

Synovate survey reveals attitudes to male beauty

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Leading global market intelligence company Synovate, has released findings from a global male beauty survey showing that 81% of Greek men feel sexy, Italian men are rated as the best-looking and 56% of all male respondents use beauty products created for, and marketed to, men.

The importance of looking good is certainly not lost on South African men, with four fifths stating that their looks are very or quite important to them, and so a deeper look at the subject yields some interesting facts.

In October 2008, Synovate took a look at male beauty in 12 markets across the world, speaking with nearly 10,000 people about beautiful blokes and what makes them that way. In the analysis, we discovered cultural differences as well as some surprises.

Who's sexy?

The study asked men whether they think they are sexy. Of our nearly 5,000 male respondents, less than half (49%) agreed that they are sexy. However, there were vast differences in self-belief across markets.

South African men certainly have a healthy opinion of themselves - 78% state that they believe they are sexy. Blessed with Adonis complexes, 81% of Greek men think they are sexy, closely followed by the Russians (80%).

At the other end of the scale, 78% of Malaysian males said they are **not** sexy, along with China and France (both 66%).

Ciao Bello!

So where are the best-looking men? The survey asked all respondents, men and women, which one country has the best-looking men. Many people were simply not sure but there was a clear winner among the named countries... say 'ciao Bello' to Italian men.

The top four homes for good-looking men across all markets studied were Italy (11%), United States (US), Russia and Brazil (all 8%).

The fact that Italy was on top when it comes to looks was even more impressive as it was not one of the markets surveyed. These men clearly have an excellent reputation for looks all across the world, among both men and women (12% of our male respondents said Italians and 10% of women did).

Bob Michaels, US-based Senior Vice President of Synovate's Consumer Insights group, said that, overall, most respondents were very patriotic and nominated men from their own country.

"One stand-out, and possibly quite reassuring, finding for men was that in most markets, women were even more likely than their male counterparts to go for handsome home-grown than to look abroad.

"But it's perhaps more interesting to look at the results within markets to see which nations are parochial and which look outside their borders for attractive people," he said.

Just some of the market-specific findings were:

- South Africans have a high opinion of their men. 63% of South African ladies voted for homegrown men as the fairest in the land with 51% of South African men agreeing.
- Russia had the highest result for its own nation, with 65% of people saying the best looking men come from their own country
- The US was fairly confident in the attractiveness of its blokes with 55% saying Americans were the best looking men
- 71% of South African men buy their beauty products themselves
- Canada had a low result for its own men... only 24% of respondents said the best-looking men are to be found at home
- Brazilian women were a lot more patriotic than the men, with 57% women saying Brazilians were the best-looking versus only 39% of men.
- The Greeks really like the Italians with 28% nominating them (32% of women and 23% of men)
- 17% of Chinese respondents said men from the United Kingdom (UK) were the best looking. Is this the Beckham effect? The English football star is widely recognised across China and consistently ranks as a top 5 sporting hero
- Brits had a pretty low opinion of the homegrown men... only 23% went for the home vote. And nearly the same number chose Italian men... 21%

Hey, good-looking

So are men's looks actually important? We asked our male respondents to rank just how important their appearance is to them on a five-point scale. Overall, 34% of male respondents, or just over a third, rate their looks as very important to them. This was as high as 61% in South Africa, 55% in Brazil and 53% in Russia.

The markets with the fewest men saying 'very important' were Australia (where only 12% say their looks are very important to them) and the US (15%).

One recent related finding from Synovate interviews about men's image in the UK found that now, more than ever, men want to take control of their looks.

"People across the world feel out of control of many aspects of their life. They feel job uncertainty as many economies enter recession. But the one thing they have total control over is the way that they choose to present themselves.

Beauty basics hit the bulls-eye

What is the bare minimum a man must do before he can be considered handsome? The number one basic requirement according to all respondents, is that a man must practice good hygiene, including fresh breath.

One third of all women said that good hygiene was an absolute necessity before a man could be considered handsome (34% - the highest single result), while only 23% of men thought this was the number one requirement. ... pleasing women might be easier than men think

Men tended to think more difficult and stereotypical things were more important, things like muscles and dressing well.

Second in overall ranking was a man who 'carries himself with confidence' with 20% of all respondents naming this as an absolute requirement, followed by 'dresses well' at 14%.

Bald men need not worry. Only 1% of respondents said that a 'full head of hair' is necessary for someone to be handsome.

South Africa followed the trend with the majority of respondents citing good hygiene and fresh breath as most important (28% of women and 19% of male respondents) followed by clear skin (17% of men and 19% of females).

Potions and lotions for blokes

The top three most used products by men across all the markets surveyed were deodorant at 72% usage, whitening toothpaste at 61% and cologne or after shave at 58%.

So, how do products specially designed for men and marketed to men go? Overall, 56% of our male respondents use them so tailoring products to men's needs is clearly worth it for beauty companies.

What products do South African men use?

Deodorant	88%
Cologne/Aftershave	80%
Mouthwash	72%
Whitening Toothpaste	72%
Lip balm/Vaseline	68%
Body Moisturiser	56%
Conditioner	45%
Facial Wash	44%
Facial Moisturiser	42%
Whitening Soap	35%
Suncream	35%
Hair spray/gel/mousse	34%

66% of South African males use products that are specially designed for men. However, 36% of South African men believe that men who use beauty products are not as masculine as those who don't. This sentiment is higher amongst South African males than it is amongst females, however a substantial 33% of women also believe this.

On the flip side however, there is a lot to be said for beauty products playing their part in **making a man feel more confident**. Two thirds of South Africans believe that men who use beauty products are more confident than those who don't. This is a wider spread belief amongst South African women than it is amongst men.

Hairy Issues!

To shave, or not, can also be something of a, err... hairy issue so Synovate asked male respondents whether or not they preferred the way they look with a clean-shaven face. Nearly eight in ten men agreed that clean-shaven was best although there were significant differences between markets.

Most committed to their shaving mirrors were South African men (90% agreed they preferred the look of a clean-shaven face), followed by China (88%) and Spain (84%).

Most likely to embrace the beard were men from Greece (34% disagreed they preferred to be clean-shaven), Australia and Brazil (both 25%) and Canada (24%).

The study also asked women whether they preferred the look of clean-shaven faces on men and the same number of women as men agreed (79%). Again, the highest results were South Africa (92%), Spain (87%) and China (86%).

Women who are more open to facial hair are from Canada, Australia and the US.

Male beauty: Taboo or beautiful opportunity?

Bob Michaels said the survey uncovered some fun facts but there is a serious side to male beauty too, offering the thought that a male beauty standard simply does not exist.

"Men never - or very rarely - talk about male beauty (although you cannot shut some of them up about female beauty!), making it an almost-taboo subject among our gender.

"Men don't comment on each other's appearance. They wouldn't dream of dissecting male celebrities' or sportsmen's looks. And they don't discuss beauty routines or products." In the absence of discussion and debate, men are open to well-delivered influence," he added.

Curiosities

- Seven in ten of all men surveyed say their main motive in looking good is for themselves. 35% of Brit blokes say it's for their partner... or to attract one!
- 79% of South African men say their motive for looking good is themselves!
- 77% of American women believe a man's appearance improves with age.
- Only 6% of women in the US and 8% in Australia say their partner's looks are 'very important' to them whereas 58% of South African women admitted looks are a high priority.
- Overall, 13% of men said, from a list of attributes, they would least like to be bald, but this was as high as 24% in China.
- 69% of men in Brazil take their grooming products with them when they leave home (the overall total across the markets surveyed was 30%).
- Chinese and Malaysian men were the least likely to consider plastic surgery in order to look better with 96% and 94% respectively saying no way to the knife.

About the Synovate global male beauty survey

This In:fact survey looked at male beauty and covered nearly 10,000 respondents in 12 markets around the world - South Africa, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Greece, Malaysia, Russia, Spain, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (US). The study was conducted in October 2008 using online, telephone and face-to-face methodologies.

About Synovate

Synovate, the market research arm of Aegis Group plc, generates consumer insights that drive competitive marketing solutions. The network provides clients with cohesive global support and a comprehensive suite of research solutions. Synovate employs over 6,000 staff across 62 countries. More information on Synovate can be found at www.synovate.com.

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