

# ANALYSIS OF METROSEXUAL CONSUMER LIFESTYLE IN URBAN AREAS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF MALE-TARGETED BEAUTY CONSUMERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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## ABSTRACT

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This in-depth study explores the evolving metrosexual consumer lifestyle within Indonesia's urban centers and specifically delves into how the metrosexual community utilizes Instagram as a platform for self-representation and social interaction. Employing a qualitative, phenomenological approach anchored in constructivism, data were gathered through a multifaceted approach, including in-depth interviews with key informants, participant observation through examination of Instagram profiles and online interactions, as well as a comprehensive literature review to contextualize findings. To identify study participants, strategic keywords such as "metrosexual," "lifestyle," and "men's beauty" were applied on Instagram search. The selection was meticulously narrowed down to ten highly active endorsers and followers with the most significant engagement. The approach ensured that rich insights from individuals deeply embedded within the metrosexual community on Instagram were captured. The study unveils intriguing aspects of Indonesian urban metrosexuals' consumption habits and social media preferences. Their primary concern lies in the effectiveness of beauty products in enhancing their appearance, prioritizing results over mere brand prestige. The focus on practicality is further reflected in their preferred places to meet. Shopping malls emerge as their preferred destinations for social activities. When it comes to social media, Instagram is the most popular choice. Its visual focus and content sharing align perfectly with the metrosexual community's interest in self-presentation and cultivating a meticulously crafted online image. The research also highlights the significant role of physical appearance in boosting self-esteem within the metrosexual community, influencing their interactions both online and offline. The managerial implications of this study indicate the importance of paying attention to male consumers for beauty products and services.

**Keywords:** Metrosexual; urban culture phenomenology; male beauty product; social role; postmodernism consumer

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Coined by Simpson in the 1990s (Simpson, 2002) and gaining prominence in the early 2000s (Sarpila, 2021), the term “metrosexual” reflects a significant shift in traditional gender norms. This phenomenon is not exclusive to the United Kingdom, with Indonesia and neighboring Malaysia experiencing a similar trend. Bano (2018) highlighted the growing emphasis on personal appearance among Malaysian men, evidenced by increased investment in grooming, fitness, and fashion. Simpson’s (2002) original definition described metrosexuality as a key characteristic of young, affluent men residing in metropolitan areas with access to premier consumer experiences (hairstylists, fitness centers, designer stores). Metrosexual men among Indonesian millennials through skincare products (especially facial care/Rodeos soap) which promise to help them look handsome with a clean, bright, and acne-free face (Putranto et al., 2022).

Understanding metrosexual consumer behavior is particularly relevant in skincare market expansion. The proliferation of media (newspapers, magazines, social media) has exposed men to traditionally “feminine” concepts such as cosmetics and fashion, challenging societal biases against male involvement (Jairath & Daima, 2021). Additionally, growing health consciousness extends to personal care products, with men being more selective about their ingredients (Lin et al., 2018). Simpson (2002) expanded on his website that further associated metrosexuality with an upper-class lifestyle. Metrosexual consumption is often body-focused and status-driven, reflecting a desire to be in vogue and display cultural capital (Flemmen et al., 2018). As Freeland and Hoey (2018) argued, status is not solely based on possessions but also on the cultural values associated with them. Consumer behavior becomes a means of expressing self-image and lifestyle.

David Beckham, the English soccer player, became a metrosexual lifestyle icon in the 2000s. His flamboyant appearance and attention to grooming helped popularize the lifestyle and his behavior, which went against traditional masculinity norms at the time, and therefore helping change society’s view of masculinity. With his neat appearance and attention to detail, he demonstrated that men can care about their looks without compromising their masculinity (Coad, 2014). Facial skincare products encompass any item designed for application on the face, and within the scope of this research, these include facial wash, moisturizer, lotion, sunscreen, anti-aging cream or serum, and eye cream.

Men’s skincare products have been on the rise in Indonesia in tandem with the metrosexual phenomenon (Pimonwattanachok & Hoffman, 2018). The growing acceptance of male grooming and skincare reflects broader changes in societal attitudes toward masculinity and self-care. Social media platforms such as Instagram, which is particularly popular among young demographics (Huang & Su, 2018), serve as key avenues for self-expression and the promotion of grooming products. This shift in consumer behavior highlights the evolving landscape of gender norms and the increasing importance of appearance and self-care in modern society.

The consumption of skincare products enhances men’s visual literacy, normalizing beauty practices for men and encouraging them to care for and nurture their skin. This could be interpreted as a form of feminization. However, advertisements often employ masculine traits and strategies, linking cosmetic products with traditional masculine values (Kenalemang-Palm, 2023). The enhancement of the male body transforms the consumption of skincare products into a performance, allowing men to maintain their distinct status in society and renegotiate the double standards of aging.

A recent survey in Indonesia revealed a growing trend of men prioritizing their appearance, with a significant portion (19.1%) desiring clean and clear skin (Mediatama, 2024). This aligns with the rise of the male beauty industry, fueled by factors such as Korean pop culture and social media influences (Belinda, 2023). The metrosexual phenomenon is changing the landscape of masculinity in Indonesia, with men embracing self-care and presentation. This shift is reflected in the significant increase in sales of men’s grooming products, highlighting a transformation in male identity (Bano & Sharif, 2016).

The emergence of metrosexuality has significantly impacted the cosmetics and fashion industry. Traditionally targeted toward women, beauty brands are now expanding their market to include male consumers who prioritize self-care and appearance (Ustymenko, 2023). This has led to a surge in men’s specific products, including cleansers, moisturizers, and fragrances. Jakarta, a major Indonesian metropolis, exemplifies this trend with a thriving metrosexual community. The men visit different urban spaces, displaying their well-groomed appearances and fashionable attire. Businesses are responding to this market: salons offer specialized treatments, barbershops thrive, and fashion brands expand their menswear lines.

The presence of metrosexuals in Indonesia is further cemented by celebrities such as Ferry Salim and Nicholas Saputra who serve as role models and trendsetters. Their concentrations on fashion, grooming, and brand ambassadorship cement the metrosexual image (Kuncoro et al., 2017). SMASH, a boy band who proffered good looks and physique, also helped normalize the lifestyle. Postmodernism is a convoluted term with various critiques; the definition related to this research is by scholars such as Foucault, Baudrillard, Lyotard, and Jameson who explored its connection to culture and consumerism (Habib, 2018). Baudrillard, in

particular, emphasized the body as a precious and alluring object, signifying physical and sexual liberation in postmodern society (Baudrillard, 2018). This aligns with the focus on metrosexuals' bodies and their use of beauty products, highlighting the evolving landscape of gender norms and self-expression.

Shopping mall culture in Indonesia has developed to the point where its malls are no longer merely community centers but active meeting points for socializing, recreation, and shopping (Bawa et al., 2019). In line with that, shopping malls cater to different motives of shoppers, from hedonic consumption to social contact, brand loyalty, or even functional needs (Jermstittiparsert et al., 2019). With such characteristics, this modern retail environment greatly influences consumer behavior and becomes an appropriate space for studying metrosexual consumption patterns.

Aside from going to the malls, metrosexuals are also very active on social media sites, which, through online technology, link users via numerous applications and sites (Wolf et al., 2018). One of the most prominent is Instagram. Started in 2010, it is an app that allows users to share photos on their mobile or desktop devices and currently boasts over 700 million active users (Musonera, 2018).

Instagram's visual orientation gives it an especial attraction for the sharing of photos. The large user base of the platform ensures a high visibility of posts. Hashtags further increase the post views and enable users to find posts relating to a specific theme or interest (Fuciu, 2019). Its visual nature fits well with the metrosexual lifestyle that often involves fastidious care for looks and style. Social media platforms, therefore, provide an unexcelled venue for self-presentation, in which users curate online identities that might very well diverge from offline personae. According to a body of research, this is done differently by men and women; while the latter underlines their physical appearances, the former underscores feats and accomplishments (Huang et al., 2018; Huang & Su, 2018).

The active presence of metrosexuals on social media and their involvement with shopping malls point toward an intersection of digital and physical spaces that shape modern masculinity. Those platforms and spaces enable one to express himself and act in a way that cements new norms of gender. In venturing through those spaces, the ever-changing landscape of consumer behavior and societal attitudes toward masculinity and self-care are navigated by them.

This study examines the consumer behaviour of Indonesian metrosexuals who are also active social media users and urban residents, in order to analyze their lifestyle from a postmodern perspective. Previous studies, such as that by Adam (2017), have investigated determinants of grooming product consumption by Jakarta's metrosexuals, including self-image, celebrity endorsement, and social expectations. Kurniawan et al. (2018) examined the motivations, meanings, self-concept, and interpersonal relationships of the metrosexual lifestyle. However, this study took a different approach by examining how the mall-frequenting lifestyle of metrosexuals intersects with their social media behavior and analyzing how their physical hangouts influence their social media posts.

Employing a communication-oriented approach, specifically a phenomenological perspective, this study explored the lived experiences of Indonesian metrosexual consumers on Instagram. This approach transcended the limitations of past research that focused solely on purchase decisions. The study posed three key research questions: 1) How do metrosexual consumers, as postmodern individuals, navigate the selection of beauty products?; 2) How do the social aspects of the metrosexual lifestyle influence their social media posts?; and 3) What forms of interaction do metrosexuals have with their followers regarding their self-presentation on Instagram? By investigating these questions, the study sought to provide a nuanced understanding of how Indonesian metrosexuals utilize Instagram to construct their identities and navigate their consumer practices within the platform's social environment.

This study adapted a qualitative approach to comprehensively understand the evolving metrosexual lifestyle in contemporary Indonesia. This research made use of online interviews and observations on the activities participants engage in on Instagram to shed light on the lived experiences of metrosexual consumers in relation to their relationship with beauty products on the platform. The goal was to delve deeper than mere purchase decisions: how the experiences of metrosexuals, in both online and offline environments, were intertwined to form an experiential entity, one that provided rich insights into the intersection between digital and physical spaces in the creation of modern masculinity.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Social role theory

Traditional gender roles will often classify individuals as either masculine or feminine based on the expectations held within society (Saint-Michel, 2018). Social role theory builds from this, describing how it is that social norms direct our behavior and others' perception of us based on these roles (Anglin et al., 2022). This theory shifts away from fixed traits and acknowledges gender as dynamic and performative—something

that flows from the cultural contexts and daily interactions. It also sheds light on how stereotypes determine opportunities and the rewards in society (Risman, 2018).

Social role theory has been applied to many issues in communication in the United States, showing that gender stereotypes give explanation for behaviors like leadership, styles of communication, and career decisions (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Applying the current theory, the study addressed how metrosexuals thought about purchasing beauty products traditionally meant for females. While stereotypes can sometimes be helpful, they can also lead to social discomfort when men do not adhere to the typical male gender consumption (Ellemers, 2018).

Gender role beliefs are important in shaping behavior, hormonal changes, others' expectations, and self-standards. These beliefs, which are deeply ingrained in both men and women, are the major determinants of behavior. According to social role theory, gender roles arise from activities that individuals of each sex do in their occupational and family roles. These roles are a central focus of socialization, beginning early in childhood and continued throughout adolescence. The impact of gender roles on behaviour is mediated through psychological and social processes (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Social role theory posits that gender differences in behavior stem from distinct social roles occupied by women and men, particularly those related to labor division. Historically, societal pressures, including economic, ecological, and technological factors, led to the assignment of tasks based on physical attributes. Men were often assigned tasks requiring strength, speed, and extended periods away from home, while women were typically responsible for domestic duties and childcare. This division of labor shaped gender roles, with men expected to exhibit agentic qualities such as assertiveness, independence and women to embody communal qualities such as warmth, nurturance (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Descriptive and injunctive social norms reinforce these traditional gender roles. Descriptive norms inform individuals how others behave in specific situations, influencing their own behavior. Injunctive norms, on the other hand, prescribe how people should behave, often leading to social disapproval or shame if violated. Men and women who deviate from traditional gender role expectations, such as men who prioritize domestic duties or women who assume leadership roles, may face negative social consequences. As society evolves, more women and men are challenging traditional gender roles by occupying roles typically associated with the opposite sex. Social role theory predicts that their perceived gender role orientations will be linked to their actual roles rather than their biological sex. For example, women in leadership positions are often perceived as agentic, while men in nurturing roles are seen as communal (Schneider & Bos, 2019). A considerable number of studies support this theory, demonstrating that perceptions of women's gender roles are influenced by their social roles. Married women and mothers are often perceived as more communal, while employed women and men are generally seen as equally agentic. However, these shifts in gender role orientations can lead to negative attitudes toward individuals who deviate from traditional norms (Harrison & Lynch, 2005).

Gender role theory suggests that men and women are subject to specific behavioral expectations based on their gender. Communal characteristics, such as empathy, gentleness, and submissiveness, are often associated with women, while agentic characteristics, which include assertiveness, dominance, and aggression, are typically linked to men. These role prescriptions influence not only how men and women behave but also how others perceive and evaluate their actions. Just as organizations, tasks, extra-role behaviors, and positions can be gendered, so too can influence tactics. Gender role theory suggests that men and women are more likely to use tactics congruent with their gender roles. Men may tend towards aggressive, self-oriented tactics, while women may be more inclined to use passive, other-oriented strategies. Further, people who use gender-congruent tactics are more likely to successfully influence others, since their behavior matches expectations from society. Going against these gender roles may even result in a backlash or social disapproval (Smith et al., 2013).

## 2.2 New media

Unlike traditional media, new media is based on digital technology to communicate information innovatively. It is interactive; users can participate and create their content, while hypertextuality allows for non-linear exploration of information (Lister et al., 2008). The new media landscape is further defined by virtual worlds, extended online communities, and immersive simulations. This pervasive digital phenomenon has fundamentally reshaped communication and continues to evolve rapidly.

One of the obvious advantages of new media is that it is digital. Information is stored and processed in a manner that allows easy sharing and manipulation, opening up possibilities for creative and interactive user experiences. Algorithmic tools allow easy description and modification of content (Hassan & Thomas, 2006). However, the true impact of new media extends beyond technological advancements. Understanding the social processes of diffusion and appropriation is equally important.

Much of the excitement, fear, and challenges in relation to new media derive from the expectation of a revolution. However, discourses on these technologies are prone to dystopian or nostalgic tendencies that are

not grounded in empirical evidence because these technologies are so new. Researchers and policy makers also have the challenge of assessing and trying to understand new media before they become fully integrated into society (Livingstone, 1999).

To comprehend the "newness" of new media, a temporal perspective is vital. Technological development frequently precedes social change. The true social impact of a new medium can only be fully grasped through its diffusion and appropriation within domestic contexts. This process is influenced by market dynamics, evolving cultural meanings attributed to the technology, and individual user practices. Furthermore, the concept of "new media" should not solely encompass the latest technologies. It can be broadened to include conventional media utilized in novel ways. The proliferation of personal devices for media consumption, the diversification of content formats, the convergence of media services, and the shift toward interactive communication all represent significant developments. These transformations have profound implications for social contexts, individual lifestyles, and democratic participation (Livingstone, 1999).

While the full impact of new media may not be fully understood until later stages of its diffusion process, examining its social meanings, user practices, and potential effects is crucial. New media, characterized by digitality, interactivity, collective participation, and user-generated content, has undeniably transformed the media landscape. Web 2.0 tools have blurred the lines between media producer and consumer, empowering individuals to create and readily share content (Tugtekin & Koc, 2020). However, alongside these opportunities lie challenges such as privacy concerns, cyberbullying, and misinformation. The digital nature of new media facilitates the rapid dissemination of both accurate and inaccurate information. The interconnectedness of online platforms is capable of amplifying information, potentially leading to societal polarization and fragmentation. The ease of sharing and reposting content can create echo chambers where individuals are primarily exposed to information that reinforces their existing beliefs (Sunstein, 2018).

To navigate these challenges and reap the benefits of new media, individuals must develop digital literacy and critical thinking skills. Understanding the ongoing digital transformations and acquiring the necessary knowledge will empower individuals to protect themselves from risks while utilizing the opportunities offered by this evolving media landscape (Tugtekin & Koc, 2020).

A temporal perspective is important for understanding the "newness" of new media. Technological development usually precedes social change. The real social effects of a new medium can only be understood fully in terms of its diffusion and appropriation into domestic contexts, which are themselves shaped by market dynamics, changing cultural meanings given to the technology, and user practices. Moreover, the term "new media" need not refer to the newest of technologies. It can be stretched to encompass traditional media forms used in new ways as well. The distribution of personal equipment for the consumption of media, the diversification of content formats, the combination of media services, and the movement toward interactive communication all constitute major trends of recent years. These have strong implications for social situations, personal life, and civic engagement (Livingstone, 1999).

While it is possible that the full implications of new media will only become clear at a later point in its diffusion process, it is important to study its social meanings, user practices, and possible effects at this time. New media—characterized by digitality, interactivity, collective participation, and user-generated content—has indisputably changed the media scene. Web 2.0 tools blurred the lines between media producer and consumer, and empowered individuals to create and share content much more easily (Tugtekin & Koc, 2020). But there are also problems brought on by these opportunities, in the form of privacy and cyberbullying concerns, alongside misinformation. The digital nature of new media allows a fast spread of both reliable and unreliable information. This could result in the amplification of information, which may further lead to societal polarization and fragmentation. Sharing and reposting on these platforms is very easy, creating an echo chamber effect where people are most exposed to information that confirms their already existing beliefs (Sunstein, 2018).

To deal with these challenges and benefit from new media, acquisition of digital literacy and critical thinking skills is a must for all. Knowledge about ongoing digital transformations and necessary knowledge shall empower individuals to protect themselves from risks while benefiting from opportunities presented by this ever-evolving media landscape (Tugtekin & Koc, 2020).

### 3. METHODS

This study, specifically, adopts a qualitative design through the approach known as phenomenology in understanding how they lived experiences of metrosexuals can be related to using beauty products for self-representation via social media. It allows detailed examination of subjective experience and the meanings people give it (Gehman et al., 2018). The current research delves into participants' conscious world to know deeper their stand regarding the happening of the phenomenon in issue. Unlike positivist approaches, which

seek objective truths, phenomenology acknowledges the role of subjectivity and personal knowledge in shaping experience (Creswell, 2015). Through this study, shared meanings were sought to be discovered related to the use of beauty products by metrosexuals for self-presentation on social media. By analyzing their lived experiences, this research sought to illuminate the commonalities that emerge within this specific group (Rodriguez & Smith, 2018). In addition, this study adhered to Husserl's (2019) brand of phenomenology, which requires bracketing the researchers' own biases to gain a more objective understanding of the participants' lifeworld (Rodriguez & Smith, 2018). This bracketing enables a more in-depth look into the participants' perceptions, thoughts, and emotions regarding the act of using beauty products for self-presentation on social media.

### 3.1 Participants

This research employed purposive sampling to recruit ten participants who met specific criteria. Purposive sampling is advantageous for its ability to target a specific population of interest, yielding a more homogeneous sample that streamlines data analysis (Andrade, 2021). In this case, participants were selected based on three key criteria: (1) consistent use of skincare products, (2) active engagement on Instagram, and (3) a follower count exceeding 1,000. The follower count threshold reflects the established popularity associated with such numbers on social media platforms (Lie & Aprilianty, 2022). While a definitive age range for metrosexual identification was not established (Simpson, 2002), this study focused on participants in their twenties, mirroring the example of David Beckham at the peak of his metrosexual influence (27 years of age at the time). The participants can be seen in Table 1. They are a group of people in their twenties with various different jobs.

To safeguard participant privacy, confidentiality, and safety, this study adhered to rigorous ethical protocols. Participants were fully informed regarding the research objectives and provided written consent. Personal identifiers, including full names and social media usernames, were withheld, and faces were obscured in any visual materials. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, and the data analysis focused on extracting key themes and insights, ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2018). These measures helped protect participant privacy and maintain research integrity.

**Table 1:** Background of informants

Participant	Age	Occupation	Followers	Total Post <sup>1</sup>
Informant 1	27	Model	10,600	185
Informant 2	27	Dentist	5,200	28
Informant 3	28	Musician	3,826	156
Informant 4	28	Musician	4,160	898
Informant 5	27	Chef	93,900	1,030
Informant 6	29	Marketing Executive	8,950	64
Informant 7	27	Model	11,300	12
Informant 8	28	Insurance Salesman	1,707	30
Informant 9	24	Legal Executive	6,238	25
Informant 10	29	Banker	1,620	1,533

### 3.2 Data analysis

This research utilized a qualitative approach, conducting in-depth interviews to gather insights from a focus group. Ten participants, all urban residents who actively use social media and incorporate beauty products into their routines, were selected (Young et al., 2018). Open-ended questions encouraged participants to share their experiences in detail, resulting in rich narratives (Weller et al., 2018). The data analysis followed an iterative model, where researchers continuously evaluated responses during data collection. This method enhanced data credibility by allowing for deeper probing and clarification during interviews (Umanilo et al., 2019). The analysis comprised three simultaneous activities: data reduction (condensing information), data display (organizing findings), and conclusion drawing (identifying overarching themes). This ongoing and interactive approach facilitated data saturation, the point at which no new insights were gained from additional interviews.

The research was grounded in the philosophical concept of phenomenology, particularly the methods developed by Husserl (2019), which focus on detailed descriptions of conscious experiences through three essential steps: adopting a specific stance (transcendental phenomenological attitude), concentrating on a

<sup>1</sup> Excluding Instagram stories and reels



particular phenomenon, and meticulously describing its essence through imaginative variation. However, when applying this method to psychology, certain adjustments are necessary. Rather than a complete transcendental reduction, the researchers employed a “phenomenological psychological reduction,” recognizing that the subjects of study were psychological phenomena rooted in human consciousness interacting with the world.

Further modifications tailored to psychological research included relying on descriptions from participants who remained in a natural state, emphasizing the psychological essence of the phenomenon within a specific context (Giorgi, 2007). This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Presented and interpreted in the following sections, the findings shed light on study participants' backgrounds, lifestyles, and motivations behind their beauty product choices and social media use.

### 4.1 Consumerism habit

This study revealed a consistent focus on product efficacy among participants. When choosing men's beauty products, particularly skincare, compatibility defined as a product's ability to deliver desired results emerged as a primary concern. Some participants even expressed indifference toward brand names or prestige, prioritizing effectiveness over labels. For instance, one participant stated, “To be honest, I don't really care about the skincare brand if the product works for me. So, even if the brand is not well-known, I will stick with it” (Informant 2). This finding suggests that for metrosexuals in this study, achieving desired outcomes is a more significant driver of purchasing decisions than brand recognition or image.

Two distinct consumption patterns emerged among the metrosexuals interviewed regarding beauty product usage. One group of participants adopted a reactive approach, purchasing products as needed when supplies ran low. Informant 6 exemplified this behavior and stated, “Face wash can be used up quickly...maybe twice a month.” The other group, however, followed a proactive strategy, adhering to a regimented schedule prescribed by their beauty clinics. Participants in this group, such as Informant 1, expressed a preference for clinic-recommended products, citing concerns over disrupting their personalized beauty programs designed for optimal results. This highlights a potential reliance on professional guidance for some metrosexuals in navigating the complex landscape of beauty products.

The study found that the prices of beauty clinics' products are the same for men and women. However, larger, and more popular beauty clinics carry products with higher prices compared to smaller clinics. Larger beauty clinics have more branches and advertisements, and therefore they are more well-known to the public. This allows them to attract more customers and charge higher prices. All participants who visited beauty clinics used the services mostly for acne treatment. The participants indicated that having a clean face without any acne was a priority when it came to beauty spending. One participant even commented that it was much more common to get acne in Indonesia compared to when he was living in the United States. The prices of acne products and branch location in Indonesia that Informant 7 and Informant 9 used, are presented in Table 2. It shows that the clinic with more branch locations carry much more expensive products than the clinic with fewer branch locations.

**Table 2:** Price and branch location comparison

Beauty Clinic	Branch Location	Product	Price
Beauty Clinic Used by Informant 7	97	Acne Cleanser	Rp. 82,997
Beauty Clinic Used by Informant 9	19	Acne Cleanser	Rp. 66,600

The above table reveals a dichotomy in Indonesian metrosexuals' approach to beauty products. While all participants prioritized compatibility, defined as effectiveness, brand loyalty varies, some, including Informant 2, prioritized results over brand recognition, suggesting a practicality-driven approach.

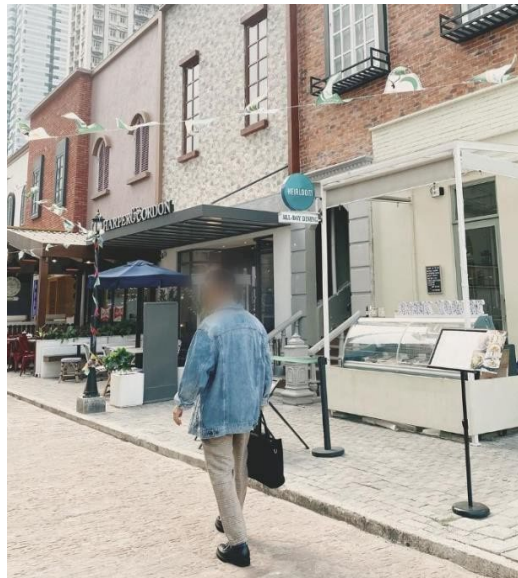
The study further highlights a segmentation within metrosexual consumers based on purchasing habits. One group of participants purchases product reactively, as needed (Informant 6). This suggests a potentially price-conscious segment focused on maintaining a baseline routine. Conversely, the other group adheres to schedules set by beauty clinics, implying a higher level of commitment and potentially more disposable income. However, adherence to clinic recommendations is not universal. Some participants, such

as Informant 1, expressed a degree of skepticism towards prescribed products, potentially indicating a preference for individual research or established routines.

Interestingly, the study suggests acne treatment as a key driver for clinic preference. This aligns with a participant's comment regarding a higher prevalence of acne in Indonesia compared to the U.S. It also highlights the importance of a clear complexion for these consumers, potentially reflecting cultural beauty standards. Finally, the analysis of clinic pricing reveals a correlation between branch count and cost, suggesting brand recognition plays a role in pricing strategy, even for consumers prioritizing effectiveness.

#### 4.2 Urban living

This study suggests that shopping malls function as significant social and practical spaces for metrosexuals in Indonesian big cities. Their strategic locations within city centers provide convenient access for those who work or reside nearby (Figure 1). More importantly, malls offer a concentrated environment catering to the multifaceted lifestyle of metrosexuals. Gyms, essential for maintaining desired physical appearance, are often located within malls alongside stores specializing in men's fashion and skincare clinics. These features cater directly to self-care needs. Furthermore, malls serve as social hubs, with cafes and restaurants fostering opportunities for social interaction, as exemplified by informant 7's routine visit to the mall after work for both his gym session and to connect with friends. These findings illuminate how malls transcend their role as shopping destinations, transforming into vital social spaces for metrosexuals in Indonesia's urban landscapes.



**Figure 1:** A participant's post on Instagram indicating a visit to a mall for social activities and meals (Participant's face has been obscured for privacy)

#### 4.3 Social media post

This study identified Instagram as the primary social media platform used by participants for self-presentation. Prior to posting content, a sense of comfort with the material emerged as a key concern. Informant 4 stated, "When it comes to content... I like to upload content that I'm comfortable with..." The participants aspired to project a specific persona on social media, often described as fun, laid-back, and easily approachable. Informant 7 stated, "On social media, I would describe myself as the 'guy next door'..." This portrayal was achieved primarily through strategic use of visuals, with most participants relying on carefully chosen outfits and locations to enhance their photos (see Figure 2). Notably, beauty products were not the sole focus for creating an appealing image. Confidence was also identified as a crucial factor, with one participant highlighting the importance of self-assuredness in translating to visually engaging photos. Informant 8 stated, "I believe that confidence is important in photography..." These findings suggest a nuanced approach to self-presentation via social media among metrosexuals in this study, where comfort, curated images, and visual storytelling play a role in crafting their online personas.



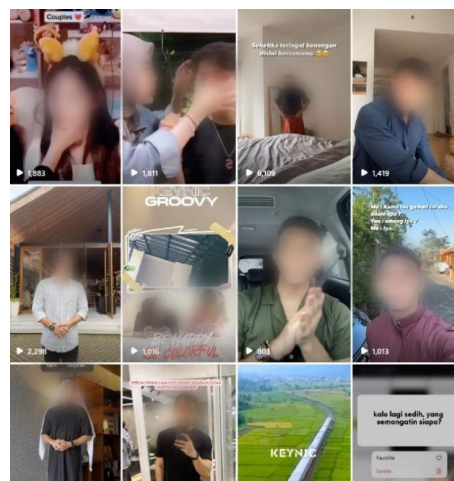


**Figure 2:** A participant's post on Instagram indicating the use of a café for background to increase the visual impact (Participant's face has been obscured for privacy)

The study participants had their own unique ways to make themselves look more interesting and stand out on social media. They used a variety of techniques, such as choosing the right background, posing in a certain way, and using a specific angle for their photos. However, the most important thing to them was to feel comfortable when taking the photo. They believed that being comfortable with themselves was the key to looking confident. The participants also wanted to be authentic in their social media presence. They did not want to create a fake persona that did not represent them in real life. One participant expressed that he preferred to simply engage in activities that he enjoyed. Finally, all participants used men's beauty products to achieve a clean face for their social media photos. They felt that this was important for them to look comfortable with their looks.

#### 4.4 Social media interaction

While Instagram offers various functionalities for user interaction, study participants primarily utilized Instagram stories and reels. One participant, as illustrated in Figure 3, leveraged Instagram reels to cultivate engagement with followers due to the platform's algorithm promoting reels with high viewership potential. The figure showcases a participant's reels achieving a substantial number of views. Notably, their content extended beyond self-portraits, incorporating friends and glimpses into their daily activities.



**Figure 3:** A participant's engagement in social media through Instagram reels (Participant's face has been obscured for privacy)

Several participants utilized Instagram stories to show images of themselves as urbanites navigating the big city life. They leveraged the ephemeral nature of Instagram stories to offer fleeting glimpses into their daily experiences. One participant, as shown in Figure 4, employed stories to showcase his career as a singer to foster a sense of connection with followers by sharing a personal aspect of his life. This finding highlights

how Instagram stories function as a tool for these metrosexuals to not only present themselves but also connect with their audience on a more personal level.



**Figure 4:** A participant's use of Instagram stories to interact with followers (Participant's face has been obscured for privacy)

The study participants revealed a strong preference for Instagram as their primary platform for photo sharing and follower interaction. The photo-centric interface resonated with their desire to visually curate their online presence. Furthermore, Instagram's features that facilitate engaging content creation, such as reels and stories, were instrumental in their decision. The focus on interactivity, with features like comments and direct messages, was highly appreciated, enabling participants to engage with their followers in a more significant manner. Together, these elements make Instagram the perfect platform for metrosexuals involved in this study to shape their social media image and build connections with their audience.

#### 4.5 Discussion

This study presents findings that diverge from previous research on metrosexual consumer behavior. While prior studies emphasized brand image as a primary factor influencing purchasing decisions (Anuar et al., 2017), participants in this study prioritized product effectiveness. This suggests a shift toward a more utilitarian approach to beauty product consumption among metrosexuals.

Furthermore, the study revealed a lingering perception of men's beauty products, particularly skincare, as being feminine. This aligns with research by Ulrich and Tissier-Desbordes (2018), which explored the concept of brands being perceived as a threat to masculinity. Despite these associations, the increasing adoption of these products by men underscores their recognition of the functional benefits they offer.

Social media plays a significant role in influencing metrosexual consumer behavior, corroborating findings by Loiacono and McCoy (2018). Participants expressed a strong desire to curate and present a specific online identity, fueling their continued use of social media. This pursuit of self-representation can create a negative cycle, as users feel the pressure of constantly managing and updating their digital image.

In contrast to the findings of Byrne and Milestone (2023), participants did not hesitate to discuss their skincare habits. This suggests a potential shift in attitudes toward open communication regarding grooming practices among metrosexuals. Additionally, social media has played a role in encouraging men to adopt skincare routines, as evidenced by the research of Byrne and Milestone (2023). The study's findings also align with those of Ferry and Astuti (2021), which highlighted the significant impact of aging on urban male consumers' attitudes toward skincare products. Despite the common association of the cosmetic industry with women, this research demonstrates the potential of this niche market for the beauty industry in Indonesia.

The findings of this study tend to contradict the earlier studies on the consumer behavior of metrosexuals. Whereas previous studies argued that brand image was among the most important factors taken into consideration by consumers (Anuar et al., 2017), the participants in the current study placed more importance on effectiveness. This suggests a practical development in the consumption of beauty care products among metrosexuals. Moreover, the research revealed the deeply rooted perception of beauty products, particularly skincare, for men as being feminine. The findings support the work of Ulrich and Tissier-Desbordes (2018) that explores how branding can be perceived as a threat to masculinity. However, the evident rise in the consumption of these products among men illustrates their recognition of the functions they serve.

This shows that social media is one of the most influencing factors on metrosexual consumer behavior, which corroborates the findings of Loiacono and McCoy (2018). The participants showed a high need to curate and present a particular identity online, which motivates them to continue using social media. This can be developed into a vicious cycle since users are always under pressure to manage and update their digital image constantly.

Opposed to the findings of Byrne and Milestone (2023), there was no reluctance from the participants while discussing skincare routine practices. This may mean a possible change in mindset about the openness of communication with regard to grooming practices for metrosexuals.

Furthermore, social media has influenced men to engage in skincare, supported by the studies of Byrne and Milestone (2023). This research also correlates with the findings of Ferry and Astuti (2021), in showing how aging has significantly influenced urban male consumers' attitudes towards skincare products. Though the cosmetic industry has been widely associated with females, this study has proven the potential of this niche market for the beauty industry in Indonesia.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This research adds to the emergent knowledge regarding the metrosexual consumer in Indonesia and, more specifically, to those residing in metropolitan hubs. The results indicate a developing niche of male consumers for whom product effectiveness in personal care and skincare is more important than promotional campaigns. Word-of-mouth referrals are helpful but take a backseat to products that deliver obvious results. Interestingly, the metrosexual buyer is functional, where store location does not matter, with the exception of metrosexuals who also purchase from beauty clinics offering unique product lines.

Moreover, the research brings forth the importance of the place for metrosexuals in Jakarta and Bandung. Shopping malls, easily accessible from workplaces and houses, are not only used as a place to go shopping but also as places where they can interact socially with other people. These interactions are then documented and shared on social media platforms, particularly Instagram. The platform's visual focus and interactive features, reels and stories, facilitate engagement and self-expression.

Study participants displayed a positive self-image and a confident online persona. They strategically utilized various techniques, including pose, location, body language, and attire, to cultivate a fun and approachable image. Beyond product efficacy, participants actively manage their online image for a well-rounded presentation. To enhance the generalizability of these findings, future research employing a quantitative approach is recommended. This would allow for broader insights into metrosexual consumer behavior within the context of urban lifestyles.

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