

Pluralist Masculinity: New Sexuels in Male Marketing

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Abstract

Traditional masculinity has been historically described by a set of attributes, behaviors and roles generally associated with boys and men, focused on physical strength and resourcefulness (Rosenberg 2008). However, this traditional view of masculinity began to change in the mid-1990's with the introduction of the metrosexual (Simpson 1994), heterosexual men with traits and interests in fashion and personal grooming. This categorization of male-identity deviated from traditional manly-man definitions of masculinity. The emergence of this new classification of masculinity expanded the product categories being purchased by men, creating amply opportunities that proved profitable for marketers.

Just as the metrosexual entered our culture, today, new classifications of masculinity have begun to emerge, namely lumbersexuals (rugged outdoorsman appearance) and spornosexuals (chiseled sexually athletic appearance). There are unique distinguishing differences between these, as lifestyle and identity categorizations of masculinity and male consumers. These differences create the context through which each classification can be understood including the representative imagery.

Indicative of the changing dynamics of cultural male identity Holt and Thompson (2004) describes three models of masculine ideology. The *Breadwinner Model* epitomizes the working man. The *Rebel Model*, reflects men who stand apart from powerful institutions, independent anti-authority or antisocial outlaws. The *Man-of-Action Hero Model* is a hybrid of the first two models. Men in this model "embody the rugged individualism of the rebel while maintaining their allegiance to collective interests, as required of breadwinners" (Holt & Thompson, 2004, p.428). While these models still persist in certain dimensions of social culture, the rise of metrosexuality and the subsequent lumbersexual and spornosexual categories, indicate that a more appearance-based model of male identity has intruded on the traditional meanings, behaviors and consumption of masculinity.

The purpose of this research is to explore the changing dimensions of masculinity and the normative depictions represented within the social culture. Further, we aim to extend existing knowledge of the classifications of masculinity by examining the

emergence of new conceptualizations that reflect new categorizations or extensions of masculine identity.

These classifications of masculinity present opportunities for marketers to develop and expand product offerings to capture this segment. Yet, to capitalize on these growing segments, marketers need a better understanding of these emerging views of masculinity and the accompanying lifestyle behavioral and consumption preferences.

References

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Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners: This study is relevant to researchers, marketers and practitioners with an interest in the changing social construction of males within society. This study also has theoretical relevance to the culture and gender studies literatures.

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TRACK: Consumer Behavior

