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**The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer
Buying Behaviour – A Case of Kuwaiti’s male
grooming Retail Market**

SHARIFA SOUDAN ALENEZI

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD/MPhil

January 2024

Department of Finance and Management SOAS, University of London.

SOAS, University of London

DEDICATION

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

{"In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful."}

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ وَالشُّكْرُ فِي الْأُولَى، وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ وَالشُّكْرُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ، وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ وَالشُّكْرُ مِنْ قَبْلِ، وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ وَالشُّكْرُ
مِنْ بَعْدِ

{"O Allah, all praise and thanks are due to You in the beginning, and all praise and thanks are due to You in the end. All praise and thanks are due to You in the former and in the latter. All praise and thanks are due to You forever and after."}

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, my father Dr. Naser and my mother Dr. Salma, with utmost respect and gratitude. Their unwavering support and encouragement over the past several years have been instrumental in the completion of this thesis. I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my siblings, Eng. Mohammed, Dr. Shoug, and Eng. Shahad, who have always been there for me, providing emotional support and motivation throughout my academic journey. To my beloved family, I am sincerely grateful for being my pillar of strength and my closest friends.

I made a promise to make you proud of me, and I hope that I have fulfilled that promise because it has been my daily goal.

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The global Covid-19 crisis has placed me in a situation where I have had to face extreme challenges, stress, sleepless nights, and loneliness. I have been isolated in London, away from my family, for a year and a half, and the uncertainty of this crisis has made my PhD journey far from easy. However, I have found strength in my faith to overcome this difficult period.

Right after the Covid-19 crisis, I unfortunately lost my dear grandmother who has always been a source of encouragement for me to strive for greater success and accomplishments in my life. I will always remember her daily prayers for me. May you rest in peace, “Omy”, and I hope I am making you proud.

This journey started in 2019 and is ongoing, with various significant moments and experiences in my life. Over the years, I have faced challenges and emotions, including happiness, sadness, anxiety, self-awareness, and excitement. These experiences have shaped me into a resilient and independent woman.

Lastly, I am deeply grateful and honored for all those who have played a significant role throughout this academic, solitary, challenging, and joyful journey in my life.

الحمد لله الذي أكرمني بنور العلم وزينني بزينة الفهم وفضل علي بعطاائه وزادني من فضلة

{}Praise be to Allah who honored me with the light of knowledge, adorned me with the beauty of understanding, favored me with His gifts, and increased me in His bounty.{}

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ عِلْمًا نَافِعًا، وَرِزْقًا طَيِّبًا، وَعَمَلًا مُتَقَبَّلًا

{}O Allah, I ask You for beneficial knowledge, wholesome provision, and deeds that are accepted.{}

ABSTRACT

This research explores male grooming, focusing on cultural norms, social media, and individual perspectives. It studies the psychological and social aspects of men's grooming routines, along with self-identity, appearance, and hygiene. It also examines how grooming enhances Kuwaiti men's self-expression, self-esteem, and social acceptance.

This study investigates self-grooming trends among Kuwaiti males, focusing on personal appearance. Using interviews and fieldwork, it examines the factors shaping grooming choices, including challenges, preferences, and motives. The research explores the influence of social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat on male grooming, including the global spread of grooming practices, celebrity endorsements, and personal care routines.

The findings reveal that Kuwaiti men's grooming habits are shaped by social media influencers, including celebrities, retailers, and cosmetic surgeons, as well as the influence of women sharing information through the same channels. Additionally, the results suggest that factors such as self-perception, self-esteem, evolving societal norms, and peer influence significantly impact male grooming behaviour.

This research provides important insights into men's grooming trends in Kuwait, influenced by factors such as cultural background and social media. It offers valuable data for strategies in advertising, archival preservation, and societal development, considering various influences including societal norms, economy, Western culture, religion, women's habits, education, and social media. The findings enhance our understanding of male grooming and are beneficial for professionals, researchers, and policymakers.

Keywords: Male grooming, social media, Celebrity Endorsement, Culture, Self-perception, Kuwait,

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LIST OF NOMENCLATURE AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASAPS	American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery
ASCC	Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Centre
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CCT	Culture Theory
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLOBE	Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness
HMT	Hegemonic Masculinity Theory
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMT	Inclusive Masculinity Theory
KISR	Kuwait's Institute for Scientific Research
MENA	Middle East/North Africa
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PACI	Public Authority for Civil Information
SCT	Self-Congruity Theory
SIT	Social Identity Theory
UAE	United Arab Emirates

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND INFORMATION

Term	Definition
Male grooming	Male grooming refers to the grooming practices that men engage in to maintain cleanliness and enhance their physical appearance.
Botox	A medication made from botulinum toxin, which is administered for medical purposes to treat specific muscle-related conditions and used for cosmetic purposes to temporarily immobilize facial muscles in order to reduce wrinkles.
Liposuction	Liposuction is a surgical procedure that removes fat from specific areas of the body, like the stomach, hips, thighs, buttocks, arms, or neck, to contour them.
Fillers	Fillers are cosmetic injections used to enhance volume in the soft tissue of the face. They target areas like the cheek, mouth, lips, around the eye, and the jawline. This treatment helps reduce signs of aging by filling in wrinkles, reducing dark circles, and restoring volume to thinning lips.
Six pack	A collection of well-developed and clearly defined abdominal muscles that are visible on a person's midsection.
Metrosexuality	The characteristics and qualities commonly associated with men
Bedouins	Bedouins are desert nomads from the Middle East who speak Arabic.
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
Instagram	Instagram is an online photo-sharing app and social network that lets users edit and upload photos and short videos using a mobile app.
Snapchat	Snapchat is a mobile app and a social media platform that allows users to send pictures, messages, and videos that can only be viewed for a limited period of time.
Twitter	Twitter is a popular social networking and microblogging online service that enables users to send and receive short text-based messages or posts known as "tweets." It is currently known as "X."
YouTube	YouTube is a widely used platform for sharing videos, available both as a website and a mobile app. Registered users have the ability to upload and share their own videos.

Zoom	Zoom is a video conferencing platform that can be accessed through a computer desktop or mobile app. It enables users to connect online for video conference meetings, webinars, and live chat.
Gender	Refers to general social and cultural beliefs on the part of individuals and societies about people and what differentiates them.
Gender role	Refers to the societal expectations regarding individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that are influenced by social and cultural beliefs about gender.
Gender role attitudes	Refers to an individual's beliefs regarding the suitability of certain behaviours for males and females.
Male cosmetic products	Cosmetic products for men, including deodorant, shaving products (pre-shave, shaving gel/foam, and post-shave), fragrances, skin care products (body lotion/cream, anti-aging cream, face lotion/cream, face cleanser, face moisturizer, scrub, and sun protection), hair styling products, and hair colour.
Masculine identity	The characteristics and qualities commonly associated with men
Metrosexual	Men placing significant value on their physical appearance and investing a substantial amount of resources and effort into enhancing their self-image and lifestyle.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Physical appearance is highly valued in society, with individuals often prioritizing their outward looks and seeking various ways to enhance their appearance, from skincare to fashion choices (Byrne & Milestone, 2023). This interest in personal grooming and overall aesthetics, demonstrated by increasing investment, is not new but has been evident across different cultures and eras (Mansoor & Yasin, 2022).

Modern trends challenge the traditional view of men prioritizing comfort and practicality over aesthetics in their grooming and attire (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). There's a noticeable shift towards increased attention to appearance among men (Boutkaska, 2019), evidenced by a growing market for men's toiletries and fragrances (Khan et al., 2017), a trend persisting for several years (Liu, 2019). This suggests a significant societal change in norms and expectations around men's grooming and self-care. Today's media landscape is rapidly changing, with men increasingly becoming the focus of attention. This societal shift encourages men to enhance their appearance through personalized grooming and unique fashion choices, allowing them to express individuality and elevate their social status (Mansoor & Yasin, 2022; Tso, 2021; Bernard et al., 2018). Bodywork, extending beyond just physical enhancement, includes various personal care practices that contribute to an individual's overall wellbeing and appearance. Practices range from common ones like grooming, essential for personal hygiene and self-maintenance, to more complex ones. These practices, particularly grooming, are significant for maintaining physical health and psychological wellbeing (Scheibling and Lafrance, 2019).

Recent research, such as Hamshaw & Gavin (2022) and Byrne & Milestone (2023), indicates a significant rise in the number of men showing interest in cosmetic medicine. Traditionally, this field was predominantly sought out by women (Mansoor & Yasin, 2022), but men are now increasingly investing in aesthetic procedures, reflecting a societal shift towards the acceptance of men's self-care and aesthetics (Byrne & Milestone, 2023). This considerable and rapidly growing demand from men is a key topic in the modern medical aesthetic landscape (Cohen et al., 2017; Boutkaska, 2019). Men's

motivations for aesthetic procedures are unique, often focusing on specific areas rather than overall aging, aiming to enhance features while maintaining masculinity. They also usually prefer multiple treatments in one session (Cohen et al., 2017).

In today's society, expectations of men now include body representation, commodification, and self-regulation. This considerable shift in societal perceptions emphasizes men's physical image, creating a complex dynamic as men navigate the balance between societal expectations and personal identity, a balance historically associated more with femininity than masculinity (Liu, 2019; Hamshaw & Gavin, 2022). Body image is our mental representation of our physical selves, encompassing beliefs and emotional responses about our appearance. It can be seen as a 'body project', a multifaceted concept combining aspects of personal identity (Hamshaw & Gavin, 2022). Men use their bodies for self-expression, making alterations to reflect their inner identity. It's important to understand the body as part of a specific social and cultural context, shaping and reflecting social hierarchies such as status, class, and power. This perspective helps us see the body as a social construct and a product of cultural norms and expectations (Liu, 2019; Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019). Despite the global rise in male grooming trends, research on grooming habits within the Arab context, particularly in Kuwait, is notably lacking. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the grooming behaviours of Kuwaiti men, their routines, products used, and the social and cultural influences shaping these behaviours.

Nowadays, male consumers as users are having more power in exchanging information and sharing their views about different products and services (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). So, today's marketers need to align their marketing strategy with the new requirement of male consumers globally as well as GCC countries and Kuwait. Companies are using social media in a way that consumers discuss their products and recommend to each other, and they consider word-of-mouth as free marketing and paid social advertising. The steady increase of large modern shopping malls has influenced male buying behaviours that are further affiliated with western-style shopping behaviours, and this has encouraged an essential part of local culture and Kuwait society (Bagnied, 2016).

While Western culture has certainly shaped grooming practices, Kuwaiti men have long held their own traditions in personal care, guided in part by Islamic principles. Cleanliness

and the importance of maintaining appearance are emphasized in Islam. Men are required to be clean, smell good, have trimmed nails, a neat beard, and wear appropriate clothing when they go to Mosque for prayers. These religious practices have also influenced the grooming habits of Muslim men outside of religious contexts (Al-Issa & Dens, 2023). The reasons for the increase in male grooming practices have created an awareness among the female participants to feel more attracted to men who take care of their physical appearance (Arli et al., 2016).

Research indicates that men have become the major growth drivers in the Kuwaiti cosmetic market (Aragon et al., 2020). It is suggested that the way in which an individual presents himself to his society and those that are important to them is essential for social acceptance. This cosmetic belief held by males has become more progressive, focusing on the importance of self-acceptance and acceptance by society. Today, various other sectors such as FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) are trying hard to lure males that previously were only consumers of traditional goods such as male deodorant etc. Additionally, the companies in the Kuwaiti market have started to focus on special male bleaches and skin creams. One of the studies conducted by Sarvana and Kumar (2013) noticed the effects of self-concept theory on consumer purchases related to male cosmetics and found that there is a strong and significant relationship among male purchase patterns and self-concept. It was also found that most men use male cosmetics in order to get social acceptance to improve their self-image (Qureshi and Vakkassi, 2019).

This research is based on the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) which is a multidisciplinary field of study that explores the relationship between individuals, society, and commercial consumption. It is closely connected to the postmodernist movement, which emphasizes the fragmentation and diversity of contemporary society. Within the fields of consumer research and marketing, CCT provides valuable insights into how consumers navigate and make meaning out of the complex marketplace (Skandalis et al., 2016). Arnould & Thompson (2018) add that CCT is a suitable framework for examining consumption communities as it helps us understand how individuals construct and transform their identities, and how they develop social connections through marketplace resources, which can be tangible or intangible (Arnould & Thompson, 2018).

1.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND ON MALE GROOMING BEHAVIOUR

With the evolution of telecommunications, globalization and technological advancement, consumers have become more conscious of beauty and hygiene which has resulted in remarkable growth in the male cosmetics industry (Arora & Gupta, 2016). Over time, male and female roles have altered according to their preferences. In this era, the market potential has led the health and cosmetics club industries to make an entry in the opportunistic industry of male grooming as males today are more concerned and conscious towards societal expectation and image based on profound exposure to the present extremely propagated metro sexual celebrity endorsement emergence. The market of male grooming products is growing at an exponential rate (Arora & Gupta, 2016).

Men are increasingly encouraged to participate in practices that are part of a broader economic process that benefits the beauty industry and is often seen as taking care of oneself. For example, going to the gym to work on one's body or removing body hair. The pursuit of a better body is seen as competitive, aligning with the ideals of dominant masculinity where having power over other men is seen as a measure of success in a neoliberal context. However, skincare is associated with beauty, which creates conflicts with traditional notions of how men enhance their physical appearance (Byrne & Milestone, 2023).

Male grooming and cosmetic products are known as the biggest financial growth driver in the totality of personal care product categories and demand for these products are growing exponentially. Several companies have launched personal and beauty care products to males so that they can capture this niche in the best possible way (Boutkaska, 2019). Hence, the study will help market players to know the demand patterns of males related to their beauty and personal care.

1.3 RESEARCH AIM & OBJECTIVES

This research aims to explore the multifaceted impact of social media, its influential social media celebrities, the role of women, individual (male) self-perception, and the cultural traditions of Kuwait on the evolving and dynamic landscape of contemporary male grooming practices. Kuwait is the hometown of the researcher. The researcher has chosen the Kuwait market because the market has witnessed a high male cosmetic demand for a few years (Mostafa & Arnaout, 2019; kuwaittimes.com, 2022). Factors such as increased

rate of higher education, professional career developments, exposure to Western culture, and increased social media adoption with influence of social media celebrities have contributed to men concerns about their physical appearance (Schick, 2009). Hence, this research aims to achieve the following: Firstly, to understand the impact of social media advertising of cosmetics on Kuwaiti male consumers. Secondly, the study aims to get deeper insights into the buying behaviour of Kuwaiti male consumers. This includes identifying categories, types, stages, and in-depth learning, all of which influence the buying behaviour of Kuwaiti male consumers of cosmetics. Thirdly, the research leads to recommendations for cosmetics brands to effectively target and engage Kuwaiti male consumers through social media advertising. This may include strategies for creating compelling content, targeting specific demographics, and utilizing influencer partnerships.

The research objective are as follows:

- To understand the impact of social media marketing strategies on the consumer behaviour and sales of male grooming products in Kuwait.
- To understand the perception of Kuwaiti society towards male grooming behaviour.
- To explore the attitudes of men in Kuwait towards grooming behaviour and to understand how personal attributes influence their men purchase decisions of male grooming products.
- To identify the factors that influence and encourage men in Kuwait to engage in grooming behaviour.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research is based on the following research questions which are answered in the final chapter.

The first research question analyzes the impact of social media on male grooming practices in relation to social identity theory, which examines how individuals align themselves with significant groups to promote self-esteem. The research question is:

- 1. What is the impact of social media marketing on male grooming products in Kuwait?**

The second research question examines how consumer culture theory provides a unique perspective on how culture, including different subcultures and social groups, influences male grooming behaviour by shaping their cultural values and practices. Following is the second research question:

2. What is the perception of Kuwaiti society towards male grooming behaviour?

The third research question aims to explore the intricate relationship between men's attitudes, grooming behaviour, and purchasing behaviour, gaining valuable insights into the self-congruity theory and how customers develop a strong subjective bond with a product or brand based on perceived self-congruity. The third research question is as follows:

3. What is the attitude of men in Kuwait towards grooming behaviour and how do personal attributes (such as, education, self-esteem, culture, religion, society, and other factors) influence their purchase decision?

This question explores the various factors that influence male grooming in Kuwait, including motivations, contributions, societal expectations, and cultural norms. The following is the fourth research question:

4. What factors influence and promote men in Kuwait to engage in grooming behaviour?

1.5 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

The research has both practical and academic contributions. From the academic perspective there is lack of research conducted previously in Kuwait. The existing literature to date has tended to focus on the purchase intention of females and teenagers but has neglected to examine male buying behaviours. International marketers' focus has remained on consumer behaviour explanations based on the theory of social identity (Sayon et al., 2021). By emphasizing the Kuwait region, the present study addresses the literature gap that will prove to be interesting for both students and researchers. The present study uses a qualitative method to explore and gather in-depth information on male grooming in Kuwait. Hence, the study can also be used in future research in the field of consumer behaviour and consumer culture which can serve as a basis for discovering new patterns of male buying behaviours in Kuwait and other neighbouring countries.

The research has relevance for marketers from a practical perspective. Marketers are interestingly concerned in knowing the male buying behaviour related to cosmetics (Boutkaska, 2019). With the combination of ideas such as product involvement, consumer involvement and product knowledge, the study aims to provide recommendations to the multinational corporations and marketers who want to make long term revenue bonds with Kuwait.

This research plays a crucial role in understanding grooming behaviour in Kuwait. Interestingly, it appears that such behaviours first took hold in Kuwait before expanding to neighbouring countries. A testament to this is the increasing demand for Kuwaiti social media influencers to promote various products abroad. While retailers from other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, influence a broad range of product usage, Kuwaiti men maintain their unique grooming product preferences. However, there's a significant lack of academic studies exploring this widespread phenomenon in Kuwait. That's where this research steps in, offering valuable insights into these unique cultural practices in Kuwait.

1.6 THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis has six chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction chapter gives an overview of the topic, including background, key terms, research problem, contribution, and study objectives. It aims to provide the reader with an understanding of the research's context and significance.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature on male grooming, covering cultural influences, social media, grooming products and services, and preference for luxury brands. These factors directly shape consumer behaviour and choices. The literature also explores theories like consumer culture theory, masculinity theory, social identity theory, and self-congruity theory.

Chapter 3: The Context of Kuwait

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of Kuwait, a member of the GCC located in the Middle East. It shares borders with Saudi Arabia to the south and Iraq to the north. Understanding Kuwait's geopolitical context is crucial as it influences its policies, development, and individual choices. Additional details include Kuwait's modernization, reliance on oil and gas, advancements in architecture and technology, and the significance of gender roles.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter gives an overview of the research methods used in this study. This research is based on the interpretivist paradigm where social phenomena, unlike natural phenomena, are unique because they are created by individuals in specific contexts. They believe that social phenomena are complex and cannot be simplified or explained by formulas. The interpretivists' phenomenological paradigm examines social phenomena by studying their specific contexts and recognizing the interactive relationship between the researcher and the subjects. Interpretive research emphasizes that individuals actively participate in society (Saunders et al., 2019). Researchers in this approach gain knowledge by immersing themselves in the social context of the subjects they study. This allows researchers to understand the phenomena from the subjects' perspective in a subjective and empathetic way (Ragab & Arisha, 2018). The study used interviews with four groups of participants - men, women, cosmetic retailers, and cosmetic surgeons - to explore male grooming. By considering different perspectives, the study aims to understand male grooming practices, including prevalence, trends, and factors contributing to their growth.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Findings

The thematic analysis is based on the Braun and Clarke (2013) steps where the research began with transcribing and familiarizing with the data several times to ensure that the information is transcribed appropriately and understood. This was followed by the coding stages and identifying the themes and finally interpreting the discussing the findings. This chapter analyses the interview data and identifies important themes related to culture, society, women's experiences, marketing strategies, social media, and self-perception dynamics. The examination of these themes provides insights into the complex interplay between these factors and enhances understanding of the subject.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter considers the research's empirical findings related to the literature. The qualitative data was thoroughly analysed using a rigorous thematic analysis method which involves a comprehensive approach of carefully identifying, meticulously analysing, and thoughtfully reporting patterns, also known as themes, that emerge from within the rich and diverse data. This robust methodology allows for a deep exploration and understanding of the data, ensuring that no valuable insights are overlooked (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The discussions focus on grooming, social media impact, celebrity endorsements, cultural influences, self-perception, self-esteem, and male grooming characteristics in Kuwait.

Chapter 7: Conclusion, Limitations, Implications & Future Research

This chapter concludes the research questions from Chapter 1 by providing answers based on the previous findings. It also discusses the theoretical contributions, managerial implications, and recommendations. Lastly, it highlights the contribution to knowledge and identifies limitations and areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the pursuit of attractiveness has been integral to humans. While physical beauty plays a big role, beautification methods and motivations have evolved. Today, numerous products and treatments promise ideal appearances, but the fundamental desire to present our best selves persists. Modern pressures from social media intensify our obsession with beauty standards. Whether using makeup or undergoing procedures, the universal desire to be attractive remains strong.

The use of cosmetics, dating back to ancient times, has grown into a multi-billion-dollar industry, dominated by large corporations but also involving smaller companies (Boutkaska, 2019). A variety of beauty products are available for women, including make-up and home remedies. The trend has expanded to include men, reflecting a cultural shift as beauty is deeply ingrained in culture (Dutton, 2014). There's a noticeable societal shift with men increasingly focusing on personal appearance and beauty routines. This change has led to a surge in beauty products and services for men, ranging from skincare to cosmetic procedures, reflecting evolving societal values (Mansoor & Yasin, 2022). Men's changing attitudes towards grooming are influenced by factors such as shifts in gender roles, gender equality debates, personal and socio-cultural influences, and media influence. A growing trend of metro-sexuality, enhanced self-esteem, confidence, and demographic factors also contribute to their new lifestyle and grooming habits, leading to increased usage of grooming products (Souiden & Diagne, 2009).

Hakim (2016) highlights the growing pressure on men to enhance their "market value" in society. The body has become a crucial part of identity, with an emphasis on traits like youthfulness, which are now important for men's status. This trend is evident in the increasing time and resources spent on physical appearance improvement. However, the trend of men using products associated with femininity presents a challenge and an opportunity for changing perceptions of gender roles and identity. Despite this, companies are creating gender-neutral products that cater to this shift (Byrne and Milestone, 2023). UK research indicates social media influences grooming behaviours even before users reach minimum age requirements (Credos, 2016). Maintaining and styling the body are

essential for achieving a desired look (Ricciardelli, 2011). The marketing industry's focus on men's appearance insecurities raises concerns about the rising use of extreme cosmetic procedures and their financial implications (Hamshaw & Gavin, 2022).

The chapter is organized according to the research objectives. It begins with a discussion on gender and grooming, particularly focusing on male grooming. The literature highlights various influencing factors such as orientalist culture, value co-creation via social media, and varying consumer behaviours including cognitive and trait-oriented approaches, along with self-concept. Subsequently, it discusses various theories such as consumer culture theory, masculinity theory, social identity theory, and self-congruity theory, which serve as a foundation for designing a conceptual framework.

2.2 GENDER AND MALE GROOMING

Today's culture is one in which gender roles, which were formerly clearly defined by tradition and strong regulations, have altered, broadened, and grown more ambiguous. The need to fulfil multiple roles that may force men to not only serve as the providers but additionally to have a hands-on parenting role with a focus on childcare tasks, take on more responsibilities, and contribute to the duties of household chores has forced men to redefine their masculinity in regard to their roles as "heroes" or "breadwinners" (Kimmel, 2012). Traditional beliefs that helped determine what a man was and were expressed in the notion of hegemonic masculinity developed in the 1980s do not appear to have the same cultural currency that they once did (Saz-Rubio, 2018).

Another shift in male roles, although one of a different kind, has been the rise in male consumption since the 1980s. Since both men and women are now considered to be active consumers of commodities, consumption has evolved into a traditional male activity and a means of achieving self-definition and fulfilment (for instance, Gill et al., 2005; McNeill and Firman, 2014). This means that the traditional goods that constitute the male market, such as "cars, alcohol, certain brands of cigarettes, mechanical tools, business products, and life insurance," are hardly the only things that men currently purchase and use (Saz-Rubio, 2018; p. 2).

According to Hall et al. (2012), modern men seemed to be intrigued with their looks and spend time and money on it by means of dietary and lifestyle choices, exercise routines,

and purchases of consumer items like apparel, accessories, and cosmetics. In fact, men are using more toiletry and grooming items than ever before, which has changed how men interact with these items. Men's use of beauty products has increased significantly over the past 20 years as evidence of this. Furthermore, Euromonitor predicts that the global market for male grooming, that had a value at US\$47.2 billion in 2015, will grow to US\$60.7 billion by 2020. Men's toiletries, such as men's bath and shower products, deodorant, and hair and skin care products, contributed 37% of all US sales in 2015 and had a value of \$17.5 billion, with an expected increase to \$23.9 billion by 2020. These astounding numbers have an equivalent within the British market, where revenues of male personal care products increased by 37.3% between 1998 and 2003 and are expected to reach £1 million by 2016.

The evolving roles of men and women within society as a result of economic, social, historical, and political changes, such as a higher percentage of women in profitable employment, a move to an economy that relies on services instead of industrialization, as well as the development of feminist principles that have questioned the traditional roles of men and women, might have been among the reasons for the increase in the purchase of male grooming products within the 1990s along with the demand for fashion trends. It has been suggested that these changes, which may have been influenced by the three waves of feminism as well as the empowerment of women, constitute a challenge to men's identity and have undermined American masculinity (Pascoe, 2003). As a result, the compensating consumption thesis — which has been used to describe men's incursions into traditionally feminine territory — would be the most appropriate justification (Holt and Thompson, 2004). Additionally, during the mid-1980s era, the way an individual looked and the things they used emerged to be valued. As an outcome, personal appearance evolved into a prominent aspect of Western consumer societies as well as an essential tool for the creation of multiple identities. In this setting, males have begun to pay greater attention to how they look, as a reflection of their physical and mental well-being (Ridder, 2005) and self-care for their physical appearance (Salzman et al., 2005; Ross, 2012). Based on Patterson and Elliott (2002), this has caused a rise in a 'new hegemonic masculinity' wherein there is a tendency for masculine behaviours to become more feminine.

The general impressions of the body and related elements like weight and muscle mass have been the subject of extensive research on the body. Conversely, little study has been done on bodywork practices like grooming that are used as appearance management strategies. Grooming, according to Hamshaw & Gavin (2022), is the taking care of, preserving, or changing of features of the body. This can include skincare, body hair, hair styling, body care or beard management, or cosmetic operations. Men's body hair removal procedures have been studied in this field of study so far in the UK (Clarke & Braun, 2019), New Zealand (Terry & Braun, 2016), the US (Barber, 2008), in addition to the development of masculinity within grooming commercials along with magazine content (Frank, 2014; Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019).

Grooming and attractiveness processes are inextricably linked, but what individuals consider attractive varies throughout time. Numerous "looks" for men have been noted to fluctuate over time because of growing larger, having specific proportions, developing more muscle definition, becoming leaner, dressing in particular styles, and styling their hair in particular ways (Cole, 2000; Diebelius, 2016). According to a common discourse, if one cannot achieve an "attractive" appearance, one's position in the romantic market is undermined (Giles & Close, 2008). As a result, bodywork frequently involves status allusions and attempts to appear superior to the average male (Gill et al., 2005; Barber, 2008; Bridges, 2014). Clarke and Braun (2019) show how body hair grooming may be framed as equally desirable and dangerous regarding masculinity, in the context of managing what would be essential to sexual success vs what could be regarded as 'vain'. They do this by using qualitative narrative completion methodologies with UK males. This illustrates how males may need to retain a particular status by finding an equilibrium in their grooming.

As a quick way to change one's appearance, cosmetic surgery is growing in favour. This is demonstrated by the significant and rising number of procedures carried out annually, especially throughout North America and Europe, along with the exponential growth of these procedures over the course of each analysed period. According to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS), throughout a 3-year period ending in 2010, the total number of cosmetic procedures performed within the US has climbed by a percentage of 155% (Vally, 2018). Around the world, more women than men have cosmetic procedures overall; nevertheless, there seems to be a substantial rise in the

proportion of men wanting cosmetic procedures within the Middle East, and early reports indicate that the ratio of men to women could be roughly equal (Vally, 2018).

Additionally, there has been a rise in grooming within the Middle East. Alharethy (2017) conducted a study on people undergoing cosmetic surgery within Saudi Arabia. They claim that during the past few years, Saudi Arabia has seen a sharp rise in the percentage of female patients seeking cosmetic surgery. This indicates how cosmetic surgery is starting to become a new idea in terms of beauty, particularly for women and to a lesser extent for males. Nevertheless, growing knowledge about cosmetic procedures is harming women in manners that go far beyond their monthly income, level of education, or age. The age of women having cosmetic surgery is getting younger because of shifting trends. All aspects of women's lives have been severely harmed by this new level of cosmetic alteration expenditure, including their economic security, physical health, and connections with others. Women are spending more money than ever on cosmetic surgery, and the trend is growing. According to a different survey, those between the ages of 19 and 34 had the highest levels of acceptance for surgical operations (Alharethy, 2017).

As social change progresses, the line separating the gender roles is fading, which has resulted in males increasingly consuming the products which were conventionally reserved for the opposite gender (Otnes and Zayer, 2012). For illustration, the product categories related to exercise, slimming, and diet no longer cater solely for women. There now exist product categories for male weight loss (including Keto), skincare and haircare products. Several factors have stimulated growth in the male grooming industry, including the increased focus of society on looks and appearance, the popularity of men's fashion magazines, and the availability of the wide range of male grooming products (McNeill and Douglas, 2011). Conventionally, the identity of women related to her domestic status, whereas men developed identity based around career status (McNeill and Firman, 2014). However, in the contemporary era where the horizon and sphere of gender roles are broadening, the identity of females as consumers and males as the manufacturers of products are becoming increasingly outdated (Cheong and Kaur, 2015). The role of females used to be limited to housekeeping without any contribution to the household income. Earning was primarily considered as the role of men and females were perceived as the consumption drivers. However, in the contemporary era, the contribution of

females in the economic activities is increasing and they also contribute to the household income (Bertrand et al., 2015).

In early consumer research, females were the primary focus of the researchers, and the language of consumerism was considered as feminine. For example, skincare, haircare and weight loss product categories targeted females. Conversely, in the contemporary era, the feminine perception of consumerism is fading, and the activity of consumption by males is getting more acceptance for the sake of self-definition (McNeill and McKay, 2016).

Historically, the position of dominant gender was held by men, but in the contemporary era, the increasing level of participation of women in male-dominated jobs and activities has challenged this (Pan and Jamnia, 2015).



Figure 2.1: Show Her It Is A Man's World

(Source: Jacobs and Edwards, 2014)

The ad campaign in 1951 by Van Heusen was titled, "show her it is a man's world,

Sis uses 750 dishes a month
Dad uses 370 dishes
Junior uses 720 dishes

Mom uses 770 dishes a month
(and one guess who does them all!)

Get out of the kitchen sooner!

It's so nice outdoors—but you're stuck inside—with 3500 dishes to do! (When you include pots and pans, that's how many an average family uses each month.) But Lux Liquid can help you get done fast!

Unlike powders that have to dissolve, Lux Liquid goes to work *instantly*. It cuts under grease, lifts it up, floats it away. With even a quick rinse, Lux Liquid gets china, silver, glassware—sparkling clean!

And Lux Liquid is Lux-mild on hands. Thrifty, too—one can outlasts several boxes of the leading powder. A teaspoonful does a dishpanful. Get Lux Liquid!

HOW LUX LIQUID CUTS UNDER GREASE AND FLOATS IT AWAY!

Thick, greasy was piled on this dish and let stand for 10 minutes until it hardened.

Just as soon as the dish is placed in the water Lux Liquid starts to do its work.

Lux Liquid's special action cuts under the grease. Mrs. Brown and Bessie it right off.

A quick rinse and the dish, as you can see, is beautifully and brilliantly clean.

LUX LIQUID IS THE NEXT BEST THING TO A DISHWASHING MACHINE

and it's Lux-mild on your hands

1956

Figure 2.2: Guess Who Does All the Dishes

(Source: Jacobs and Edwards, 2014)

Another ad campaign in 1955 by Lux dishwashing liquid was titled, “guess who does all the dishes”. The ads in the “Mad Men¹” era primarily targeted females as the consumers and men as the main financial contributors.

¹ The pre-60s era could be considered a male-dominated world.

Such instance has posed a significant impact on the norms of gender roles as women are now participating in economic activities and contributing to the household incomes, which has increased the pressure on males to participate in the activities which were traditionally labelled as feminine (Miller, 2014). Furthermore, as compared to the previous generation, males of the new generation are more involved in shopping and consumption activities. Similarly, home chores and domestic tasks are now performed by both spouses (Pan and Jamnia, 2015). As a result, it can be inferred that the role of men is evolving and undergoing a transformation in terms of relationships, at the workplace, and in their family life. These changes have had a significant impact on the buying behaviour of men (Assawavichairoj and Taghian, 2017).

Despite changing and evolving gender role norms, there is a research gap in the field of marketing in relation to masculinity and the nature of the relationship which masculinity possesses with the consumption behaviour (Ourahmoune, 2016). Moreover, past studies done in the domain of male consumption have focused on products which enhance and elevate a sense of masculinity. However, products which arguably threaten masculinity such as those associated with the fashion industry have been largely ignored in such studies (Chiu et al., 2019). For illustration, makeup products for men, fairness creams for men and other male hair care products were not advertised. This example indicates the violation of conventional and traditional stereotypes and norms.

The ongoing changes are evidence of the dynamism of the cultural aspects of the contemporary landscape. Consumer culture theory is very applicable to current studies focusing on investigating the impact of cultural and consumers' buying behaviour (Lee and Lee, 2013). Additionally, gender roles and the expectations are also evolving and this is evident in the marketing campaigns of several brands such as Gillette (Topping et al., 2019) (the video link of one of the marketing campaign video can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koPmuEyP3a0>). The concept of toxic masculinity and domination of males over females is facing criticism and females have better access to equality and justice. Thus, when the movement of "Me Too" started, the positive aspects of gender roles and expectations were depicted in a marketing campaign of Gillette which changed its tagline from "the best a man can get" to "the best men can be" (Topping et al., 2019). The ad highlighted that toxic masculinity, bullying and sexual harassment are not acceptable traits and highlighted the positive image of a man who

stands against these behaviours; thus, mentioning the best men can be (Topping et al., 2019). Gender roles and expectations are evolving across the globe which has also posed significant impact on male grooming which has started to attract particular attention from males. Brands are trying to create difference.

2.3 CULTURE AND ORIENTALISM

Culture is included among the significant dimensions to gauge and predict the buying behaviour of consumers (Sreen et al., 2018). Another perspective defines culture as the collective programming of the mind, which induces a point of difference, distinguishing the members belonging to a particular group or category from others (Al-Kandari et al., 2016). Therefore, to investigate and assess the impact which culture poses on consumer behaviour, several studies have incorporated directional models of culture, among which Hofstede's model, GLOBE and Trompenaars seven dimension cultural model are the most popular (Buscemi, 2017). Theories based on cultural dimensions have been extensively incorporated in studies investigating the impact of culture on consumers' buying behaviour. Hofstede's study has utilised the different dimensions of cultures such as long-term orientation, power distance, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism (Spaargaren, 2011). However, Hofstede's model has received criticism and its application in the contemporary dynamics of the business world is largely questioned by different scholars across the globe (Ailon, 2009; Dimitrov, 2014). For instance, all individuals belonging to a particular culture are not a homogeneous group in relation to cultural attributes. Moreover, Hofstede assumes culture as the only driver of behaviour or values (Hsu et al., 2013).

Therefore, other theories based on the cultural dimensions are incorporated in the marketing research. Widely used cultural dimensions in these studies that investigate consumer behaviour are long-term orientation and collectivism (McSweeney, 2016). Krystallis et al. (2012) mention that the underlying reason driving the significance of long-term orientation is connected to impulse buying behaviour. It has not been empirically proven by any theory that people belonging to a culture characterised as long-term oriented do not engage in impulse buying behaviour. Therefore, studies have incorporated the dimension of long-term orientation derived from the seven dimensions cultural model of Trompenaars to investigate the determinants of impulse buying behaviour (Hsu et al., 2013). Resultantly, buying decisions have been classified into high

involvement and low involvement, which explain the discrepancies among the consumers' impulse buying behaviour and their culture's long-term orientation (Venaik and Brewer, 2013).

Subsequently, the fundamental reason stimulating the significance of collectivism is the theory of decision-making unit that highlights the role of collectivism (Trompenaars and Woolliams, 2002). House et al. (2002) and Trompenaars and Woolliams (2002) have highlighted the aspect of collectivism in their models of cultural dimensions. In collectivist cultures, the number of participants involved in the purchase decisions tends to be higher. For instance, the participants that are potentially involved in the buying behaviour can assume the roles of influencers, users, initiators, buyers, gate-keepers, and decision-makers (Rezaie and Hamed, 2012). However, in the case of consumers belonging to an individualistic culture, there can be participants involved in the purchase decision-making. Therefore, the dimension of collectivism reserves an important role in analysing the impact of culture on the buying behaviour of consumers (McSweeney, 2016). As a result of the academic significance which Trompenaars's and GLOBE models possess they can be considered the best choice to be utilised as a reference in studies related to consumer culture (Rezaie and Hamed, 2012).

Studies which analyse consumer behaviour have also incorporated value orientations accompanied by dimensions of culture to investigate the role of culture in defining the consumers' buying behaviour (De Mooij, 2014). The cultural values are classified into five types, including human nature orientation, personal activity orientation, past time orientation, man-nature orientation, and relationship orientation (Levy, 2015). Human nature refers to the belief of humans on evil as good; for instance, a person may believe that mankind was not created as good or evil but neutral or mankind was created as good. The aspects of man-nature orientation address the relationship in which the environment and humans share (Levy, 2015). Time orientation relates to the approach of human with time. For instance, a person with a past orientation can be inferred as a traditional person, a person with future orientation focuses more on future as compared to present and a person with present orientation focuses more on the present as compared to past or future (McSweeney, 2016). However, the applicable type of value orientation in the studies investigating consumer behaviour in the context of the fashion industry is human nature orientation, which defines the type of relationship with nature. Societies can be classified

based on “man-nature orientation” into low man nature societies and high man nature societies (Al-Kandari et al., 2016).

The term “man-nature” is used by the author and does not reflect any gender bias. Low man nature societies are characterised by the belief that they have no control over nature; however, high man nature societies believe that they have significant dominance over nature. Thus, products like air conditioners and eco-friendly goods are the focus of a high man nature orientation (Sreen et al., 2018). Drawing from the implications of prior studies, it can be inferred that the fashion industry’s performance in a market also relies on its man nature orientation. For instance, high man nature orientation societies believe that they can well look through cosmetics. Cosmetic and plastic surgeries are the extreme examples of a high man nature orientation (Hsu et al., 2013).

Kuwait is a country dominated by the Muslim population, which believes that they cannot exercise their control over nature. Kuwait also possesses diversity among the Muslim population as there are two primary Muslim sects: Sunni and Shia. Thus, despite, being unified by the umbrella of the same religion, there are diversities based on the sects (Buscemi, 2017). Kuwait arguably possesses a culture that can be classified as a low man nature orientation culture (Al-Kandari et al., 2016). However, due to the increasing degree of diversity on the global level and the uncertain level of rigidity in the beliefs, any generalisation cannot be made (Buscemi, 2017). The application of consumer culture theory in the studies investigating the impact of culture on the consumers’ buying behaviour tends to be highly suitable from the academic context. In future, during the PhD research stage, a separate detailed section on Kuwait will be added in the specific section about Kuwait.

The term orientalism refers to the depiction or imitation by the Western World of the elements from the East (Macfie, 2014). Such depiction can be found in work by Western artists, designers and writers. The work of Edward Said is constituted among the remarkable works in cultural studies in which he has advanced criticism on the differences laid by the West, differentiating West from the East (Guhin and Wyrzten, 2013). Said (1978) sheds light on the concept of orientalism and defines it along three dimensions. For illustration, firstly, he has defined orientalism as studying and engaging with the Orient. However, informally, orientalism is referred to as studying the differences which

persist among the Western and Eastern world (Hamdi, 2013). In addition to this, Said (1978) refers to the work of Michel Foucault on orientalism to illustrate how orientalism has been utilised by the western world to restructure, dominate and exercise their authority over the eastern world or orient. Said has attempted to draw a contrast between how orientalism was constructed historically by French and British and how it is constructed in the contemporary era (Iskandar and Rustom, 2010).

The initial focus of Said (1978) is towards highlighting the scope of orientalism. Marketing has focused on creating needs among orients by creating a contrast to the oriental since fashions, cosmetics and other major companies have originated from the West and then entered East. For instance, the use of cosmetics, jeans and t-shirts are the concepts of the West which were introduced in the East through marketing. As per Hamdi (2013), the world was divided into two parts by the orientalists and an imaginary geographic line separated the orientalists from the oriental and to differentiate what was theirs and what was ours. Furthermore, orientalists regarded the orients as uncivilised and showcased their supremacy over them (King, 2013). Orientalists used the argument of being superior and civilised for their colonisation which they inferred as their duty to civilise the orients. Additionally, orientalists, or more specifically, Europeans, considered their duty to introduce and represent orients in the western world. Therefore, teams were sent to the east to live with them, who observed the orients silently (Netton, 2013). The incidents or the behaviour projected by orients were recorded without taking the contexts into account and were presented to the orientalists which resulted in the generalisation. Anything that was observed was associated with the oriental culture without taking the situational contexts into account (Cronin, 2015). The example of “Fair & Lovely” fairness creams for both males and females is an example of the implementation of orientalism as people in West usually have white skin complexion whereas, in the East usually people have fair skin complexion. Thus, these differences among East and West, on which orientalism is based are utilised to influence consumer behaviour using marketing as the tool.

The last chapter is themed on orientalism in the contemporary era and starts with how colonisation has shaped the geography of the world. The changing political scenarios of the world and how orientalism is changing in the twentieth century have been highlighted by the author (King, 2013). The primary difference between the orientalists in the earlier

times and the contemporary era has been drawn. The orientalists in the early times were silent observers but what distinguishes the contemporary orientalists is that they spend their everyday lives with the orientals (Cronin, 2015). Additionally, early orientalists had a lower level of interaction with the orientals which resulted in wrong generalisations as to the contexts of behaving in a particular scenario. However, contemporary orientalists have a greater degree of interaction with the orientals and live them as if they also belong to orient (Dabashi, 2017). Fashion and cosmetic industries have originated from the West, as orientals created the needs of looking good, and associated good looks with an Eastern standard; for instance, in relation to skin complexion, clothes and so on. As a result, Kuwait has also been influenced by the concept of orientalism as the fashion and male grooming industry of Kuwait are dominated by the products invented by West.

2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA AND VALUE CO-CREATION

One of the emerging factors impacting the buying behaviour of consumers is social media (Aladwani and Almarzouq, 2016). The outset and popularity of social media platforms have created a new and global marketplace (Goh et al., 2013). There are certain studies themed on investigating the relationship between social media and consumers' buying behaviour; however, there are fewer studies in the context of Kuwait (Aladwani and Almarzouq, 2016). There is an absence of research studies that have investigated the impact of culture in determining the relationship between social media usage and consumers' buying behaviour. Kuwait is included among the countries with the highest rate of social media usage for leisure, communication and socialisation, but there is the absence of studies which explore compulsive social media usage and its consequences (Aladwani and Almarzouq, 2016). Compulsive social media usage refers to excessive usage of social media and its addiction. The factors influencing and driving compulsive usage of social media tend to be of enormous significance for the marketers as they can allow them to better understand the implications of social media on the buying behaviour of consumers on social media platforms (Ioană and Stoica, 2014).

Access to the underlying reasons for the usage of social media platforms is of immense importance for marketers to design their marketing strategies. Prior studies have not found any significant differences among the addiction and compulsive social media usage rates by both genders (Vinerean et al., 2013). One of the determinants of compulsive social media is self-esteem. Past studies have found a significant relationship between

self-esteem and compulsive social media usage. Therefore, people with low self-esteem tend to be more addicted to social media. It can be inferred that people extensively make use of social media to portray and project better and ideal versions of themselves, which involves showing the usage of different brands (Forbes, 2013). People attempt to project their ideal self on the social media platforms which they are not in reality. Subsequently, people further tend to compensate for their sense of inferiority by portraying what they are not able to attain in reality, gratifying their self-esteem (Forbes, 2013). There is a direct application of the consumer culture theory's aspect of socio-historic patterning of consumption in assessing the relationship among self-esteem, social media usage, and consumer behaviour showcased on social media platforms (Bronner and de Hoog, 2014).

Moreover, another factor largely reported by past studies in determining the compulsive social media usage is interaction anxiousness (Zhang and Benyoucef, 2016). Interaction anxiousness can be referred to as the anxiety which people feel during social interactions (McCord et al., 2014). Studies have reported a positive and significant relationship among interaction anxiousness and compulsive social media usage. Thus, people who encounter a high level of anxiety when using social media tend to be more addicted to social media usage (Rapp et al., 2013). Primarily, studies have reported such type of people as introverts as they avoid social interactions. As a result, to fulfil their social needs, as mentioned in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, these individuals increase the usage of social media platforms (Nemati, 2013). Interaction anxiousness poses a significant impact on consumers' buying behaviour as such people prefer interacting on social media platforms; they attempt to portray their social media or cyber identity, which is in harmony with their ideal self (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016). Thus, it can be inferred that social media has become a pivotal component of culture, which is not incorporated in the theories highlighting the impact of culture on consumers' buying behaviour (Alves et al., 2016).

One of the reasons for such an instance is the absence of compulsive social media usage due to a lower level of popularity and access to the internet at that time. However, the advancement of technology and common access to the internet has accentuated the need for the integration of social media as a component of culture's concept (Solomon and Panda, 2011). The definition of culture by the consumer culture theory allows the incorporation of social media usage, which makes it a good option to be used as a reference for studies investigating the impact of culture on the consumers' buying

behaviour (Bronner and de Hoog, 2014). To control the negative outcomes of social media usage such as negative behaviour demonstrated online, the government of Kuwait is planning to implement a software which will monitor social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. This measure will not only allow the government to monitor the activities on social media platforms but it will also enable it to control and limit such behaviour which can lead to undesirable outcomes such as online bullying and blasphemy.

One of the emerging concepts which has attracted the interest of researchers and the attention of businesses is relationship marketing (Edvardsson et al., 2011). The pace of changes in the business world has stimulated significantly, contributing to its dynamism. The tastes, preferences, and buying behaviour of consumers are evolving, which has contributed to the need for businesses to be highly responsive and flexible (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). One of the pivotal challenges which businesses encounter is gauging and predicting consumers' needs, wants, and buying behaviour. As a result, the incorporation of relationship marketing by the businesses in their operations and activities is stimulating (Cova et al., 2011). At its core, relationship marketing stands on the pillars of creating, sustaining, and enhancing mutual relationships that yield value for the consumers (Ketonen-Oksi et al., 2016). In order to sustain their long-term growth and performance, businesses need to interact, engage, and communicate with their consumers. Continuous interaction and communication with consumers allows businesses to mutually create value and deliver it to their consumers, enabling them to secure long-term relationships and profits (Saarijärvi et al., 2013; Galvagno and Dalli, 2014). Thus, the collaborative and mutual relationships are established and sustained with the consumers through continuous communication and interaction to add higher and superior value to their market offerings. Past studies have termed relationship marketing as a linear process that comprises three fundamental stages encompassing communication, interaction, and value creation (Frow et al., 2015).

The emergence of social media has provided businesses with numerous opportunities to generate ideas for innovation to improve their performance, sustainability, success, and credibility (Cossío-Silva et al., 2016). Subsequently, prior studies have reported that social media has allowed businesses not only to identify new opportunities as well as to develop new strategic management practices and policies which maximise the value

provided to the consumers (Alves et al., 2016). Incorporating social media in relationship marketing efforts has improved and enhanced the customer relationship management and networking competencies of businesses. Due to such advantages, social media has allowed businesses to increase collaboration with their consumers and attain consumer loyalty (De Beer, 2014). Businesses can empower their consumers through social media to provide their feedback on the quality of services or products offered by them. Consumers are also enabled to provide suggestions and recommendations to identify areas for improvements (Smaliukiene et al., 2015). One of the significant reasons for a growing level of business failure is not being able to innovate and improve in the way which their consumers expect. Thus, social media has mitigated the challenges experienced by businesses when attempting to collaborate with their customers, collect the latest information about the changes in the consumers' needs and trends and co-create value for market offerings of the businesses (Frias Jamilena et al., 2017).

Furthermore, social media has allowed businesses to transform their consumers into their business partners. When businesses communicate and interact with their consumers, it yields a sense of ownership among the consumers, which allows the businesses to attain the loyalty of their consumers (de Oliveira and Cortimiglia, 2017). Additionally, the focus of businesses is shifting from providing products and services to providing experiences to their consumers. However, delivering value experiences relies on gauging what consumers expect from businesses (Frow et al., 2015). Therefore, through social media, businesses engage their consumers to express their expectations and allow them to co-create the value (Talonon et al., 2016). Thus, it can be inferred that social media has provided businesses with the platform to communicate, interact, and engage with their consumers, which eases value co-creation (Killa, 2014). Businesses are able to make their profiles on different social media platforms and interact with the existing and potential customers directly. The content businesses share on their social media platforms increases the engagement and interaction of their target audience on their social media profiles. Additionally, the target audience shares their ideas and feedback which assists the businesses to adopt the practices of value co-creation by incorporating those ideas into their content.

2.5 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumers show varied behaviour in making buying decisions (Badgaiyan and Verma, 2014). Past studies have adapted the cognitive approach, and some studies have utilised a trait-oriented approach to defining the buying behaviour of the consumers (Foxall, 2014). Thus, the academic literature is stretching in the sphere as well as in-depth (Joy and Li, 2012). Additionally, new models and theoretical frameworks have also been developed to investigate consumers' buying behaviour. However, there is a gap in the literature in relation to the impact of intrinsic factors on the buying behaviour of consumers (Rani, 2014). Culture is constituted among the critical factors which determine the persona of consumers; thus, it poses an enormous impact on the buying behaviour of consumers. Culture influences the thinking patterns of people through which they allocate meanings to life's various aspects, which eventually drives their behaviour (Ünsalan, 2016). Culture has a multi-fold impact on consumers' buying behaviour as it shapes the needs and wants of individuals, and further impacts on their preferences, the way they behave and subsequently on their attitudes (Sofi and Najar, 2018).

Furthermore, culture not only influences the consumers' buying behaviour at an individual level but also a collective level (Barakat, 2019). Past studies have utilised the collectivist versus individualistic dimension mentioned in the models of GLOBE and Trompenaars. The dimension of collectivist orientation related to consumers' buying behaviour in the context of consumption been considered as the mean to satisfy social needs (Husnain et al., 2019). In collectivist societies, buying decisions are not limited to the individual level as purchasing and buying is also done for the family members. Therefore, buying behaviour and its outcome in the form of satisfaction or dissatisfaction varies significantly across individualist and collectivist societies (Nayeem, 2012).

In contrast to this, in individualist societies, consumers' buying behaviour tends to differ from that of collectivist societies as individuals in individualist societies tend to largely ignore the consequences of their buying behaviour on those in their in-groups (Ruediger Kaufmann et al., 2012). Therefore, the buying behaviour of people in individualist societies is largely driven by the personal interests, needs, preferences and perception of independence to take decisions to attain their personal goals (Lin et al., 2013). Thus, one of the differences in the buying behaviour of people belonging to the individualist and collectivist societies is in the form of impulsive buying (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011).

People with an individualist orientation tend to be more self-centred and engage more in impulsive buying as compared to those belonging to collectivist societies as the latter attach immense significance to the consequences of their buying behaviour on others (de Mooij, 2017).

Subsequently, individuals with a collectivist orientation encounter a greater degree of interdependency which impacts their consumption patterns and choices. Such a notion induces a substantial point of difference in consumers' buying behaviour between collectivists and individualists (Badgaiyan and Verma, 2014). However, there are some practical examples which contradict this generalisation; for instance, China is a collectivist society but is also characterised by a high level of impulsive buying. This is particularly the case with the young adults in China, particularly born during the years of the single child policy, 1979-2011 as there is impulsive buying which comes to the fore, especially due to social media and digital marketing, indeed the consumption grows exponentially. Similarly, the UK is considered as an individualist society but impulsive buying behaviour tends to be low. For the UK, it is very difficult to generalise, not the entire UK is opposed to impulsive buying, but many in the UK observe their religious upbringing which is called Protestant Ethics (Weber, 1905) which forbids impulsive buying in every sense, thus the issue really is contested.

2.5.1 Cognitive Approach

The cognitive approach of consumer behaviour attempts to illustrate how consumers assign and derive meanings in their daily lives (Lawson, 2010). Among the critical determinants of human behaviour, cognition or knowledge and understanding possess enormous significance. Meanings are referred to as the product of reasoning in cognitive research (East et al., 2016). Therefore, the phenomenon of how consumers pay attention to and deal with information; and assign meanings during the procedure of information processing has received particular attention from researchers (Foxall, 2010). The field of consumer behaviour has derived the concepts from multiple disciplines and fields of study such as economics, and psychology; therefore, there are different cognitive research approaches in understanding consumer behaviour. For illustration, different disciplines from social sciences define the term *meaning* from different perspectives (Nayeem, 2012).

Psychology explains meaning as the subjective understanding or perception of a particular concept. However, the impact of culture on consumer behaviour cannot be denied. Past studies have utilised the variable of culture to determine consumer behaviour to a certain extent. The models, namely GLOBE, Trompenaars's seven-dimension cultural model, are primarily based on determining the impact of culture on consumer behaviour (McSweeney, 2016). Thus, anthropology relates the concept of cognition with culture and the way a group of people develop and negotiate rationalities and rituals. The discipline of cognitive anthropology has contributed to the domain of consumer behaviour by attempting to explain how consumers gain knowledge in their everyday lives (Cohen et al., 2014). Hence, cognitive anthropology infers products as systems of sensibility by which consumers interpret the everyday world as sensible.

Moreover, cognitive psychology relates to studying and understanding the mental processes and structures which impact the relationship between stimulus and response (Bhamra et al., 2011). Additionally, there are several factors, such as learning, thinking, memory, motivation, and emotion, outlined by contemporary cognitive psychology to grasp an understanding of intrapersonal processes. Such factors are not sufficient to thoroughly understand the intrapersonal process of responding to stimuli; however, they highlight the multiplicity and complexity embedded in using a cognitive approach to study and understand consumer behaviour (Dolan et al., 2012). Early models, such as the Stimulus-organism-response model, suggest a linear relationship between stimulus and response. Furthermore, there is an assumption in these models that stimuli get exposed to unprepared and inactive organisms (Josiassen et al., 2011). Contemporary studies criticise the early models based on their preliminary assumptions. Modern theorists have adopted the view that humans are not inactive and the impact of past experiences and past learnings of humans not only impacts on information processing but also on what information is received and sought (Joy and Li, 2012).

Therefore, it can be devised that information processing is stimulus-driven as well as concept-driven. Another reason for the criticism of the cognitive approach is driven by the fact it incorporates variables that are unobservable and abstract, which cannot be quantified; thus, empirical evaluation and investigation are not possible (Amos et al., 2014). Moreover, other assumptions of the cognitive approach outlining the consumers as logical, rational, and active have also received criticism from contemporary studies

(Xiao and Nicholson, 2013). Xiao and Nicholson (2013) argue that consumers do not always learn and behave actively as behaviour resulted from classical conditioning is the result of the pairing of two stimuli which does not mean that the consumer is actively learning and behaving to it such as Lays and Pepsi have been conditioned through advertising as the best combination for snacks.

2.5.2 Trait-oriented Approach

Advocates of a trait-oriented approach advance that the personality of any individuals is the accumulation of the traits that (s)he possesses and the identification of such traits is of immense significance (Badgaiyan and Verma, 2014). Different individuals possess different traits, which are also referred to as psychological characteristics, and each trait belongs to a particular personality type. Additionally, trait theorists utilise different approaches such as personality tests, inventories, and scales to differentiate among numerous personality traits (Sun and Wu, 2011). Thus, it can be inferred that unlike the Freudian and neo-Freudian theorists, the trait theorists utilise some measure of quantitative measures. The first stage is to identify different personality traits, and once the traits are identified, the trait theorists group the individuals based on the traits' patterns (Egan and Taylor, 2010). Trait theories can be classified into two broad categories, including simple trait theories and general trait theories. Simple trait theories encompass limited personality traits, and individuals are classified based on the limited personality traits; on the other hand, general trait theories constitute a wide range of traits (Mowen, 2004).

Moreover, the relevance for a trait-oriented approach while studying consumer behaviour exceeds that of Freudian and neo-Freudian approaches (Seimiene, 2012). A neo-Freudian approach mentions that behaviour and personality are the results of the process of socialisation and social interaction; however, the Freudian approach mentions behaviour a result of unconscious drives and needs. The underlying reason for this is driven by the fact that the trait-oriented approach is quantitative and more objective and realistic. Furthermore, single personality tests, inventories, and scales are tested to assess their reliability and validity and then incorporated in the researches themed on studying consumer behaviour (Sun and Wu, 2011). Utilising the trait-oriented approach in consumer behaviour allows the researchers to attain several benefits. For example, the personality traits of the consumers can be assessed, and based on patterns identified, they

can be categorised into different personality types (Mowen, 2004). Consumer personality traits have an enormous impact on their consumption patterns and decision making. Similar to the simple and general trait theories, researchers have identified the personality traits of consumers, which can be classified into consumption-specific and general traits. Based on the classification put forward, these traits are utilised to devise effective marketing strategies that are specific to the target population, market segment, and accurate product positioning and marketing mix can be formulated (Seimiene, 2012).

In addition to this, some of the prominent personality traits of consumers include innovativeness, dogmatism, social character, variety novelty-seeking, and optimum stimulation levels (Gunter and Furnham, 2014). Different consumer personality traits measure different aspects; for illustration, consumer innovativeness indicates how responsive and open a consumer is towards any new product and brand or any change induced in the existing marketing mix (Gordon-Wilson and Modi, 2015). Dogmatism is the opposite of innovativeness and indicates the rigidity of consumers towards a new product or a change in the marketing mix (Javornik, 2016). Social character indicates the degree to which consumers depend on themselves or others while triggering a purchase decision. The variety novelty-seeking trait indicates the degree to which the consumers seek variety while making purchase decisions (Rani, 2014). Therefore, it is of immense significance for marketers to identify the traits of their target audience and devise marketing strategies which best complement the personality traits of their target audience (Mehmetoglu, 2012).

2.5.3 Self-concept

There is disagreement in the consumer behaviour literature in conceptualising the definition of self-concept (Rani, 2014). Some researchers have inferred self-concept as a single variable, and have explained it as the perception of one's self. Therefore, in such a context, self-concept is also referred to as real self, actual self, extant self, and basic self (Hosany and Martin, 2012). However, some researchers have associated additional concepts with self-concept. For example, self-image value, and self-image belief. Self-image value can be defined as the level of value which is attached to the real self. Additionally, self-image belief refers to the strength or the degree of belief related to the perception of the real self (Hamilton and Hassan, 2010).

In addition to this, commonly incorporated concepts in consumer behaviour related to self-concept are the ideal self and actual self. The actual self refers to the current state at which the consumer is; the ideal self refers to what the consumer wants to be (Ahn et al., 2013). Individuals can showcase their behaviour in two ways, depending on the situation and the degree of priority assigned. For example, an individual may prioritise consistently their actual self while making a purchase decision such as choosing makeup or clothes (Mittal, 2015). On the other hand, an individual may prioritise the ideal self while triggering purchase decisions to mitigate the discrepancies among the state in which he is and what he wants to be to boost the self-esteem levels (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012). However, individuals encounter conflict when there is a significant disparity between the actual self and ideal self; thus, the behaviour of individuals relies on the context and situation. Hence, it can be inferred that self-concept is not based on a single variable; instead, it involves multiple versions of the self (Dootson et al., 2016).

Moreover, in the context of consumer behaviour, the concepts actual self and ideal-self come into play while making purchase decisions and selecting products and brands (Mittal, 2015). For illustration, when the consumer selects products or brands which match his or her personality, their actual self plays a role. However, when the consumer selects products and brands whose personality matches with the consumer's aspirational group, the ideal-self starts playing a role (Hamilton and Hassan, 2010). Therefore, it can be inferred that self-concept is closely associated with personality, and individuals' choices of products and services tend to vary according to their personalities. Furthermore, the purchase decisions of consumers tend to vary because of the multiple selves (Hosany and Martin, 2012). The same consumer may prefer different products or brands with different people and at different times because of the differences in the situations and circumstances (Rani, 2014). Different scenarios, peer pressure, similar and different social classes and different people constitute the reasons for such differences. Whether the ideal self or the actual self would come into play depends on situational factors such as the usage of the product, social visibility of the product, and the relevance and significance of the product or brand for the self-image of the individual (Mittal, 2015). As a result, self-concept has different implications for marketers. For example, while devising the marketing strategy of their products, organisations need to decide whether they should target the actual self or the ideal self of their target audience and formulate their strategies accordingly (Ahn et al., 2013).

2.6 THE CONCEPT OF LUXURY: PRODUCTS, BRANDS AND CONSUMPTION

Luxury products are typically characterized by their high price compared to their functional utility. However, what sets luxury products apart is their ability to offer an abundance of intangible and situational benefits that enhance the overall experience of owning and using them (Mostafa & Arnaout, 2019). These intangible benefits could include a sense of exclusivity, prestige, and the ability to showcase one's social status. Additionally, luxury products are often associated with exceptional craftsmanship, attention to detail, and the use of high-quality materials. All of these factors contribute to the allure and desirability of luxury products, making them highly sought after by consumers who value not only the functional aspects of a product but also the emotional and symbolic value it carries. Luxury products create a sense of exclusivity. These products compete in the market through their brand identity, brand awareness, and perceived quality (Mostafa & Arnaout, 2019).

In the context of luxury products, it has been observed that individuals who place a high importance on social status and the perception of prestige tend to be more inclined to pay premium prices for such products, compared to those individuals who do not place as much emphasis on their social standing (Balabanis & Stathopoulou, 2021). This suggests that the desire for social recognition and the status symbolism associated with luxury products play a significant role in shaping consumer behaviour and willingness to pay higher prices for these products.

According to research conducted by Han et al. (2010), it is suggested that the impact of the desire for social status should not be studied independently, but rather in combination with income. The study proposes that both income and the desire for status have an influence on preferences for luxury prices. Furthermore, the researchers argue that examining the relationship between social status and income is crucial in understanding consumer behaviour. By considering both factors together, a more comprehensive understanding of consumer preferences for luxury prices can be obtained (Han et al., 2010).

In addition, it is worth noting that people often make use of luxury brands as a way to showcase their financial capability and achieve a highly esteemed position in society,

which is a quality that is intangible yet highly desirable. These individuals seem to have a stronger inclination to interact with people who hold a high social status and treat them more favourably, as evidenced by the study conducted by Nelissen and Meijers (2011). Moreover, those who have a strong desire to attain a higher social status tend to prefer luxury products over ordinary ones due to their ability to convey a sense of prestige, as highlighted by the research conducted by Balabanis and Stathopoulou (2021).

Income and wealth play crucial roles in the consumption of luxury goods since they determine consumers' purchasing power for such products. It is worth noting that the democratization of luxury has led to increased accessibility of both premium and mass-market luxury items for a broader range of income groups (Srinivasan et al., 2014). A study by Hooper et al. (2018) highlights that even individuals with lower incomes allocate a significant portion, approximately 40%, of their earnings towards luxury items while allocating the remaining 60% to essential needs. Conversely, wealthier consumers have more substantial financial resources at their disposal, enabling them to allocate a larger portion of their income towards luxury purchases.

At the same time, Sun et al. (2021) mention that people also buy luxury products because they are long-lasting. In addition to their durability, these products are often crafted with high-quality materials and meticulous attention to detail. This attention to detail not only enhances the overall aesthetic appeal of the products but also contributes to their superior functionality. By investing in luxury products, consumers can enjoy the benefits of owning items that are not only durable but also offer practical advantages in terms of performance and usability. Moreover, the longevity of luxury products helps reduce the environmental impact by minimizing waste and promoting sustainable consumption practices. For companies, manufacturing and marketing long-lasting luxury products can lead to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as a positive brand reputation. Therefore, the durability of luxury products serves as a significant factor in the decision-making process of consumers and plays a crucial role in the success of luxury brands in the market.

Given that consumers not only desire to be environmentally conscious but also mindful of their personal finances, they can achieve both objectives by selectively purchasing fewer products. The authors of this study also suggest that by investing in luxury items

that have a longer lifespan, consumers can indirectly support sustainable consumption by reducing the frequency of their purchases. By using selectively purchased products for a longer duration, as well as considering reselling or donating them, consumers can effectively manage their financial budget while actively contributing to the sustainability movement (Sun et al., 2021).

2.6.1 Brands

Luxury is the ultimate value achievement for a brand (Kapferer, 2001). This means that luxury brands are not just focused on providing high-quality products or services, but they also aim to create a sense of exclusivity and prestige for their customers. By offering unique and limited-edition items, luxury brands are able to differentiate themselves from other brands in the market.

Since there is no standard definition for it, Sjöstrom et al. (2016) describes three ways in which it can be defined: (1) by carefully identifying and exploring the various attributes and concepts (such as authenticity, exclusivity, and craftsmanship) that people commonly associate with luxury, valuable insights can be gained into the perception and expectations surrounding these high-end products and experiences; (2) by thoroughly examining and analysing the impact of luxury in relation to three distinct dimensions of luxury: the functional aspect, the experiential aspect, and the symbolic aspect. This comprehensive approach allows us to gain a deeper understanding of how luxury operates and influences various aspects of our lives and; (3) by questioning whether the way buyers typically make purchases for luxury goods exhibits similarities to their purchasing behaviour for non-luxury items. This exploration aims to delve into the underlying factors that influence consumer decision-making in the realm of both luxury and non-luxury products, thus shedding light on the potential nuances and distinctions that may exist in the buying process for these different types of goods (Sjöstrom et al., 2016).

In addition to assessing the social status of others, the utilization of luxury brands can serve as a means to gauge one's own social standing and cultural capital within a given society (Jhamb et al., 2020). Moreover, it is worth noting that luxury brands often carry connotations of exclusivity, refinement, and elegance, which further contribute to their appeal and desirability in the eyes of consumers.

2.6.2 Consumption

Luxury consumption is often associated with conspicuous consumption, where the brand of the product/service being consumed or used is easily noticeable to most consumers. This can be observed through various indicators such as the price, quality, and exclusivity of the luxury item. Moreover, conspicuous consumption is often driven by the desire for social status and the need to display one's wealth and success. It serves as a way for individuals to signal their high social standing and differentiate themselves from others. On one hand, it can contribute to economic growth and stimulate demand for luxury goods and services. On the other hand, it can also lead to wasteful spending, environmental concerns, and reinforce social inequalities. Therefore, it is important to understand the motivations and consequences of conspicuous consumption in order to assess its impact on individuals and society as a whole (Eckhardt et al., 2014).

Luxury consumption can also be linked to a consumer's materialistic tendencies, meaning their desire to purchase luxury products because these items symbolize their higher social status within society. In today's world, many consumers have a preference for specific luxury brands or even feel a strong attachment towards certain brands of luxury products. Shimul et al. (2019) propose a way to understand consumers' attachment to luxury brands. They created and tested a concise seven-item scale to measure this attachment. This scale can be used to assess the level of attachment consumers have towards luxury brands. Additionally, having a preference for luxury brands can indicate a consumer's materialistic tendencies.

2.6.3 Kuwait

The market for high-end products has experienced consistent growth over the past few decades. Since the 1990s, the market has seen a steady increase and reached a staggering value of approximately \$1 trillion in 2010. This growth is particularly evident in the luxury fashion sector, which is estimated to be worth around \$240 billion. In addition to the global market, it is important to highlight the significance of the luxury products market in Kuwait. As part of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Kuwait's luxury sector alone was valued between \$6 billion and \$10 billion in 2014. This remarkable figure is further supported by a compound annual growth rate of 11% since 2009 (Mostafa & Arnaout, 2019). These statistics highlight the thriving nature and immense potential of the luxury market in Kuwait.

According to Kuwait's Central Statistical Bureau, there was a significant rise in the monthly consumer price index in March 2021, with an annual increase of approximately 4.36 percent. Despite the higher prices of luxury items in the local market and concerns about a global economic crisis, consumer spending in Kuwait on non-essential products continues to grow (kuwaittimes.com, 2022).

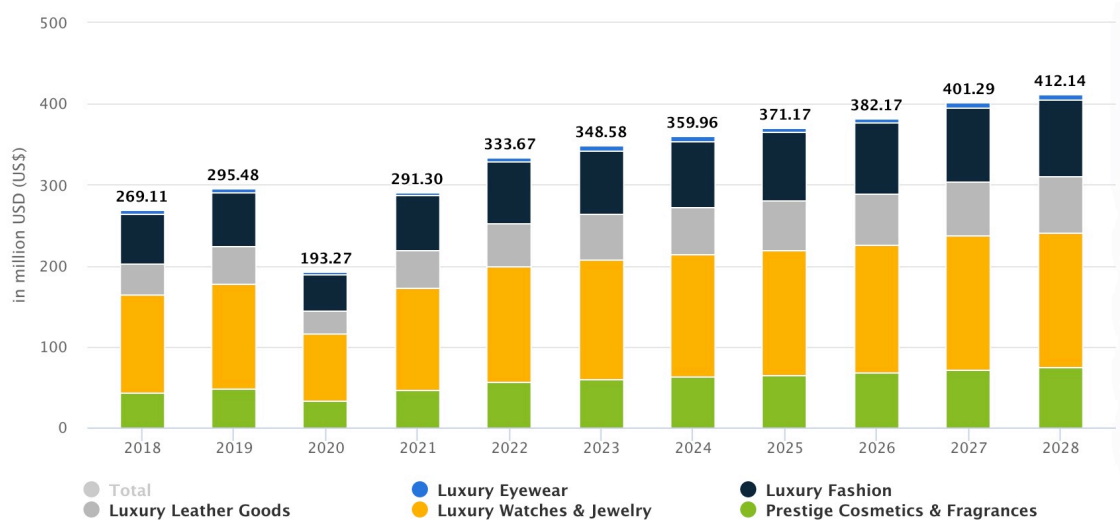


Figure 2.3: Luxury Goods Revenue – Kuwait (statista.com, 2023).

Based on Figure 2.3, it can be observed that the purchase of luxury goods in Kuwait in 2020 was relatively low due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdowns and restrictions imposed on businesses greatly affected the demand for luxury items. However, since 2021, there has been a gradual increase in the purchase of luxury goods, and this upward trend is expected to continue until 2028. Notably, the 'prestige cosmetics & fragrance' segment, which is the main focus of this research, is also anticipated to maintain consistent growth year-on-year (statista.com, 2023). This segment includes a wide range of luxury products available in Kuwait, such as yachts, cars, clothing, watches, accessories, leather goods, perfumes, and cosmetics. The diverse availability of these luxury items further contributes to the overall growth and appeal of the luxury market in Kuwait.

Considering the substantial growth and consistent upward trend observed in the market for high-end products in Kuwait, it is safe to say that this industry is poised for continuous expansion and prosperity in the coming years.

2.7 THEORIES

This section discusses the different theories that are related to male grooming.

2.7.1 Consumer Culture Theory

Consumer culture theory is a set of theoretical perspectives focused on the relationship between the marketplace, cultural meanings, and consumer behaviour (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014). Consumer culture theory does not advance any relationship between consumer actions. Therefore, consumer culture theory is not a unified theory, but it can be referred to as an umbrella which incorporates different theoretical perspectives such as social and cultural (Belk et al., 2013). Moreover, consumer culture theory aims to simplify the convolutions and complexities in understanding and to interpret consumer culture. However, consumer culture theory views the concept of culture from a different perspective as compared to the other theories driven by the primary distinction of the definition of culture (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011). Consumer culture theory does not address culture based on commonalities such as values, customs, and traditions, but it adapts a different perspective and explores the different meanings of overlapping cultural groups in the light of market capitalism and globalisation (Bajde, 2013). For instance, considering the emergence of post-modern society, consumer culture theory mentions that the meanings derived from culture are as fragmented as they are numerous (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014). Thus, consumer culture theory considers culture as the accumulation of different groups of people with different shared meanings rather than being the static amalgamation of a homogenous construct such as the Kuwaiti culture (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011).

Additionally, from the approach of consumer culture theory, consumer culture is not static; instead, it is a dynamic network encompassing the social, material, symbolic, and economic connections, and relationships (Cova et al., 2013). Consumer culture theory infers that consumer culture is not a character's attribute; it is what consumers do. The dynamics of the business world are evolving swiftly, and the consumers' tastes and preferences, behaviour, and needs are transforming at a rapid pace. As a result, consumer culture theory labels consumer culture as evolving and dynamic rather than static and limited to social groupings based on conventional factors (Arnould and Thompson, 2018). In addition to this, in the context of the globally dominant economic system, namely

market capitalism, being a consumer is an intrinsic identity (Gopaldas and Fischer, 2012). Therefore, consumer culture can also be defined as where the social phenomenon contributes as the mediating factor, impacting the life experiences of the consumers; for instance, the social phenomenon mediates the relationship between the consumers' ways of spending life and the materialistic resources to spend it such as brands (Belk, 2017).

Consumer culture theory emerged as a contradiction to a utilitarian and rational view of consumerism, a view popular in business schools until the 1980s (Arnould and Thompson, 2018). The utilitarian approach to consumerism infers that consumers utilise the rational approach while triggering purchase decisions, and their core focus is towards the functional advantages of consuming a good or service (Arnould and Thompson, 2015). As a result, research studies incorporating the utilitarian perspective are primarily focused on investigating the impact of factors including price, presentation of information in marketing and product assortments on the consumers' buying behaviour (Sherry and Fischer, 2017). Conversely, early consumer culture theory researchers were fascinated by the mediating factors impacting the relationship among consumers and their lived experiences. Therefore, factors such as post-consumption experiences, desires of consumers, and the meanings which consumers associate with brands in their lifestyle were the primary focus of early consumer culture theory researchers (Thyroff et al., 2015). For instance, Arnould et al., (2014) conducted a study on American Thanksgiving Day celebrations. The study highlighted the consumption in the celebrations by ritual people is driven by the social life of America. The socially embedded beliefs about a women's role, family pooling, the abundance of basic consumption opportunities' abundance, and family pooling are celebrated on the occasion (Arnould and Thompson, 2015). In addition to this, earlier marketing and consumer research studies were based on psychology and economics; however, the emerging consumer culture theory concepts encompass the disciplines of social psychology, semiotics, anthropology, history, design, sociology, and literary criticism which has broadened the horizon of consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson, 2018).

The fundamental difference among conventional consumer behaviour researches and cultural consumption research, which has taken the form of consumer culture theory, is that the later accentuates the cultural phenomena driving consumption (Cova et al., 2013). However, consumer culture theory has a different standpoint in defining "culture". The

definitions of culture from the discipline of business studies differ to a large extent with the definition of culture advanced by consumer culture theory (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014). For illustration, business studies define culture as a homogenous structure, but consumer culture theory does not focus on behaviour as an outcome of a causal relationship (Belk, 2017). Consumer culture theory constitutes the consumers' sphere of thoughts, feelings, behaviour patterns, possible actions, and sense-making elucidations. Additionally, consumer culture theory pays heed to the patterning of cultural identities, ideologies, and meanings rather than intrinsic characteristics of a particular culture, such as its members' cultural traits (Thyroff et al., 2015). For elucidation, unlike a conventional approach, consumer culture theory will not explain consumption patterns through culture's masculine or feminine nature, but it will adapt the lens of enduring negotiation processes and gender formation rooted in the particular social and historical contexts (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011).

Early researchers and pioneers of consumer culture theory have paid particular heed to consumption's experiential, contextual, and symbolic aspects (Firat and Dholakia, 2017). Such aspects contribute their role and unfold during the consumption cycle encompassing the stages of acquisition of knowledge, making consumption decisions, possession and disposing of the products and services, and further evaluate and analyse these stages through micro, macro, and meso theoretical perspectives (Steenkamp, 2019). For instance, a micro perspective emphasises individualism, a macro perspective inquires about the impact of cultural globalisation and economic factors and a meso perspective explores the impact of cultural production systems encompassing the fashion industry as well as marketing communications.

Consumer culture theory builds on the knowledge of consumer behaviour in four broad aspects constituting consumer identity projects, marketplace cultures, sociohistoric patterning of consumption, mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies (Cross et al., 2018). Addressing aspects of consumer identity projects, consumer culture theory focuses on the methods in which consumers develop a fragmented and coherent image and sense of themselves while working with the materials and content generated by marketers (Baker and Saren, 2016). The marketplace has transformed into a significant source for consumers to construct narratives of identity by utilising the symbolic and mythic resources provided by the marketplace (Arnould and

Thompson, 2018). The materials produced by the marketers are used by consumers to develop a sense of self, and they further exemplify themselves by the consumption of products and services provided by the brands. In the process, consumers are considered as the identity seekers and makers as the consumer identity projects are goal-oriented. While projecting themselves on digital media, consumers showcase their use of brands to create their digital personalities (Levy, 2015).

Additionally, drawing on the aspect of marketplace cultures, consumer culture theory advances that in the modern and temporary perspective, consumers are regarded as the co-producers of culture (Firat and Dholakia, 2017). However, this perspective contradicts anthropology's conventional and traditional view, which considers people as culture bearers. Subsequently, addressing the third domain of sociohistoric patterning of consumption, consumer culture theory focuses on the social structures that impact on consumption; such social structures encompass gender, ethnicity, community, and class (Thyoff et al., 2015). A research problem arises in defining consumer society and the phenomenon of how it is formed and sustained. As a response to this question, the researchers and theorists of consumer culture explore and examine the processes by which social structures and class hierarchies influence consumption behaviour and decisions (Sherry and Fischer, 2017). Moreover, addressing the fourth domain of mass-media marketplace ideologies and interpretive strategies of consumers, consumer culture theory investigates the system of meaning, which induces and channelizes the reproduction of similar actions and thoughts which defend the dominant interests in the society (Gopaldas and Fischer, 2012). Therefore, the primary research questions in this domain include investigating the normative messages transmitted about consumption by commercial media and exploring how consumers make sense and respond to such messages (Cova et al., 2013).

2.7.2 Masculinity theory

Hegemonic masculinity theory (HMT) and inclusive masculinity theory (IMT) are the foundations upon which masculinity theory is debated. For defining masculinity within post-industrial consumer cultures, IMT provides a crucial foundation. The central tenet of IMT is the belief that there are new kinds of masculinity, inclusive masculinities, which are not supported by homophobia and the concomitant fear of femininity and are instead contextualized amid consumer society and a cultural embrace of egalitarian principles

(Anderson, 2009). According to assertions that it is currently the ‘most prolific paradigm of theorizing the increasingly liberal nature of contemporary masculinities’, IMT is highly productive for academics of masculinity, notably in the USA and UK (Magrath and Scoats, 2019, p. 53).

Inclusive Masculinity Theory (IMT) was developed as a result of ethnographic research that revealed novel behavioural patterns in the social interactions of young, heterosexual men in colleges in the US and the UK (Anderson, 2009). These actions, according to Anderson, signify new types of ‘inclusive masculinities’, in which heterosexual men as well as boys socially comprised gay friends and participated in historically gendered behaviours like homosocial emotional intimacy along with physical tactility. Amid a consumerist, egalitarian society with declining homophobia, many males didn't seem to need to distance themselves from homosexuality. As a result, Anderson (2009) hypothesized that a spectrum of traditional and inclusive masculinity archetypes presently coexisted, replacing Connell's (1995) original theory of hegemonic masculinity theory (HMT), which held that homophobia, forced heterosexuality, and anti-femininity were the three pillars of orthodox masculinity.

While IMT received substantial backing from a variety of scholars who identified inclusive masculinities throughout various sites in addition to those of the young, white, middle-class, university-educated, sports team players of Anderson's original studies, HMT was later revised to accommodate for social change (like, Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Coles, 2009; Atkinson, 2011). These investigations also contributed to the development of IMT by examining how new activities that used language with a gay theme were developing without any desire to oppress or exclude other men (McCormack & Anderson, 2010; McCormack, 2011). HMT will be examined in regard to male grooming throughout this study.

Hegemonic masculinity refers to culturally accepted and prevailing masculinity values (Connell, 1987). As a result, masculine hegemony might be seen as a role, status, viewpoint, behaviour, or individual trait. Even though hegemonic men do not exhibit all characteristics at once, some of them may. A Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a significant firm and a professional athlete, for instance, both employ various forms of hegemony. The CEO represents power and status, whilst the athlete represents physical

strength. Hegemonic masculinity is thus expressed through appearance discourses (such as strength and size), affects (such as work ethic along with emotional fortitude), sexualities (such as heterosexual versus homosexual), behaviours (such as aggressive and violent ones), occupations (such as prioritizing work over family and housework) and dominations (such as women's and children's subordination) (Pringle, 2005).

Men are being urged more and more to participate in activities that are part of a larger economic process that supports the beauty industry which is frequently referred to as 'looking after ourselves'. For instance, shaving off male body hair, known as 'manscaping', as a rising ideal (Hall, 2015), or exercising at a fitness centre as a body initiative (Hakim, 2016). As strength over other men is viewed as an indicator of success in a neoliberal setting, the enhancement of one's physique is placed inside a competitive arena that is in line with hegemonic masculinity ideals (Lindisfarne and Neale, 2016). Men were 'consumers' of women's beauty under the old hegemonic masculinity paradigm. Men are now in a group of people who should be evaluated by others and themselves, thanks to the growth of the masculine skincare industry. An 'inversion of the male gaze' has received greater scrutiny lately as a result of women and other males giving men's appearances higher ratings (Byrne and Milestone, 2023).

Given generational disparities in gender beliefs and practices in addition to structural changes within society, academics have acknowledged that masculinities are additionally in dispute (Connell, 2005). According to the authors, any time hegemonic masculinity is contested, a new hegemonic form typically develops. Due to its capacity for adaptation and resistance to change, hegemonic masculinity gains in strength. Hegemonic masculinity continues to be an ideal that is unattainable for most men even though it serves as a standard by which men evaluate their sense of self (Connell, 2005). It should come as no surprise that modern men express body dissatisfaction when compared to representations of accepted standards of body ideals connected to hegemonic masculinity (Ricciardelli et al., 2010).

This study delves into the practice of male grooming, examining its various aspects and implications. By default, the study is related to the theory of masculinity which is a multifaceted concept that encompasses a wide range of factors related to male grooming. These include not only physical appearance and grooming trends, but also societal

attitudes towards men's grooming practices. By exploring these different aspects, this study aims to shed light on the complex interplay between masculinity and grooming.

Moreover, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is also deeply intertwined with men's grooming habits. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant form of masculinity that is often reinforced by society and culture. In this context, men's grooming practices can be a way to either challenge or reinforce hegemonic masculinity. Depending on the specific grooming habits and societal perceptions surrounding them, men may encounter resistance or acceptance of their grooming practices. Thus, exploring the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and male grooming is crucial for understanding the broader landscape of masculinity and gender dynamics in society.

The recognition of grooming as a common practice among men nowadays could be considered a positive indication of a more inclusive and accepting form of masculinity that values self-care and personal hygiene. Furthermore, this shift in attitudes towards grooming could also be seen as a reflection of a changing societal norm that is increasingly accepting and embracing of diversity in all its forms. As men continue to embrace grooming and take an active interest in their physical appearance, it is likely that this trend will only continue to grow in popularity, ultimately leading to a more positive and accepting view of masculinity in our society. However, linking grooming to romantic success and competition may suggest that men are conforming to traditional gender roles and expectations of hegemonic masculinity. In general, the masculinity theory addresses the male grooming concept that is studied in this research.

2.7.3 Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Race, ethnic origin, political association, as well as sports teams have been considered by academics studying social identity as significant social identities. Social identities are associated with a number of qualities. An idealized prototype or embodiment of the group is made out of these ideas, attitudes, and behaviours. Attacks on social identity entail a range of negative effects, notably decreased self-esteem, sadness, stress, and antisocial conduct (Munsch & Willer, 2012). Preserving an individual's identification with relevant and meaningful groups promotes higher self-esteem. People are driven to uphold the credibility of their position within an in-group for these causes. In order to regain the credibility of their in-group position, threatened group members will act in way that are

predicted by social identity theory (SIT) by adhering more firmly to their in-group principles and by excluding themselves from pertinent out-groups.

It is well known that gender is "one of the most important, salient, and pervasive social categories" (Maass et al., 2003, p. 854). Munsch & Willer (2012) emphasize gender as the foundation of social identity along with how men and women respond to threats to their gender identities. They additionally relate the social theory of gender with SIT, focusing on the notion of hegemonic masculinity as one model or ideal toward which men aspire (Lusher & Robins, 2009). Hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculinity that is most socially acceptable and an idealized set of prescribed norms. Hegemonic masculinity, comprising identity prototypes, is not indicative of any specific individual.

SIT contends that self-perception, along with identification within social groups are influenced by the extent to which social institutions are believed to possess impermeable boundaries along with stable and genuine group statuses. Self-stereotyping or learning to identify oneself in regard to in-group qualities, can be used by people to retain their gender position or to increase their in-group identification in order to safeguard their group's standing (Kray et al., 2017).

In recent times, several factors have begun to impact male grooming more and more. Social media, that has rendered it simpler for men to learn about new grooming trends as well as methods, constitutes one of the main transformative factors. Male grooming habits have also been significantly shaped by marketing initiatives, with brands advertising items created just for males. Men today have more access than previously to an extensive selection of grooming alternatives because of the accessibility of beauty items and amenities. It is important to note that male grooming is related to social identity and community as well as grooming. Men might convey to others whether they are a member of a specific group or subculture through taking good care of their appearance. The topic of male grooming is intricate and multidimensional, with many different influences. The social and cultural context whereby male grooming occurs must also be taken into account, even though social media, marketing, including product accessibility are significant change-agents (Fujita et al., 2018).

According to Fujita et al. (2018), SIT proposes that people categorize themselves among actual or symbolic social groups in order to create meaningful identities. As a result, social identity may be crucial to brand communities' success. Members' connections with the brand, the product, the business, and other members can all be influenced by their sense of belonging that comes from associating with a brand community. Greater loyalty and involvement within the brand community might result from the favourable feelings connected to this sense of belonging.

Marketers are continuously looking for new ways to increase customer participation and have an impact on their audience's sense of social identity. Providing customers with pertinent and valuable content has been a successful tactic. By grabbing potential customers' attention and enticing them to become involved with the business, this strategy can operate as an engagement trigger. When done correctly, this may encourage a deeper level of consumer interaction and build a powerful sense of community surrounding the brand. For instance, a company can position themselves as an authoritative voice within its field and gain the audience's confidence by sharing fascinating and helpful content relevant to it. As happy consumers communicate the brand's content via their personal social networks, this may boost customer loyalty towards the brand and produce positive word-of-mouth marketing. As a result, in today's digital world, offering pertinent and useful content has grown into a crucial part of numerous successful marketing strategies (Gummerus et al., 2012).

Individuals of the community can build a sense of competence and social standing by sharing information and personal experiences about the brand or product on social media platforms. Furthermore, brand communities can give participants a forum to express their ideas and critiques to the company and its representatives, fostering a sense of empowerment alongside ownership. As a result, businesses that cultivate an enduring brand community can gain from the important insights and comments of their most devoted customers in addition to enhanced loyalty and engagement (Fujita et al., 2018).

The SIT provides a thorough framework for comprehending the formation of relationships between consumers and businesses. It asserts that group membership has an impact on an individual's behaviour, attitudes, as well as beliefs in addition to how group membership contributes to an individual's sense of self. SIT has been frequently employed

to clarify how customers form solid and long-lasting connections with businesses in the setting of relationship marketing. Consumers can develop a sense of social identity and belonging through brand or product identification that extends beyond purely practical advantages.

Nevertheless, despite being a long-standing idea in relationship marketing, the function of SIT within social media marketing is still largely unexplored. Social media networks have completely changed how customers engage with brands, giving businesses new chances to build enduring relationships with their clients. However, our understanding of the precise processes that govern how SIT functions in this situation is still lacking. Recent studies (Bagozzi et al., 2012; Reed et al., 2012) have highlighted the necessity for additional research on this subject. Thus, a deeper comprehension of SIT's function within social media marketing could help businesses in creating more potent plans for interacting with consumers and forging enduring bonds with them.

Social media sites present a special chance for marketers to interact with their target market. Marketers may increase consumer awareness of and adherence to their brands by producing content that speaks to their audience. These can be done in several ways, including sharing educational content, conversing with followers, and holding freebies and contests. Social media advertising is another effective tactic that marketers can use alongside to content development. Marketers can contact customers who are more inclined to be intrigued by their goods or services by focusing on specific demographics and hobbies. Improved conversion rates and sales may result from this. Despite being an emerging field, social media marketing has enormous potential for helping businesses engage with customers in significant ways. Marketers can establish close bonds with their audience using techniques like content production and targeted advertising, which will ultimately lead to economic success.

This research is related to the SIT theory based on the practice of male grooming that can be influenced by several factors, including but not limited to the expectations of society and the peer relationships. Maintaining a connection with important and relevant groups can help boost self-esteem. For instance, staying in touch with family members, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances who share similar interests can provide an individual with a sense of belongingness and validation. Additionally, cultural norms and personal

preferences can also play a role in shaping one's approach to grooming. For example, in some cultures, having a well-groomed appearance is highly valued and considered a sign of professionalism and success. On the other hand, some individuals may prefer a more natural or rugged look, which may be influenced by their hobbies or personal interests. It is important to note that there is no one "correct" way to approach male grooming, as it is ultimately a personal choice that can vary from person to person.

To restore their status within their group after feeling threatened, individuals may behave in ways consistent with SIT. According to SIT, people identify with groups that they perceive as positive and significant and tend to differentiate themselves from groups that they perceive as negative or less significant. Therefore, individuals who feel threatened may strengthen their commitment to the beliefs and values of their group, while distancing themselves from relevant out-groups. This can be seen in various scenarios, such as in a workplace where an employee may be excluded from a team meeting or an important project. To restore their status, the employee may emphasize their commitment to their team's values and beliefs while distancing themselves from the team that excluded them. Similarly, in a school setting, a student who is excluded from a social group may strengthen their commitment to their own group and distance themselves from the group that excluded them. In this way, the social identity theory provides a framework to understand how individuals may respond to situations where their status within their group is threatened.

2.7.4 Self-congruity Theory

A key idea in the study of consumer behaviour is self-congruity. It describes the extent that a consumer's perception of themselves aligns with that of a particular brand or product. A customer feels subjectively connected to a product or brand as soon as they sense an elevated degree of self-congruity. The consumer's values, attitude, and way of life can all have an impact on this link (Khalid et al., 2018). By framing their goods or brands in a manner that is consistent with how consumers perceive themselves, businesses can use the idea of self-congruity to create marketing strategies that connect with their target audience. They can boost revenue and client loyalty through this. Kim (2015) asserts that consumers utilize brands to communicate their self-concept to others. This is done by acquiring and consuming goods that have connotations. These connections are frequently symbolic and stand in for ideals or character traits which the customer wishes

to express. People who value environmental sustainability, for instance, might decide to buy goods from a company with a good reputation for being environmentally friendly. Akin to this, a person may choose high-end designer brands if they wish to convey an air of richness and prominence. As a result, the brands individuals choose to buy can reveal a lot about their personalities and values.

Psychologists have extensively investigated the concept of self, which is a key component of one's psychological make-up. It is important because it affects how someone behaves and views other people and themselves. The way an individual views himself, encompassing their beliefs, values, including personality traits, is known as their self-concept. Numerous elements, including past experiences, upbringing, and cultural background, may have an impact on this perception. As stated by Ahmad et al. (2018), a person's self-concept significantly influences how they behave since they have a propensity to act in ways that support their self-concept. Thus, to encourage healthy behaviour and relationships, it is crucial to possess a positive self-concept.

Kim (2015) claims that customers are more inclined to choose brands and items that fit with their self-image. This is because customers who purchase goods that do not reflect their present self-image could feel as though their identity is in danger. To effectively sell their products, businesses must take into account the psychological aspects that affect consumer behaviour. Businesses may develop successful branding and advertising strategies that connect with their target audience by comprehending the relationship among a customer's self-image as well as their purchasing decisions. Businesses can also utilize this information to customize their goods and services towards the wants and desires of their clients, which will ultimately boost customer satisfaction alongside loyalty. In general, developing effective marketing tactics that spur company growth and profitability requires a grasp of the nuanced link among customer self-image and purchase behaviour.

Consumer goods act as symbolic communication tools between a person and others and convey the meaning of the person to his or her references to lower the likelihood of interpersonal conflict (Bosselman et al., 2012). This is since people have a significant propensity to prefer persons who are like them regarding demographics, culture, as well as personality (Najem & Puolakka, 2020). Buying products can be a kind of self-

expression. People can display their distinctive personalities, tastes, and values via these products. For instance, in certain cultures, specific goods may be seen as acceptable by society than in others. This shows that using consumer items is about more than just expressing oneself; it's also about living up to social norms. Consumer goods play a complicated and diversified role in communication and self-expression throughout. They can convey significant messages and act as markers of identity, but they are also shaped by social mores and cultural customs.

Customers that are unhappy with their current self-concept and want to improve it try to boost their self-esteem by buying things that reflect their ideal selves (Kim, 2015). Self-congruity enables marketers to define themselves and divide consumer markets among groups of people who see congruence of their product-user image as opposed to those who disagree (Bosselman et al. 2012). In order to make it simple for consumers to link a brand with their self-concept, marketers must employ a marketing or branding approach in advertising that highlights specific personality traits (Bosselman et al. 2012; Ahmad et al. 2018).

Al-Issa & Dens (2023) apply the self-congruity theory to investigate the behaviour of Muslim consumers towards luxury values. According to the self-congruity theory, Muslims' attitudes toward luxury values are influenced by their Islamic values and their desire to present themselves as religious consumers. In other words, Muslims' perception of luxury values is shaped by how well they align with their religious values and their intended self-presentation. Dekhil et al. (2017) note that Muslims typically avoid displaying wealth and leading a materialistic lifestyle. This is also true in Kuwait, where religious beliefs strongly shape the local culture.

According to self-congruity theory, consumers are more likely to purchase a product or brand when they perceive a connection between themselves and the product. The theory suggests that individuals evaluate the extent to which a product reflects their self-image, values, and personality traits. This evaluation process is influenced by several factors, such as advertising messages, brand image, and product design. In this research, information is collected from retailers and social media influencers on male purchasing behaviour of grooming products. Therefore, companies can leverage self-congruity theory by developing marketing campaigns that highlight the connection between their

brand and their target audience. By doing so, they can create a sense of identification and loyalty among their customers. Additionally, companies can use self-congruity theory to guide their product development process, ensuring that their products align with their customers' self-image and values. This refers to the role of self-congruity theory in this research.

2.8 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The framework (figure 2.4) that is presented in this chapter summarises the findings of the literature review and the theories discussed above.

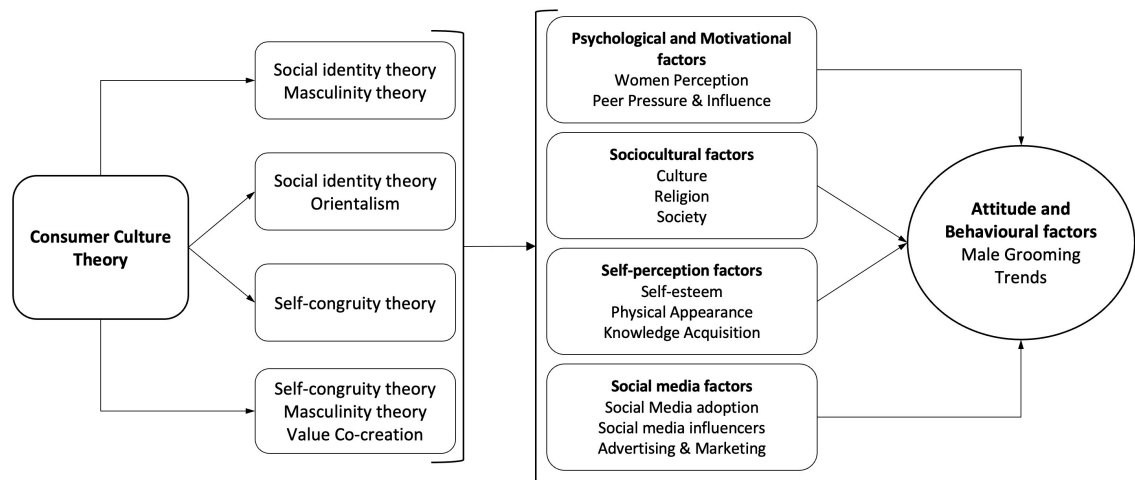


Figure 2.4: Conceptual Framework

Designed using studies by Munsch & Willer, 2012; Guhin and Wyrzten, 2013; Galvagno and Dalli, 2014; Khalid et al., 2018; and Magrath & Scoats, 2019.

The conceptual framework is built on the foundation of **consumer culture theory**, which explores the relationship between individuals and their consumption behaviours (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014). In addition, it considers other influential theories such as the **social-identity theory**, which examines how individuals' identities are shaped by their social groups (Munsch & Willer, 2012); the **self-congruity theory**, which investigates the alignment between consumers' self-image and brand image (Khalid et al., 2018); and the **masculinity theory**, which explores the influence of gender norms on consumer behaviours (Magrath & Scoats, 2019). By incorporating these theories, the conceptual framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape consumer attitudes and behaviours in relation to consumer culture. In addition to this orientalism is another concept that has been used in this research. **Orientalism** refers to imitating and

adopting Western practices and styles in terms of male grooming and cultural changes (Guhin and Wyrzten, 2013). **Value co-creation** refers to the efforts and practices undertaken by businesses to engage and communicate with consumers, with the aim of fostering long-term growth, performance, and relationships that ultimately lead to profits (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014). Social media plays a crucial role in enabling this two-way communication and facilitating value co-creation (Killa, 2014).

The framework is built upon four crucial factors that have a significant impact on male grooming behaviour. These factors encompass various aspects such as psychological and motivational factors, which explore the deep-seated emotions and drives that influence male grooming behaviour. Additionally, sociocultural factors play a pivotal role in shaping individuals' actions and decisions, as they are strongly influenced by the norms, values, and beliefs of their surrounding society. Moreover, self-perception factors come into play, as individuals' own perceptions of themselves can greatly influence their behaviours and choices. Lastly, the advent of social media has emerged as a powerful factor in the modern age, as it can shape opinions, preferences, and behaviours through its pervasive influence on individuals' lives.

Psychological and motivational factors are extensively studied in the field of social sciences, particularly in the context of women's perception of male grooming. Additionally, the impact of peer pressure and influence on individuals' behaviours and decision-making processes is also a significant area of research. By exploring these key factors, researchers aim to gain a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics that shape human behaviour and motivations. Sociocultural factors play a significant role in shaping an individual's beliefs, behaviours, and values. These factors encompass elements such as culture, religion, and society, which greatly influence how people perceive the world around them. Moreover, self-perception is a crucial aspect of one's identity, encompassing various components such as self-esteem, physical appearance, and the process of acquiring knowledge. The way individuals perceive themselves in terms of their self-worth, their physical attributes, and the extent of their knowledge greatly impacts their interactions with others and their overall well-being. In addition to the influence of social media, it is important to consider other aspects that can also shape male grooming behaviour. This can include the role of peer influence and societal norms, the accessibility and affordability of grooming products, as well as the influence of

cultural and personal preferences. Furthermore, it is crucial to examine the psychological motivations behind male grooming choices, such as the desire for self-expression, confidence, and attractiveness. By considering these various factors, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that drive male grooming behaviour in relation to social media and marketing strategies.

The research studies the impact and influence of various factors on attitude and behavioural factors, specifically focusing on male grooming trends within the context of this research. Through a comprehensive analysis, this study explores the intricate relationship between these factors and sheds light on their significance in shaping societal perspectives and consumer behaviour. By expanding the scope of investigation and incorporating a holistic approach, this study strives to contribute valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge in the field of male grooming trends.

2.9 CONCLUSION

Culture significantly impacts consumer behaviour and can be studied using models like Hofstede's, GLOBE, and Trompenaars' (Sreen et al., 2018; Buscemi, 2017). Changes in gender roles have increased the popularity of grooming products among men. Social media, heavily used in Kuwait for leisure and communication, influences consumer behaviour and allows consumers to co-produce marketing content (Buscemi, 2017). Various approaches to consumer behaviour include a cognitive approach, trait theories, and consumer culture theory, which explores the relationship between marketplace, cultural meanings, and consumer behaviour (Sreen et al., 2018). Orientalism, the Western World's depiction or imitation of Eastern elements impacts the fashion and male grooming industry in Kuwait (Buscemi, 2017).

CHAPTER 3: THE CONTEXT OF KUWAIT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The State of Kuwait is located in the Middle East, is one of the world's wealthiest countries with one of the highest value world currencies. However, Kuwait has dropped in the ranking of the world's richest countries in terms of per capita GDP based on purchasing power. It now stands at 36th place out of 193 countries, down from 31st place in 2021 ranking (zawya.com, 2022). At the same time, according to the April World Economic Outlook report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with purchasing power parity in Kuwait rose from \$51,000 last year to \$53,000 in the new classification (timeskuwait.com, 2023).

3.2 GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) comprises six Arab nations - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates - with the aim of promoting political and economic cooperation among them. The primary objective of the six GCC countries was to unify oil sales and its prices (europa.eu, 2023). The GCC was established in 1981. This agreement was made in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021). The GCC was established with the primary objective of controlling the oil prices and foster cooperation and coordination among its member states in various areas such as economic development, security, and cultural exchange.

3.3 KUWAIT HISTORY

The State of Kuwait is a small country located in the north-western Persian Gulf area (Sadek et al., n.d.). The neighbouring countries of Kuwait are Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The Kuwaiti land was discovered about 380 years ago, dating back to 1613 (History of Kuwait, 2017).

As a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Kuwait was the world's tenth-largest producer of petroleum and other liquids in 2015, and it was the fifth-largest producer of crude oil among the 14 OPEC members. Despite its relatively small geographic size (about 6,900 square miles; see Figures 3.1 and 3.2), in terms of

production, it only trailed Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates in production of petroleum and other liquids in 2022 (eia, 2023).



Figure 3.1: Kuwait Map

Source: britannica.com, 2023

Figure 3.1 provides a map of Kuwait with some of the major areas illustrated. According to Britannica.com (2023), the physical area of Kuwait is slightly larger than the U.S. state of Hawaii. Kuwait shares its borders with Iraq to the west and north, the Persian Gulf to the east, and Saudi Arabia to the south (see Figure 3.2).



Figure 3.2: Kuwait in comparison to neighbouring countries

Source: britannica.com, 2023

Kuwait is largely a desert, except for the Al-Jahrā' oasis, at the western end of Kuwait Bay and a few fertile patches in the south-eastern and coastal areas. Kuwaiti territory includes nine offshore islands, the largest of which are the uninhabited Būbiyān and Al-Warbah. The island of Faylakah, which is located near the entrance of Kuwait Bay, has been populated since prehistoric times. A territory of 2,200 square miles (5,700 square km) along the Gulf was shared by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as a neutral zone until a political boundary was agreed on in 1969. Each of the two countries now administers half of the territory (called the Neutral, or Partitioned, Zone). However, they continue to share equally the revenues from oil production in the entire area (Britannica.com, 2023).

Found amongst archives owned by Great Britain, a letter written by Kuwait's seventh ruler Sheikh Mubarak Al Sabah, was retrieved (Alenezi, 2022). This letter was sent to a British resident who stated that Kuwait is a poor land. Kuwait's economy relied on pearl diving to survive and be able to live in this desert of a country. As women stayed home

and cared for their children, men sacrificed their lives to go pearl diving. With this job, lives were lost at sea and families were used to dealing with poverty (Alenezi, 2022).

Great Britain gained control and authority over Kuwait's foreign affairs in 1899 (A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Kuwait, n.d.). With the guidance of Great Britain, Kuwait was able to grow and discover its valuable resource, oil. Eventually, Kuwait became an independent state in 1961 (Alenezi, 2022). The exploration of oil in the mid-20th century transformed Kuwait from a struggling nation into one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The shift from dangerous pearl diving to the profitable oil industry brought prosperity to Kuwait.

Kuwait's economy is heavily dependent on petroleum export revenues, which accounted for more than 70% of the government's total revenues in 2015, according to IMF estimates. In fact, petroleum exports accounted for almost 89% of total export revenues in 2015. Much like other OPEC producers, Kuwait saw the value of its total exports fall sharply in 2015 as crude oil prices fell. In 2014, Kuwait's value of exports totalled roughly \$104 billion and fell to about \$55 billion in 2015. The share of petroleum exports in 2014 was 94% of the total export revenue (EIA, 2016). Provided below are some of the prominent events in Kuwait over the years (bbc.com, 2022).

In 1961; Iraq joined the Arab League, a regional organization of Arab countries. This move was seen as a significant step towards Arab unity and solidarity. However, Iraq soon found itself embroiled in a territorial dispute with Kuwait. Iraq claimed that Kuwait was historically part of its territory, a claim which Kuwait vehemently rejected. However, the intervention of British was successful in reducing the conflict and setting the matter (bbc.com, 2022).

In 1963: Historical elections were held for the National Assembly, which was established under the terms of a newly drafted constitution. These elections were a significant moment in the country's political history, as they marked the transition to a new form of government (bbc.com, 2022).

In 1990: Iraq invaded Kuwait in a surprise attack. The Iraqi army quickly overran the country and annexed it, leading to chaos and turmoil in the region. The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution condemning Iraq's invasion and demanding the immediate withdrawal of its troops from Kuwait (bbc.com, 2022).

In 1991: Iraq fails to comply with UN resolutions ordering the pull out. The United States and its allies also quickly mobilized, leading to the first Gulf War, which would last for several months and ultimately result in the liberation of Kuwait (bbc.com, 2022).

In 2003: The world was witness to a momentous event when tens of thousands of soldiers from various countries flocked to the border between Kuwait and Iraq. Their mission was to take part in a US-led military campaign to disarm and topple the regime of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, who had been accused of committing numerous human rights violations. The campaign, which was dubbed Operation Iraqi Freedom, marked a turning point in the history of the Middle East and had far-reaching consequences that are still felt today (bbc.com, 2022).

In 2005; A significant milestone for women's rights was achieved in the country's parliament. During May of that year, a new law was passed that granted women the right to vote and run for parliament. In June of the same year, Massouma al-Mubarak emerged as the first woman cabinet minister in the newly established government. Her appointment marked a historic moment for women's representation in the highest levels of government and served as a powerful symbol of hope for aspiring female politicians across the nation (bbc.com, 2022).

In 2006; A momentous event took place in which women were granted the right to vote in a municipal by-election. This was a significant milestone in the progression towards gender equality and women's rights. The inclusion of women in the democratic process marked a turning point in the struggle for gender equality and paved the way for further advancements in women's rights (bbc.com, 2022).

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was formed through an agreement reached on May 25, 1981, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The participating countries include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The establishment of

the GCC was driven by their close ties, geographical proximity, similar political systems rooted in Islamic principles, shared destiny, and common goals. GCC countries share a common vision for economic development, set out in national development plans that highlight the need for diversification of the productive base to reduce dependence on the hydrocarbon sector and to create more employment opportunities for young and growing populations (Beidas-Strom et al., 2011). National development plans have a long history in some GCC countries as a means of setting out development objectives, particularly following the lows in oil prices in 1998–99. All of the latest plans emphasize economic diversification and an increase in the labour force participation of nationals (Beidas-Strom et al., 2011).

Hydrocarbon dependency has changed little over the last decade, with fiscal dependency mostly increasing (Figure 3.3). During 1990–1999, hydrocarbons generally accounted for about 80 percent of revenue and exports of goods and services in the GCC, with the exception of Bahrain. In the period 2000–2009, fiscal dependency mostly increased, with the majority of GCC countries converging toward hydrocarbons accounting for almost 90 percent of revenue and 80 percent of exports. The exception was the United Arab Emirates, where hydrocarbons have fallen to about 60 percent of exports and their share in revenue has fallen slightly (Beidas-Strom et al., 2011).

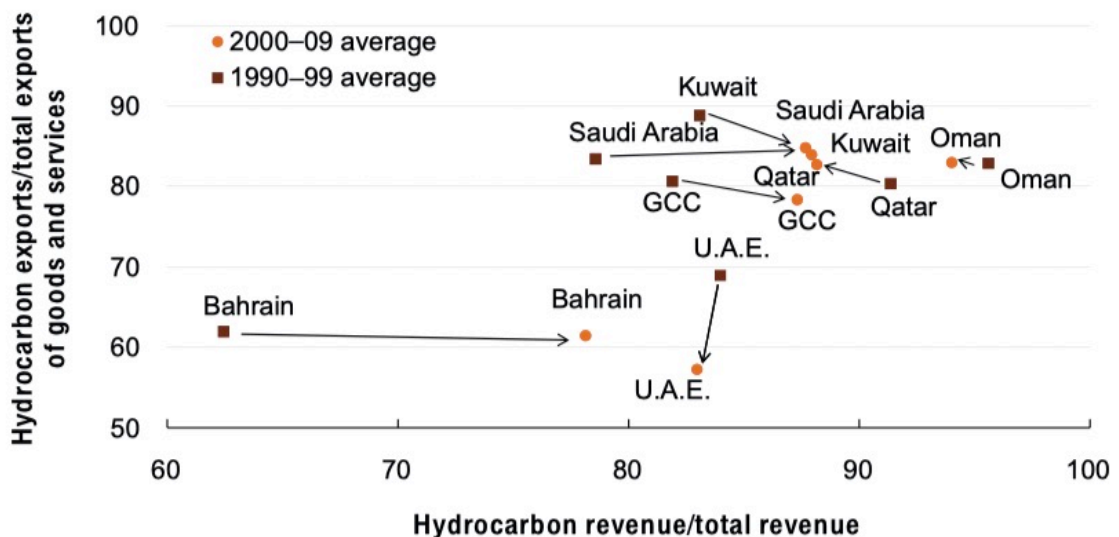


Figure 3.3: GCC: Hydrocarbon Dependency, 1990–2009

The shift toward greater dependency on hydrocarbons reflects the increase in oil prices over the past decade. In nominal terms the share of the non-hydrocarbon sector in GDP has generally decreased over the past decade (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: GCC: Non-hydrocarbon GDP as a Share of Total GDP; 1990, 2000, 2010

	1990	2000	2010
Bahrain	81	72	75
Kuwait	52	48	48
Oman	52	49	46
Qatar	62	40	43
Saudi Arabia	64	59	48
U.A.E.	60	71	66
GCC	61	59	51

Kuwait is a classic example of a rentier state, with oil revenues comprising the majority of the country's GDP and a significant portion of government revenues. The divergent approaches taken by Kuwait, as opposed to those taken by wealthy rentiers such as the UAE and Qatar, raise important questions about the dynamics of the rentier system in each of these countries. Per capita rents remain high, and the economy is almost entirely reliant on oil (Deshwal, 2017).

Iraq, located in the Middle East, shares borders with six countries: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Jordan, Syria, and Kuwait. For many years, Iraq was under foreign domination. The territorial dispute between Iraq and Kuwait has been a long-standing issue, with its importance fluctuating over time. Kuwait proposed a solution for Iraq to recognize its independence in exchange for territory granting access to the Persian Gulf, but Iraq consistently refused. This resulted in continued tension between the two countries. Iraq sought control of Kuwait's territories to strengthen its military and gain access to the Persian Gulf (Wauters et al., 2017).

The Arabian Gulf Region has a history marked by major conflicts, including three significant wars. The first was the Iraq-Iran War from 1980-1988, resulting in a devastating impact on both countries. The second Gulf War began with the Iraqi invasion

of Kuwait in 1990 and ended with Kuwait's liberation by an international coalition. The 2003 Gulf War, sparked by concerns over Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, led to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's government and caused political and social upheaval in the region. These wars have shaped the political and social landscape of the Arab world (Misak et al., 2009). On August 2, 1990, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait and swiftly took over the country. The United States, together with the United Nations, demanded an immediate withdrawal of Iraqi forces. Despite attempts by Iraq to negotiate a withdrawal, the United States was not receptive. U.S. military forces in the region had already rehearsed battle plans to fend off an Iraqi invasion (Klein, 2003).

Throughout the conflict, the desert and coastal environments of Kuwait bore the brunt of the aggression. Armoured vehicles, tanks, and other military hardware moved freely throughout the desert, causing significant damage. Hundreds of bunkers and foxholes were constructed, millions of mines were placed in the desert and the Gulf waters, a large number of oil wells were detonated or exploded, millions of barrels of oil were released into Kuwaiti waters, and huge quantities of ammunition were dropped in the desert (Omar et al., 2009). After the war, Iraqi forces left behind a lot of solid waste, including live and spent ammunitions, mines, explosion crates, and damaged military hardware. Kuwait made huge efforts to clean up the desert, fill bunkers and underground shelters, and collect unexploded ammunitions and debris left by the Iraqi military. These were detonated in large underground pits and filled with foreign soil. The desert surface was destroyed, and vegetation was heavily affected (Omar et al., 2009).

3.4 KUWAIT'S ADVANCEMENTS AND MODERNIZATION

3.4.1 The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

The exploration of oil set the base for Kuwait's modernization and advancements. Due to the presence of Oil, Kuwait could advance and join Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The OPEC welcomed Kuwait to be a part of its team. Kuwait started exporting its oil and making a profit to improve the country. The OPEC is a permanent, intergovernmental organization. It was created during the Baghdad Conference, which was held on September 10-14, 1960. The founding members were Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela (opec.org, 2023). This establishment of the GCC provided the member countries with increased power and control over their oil

prices, allowing them to have an advantage in the global oil markets. This ultimately led to a strengthened economy, resulting in a greater purchasing power for both the government and the individuals within these countries. Additionally, the GCC's collective efforts in coordinating policies and strategies have further contributed to the stability and growth of the member countries' economies, fostering economic cooperation and integration among them.

3.4.2 Architectural Advancements

The oil revenue has provided Kuwait to advance in terms of architecture. In 1977 the Kuwait towers were built. The Kuwait Towers provided an interest in architecture and design for future generations (Kuwait Towers, n.d.). Abraj Al-Kuwait is designated as a single monument (figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4: Kuwait Towers

It's worth noting that this building is part of a nationwide network of infrastructural water supply and reservoirs, which includes 31 additional water towers (known as the mushroom towers) strategically distributed in groups throughout the country. These towers are connected to the distribution grid of the two distillation seawater plants already

built. This ambitious national project was part of the country's large-scale modernization process that began after the first shipment of oil in 1946. It was essential to ensure an effective system of water distribution to a growing population, which until then relied on tank trucks. This group of towers was named "Kuwait Towers," which translates to Arabic as Abraj Al-Kuwait. Since the Towers' opening on February 26th, 1977, they have been regarded as a symbol of national identity (unesco.org, 2023).

The Kuwait towers are only one example of Kuwait's famous landmarks. Malene Bjorn, a Danish architect, designed the Kuwait towers. The idea to have a distinctive landmark came from western countries, for example, France with the Eiffel tower. Architectural advancements were made to achieve modernization in Kuwait. In the year 2018, one of Kuwait's modernized museums was established. Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Centre is one of the world's unique and large projects brought to reality. The main museum is made up of six component museums. Every museum has a unique architectural design. Technology has also played a prominent role in this project. The Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Centre is a vast cultural complex that boasts 22 galleries with over 1,100 exhibits. Visitors can explore a range of museums, including the Natural History Museum, Science and Technology Museum, and Arabic Islamic Science Museum, as well as a Fine Arts Centre, Space Museum, and Theatre.

The exhibits include:

- Taking a journey through time to gain an exclusive understanding of the natural world, both past and present. Comprehend the significance of ecosystems and their impact on the evolution of biodiversity on our planet over millions of years.
- The world of the dinosaurs that displays the amazing reptiles and mammals that roamed the Earth up to 65 million years ago.
- The evolution of transportation that has evolved from simple hot air balloons to powerful jet engines, horse-drawn carriages to modern cars, and small boats to massive oil tankers.
- The human body that shows endlessly fascinating, filled with intricate workings that reveal their secrets as we explore their complex functions.

- The Golden Age of Islam, highlighting the significant contributions that Muslims and Arabs made to science, culture, and the arts, which continue to influence modern society.
- The exploration of space and the universe has always held a sense of mystery and inspiration. offering audiences an unprecedented chance to delve into the wonders of this unknown universe (ascckw.com, 2023).

3.4.3 Technological Advancements

Kuwait also strives for technological advancements. Kuwait has its very own Institute for scientific research. Kuwait's Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) aims to provide and help Kuwait focus on scientific and technological advancements to be up to date with the world's recent findings. Kuwait's governmental sectors and private sectors aim to have a paperless future. Everything will be made through technology and artificial intelligence, which is the goal by 2024 (Kuwait, 2021).

The latest electronic performance index for GCC countries in 2022 has shown exceptional progress in digital transformation. According to the index prepared by Orient Planet Research (OPR) in collaboration with Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Kuwait ranked 51.36, the UAE achieved an average rating of 66.22, followed by Saudi Arabia with 59.26, and Qatar with 57.63. Oman and Bahrain scored 54.02 and 53.43, respectively. It is expected that Kuwait's spending on information and communication technology will reach \$10.1 billion by 2024, while the UAE's will reach \$23 billion and Qatar's will reach about \$9 billion (zawya.com, 2022). ZAWYA.com, a subsidiary of Refinitiv Middle East, is a leading provider of regional news and intelligence. The platform has plenty of resources such as market data, industry reports, and financial news. ZAWYA tracks the latest market developments and analyse the impact of various events on the economy, ensuring that their readers are always informed.

3.5 KUWAIT POPULATION

Kuwait's population count is 4,269,377, which makes up 0.05% of the world (Kuwait population 2022 (live), n.d.). Kuwait's population growth rate is at 4.0%. Kuwait's population comprises ex-pats primarily. There are more expats living in Kuwait than Kuwaiti citizens. The reason behind the increase of expats is that there is an increase in

job opportunities. As of 2021, the male population in Kuwait is 2.65 million; the female population is 1.67 million (Demographics of Kuwait, 2021). According to the latest demographic data from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), Kuwait’s population growth trend reversed course during 2022, rising by 8% y/y, the fastest annual growth rate in 17 years. The population is now just 0.8% below its 2019-peak. The growth rate of Kuwaiti nationals further eased to 1.9% year-on-year in 2022, while the rate of non-Kuwaiti growth accelerated sharply to 11.1%, after two consecutive years of decline (Jain, 2023).

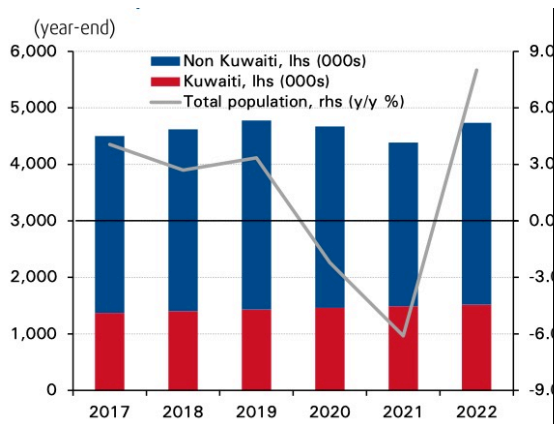


Figure 3.5: Kuwait Population

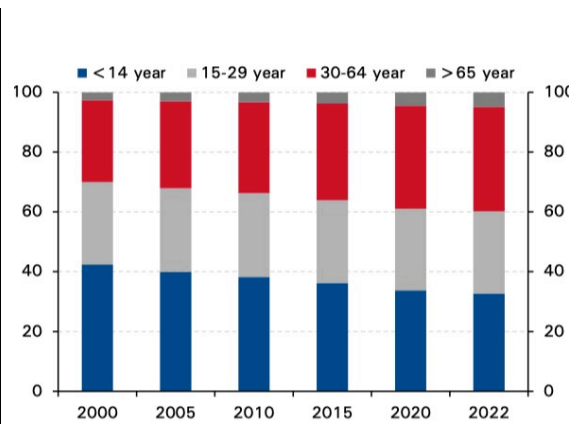


Figure 3.6: Kuwaiti National Population by age

Source: Jain, 2023

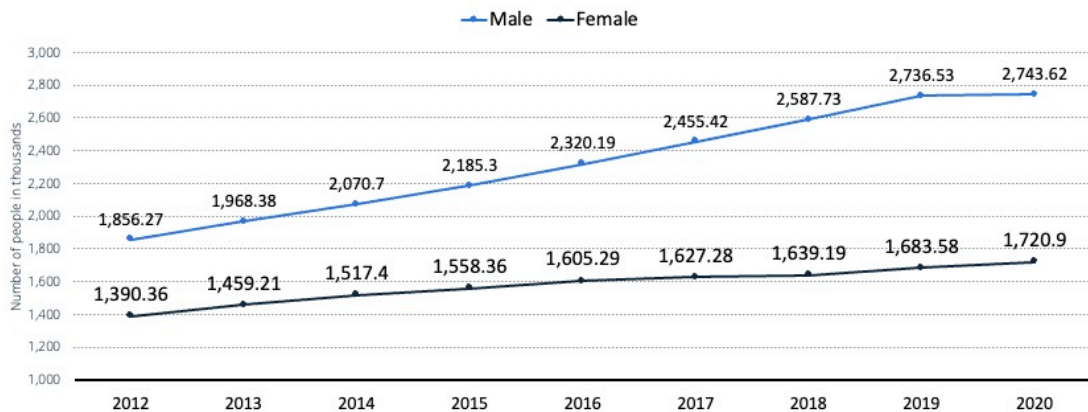


Figure 3.7: Kuwait Total Population (by gender) from 2012 to 2020

Source: statista.com (2023a)

Figure 3.7 provides the population based on male and female gender. There has been a significant and increasing gap between both genders, with more males compared to females. The gap has been growing over the years. It has also to be noted that the population includes expatriate (non-Kuwaiti) nationals. Many of these expatriate

population are unskilled labourers that tend to be single men. This also adds to the gap between men and women.

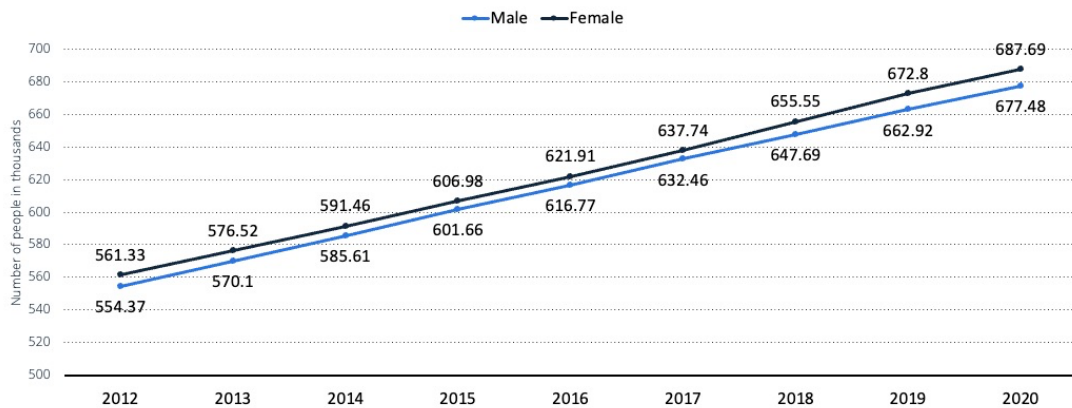


Figure 3.8: Kuwait Local Population (by gender) from 2012 to 2020

Source: statista.com (2023b)

Figure 3.8 provides the population that includes only Kuwaiti nationals. The gap between male and females is less pronounced where the expatriate community is not counted.

The gender roles in Kuwait are very traditional. Men typically take on the primary role of providing for their families, while women often focus on caring for their homes. In past generations, many women were housewives and could not vote or run for parliament. However, as of May 17th, 2005, women were granted the right to vote and run for parliament. Women fought hard in women's rights committees to have this privilege (Hassan, 2006). Kuwaiti society, like other societies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, has traditionally been patriarchal, with women in secondary roles. However, efforts to address gender inequality are underway (Hausmann et al., 2014). Kuwait ranks 113 out of 142 countries in the World Economic Forum index, indicating room for progress. In recent years, Kuwait has increased women's representation in parliament and passed laws against domestic violence. Still, more needs to be done for full equality. The MENA region lags behind in gender equality compared to other parts of the world (Hausmann et al., 2014).

Aside from the ethical considerations, there are numerous economic reasons why denying women equal opportunities is detrimental to society. When women are not given the same opportunities as men, society as a whole miss out on the benefits of their contributions to the workforce. This, in turn, limits the amount of human capital that can be utilized, which

can have a negative impact on economic development. For example, in many countries, a large portion of highly educated women are not given the opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge in the workforce. This represents a significant loss of potential economic growth and innovation. Furthermore, when women are not given the same opportunities as men, it can lead to a waste of important energies and investments that might otherwise contribute to achieving economic development for all. Therefore, it is important to recognize the value of women's contributions to the economy and to ensure that they are provided with equal opportunities to succeed. This can lead not only to greater economic development but also to a more equal and just society overall (Al-Salem & Speece, 2017).

3.6 CONCLUSION

The State of Kuwait has undergone significant transformations over time, transitioning from humble beginnings to a position of prosperity. Kuwait, being a part of the GCC, plays a vital role in fostering unity among its member countries. This is particularly significant considering the historical context of Kuwait, having endured the devastating Iraqi invasion. The inclusion of Kuwait in the GCC not only serves as a symbol of solidarity but also provides a platform for cooperation and collective decision-making in various regional matters. With oil exploration, Kuwait could strive and advance, following some western patterns. The population in Kuwait has a large proportion of expats due to numerous job opportunities. Although there has been a shift over the decades, one thing will always remain consistent: a prevailing presence of male influence.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Typically, the research techniques and methodology aim at identifying the instruments which are used in a particular study the phenomenon. This research has opted for qualitative research as it offers the researcher in gathering a deeper understanding of complex phenomena, uncovering rich insights that quantitative methods may miss. It considers social, cultural, and contextual factors, providing a holistic view which is essential in studying the male grooming topic. Further, the flexibility of qualitative research allows for adaptation and exploration of unexpected aspects or new questions. In addition to his, qualitative research focuses on subjectivity, individual experiences, and diverse viewpoints (Sahay, 2016).

The research explores the impact of social media, cultural traditions, and individual self-perception on male grooming practices in Kuwait, a market experiencing high demand for male cosmetics. Influences include higher education rates, career development, exposure to Western culture, and social media adoption. The study aims to understand the effect of social media advertising on Kuwaiti male consumers, gain insights into their buying behaviour, and provide recommendations for cosmetics brands to effectively target this demographic. The research fills a significant gap in academic studies exploring this phenomenon in Kuwait.

This chapter provides information about the data collection procedures, time horizon, choice of research, main strategy used, philosophical approach and technique. The study is also focused on providing a detailed consideration of the ethical considerations and conceptual framework in the form of a diagram by testing the reliability and validity of the research. The part of ethical consideration emphasises on highlighting the research's ethical grounds.

4.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Research philosophy aims to explore the type of research, with one philosophical approach being determined based on whether it is quantitative or qualitative. This research has utilized the interpretivist research philosophy as the researcher seeks to

investigate the demand for male cosmetics in Kuwait through the use of semi-structured interviews.

Research paradigm refers to the framework or perspective that researchers choose for their study. It encompasses the beliefs, assumptions, and approach that researchers take when conducting their research. The research paradigm plays a crucial role in shaping the design, methods, and interpretation of the study, ultimately influencing how knowledge is created and understood within a specific field of study (Saunders et al., 2019).

Ontology: The essence of reality as described by ontology can be summed up as (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Ontology is therefore primarily concerned with the phenomena in terms of its mode of existence. By pointing to different types of already-existing information, it seeks to reveal the truth or an answer to a research issue.

Epistemology: Epistemology is the way researchers find truth (Carson et al., 2001). It deals with how researchers gather information to understand reality. It is also about how researchers distinguish right from wrong and interpret the world. Ontology and epistemology differ in different paradigms, with unique assumptions about reality and knowledge. This shapes the study's methodology (Scotland, 2012).

From ontology and epistemology perspectives, this study has utilized existing literature to enhance understanding of the research topic and to follow empirical procedures. The empirical studies were carried out using exploratory method to gain in-depth understanding through interviews. The findings are also examined in relation to existing literature, offering valuable insights into the topic specifically within the context of Kuwait, while also considering global studies and findings.

4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Research methods fall into two core categories: deductive and inductive. Deductive methods journey from the realm of general theory to specific observations, typically involving the testing of hypotheses derived from theoretical models. On the other hand, inductive methods adopt a more exploratory stance, navigating from specific observations towards broader generalizations and theories (Saunders et al., 2019). These distinct

research methods offer unique lenses through which we can comprehend and interpret our world. This particular research is anchored in the inductive approach.

Inductive analysis is a method in which the research outcomes are influenced by the predefined goals or queries of the researcher. Unlike the deductive method, these outcomes are not solely dependent on the initial assumptions of the researcher. Rather, they predominantly arise from the meticulous scrutiny of the primary data. This suggests that the researcher deeply scrutinizes the primary data, distinguishing patterns, themes, or classifications, which subsequently become the foundation of their deductions (Azungah, 2018). For this study, a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted to produce codes and themes.

4.4 RESEARCH STRATEGIES

This study conducted exploratory research to gather comprehensive information on the phenomenon of male grooming and the purchase of grooming products by men in Kuwait. This approach allowed the researcher to gather detailed insights and identify various factors that contribute to this phenomenon.

Given the goal of gathering comprehensive information on the phenomenon and the limited information available in the Kuwait context, the interpretivist philosophy, utilizing qualitative methods, was deemed the most appropriate approach for this research. The limited research on the topic of male grooming and cosmetics towards domestically and foreign-produced services and products meaning that the qualitative research approach has not been extensively used to investigate or study the topic. Therefore, qualitative research choice seems appropriate in addressing the research gap through qualitative data as the purpose of the research is exploratory (Thorpe et al., 2015).

Secondly, conducting semi-structured interviews with Kuwaiti male consumers allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of their grooming practices and their purchasing behaviour when it comes to cosmetics. Also, the interviewees provided an insight to the topic subject that is outside the initial focus areas of the researcher. Such discovery would help to go beyond the emphasis on explaining the consumer buying behaviour towards national or international goods and services in Kuwait. The approach offered the necessary guidance for preparing dependable semi-structured interviews that aided in

conducting a comprehensive analysis of the results. Third, the qualitative approach seems to be appropriate because according to Saunders et al. (2015), this method overcomes research method limitations by enabling the researcher to undertake both analysis and exploration. The sample population included:

- 10 Male Consumers
- 10 Retailers of Male Grooming products.
- 10 Female Consumers.
- 9 Social media celebrities.
- 2 Cosmetic surgeons.

The reason for selecting these groups is that they are the individuals who are either using, selling, or promoting male grooming products in Kuwait. So, interviewing these people provided the researcher in collecting the specific data that is needed for this research. The researcher utilized an interpretivist research philosophy to investigate the demand for male cosmetics in Kuwait using semi-structured interviews.

4.5 RESEARCH CHOICES

Creswell (2009) highlights three main research designs: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Usually, a study tends to be predominantly qualitative or quantitative. But mixed methods research carves out its own space in the middle, bringing together elements from both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This research is qualitative, and the next paragraph will delve into the reasons for selecting this approach.

Qualitative research is a technique employed to delve into and comprehend the value individuals or groups assign to sociological or human-related matters. This methodology involves crafting queries and procedures, typically gathering data from the participant's surroundings, constructing a data analysis that spans from minute details to broad themes, and the researcher parsing the significance of the data (Creswell, 2009). The final report maintains a flexible structure. Supporters of this research style value an inductive approach, an emphasis on personal significance, and the essential task of conveying a situation's complexity.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION

Considering the different philosophies of positivism and interpretivism research, their data collection methods are also different. The qualitative approach seems useful here because it employs the interpretivist research philosophy.

To measure aspects of primary data (the empirical data collected through interviews), the semi-structured interviews were conducted. The sampling technique included the non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is a sampling technique where the samples are gathered in a process that does not give all the individuals in the population equal chances of being selected (Explore, 2020). Within the non-probability sampling, the convenience sampling technique was used. The convenient sampling usage permits to gather the data conveniently. On the contrary, the analysis of secondary data is analysed with the help of critical literature analysis. As stated above, data was collected from 10 Male Consumers, 10 Retailers of Male Grooming products, 10 Female Consumers, 9 Social media celebrities and 2 Cosmetic surgeons. The two cosmetic surgeon interviews are clubbed with the social media celebrity. Therefore, there are four interview groups.

4.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Conducting interviews is the initial stage of the fieldwork. The provided semi-structured understanding of male grooming and cosmetics and their impact on buying behaviour in Kuwait can be obtained. This was achieved by studying the influence of these cosmetics on male grooming and their intentions to purchase based on information shared by the participants. Interview information is relevant as this would provide direct knowledge on the topic that could be discovered through extant literature review.

Semi-structured interviews as a method provided the researcher with an ability to examine in-depth into the context and situations of the participants. This helps to obtain a detailed understanding of how individuals reflect, interpret and interact on a particular experience (Dempsey, 2016).

For conducting the primary research, a semi-structured interview is a suitable method when the subject is relatively under-researched. It allows the researcher to follow an interview pattern and encourages further exploration and discussion of the information shared by the participants. Interviews enabled the research to gain understanding of the

beliefs, opinions, experience and viewpoints of respondents (Melnikovas, 2018). This states that the interviews are used to gain a comprehensive analysis of the extent to which males in the country are influenced by cosmetics available in the local market. Revealing the participant experiences, opinions and perspectives addresses the study objectives. This is due to the reason that face-to-face interviews assist in gaining social cues, intimacy and trust that further contribute to the likelihood that interviewee would provide transparent and open answers while sharing their experiences as compared to the telephonic ones (Denscombe, 2014). Hence, due to the vital role of trust in the study, the researcher chose to conduct the interviews in person rather than via the telephone despite the costly and time-consuming nature of the face-to-face interviews. In the interviews, the researcher plays an active role by interviewing participants, while also remaining unbiased and neutral. The researcher is responsible for monitoring and supervising the entire data collection process. As the person in charge of the process, the researcher can gather valid and authentic first-hand information.

This research questions captures both the "what influence" the consumers and "how these influence" on the male Kuwaiti consumers. To capture this research question, the interview schedule was developed. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the means of data collection as these allowed the interviewer to embark the discussion with the participants yet follow some structure for the questions to ask to fulfil the aim of conducting the interview. Different interview schedules were developed for different groups of participants such as Male consumers, Male grooming retailers/professionals and social media influencers.

4.6.2 Triangulation

Triangulation is the process of using several techniques or data sources in qualitative research to create a thorough understanding of a phenomenon (Patton, 1999). Triangulation has also been considered a qualitative research technique to examine validity by bringing together data from many sources. Four different types of triangulations distinguished by Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999): investigator triangulation, method triangulation, theory triangulation, and data source triangulation. Most qualitative researchers who study human phenomena gather data from individuals or groups during interviews; the sort of interview they use depends on the objectives of the study and the resources at hand.

The in-depth interview is one of the most effective methods for understanding people and delving deeply into a subject (Fontana and Frey, 2000). Although in-depth interviews allow for spontaneity, flexibility, and response to individuals, they frequently take a lot of time and work to conduct, to transcript, to analyse. The type of interview carried out in this research is the semi-structured interviews were conducted where the participants were asked variety of questions to engage into the dialogue that was facilitated by the follow-up questions as necessary. Generally, interviews lasted between 45 – 60 minutes. A total of 41 interviews were conducted – 12 Retailers, 10 Male Consumers, 10 Females and 9 Social Media Influencers

4.6.3 Sampling

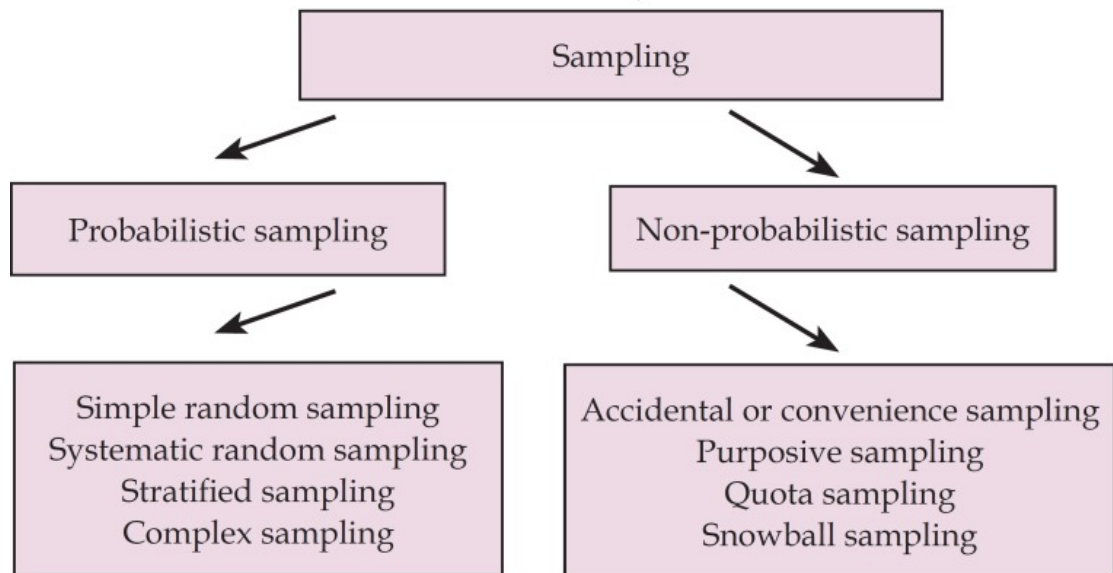


Figure 4.1: Different types of Sampling

Source: Martínez-Mesa et al. (2016)

Non-probability sampling is a sampling technique where the samples are gathered in a process that does not give all the individuals in the population equal chances of being selected (Saunders et al., 2019). Purposive sampling was used to identify those male consumers who regularly buy male grooming products and male grooming professionals/retailers. The researcher also employed snowball sampling where the respondents were asked to refer others which meet the above-mentioned criteria. The analysis of secondary data is analysed with the help of a critical literature analysis. Semi-

structured interviews were carried out with male consumers, women, social media influencers and cosmetic surgeons, and retail store managers and employees.

4.6.4 Purposive Sampling

Due to the nature of the research that is specific to the Kuwaiti is specific and unique, the researcher proposed a set of professionals who are directly related to the cosmetics field especially in male grooming cosmetics. These are senior executives in retail of high-end brands such as Harvey Nichols, Clinique, and Chanel as well as Cosmetic Surgeons – Doctors who are specialised in treating men both surgically and non-surgically.

4.6.5 Selection of Respondents

It is important to have a selection process in the interviews. This is due to the information depth within every interview conducted as this would help to ensure that male cosmetic selection is evaluated properly. It seems vital that those Kuwaiti male customers are chosen for interviews who possess regular purchase experience of the products locally available. Also, people from the retail industry were interviewed to gain deeper insights. The ability to choose individuals and compare with the other information works as triangulation and it minimizes the risk for the researcher which is further focused on a singular experience. The experiences of different Kuwaiti males were contrasted and compared to know about their decision making when it comes to making final purchase decisions related to male cosmetics. The focus of the in-depth interviews would be on analysing the extent to which certain theoretical concepts such as country image, orientalism (ways of perception), xenocentrism (desire to engage in the elements of another's culture rather than one's own) and ethnocentrism (customs of one's own culture) influence the purchase decision of males.

Once the interview process is over, the interviews are the source of providing relevant insights to conclude the final results. The face-to-face interview approach seems useful to analyse all the characteristics displayed by the Kuwaiti males, which would form the basis of conclusions. Simultaneously, with the methodological approach followed by Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2016), the interview incorporated some statement questions to evaluate the extent of xenocentrism displayed by the Kuwait males considering their grooming and usage of cosmetics surrounding important buying behaviours.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS - THEMATIC ANALYSIS:

Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 178) note that thematic analysis (introduced by Holton in the 1970s) is a “distinctive method with a clearly outlined set of procedures in social science”. Thematic analysis helps a researcher identify themes and patterns of meanings across a given dataset with a specific research question(s). This method can be used with larger or smaller data sets to analyse almost any type of qualitative data such as interviews, focus groups or qualitative surveys. By using this method of data analysis, researchers are able to capture complex, chaotic and contradictory relations in the real world. This approach is stimulating and demanding, as qualitative research can uncover relationships and patterns from the data, contributing to a specific area of knowledge by situating the research findings within existing knowledge (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2013).

This method of data analysis allows the researcher to identify commonly recognised patterns and connections to answer the research questions meaningfully. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), this method consists of seven steps, including transcription, reading and familiarisation, coding, search for topics, thematic reviews, the definition and naming of topics, and analysis completion. The following section shows the necessary steps involved in the thematic analysis.

4.7.1 First steps: Transcribing and Reading

The researcher must be ready with the transcriptions before analysing qualitative data. This refers to the transcription and transferring the information into written documents collected from the recorded audio and video interviews. It is important to remember that this is a demanding process. However, transcription software offers options to speed up the playback and slow it down. Play a recording for a few seconds, type what you hear and rewind to avoid the missing data to transcribed interview data. Similarly, the researcher must proceed very slowly and remember that this is not a quick and simple process. Depending on the researchers' interests and how he/she plans to analyse, the transcription can be used as a hard copy or soft copy. If it is done manually, it is better to read it with a hard copy. When using software for data analysis such as NVivo, it is better to keep and read soft copies. Similar to the process followed in this research, the researcher first listens to the interview that was conducted in the local language (Arabic

in this case), noted it down as exactly what was said, then the interviews transcripts were translated into English.

Before indicating the coding and the identification of subjects, the researchers must be familiar with the data. This familiarity occurs during the transcription, because the researcher becomes immersed in what the interviewees are saying, by listening, typing, and making corrections to the transcripts. However, in order to extract meaningful information from the data, the researcher analysed it from a theoretical perspective. Braun and Clarke (2013) identify this as "analytical sensibility," referring to the ability to read and interpret data through the selected theoretical lenses. Reading, re-reading and record keeping of noticed aspects (for instance, certain quotes that represent concepts directly from the theory may be present in the interview data; and/or unexpected responses that show new patterns) of the data must be made either in the data itself (as a note below, over or as a footnote or as a footnote) or in a separate document. At the end of this stage, the researcher gets an idea of the data patterns and relations. Once the researcher knows the data, he/she can proceed to coding the data, which constitutes the next key step in the thematic analysis.

4.7.2 Second step: Coding

Coding refers to the identification of all relevant data in the whole dataset in order to respond to research questions (mentioned in the Chapter 1). According to Braun and Clarke (2013), "a code is a word or brief phrase that captures the essence of why you think a particular bit of data may be useful" (p. 207). Coding can be performed manually or using different qualitative software such as NVivo, Atlas and Qualtrics. While codes derived from the data contain a "succinct summary of the explicit content of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 207) and are labelled as semantic codes the codes derived from the data are further enhanced, invoking conceptual and theoretical frameworks that determine implicit meanings within the data which are latent. In other words, if the researcher expects to present the research more realistically and descriptively, semantic codes are probably best. Otherwise, if the researcher expects to present the theoretical lens-based information, latent codes are more appropriate and more theoretical (Brauns et al., 2014).

Byrne & Milestone (2023) note that semantic codes are merely explicit representations or superficial meanings of what respondents provide. This approach is also known as a descriptive analysis of the data, i.e. representing only what was communicated to the researcher by the participant. Latent coding attempts to go beyond the semantic codes' descriptive level to provide in-depth analysis, assumptions, ideas and beliefs (Byrne & Milestone, 2023). Several latent codes were developed using the theoretical lens of the study in this research. The researcher also identified data-driven codes (semantic codes). Researcher can begin to code the transcripts using latent codes and semantic codes can be identified during coding. The semantic codes are the emerging data (unanticipated quotes identified in the previous phase) and can be labelled with a name derived from the data. If these codes are identified, they must be included in the list of codes. The list of codes can also be enlarged with emerging (semantic) data driven codes. By considering these semantic codes, new theoretical relationships could be established as new (emerging) patterns demonstrated in these codes would not be explained by the initially taken theoretical lens alone.

4.7.3 Third Step: Pattern Identification: Theme Codes (Sub-Themes and Themes)

When the coding in the entire dataset is completed, it is time to look for patterns in the data. Braun and Clarke (2013) state in that respect that a pattern-based analysis allows the researcher to identify important data characteristics that serve to answer the research questions. The frequency of appearance of a certain code is important in identifying which patterns are most relevant for answering a specific research question. However, some codes may not appear frequently but remain useful in answering the research questions. Therefore, the frequency and the importance of a certain code must also be considered during the identification of patterns in the data. In this example, the right-hand sides of At the end of this phase, the researcher must examine them carefully without considering frequency, because some codes which do not often appear can still support answering the research question.

4.7.4 Fourth Step: Search, review, and finalisation of topics

The next step is to determine the broader data patterns which can be used to answer the research question. Themes and sub-themes can be identified according to the data patterns. The theme "captures something important about the data in the context of the research question and provides some level of patterned response or meaning in the data

set" according to Braun and Clarke (2006; p. 82). These patterns are wider than codes because they have many aspects. These authors further state that a theme is a "central organisational concept," which is a collection of codes, thus a collection of ideas or aspects, that can be recorded within a certain theme (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 224). The data set, for example, places cultural and societal pressure on the Kuwaiti men to look young and presentable and thus influence their decision in buying men's grooming products. Therefore, all the influences on the Kuwaiti men's purchasing are categorised under the sub-theme "Peer Pressure/Society". Another example from the data shows that "purchases pattern of men's grooming products are influenced by a few factors". A sub-theme entitled "Purchases" was therefore defined.

A careful reading of those sub-themes and associated data, which are represented by codes, shows that these sub-themes can be categorised into two broader subjects: 'Purchases' and 'Packaging'. Likewise, a researcher must try to identify data patterns in sub-themes and themes at this stage.

Braun and Clarke (2013) state that the researchers at this stage have a couple of points to notice. Firstly, the topics identified at this stage might be temporary and subject to change under the guidance of a supervisor, or the researcher may realise that the topics identified do not correspond to the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2013) therefore encourage revision of identified themes. Second, topics must not all cover the data, but must be selective, because qualitative research presents a story about the data in a way that deals with the research issues. Finally, a qualitative researcher must understand that analytical differences can be made according to the different views and theoretical influences of different individuals. A supervisor or a co-investigator can view these patterns in different ways. However, a qualitative study is not able to provide answers to research questions, but instead the researcher has to look for the best fit for the analysis. For instance, interviews enabled the researcher to gather a significant amount of information, particularly in the open-ended semi-structured interviews utilized in this study. Ultimately, it depends on the researcher and the researcher's capability to understand what information is useful and how it is connected to the research topic.

4.7.5 Finally: The analysis development

This phase not only takes a considerable amount of time, but also requires reference to the body of literature in order to be meaningful and to add to the body of knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Clarke & Braun, 2013). In other words, the sub-topics and themes should be identified in light of the literature covered earlier and during the analysis of the interviews. This presentation has to be made in light of the theoretical lens of the study, and certain topics (dependent on the research) cannot be presented with the prevalent constructs of the theory, or the themes identified can conflict with the theory's constructs. Some theories could therefore be integrated with the study's main theoretical lens to elaborate the identified subjects. This could explain a new theoretical relationship (theoretical development) and contribute to existing knowledge (Bendassolli, 2013).

4.7.6 Summary

Thematic analysis is recognised as a useful method with a clearly defined set of social science procedures that can be used to analyse almost any kind of qualitative data, including data elicited from interviews, focus groups and qualitative surveys etc. This method involves seven steps: transcription, reading and familiarisation, coding, searching, and reviewing themes, defining, and naming of themes, and finalising the analysis.

4.8 ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethical consideration is referred to as the most essential component that is supposed to be discussed comprehensively in every study. This provides support to make sure that the whole research is conducted with boundaries of morality and ethics. Besides, the researcher must make sure appropriate mitigation of any ethical issues to ensure the study is robust. Most importantly, the researcher needs to have respondents' informed, written consent. This can be done by providing respondents with detailed objectives of the study and asking them to sign a consent form. With this, the researcher is also supposed to assure participant anonymity and confidentiality of personal information.

Participants were provided the option and flexibility to select the place wherever possible such as their workplace, café or restaurants or their homes. The researcher obtained prior consent from all the participants in the invitation message as well as at the start of the actual interview. The consent process explained the academic purpose of the researcher

and the way participants' confidentiality would be maintained. No personal sensitive information was recorded (Bryman and Bell, 2007) such as name, date of birth and other credit/debit card details.

However, other general personal details such as gender, age group, academic qualification, income group, marital status, and any other such details were elicited from the respondent to be able to correlate these factors with a respondent's buying behaviour. Data were treated according to GDPR rules. The researcher's details along with the aims and objectives of the research were provided to participants, so follow-up questions could be directed to the researcher (Saunders et al., 2012).

4.9 LIMITATIONS

The researcher has made sure to make a comprehensive analysis of every component, but this limitation has resulted in an unwanted resistance for the overall study. The study was also limited by qualitative analysis as the usage of quantitative analysis would have made the study clearer and more detailed. Other limitations experienced during the data collection included limitation of time, financial constraints, lack of expertise. Interviewing skills were limited by a particular region especially Kuwait and the technical knowledge required to use the qualitative software such as NVivo seems challenging. It was also challenging to secure interviews with popular social media users because many of them claimed to be too busy.

4.10 REFLECTION ON THE EXPERIENCE OF FIELDWORK

From the outset, this research was complicated due to the global crisis of Covid-19 and pandemic that was emerging. With time, countries all around the world were placing travel bans and social distancing restrictions. This research paper focuses on the cosmetic/grooming field for Kuwaiti males in Kuwait. Kuwait had placed a travel ban and a full lockdown in the nation, which resulted in all stores shutting down and people staying at home. As Covid-19 precautions increased all around the world, it was very difficult to conduct interviews with experienced individuals in the retailing sector Kuwait. Although this was a difficult and challenging time to collect data, I was able to overcome those complications and find alternative solutions to keep the research going.

By patiently waiting, the first interview took place during August 2020 while I was in London through online video Zoom. By having some connections in Kuwait and also by the use of social media, information regarding specialized individuals who were experienced in this research topic was collected. By using cell-phones interviewees were asked questions. The interview questions being asked were relevant and straight forward, however it was difficult to ask them without physically meeting the participants. Some interviewees refused to use virtual meeting platforms to conduct the interview and preferred to have it done by a phone call. It was a very hectic time to conduct interviews via online video/phone due to connections and lags due to being in a different country. As travel bans decreased I was able to travel back home and continue conducting more interviews in person. By multiple visitations to cosmetic stores in Kuwait, the data set was enlarged. Conducting interviews in Kuwait via videocalls and Zoom carriers reduced the pressure somewhat.

Overall, the experience of this fieldwork with interviews has been very challenging due to the world crisis of Covid-19 holding some emotional and psychological side effects. However, it enriched the research by providing the opportunity to the researcher to explore and get familiarised with online meeting platforms such as MS Teams and Zoom. The researcher felt confident and brave in conducting the research and interviews during such an extraordinary time of social upheaval. After the first three interviews, some interview questions were changed and amended based on preliminary responses, so the questions were able to be reshaped.

As mentioned before, after conducting interviews with ten male consumers the researcher decided to stop as no new details were being identified. Therefore, the researcher moved to the second main interview group – male grooming industry professionals. In October 2021, where the researcher started analysing the transcripts, it was found that the information saturation had been reached. Likewise, after conducting seven interviews with the professionals, the researcher was in the similar position where the answers started to be repetitive. However, before interviewing the Social Media celebrities, it was found that women in the social circle of the male respondents were very important in influencing the buying behaviours of men in relation to grooming products. This included buying products or a cosmetic surgery or any other beauty procedure such as hair removal or beautification. As a result, the interviewer decided to interview female consumers and ask

them about their influence on their male friends and relations and their perception of male grooming. Finally, the last cohort of the interviewees – Social Media Celebrities were interviewed.

4.11 SUMMARY

This chapter provides the research design, approach, philosophy, data collection, data analysis, ethical reviews and limitations of the study considering validity and reliability. The chapter has explained the reason for taking a qualitative approach combining all the interview transcripts so that the researcher can better analyse aspects of male grooming and cosmetics in consumer purchase decisions. The data analysis includes transcripts and coding by analysing data, converting them in the form of text followed by coding procedures to evaluate the themes accurately.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 FINDINGS FROM MALE CONSUMER INTERVIEW DATA

The following tables show the key details about the male consumers that participated in the study. A total of 10 Kuwaiti male participants were interviewed (see table 5.1). They range between different age groups, marital status, occupation, and place of work. This provides different perspectives on male grooming.

Table 5.1: Male Participants

Interview#	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Place
1	26	Single	employer	Bank
2	24	Single	Medical graduate	Hospital
3	27	Married	Radio/TV representer	Kuwait Radio
4	20	Single	Student	Kuwait University
5	23	Single	Student	Gulf University
6	38	Married	Military	Kuwait Military
7	34	Married	Engineer	Oil Company
8	40	Married	Manager	Bank
9	27	Single	PhD Student	SOAS
10	41	Married	Business owner	Kuwait

Note: The name coding would be P-MF-1 where P is for Participant, M is for Male and 1 is the interviewee number as shown in the table.

Below are the main themes that emerged from the analysis of the male consumers interview data:

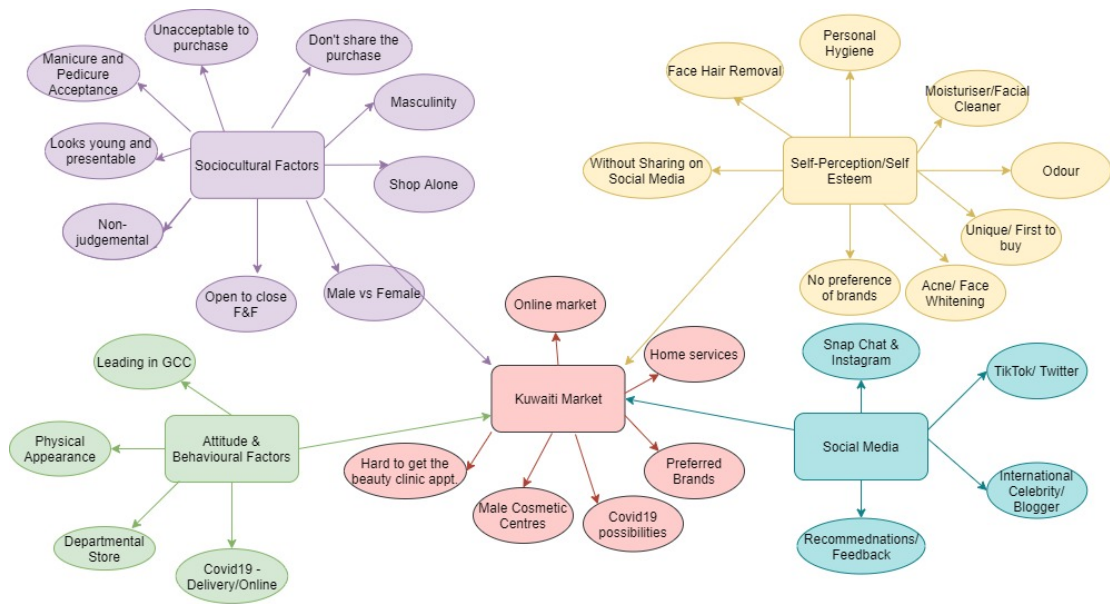


Figure 5.1: Main themes emerge from Male Consumers' Interviews

Table 5.2: Themes from Male Consumer interviews

Main theme	Sub-theme	Description
Kuwaiti Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online market ▪ Home-services ▪ Preferred brands ▪ Covid-19 possibilities ▪ Male cosmetic centres ▪ Hard to get beauty clinic appointments 	<p>The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a surge in online shopping across virtually all consumer sectors. This trend is also reflected in the growing popularity of online beauty and cosmetic resources shared through social media. In addition, there has been a notable increase in awareness among men regarding the importance of personal grooming and physical appearance. As a result, there has been a corresponding rise in demand for cosmetic surgery and beauty salons. However, this has also led to difficulties for male consumers seeking appointments at popular cosmetic centres, given the high demand. Consequently, there has been an increase in competition among male grooming cosmetic centres in Kuwait.</p>
Sociocultural Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Don't share the purchase ▪ Masculinity ▪ Shop alone ▪ Male vs Female ▪ Open to close family & friends ▪ Non-judgmental ▪ Looks young & presentable ▪ Manicure & pedicure acceptance 	<p>Although grooming is widely accepted in Kuwait, some men still consider it taboo for a man to shop for cosmetics in public. As a result, they may prefer to shop online or alone to feel more comfortable. Gender segregation is common in Kuwait due to its Islamic and cultural background. Manicure and pedicure services are becoming popular among men in Kuwait. However, there are still some who do not accept grooming</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unacceptable to purchase 	behaviour for men and view it as unacceptable.
Self-Perception/Self-Esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal hygiene ▪ Moisturizer/Facial cleanser ▪ Body odour ▪ Unique/First to buy ▪ Acne/Face Whitening ▪ No preference of brands ▪ Without Sharing on social media ▪ Face Hair removal 	There are several factors that contribute to higher self-esteem among men. Among the Kuwaiti men interviewed, personal hygiene is considered the most important aspect of grooming. Additionally, smelling good is seen as attractive and helps men feel more welcomed. Many men in Kuwait are also interested in facial laser hair removal as a reliable and practical option.
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Snap Chat & Instagram ▪ Tik Tok / Twitter ▪ International Celebrity/Blogger ▪ Recommendations/Feedback 	Snap Chat and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms used by men in Kuwait. Findings of this research has revealed that social media celebrities/bloggers have a significant impact on men in Kuwait, influencing them to become more conscious of grooming habits and products. Through these social media influencers and advertising, male consumers are being introduced to a wide range of grooming products and services, which is helping to keep them informed.
Attitude & Behavioural Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leading in GCC ▪ Physical Appearance ▪ Departmental Store ▪ Covid-19 - Delivery/Online 	The trend of grooming behaviour is expected to continue expanding in the GCC. The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in an increased online purchase. This is a new trend in consumer behaviour. Consumers have increased their online purchases.

Five main themes were highlighted (see Table 5.2) as follows:

5.1.1 Kuwaiti Market

The male consumers observed that there is a huge potential for male grooming products in the Kuwaiti market. The reasons are multifaceted that are also discussed in the other themes later in this section. Upon asking the interviewees, there was consensus that Covid had had a positive effect, in both online and offline purchasing (discussed further in this chapter) and despite a debate about the preferred brands among the retailers discussed earlier, the male consumers stated that product ingredients are more important to them than brands. It has also been noticed that it is very hard to get beauty clinic appointments due to their limited availability because of the popularity of availing their services. This is backed by several respondents. For example, “*So many competitive clinics and mainly*

fully booked ... this shows how there is an extreme demand and society acceptance” (P-MF-6).

Use of home beauty services such as manicure and pedicure among the male consumers is also reported as increasing, showing a growing market for home services only for men. There are several other services such as plastic surgery for body sculpting, "Hollywood" smile (dental procedures), treatment for hair loss and baldness, and several other procedures to enhance their overall physical appearance. The increase in number of beauty clinics, difficulty in getting appointments, increasing acceptance of male grooming in the society indicate the growth of the male grooming market. The increased popularity of home beauty services amongst the group appears to be due to their attitudes towards male grooming purchases. Interviewees suggested that there should be more male beauty salons as there are for women.

There has been an increase in competition among beauty/grooming clinics for men in Kuwait in the past 6 years. The evidence is based on information that was shared by interview participants and other publications. For example, the cosmetic surgeons that were interviewed indicated that they are in demand and the procedures that they are doing for men have increased over the years. This is backed by news reports. According to Morocco World News (2012), there has been an increasing demand for plastic surgery among both men and women in Kuwait. However, recent data suggests that more men are now opting for procedures of this type than ever before. Specifically, the percentage of men in the Arab world seeking plastic surgery has risen from 5 to 25 percent of the total number of patients undergoing such a procedure (moroccoworldnews.com, 2012).

The Al Arabiya English newspaper published a report in 2022 where they point out that cosmetic procedures have become increasingly popular among women in recent years, largely due to shifting beauty standards perpetuated by advertising, society, and social media. According to the report, there has been a recent increase in men's interest in and participation in cosmetic procedures. There are several factors contributing to the increase in male patients undergoing cosmetic procedures. These include a desire to appear more competitive and youthful in the workforce, growing social acceptance of cosmetic procedures, and increased awareness of their safety and efficacy (Issa, 2022). A study by Sindi et al. (2023) indicates that effect of social media on the plastic surgery industry

among the general Saudi Arabia population. Among the Arab countries, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is globally ranked in growth of cosmetic surgeons, which represents the cosmetic industry growth (arabianbusiness.com, 2023). The thenationalnews.com (2023) further added that cosmetic procedures in the UAE increased from 223,507 in 2020 to 583,909 in 2022 with eyelid surgery, liposuction, and skin tightening as main procedures.

This is further ascertained in a report published in the Kuwait Times; there has been a growing trend of men seeking plastic surgery to improve their physical appearance in Kuwait. In the past, plastic surgery was predominantly viewed as a practice for women due to the conservative nature of the Kuwaiti community (Al-Issa & Dens, 2023). However, with the rise of social media and celebrity culture, there has been a shift in attitudes towards plastic surgery among men. This has led to an increase in the number of men undergoing such procedures to enhance their physical features and achieve a more aesthetically pleasing appearance which can differ based on individual preferences, ethnic background, and societal preferences. For example, according to research, Middle Eastern women's top aesthetic priorities are related to their eyebrows, skin quality, tone, and colour, and nose jobs (Fabi et al., 2023). Dr. Ahmed Hegazy, a Plastic Surgery Specialist and Assistant Professor of Plastic Surgery at Boushahri Clinic, has acknowledged through another interview this trend. Hegazy suggests that that men are now more open to the idea of plastic surgery and are seeking procedures such as nose jobs, facelifts, and liposuction to achieve their desired look. With the growing acceptance of plastic surgery among men in Kuwait, it is expected that the trend will continue in the coming years (Fattahova, 2017). Provided below is example of advertising for a clinic that specializes in liposuction for men.

According to the interviewed cosmetic surgeon:

“Also, as the world is getting more open and more advanced in the medical field, many new cosmetic procedures are created and developed and also tailored only for men. So, this is also an influence and seen as a motivation for men to take this challenge in trying new procedures or new trends in their life.” “Also, services and procedures are becoming more easy and more spread at our present time, unlike before...” (P-C-6).



Example of a procedure made by Dr Mohammed Hilali for abdominal liposuction for a male consumer.



Social media platform page of Dr Mohammed Hilali, plastic/cosmetic surgeon in Kuwait.

Figure 5.2: Social Media platforms of Cosmetic Surgeons

According to Fattahova (2017), there has been a notable increase in the number of men choosing cosmetic surgeries in Kuwait. Popular procedures for men include hair implants, rhinoplasties, post-weight loss plastic surgeries, and high-definition liposuction (HD Lipo), which is an effective and minimally invasive method for achieving desired body shape (Fattahova, 2017). A growing trend in cosmetic surgery is the increasing demand for skin-tightening procedures. Men are seeking to appear more youthful and refreshed. Advancements in technology and medical science have made it easier for men to achieve their desired looks. This trend is expected to continue rising in the future (Wood, 2023). As technology and techniques continue to advance and male grooming becomes more mainstream, the demand for men's plastic surgery is steadily increasing (Wood, 2023).

According to a report published by the BBC, the increased popularity of video calls is believed to be a contributing factor to the rise in male cosmetic surgery (bbc.com, 2021). Another report further confirms that the global cosmetic industry has seen remarkable growth in recent years due to several factors, including advances in technology, improved techniques, and a greater societal acceptance of cosmetic procedures (Parashar, 2023). In the interview with a prominent cosmetic surgeon, the following information was provided:

“A large number of surgical procedures started to have an alternative procedure which is “non-surgical” so many males started to get encouraged to do those cosmetic procedures. Also, the advancement of medical field has improved in many ways that they created cosmetic and beauty treatments that might not show any “scar” on the body after treating an area of the body. So those all influenced and encouraged Kuwaiti males to consider treating and fixing their physical appearance” (P-C-6).

As the demand has been increasing and more men are accepting the idea of focusing on their appearance, many clinics started to increase and open in Kuwait. For example, a report published in the timeskuwait.com (2022) states that the popularity of cosmetic procedures has grown significantly in the Arab regions over the past decade. In fact, at least 60% of Kuwaiti women aged 15 to 55 invest in cosmetic and laser procedures, while treatments for gynecomastia and forehead wrinkles are the most sought-after by men. According to the cosmetic surgeon interviewed, availability of procedures is scarce due to popular demand:

“The number of cosmetic/grooming clinics in Kuwait is one of the largest numbers of retailing industry in Kuwait at this present time. There is a very tough competition between those clinics and retailers... the reason is because there is a very noticed rise in demand from the society towards grooming and cosmetic” (P-C-6).

Based on empirical evidence, grooming behaviour and cosmetic surgery procedures are both becoming trends for men in Kuwait. For example, many men have a busy lifestyle and feel that there's no time for gym or to exercise, so they would prefer to get a cosmetic surgery done as it might be easier for them and would make them feel more confident.

“Males that have a crucial position in the society – that have a stressful lifestyle in Kuwait, those males usually have a “exhausted look”. This exhausted appearance makes them feel less low in their self-esteem, so they would prefer to boost their look and have at least a “fresh look” (P-C-7).

“Because these men face a very stressful routine in life by working a lot, many meetings, traveling a lot and are exposed to the public they actually are very stressed in life. For this reason we notice that their facial features change and would adapt face that looks always “tired”. These men are mainly educated and open-minded so they are now aware of some simple grooming or beauty procedures that would enhance their look or appearance in a more acceptable way” (P-C-7).

The most popular cosmetic surgery is liposuction which is fat removal from the body through a surgery done in a clinic/hospital. Another popular cosmetic surgery with Kuwaiti men is the enhancement of abdominal muscles. This involves the removal of fat from the abdominal area to show their six-pack (the process of toning and building strength in the abdominal muscles). As per the responses received from the cosmetic surgeons, cosmetic surgery procedures, particularly liposuction and abdominal muscle enhancement, are becoming popular among men in Kuwait who have busy lifestyles and feel that exercise is not an option. The cosmetic surgeons added cosmetic procedures are seen as a way to boost confidence and save time. Men are taking various procedures to make themselves look better and presentable.

5.1.2 Sociocultural Factors:

Despite the popularity and acceptance of the Kuwaiti society, interviewees mentioned that it is still taboo for the male consumers to go out and shop for male grooming products. It has been noticed that male consumers feel shy and eventually order online for their preferred cosmetics or hygiene products.

“My friends usually will make fun of me if they hear that I would do “hair laser removal” because some of them still see this as “less” manly behaviour in Kuwait especially between us men.” (P-M-1)

Considering the local culture of Arab and Islam as the governing rule, there is a segregation between culturally assigned gender, the workplace and finance are more male orientated, whereas cooking and domestic house duties are assigned to women. The Arab culture is strongly linked with the Islamic religion which also has impact on the society. From a general perspective, there are some segregations between men and women and the culture places emphasis on men taking various leadership positions. Hamdan (2021) refers to this male dominance as “toxic masculinity” where society conforms to the values. However, current evidence suggests women are coming into various leadership positions (Jones, 2023). For example, Women in Kuwait have made significant strides in various leadership positions, breaking stereotypes, and challenging traditional gender roles. In the corporate sector, for instance, women are increasingly occupying high-level positions such as bank managers, CEOs, and businesswomen, and contributing to the growth of the economy. In the political arena, women are making their voices heard by participating in the parliament, serving as ministers, and holding other political leadership positions in Kuwait (Jones, 2023). Their contributions to the country's development and progress cannot be overstated and serve as an inspiration to many young girls and women who aspire to make a difference in their respective fields.

Similarly, cosmetic, and grooming products are solely considered to be feminine and generally men tend to avoid these practices with reasoning that it does not align with their perception of masculinity. It is still considered feminine to shop for cosmetics products. That is one of the reasons that the male consumers in the study are not disclosing or discussing their shopping with anyone either online or offline. The only exception is their very close friends and family and only if they ask for their recommendations.

“I personally would do this habit openly in public and freely, but, however, I notice that many people in Kuwait don't fully accept this. I also would not try to talk about my habits and grooming behaviour because men in Kuwait would judge each other ... Men in Kuwait would feel shy or embarrassed to go shop in public for grooming products and services, because they fear the public and how they might see and label them. That's why some men would prefer ordering cosmetic/grooming products online because they feel confident, and no one will know about. I honestly feel not all of Kuwaiti's live like me and have an openminded family and lifestyle, so that's why maybe not all the society accepts it yet.” (P-M-2)

Interestingly, manicure and pedicure services among male Kuwaitis is getting popular and accepted in this society, as stated by male participants. However, due to the issues of claiming it publicly the home services have shown quite a bit of interest.

“We also start to do manicure pedicure as it’s becoming popular (it has become a social status and seem to be a high-class behaviour) so this is a norm, and we can be seen as an “elite” male when we do manicure pedicure” (P-M-2).

Some Kuwaitis still don't fully accept men grooming because they consider it "closed minded" and believe that men should focus on their behaviour rather than their appearance. For instance, some of the men in the study reported that they have bought more grooming products in the past than planned because they are influenced by advertisements, social media, and people in their social circle. Men in Kuwait are relatively new to the grooming market and the associated behaviour, as well as to the variety of products available. The closed-minded attitude or restricted behaviours arise from religion and culture that are imbedded in the lifestyle of Kuwait people.

According to a female participant *“I come from a religious family so men in my environment still won’t fully accept and behave that way.” (P-F-17).*

Further, The interview data provide support for the idea that, as a Kuwaiti citizen and strong societal bonds, the change in men’s attitude and behaviour towards portraying themselves physically better is evident through frequent observations. The insights provided by the study participants demonstrate that male grooming is becoming increasingly popular. However, it is important to note that there are still certain societal, familial, cultural, and religious restrictions that may hinder its full expression. A direct quote from a male is one example of the findings.

“However, men might get criticized if they go a bit over or extreme, also by the way they dress then yes they will get criticised” (P-M-5).

This is supported by studies by Alenezi (2022) where the authors points out that in Kuwaiti society, Bedouins are referred to a group of people who usually lead a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle and trace their roots to the Arabian Desert. They have distinct cultural practices, customs, and values that set them apart from other groups in the region. Bedouin society in Kuwait is organized around tribal units that function as extended

families. These tribes are usually formed based on shared ancestry, lineage, or geographic regions, and each has its own unique customs, traditions, and internal governance systems. Bedouins have a rich cultural heritage that is reflected in their traditions, music, poetry, storytelling, crafts, and hospitality. They often hold on to their cultural practices and values, retaining a strong sense of identity and pride in their Bedouin heritage. The Bedouin community has gradually integrated into Kuwaiti society while still preserving their unique cultural identity. Their contributions to Kuwait's cultural landscape can be seen in areas such as cuisine, language, and celebrations (Alenezi, 2022).

According to Al-Hyari et al. (2012) some Islamic religious people in Kuwait still won't have a fully accepted view of men and grooming. Though Islam like any other religion, has not shown any opposition to male grooming, it rather requires its followers to look presentable. According to Al-Hyari et al. (2012), religiosity plays a pivotal role in the consumption of global brands. While Alserhan et al. (2014) and Ashraf et al. (2017) have reported no impact of religiosity on luxury brand choice and purchase intentions, the majority of studies suggest that religiosity has a significant positive influence on the behaviour of Muslims towards luxury brands, as long as it is consistent with Islamic values (Arlı et al., 2016). According to Arlı et al. (2016), being religious does not necessarily make one anti-materialistic among Muslims. However, there is limited evidence regarding which luxury values may be considered more or less conflicting with Islamic values.

Some religious leaders have made the connection by claiming that these male grooming products are prohibited for men as it may eventually influence them to behave and look like women. According to Al-Hyari et al. (2012), religion significantly defines Muslims' life values. Additionally, Billah et al. (2020) suggest that it acts as a controlling factor of their purchasing behaviour. However, it is not just the mere religious affiliation of Muslims that should determine their luxury values. Rather, their level of religiosity, as argued by Agarwala et al. (2019), is the determining factor. This is because religiosity often leads to the adoption of certain lifestyle choices, including buying habits, and has a profound influence on the way in which individuals perceive and interpret the world around them. Therefore, it is important to understand the relationship between religiosity and luxury values to gain a better understanding of the purchasing behaviour of Muslims.

“The majority of open-minded people totally accept men to groom themselves either with products or services but there is a small number of “Bedouins” (close-minded) maybe still refer this to females ... but I think they will accept this concept as is it widely spreading” (P-M-7)

That is one main reason that many participants prefer to shop abroad when they travel because they feel more relaxed when purchasing cosmetic/grooming products when they travel, they feel less pressure and, they’ve mentioned that process of products outside the country is cheaper. Some said they would prefer ordering online as this would make them feel relaxed and no need to go to a public store.

5.1.3 Self-Perception/Self-Esteem:

Self-perception or self-esteem is another key theme that was noticed during the analysis of the interviews. Kuwaiti male consumers are cautious about their physical presentation specially they stated that they are more inclined towards looking younger.

“Main factor to me is my personal hygiene wise (because it’s most important for first impression), secondly is because I always wear shorts, so I don’t want my knees to look dark and rough (for presentation in front of people) social acceptance. I want to look and feel presentable in the public” (P-M-4).

They are also very keen about their personal hygiene such as cleaning their teeth,, especially for the smokers as well as using body and face cleaners. The participants started using male grooming products at an early age; many of them stated use of male grooming products from the start of puberty, a time where they experienced changes and imperfections in their skin. Another interesting factor that influences the Kuwaiti male consumers is their attraction towards scent. Perfumed products are more popular and preferable among the group. The data suggest that there is a growing preference to remove facial hair. Many of the interviews agreed that if they look acceptable and “good looking” in public, then they would have higher self-esteem and feel more welcomed and confident. Looking good for the workplace is also something that many men stated.

“Self-esteem is a main factor for grooming habits because people nowadays think that people around them would think people will judge you by your look & appearance, it’s a big reason to groom yourself” (P-M-5).

Some participants agreed that once entering and developing the behaviour for grooming, it becomes more “*addicted*” just like females. A male participant stated the following: “*I eat good, I work-out, I sleep well... but those grooming products are very essential for me and I’m addicted to them because I saw good results on my physical appearance*” (P-M-2).

This behaviour can become addictive for both males and females because they witness an improvement in their physical appearance and realize that their self-confidence/esteem is much higher. They appreciate and accept themselves more, often comparing before/after photos to see how much they've changed after getting a cosmetic or grooming procedure done. Additionally, receiving compliments and acceptance from friends, relatives, and society can make men want to look even "better" and rely on non-surgical cosmetic procedures more than traditional methods like applying face creams and serums every night for years. Kuwaiti men therefore prefer non-surgical cosmetic procedures over traditional methods like applying face creams and serums nightly for years. This is because injections provide quick results that are visible after just one treatment. These injections are fast and provide visible results after just one treatment. It all revolves around self-esteem and self-confidence where they are receiving positive compliments from their friends/family members such as “*you look good*”, “*you look different*”, “*you look slimmer*”, “*you look healthier*”, and “*you look younger*”.

“Males in Kuwait are very sensitive nowadays regarding their appearance, even if they don’t show it. They are willing to do anything just to look and appear young, fit, and handsome” (P-M-6).

The findings indicated that participants see grooming as an addiction and aim to improve their appearance by exploring grooming tips, new products, and routines. Also, men who are into grooming behaviour said that they feel confident around females, which makes them feel more welcomed and attracted when they appear presentable from head to toe, clean, fit, handsome, and wearing a nice perfume or smell nice.

“Highly focus on my weight and I try to look “good” among my friends, I actually compare myself and my weight when I see other men around me, also, I started going to the gym just to shed weight to look good among my friends and to attract the opposite sex.” (P-MF-1).

Many male participants stated that grooming does not make them less “*manly*” and does not affect their “*masculinity*” because they noticed that the way they appear and look has nothing to do with being a “*man or masculine*”. They stated that masculinity revolves around how a male would “*act, think, behave*” and not on how they would “*appear or look*”. Perhaps many grooming behaviours, such as products/services, might help them to feel more “*manly*”.

“I started to notice and take care of my appearance in young age when I had my teeth fixed (braces) just to have a good smile to look presentable .. I didn’t have a problem with my teeth honestly, I just want to look more presentable and have a good smile” (P-M-7).

A very popular procedure among males in Kuwait is to have the “perfect” teeth the “Hollywood” smile (as shown in the picture).



Figure 5.3: Hollywood Smile dental procedure

The findings also showed that younger men in Kuwait (18 to 30 years old) would prefer to purchase cosmetic/grooming products that might have an international luxury brand name, is expensive and looks like an exclusive product. They said this would make them feel “*niche*”. Higher pricing connotes better quality. Participants suggested they would purchase a beauty product or service just because it’s the “*trend*”. However, study participants aged over 35 indicated that they would prefer to get more medical/organic/healthier cosmetic products that and would continue using the say perceive to have safer ingredients.

5.1.4 The perception of social media among Men:

Despite the fact that social media, especially Snapchat and Instagram are the most popular platform for the Kuwaiti male consumers, they do not report to be influenced by local celebrities or bloggers.

“I never got influenced from a social media celebrity to purchase any grooming products ... because I believe they are all “fake” and they do it for income. I don’t easily get influenced” (P-M-8).

Social media celebrities have a significant influence on society, including grooming practices, with some respondents mentioning that it does have an impact while others stated that it does not. Social media is often used to share grooming tips and product recommendations, which can introduce new practices to users. According to the literature, social media and celebrities have been identified as significant influencers on male grooming practices, and this trend is likely to continue as social media continues to grow in popularity and influence (Boutkaska, 2019). Many celebrities advertise for cosmetic clinics and services, which has been witnessed an increase in demand for Kuwaiti men to get those cosmetic/beauty treatments done. This refers to procedures such as vitamin injectables for brighter face and healthier look, laser hair removal, Botox for forehead, facial treatments, and eyebrow cleaning.

“I got influenced many times through snapchat advertisement to buy shampoo, hair cream, hair style grooming and bought it” (P-M-7)

However, other participants claimed that they use social media to learn about the products, including their ingredients and availability, and they value feedback and recommendations as genuine and honest suggestions over traditional advertisements or influencer endorsements. The information provided here suggests that many people in Kuwait utilize social media to enhance their knowledge about grooming. The responses also indicate that social media influences peoples perspective towards grooming and there is a significant level of attraction by the men in the study towards understanding more about grooming and beauty products.

5.1.5 Attitude and behavioural factors:

Analysis of the data collected from the interviews shows that male grooming products popularity, acceptance and consumption is the highest in the Kuwait than any other GCC country.

“The number of cosmetic/grooming clinics in Kuwait is one of the largest number of retailing industry in Kuwait at this present time. There is a very tough competition between those clinics and retailers... the reason is because there is a very noticed rise in demand from the society towards grooming and cosmetic” (P-C-6).

Other neighbouring countries in the GCC such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman are also starting to accept this new behaviour among men as they are seeing how Kuwaiti men look and appear, so this behaviour is spreading among the GCC (Donnelly et al., 2018).

As discussed earlier, the Kuwaiti male consumers are very cautious about their physical appearance, perceived highly important in their culture. This is articulated by P-MF-6 who states that:

“I believe that Kuwaiti men focus more for their physical appearance more than Western males” “Because Kuwait culture is judging you mainly by your look and appearance, so this is a reason why men started to focus more into their physical appearance.”

According to the participant's, there has been a noticeable increase in the demand for male grooming products and services in Kuwait. This growing trend has opened numerous opportunities for the beauty and cosmetic industry to expand and diversify its offerings in the country. As men's grooming becomes more widely accepted and embraced in Kuwaiti culture, businesses have responded by developing new and innovative products and services to meet the evolving needs of their male customers. This has not only led to increased revenue and growth for these businesses, but also a more diverse and inclusive beauty landscape in Kuwait. This is backed by the quote from one male participant:

“Because the demand is highly noticed and increasing and men are very educated by developing and open mindset towards grooming habits and behaviour, so many international markets and businesses for grooming are being opened in the GCC as there is a large demand and success for businesses to open” (P-M-3).

Some of the participants stated that male grooming is becoming the norm in society. People expect men to look younger and presentable in the same way as women carry their beauty and aura. Interviewees also noticed that females are not attracted towards those men who are not taking care of their skin, physical look, and the basic hygiene.

“I must take care of my physical appearance for myself, but also in front of people it’s very important. I notice I am more welcomed and respected by the public when I look presentable, nice, fit, and handsome” (P-M-4).

Amongst the respondents, it is commonplace for woman in the family, for instance mother, sister and wife to be the main influencers in the purchase of male grooming products. According to the participants, Kuwaiti females play a vital role in influencing men to look presentable and better. Some females are the ones who purchase grooming products for their husband/brother/friend/father to treat or enhance their physical appearance. Kuwaitis are updated with the latest grooming trends and therefore up to date following the latest global trend in fashion.

“Also, the majority of men are becoming obsessed with tanning beds, it became a trend and a “must” when summer comes to look a bit dark and bronze like celebrities, tanning beds and tanning sprays are becoming a new market in Kuwait now. many men would like to look “the same” as the other men, it’s like a trend, they all want to achieve the same level of look, also maybe the social media celebrities influenced them” (P-M-5).

Also, older generations of their fathers and grandfathers they used to copy westernized behaviour and looks such as Michael Jackson or in the 70’s the high waist jeans. So this shows that society accepts to develop certain behaviour from other cultures. More information related to this is provided in chapter 6, section 6.8.1.

5.2 FINDINGS FROM RETAILERS/COSMETIC SURGEONS INTERVIEWS

The following themes started to emerge from the analysis of the interview data. The interviews were conducted with twelve professionals who belong to the cosmetic industry. The details of interviewees are mentioned in the following table:

Table 5.3: Retailers/Cosmetic Participants

Interview#	Profession	Experience (years)	Company	Position	Place
	Retail	Three	Chanel	Counter Manager	Bloomingdales
2	Retail	Seven	Clinique	Sales Manager	Avenues Mall
3	Retail	Nine	Durance	Marketing Agent	Al-Raya Mall
4	Retail	Nine	Debenhams	Marketing Agent	Avenues Mall
5	Retail	Nine	Harvey Nicole's	Top manager	Avenues Mall
6	Cosmetic Surgeon	Twenty- three	Private clinic	Doctor	Al-Jarallah Clinic
7	Cosmetic Surgeon	Twenty years	Private clinic	Doctor	Kuwait City
8	Retail	Eleven	Guerlain	Salesperson	Debenhams
9	Retail	Ten	Dior	Manager	Debenhams
10	Retail	Four	Kehil's	Marketing Manager	360 Mall
11	Retail– Spa	Sixteen	Man Time	Sparista	Muhallab Mall
12	Retail	Six	Beauty Boulevard	Business owner	Private Business

Note: The name coding would be P-R-I where P is for Participant, R is for Retailer/CS, and I is the interviewee number as shown in the table.

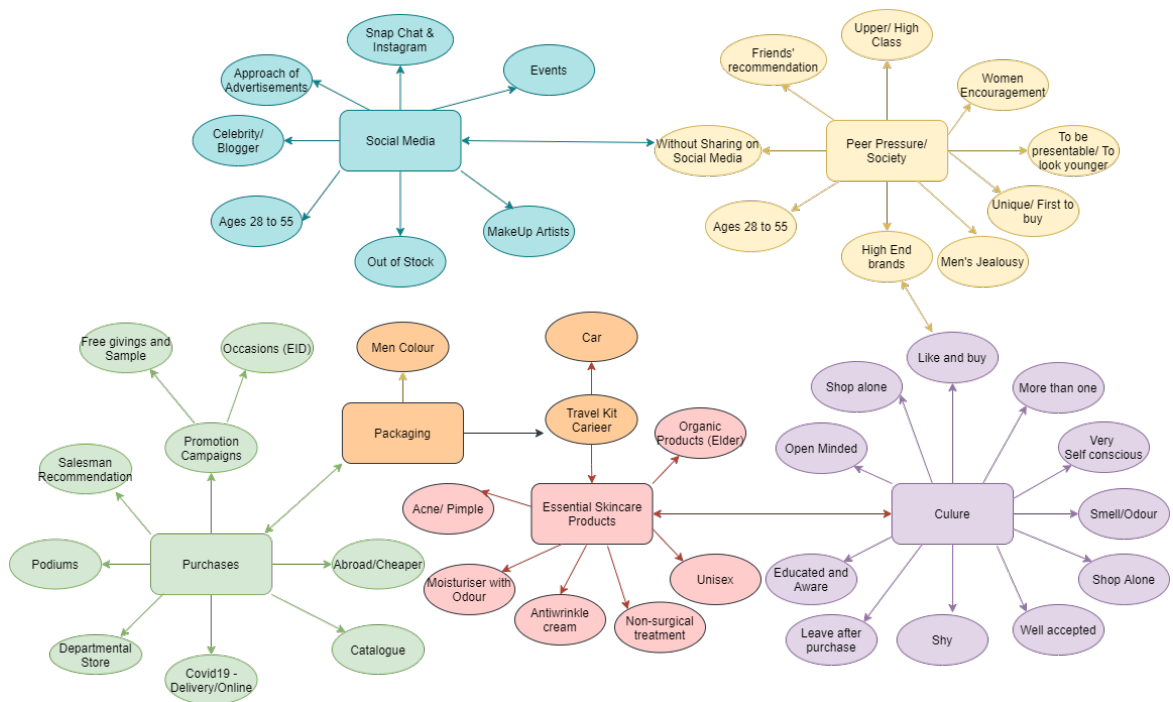


Figure 5.4: Main themes emerge from Retailers’/CS’s Interviews

Table 5.4: Themes from Retailers and Cosmetic Surgeons’ interviews

Main theme	Sub-theme	Description
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Like and buy ▪ More than one ▪ Very self-conscious ▪ Smell / Odour ▪ Shop Alone ▪ Well accepted ▪ Shy ▪ Leave after purchase ▪ Educated & Aware ▪ Open minded ▪ Shop Alone 	Grooming has become a more prevalent habit in society as many men are becoming increasingly educated and open-minded. While there is a growing acceptance, some men may still feel uncomfortable shopping with friends. Shopping alone and leaving the store after making a purchase can alleviate this pressure. Additionally, wearing fragrances can help men feel more confident and welcomed in social settings.
Purchases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotion campaigns -> Free giving’s & sample /Occasions (Eid) ▪ Salesman recommendation ▪ Podiums ▪ Departmental store ▪ Covid-19 – Online/Delivery ▪ Catalogue ▪ Abroad/Cheaper 	The shift towards online purchases has consumption with convenient home delivery. Further, male consumers tend to rely on the knowledge of salespersons when making purchasing decisions. In Kuwait, shopping for grooming products abroad has become increasingly popular amongst men due to price differences and perceived cost savings. Offering free samples

		and gifts has a positive effect on men's purchasing decisions.
Peer Pressure/ Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Upper/High Class ▪ Women Encouragement ▪ To be presentable/ to look younger ▪ Unique/ First to buy ▪ Men's jealousy ▪ High-end brands ▪ Ages 28 to 55 ▪ Without sharing on social media ▪ Friends' recommendation 	In today's society, there is a certain expectation for men to maintain a presentable appearance. Women in Kuwait also play a role in encouraging men to present themselves well. Engaging in grooming behaviours can help a man achieve a presentable appearance and be perceived as belonging to a certain social status, such as high class. Purchasing the latest exclusive products can make male consumers feel more elite and unique. Despite the increasing trend of grooming, men in Kuwait still do not feel comfortable sharing their experiences or purchases on social media.
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Snap Chat & Instagram ▪ Events ▪ Makeup Artists ▪ Out of Stock ▪ Ages 28 to 55 ▪ Celebrity/Blogger ▪ Approach of Advertisements 	Snapchat and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms among male consumers. In Kuwait, social media celebrities and bloggers are a powerful advertising method. Many brands have seen an increase in demand and sales to the point where products have become out of stock due to the strong influence of the advertisements made through these social media celebrities and bloggers.

5.2.1 Culture:

Interviewees highlighted that the trend of buying cosmetics in Kuwait is persistent and increasing. Kuwaitis have shown unique behaviour that is not only different from other Arabs in the region but also from Western countries. Male grooming is a relatively recent concept in Kuwait. While these practices are commonplace in Western cultures, Kuwaiti men should be mindful of societal views when adopting them. It is important to note that there are cultural and traditional differences between the West and Kuwait, and it is crucial for Kuwaiti men to navigate these differences thoughtfully. For instance, while Western men may prefer a clean-shaven look, beards and moustaches are considered a symbol of masculinity in Kuwait. Therefore, Kuwaiti men may choose to groom their facial hair instead of completely removing it.

Moreover, Kuwait is a close-knit society where people frequently interact, and physical appearance plays a significant role in social interactions. Therefore, any changes to one's physical appearance are often carefully considered. Adopting Western grooming practices while still respecting Kuwaiti cultural values can be a challenge, but it is possible with some careful consideration and thoughtful decision-making. By doing so, Kuwaiti men can achieve a well-groomed appearance that is both modern and culturally appropriate.

Kuwaiti men are experiencing a shift in their attitudes towards grooming and personal care. This change can be attributed to various factors, such as the influence of Western culture, exposure to social media, and the impact of advertisements. Through these channels, Kuwaiti men are gaining knowledge about the latest trends and products in the grooming market, and they are becoming more interested in experimenting with different grooming behaviours.

According to a Chanel cosmetic retailer:

“Kuwaiti men have caused an influence not only among each other, but also among the Middle East” “Some men from the Middle East come into the store and ask for products that “Kuwaiti” use! They are being influenced on how the Kuwaiti male is acting... They ask the salesmen “what is the most popular product Kuwaiti men are purchasing?” (P-R-1).

Where they are more towards buying male grooming products similar to their Western counterparts, they are shy and hide their cosmetic purchases.

“One of the reasons for men becoming very self-conscious about their physical appearance is because of women. Females here in Kuwait are becoming more educated and exposed to beauty and hygiene and would prefer seeing their husband, son, father or brother looking healthy, fit, young and in good physical shape. Females in Kuwait also encourage men to go treat their dark circles, forehead, lose weight, etc.” (P-R-6).

Self-confidence is a complex concept that can be influenced by various factors (Liu, 2019). One of these factors is physical appearance, which can have a significant impact on a person's level of self-esteem. In fact, some participants in this study mentioned that they feel more confident when they engage in grooming activities such as getting a new

haircut, wearing nice clothes, or applying makeup. This suggests that taking care of one's appearance can have a positive effect on one's self-perception and overall confidence. Additionally, other factors such as social support, personal achievements, and positive self-talk can also contribute to the development of self-confidence. By recognizing and addressing these factors, individuals can work towards building a stronger sense of self-worth and confidence in their abilities.

Kuwaiti men are quite concerned about their appearance and prefer to maintain a youthful physical look.

“A large percentage of the society accepts and started to be aware and understand how important a man should take care of his physical appearance. However, there might be a small percentage of the society also men themselves that still doesn't agree with this behaviour and might look at it as “less manly” and more for females. But because the majority of the society are well educated, exposed to media, travel a lot, have friends from different nationalities, engaged with media, so they have become more aware of how important it is for a man to use grooming products” (P-R-4).

The women participants indicated the following:

“Because they know for a fact that the public will look at them and judge them, they believe in “first impression” is highly important... they are also aware that the other sex will look at them, females now care how men appear and will judge a man by his appearance. For example, also in meetings and work field especially business wise it is highly important to look presentable and look at their “best” because in business sectors and meeting you are more acceptable if you look very neat to seem intelligent and come from a high level also in relationship wise men started to care for their appearance so they developed the grooming behaviour to impress the other sex” (P-F-16).

The reasons for this phenomenon are varied and complex. One factor is the influence of cultural and societal expectations, which can shape our attitudes and behaviours around certain things such as body image, success, and happiness (Alenezi, 2022). Similarly, the media and advertising play a significant role in shaping our perceptions of what is desirable or acceptable, often promoting unrealistic or unattainable standards.

According to another the female participant:

“Despite the increasing openness, education, awareness, and globalization of Kuwaiti society, it remains an Islamic country with strong cultural and religious values. Therefore, there are certain behaviours and actions that are not acceptable in Kuwaiti culture and religion. While it is true that society is becoming more open, a significant portion of the population, especially the elderly, still do not accept certain behaviours and actions, such as certain dress codes for women. Additionally, many younger people in Kuwait are using new slang words and terms that were not previously found in Kuwaiti culture” (P-F-17).

According to female participant:

“Social media made us now more open and exposed to new cultures and also now this generation they raise their kids differently into developing this new mindset” (P-F-15).

Social comparison and societal pressure can lead individuals to pursue goals or lifestyles that don't align with their true desires. Concerns about self-image and acceptance also contribute to this phenomenon. Fear of judgment or rejection can influence individuals to conform to societal norms, even if they conflict with their values.

5.2.2 Purchases:

Interviewees highlighted that they normally purchased their product either in-store or online. Whatever the mode of purchase they choose, their (Kuwaiti men) purchasing behaviour is influenced by many different factors: friends and family recommendations, social media influence, and salesperson recommendations while visiting the store, as their suggestion is paramount because of their knowledge of the product.

“Kuwaiti men: they might purchase more than what they tended to buy, they are also more open to discuss and get easily influenced by what salesmen recommend and market” (P-R-8).

As mentioned before, citizens of Kuwait have a high purchasing power due to government support through allowances and good monthly incomes from their jobs and businesses.

This enables them to afford luxury and expensive products, which in turn increases their overall purchasing behaviour.

There are other factors such as appealing packaging of the product, and free product samples offered that create a positive influence towards a product. Following are some of the products that are offered as samples as part of marketing.



Based on numerous interviews with retailers, it has been found that there is a high demand for a particular men's aftershave. This product has gained considerable popularity due to its distinct qualities and brand image. In addition, it has been noted that the mist is preferred by men of all ages.

The photos presented here were shared by one of the retailers of the renowned fashion brand, Chanel.



The packaging for this product has been thoughtfully designed to appeal to men by using grey colours that are associated with masculinity. By utilizing a colour scheme that is commonly associated with men, the product can communicate that it is well-suited for male consumers and that it will meet their needs and expectations.

The product example mentioned in this document is the Chanel Shaving Foam, a highly coveted item among Kuwaiti men. Its popularity can be attributed to its superior quality and packaging, using attractive colour.



Marketers often use various tactics to appeal their products to men. One such tactic is the use of sophisticated dark colours and packaging. As per the retailers, these colours are believed to be more appealing to men, as they are often associated with masculinity and strength. It is important to note that not all men may be drawn to these marketing tactics, and it is important for companies to consider the diversity of their consumer base when developing marketing strategies.



Chanel strengthens its presence in the male beauty market by expanding its Boy de Chanel make-up line. The Boy de Chanel line was originally launched in 2018, and since then, it has gained a loyal following among male consumers. The line includes a range of makeup products, such as foundation, eyebrow pencils, and lip balm. The expansion of the line will likely include new products that cater to men's specific grooming needs. With this move, Chanel is solidifying its position as a leader in the luxury beauty market, with a commitment to inclusivity and innovation. The brand's expansion into male beauty is a testament to its ability to adapt to changing consumer needs and stay ahead of the curve.

Figure 5.5: Examples of Luxury Grooming Products

The photo examples provide above indicate the type of product (for example, branded and luxury items) and its packaging (use of darker colours) are significant factors by male consumers. In addition to the marketing evidence, this was also verified by retailers.

“Size, colour and shape indeed does influence the decision of Kuwaiti male consumers. Especially packaging of grooming products that are grey-black-white are purchased the most. Men in Kuwait still seem to associate colours with gender, for example, if they notice a pink item or product, they might not purchase it as they think it is meant to be for females. Another influence of packaging or shape

of products is that the majority of Kuwaiti consumers prefer buying a small product” (P-R-5).

“Of course, the shape, colour, size, and package of cosmetic and grooming products has a very important role in persuading males to purchase a specific product. For example, many of Kuwaiti men travel a lot, so they would prefer having a small sized cream or oil. Also, they tend to keep some of their grooming products in the car. They tend to buy dark colours and avoid and flashy colours that tend to look more feminist” (P-R-4).

“Kuwait male consumers would purchase a grooming product based on a “photo” they saw on online shopping or any social media platforms” (P-R-9).

The reason behind this phenomenon is revealed by the findings of this study. They show that the male respondents, especially those who report themselves as highly active on social media platforms, are easily influenced by social media celebrities when it comes to purchasing products or services. Based on the findings, it has emerged that not all of the men are influenced by social media celebrities and advertisements. This is highly subjective and depends on many aspects, such as social status, mindset, demographics (education level, income, age), use of social media platform, influence of social circle (friends, family, co-workers), previous purchasing experiences, and advertisements that can act as emotional or psychological triggers towards purchasing the products. These are several factors that influence individuals’ decision on influencing and associating with social media celebrity. This is because these men are attracted by advertised grooming products, often demonstrated through before-and-after photos (see section 5.1.1 and 5.1.3). The male respondents report they are drawn to the idea of achieving similar results for themselves and are thus more likely to buy the product or service being advertised. It is therefore important for marketers to utilize these findings when developing their advertising strategies on social media platforms.

For example, social media has become a powerful tool for influencing consumer behaviour in the grooming industry. A study showed that almost 70% of males who groom themselves regularly get influenced by social media ads (Boutkaska, 2019). They see photos and videos of high-quality grooming products and services, and they get attracted

to the results shown in the before/after pictures. As a result, they purchase the products or services advertised. Additionally, social media influencers have become a key part of grooming marketing campaigns. They share their experiences with grooming products and services and how they have solved problems like hair loss and acne. Men who follow these influencers trust their recommendations and buy the products or services they suggest. Social media has revolutionized the way grooming products and services are marketed and consumed, and their impact is only going to increase in the future.

Kuwaiti men prefer to buy small-sized products that are easy to carry in their pocket or travel kit. The Badra Clinic in Kuwait is a well-known medical facility specializing in hair treatment for men. They are highly regarded for their hair loss procedures and getting an appointment can be difficult due to their popularity among men of all ages.



The Badra Clinic is an excellent choice for men in Kuwait who are struggling with hair loss or baldness. With its exceptional reputation, experienced staff, and cutting-edge technology, this clinic is committed to helping patients achieve the best possible outcomes and regain their confidence and self-esteem.

Figure 5.6: Hair loss treatments

During the discussion, one of the male participants shared his personal experiences with a certain hair treatment procedure. He also went into detail about the process, describing the steps involved in the treatment and explaining how it had worked for him. This information shared here indicates that Kuwaiti men prefer small-sized products that are convenient for portability. Men prefer reputed cosmetic clinics but getting an appointment such clinics can be challenging due to high demand. This indicates the preference of men towards improving their physical appearance and demand for cosmetic procedures.

5.2.3 Peer Pressure:

As mentioned above, the Kuwaiti male respondents feel peer pressure to focus on personal grooming. They report that this pressure can lead to anxiety and stress, which can negatively impact their mental health. Beauty is a highly subjective category, and societal standards of attractiveness can vary greatly depending on cultural context. In Kuwait, these standards have been shaped by a variety of factors, including social media advertisements, social media influencers, and various media sources. Despite the subjective nature of beauty, a certain standard of appearance has been established and promoted in Kuwaiti society for both genders. This has led to a stereotyping of what is considered "beautiful" or "handsome" according to these societal standards. However, it is important to note that these standards may not accurately reflect the diversity of appearances within Kuwaiti society. Furthermore, the pressure to conform to these standards can be particularly challenging for individuals who do not fit these narrow definitions of beauty.

This pressure is evident not only from friends but also from the family. The respondents are more inclined towards friends and family recommendations.

“Second influence is among their family and friends when publishing those products on their social media platform, especially Snapchat. They actually believe and trust what their friends use and buy so they would immediately go and purchase the same” (P-R-1).

The findings indicate that Kuwaiti men are still hesitant to publicly share their use of grooming products, preferring instead to discuss these matters in person with their close friends. This reluctance to "*publish*" their grooming habits online stems from a societal concern among Kuwaiti men about being judged by others, particularly given that many of them have family members and a large number of friends connected to their social media pages. Kuwaiti men understand that other members of society may have varying mindsets, and some may be more closed-minded or religious than others. As a result, they may fear being judged by certain members of society. It is important to note that while Kuwait is a Muslim country, there is still a great deal of diversity within the population. This diversity includes differences in religious beliefs, cultural practices, and attitudes towards social issues. Despite this diversity, however, Kuwaiti men often feel pressure to conform to certain societal expectations and norms. This pressure can be particularly

strong when it comes to issues related to gender and sexuality, where there may be strict cultural and religious taboos that are difficult to navigate.

As many of the interviewees, Kuwaiti men do not share information about their visits or purchases of male grooming products with anyone even not with their wives, sisters, mothers, or any other very close person. Another purchasing influence is to buy unique and “*just arrived*” products to get them first and try them before any other person in their circle. High-end brands are equally very popular among male consumers when it comes to male grooming products. This is because Kuwait is a highly modernized country with a dynamic culture and a diverse population. The information related to high-end brands was identified by a female participant earlier (section 1.3.3). Many people in this country follow the latest fashion trends, especially the younger generation who strive to always fit in and belong to a specific social circle. This can be seen in the way they dress, talk, and carry themselves.

In fact, Kuwaiti fashion has become a reflection of the country's social and cultural diversity, with influences ranging from traditional Arab clothing to Western fashion. The popularity of social media platforms has also contributed to the growth of fashion trends in Kuwait, with many young people using these platforms to showcase their style and to follow the latest trends (Alenezi, 2022). Social media has contributed to the growth of the country and its individuals in several ways. For example, businesses are using social media as a marketing tool and a way to reach out to customers. Social media is used by several businesses as part of marketing and customer relationships. For example, in small and medium enterprise businesses to improve performance (Dutot & Bergeron, 2016); brand attachment and brand equity (Dwivedi et al., 2019); hotel employees (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2023); purchase of vegan products in the cosmetics industry (dos Santos et al., 2023); hospitality and tourism context (Jin, 2023); tourism destinations (Kilipiri et al., 2023); educational context (Smith & Storrs, 2023), and also in politics and conflicts (Ukraine–Russia) (Mir et al., 2023).

Evidence presented in this chapter shows different examples of doctors using social media to showcase their achievements and a means to attract more customers to their clinic. Several people have become famous and accepted in society through social media. The impact of social media is one of the factors in the changing lifestyle of people in Kuwait.

Further, in Kuwait, it's common for many Kuwaitis to follow the latest trend in various areas such as fashion, food, travel, beauty, and more. The growth of the Kuwait economy has been quick with the discovery of oil. This has increased the purchasing power with one of the strongest currencies in the world and Kuwait is ranked as one of the richest countries in the world (see chapter 4). This tendency is partly due to the increased purchasing power of younger generations who are willing to buy expensive products to feel like they belong to a higher social class. They do this to fit in with a specific level and feel more confident when they purchase or possess a new, latest, or exclusive product. This desire to stand out and be unique also helps to boost their self-esteem and make them feel more welcomed. Moreover, following the latest trend also allows individuals to express themselves and put forward their chosen identity. This is a way for them to keep up with the times and remain relevant in a fast-changing world.

It is also because that the inclined trend of purchasing of male grooming products can be found in those men who belong to high social class. With the high disposable income, the majority of the purchasers in the study sample are between 28 and 55 years old.

“This new behaviour in Kuwait among men has become an “essential” and a very important aspect in their lives. Kuwaiti men in this present time is highly conscious on how they would appear in public, they are willing to spend money and time to groom themselves and always look good for many reasons” (P-R-11).

The arguments asserted here are based on information shared by retailers. Specifically, insights presented in this research are derived from in-depth interviews with key players in the industry. The data that gathered from these interviews have enabled the researcher to provide recommendations. For instance, in one of the interviews, a prominent figure in the sector provided us with detailed information that corroborates our position. To strengthen our claims, we can even use direct quotes from this interview which attest to the accuracy of our findings.

5.2.4 The perception of social media by Retailers & Cosmetic Surgeons:

Social Media plays a vital role in creating a positive influence on the purchasing of male grooming products among Kuwaiti men. Social media, especially Snapchat and Instagram are more famous among the local population in Kuwait.

“Social media, advertising, influencers, before and after photos are all factors that changed the view of the society and enforced them to accept this behaviour towards Kuwaiti men” (P-R-10).

Equally well-known among male grooming companies, whether they are manufacturers or retailers, is the use of social media platforms to promote their products. These are also popular among the cosmetic clinics that market their treatments to their prospective customers. These professionals stated that it helps them to upload their videos and pictures (before and after) to influence the viewers.

“Because social media platforms tend to be an addictive behaviour to Kuwaiti society, it became very important for them to always capture and share with their friends or even their daily lifestyles, whether what they eat, what they consumer, what they purchase, maybe because they are very addicted to their phones and very active on social media” (P-R-12).

Social media celebrities and bloggers have a great influence on social media (Boutkaska, 2019). However, it was stated in the interviews that sometimes the viewers know that they are sponsored and paid for by the companies, so these may not be genuine and authentic suggestions and recommendations. One respondent shared their frustration even when the sale was successful, as stated:

“It’s a bit difficult to gain full trust from the audience, even if customers will “purchase and buy” the product that doesn’t mean that they trusted me... they might purchase it once and never show up again. Not easy to know if they feel I’m honest or not” (P-C-6).

In Kuwait, there is a legal framework that provides protection to all stakeholders involved in the social media industry, including brands, consumers, and social media influencers. This legal framework is in place to ensure that there are consequences for the publication of any content that contains violence, harm, copyright infringement, or false information (moi.gov.kw, 2023). Kuwait is open to free speech but there are certain restrictions in the use of social media and free speech. A report published by Alkhateeb (2021) in the Arab Times newspaper titles "tweeting is like walking in a minefield in Kuwait" where the author states that individuals who frequently publish through social media publishing in Kuwait and the Middle East, can end up in facing criminal charges and higher risk of even

being sent to prison. This is due to a concerning trend of silencing dissenting voices against the country, its rulers, the government, and any other sensitive information (Alkhateeb, 2021). By having this legal framework in place, the Kuwaiti government can maintain a level of accountability in the social media industry, which ultimately benefits all parties involved. Furthermore, the law also provides a deterrent for those seeking to commit fraud or engage in any harmful activities, as there are clearly defined consequences for such actions. Overall, the legal framework in Kuwait is an important tool for maintaining a fair and responsible social media industry and one that is beneficial to all stakeholders.

The phenomenon of negative or proactive behaviour on social media has been increasingly observed in recent years. Social media bloggers are often at the forefront of this trend, speaking out against injustices they perceive online and asserting their legal rights in the face of violations. In some cases, these individuals have taken legal action to seek redress for harms suffered, whether in the form of defamatory statements, unauthorized publication of private information, or other forms of online misconduct. The emergence of legal remedies for social media-related harms has opened new avenues for individuals seeking to protect their reputations, privacy, and other important interests. However, social media platforms' complex and rapidly evolving nature also presents unique challenges for those seeking to navigate the legal landscape and obtain meaningful relief. As such, it is important to remain vigilant and informed about one's rights and options in the online world and to seek out competent legal counsel when necessary.

This has led to some influencers showcasing their lawyers' names on social media profiles. Other social media celebrities and influencers take further steps to demonstrate their legal protections against spam and harmful messages. This includes highlighting their ability to initiate legal action against any unsolicited or unwanted messages that they receive. For instance, numerous social media celebrities have shared their negative experiences on their platforms through published photos and videos. These individuals often mention legal issues and how they have sought protection through their lawyers and law firms. An example is provided in below:



Figure 5.7: Examples of legal posting by celebrities

Source: layalina.com (2022)

By publicly emphasising their legal resources and protections, these personalities aim to deter spam and protect their online presence. Moreover, the use of legal measures in this way highlights the importance of strong legal representation in the digital age, where online interactions can have real-world consequences. Nevertheless, these actors are still a great influence on the audience and been regularly hired by the marketers to run their marketing campaigns, give away discount codes and announcing the sales and the duration for different brands.

“Social media celebrities and bloggers indeed created more demand from customers and increased our sales after advertising for a product. Kuwaiti customers seem to trust those bloggers at our present time” (P-R-9).

In recent years, consumers have become more selective and distrustful of celebrity endorsements. Instead, they rely on social media influencers, especially in Kuwait, who have credibility within their communities. These influencers share their experiences with products on social media, even showing themselves using the products regularly. For example, they may record videos of themselves receiving beauty treatments like fillers or Botox. By putting their physical appearance on the line, these influencers build trust in the product or service.

In Kuwaiti culture, it is easier to connect with a social media influencer compared to a famous Hollywood celebrity. Kuwaiti social media influencers are often students or employees, making them relatable to their audience as regular people in Kuwait. They are frequently seen in public, which makes approaching them slightly easier. Additionally, these influencers are well-known in the community, leading to higher acceptance. Many of them are from Kuwait or other Arab countries with similar cultures and lifestyles. As a result, their social media followers and the community understand and accept their perspectives.

Trust is the foundation of a relationship between a party and another party. It is the belief in the reliability and integrity of the other party. Trust is essential in building and maintaining relationships between a firm and its customers. When customers trust a firm, it can lead to loyalty and commitment.

“We highly train our salesmen to know what product to recommend for our customers. They should be honest and educate customers on what specific products goes with each customer. This will build a trust between the brand and the customer, and the customer will eventually come back to our store again” (P-R-2).

“The society also started to trust salesmen especially in cosmetic and grooming sector, they actually listen to what advice the salesmen might recommend such as, what specific product might be useful for their skin or physical appearance” (P-R-5).

“Men in Kuwait seem to trust and easily get influenced when seeing promotional campaigns on specific products” (P-R-10).

Value co-creation and interaction are the foundation of building "trust" between consumers and social media celebrities. This trust is developed through engagement, exchanging information, and providing feedback. Social media platforms have made this interaction easier, faster, and more reliable. Participants can share photos, videos, audio, text, and location information, which creates a sense of closeness between them.

5.3 FINDINGS FROM FEMALE CONSUMERS' INTERVIEWS

The following tables shows the key details about the female consumers that were participated in collecting the data:

Table 5.5: Female Consumer Participants

Interview No.	Age	Social status	Preferred social media platform	Occupation
1	23	Single	Instagram + Snapchat	Engineer
2	26	Single	Instagram + TikTok	Doctor
3	33	Married	Instagram	Businesswoman
4	61	Married	Instagram	Lawyer
5	31	Married	Instagram	Graphic designer
6	36	Single	Snapchat	In bank
7	25	Single	Instagram	Medical student
8	37	Married	Instagram + Snapchat	Businesswoman
9	29	Single	Instagram + TikTok	Graphic designer
10	32	Married	Snapchat	Teacher

Note: The name coding would be P-F-I where P is for Participant, F is for Female and I is the interviewee number as shown in the table.

Trust is an essential factor that influences consumer behaviour when making purchasing decisions. Without trust, consumers may hesitate or even refrain from buying a product or service altogether. Trust can be established through various means, such as previous positive experiences with a brand, recommendations from friends or family, or positive reviews and ratings from other customers (Aydin, 2014). Additionally, building a positive reputation and maintaining transparency in business practices can help foster trust and strengthen relationships with consumers. Therefore, companies must prioritize trust-building efforts in their marketing and sales strategies to attract and retain loyal customers.

Thota et al. (2014) conducted a study that shed light on the relationship between men's loyalty and trust towards their friends and their attitudes towards male grooming brands. The findings of the study suggest that men who exhibit loyalty and trust towards their friends are more likely to exhibit similar attitudes towards male grooming brands. According to one of the male participants:

“However, I would only tell my close friends who seem interested in grooming habits like me, but I will never post or share my cosmetic products on social media

because I don't want to be judged. I would recommend the good products to my close friends only" (P-M-2).

Trust is a significant factor that influences purchase and promotes male grooming. This has been emphasised by retailers and cosmetic doctors who are also influencers through their social media advertisements, as illustrated below:

"Social media celebrities and bloggers indeed created more demand from customers and increased our sales after advertising for a product. Kuwaiti customers seem to trust those bloggers at our present time" (P-R-9).

"Many doctors ... especially cosmetic would like me to market their medical services/treatments/products ... because audience would trust my advertisement ... [as] I'm a doctor and they would perceive that doctors would share beneficial harmless services" (P-C-6).

This implies that there is a strong connection between social relationships and consumer behaviour, particularly in the male grooming industry. Therefore, it is important for male grooming brands to understand the role of social relationships in shaping consumer behaviour and to develop marketing strategies that consider the social nature of their target audience. Kuwaiti men trust women with regards to grooming products and usage.

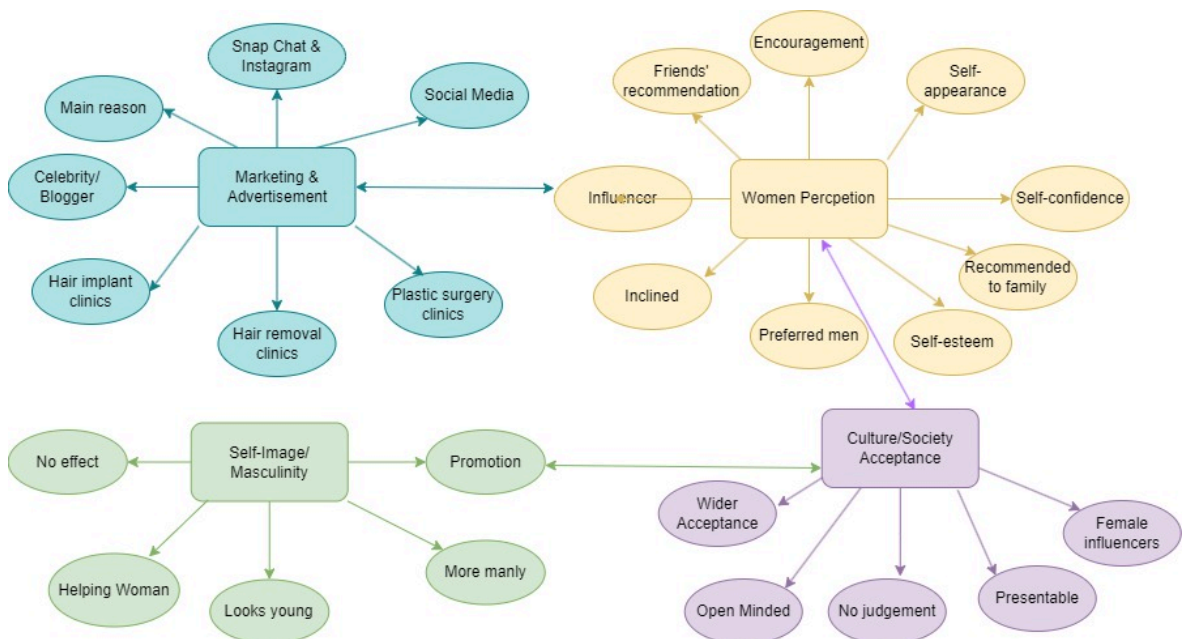


Figure 5.8: Themes emerge from Female Consumers' Interviews

Table 5.6: Themes from Female Consumer interviews

Main theme	Sub-theme	Description
Culture/ Society Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wider Acceptance ▪ Open Minded ▪ No judgement ▪ Presentable ▪ Female influencers 	Kuwaiti society has become more open towards male grooming behaviour. This shift in attitude has led to a reduction in negative perceptions towards male grooming, making it a less controversial concept in the country. Women in Kuwait have played a pivotal role in promoting the importance of grooming among men, encouraging them to present themselves in the best possible way.
Women Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encouragement ▪ Self-appearance ▪ Self-confidence ▪ Recommended to family ▪ Self-esteem ▪ Preferred men ▪ Inclined ▪ Influencer ▪ Friends' recommendation 	Women in Kuwait often encourage men to take care of their personal hygiene and physical appearance. This is because these things can contribute to self-confidence and overall appearance. In fact, women may even recommend certain grooming products and services, as they tend to have more knowledge in beauty and cosmetics than men do.
Marketing & Advertisement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Snap Chat & Instagram ▪ Social Media ▪ Plastic surgery clinics ▪ Hair removal clinics ▪ Hair implant clinics ▪ Celebrity/ Blogger ▪ Main reason 	Snapchat and Instagram are useful tools for advertising and promotion in Kuwait. Many cosmetic and beauty clinics promote their services and products through social media celebrities and bloggers on these platforms.
Self-Image & Masculinity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No effect ▪ Helping woman ▪ Looks young ▪ More manly ▪ Promotion 	Many women in Kuwait do not view a man who takes care of his physical appearance, including hygiene, grooming, and neat hair, as "less masculine". In fact, they find that a well-groomed man can maintain a youthful appearance that is attractive to them. For these women, masculinity is not defined by a man's physical appearance, but rather by his behaviour.

In this section four main themes that emerged through analysis of female interviews are discussed here.

5.3.1 Culture/Society Acceptance

Culturally, male grooming is widely accepted. It is not considered a taboo that may still be a case in many neighbourhood countries, especially in the Arab world.

Based on the gathered findings, it has been observed that many women appreciate a well-groomed male figure in their lives, whether it be a brother, father, or husband. Furthermore, the rise of cosmetic and grooming clinics in Kuwait has led to increased competition and encouragement from female relatives to address physical appearance. The pressure for men to look their best has also been amplified in the workplace and job positions. This study has also emphasized the significant impact of social media influencers and retailers on men's grooming practices. Men are turning to these influencers and retailers for grooming tips and product recommendations, as evidenced by higher purchase rates among men. These observations are based on data collected from social media celebrities, retailers, and male participants in this research study.

Moreover, the shift in grooming behaviour is not only attributed to the changing mindset of Kuwaiti men. Other factors such as higher education, increased awareness, travel, exposure to different cultures, and influence of social media have also played a significant role. A female participant indicated:

“I believe that there are several factors that led men in Kuwait into grooming. Firstly, is that Kuwaiti men are more open at this present time, they are more educated, travel a lot, studied abroad, have friends with different nationalities, media, exposed to different cultures, so all those have affected the mindset and lifestyle of Kuwaiti men” “Social media as well has a global effect all around the world, social media educates, changes, and influences people’s behaviour” (P-F-20).

Further according to the cosmetic surgeon Kuwaiti *“men are educated and open-minded so they are now aware of some simple grooming or beauty procedures that would enhance their look or appearance in a more acceptable way” (P-C-7)*. These factors have exposed men to new ideas and perspectives, which have consequently influenced their grooming behaviour positively.

Notably, the shift in grooming behaviour is slowly becoming the “*norm*” in Kuwaiti society (Al-Haifi et al., 2022; Al-Issa & Dens, 2023). This is a positive development as it highlights the importance of self-care and self-love. It is encouraging to see that Kuwaiti men are now more invested in their physical appearance and are willing to go the extra mile to look and feel their best.

Socially, men are more inclined to use male grooming products because of women. After analysing the female interviews, it was clear that women are the influencers and admirers of men’s beauty. They are the ones who want their male family members to look young, beautiful, presentable, and attractive.

“My father, for example, had Botox in his forehead and actually had fillers in his cheeks because he is old, and his face started to sag so my mother which is younger than him in 20 years informed him to get face fillers to lift his cheeks and not look saggy” (P-F-6) [sic]

There are multiple reasons such as boosting self-confidence by looking younger and peer pressure, which is also related to the social identity theory (Munsch & Willer, 2012). The findings also indicate that men are influenced by women in their grooming in maintaining good physical appearance and improving their grooming behaviour. These are some of the many factors that promote male grooming in Kuwait.

Kuwaiti culture also shows a strong family-orientated society where the nearest family members are the main influencers, such as mother, wife, and sister.

“Yes, because grooming for men has become a “necessity” for men so the society now accepts and are open to this behaviour and understands how important a male should take care of their physical appearance just like how they take care of their body such as going to gyms” (P-F-4).

People at large are considering the male grooming as normal and generally practiced. Increasing number of beauty salons, plastic surgery, hair removal and hair implant clinics show that the male grooming is quite famous in society.

“My father always had small moulds that he wanted to get them removed, but now because its more accepted so he did it with full confidence” (P-F-9)

5.3.2 Women Perception

Unsurprisingly, female respondents were unanimous in accepting that they not only have any issue with male grooming, but they are the main influencer as well. They claimed that men should be presentable and good-looking. In fact, they consider the male grooming products as a must in keeping themselves hygienic and clean. Women recommend certain products to their male family members such as one participant claim that she recommends her son to as she stated:

“Yes, I always recommend my son into looking better and tell him to get facials done every week for his skin, and I also informed him to get a cosmetic procedure for his abdominal ... I know this will boost his confidentiality in public and make him feel more confident and higher self-esteem in his work and in marriage life”
(P-F-4)

According to female participants, masculinity is not dependent nor linked to any male grooming practices or products. Rather, they claim that male grooming makes man younger, cherish and fresh that enhances their manly features.

“To me I don't judge a man's masculine identity on the way he looks, perhaps on his actions, or even the tone of his voice” (P-F-9)

They also claim that masculinity is dependent on how much a man help woman at home, in workplaces and in a larger society.

“It's about “masculine energy”, it's all about how a man “acts” and how he puts himself out in society” (P-F-2)

In Kuwaiti culture, men are expected to be providers, supporters, heroes, and caregivers. This perception is based on actions rather than looks and has been influenced by Westernized culture and the discovery of oil. Women judge masculinity based on what men can contribute through their actions.

5.3.3 Social Media Marketing and Advertisement

Marketing and advertisement have played a vital role in male grooming acceptability as well as in getting famous among men. It started with the high-end brands marketing their male grooming products via traditional marketing means. However, now social media, especially Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok are the key marketing and advertising

platform. Social media celebrities are the main influencers for male grooming products. In fact, these celebrities inspire females that in turn recommend those products to the male family members.

“Women affected men because some women would encourage and like to pamper her husband so she would scrub his facial, hand, feet... I believe that it [male grooming] all started from ladies and then spread” [P-F-3]

Nowadays, there is an increased marketing campaign from many male grooming clinics as they use social media to attract customers. Whether they are plastic surgery or hair-related clinics, the sheer amount of advertisement and offers, such as instalments, lure the male population towards them.

“I feel that mostly social media caused a major influence for men to accept and feel more “confidence” into using grooming products and developing grooming behaviour, the more they see advertisements everywhere the more they feel that it is accepted in the society and that it is their “right” and becoming an important aspect in life” (P-F-8)

5.3.4 Self-Image & Masculinity

The female respondents were asked if they consider men less masculine if they are using male grooming products. All females mentioned that they do not consider less masculine if the male is using grooming products, either facial, hair, perfume, or body lotions.

“They [men] feel more confident when they look more presentable and accepted by society, so self-esteem plays a role” [P-F-1]

Social acceptance is significant, but it's surprising to see male grooming becoming a new norm in Kuwaiti society, according to many female respondents. They argue that men groom themselves to appear attractive, youthful, and well-presented, which is a reasonable thing for them to do. As one respondent claim:

“We [Kuwaiti society] judge people on the way they “look”. so, the more a man looks “perfect” or presentable, the more he will get accepted ... [belong to] high social status” [P-F-2]

Based on research conducted by retailers, there is a growing social acceptance of male grooming practices in Kuwait. This is supported by social media influencers promoting

male grooming as an integral part of personal care. Changing lifestyle and fashion trends have contributed to this acceptance, which is now widely seen as the norm in Kuwaiti culture. Importantly, this shift is not limited to the younger generation and has been embraced by the older generation too, signalling a positive change in the importance of personal care and hygiene in Kuwaiti culture. The literature indicates that men consider it important to take care of themselves in order to improve their interactions, family life, social standing, and careers, as well as their physical appearance (Scheibling and Lafrance, 2019).

Male grooming is generally accepted in Kuwait, but some find it surprising. Traditionally associated with women, practices like manicures and cosmetic procedures are becoming popular among men, creating an opportunity for the beauty market. The increasing endorsement of male grooming by social media influencers and growing social acceptance in Kuwait reflects a positive cultural shift towards personal care and hygiene. As male grooming gains acceptance, beauty markets in Kuwait have an opportunity to expand. With more men embracing these practices, the demand for grooming products and services will increase, prompting beauty businesses to cater to the growing market.

Masculinity, according to the female respondents, is not about male grooming; rather, it is about how males behave.

“When a man helps a woman in hard moments ... it’s an instinct in a man to help a women ... it’s very manly and helpful and gentle... when a man respects a women’s role in society to me this is a manly trait so grooming behaviour will not make him less manly at all” [P-F-3].

The culture of Kuwait has been shaped by the traditional belief that men are the primary providers for their families and that women depend on men to support and care for them (Jones, 2023). While there are still remnants of this cultural practice in families and society, much has changed over time. Women have taken on new roles and responsibilities, and they are no longer completely reliant on men for their well-being. In fact, women have become an integral part of the workforce in Kuwait, contributing to the country's economic growth and development. They are now active participants in various fields, including education, healthcare, and government, and have made significant contributions to the country's progress. Despite the changes, however, it is important to

note that the traditional beliefs and values of Kuwait still hold a significant place in the hearts and minds of its people and continue to shape the country's culture and identity.

However, a few respondents express the opinion that there should be a boundary on male grooming, suggesting that men should not surpass or go over this boundary. They believe that surpassing this boundary could potentially diminish their masculinity. This viewpoint pertains to the excessive application of cosmetics or the permanent elimination of masculine traits like facial hair.

“I think there’s a limit to it... its ok for men to groom, but once it’s too much then that’s not acceptance” [P-F-8]

5.4 FINDINGS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA CELEBRITIES’ INTERVIEWS:

The following tables show the key details about the Social Media Celebrities/Influencers that participated in the study:

Table 5.7: Social Media Celebrities Participants

Interview No.	Age	Target audience	Advertising area	Advertising platform
1	34	Females	Beauty/cosmetic/grooming	Snapchat + Instagram
2	31	Females	Makeup/skincare	Instagram
3	37	Both genders	Lifestyle/event planner	Instagram
4	52	Both genders	Perfumery/grooming	Instagram + Snapchat
5	35	Both genders	Business/technology	Instagram
6	38	Both genders	Medical treatments/cosmetic	Snapchat
7	32	Both genders	Lifestyle	Instagram
8	33	Both genders	Grooming/beauty/cosmetic	Instagram + Snapchat
9	46	Both genders	Skincare/beauty	Snapchat

Note: The name coding would be P-C-I where P is for Participant, C is for Celebrity, and I is the interviewee number as shown in the table.

The influencers have several followers. For example:

- Suhad Al Qenaei (Instagram handle: suhadalqenaei) has around 104,000 followers.

- Nada Alayoub (Instagram handle: nadaalyoubkuwait) has around 32,700 followers.
- Salem Al-othman (Instagram handle: salem_95) has around 28,900 followers.
- Dr. Adel Quttainah (Instagram handle: dr.adel.quttainah) has around 648,000 followers.
- Dr. Alrasheed (Instagram handle: dr_alrasheed) has around 320,000 followers.

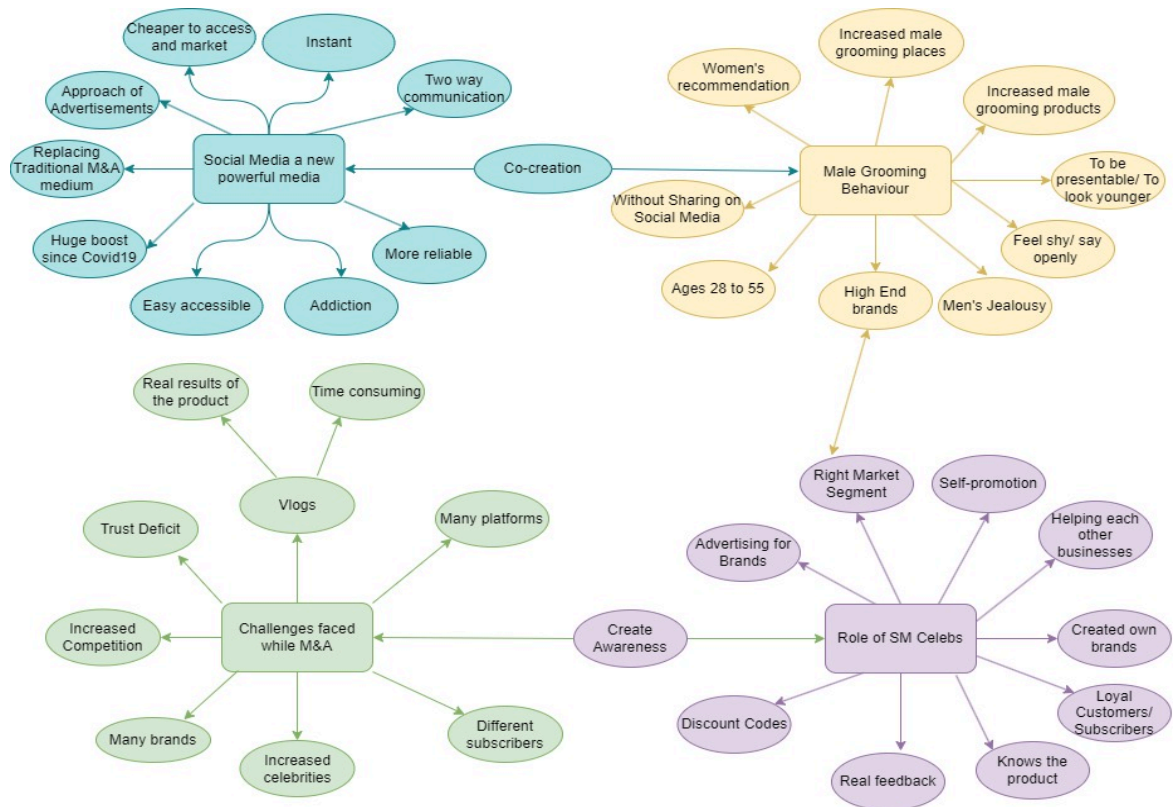


Figure 5.9: Themes emerge from Celebrity’s Interviews

Table 5.8: Themes from Social Media Celebrity / Influencers interviews

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Description
Social media – A powerful medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cheaper to access and market ▪ Instant ▪ Two-way communication ▪ Co-creation ▪ More reliable ▪ Addiction ▪ Easily accessible ▪ Huge boost since Covid-19 	Social media advertising and influence of social media celebrities have positively impacted male grooming behaviour among Kuwaiti men. It is easier, faster, and more reliable to communicate and access the market through these channels. Traditional marketing and advertising methods are no longer as effective in today's era, as consumers are highly active on social media and many individuals are addicted to their digital

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Replacing Traditional M&A medium ▪ Approach of Advertisements 	<p>devices. As a result, it has become easier and cheaper for businesses to promote and advertise to a wider audience.</p>
Male Grooming Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased male grooming places ▪ Increased male grooming products ▪ To be presentable/ to look younger ▪ Feel shy/ say openly ▪ Men's jealousy ▪ High End brands ▪ Negative Effect ▪ Without sharing on social media ▪ Women's recommendation 	<p>Social media advertising and celebrity endorsements have revolutionized the grooming industry in Kuwait. Men in Kuwait are now more informed, educated, and aware of grooming products and services available in the country, thanks to these ads. While many men believe that grooming products and services can help them achieve a more presentable and youthful appearance, some are still hesitant to share their grooming experiences or purchases. However, women have played a significant role in encouraging men to take grooming more seriously, and some men have started relying on female recommendations as they perceive women to be more knowledgeable about beauty and cosmetics than men who are new to this area.</p>
Role of Social Media Celebrities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Right Market Segment ▪ Self-promotion ▪ Helping each other businesses ▪ Created own brands ▪ Loyal Customers/ Subscribers ▪ Knows the product ▪ Real feedback ▪ Discount Codes ▪ Create Awareness ▪ Advertising for Brands 	<p>Social media has played a significant role in the success of social media celebrities in building their own brands. These celebrities/bloggers have leveraged social media platforms to promote their expertise in various fields, such as fashion, beauty, music, and their professional backgrounds. As a result, consumers are able to receive exclusive discounts on products and services promoted by these celebrities/bloggers, thereby increasing the number of subscriptions and driving customer loyalty towards specific brands and celebrities.</p>
Challenges faced by social media celebrities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vlogs -> real results of the product, time consuming ▪ Many platforms ▪ Different subscribers ▪ Increased celebrities ▪ Many brands ▪ Increased Competition ▪ Trust Deficit 	<p>While social media celebrities enjoy many benefits, they also face several challenges. Research has shown that creating and sharing content on social media requires a significant amount of time and effort. Additionally, competition among online celebrities is becoming increasingly fierce with the rise of more public figures around the world, making it difficult for consumers to trust anyone celebrity in particular.</p>

Following are few examples of followers that social media celebrities have.

< **suhadalqenaei** 🔔 ...



618 Posts **104K** Followers **911** Following

Suhad Al Qenaei 🇰🇼
 Entrepreneur
 ■ Perfumer expert&consultant
 ■ Member in Fragrance Foundation UK+عضوة في مؤسسة العطور في بريطانيا
 مؤسسة العطور في بريطانيا... more
 See Translation
 suhadperfumes.com

Suhad is not only a popular social media celebrity in Kuwait, but she is also a successful entrepreneur. She owns her own brand of fragrances and perfumes, called "Suhad Perfumes". Suhad's success in the fragrance industry is a result of her passion for creating beautiful scents that are both memorable and timeless. Suhad's dedication to her brand and her customers has earned her a loyal following and a reputation as one of Kuwait's most talented and influential businesswomen.

< **nadaalayoubkuwait** 🔔 ...



851 Posts **32.7K** Followers **14** Following

Nada Alayoub
 Fashion Designer
 Evening Wear, Kaftans, & Ready to Wear
 دورة "أسس مشروعك التجاري في تصميم الأزياء"
 See Translation

Nada Al Ayoub is an influential figure in Kuwait, known for her work in fashion design and social media. With a large following on several social media platforms, she has made a name for herself as a trendsetter and style icon. Her dedication to both fashion and philanthropy make her a role model for many young people in Kuwait and beyond.

< **celebrate.application** 🔔 ...



707 Posts **20.6K** Followers **534** Following

Celebrate سلبريت
 Party Entertainment Service
 🎉🎵🎁🎂🎈🎊🎋🎌🎍🎎🎏🎐🎑🎒🎓🎔🎕🎖🎗🎘🎙🎚🎛🎜🎝🎞🎟🎠🎡🎢🎣🎤🎥🎦🎧🎨🎩🎪🎫🎬🎭🎮🎯🎰🎱🎲🎳🎴🎵🎶🎷🎸🎹🎺🎻🎼🎽🎾🎿🏀🏆🏇🏈🏉🏊🏋🏌🏍🏎🏏🏐🏑🏒🏓🏔🏕🏖🏗🏘🏙🏚🏛🏜🏝🏞🏟🏠🏡🏢🏣🏤🏥🏦🏧🏨🏩🏪🏫🏬🏭🏮🏯🏰🏱🏲🏳🏴🏵🏶🏷🏸🏹🏺🏻🏼🏽🏾🏿
 حمل التطبيق
 Kuwait City
 See Translation

Celebrate Co. is a renowned party/event planning service based in Kuwait that has made a name for itself through its exceptional services and active presence on social media. The company uses its social media platforms to connect with its clients and followers, providing them with regular updates and insights into the latest event planning trends and ideas. The company's social media pages are filled with inspiring photos and videos of its past events, showcasing the company's creativity and attention to detail.

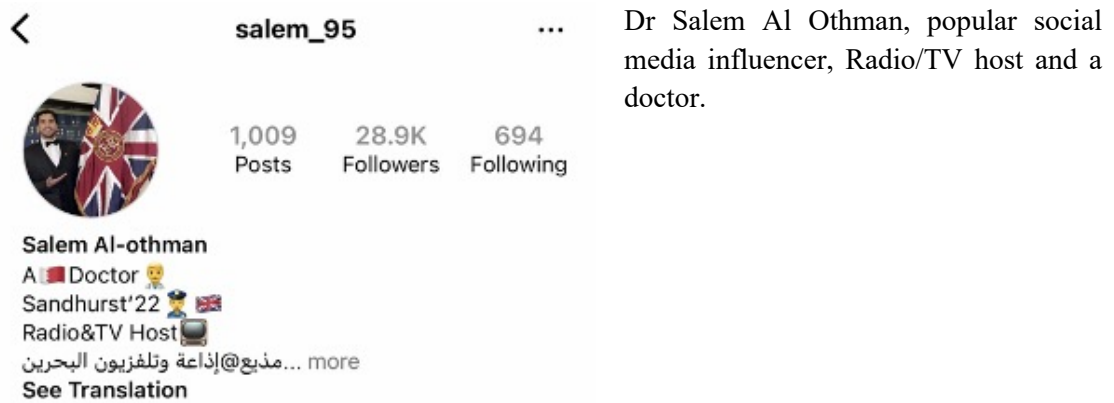


Figure 5.10: Examples of followers of Kuwait Social Media celebrities

Four main themes emerge after analysing the female interviews.

5.4.1 Social Media – A powerful medium

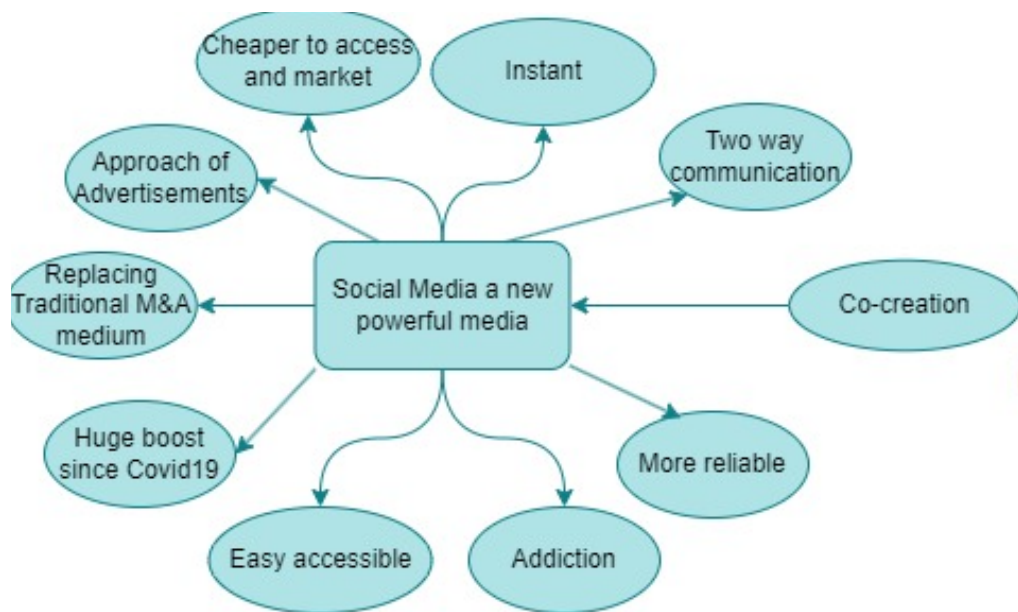


Figure 5.11: Social media benefits

As it was mentioned earlier, social media is a new powerful medium for the marketing and advertising. There are many different features stated by social media celebrities that makes it different and unique. The main characteristic that is very limited (or practically absent) in traditional marketing and advertising media is its two-way communication where the seller and the buyers share their knowledge with each other as well as with the larger audience.

“There is more feedback than the traditional advertising method, and the words gets out quicker and target bigger audience ... targets also for different variety of demographics for audiences” [P-C-1].

Another significant finding is that individuals are increasingly active and somewhat dependent on social media, which can be attributed to the widespread use of smart devices such as phones, watches, tablets, and pads.

“Everything is technology/digital based, so in order for me to grow my business, I need to approach technology & social media platforms to become successful” [P-C-2].

So, celebrities declare that social media attracts a massive audience that is easy to access for both advertisers and interested viewers.

“It's much easier for both business owners & consumers to interact and engage and nearly everyone has a mobile phone with digital/internet services” [P-C-5].

They also claimed that Covid19 has boosted the use of social media and technology as people were isolated to their homes and the only means available to them to socialise and interact with the world was mostly the internet. As one claimed:

“Covid19 showed and witnessed the world how social media indeed became the most reliable source for advertising” [P-C-5].

Reputation is another feature that was highlighted during the analysis. The reputation of the influencer is at stake while advertising a certain product. The trust and belief of the viewers and subscribers on the celebrities can be destroyed by any wrong information, advice and recommendation given about any product. Additionally, these influencers are not just media sensations but also experts in their respective fields, such as cosmetic surgeons and nutritionists, who generously share their knowledge with their viewers. Often they are respected figures and people listen to them.

“Social media advertising is also used by professionals such as nutritionist, doctors, cosmetic surgeons, etc. it helped them to share their experience and market their work and services throughout social media platforms” [P-C-6].

Consumers are more likely to trust social media influencers and celebrities who have a larger following (Fattahova, 2017). This is because a greater number of followers can make the influencer appear more reliable and knowledgeable in their particular field. Ultimately, the number of followers plays a significant role in influencing consumers' trust in these individuals. Social media has also made it easier for patients to research and connect with cosmetic surgeons from across the globe. As a result, the use of social media in the cosmetic surgery industry has revolutionized the way professionals' market and promote their services. Provided below are some examples.

Dr. Adel Quttainah is a highly reputable and renowned cosmetic surgeon with a vast presence throughout the GCC. He has several state-of-the-art clinics located in Kuwait, Dubai, and Qatar, all of which are staffed by a team of highly skilled and experienced medical professionals.



dr.adel.quttainah

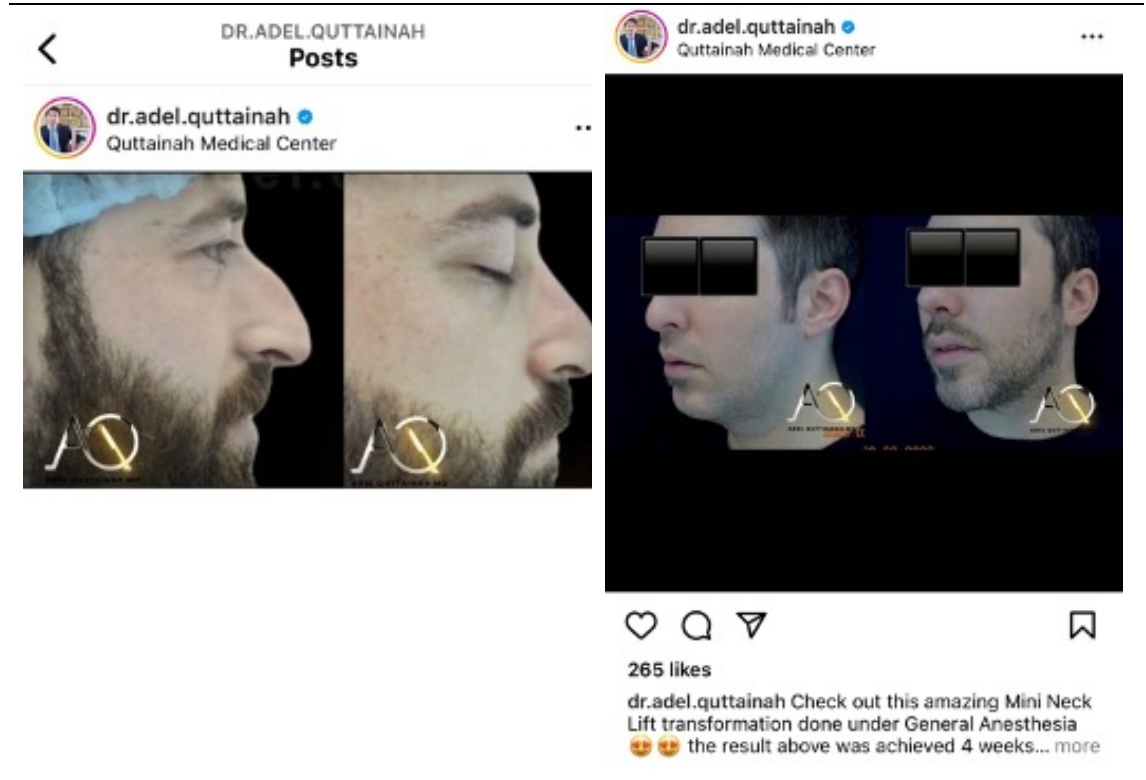
2,884 Posts 648K Followers 152 Following

د عادل قطينه
Plastic Surgeon
Founder of QMC

🇰🇼 Booking: +965 22673541 📞 94123307
🇦🇪 Booking: +971 800-888882
🇶🇦 Booking: +974 800-8885 📞 66538996

Quttainah medical center, Shaab, Al 'Aşimah, Kuwait
youtu.be/PWinSG1-mb8

Some of the cosmetic procedures of Dr. Adel Quttainah are:



DR.ADEL.QUTTAINAH Posts

dr.adel.quttainah Quttainah Medical Center

265 likes

dr.adel.quttainah Check out this amazing Mini Neck Lift transformation done under General Anesthesia 🤗🤗 the result above was achieved 4 weeks... more

< dr_alrasheed   ...



2,108 Posts 320K Followers 262 Following

د عبدالعزيز عبدالله الرشيد الحصان
Plastic Surgeon
استشاري جراحة تجميل وحروق
من نعم الله عليك حاجة الناس اليك
Consultant Body Sculptor
زائر    ... more زائر
See Translation

Dr Abdulaziz Al Rashid is a well-known cosmetic and beauty surgeon in Kuwait and the GCC. He has established himself as one of the most sought-after surgeons in the region. He has a reputation for delivering exceptional results and is highly regarded by his patients for his professionalism and attention to detail.

Some of body sculpting example of dr_alrasheed is provided here:

< DR_ALRASHEED Posts

 dr_alrasheed 

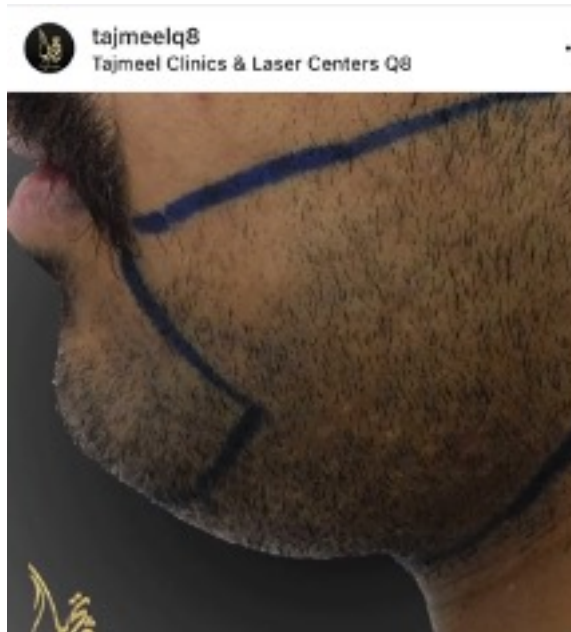


نحت الرجال  

< DR_ALRASHEED Posts

 dr_alrasheed 
الكويت - Kuwait





Dr Mohammed Hilali is also prominent and know for body sculpting work to specific body areas such as to enhance the jawline and reduce fat of male consumer.

Figure 5.12: Examples of cosmetic procedures

Respondents agreed that social media marketing has largely replaced the traditional marketing and advertising means that are used to attract local audience such as TV, radio and billboards. It is not only that it can reach masses, but it is advanced, instant, cheaper, and global.

“Social media has the same concept as traditional marketing/advertising but moved to digital social media advertising created a new method to deliver an ad ... benefits businesses by not needing many costs as old/traditional advertising and accessible to large number of people worldwide, it made them closer to clients” [P-C-7].

It’s also much more accessible and easier ... even more financially affordable than old traditional marketing methods [P-C-8].

5.4.2 Male Grooming Behaviour

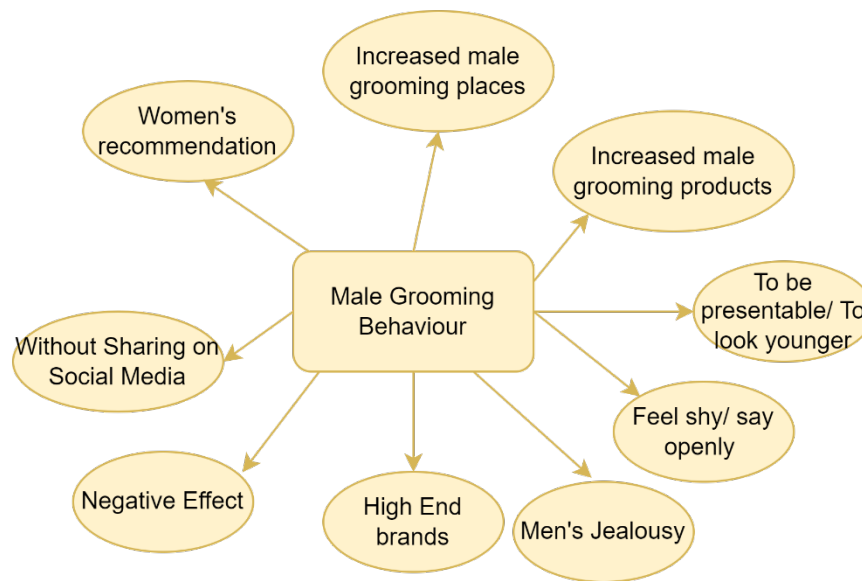


Figure 5.13: Male Grooming Behaviour

According to the respondents, social media advertisement is identified as the primary factor driving change in the male grooming industry. It influences men such as the way they appear, behave, wear, and carry themselves. As one respondent stated:

“[social media] advertisements changed males’ lifestyle, such as travel, fashion, cosmetic, skincare products, facials ... [it] made them aware of ... and educate them” [P-C-1].

“Social media advertising made men aware that they have places to groom, techniques for them to help them be better, it helped them change their aspect in grooming and become more informed” [P-C-2].

The findings indicates that there is an immense increase in popularity of male grooming products especially due to social media with respect to products, men’s salons, cosmetics clinics and beauticians.

“New men salons opening in Kuwait that provide new grooming/beauty services that were never promoted, men cosmetic clinics, new male beauty machines in clinics only for men ... using men in advertisements to make the males in Kuwait feel more comfortable and confident” [P-C-1].

However, as few respondents claim that regardless of growing male grooming, some people in the Kuwaiti culture still believe that use of cosmetics and beauty items and procedures only belongs to females. If males are using any of these, they are shy and do not want to admit and discuss it openly.

“Males in Kuwait don’t want to show and admit this grooming behaviour in public ... because they still hold the fear of society judgments and view ... a married man grooms himself secretly without his wife knowing” [P-C-4].

However, the male respondents are more curious about male grooming products and started exploring their male grooming options. They first started asking their female counterparts about the use of the products as they feel women know these products. Nevertheless, now they are getting information from social media in the form of marketing and advertising by influencers. As one respondent claims:

“My husband is asking me if eye creams reduce darkness undereye... [now] [social media] advertisements are reaching them, to give them a sense of solution to their problems” [P-C-7].

“Men in Kuwait were not aware before social media, but now everything became easy and accessible for them” [P-C-8].

Even male influencers claimed that they need to use male grooming products to be more attractive and presentable to satisfy the expectations of their customers, viewers, and subscribers. One doctor reported:

“I must get my regular facials, PRP, skincare is very important to me because I’m a doctor and a public figure and will always keen to look at my best” [P-C-6].

Some of the Kuwaiti influencers interviewed believe that it is important to use grooming products for basic essentials, such as maintaining the hair, beard, and shaving. They emphasized that everything looks good when used in moderation, but if overdone, it may not have the desired effect.

“To me it’s a trend, something normal... but if it’s too much then it’s not appealing or will be desired ... its ok for men to groom ... too much then that’s not acceptable” [P-C-8].

“Another negative outcome is changing some of the younger generation’s morals/culture Arab country. our language is changing, new words are developing, new behaviour; new unacceptable attitude” [P-C-6].

Although there have been some positive changes in Kuwaiti society over the years, there is still a significant portion of the population, particularly the older generations, who remain attached to the traditional values and culture they have grown up with. This does not imply that traditional culture and the perception of older individuals are negative. It simply pertains to the challenges associated with cultural shifts.

5.4.3 Role of Social Media Celebrities

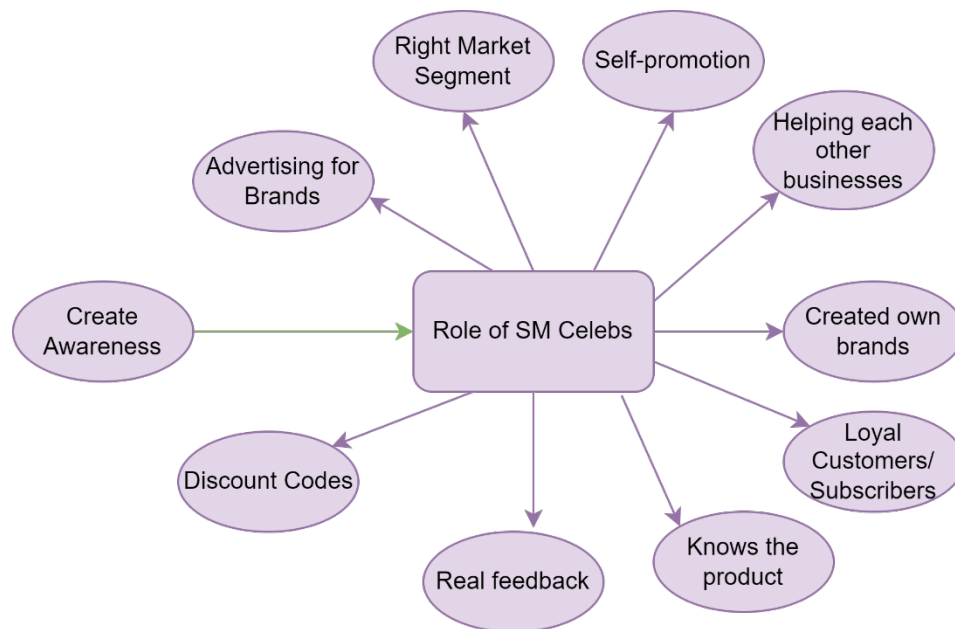


Figure 5.14: Role of social media celebrities

Like the social media platforms themselves, social media celebrities are a powerful source of marketing and advertisement of male grooming. The influencer respondents reported that social media helped them to create their own brands.

According to respondents, one of the primary intentions of using social media is for self-promotion. However, social media can also be used for a variety of other purposes. For example, individuals can use social media to connect with friends and family, share

information and news, or find and join communities of similar interests. Moreover, social media can be used for educational purposes, such as online learning or political activism and social change.

“Social media made us now more open and exposed to new cultures and also now this generation they raise their kids differently into developing this new mindset” (P-F-15).

“Another negative outcome is changing some of the younger generation’s morals/culture Arab country. our language is changing, new words are developing, new behaviour, new unacceptable attitude” (P-C-6).

When it comes to self-promotion, social media can be a powerful tool for individuals and businesses alike. Individuals can use social media to gather followers and promote themselves to gain recognition, power, and financial gains. Similarly, businesses can use social media to build their brand image, retain and attract customers, and increase their organizational growth. Social media can also be used to conduct market research, gather feedback from customers, and track industry trends. In both cases, self-promotion is indeed a key factor, but it is not the only purpose that social media can serve.

Provided below are some examples of social media celebrities that have created their own brand.



Own’s her brand in fragrance and perfume called “Suhad Perfumes”.



Figure 5.15: Example of social media celebrities that have created their own brand.

Celebrities help male in educating and creating awareness about the male grooming products, as one respondent said:

“Most advertising in Kuwait educated the public, made them aware of new products/services that they were never aware of and created new “needs” for customers ... indeed changed their mindsets, lifestyles and behaviour” [P-C-3].

Respondents claim that their viewers and admirers emulate them. They behave in a same manner as the influencers such as wearing, eating, and travelling habits.

“Consumers now started copying influencers and celebrities by sharing and posting on their social media account the restaurants they go to, the outfits they purchase, the food they eat, their travel, they are exposing their lifestyle and sharing it with their friends and family, so they are marketing and sharing brands” [P-C-9]

The expertise of influencers played an important role in social media marketing as their audience believes that they are very aware of the products and the information given is authentic and trustworthy.

“Many doctors ... especially cosmetic would like me to market their medical services/treatments/products ... because audience would trust my advertisement

... [as] I'm a doctor and they would perceive that doctors would share beneficial harmless services" [P-C-6].

"Because people associate with me, they feel closer to the brand. If I'm associated with it, they will follow me because it's a part of my business" [P-C-8].

The influencers report that sometimes it is hard to promote their social pages by themselves, so other individuals market them and vice versa. Respondents also claim that they have successfully helped several male grooming brands to market their products.

"I have indeed created success to several brands by promoting their products/services and at the same time other social media influencers did me a favour by helping my business grow and become recognised in the market due to their advertising for my business" [P-C-3].

Discount codes is another form of social media marketing that influencers generally use while marketing the product. It not only helps their audience to claim discounts while buying any of these products but also evaluate the level of sales generated by that celebrity.

"When I share a discount code with my fans, businesses monitor and check the data and sales from my followers" [P-C-9].

Respondents reported that there is too much competition, and it is difficult to attract the right market segment. Also, many so-called celebrities impart the wrong advice or recommendation for the product just because they were paid to do so have its negative impact on the social media celebrities' marketing.

"I think this field is becoming denser and people having difficult time to trust the social influencers now, too much competition going on and lack of honesty. It became more of a commercial and business, so consumers are aware of that" [P-C-8].

5.4.4 Challenges faced by Social Media Celebrities



Figure 5.16: Challenges faced by Social Media Celebrities

One participant mentioned that the lack of trust is also attributed to certain celebrities who prioritize monetary gain over professionalism in their endorsements.

“Competition is becoming so difficult and too many influencers aren’t honest, and the public are aware that they promote only for the money and don’t trust their advertising” [P-F-3].

Another respondent told me that videos are more effective than blogs or websites at generating business. However, they noted that it is a time consuming and requires a lot of patience to get right. Consumers also value witnessing the influence grooming products have on celebrities before deciding to buy or utilize them themselves.

“I must show products/services to them, they need to see results on me ... it needs time, they ask me questions. I answer them ... it needs time to gain trust they need confirmation to gain full trust” [P-F-9].

Some of the respondents also raised that there are too many social media platforms, and it is difficult to attract a coherent audience on disjointed, multiple platforms. They also

reported that influencers need to be innovative in marketing their product to keep their consumers interested:

“There’s a lot of copying, there’s nothing unique, I must try my best to gain customers trust then start talking about my business. I must always do something new and improve myself/brand to try fit and gain more trust. I must always update my line and keep progressing” [P-F-4].

Despite the challenges faced on social media, the influencers claimed that the opportunity to gain feedback from the customers and having a conversation with them, helps them to improve and innovate their way of marketing and their products.

“Of course, I saw difficulties on how to reach the public ... I’m explaining the products/service right and saying it in a proper way to make consumers interested and convince them, so it’s not easy, it’s tough and challenging, and I need time to be successful. But it feels easier when I get the feedback from the public, because I know what they need, I understand their wants/needs/lifestyle, so I give and take information from them. there is communication back and forth between me and the audience, they help me know to improve my advertising and, they cause a positive effect in me to be prepared next time when I advertise” [P-F-9].

5.5 SUMMARY

The information shared in this chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the empirical evidence on the male grooming trends in Kuwait based on the data collected through interviews with men, women, retailers, social media celebrities, and cosmetic surgeons, a wealth of valuable insights has been gathered, shedding light on the evolving practices of grooming among men in Kuwait. The collected details not only offer the beginnings of an understanding of the current scenario but also highlight the factors influencing the growing prevalence of grooming among men in Kuwait. This chapter serves as an invaluable resource for anyone interested in exploring the cultural shifts and societal perceptions surrounding male grooming in Kuwait.

Kuwaiti culture is deeply intertwined with the Islamic religion. Traditionally, there has been a strong presence of men in various aspects of life, including clothing choices and physical appearance. This dominance of men has been often associated with toxic masculinity, which encompasses a set of attitudes and behaviours stereotypically

expected of men. However, it is important to note that Kuwaiti society has been undergoing significant changes in recent years. Women have been increasingly taking on leadership roles in politics and management positions, challenging traditional gender norms. This shift towards gender equality is also reflected in the changing attitudes of men, including their grooming behaviours, which is the specific focus of this research.

The findings of the study indicate that men employ various strategies to alter their appearance. In addition to utilizing salons and cosmetic clinics to upkeep their looks, men prefer to keep their beauty routines and requirements discreet, avoiding any public attention. While society has become more accepting of these changes, it is worth noting that there are still certain constraints and limitations in place.

Women have noticed that men pay attention to grooming and adopt certain practices. Men themselves acknowledge the influence of women on their grooming habits. In the digital age, cosmetic surgeons use social media to promote their services, leading to more work for them. Beauty salons also have more demand, causing longer wait times for men. Retailers report increased demand and sales of male grooming products.

Social media has played a crucial role in driving the growth of male grooming. Not only have men been influenced by international grooming practices, but they have also been inspired by the grooming routines of their favourite celebrities. By showcasing different grooming techniques, products, and trends on social media platforms, men have been exposed to a wide range of options to enhance their grooming routines. This exposure has not only increased awareness about grooming but has also provided men with the opportunity to experiment with different styles and products, leading to the overall growth of the male grooming industry.

The overall findings of the study indicate that men are engaging in grooming practices because of several factors that are presented in this chapter. This is accompanied by a growing desire and inclination towards the utilization and acquisition of high-end, premium grooming products. It is evident that men are increasingly recognizing the importance of self-care and personal grooming, resulting in a surge in the market demand for luxury grooming items.

Grooming practices are well-established amongst both women and men. This is evident from the extensive literature on beauty habits, which mainly focuses on women. However, the practice of male grooming is relatively limited and has received less attention. In Kuwait, specifically, there is a lack of emphasis on this topic and a dearth of research. The findings of this research not only contribute new knowledge but also highlight the need to further explore and investigate the topic through future research endeavours.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Men are frequently thought to be less concerned with personal grooming and to dress more for comfort and fit than those for image. However, the market for men's toiletries and fragrances has grown significantly in recent years, according to both marketers and academics (Liu, 2019). Meanwhile, it has been asserted that the reversal of the male perspective has made male customers today's consumers equally, if not more interested with their physical presentation than women.

Over last two decades, the market for male skincare products—including moisturizers and facial toners—has expanded steadily and quickly. According to recent data (Ridder, 2021) the male skincare industry in the UK is valued 77.2 million British pounds, increasing from the last year. The present market size for men's skincare is estimated to be about USD 11.6 billion (Bryne & Milestone, 2022). The male cosmetics industry, sometimes known as the "grooming market," has a global market value of US\$51 billion in 2019 (Ridder, 2021). With the steady increase observed, it is expected that the male skincare market will grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.2% from 2020 to 2027 (grandviewresearch.com, 2023).

The male grooming market has expanded significantly in recent years due to various factors. One of the major reasons is the westernization of the youth population, which has led to an increase in awareness and knowledge of grooming services, products, and behaviour. Social media influencers and bloggers have also played a significant role in promoting male grooming. Other contributing factors include the pressure of the work field, increased societal acceptance, the desire to boost self-esteem and self-confidence, and the need to look presentable and acceptable. Additionally, education and purchasing power have enabled men to become more open-minded in their grooming habits. With marketing efforts creating greater awareness, there has been an increasing demand for male grooming services, resulting in high competition among businesses.

In addition to the evidence gathered by Ridder (2021) and Bryne & Milestone (2022) in U.K., this research has identified that the growth of male grooming practices is not solely

due to traditional cultural practices but is also influenced by the globalization of western culture and the rise of social media. The spread of western ideals of beauty and self-care have played a significant role in the adoption of male grooming practices in non-western cultures. Additionally, the widespread use of social media has created a platform for men to share grooming tips and techniques, leading to a further increase in grooming practices worldwide. Therefore, it is important to note that male grooming practices are not simply a result of traditional cultural practices, but indicate a shift towards a more globalized and interconnected world.

People have used various methods to achieve their desired look, including use of makeup, clothing, and accessories. In addition, people have also used different forms of physical activity and diet to maintain their appearance. People continue to use various methods to achieve the appearance they desire, such as plastic surgery, cosmetic procedures, and the use of cosmetic products. Consumers perceive that the ideal body form and gorgeous, bright skin are the secrets to a happy existence (Nair, 2007; Liu, 2019). Since the cosmetics industry has historically produced feminine items, cosmetics are typically associated with women. However, as time marches on, things change, and the cosmetics industry now has a distinct marketplace for male customers.

There is a growing trend for men to participate in practices that contribute to the beauty industry and are often marketed as "self-care" (Lee & Lee, 2013). This emphasis on physical improvement can be seen as part of a competitive environment that values traditional masculine ideals, such as power and control. The rise of the male skincare market is a significant shift that places men in a position where they are subject to scrutiny by themselves and others. Furthermore, the trend towards greater appreciation of men's looks by both women and other men has led to a shift in the traditional dynamic of the male gaze (Byrne and Milestone, 2023).

In the last decade, there has been a worldwide shift in the way male grooming is perceived and embraced. Shaving cream, deodorant, and shampoo used to be the extent of men's toiletries (Boutkaska, 2019). Nevertheless, bathroom cabinets in middle-class households today overflow in cities like London, New York, and Sao Paulo with lotions, face wash, eye serums, highlighters, palettes, anti-agers, and now even mud treatments that are all specifically made for guys. Male-specific toiletries are becoming more expensive for men

than shaving goods. Self-assurance plays a major role, as does the need to feel more handsome, accomplished, and, ultimately, youthful (Petruzzi, 2022).

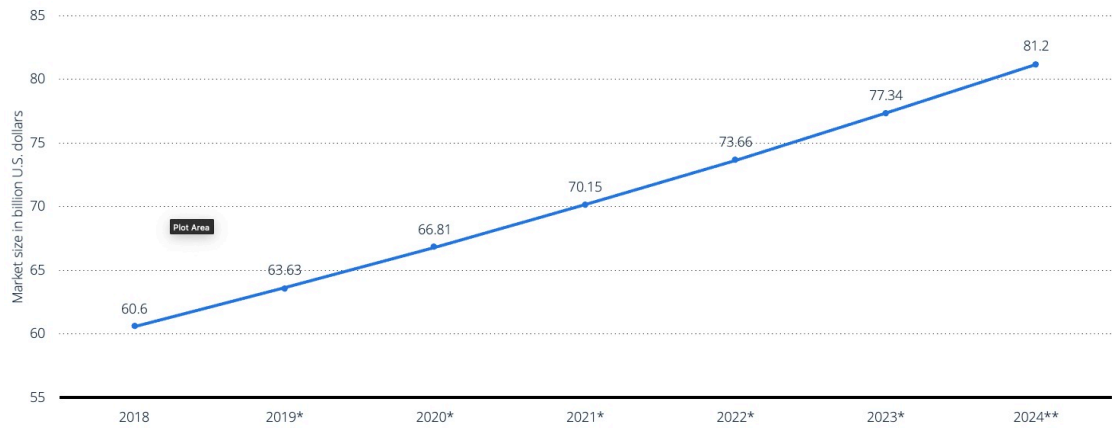


Figure 6.1: Size of the global men's grooming products market from 2018 to 2024 (in billion U.S. dollars)

Source: Petruzzi, 2022

As shown in figure 6.1, the purchase of men grooming products is seeing a steady increase.

The retailer interview findings indicate that the Kuwaiti male respondents have different preferences compared to non-Kuwaiti consumers when shopping for grooming products and services. This diversity in preferences and behaviour has made it challenging for brands in the worldwide male cosmetic industry to cater to the Kuwaiti market. One male participant stated that “I feel that in the GCC we need to have more centres for beauty/grooming/cosmetics aimed at men. Females have more cosmetic centres; we need more for males as there is more demand and consumers at this time. this would be an opportunity for businesses” (P-M-7). Cosmetic brands have been producing grooming products targeted towards female preferences for ages, making it even harder for them to create and establish a new product line for male consumers. Despite these challenges, it is essential for brands to recognize the unique needs and preferences of Kuwaiti male consumers and invest in developing innovative product lines that cater to their specific requirements. By doing so, they can tap into a new market and gain a competitive advantage in the male cosmetic industry.

For instance, L'Oréal has invested significantly in its Men Expert range, yet the L'Oréal brand is still mostly identified with women. That still acts as a deterrent to some men.

Companies have invested in men's beauty products for various reasons such as market opportunity, evolving gender norms, increased awareness, economic potential, diverse lifestyles, competition, and social media endorsement. As a result, brands are aware of and understand these reasons, leading them to invest in and develop new product lines and ranges specifically for men.

Men's grooming will continue to be segmented, according to the sector, especially in developed economies where there are chances for a more robust growth. Products for skin care that are made for various skin types and extent of facial hair will become more prevalent. Obviously, there won't be as many product launches for males as there are for women, however the difference will close with time (Petruzzi, 2022). The findings states that the culture of men's grooming has undergone a major shift in the past decade. Men are spending more on toiletries than on shaving products.

Catering to the global demand for men's grooming products is challenging, especially for brands with a history of targeting female consumers. L'Oréal, for example, has invested in its Men Expert line, but is still primarily associated with women (Petruzzi, 2022). Meanwhile, smaller competitors focusing on men's grooming products have taken advantage of this weakness. According to Petruzzi's (2022) men's grooming industry is expected to continue growing, particularly in developed markets. Skincare products will become more specialized for different skin types and facial hair. Although there will still be fewer product releases for men compared to women, this gap will narrow over time.

Skincare is linked to beauty, which remains at odds with conventional ideas about how men acquire physical capital. Men were "consumers" of women's beauty according to the old hegemonic masculinity paradigm (Byrne and Milestone, 2023). Men's appearance is now subject to greater levels of scrutiny by others and themselves, thanks to the growth of the masculine skincare industry. In the current study, one male participant expressed a strong desire for more grooming services, clinics, and hubs that exclusively cater to men's needs and wants regarding grooming.

The participants pointed out that many of the existing grooming establishments are geared towards women and do not provide the same level of services for men. To address this issue, the researcher recommends the establishment of more male cosmetic and grooming centres, similar to female salons and beauty centres, to make these facilities more accessible to men. Such cosmetic centres could offer a wide range of grooming services specifically tailored to men's needs, such as beard trimming, hair styling, skincare treatments, and more. Moreover, these centres could also serve as a hub for men to socialize, network, and share grooming tips and advice with each other. By creating more male-focused grooming centres, men would have more options to choose from and more opportunities to take care of themselves and their appearance.

The importance and influence of male consumers in the fashion and cosmetic industries has garnered significant attention from both media and marketers in recent years (Biraghi et al., 2018). In order to capture the diversity within this group, the media has coined different terms like 'grooming men' to categorize the distinct subsets of male consumers who have a specific focus on their personal grooming and appearance (Lee & Lee, 2013). It is crucial for marketers to understand and cater to the needs and preferences of these diverse male consumer segments to effectively tap into this growing market. Part of the existing literature surrounding the creative function of tribes proposes that this function is predominantly limited to the tribe itself (Greenacre et al., 2013). Moreover, consumer collectives have been found to augment the utilization of the product by individuals within the community through the implementation of grooming and personalization practices (Biraghi et al., 2018). It is worth noting that these practices contribute to a sense of belonging and engagement among community members, fostering a deeper connection and loyalty towards the product or brand.

The surgeons noted that Kuwaiti men are particularly invested in their appearance, wanting to look youthful and attractive. This is something that has traditionally been seen more in women, but men in Kuwait have begun to embrace the idea of looking youthful and attractive as well. The surgeons felt that it was important to give them the opportunity to do so, as it can make them feel more confident and comfortable about their appearance. The concept of the customer experience in the context of male grooming behaviour is thoroughly examined and understood by adopting the consumer culture theory (Andreini

et al. 2019). This theory provides a comprehensive framework for analysing and interpreting the various aspects of consumer behaviour in relation to male grooming.

Further, by applying consumer culture theory, researchers and practitioners gain valuable insights into the intricate dynamics that influence customer experiences in the realm of male grooming. The adoption of this theory allows for a deeper understanding of the underlying motivations, preferences, and decision-making processes that shape consumer behaviour in this specific context (Gensler et al., 2013). Consequently, it enables businesses to develop more targeted and effective strategies that enhance the overall customer experience and foster stronger relationships with male grooming consumers (Waqas et al., 2020). In Kuwait, the behaviour of men is socially constructed, leading to the formation of a "sub-culture" or a specific "consumer tribe" of men who share and prefer similar grooming behaviours and mindsets. These men have created their own sub-culture based on these similarities. As a result, it is suggested to develop future social places, such as hubs, to cater to this specific segment of men.

The patterns of food consumption frequently reflect attitudes and practices about eating habits that are particular to gender. For example, research has shown that women tend to prioritize their food choices and are more concerned with maintaining a healthy diet to preserve their physical fitness compared to men (Alkazemi, 2019). This could be attributed to a variety of factors such as societal expectations, cultural upbringing, and personal beliefs. Furthermore, women may be more inclined to seek out healthier food options due to their increased awareness of the potential health benefits and risks associated with certain foods. Additionally, women may place a larger emphasis on the long-term impact of their dietary choices, which may influence their decisions regarding their eating habits. Further, women in Kuwait tend to prioritize food options and physical appearance due to cultural norms that assign the role of cooking primarily to women. As a result, women are considered experts in the field and often prepare meals for their families, making them more aware and knowledgeable about food than men in Kuwait.

However, it is important to note that this is not to say that men are not interested in food or that they do not have knowledge about it. They may have different areas of expertise or interests, such as camping, sports, automobile, technology, and many other fields that they are passionate about. For example, there are those who have a deep fascination with

automobiles and stay updated with the latest advancements in the automotive industry. Furthermore, many individuals have a strong affinity for technology and are always up to date with the latest gadgets and innovations. The list of possible areas of expertise and interests is extensive and diverse, reflecting the unique passions and preferences of everyone.

Food can have long-term benefits which can also change over time based on several factors such as nutrition, lifestyle, and overall health. It is important to note that the effects of food on the body can vary depending on individual circumstances and choices. On the other hand, male grooming, while often associated with short-term goals such as enhancing appearance or immediate self-care, can also have long-term effects on self-confidence, overall well-being, and personal presentation. It is a pattern that can be influenced by cultural norms, personal preferences, and societal expectations.

In addition to their expertise in cooking, women in Kuwait have always been interested in beauty and related topics. They often prioritize their physical appearance more than men, striving to always look presentable and beautiful. This has resulted in a wider accessibility for individuals who are seeking cosmetic treatments or grooming services. As a result, more people are able to take advantage of these services and enjoy the benefits they offer, such as enhancing their appearance and boosting their self-confidence. The increased affordability of prices has also led to an increase in competition among the clinics, pushing them to improve the quality of their services and provide better customer experiences. However, it is important to note that there are still certain treatments and grooming procedures that are expensive, making them more accessible to consumers from higher social classes. On the other hand, there are also affordable options available for those who may not have the financial means to indulge in luxurious treatments. These affordable alternatives provide an opportunity for individuals from different social backgrounds to experience the benefits of grooming and self-care. By offering a range of price points, the beauty industry aims to cater to a diverse consumer base and promote inclusivity in the realm of personal care.

This is partly due to the common belief in Kuwait that women should present themselves in a certain way, which includes looking beautiful and being physically fit. As a result, many women have adjusted their mindset to believe that they will gain greater social

acceptance if they meet these beauty standards. It is worth noting that some women in Kuwait may not prioritize food options and physical appearance to the same extent. Personal preferences and individual differences play a significant role in shaping behaviour and attitudes. Nonetheless, cultural norms and expectations can exert a strong influence on people's choices and behaviours, including those related to food and appearance. Culture norms, including but not limited to gender roles and expectations, religion, lifestyle choices, dress code, and society rituals, play a significant role in shaping people's preferences and influencing their decisions. These cultural factors have impact on individuals, as they guide and mould their choices and behaviours, ultimately shaping their identities and perspectives.

The findings indicate that men must not only take care of their physical appearance for themselves, but also for their appearance in front of others. This is critical to maintain a positive self-image and to foster a sense of self-confidence. Furthermore, taking care of one's physical appearance can be a way to demonstrate respect to oneself, and to those around them, by showing that they take pride in the way they present themselves. Additionally, taking care of one's physical appearance can be a way to enhance the perception of others, and thus create opportunities for social and professional advancement. Ultimately, the importance of taking care of one's physical appearance cannot be underestimated, as it is essential for self-esteem and a sense of self-worth. Based on the findings and responses, it has been observed that there is a societal pressure among the men interviewed to maintain their physical appearance. With the evolution of corporate culture, new job roles have been created that require certain characteristics, such as clean-shaven soldiers in uniform or neat and clean waiters. Airlines also expect their employees to look appealing. In this context, workplaces have imposed a pressure on men to look presentable. For instance, men in the business or banking sectors are scored based on their ability to look "presentable," including factors such as shaving, formal attire, clean clothes, and a pleasant scent.

This societal pressure is not limited to Kuwait alone but is prevalent globally. Social media platforms, celebrities, and marketing agencies are actively promoting a certain "fit" look for men, which has created a sense of competition among men to compare their appearance with family members, friends, and potential partners. Ultimately, the desire to boost self-confidence and be accepted in society drives men to strive for a certain level

of physical appearance and be judged positively. This concept is intricately linked to social identity theory, that posits the idea that individuals develop a sense of self by classifying themselves into tangible or abstract social collectives. By participating in these groups, individuals gain a clearer understanding of their own identities and how they fit within the broader social fabric. This theory emphasizes the role of group membership and its influence on self-perception, highlighting the significance of both real and symbolic affiliations in shaping an individual's sense of self.

Male students were found to be more obese as well as overweight in comparison to female students, according to research by Al-Isa et al. (2011), despite the fact that male students outperformed female students in terms of physical activity. Additionally, to becoming less active, female students were also discovered to be more anxious, with stress having a greater impact on their dietary choices than it did on male students (Ahmed et al., 2014). According to studies, obesity rates in the State of Kuwait are higher than the global average. In a study by Rey-Lopez et al. (2019), it was found that a significant number of adolescents in Kuwait were overweight or obese. Specifically, the study revealed that 59.8% of boys and 49.2% of girls were classified as being overweight or obese. This is a cause for concern as obesity can lead to several health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure. In addition, being overweight can also negatively impact an individual's mental health, self-esteem, and overall quality of life. Therefore, it is important for parents, educators, and healthcare professionals to work together to promote healthy eating habits and physical activity among adolescents in Kuwait and around the world. Adolescence is a unique stage of development that marks the transition into adulthood. During this time, young people gradually gain more independence. However, parents and family members still play a critical role in shaping adolescents' health and lifestyle, as noted by Al-Haifi et al. (2022). This is another example of how grooming behaviours evolve among men even from their young age.

Couch et al. (2016) mention that young men face social pressure and have worries and insecurities about their physical appearance, indicating the possible influence of the synopticon ("*the many to see and contemplate the few*"; p. 62). This is supported by the significant growth in retail markets for male grooming and beauty products, illustrating the growing significance of looks for men and the response of the business sector to capitalize on these market prospects. Previous research indicates that both men and

women are being affected by the pervasive influence of consumer culture, which places a significant emphasis on body image. This influence has led to an increasing trend of self-criticism and vulnerability to feelings of body dissatisfaction among men (Featherstone, 2010). Moreover, this phenomenon highlights the importance of understanding the complex relationship between consumer culture, body image, and individuals' self-perception.

The cosmetic surgeon respondents reported that Kuwaitis have demonstrated a behaviour that has been distinct from other Arabs in the region and even from western countries. This is a remarkable feat that can be attributed to the inherent political, economic, and social stability that Kuwaitis have enjoyed for many years, as well as the abundance of resources in the country. In 1938, a significant discovery was made in Kuwait – oil. This discovery had a profound impact on the way of life in the country, transforming it in many ways (kpc.com.kw, 2019). The newfound abundance of oil greatly contributed to the country's economy, leading to a surge in revenue and oil rents. As a result, the Kuwaiti citizens experienced a notable improvement in their standard of living, with increased purchasing power and access to a wide range of opportunities for economic growth and development (Fuinhas et al., 2015). The oil industry became a cornerstone of the nation's economy, attracting investment and fostering innovation.

Furthermore, the Kuwaiti government has taken measures to ensure that its citizens have access to the highest quality of healthcare services, which can be seen in the advanced medical knowledge and skills of the nation's surgeons. Additionally, the country has invested heavily in education and research, which has allowed Kuwaitis to benefit from the latest medical breakthroughs and cutting-edge technology. Kuwaitis have greatly benefited from the availability of advanced medical treatment and comprehensive support systems. These factors have significantly contributed to the improvement of their overall well-being, resulting in increased life expectancy and enhanced quality of life. Additionally, Kuwaiti individuals actively prioritize their self-presentation and invest time and effort in various grooming practices, ensuring that they present themselves in the best possible manner.

Merza & Alhasan (2016) examine the impact of government spending on economic growth, specifically focusing on different budget components such as education, health,

and infrastructure. They found that in a small open economy with significant oil rents, capital expenditures had a greater influence on economic growth compared to expenditures on health and education. This is because in a sparsely populated economy where most of the population consists of temporary residents (expatriates from different countries), investments in education and health have minimal impact on GDP and are therefore not reflected in the econometric analysis (Merza & Alhasan, 2016). Kuwait is therefore able to distribute some of its oil wealth to its citizens in supporting their citizen various expenditures, healthcare, and education.

Based on extensive research and interviews, it has been reported that a growing trend has emerged among Kuwaiti males - a willingness to pay a premium price for cosmetic procedures and treatments that can enhance their physical appearance. This purchasing power has created a potential market for cosmetic doctors, and many have noted a significant uptick in demand for such services. A considerable number of Kuwaiti men are willing to invest in these procedures not only to improve their physical appearance, but also to boost their confidence and overall well-being. This trend has the potential to drive economic growth in the cosmetic industry and, as such, more and more practitioners are exploring this emerging market.

6.2 GROOMING AND MASCULINITY

The discussion in this section answers the fourth research question which is “What factors influence and promote men in Kuwait to engage in grooming behaviour?”

Although grooming to appeal to women is important for achieving heteronormative societal norms, doing so may also cast doubt on a person's masculinity because of the relationship between caring for one's body and femininity. According to the masculinity theory, there are many different masculinities and femininities, all of which are hierarchically unbalanced (Messerschmidt 2018). It takes ongoing effort to differentiate oneself from those other types and their "configuration of gender practice" in order to reproduce one's gendered identity. Masculinities (and femininities) are created and experienced in the "idealized qualitative content of the categories of "man" and "woman" (Schippers 2007, p. 90).

This theory of masculinity is a complex and multi-faceted concept that has been studied and analysed from various angles. It is divided into two main categories: inclusive and hegemonic masculinity. Inclusive masculinity refers to a more open and accepting concept of what it means to be a man, which considers a wide range of identities and experiences. On the other hand, hegemonic masculinity is a more narrow and restrictive definition of masculinity, characterized by dominance, aggression, and the exertion of power over others. According to the masculinity theory, men are increasingly encouraged to participate in activities that are part of the larger economic process that supports the beauty industry, which is often referred to as "self-care." This phenomenon can be attributed to several factors, such as the changing social norms and the emergence of new media platforms that promote the idea of self-improvement. For instance, shaving off male body hair, also known as "manscaping," is becoming more and more popular among men (Hall, 2015). Moreover, working out at a fitness centre is widely recognized as important in order to take care of one's body and maintain a healthy lifestyle (Hakim, 2016). It is evident that the concept of "self-care" has become increasingly important in men's lives, and that activities such as "manscaping" and working out at a fitness centre have become popular ways for men to take care of themselves and enhance their physical appearance.

The worship of high-profile masculine role models, including celebrities, athletes, and movie stars, is particularly fuelling rising male interest in enhancing their physical beauty (Krishnan et al., 2013). Celebrities endorsing grooming products can have a remarkable impact on consumer behaviour. Studies have shown that people tend to associate themselves with celebrities, and their preferences and opinions can have a significant influence on consumer behaviour (Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019). There are multiple factors that contribute to the prominence of individuals. Firstly, their recognized and acknowledged expertise in a specific area plays a significant role. Moreover, the advent of globalization and the widespread use of social media platforms have facilitated the ability of celebrities to reach and engage with a vast audience and fan base. Additionally, the establishment of celebrities' own brands and businesses has resulted in the accumulation of substantial economic value. Collaborations with globally renowned brands and companies have further bolstered celebrities' prominence. Furthermore, their journey of success and the distance they have travelled in their respective fields also enhance their prominence. When all these factors are considered together, it becomes

evident that the combination of these elements has played a pivotal role in making them prominent figures.

For instance, those who embody traditionally masculine traits, such as those gained by athletic accomplishments, can have a significant impact on the audience. In fact, the impact of celebrity endorsement can be so strong that it can even override the quality of the product (Hamshaw & Gavin, 2022). Therefore, many advertisements for men's grooming products appeal to these kinds of stimuli, especially those that evoke a sense of masculinity or ruggedness. Advertisements often use images of athletes, rugged outdoor activities, and other masculine signifiers to appeal to their target audience. This type of advertising is especially effective in building brand loyalty and increasing sales. According to Tso (2021), men don't necessarily groom for themselves rather than for pleasure because doing so would link them with femininity. Instead, we will find that males use the discursive technique in which they groom themselves for women. They are able to uphold grooming norms while concurrently attempting to reject feminine beauty and identify themselves with gender norms thanks to this truly masculine construct. This is not to imply that males don't love grooming; in reality, they do, but also, they don't concern if women think they look well or not.

This research indicates that marketing and advertising campaigns might have an impact on creating and promoting a particular image of male appearance in contemporary society. The media and advertising industries' patterns and trends over the years have contributed to shaping men's ideal look, which often includes a six-pack, a specific hairstyle, white teeth, a particular beard style, broad shoulders, and an impressive posture. These images have a profound effect on men's perception of beauty and desirability. It is worth noting that these male beauty standards are not only unrealistic but also exclusive, as they do not consider diversity and individuality. Despite this, many men feel the pressure to conform to these standards to be attractive and relatable. Moreover, the effects of these beauty standards can go beyond the physical aspect, as they can also affect men's mental health and well-being. In conclusion, while marketing and advertising campaigns can be used as a tool to promote products, they should also consider the impact they have on society's perception of beauty. Instead of promoting exclusive and unrealistic beauty standards, they should embrace diversity and individuality, promoting positive messages that encourage men to feel confident and comfortable in their own skin.

According to the American Society of Dermatologic Surgery, male patients received 10–11% of all non-surgical cosmetic treatments in 2014 (Cohen et al., 2017). A more recent study by Busby & Fattahi (2021) indicates that cosmetic surgery continues to grow in popularity across the nation, with a 31% increase, as per the American Society of Plastic Surgery (ASPS). While women comprise the overwhelming majority of patients seeking cosmetic procedures, there is a growing trend of men undergoing cosmetic surgery in the United States (Busby & Fattahi, 2021). The report by PolicyBee.co.uk (2022) indicates that male aesthetics have risen hugely in popularity in recent years. It's all part of a more general trend. In 2021, 43% of all UK adults were considering non-surgical treatments as part of their regular grooming routine. Popular aesthetics treatments for men include, Botox injections, Filler around the jawline and chin, and non-surgical hair growth procedures (policybee.co.uk, 2022).

It can thus be argued that, in the modern society, the trend of females undergoing more cosmetic procedures than males are prevalent. This can be explained by the enduring fascination of females with beauty and the desire to maintain a youthful appearance. Historically, the emphasis on physical appearance was not as important for men as it was for women. Men preferred to display ruggedness and accentuate their behaviour and attitude as masculine traits, while beauty and smoothness were regarded as feminine traits. However, in recent years, there has been a significant shift in this outlook. Gender roles are becoming more equal, with women taking on roles that were once considered male-dominated and serving as providers for their families. This change can be attributed to the influence of marketing and media, which have played a critical role in creating gender-based stereotypes through their advertisements and products. Consequently, these factors have raised awareness among consumers, leading to a shift in their attitudes and behaviour. This shift is expected to continue in the future, as society becomes more accepting of gender diversity and encourages individuals to express themselves freely.

This is because the education level and quality in Kuwait have significantly improved and are highly developed and advanced. As a result of these improvements, there is now a high level of awareness due to education, which has led to a better understanding of various issues and perspectives. Moreover, globalization has played a role in shaping societal attitudes in Kuwait by exposing people to different cultural expectations and

norms for gender roles. This exposure has allowed for a more open-minded and inclusive society. Additionally, the rise of women's activism has been instrumental in challenging traditional norms and advocating for equal rights and opportunities. The influence of media and technology has also contributed to these shifts in attitudes, as it has provided platforms for diverse voices to be heard and for important discussions to take place. Furthermore, cultural changes over time have played a significant role in shaping societal attitudes, as societal values and norms evolve with the changing times. All these factors combined help justify the current situation and the positive changes that have taken place in Kuwait.

In the past decade, there has been a significant shift in male grooming behaviour and attitude in Kuwait and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. While this change can be attributed to a number of factors, including globalization and the increased disposable income of the region's residents, changing attitudes towards male grooming are undoubtedly playing a key role. One of the most notable changes in male grooming behaviour in these countries has been the rise of the barbershop culture.

In Kuwait and other GCC countries, barbershops are no longer just places to get a haircut or a shave. Instead, they have become social hubs where men can relax, socialize, and even receive spa treatments. In addition to the rise of the barbershop culture, there has also been a significant increase in the availability of male grooming products in Kuwait and other GCC countries. This availability has been driven by the growing demand for these products, which is in turn fuelled by changing attitudes towards male grooming. Men in these countries are now more likely to experiment with different grooming products, and to invest time and money in their personal grooming routines. These changes can be attributed to various factors such as an increase in awareness and exposure to different cultures. The influence of marketing and the contribution of social media influencers have also played a significant role in shaping these changes. Additionally, there has been a noticeable shift towards a more open-mindedness among citizens, which has further contributed to this transformation. It is important to note that this shift in thinking and perception is not limited to one specific society, but is applicable to societies worldwide, including Kuwaiti society.

Several factors have contributed to the significant shift in awareness and demand for male grooming behaviour in Kuwait. One of these factors is the expansion of grooming treatments and services in salons, which has made it easier for men to access these services. However, this is not the only reason for the increase in demand for male grooming. Other factors such as marketing, advertising, and social media influencers have played a significant role in raising awareness about male grooming and promoting it as a desirable behaviour. Cosmetic surgeons and gyms have also contributed to this trend by offering services and treatments that enhance men's appearance and attractiveness.

Based on the findings and responses, it has been observed that booking appointments in many popular beauty and grooming cosmetic clinics can be challenging due to high demand. One possible reason for this is the reputation of several well-known and highly skilled cosmetic surgeons, whose procedures have been proven successful among Kuwaiti men. These surgeons have gained a significant number of satisfied customers.

Consequently, Kuwaiti men tend to prefer having cosmetic and surgical procedures performed by these highly rated, reputable, and renowned surgeons, resulting in a substantial demand and making appointment scheduling somewhat challenging. Additionally, during the interviews with cosmetic doctors, they explained that they have expanded their cosmetic clinics not only in Kuwait but also in neighbouring GCC countries such as Qatar, UAE, and Saudi Arabia. As a result, these doctors frequently travel to these neighbouring countries within a short period of time to attend to their different clinics. This can make it more challenging for Kuwaiti men to schedule appointments, as these popular doctors are often busy and constantly traveling between countries to fulfil their work commitments. Dr. Adel Quttaineh serves as a good example of this, as he has multiple branches for his clinics in Kuwait, Doha, and the UAE.

Furthermore, the rise in demand for male grooming can also be attributed to the increasing competition among cosmetic and beauty clinics. With more and more clinics offering grooming services for men, there is a greater awareness of these services and a greater demand for them. There is a significant demand that contributes to the growth of "home service" for male grooming. This was emphasized by the male participants in the study. These men reported feeling more at ease in their own homes, and the privacy allows them more freedom to undergo various procedures to enhance their physical appearance.

According to the male participants, home services for manicure & pedicure treatments are becoming a common practice among Kuwaiti males. As a result, there has been an increase in demand and greater acceptance from both society and men themselves towards getting various minor grooming treatments done at home. Additionally, many salons have recognized this new trend, leading to their expansion of sales by offering "home service" for Kuwaiti men. This has been perceived as a convenient option for Kuwaiti consumers. In summary, several men prefer the comfort of their homes to fulfil their grooming needs rather than going to a salon. This saves them time, allows them to feel more relaxed, and also benefits barber shops by increasing their sales.

In addition, the respondents reported that there are several manufacturers that offer a range of grooming products specifically designed for men. These brands cater to men by using special labels and packaging to make the products seem more masculine and normal. With the availability of these products, men are now more likely to engage in grooming behaviour as part of their daily routine. Overall, the shift in awareness and demand for male grooming behaviour in Kuwait is the result of several interrelated factors, including the expansion of grooming services, marketing and advertising efforts, social media influencers, cosmetic surgeons, gyms, and the availability of grooming products designed specifically for men. As the region continues to modernize and become more globalized, it is likely that we will continue to see significant changes in the way that men approach their grooming routines and attitudes towards personal care.

6.2.1 Gender and Physical Appearance

Although women use cosmetics more often than males do (Souiden and Diagne, 2009), standards about appearance have indeed come to represent masculinity (Madan et al., 2018). With job applications, appearance modification — which primarily entails grooming and dressing — matters. Common grooming techniques increase beauty by emphasizing the appealing gendered physical characteristics. For instance, men's grooming emphasizes a clean-shaven face with neat hair, that are acceptable masculine qualities, whereas women's use of makeup accentuates facial contrast, that is a common acceptable feminine attribute (Etcoff et al., 2011). The literature discussions are in line with the findings of this research on male grooming practices and their purchase of grooming products.

Dermatologists must consider several distinct characteristics among masculine and feminine human skin whenever managing men for skin illnesses and when giving them advice on cosmetic issues, even though the basic design and function of skin are generally relatively similar between both the sexes (Elsner, 2012).

Due to the development of beard hair and problem regions that produce excess sebum, the cosmetic requirements of the male face are very different from those of female face. Men's most popular cosmetic procedure is shaving. The choice of whether to shave or keep a beard relies on the cultural environment, aside from any occupational requirements, such as those for firefighters, soldiers, or pilots who may need to keep their beards shaved to fit their masks snugly. Since the 20th century, shaving practices have increased while the social acceptability of having a beard has decreased in Western societies. This change has been influenced by the development and improvement of shaving tools for wet and electric shaving, as well as their widespread availability. Shaving goes beyond being necessary when a beard grows during puberty; it also becomes a ritual and an important psychological aspect (Elsner, 2012). According to this study, men buy luxury grooming products to maintain their appearance.

Deaux and Lewis (1984; quoted in Wang et al., 2022) assert that a person's perceived qualities are more strongly influenced by physical appearance than by gender. The argument presented by Wang et al. (2022) is a comprehensive and insightful study that addresses the intricate relationship between grooming and dress style, shedding light on their profound impact on the likelihood of a job applicant being hired. Their study not only provides valuable insights into the connection between these factors but also offers a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play within the context of job applications. In this research, male grooming and not restricted to a particular context. Therefore, altering one's physical appearance can help people lessen the impact of gender norms to some level. However, as mentioned earlier, this argument is specifically focused on the hiring process for employees in different job positions. It is worth noting, as highlighted by Wang et al. (2022), that the dress style which goes against traditional gender norms has been found to have a limited impact on its own outcomes, especially when the evaluators happen to be male. This suggests that while the dress style may have some influence, it is not the sole determining factor in the decision-making process during hiring.

According to the surgeons interviewed, Kuwaiti exhibit a reluctant demeanour when it comes to their cosmetic purchases, unlike their Western counterparts who are more open and willing to share what they buy. This is due to the anxiety of societal perception. This tendency to hide their purchases is believed to be due to a more conservative approach to the topic of beauty, one that is not as commonly accepted as it is in the West. This difference in attitude towards beauty is also seen in other aspects of Kuwaiti culture, such as dress and even the language they use.

Even though some aspects of a person's personality are genetically predetermined and hard to change, others, including grooming and attire, are modifiable. Given that grooming and attire are overt displays of gender construction, they may act as indicators for onlookers to draw conclusions about just the wearer's gendered behavioural qualities (Gurung et al., 2021).

The findings presented in here provide valuable insights into the intersection of consumer culture theory and the masculinity theory. Specifically, they shed light on how societal norms and expectations surrounding gender influence consumption patterns and preferences (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014). Furthermore, the implications of these findings extend beyond the realm of marketing and consumer behaviour, as they can inform broader discussions about gender roles and societal norms. For example, these findings could be used to inform policies and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and challenging harmful stereotypes. In addition, they could be used to develop more effective marketing strategies that are sensitive to the complex ways in which gender shapes consumer preferences and behaviours (Byrne and Milestone, 2023). Overall, the insights presented in this document have important implications for scholars, policymakers, and business professionals alike.

6.2.2 Male Grooming Trends

Males are more frequently portrayed as image-conscious characters, however as a result to the feminization of these issues, how men maintain their appearance is indeed a complex issue (Bennett & Gough, 2013).

Men are becoming increasingly curious about their male grooming options, exploring a variety of products and services designed specifically to meet their grooming needs.

These products range from traditional barbering services to more modern, specialized treatments such as hair styling, beard trimming and shaving, skincare, and even manicure and pedicure services. Men are recognizing the importance of taking care of their appearance, and this is evidenced by the growing demand for male grooming products. This surge in the grooming industry has created a whole new sector of retailers, offering an extensive array of products and services catered to the needs of men.

As discussed in the analysis chapter, revenue in the men's grooming sector has significantly increased over the last ten years, perhaps reflecting the value that men and/or the general public increasingly concentrate on appearance. Men are purchasing products other than conventional shaving products, which is why purchases of men's toiletries are increasing more quickly than those of toiletries as a whole (Cooke, 2018).

The information discussed here refers to self-perception theory which has garnered a lot of support from social psychology literature, with numerous research studies indicating that an individual's thoughts and beliefs can be influenced by their actions and behaviours (Woosnam et al., 2018). This is a particularly fascinating concept as it suggests that our perception of ourselves is not always fixed and can change based on our actions. Further to this, according to self-perception theory, men develop grooming habits to achieve their desired physical appearance and boost their self-esteem and self-perception.

This theory suggests that men's grooming behaviours reflect their desire to present themselves in a positive light to others and to feel good about themselves. Grooming routines can include a variety of treatments, services, and products, such as haircuts, beard trims, facials, and skin care products. These grooming practices can be an important part of men's self-care routines, helping them to not only look good, but also to feel good about themselves. By taking care of their appearance, men can increase their confidence and sense of masculinity, which can have positive effects on their personal and professional lives. Furthermore, grooming habits can also be a means of self-expression, allowing men to convey their individual style and personality through their appearance.

For instance, if a person behaves in a certain way for an extended period of time, they may begin to believe that this is an inherent part of their personality. This can have both positive and negative implications, as individuals can use this theory to reframe their

beliefs and thoughts in a more positive light, or conversely, they may fall into patterns of negative self-talk and self-perception. Regardless, the self-perception theory has opened up a new realm of understanding in social psychology and continues to be an area of intense research and exploration.

The growing accessibility of men's grooming items has led to a flourishing market. Men are now paying more attention to their beauty and self-care, using products like creams, hair products, and skincare goods. Businesses and brands are offering a wider range of products for men, providing them with more options to meet their needs (Thompson, 2006). According to the Arab News, cosmetic procedures are increasingly popular in Saudi Arabia, with both men and women seeking aesthetic-enhancing procedures. About 30 percent of these procedures are performed among men in the GCC, compared to 15 percent globally. The London Centre for Aesthetic Surgery states that cosmetic surgery has become socially acceptable in Saudi Arabia, leading to its rising trend (Bell, 2019). Plastic surgery is also becoming more openly discussed in many countries in the Middle East, whereas it was previously done discreetly.

The greatest demand is for tummy tucks, liposuction, and stem cell buttock augmentation. On the non-surgical side, patients most commonly request Botox, filler treatments and facial rejuvenations. Bell (2019) also adds that according to the cosmetic surgeons, on the non-surgical side, patients most commonly request Botox, filler treatments and facial rejuvenations. The cosmetic surgeons also stated that the demand for male cosmetic surgery and grooming is because social media has put enormous pressure on millennials to “look better,” and the younger population is fuelling the booming plastic surgery market.

Social media influencers are choosing to undergo cosmetic surgeries and sharing their experiences with the public, often publishing the entire procedure along with before and after photos. Several studies have identified the influence of social media (digital) influencers in grooming behaviours (for example, Hamshaw & Gavin, 2022; dos Santos et al., 2023; Kilipiri et al., 2023). This trend has been fuelled by the increasing number of ads on social media by cosmetic doctors and surgeons, showcasing their procedures and patients' results. As a result, there is a growing awareness that cosmetic surgery is becoming more normalized for both genders, and that it is an option to achieve faster and

more noticeable results than traditional methods such as diet and exercise. For example, men can opt to get a "six-pack" abdomen in a short period of time through plastic surgery rather than going to the gym. According to Al-Issa & Dens (2023), research has shown that effective marketing practices have a significant impact on shaping the perceptions of global consumers when it comes to luxury products and services. Additionally, Prasath & Yoganathen (2018) emphasize the vital role that social media marketing plays in placing consumers at the very centre of the dynamic and ever-evolving business landscape. It is a powerful platform that not only provides marketers with a wide range of innovative tools but also enables them to establish meaningful connections with consumers and seamlessly integrate their brand into their daily lives.

In addition to surgical procedures, non-surgical treatments such as fillers, Botox, and injections have become more affordable, faster, and easier ways to achieve a healthy-looking face and good skin. This aligns with the arguments presented by Busby & Fattahi (2021), who discovered that rhinoplasty and botox injections are the most commonly performed surgical and nonsurgical facial cosmetic procedures for men. According to their research, rhinoplasty, also known as a nose job, is a surgical procedure aimed at reshaping the nose to improve its appearance or functionality. On the other hand, botox injections involve injecting a neurotoxin called botulinum toxin into the muscles of the face to reduce the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines. These procedures have gained popularity among men in recent years due to the desire to enhance their facial features and maintain a youthful appearance (Busby & Fattahi, 2021).

This is in contrast to relying on skincare products such as creams, serums, and gels for a long period of time, which may not produce as visible results as the injections. The recent popularity of cosmetic treatments has raised awareness among consumers about the benefits of non-surgical and surgical procedures over traditional beauty methods. Cohen et al. (2017) point out that in the year 2014, approximately 10–11% of all non-surgical cosmetic treatments were received by male patients. This statistic highlights the growing trend of men seeking such treatments, indicating a shift in societal norms and perceptions of beauty. The findings of this study shed light on the increasing popularity and acceptance of cosmetic procedures among males, which were previously believed to be predominantly sought after by women.

Consumers have been exposed to the fast and noticeable results of these treatments through media and social media platforms, as well as through the experiences of influencers. This increased knowledge has led many consumers to favour cosmetic procedures over traditional methods, resulting in a shift in global trends and patterns. In a study conducted by Wu et al. (2022), it was found that the frequent exposure to information related to cosmetic surgery, particularly when targeted for marketing purposes, on various social media platforms has been observed to have a noteworthy influence on the rise in the acceptance and utilization of cosmetic procedures. This exposure through their social media accounts to the experiences and results shared by individuals who have undergone cosmetic procedures serves as a catalyst for individuals to contemplate and contemplate the possibility of undergoing cosmetic surgery themselves (Wu et al., 2022).

People now feel more compelled than ever to share their daily lives with their friends, family, and the world at large. In fact, social media has become a powerful tool for people to showcase their unique lifestyles, including the food they eat, the consumer goods they purchase, and the experiences they have. It is interesting to note that this phenomenon may be due to the heavy reliance on mobile devices and the vast activity on social media. As such, social media has become an integral part of modern life and culture, and it will continue to shape the way we interact with others and share our experiences for years to come.

Social media platforms have become an integral part of the lives of Kuwaiti citizens, providing them with a powerful tool to share their experiences and thoughts across a wide range of contexts. By using social media, individuals can connect with others, express themselves, and showcase their stories, whether it be through photos, videos, or written content (Al-Shammari, 2022). This sharing culture is further influenced by the attitudes within the community, where the acceptance and engagement with the information and products being showcased on social media platforms hold great significance. It is through this acceptance and engagement that ideas are spread, experiences are shared, and connections are made, fostering a sense of community and collaboration within the Kuwaiti society. The literature also presents evidence regarding the impact of social media posts on the evolving grooming habits of men. For instance, Byrne and Milestone (2023) assert that skincare advertisers have targeted men's skin as a focal point, urging

them to examine their face in the mirror, social media posts, and, more frequently, during video calls, to identify areas for improvement. These expectations concerning enhancing one's appearance can generate doubt about self-image, resulting in increased self-reflection on how others perceive you. Additionally, according to Hakim (2016), the perceived evaluation by others regarding the emerging concepts of masculinity reflects evolving social ideals. The idea of using skincare products to enhance one's appearance is considered an acceptable norm for men. Male consumers of traditionally female-only goods are rising as society's concept of gender norms becomes more ambiguous (Dodson, 2006). The expansion of male-specific nutritional, dieting, fitness, and various other items and services is sufficient proof that this retail sector is not exclusively solely the realm of women.

The male participants in the study stated that in Kuwait, it has been observed that getting appointments for beauty clinics is difficult due to the sheer demand for their services. The demand is so high that the availability of appointments is limited, and those desiring to use the services must book far in advance in order to secure a spot. Unfortunately, this can leave some customers feeling frustrated as they must make plans to accommodate the appointment availability. Moreover, the popularity of beauty clinics and the corresponding surge in appointments has caused a strain on the resources of the clinics, leaving them unable to meet the ever-growing demand.

General impressions of the body and related elements like weight and muscle mass have been the subject of extensive research on the body. Little research has been done on bodywork practices like grooming that are used as appearance maintenance tactics. Grooming, according to Hamshaw and Gavin (2022), is the taking care of, preserving, or changing of particular features of the body. This can include hygiene, body care, body hair as well as beard maintenance, hair styling, or cosmetic operations. Grooming and attractiveness processes are intrinsically tied, but what is thought attractive varies throughout time. Clarke and Braun (2019) illustrate how body hair grooming could be portrayed as both desired and harmful to masculinity utilizing qualitative story completion methodologies with UK males. This illustrates how males may need to retain a particular status by achieving an equilibrium in their care.

The Kuwaiti female respondents suggested that their elderly fathers use Botox to help reduce the appearance of wrinkles and sagging skin, as a way of maintaining a youthful look. In addition to this, they also noted that Botox has other benefits such as helping to reduce the intensity of existing wrinkles and fine lines, and can even prevent the formation of new wrinkles in the future, a benefit that can be particularly valuable for those who are already showing signs of aging. By targeting the underlying causes of wrinkles and sagging skin, Botox can provide a more natural and longer-lasting solution than traditional methods like makeup and creams, making it an attractive option for those seeking to maintain their youthful appearance.

There has been an undeniable increase in the demand for Kuwaiti men to undergo cosmetic and beauty treatments such as vitamin injectables for a brighter complexion and a more youthful, healthy look, laser hair removal, Botox for the forehead, facial treatments, and eyebrow cleaning. This demand has been driven by celebrities who advertise these services, making them more widely available and accessible. It has become commonplace now for Kuwaiti men to turn to these treatments to improve their appearance and look their best. Furthermore, these treatments promise not just a physical transformation, but also a psychological one, leading to greater self-confidence and esteem.

With respect to male grooming and its impact on society, the responses indicated that a significant number of participants reported that male grooming is increasingly becoming the expected norm in modern society. For instance, this shift appears to be the result of a wide range of factors, such as the influence of the media, the need to make a good impression in the workplace, and the increased focus on personal appearance and self-care. According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), individuals' self-perception and identification within social groups are shaped by their belief in the presence of rigid boundaries and stable and authentic group statuses within social institutions (Kray et al., 2017; Fujita et al., 2018).

In order to protect their group's reputation, individuals may engage in self-stereotyping, which involves associating oneself with the qualities and characteristics of their in-group. This strategy allows individuals to maintain their gender position or strengthen their identification with their in-group (Munsch & Willer, 2012). Moreover, SIT suggests that

by perceiving social institutions as having impermeable boundaries and stable and genuine group statuses, individuals are more likely to develop a strong sense of belonging and attachment to their social groups. The belief in the stability and authenticity of their group's status motivates individuals to protect and safeguard their group's standing in society. This can be achieved through self-stereotyping, a cognitive process where individuals internalize and adopt the traits and attributes associated with their in-group, thus reinforcing their identification with the group and maintaining their group's position (Kray et al., 2017).

Social identity theory suggests that societal norms place pressure on men to maintain their physical appearance. This pressure is perpetuated by workplaces that expect men to look "presentable" to be taken seriously, respected, and considered intelligent. In Kuwait, people tend to judge others based on their physical appearance, clothing, and behaviour. As a result, men are aware of these societal judgments and strive to be seen as belonging to a certain level of society. Grooming behaviour, a form of self-care, can significantly contribute to an individual's self-esteem and confidence, which aligns with the self-perception and self-esteem theory. Additionally, taking care of one's appearance can also have a positive impact on the way others perceive and interact with the individual, leading to better opportunities and more positive social experiences. In conclusion, while societal pressure can be challenging, grooming behaviour can provide a valuable tool for self-care and positive self-perception. Additionally, the growing acceptance of male grooming practices within the wider culture has encouraged more men to experiment with different grooming styles and products. As a result, male grooming is no longer seen as an uncommon or unusual phenomenon, but rather as a normal and accepted part of daily life.

The responses of Kuwaiti female participants to questions about male grooming showed an overall acceptance that this is a normal, widely accepted practice. Interestingly, their answers also indicated a sense of admiration for men who take the time to groom themselves; this suggests that the Kuwaiti society is increasingly viewing male grooming as an important aspect of self-care and a sign of respectability. This shift in attitude is a positive development, since it suggests that Kuwaiti society is embracing the idea that men should be allowed to take care of their own appearance with the same freedom as women.

According to the female participants, culturally, male grooming has become increasingly accepted in recent years. They suggested, it has become more commonplace for men to take part in activities such as styling their hair, shaving, and taking care of their skin. Those who take part in such activities are seen by the study participants as confident and fashionable and are often looked upon with admiration. As a result, it is no surprise that male grooming has become widely accepted in today's society. Kuwaiti men are gradually becoming more conscious and accepting of grooming habits. This is due to the evolution of societal norms and increasing acceptance of the idea that physical appearance matters. Consequently, there has been a notable increase in the number of men seeking out grooming services and treatments. Previously, cosmetic and beauty clinics were often seen as exclusively for women, and it was uncommon to see men in the waiting room or reception area. However, as grooming practices are becoming less gendered, both men and women are now seeking consultations with cosmetic surgeons and undergoing treatments, such as laser hair removal, to enhance their appearance. This progressive shift towards gender-inclusive grooming practices in Kuwait is a reflection of modernizing attitudes and growing awareness about the importance of self-care.

The increase in male grooming practices has been driven by several factors, according to the study participants. One of the primary reasons is the influence of globalization, which has led to the observation and adoption of other cultures, styles, and fashion. As people travel to different countries, they are exposed to new ways of grooming and taking care of their appearance. Additionally, social media and retailer marketing and advertising have played a significant role in promoting male grooming. With the rise of influencers and social media celebrities, men are becoming more aware of the importance of looking good and taking care of their physical appearance. Another factor that has contributed to the increase in male grooming practices is the Islamic religion. Cleanliness and the importance of maintaining appearance are emphasized in Islam. Men are required to be clean, smell good, have trimmed nails, a neat beard, and wear appropriate clothing when they go to Mosque for prayers. These religious practices have also influenced the grooming habits of Muslim men outside of religious contexts. The reasons for the increase in male grooming practices have created an awareness among the female participants to feel more attracted to men who take care of their physical appearance. This, in turn, has encouraged men to feel more relaxed and confident about taking care of their grooming

needs. The trend towards male grooming is expected to continue to grow as more men become aware of the benefits of looking good and taking care of themselves.

This argument is based on the large number of beauty salons, plastic surgery, hair removal, and hair implant clinics that are becoming increasingly popular in society. It is clear that male grooming is becoming increasingly popular and accepted within society, with more and more men turning to beauty treatments to improve their physical appearance and boost their confidence. Moreover, these treatments have become much more accessible, with an abundance of clinics offering a broad range of services. Men are no longer afraid to invest time and money in improving their looks, and this is a testament to the rising trend of male grooming.

The male cosmetic industry is growing quickly. Despite the fact that males have demonstrated a stronger awareness of the necessity to preserve a nice look (Chiu et al., 2019), studies of male grooming continue to provide contradictory findings and conflicting implications (Ho et al., 2020). Over recent decades, many communities have become more scrutinizing of men's bodies as well as body grooming (Holliday and Elfving-Hwang 2012; Casanova 2015).

6.2.3 Women Perception

The female respondents were unanimous in their opinion that they have no issue with male grooming, but in fact, they claim to be the main influencer when it comes to encouraging male friends and relatives to take better care of their appearance. Men observe the grooming practices and appearance that motivate them to adopt such practices. Therefore, the perception of women in relation to male grooming is important. They highlighted how their opinions and input on this matter are highly valued, and that it is important for them to be recognized for their role in raising awareness and encouraging men to take grooming seriously. Moreover, they noted that it is essential for men to remain well-groomed not just for their own self-confidence, but also to make a good impression on those around them. In conclusion, female respondents were in agreement that they are the main influencers when it comes to male grooming, and that their opinions and input are invaluable.

The Kuwaiti females in the study report that they take great interest in ensuring that their sons look their best through regular facials. One female even went so far as to suggest cosmetic procedures to her elder son to help reduce his abdominal obesity, which is a growing problem in Kuwait. Many mothers in Kuwait have taken to ensuring that their sons receive regular facials, in addition to other treatments, as a way of helping them maintain good health and well-being. Furthermore, even though obesity rates are high in Kuwait, mothers are doing their best to help their sons look and feel their best. There are several reasons. For example, men have attempted to lose weight through dieting but have not been satisfied with the quick results or have struggled to strictly adhere to a diet program, they may consider alternative methods such as liposuction. Liposuction can be particularly beneficial for individuals who have "stubborn fat" in certain areas of their body that are resistant to weight loss efforts. Unlike dieting, liposuction offers faster and more noticeable results. Additionally, for some men, their self-confidence may play a role in their decision to undergo surgery to enhance their appearance and boost their self-esteem. Other factors that may influence men to choose liposuction over dieting include personal preferences, the influence of social media, and advertising.

The influence of women on male behaviour reported by the study participants relates to the social identity theory that suggests that individuals tend to form and maintain a positive self-concept based on their social group memberships. This theory has been applied to the Kuwaiti context, where it has been found that Kuwaiti females play an important role in promoting grooming behaviour among Kuwaiti men. They do so by setting high grooming standards for men to follow, and by reinforcing men's adherence to these standards through social rewards such as praise and approval. As a result of these social dynamics, men in Kuwait are increasingly incorporating grooming services, products, and treatments into their daily routines and lifestyles. This shift in behaviour has not only improved men's physical appearance, but it has also made them feel more confident and relaxed about grooming. In addition, it has led to the emergence of a grooming industry in Kuwait that caters to the needs of both men and women, creating new job opportunities and contributing to the country's economy.

6.3 SOCIAL MEDIA

The discussion in this section answers the first research questions which is "What is the impact of social media marketing on male grooming products?"

In recent years, Kuwait has experienced a surge in the adoption of new grooming and fashion trends. This can be attributed to the widespread use of social media and the growing influence of celebrity culture. As people in Kuwait are increasingly connected to the global community through the internet, they are exposed to a wider range of grooming and fashion styles than ever before. This exposure has led to a growing interest in experimenting with new looks and styles, as people seek to keep up with the latest trends.

In particular, social media platforms like Instagram have become a powerful tool for trendsetters and influencers to showcase their personal style and promote new products and trends. As a result, people in Kuwait are able to learn about and adopt new grooming and fashion trends from around the world with greater ease than ever before. With the click of a button, they can see how their favourite celebrities and social media influencers are styling their hair, grooming their beards, and dressing for various occasions.

Social networking is one of the new aspects influencing how consumers make purchases (Aladwani and Almarzouq, 2016). Kuwait is one of the nations with the highest rates of social media use for communication, socializing, and leisure, however research on compulsive social media use and its effects is lacking (Aladwani and Almarzouq, 2016). Overuse and dependence to social media are referred to as compulsive social media usage. For advertisers, the variables affecting and driving obsessive social media use are of utmost importance since they help them better comprehend the effects of social media upon consumers' purchasing decisions on social media sites (Ioană and Stoica, 2014).

Social media may reach a bigger consumer base and do it more rapidly, making promotion through it more efficient. Through social media, businesses may communicate directly with clients or future clients and stay on top of how their interactions with the items on sale are developing (Lusiah et al., 2020)

The complicated linkages between gender, ethnicity, wealth, the idealization of male and female bodies in the media, as well as the internal psychosocial elements that regulate these linkages have long been the focus of gender studies as well as mass media researchers (Andsager, 2014). Since social pressure and cultural standards linked with the value of physical appearance fluctuate, media representations of female and male

appearances are different around the world, as is the extent to which they impact cultures (Lee et al. 2014).

There has been a great deal of research done on how people absorb pictures of idealized bodies throughout traditional media including periodicals, TV, and marketing (Levine and Harrison 2009). Nevertheless, limited published research has looked at how and whether social media being used in particular may affect perceptions of physical goals and the best ways to achieve such. Perloff (2014) provides a theoretically grounded transactional model of online media as well as body image issues that comprehensively hypothesizes how social media may worsen body dissatisfaction and cause unfavourable affective reactions.

The findings from the current study showed mixed information related to the influence of social media. For example, according to multiple male participants in the study, Instagram advertising played an important role in prompting them to purchase and use cosmetic products. This finding is particularly striking, especially considering the fact that Instagram is generally seen as more of a platform that appeals to young women, rather than men. However, this research shows that the men interviewed are increasingly engaging with beauty-related content on the platform as well, and that this engagement is translating into an increased willingness to buy and use cosmetics. This trend could have far-reaching implications in the beauty industry and could lead to more targeted campaigns and products designed specifically for men. However, a number of participants suggested that they use social media not only to gather information on products, their ingredients, and availability, but also to be inspired and motivated by the advertisements or the influencers. Furthermore, they prefer to consider the feedback and recommendations they find on social media as genuine and honest, rather than simply taking any advertisement at face value. As such, these insights are considered, by the respondents, to be a far more reliable source of guidance when making decisions on which products to purchase.

The discussion here deals with the concept of co-creation, which is the interaction between consumers and social media celebrities. This interaction involves sharing information and feedback, allowing for a level of collaboration and communication (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2023). With the advent of social media platforms, this interaction

has become much easier, faster, and more reliable, resulting in seamless communication between social media influencers and their followers. These platforms offer various features such as photo sharing, video recording, audio messaging, chat, and location sharing, all of which contribute to creating a sense of closeness between the parties involved (Kilipiri et al., 2023). In Kuwaiti culture, it is relatively easy to connect with social media influencers, much like one would with famous Hollywood celebrities. Many Kuwaiti social media influencers are regular people, such as students or employees, which makes them relatable to their audience. They are often seen in public places, making them accessible and approachable. This accessibility has further strengthened the bond between social media influencers and their followers, resulting in a greater level of co-creation (Hungara & Nobre, 2021). The concept of co-creation is closely linked to social media celebrities, who now take on the role of answering questions and feedback from fans and consumers regarding products and services they advertise. They also provide live video demonstrations and explanations of the products and services on their platforms, further strengthening the bond between consumers and the celebrities. This has resulted in a significant increase in consumer engagement, leading to higher levels of brand loyalty and increased sales.

Unlike traditional marketing and advertising media, social media provides two-way communication and has opened up a whole new world of opportunities for businesses. It enables business owners to directly engage with their customers, build relationships, and obtain valuable insights into customer needs and wants. This two-way communication allows businesses to create more customized and relevant content, leading to more meaningful conversations and building trust. Furthermore, it allows them to reach a wider audience, with the potential to reach millions of people in an instant. With this two-way communication and reach, businesses can create effective campaigns to boost their brand recognition and reach their goals.

6.3.1 Social Media Adoption

According to the findings from this research, the influence and usage of social media in Kuwait is due to mass adoption of smart devices – phones, watches, tablets, and pads. This is true for all ages across Kuwait, as the cost of these devices has become increasingly affordable through the years, resulting in an increased penetration of smart devices and technology into the lives of many Kuwaiti citizens. Social media has become

a major part of everyday life in Kuwait, as it is used for communication, entertainment, and even to conduct business. It has become an integral part of daily life, as individuals use it to keep in touch with friends and family, stay informed and up to date, and even to promote their businesses or services. The highly interactive nature of social media platforms has made it particularly popular in Kuwait, and its reach and usage continue to grow.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are increasingly becoming essential for businesses looking to reach their target audience and capture their attention. These platforms are invaluable tools for companies to build brand awareness and create an engaging presence that can help boost sales and lead to higher levels of customer engagement. By leveraging the power of social media, businesses can create unique campaigns that can be tailored to specific demographics, allowing them to capitalize on the tremendous reach of these platforms. Additionally, the ability to track analytics and measure the success of campaigns makes social media an invaluable resource for companies looking to maximize their marketing and advertising efforts.

Businesses have employed social media extensively as an instrument for their marketing strategies. Social networking sites (SNS) are a type of social media that let users interact with one another. SNS may develop into a two-way channel of communication for businesses and their clients. SNS's accessibility to a large user base, affordability, and integration into everyday life (Ajina, 2019) make it advantageous for businesses to assure the attractiveness of marketing initiatives, raise customer knowledge, and establish online brand networks (Chen & Lin, 2019).

6.3.2 Social Media Growth and Male Grooming

In order to anticipate self-disclosure, Al-Kandari et al. (2016) analysed young adults utilizing Instagram. They claim that now the Arab culture is much more communal in essence than Western cultures. They continue by saying that because Kuwaiti culture is collectivistic as well, it is comparable to other Asian civilizations. To maintain close contact with loved ones was a priority when engaging in social interactions. Individual aims and goals are regarded less than social ties, coherence, and compliance. For Kuwaitis, maintaining relationships and being sincere are vital virtues.

According to a study by Al-Kandari et al. (2016) men share information online that is substantially more in-depth than that shared by women. Instagram's level of self-disclosure represents the sharing of personal photos, including 'personal photographs', 'facial or body', and 'intimate photos', which are troublesome for women in Kuwait. Additionally, they point out that women are more truthful in their self-disclosures since, as owners of private accounts, they exhibited more truthful images than men, who mostly owned public accounts. Additionally, women prefer private Instagram profiles more than men do. Furthermore, society and culture influence how people are using the media. The conventional and conservative Kuwaiti cultural environment, which may explain why females choose to be secretive in their self-disclosure, likely plays a decisive role in this result.

Additionally, social media influencers have commented that there has been a considerable surge in male grooming in Kuwait, which has been attributed to the opening of new salons that offer beauty services and treatments specifically tailored to men, such as cosmetic clinics and beauty machines for male customers. This is a major shift from the past, where these treatments were not widely promoted and were thus not as popular. With the increasing availability and access to these services, more and more men in Kuwait are now taking advantage of them to look and feel their best.

The theory of orientalism can be applied in this case to examine the male grooming industry in Kuwait (Macfie, 2014). This is because the industry has seen an increase in global cosmetic and beauty brands, which are targeting male Kuwaiti consumers through various social media platforms. One can also apply this theory in the current context since global brands and markets are promoting their own "cultural identity" in the region. For instance, Westernized, Asian or Korean identity is being spread through the Kuwaiti market, behaviour, fashion, appearance, and grooming habits of Kuwaiti men.

During the interview phase, many male consumers expressed that when looking at their father's old album photos, they would often see them wearing jeans like Elvis Presley or sporting hairstyles and beards like popular actors or singers of that time. This indicates that Kuwaiti men have historically been open and accepting of adopting certain attitudes, behaviours, and styles from other cultures. Moreover, in the past, Kuwait has heavily invested in franchising global westernized restaurants and shops, a trend that remains

significant today. Kuwaiti citizens have a desire to experience different aspects of culture, such as food, fashion, entertainment, and education. For instance, the American cuisine restaurant "Wendy's" was opened in Kuwait in the 1970s. Additionally, businesses like AlShaya have introduced several franchises, providing choices for Kuwaiti citizens, and reflecting the demand for international products in Kuwait. In summary, Kuwaiti culture has always had a certain degree of openness towards embracing other cultures, adopting different cultural norms, and being influenced by them, which is evident in the appearance and behaviour of Kuwaiti men.

This trend has led to a rise in marketing, both domestic and global, and international brands, which has in turn increased demand for grooming products among Kuwaiti men. As a result, the beauty market in Kuwait has an opportunity to expand and grow. According to Abdulrahim et al. (2009), a study conducted in Kuwait found that the younger generation in the country tends to have a more progressive and open-minded outlook. They are not only more receptive to new ideas and the Western lifestyle, but also actively embrace and showcase their way of life through the posting of pictures on various platforms. Furthermore, according to van Dijck (2008), it has been suggested that photo-sharing platforms have emerged as the primary means of communication for the younger generation of adults. This shift in communication preferences highlights the growing significance of visual media in contemporary society, as well as the need to study and understand the impact of these platforms on social interactions and cultural practices (van Dijck, 2008).

However, the growth of the industry is also reflected in the increasing competition among cosmetic and grooming clinics in the country, as indicated by the findings of this study. This competition is driven by the demand for grooming products and services among Kuwaiti men. As a result, cosmetic and grooming clinics are striving to provide high-quality services and products to their customers to remain competitive. This trend has also led to the emergence of new players in the market, which has further increased competition. Moreover, the rise of the male grooming industry and the increasing demand for grooming products among Kuwaiti men have also led to the development of new trends in the industry. For instance, there is a growing trend of using natural and organic grooming products, which are considered safer and healthier for the skin. This trend is

driven by the increasing awareness among consumers about the harmful effects of chemical-based products on their skin.

In conclusion, the male grooming industry in Kuwait is experiencing significant growth, driven by the increasing demand for grooming products and services among Kuwaiti men. The theory of orientalism can be applied to understand the industry's growth and the emergence of new trends. While this growth presents an opportunity for the beauty market to expand and grow in Kuwait, it also reflects increasing competition among cosmetic and grooming clinics in the country.

Social media influencers are increasingly using male models in their advertisements to make their products more appealing to the male population in Kuwait. This helps to create a sense of comfort and confidence among the male demographic, as they can relate to the person in the advertisement, making the product and message more personal and relatable. By featuring men in the advertisements, it shows that the company is taking into consideration the needs and wants of the male population in Kuwait, which can help to build trust and loyalty between the company and potential customers. The discussion here covers various aspects that are interconnected. These include exploring smart ways for markets to increase their sales, raising awareness, and educating men, as well as introducing them to the grooming industry in Kuwait. To tap into a new market, it is necessary to build tailored products according to male psyche. When we think about Kuwaiti young male population, they generally follow the theory of self-concept. They are very much concerned with their self-image (Ahn et al., 2013). It's a simultaneous process to increase their business smart way, companies spread awareness, educate men, and introduce Kuwaiti men to the grooming industry (Ahmad et al., 2018). It is due to a significant cultural shift in the behaviour of Kuwaiti men of which markets and brands are now becoming increasingly aware. Brands have extensively conducted research and development to gain a deeper understanding of Kuwaiti male behaviour, as well as to identify and analyse the latest trends, lifestyles, needs, wants, new segments, and emerging markets.

This proactive approach enables brands to adapt and cater to the evolving preferences of Kuwaiti male consumers, ensuring that they stay relevant and competitive in the ever-changing marketplace. It has been acknowledged that there exists a prevailing inclination

among males in Kuwait when it comes to engaging in grooming practices. That is, a growing awareness and importance placed on personal grooming among Kuwaiti men, signifying a shift in societal attitudes towards self-care and presentation. As a result, marketers have not only acknowledged but also embraced this significant cultural shift in Kuwait. They recognize the evolving mindsets and behaviours of men and are now fully prepared to cater to their diverse needs. To meet these demands, marketers are offering an extensive array of sophisticated grooming services, high-quality products, and innovative treatments. Men in Kuwait can now indulge in an expanded range of options, ensuring they have access to the latest and most effective solutions for their grooming needs.

An interesting aspect of understanding consumer behaviour is exploring it through the lens of self-concept theory. To gain a deeper understanding and analysis of their consumer behaviour, we can explore the theory of self-concept. This theory focuses on how individuals perceive themselves and how this perception impacts their purchasing decisions and preferences (Rani, 2014). In studying the theory of self-concept, researchers can understand the motivations, attitudes, and values of consumers, which helps to illuminate their purchasing patterns and choices (Dootson et al., 2016). By examining the relationship between self-concept and consumer behaviour, we can gain valuable insights into why people buy certain products or engage in specific consumption behaviours. This exploration of self-concept theory adds depth and nuance to our understanding of consumer behaviour, allowing us to develop more effective marketing strategies and tailor our products to better align with consumers' self-identities.

The social media influencers interviewed stated that despite the growing trend of male grooming in Kuwaiti culture, there are still some people who strongly believe that beauty items, procedures, and cosmetics should only be used by females. For example, there is a significant number of Kuwaiti male consumers who still don't feel comfortable openly sharing and discussing their grooming purchases and habits with their family members, friends, or society. Many men prefer to keep these behaviours discreet, choosing to groom themselves privately without the need for discussion or sharing with their loved ones. The reason for this is that, according to the respondents, many men still fear judgment from society and being labelled or seen differently. Additionally, some men have mentioned

that their family members and friends come from backgrounds strongly influenced by traditional cultures, which can lead to closed-mindedness and resistance to change.

Limited education and the social circles they interact with also contribute to these closed-minded attitudes. These individuals tend to judge men based on their grooming practices and physical appearance changes. Therefore, men prefer to avoid being judged, as they are aware that many people have different attitudes to grooming and levels of acceptance. Some male consumers mentioned that they would feel more comfortable sharing their grooming habits and purchases with close friends or family members if they knew that these individuals had also undergone similar grooming treatments and could provide advice or recommendations. They may also feel more inclined to seek grooming services if they are influenced by these individuals. Many people in society, such as wives, sisters, close friends, and social media celebrities, play a role in encouraging and influencing Kuwaiti males to invest in grooming services. This traditional viewpoint has been passed down from generation to generation and is deeply entrenched in Kuwaiti culture, with many people continuing to subscribe to it. Even though male grooming is becoming increasingly popular, some people in Kuwaiti society still view it as a taboo. This is even though more and more men are becoming aware of the importance of taking proper care of their appearance and investing in products that can help them look and feel their best.

The discussion in this text centres around two theories: social identity theory and consumer culture theory. According to Munsch and Willer (2012), social identity theory suggests that identification with relevant and meaningful groups can promote self-esteem, while a lack of identification can have negative effects, such as decreased self-esteem, feelings of sadness, stress, and antisocial behaviour. In Kuwait, where beauty has traditionally been associated with femininity, there has been societal pressure for both genders to conform to certain gender roles and appearances. This pressure can create stress and other negative effects. However, societal attitudes and beliefs can also change over time. For example, grooming behaviour was not recognized in the past as a norm for men in Kuwait. It is a new socially constructed behaviour that has been adopted by male consumers in the society. Initially, this behaviour was limited to a sub-culture group of male consumers, but it gradually spread and became a norm in the society. Male consumers in Kuwait achieved this by having and sharing similar attributes, qualities, and looks. Both social identity theory and consumer culture theory can support these findings,

as they explain how group identification and societal attitudes can influence behaviour and appearances.

6.3.3 COVID-19 Pandemic and Social Media Usage

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a dramatic shift in the way that people communicate and interact with each other. With the movement restrictions, people have increasingly turned to social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to keep in touch with family and friends. This heightened usage of social media has also allowed people to stay connected to the world, with news and updates on the pandemic being shared rapidly. As a result of this, many people have become more reliant on social media to keep up to date with current events and to stay connected with those around them. With this increased use, it is clear that the pandemic has had a significant effect on the way that people use social media platforms.

For example, Goel & Gupta (2020) add that, in this extraordinary once-in-a-generation situation of a global lockdown, there has been an array of restrictions that have been put in place; however, the reduction in physical mobility has led to a surge in mobile and internet usage, as individuals have sought to explore and utilize the full potential of social media platforms. It is evident that the restrictions have acted as a catalyst for individuals to make increased use of these platforms, as it has been seen to be the primary means of communication, during the times of the global pandemic. González-Padilla & Tortolero-Blanco (2020) note that social media platforms have been invaluable in providing the public with a way to stay connected with others during the current pandemic. This has been especially beneficial in reducing feelings of loneliness and boredom, which can lead to increased levels of anxiety and distress. In light of this, it is recommended that people in isolation take advantage of the various social media platforms available to them, as it can provide a helpful distraction and a source of support during difficult times. Moreover, this can help to reduce the psychological impact of being in isolation, by allowing individuals to stay connected with their social networks.

In today's digital age, where people's time is highly valuable, social media platforms have emerged as a critical tool to connect individuals across the world, be it in their personal or professional lives. The Covid-19 pandemic, which forced many countries to impose isolation and social distancing measures, further amplified the importance of social media

platforms as the primary means of staying in touch with loved ones and colleagues alike. This new way of interacting, albeit through digital devices, helped people maintain a sense of normalcy during these uncertain times. In fact, the reliance on social media platforms was not only limited to socializing but also extended to conducting work and meetings remotely, which helped people avoid feeling isolated and disconnected from one another. As such, the significance of social media in our daily lives cannot be overstated, especially when it comes to bridging the physical distance between people and enabling us to stay connected in a rapidly changing world.

6.3.4 Knowledge Acquisition

One of the primary sources of men gaining knowledge of cosmetic products is from the female population and their utilization of these products. This can be seen in many different contexts, from observing the makeup routines of friends, family and colleagues, to the presence of beauty influencers and content creators on social media platforms and websites. Furthermore, the beauty industry has become increasingly accessible, offering an array of products that cater to different skin types and tones, thus allowing men to explore a wider range of cosmetics and discover the best product for their individual needs. This has resulted in an increased interest in the world of beauty and cosmetics, and a growing number of men embracing the idea of using these products to enhance their appearance.

Social media has become a powerful platform for communication, collaboration, marketing, creating awareness and sharing ideas and experiences. It has revolutionized how people access and exchange information, enabling an unprecedented level of connectivity that has made it easier than ever before for people to collaborate and share ideas. With the increasing availability of online content, social media has become the go-to source for staying up-to-date on the latest topics and trends. It has also been used to promote discussion and debate, enabling users to connect with each other in meaningful ways. As such, it has become an invaluable tool for gathering and disseminating knowledge.

Social media has emerged as a double-edged sword, with its own set of advantages and disadvantages. While it provides users worldwide with a wealth of information and awareness, it also has a darker side. The publication and spread of fake news are one of

the major challenges faced by social media platforms, which can create chaos and build wrong notions based on misinformed hypotheses. The ease of dissemination of such news through social media and websites further compounds the problem, leading to widespread confusion and mistrust. For example, in the world of social media, there is a growing concern about the presence of numerous fake accounts that attempt to imitate popular individuals or even steal their identities. These fraudulent accounts not only deceive unsuspecting users, but they also contribute to the spread of misinformation and false narratives. Moreover, the issue extends beyond impersonation, and witness incidents where legitimate social media accounts get hacked, leading to the dissemination of fabricated or fraudulent information. Such instances not only erode trust in social media platforms but also have the potential to cause significant harm to individuals and organizations alike.

To combat this, many consumers have taken to relying on high-rated websites for their news, which are more likely to provide accurate information and avoid fraud or false information. In addition to this, social media has also become a popular platform for retailers to market and promote their grooming services and products. The targeted marketing on highly trusted websites has become a key strategy for companies to attract and engage with their target audience. This has led to a growing trend of retailers leveraging social media to build brand awareness and loyalty, whilst also driving sales and revenue. As such, social media has become a crucial tool for businesses to connect with their customers and achieve their marketing goals.

However, there are many so-called celebrities who are providing their followers with the wrong advice or recommendations for a product, simply because they were paid to do so. For example, some consumers expressed their dissatisfaction after purchasing a product that was advertised by a social media celebrity or blogger. According to their feedback, the product did not live up to the expectations set by the advertisement. These customers were disappointed because the product did not match the way it was portrayed in the advertisement, leaving them feeling misled and dissatisfied with their purchase.

This can have a damaging impact on the effectiveness of social media celebrities marketing and their ability to influence consumer behaviour. Not only can this create a bad reputation for the celebrity themselves, but it can also have a detrimental effect on

the brand they are promoting. Moreover, this can also lead to consumer mistrust, as people may feel like they cannot rely on the advice of celebrities. Consequently, it is important for companies to be more mindful of the kind of advice their influencers are giving, ensuring it is not only accurate, but also beneficial for their customers.

6.4 SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

The discussion in this section pertains to the influence of social media celebrities and their endorsements on male grooming behaviour and purchase of grooming products. The discussion is therefore associated with the third research question, which is “What is the attitude of men towards grooming behaviour and how do personal attributes influence their purchase decision?”

Celebrities everywhere are highlighting the powerful impact of social media, which has the ability to attract a large and diverse audience that can be easily tapped into by advertisers and viewers alike. By leveraging the power of their reach, these influencers are able to make an impact on a global scale, connecting brands and products to an ever-growing audience. The potential of this platform is immense, and as it continues to evolve, so too do the opportunities for those looking to capitalize on its potential.

Trust plays an important role in society, specifically when it comes to consumers and social media influencers and bloggers in Kuwait. The concept of "co-creation" and "value co-creation" is the foundation of trust among these groups (Fujita et al., 2018). With the rise of social media, consumers have become more aware that celebrities are often paid to endorse products. It's no longer enough to see a celebrity in a magazine ad for coffee to convince them to buy the product. Consumers are more discerning and cautious in their purchasing decisions because they know that celebrities are being paid for their fame (Hungara & Nobre, 2021).

When consumers see their favourite celebrities endorsing a product, they not only see the product itself, but they also see the values and characteristics that the celebrity embodies. For example, if a celebrity is known for being eco-friendly and they endorse a hybrid car, consumers may associate the values of eco-friendliness and sustainability with a particular car brand. This can help consumers feel like they are making a positive impact on the environment by choosing to buy that car. In addition to this, seeing a celebrity

endorse a brand can also help consumers feel like they are part of a certain group or community. This feeling of belonging can be a powerful motivator for consumers to purchase products that are associated with their favourite celebrities.

However, social media influencers, bloggers, and celebrities from the same region as the intended audience are more likely to be trusted for several reasons. Nowadays, social media influencers share their complete experience with a product through their social media platform. We get to see them using the product themselves, witness daily videos of them consuming it, and get a glimpse of the whole experience with them. This kind of "real" feedback is more credible than traditional advertising. For instance, when it comes to cosmetic and grooming services, social media celebrities may share their beauty treatments, such as "fillers or Botox," on their face while taking a video, risking their physical appearance, and exposing themselves to the public. This provides consumers with a sense of trust by letting them see the entire journey of a product or service, not just a typical ad.

Consumers feel like they're living with social media celebrities. They see their daily routines, and there's a sense of belonging and connection. Before-and-after photos or videos of a product are shared, and this is where trust is built. Both the consumer and the influencer interact, and this interaction builds a co-creation. Influencers reach out to customers, and customers share their feedback and experiences on the influencer's social media platform. Value co-creation can be a useful concept to support the idea that male consumers are influenced more by social media celebrities and bloggers. There is an interaction between consumers and social media celebrities, where they engage and exchange information and feedback. This encourages collaboration and communication between both parties, reflecting co-creation. Social media has made these interactions easier and faster to engage with social media influencers. Social media platforms provide a convenient way for individuals to interact and share photos, videos, and audio files. They also offer features like chat and location sharing, which enhance collaboration and foster connections.

In Kuwaiti culture, it is relatively easy to connect with social media influencers, including famous Hollywood celebrities. Many social media influencers in Kuwait are young people, often students or employees, which makes them relatable to the audience. They

are seen as regular individuals with friends and relatives, and they are often outgoing in public places, making them more accessible. Furthermore, co-creation is closely associated with the fact that social media influencers nowadays actively engage with their fans and consumers by addressing their questions and feedback about the products or services they promote. These influencers also provide explanations and demonstrations through live videos on their platforms, creating a sense of closeness between them and the consumers. As a result, consumers develop trust and confidence in purchasing the products that are being advertised. This encourages other customers to share their experiences as well. Strong influencers who take customer viewpoints into consideration can create an online community where interaction between different stakeholders occurs. Retailers also use these practices as part of their relationship marketing strategies.

Research shows that businesses can benefit from incorporating relationship marketing into their operations and activities (Cova et al., 2011). Essentially, relationship marketing is built on creating, sustaining, and enhancing mutual relationships that provide value for consumers (Ketonen-Oksi et al., 2016). By establishing trust and building interpersonal relationships between businesses and consumers, businesses can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, leading to long-term benefits.

According to the study respondents, celebrities play an important role in educating and increasing awareness of the various male grooming products that are available on the market today. By speaking out about their personal grooming routines and the products they use, they inspire other men to take care of their appearance and embrace a more self-care focused lifestyle. Furthermore, many male celebrities are now partnering with various brands to create their own signature product lines, providing men with the opportunity to access high-quality products tailored to their specific needs. Ultimately, by promoting positive body image and encouraging men to take care of themselves, celebrities are helping to raise awareness of the importance of male grooming.

Social media and celebrity culture have had a significant impact on male grooming behaviour and attitudes in GCC countries. The prevalence of social media use in the region has made it easier for grooming brands and services to reach consumers. Social media influencers and celebrities are often seen as trendsetters and role models, and their endorsement of grooming products has contributed to the growing interest in male

grooming. In addition, the rise of the fashion industry in the region has created a greater emphasis on personal appearance, which has further fuelled demand for grooming products and services. Men in the GCC countries are increasingly embracing the idea that taking care of their appearance is important not only for their personal well-being but also for their professional success. As a result, the male grooming market in the region is expected to continue to grow in the coming years, with new products and services being developed to meet the needs of this expanding market.

The social media influencers in the study have also highlighted the importance of being responsible when using their platform, as any wrong information, advice, or recommendation given about a product can quickly lead to a loss of trust and belief from their viewers and subscribers. As such, it is important that influencers ensure that they are providing accurate and helpful information, so as to maintain the trust of their followers. Ultimately, the trust of their viewers and subscribers is vital to an influencer success and should be taken seriously.

The use of grooming products has been observed to be influenced by celebrity endorsement; instances of these influences include celebrities who celebrate achievements that are generally associated with men, such as athletic prowess (Cheng et al., 2010). These sorts of stimuli are frequently used throughout men's grooming product promotion (Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019).

According to the male participants surveyed, social media celebrities remain a major influence in modern society, particularly in terms of product promotion and grooming decisions. This influence can be found in the choices of many people, from the youngest members of our society all the way up to the oldest. From the everyday consumer to those making the most important decisions in the business world, social media celebrities have a powerful sway over their decisions, making their opinions and advice incredibly important. As a result, companies spend a significant amount of money and effort to ensure they have the right celebrity representation, as they know it will help them reach their target audience. This influence is likely to continue in the coming years, making it important for companies to stay ahead of the curve and understand how best to capitalize on the power of social media celebrities.

In recent years, there has been a shift in the marketing and advertising strategies of companies. Previously, traditional marketing channels such as TV, magazines, radio, and billboards were the go-to methods to reach the target audience. However, with the rise in popularity of social media platforms, companies have started to utilize them for promotion and advertising. These platforms provide an easy way to reach a large audience and are proving to be effective in generating leads and conversions. One of the trends that companies are following is associating with social media influencers and celebrities. This is because influencers have a large following and a significant impact on their audience's purchasing decisions. By collaborating with influencers, companies can increase their brand awareness and reach a wider audience. In addition, influencers have a significant impact on their followers, and consumers tend to trust them more than traditional advertisements.

Another benefit of social media platforms is that they facilitate co-creation of content among businesses, consumers, and influencers. This collaboration leads to the creation of unique and relevant content that resonates with the target audience. The engagement between consumers and social media celebrities fosters a sense of collaboration and co-creation (Waqas et al., 2020). The interaction between the two parties also creates a feedback loop that leads to a better understanding of the target audience's needs and preferences. Thanks to social media platforms, interaction and communication with social media influencers have become easier, faster, and more reliable. This has led to a seamless exchange of information and feedback, which helps businesses to improve their products and services. As a result, social media has become an integral part of marketing and advertising strategies in today's digital age.

Social media platforms are designed to be highly engaging, with a wide range of features that allow users to share photos, videos, audio recordings, chat, and even share their location. This creates a sense of closeness and connection between users, regardless of where they are in the world. In Kuwaiti culture, social media influencers are highly valued and are often treated like famous Hollywood celebrities. It is relatively easy to reach out to a social media influencer, and many of them are students and employees who are seen as relatable to their audience. They are just regular people in Kuwait with many friends and relatives, which makes them even more appealing to their followers.

In addition to their online presence, many Kuwaiti social media influencers are also outgoing in public places, making them even more accessible to their fans. They often attend events and participate in public activities, which only serves to increase their popularity and influence. Overall, social media has had a significant impact on Kuwaiti culture, with influencers playing an increasingly important role in shaping the opinions and behaviours of their followers. With their relatable personalities, engaging content, and accessibility, it is no wonder that social media influencers are so highly regarded in Kuwait and beyond.

Celebrities use social media as a tool for communication and fan engagement. Social media has made it possible for fans to interact with celebrities and stay informed about a variety of their beloved celebrities' personal activities. This practice of utilizing social media to develop connections between celebrities and their fans strengthens social media's capacity as a marketing device (Johnston, 2021). Celebrity endorsement is an advantageous promotional tactic that is employed all over the globe. Contrary to the roughly 25% of TV advertising throughout Western countries that do, 75% of Television commercials within Asian countries utilize one or more celebrities. Celebrity endorsements are used by advertisers in the expectation that they will cut through the noise, raise brand recognition, improve consumer perception of the advertisements and brand, ultimately increase sales (Um, 2022).

The reason for this is that many people in Asian countries have a strong affinity for digital devices and are easily reachable through social media. This affinity can be observed in the high usage rates of digital devices and social media interaction in these countries, which can lead to addiction and other problems. Additionally, the digital revolution of technology has significantly impacted these societies, making online platforms a preferred method of learning about new products. These platforms provide a convenient and engaging way for users to discover and interact with brands, leading to increased brand awareness and loyalty. As a result, companies that wish to expand their reach in Asian markets should consider investing in online marketing strategies that leverage the popularity of digital devices and social media in these regions.

In recent times, a significant number of individuals in Asian countries have transitioned from traditional offline shopping methods to the more convenient and time-efficient

online shopping option. The traditional way of accessing shopping in malls, which was once a popular trend, has now become less common. Meanwhile, online shopping has become a more popular option as it offers convenience and ease of browsing through various products. Brands have taken note of this shift in consumer behaviour and interests and have begun exploring new marketing strategies to reach a larger audience. One such popular strategy is collaborating with social media influencers to promote their products and services. This approach helps brands gain trust from consumers by leveraging the social status and popularity of the influencers who have a significant following and influence over their audience. This way, brands can increase their reach and visibility among their target audience and establish themselves as credible and trustworthy entities in the market.

The female participants in the study reported that social media celebrities have become a major source of influence when it comes to male grooming products. They often showcase the various products they use, and in doing so, create a desire in their followers to replicate their look and lifestyle. Consequently, male grooming products are becoming increasingly popular, as more and more men are looking to emulate the style of their favourite celebrities. As a result, it can be said that social media celebrities have had a significant impact on the male grooming industry.

The responses that were collected from social media influencers provide further evidence that these celebrities are not only media sensations, but they are also sometimes experts in their respective fields. This includes cosmetic surgeons, nutritionists, and other specialists who are able to share their knowledge with their viewers, who in turn can benefit from their expertise. Not only can they provide valuable advice and information, but they can also serve as role models for their followers, inspiring them to make positive changes in their lives. Therefore, it is clear that these social media celebrities are more than just media personalities – they are sometimes also knowledgeable professionals who are able to use their influence to make a difference.

According to study participants, social media influencers play a powerful role in the lives of people in Kuwait, as they are constantly being exposed to the countless benefits and advantages of using social media. This has a direct impact on their purchase decisions, as they have access to a wide range of products and services that are available online. This

increased exposure to social media has led to an increased presence of influencers in the Kuwaiti market, as they are able to reach a larger audience, and impact the decisions that they make. Through the use of influencers, companies have been able to create a strong connection with their customers and have been able to successfully promote their products and services. This has allowed them to gain a larger market share, as they are now better positioned to reach more people and influence their buying decisions.

The impact of self-concept on consumer choice behaviour has been well-documented. Self-congruity is an extension of self-concept, and the basic premise of self-congruity theory is that consumers tend to prefer products or brands that align with their self-concepts. Through brand purchases and consumption, consumers develop and reinforce their self-concepts. This means that a consumer's self-concept influences not only their choice of product or brand, but also how they perceive themselves, and how they interact with the world around them. Furthermore, self-congruity theory suggests that consumers may actively seek out brands that align with their self-concept, as a way of expressing their identity to others. This can lead to a sense of belonging and may be particularly important for consumers who are seeking to establish or reinforce their identity in a particular social context (Xu & Pratt, 2018).

Social media has a significant influence on consumer choice and self-congruity theory due to various factors. One way in which this influence manifests is through the application of the theory, where consumers are more likely to engage with and develop loyalty towards specific brands. This is because they perceive these brands and their products as being in line with their own identity and self-concept. By aligning themselves with these brands, consumers can express and reinforce their sense of self. This connection between social media, consumer choice, and self-congruity theory highlights the profound impact that social media has on shaping consumer behaviour and brand loyalty. Social media plays a crucial and pivotal role in shaping consumer choices in today's digital age. It has revolutionized the way we perceive and interact with various lifestyles, providing a vast array of options for consumers to explore and select from. By leveraging the power of social media platforms, individuals are exposed to an abundance of content that caters to their specific interests and preferences.

Social media can be a powerful tool for businesses when it comes to targeting the audience and implementing targeted marketing strategies. In today's digital age, social media platforms offer businesses the ability to customize and tailor their marketing efforts based on the specific demographic data of consumers. This allows businesses to offer niche products and services that are specifically tailored to the needs and preferences of different demographics. Additionally, through social media platforms, brands have the opportunity to deliver personalized content that resonates with individual consumers, allowing them to feel a strong association and identification with the brand and its offerings. This personalized approach not only helps businesses establish a strong connection with their target audience but also enhances the overall consumer experience.

The cosmetic surgeons interviewed reported the influence of social media celebrities and bloggers has been far-reaching, with many people turning to them for advice and guidance. From fashion to lifestyle choices, they have become a source of inspiration for many, with their posts and stories often being shared by their followers. This has enabled them to create a powerful platform for promoting their own ideas and opinions and can be seen as a major factor in the spread of trends and ideas on social media.

Celebrities have been making a big statement about the impact of social media advertisement on the male grooming industry. It has drastically changed the way men look, act, dress and carry themselves in the public eye. In addition, it has also had an effect on how men perceive themselves and the importance of personal grooming. Men are now more conscious about the way they present themselves and take greater pride in their appearance, thanks to the increased visibility of grooming-related products on social media. As a result, the male grooming industry has experienced a surge in sales and an overall increase in demand.

The responses from social media influencers also showed that there is an increase in popularity of male grooming products, particularly due to the enhanced visibility of men's grooming products on social media. This has led to a surge in the demand for not only products, but also places such as men's salons, cosmetics clinics and beauticians that are specifically tailored to the needs of male grooming. Furthermore, the rising popularity of male grooming products has given rise to an entire industry that is devoted to catering to the specific needs of men, providing them with a wide range of products and services to

meet their grooming needs. This is a clear indication that male grooming is here to stay and that it is only going to become more popular in the coming years.

Social media's influence may have a two-pronged effect that encourages cultural uniformity in some contexts while also bringing forth changes in society and culture in other areas. When people defy cultural norms and restrictions by incorporating contemporary social media activities, they may bring about change. This is crucial when taking into account the traditional familial structure of the Arab world, which itself is centered on deference to male relatives as well as the elderly. Similarly, social media can promote conformity when people with conservative cultural viewpoints and behaviours share their conventional opinions with others or utilize it to get content that confirms their pre-existing convictions. As a result, although some Kuwaiti Instagram users might utilize the social media platform as a platform for personal view sharing and self-expression, those around could be less likely to be forthright or expose in their assessments of what they perceive in so as to avoid questioning the prevailing cultural and social complexities (Al-Kandari et al., 2016).

The prominence of celebrities has been a key factor in the success of social media marketing, as their fan base trusts that they are well-informed on the products they promote and that their opinions are reliable and genuine. This trust has been a major contributing factor in the increased effectiveness of social media marketing, as it allows brands to tap into the influence and reach of established celebrities, who can spread the word about their products to a large and dedicated audience. Additionally, celebrities are often seen as trendsetters, so when they recommend a product or service, their followers are more likely to try it out as well.

The celebrities interviewed reported that it can be difficult to promote their social media pages on their own. As a result, they have developed a system of mutual marketing, where they help another celebrity promote their page, and in turn that celebrity will do the same for them. This kind of collaboration has been seen as beneficial for both parties, as it allows for a larger reach of the celebrity's page and content, as well as providing a boost in followers and popularity. According to interviewees, this kind of exchange has become commonplace amongst the celebrity community, as it is mutually beneficial and helps to increase the visibility of their online presence.

This implies that in order for celebrities to capture the attention of people, they should exercise caution in terms of what they share. It is crucial for them to not only be mindful of the content they post but also to be mindful of the impact their words and actions may have on their followers. By sharing personal usage and experience when providing beauty and health advice, celebrities can establish themselves as reliable sources of information. This approach not only fosters trust but also motivates individuals to follow social media celebrities for their expertise and guidance. Moreover, when followers are encouraged to share their own experiences, it creates a sense of community and connection. This fosters mutual understanding, collaboration, and co-creation between social media influencers and their followers. By engaging in conversations and actively involving their audience, celebrities can build a loyal and dedicated fan base who feels valued and appreciated.

Trust is an absolutely crucial foundation for both sides to achieve success and form a strong and long-lasting partnership. The process of collaboration to establish trust and work on specific projects must take into careful consideration several critical factors, such as complete honesty and open and transparent conversations about goals, tasks, roles, and desired outcomes. In addition to these essential elements, it is also vital to ensure that all parties involved share a common set of values and morals, as this will greatly contribute to effective teamwork and mutual trust. Furthermore, legal contracts and agreements can serve as valuable tools in protecting the rights and interests of both teams. It is equally important to have a clearly defined target audience and to carefully consider and evaluate the reputation and credibility of all parties involved. By demonstrating respect for one another and consistently adhering to high ethical standards, trust can be nurtured and strengthened, ultimately leading to successful collaboration and the formation of strong and prosperous partnerships among celebrities.

The celebrity informants claim that they have successfully aided numerous male grooming brands in the marketing of their products. This includes helping to create and promote campaigns to generate interest and boost sales, providing insight into consumer trends, and leveraging their own star power to bring attention to the product. In addition, they have provided advice on product design and development, helping to ensure the brand's success. Their involvement has been invaluable in helping the grooming companies to reach their goals, and the brands have been thankful for their contributions.

Based on the findings of this research, the celebrities also argued that there is an overwhelming amount of competition in the industry, making it hard to pinpoint and attract the ideal target market. With so many similar products and services being offered, it can be difficult to stand out from the crowd and capture the attention of the right people. As a result, it requires a great deal of creativity and strategic marketing to reach the desired audience.

People use social media to promote a variety of things, including cosmetic products and advice, but often times they don't have the right knowledge or expertise to do so. This can create a problem of trust when it comes to professional social media influencers, as they may not always be as knowledgeable as they appear. It can be difficult for them to gain the trust of their followers, and even more difficult to keep it. However, by being honest and transparent about the products they promote and their level of expertise, they can earn respect and trust from their followers.

The celebrities also highlighted that there are far too many social media platforms available, creating an environment in which it is difficult to capture the attention of an audience that is spread across multiple platforms. For this reason, it is increasingly important to ensure that any content produced is able to effectively reach the right people in the right places in order to maximize its impact. While the sheer number of platforms may make this difficult, it is still possible to devise a strategy that allows for the successful distribution of content.

Messages delivered by attractive or popular sources have been proven to have a higher chance of achieving higher attention and recall, which is why many advertisers today use celebrities as spokespeople to utilize their star power and influence in order to market their products or services more effectively (Boutkaska, 2019). This is because celebrities are seen as relatable figures, which is why people are more likely to pay attention when their favourite star is talking about a product or service. By using celebrities, companies can increase their reach and better engage with their target audience. Attractive and popular sources can include a variety of well-known regional figures, such as local celebrities or influential community leaders. Additionally, popular social media influencers or bloggers who have a large following and engage with their audience can

also be considered as attractive sources. Furthermore, famous actors or singers who have a strong presence in the entertainment industry can add credibility and appeal to a product or brand. Lastly, established online sources or websites that have gained a reputation for providing reliable and trustworthy information can be valuable sources for consumers. These diverse sources are widely recognized and familiar to the majority of consumers in society, making them highly influential in shaping consumer behaviour and preferences.

Despite the various challenges that the celebrity informants reported to have been facing on social media, they have claimed that the opportunity to gain feedback from their customers, as well as having meaningful conversations with them, is something that has been immensely beneficial in helping them to improve and innovate their marketing strategies and products. It has been an eye-opening experience for some celebrities, as they have been able to receive valuable input from their customers, which has allowed them to make necessary adjustments to their products and services, which in turn has enabled them to become more successful in the long run.

The challenges mentioned above refer to social media influencers encountering various challenges throughout their public careers on digital platforms. These challenges can arise from the intense competition among other influencers, as the number of public figures around the world, including Kuwait, has been steadily increasing over time. Moreover, one of the notable challenges faced by influencers is the inherent scepticism that consumers have towards them. This scepticism stems from the awareness that many influencers are being compensated to endorse specific products and services. Consequently, this creates a hurdle for influencers to build a strong foundation of trust with their audience, making it imperative for them to develop authentic and genuine connections with their followers.

In addition to the challenges mentioned earlier, social media celebrities reported that they may also have to deal with other issues that can have an impact on their mental well-being. These include but are not limited to, coping with online abuse, facing negative comments and false news, dealing with online harassment, and being subjected to cyberbullying. Furthermore, finding a balance between their private and public lives becomes increasingly challenging for them, as their fame often results in a loss of privacy. Moreover, they are constantly required to stay updated with the ever-evolving social

media platforms and trends, adding another layer of difficulty to their public career. All of these factors combined make their journey in the public eye immensely challenging and demanding.

6.5 CULTURE

Culture is closely associated with society and community. The discussion in this section is therefore associated with the second research question which is “What is the perception of Kuwaiti society towards male grooming behaviour?”

Culture is one of the key elements that shapes a consumer's persona, and as a result, it has a significant influence on how they behave when making purchases. People's mental models are influenced by culture when they give meaning to life's many components, which ultimately affects their behaviour. The desires and requirements of individuals are shaped by culture, which also has an influence on their choices, how they behave, and ultimately their attitudes. As a result, culture has multiple effects on how consumers behave while making purchases (Sofi and Najjar, 2018).

In recent years, Kuwait has seen a significant shift in attitudes towards male grooming services. Men are now feeling more welcomed and less judged when it comes to their grooming habits. This change can be attributed to increased societal acceptance and awareness towards male grooming services, as well as the rise in male cosmetic clinics throughout the country. Moreover, the prevalence of advertisements for these services on various platforms, such as large billboards and social media influencers, has further contributed to this positive shift in perception. As a result, the demand for grooming services within this niche market has grown significantly. This trend shows no signs of slowing down, as more and more men are becoming comfortable with taking care of their appearance and availing grooming services.

Although modern grooming practices are becoming more popular, traditional grooming practices still hold strong in Kuwait and other GCC countries. In fact, traditional grooming practices in these countries are not just about the physical act of grooming but are also deeply rooted in cultural and religious traditions. For example, the use of fragrances like oud and *bakhoor* is not just a way to smell good but is also seen as a form of respect and hospitality towards others. Similarly, the use of the miswak (a natural

toothbrush) goes beyond just cleaning teeth but is also believed to have medicinal properties and is mentioned in Islamic texts as a recommended practice.

In Kuwait, the differences mentioned can be attributed to the deep-rooted traditional values that have been upheld and transmitted across generations. These values and behaviours have become deeply ingrained as customs or rituals specifically for men in Kuwait. However, it is important to note that in parallel with the considerable cultural and technological progress in the region, grooming practices have also undergone a transformation. These changes reflect a more contemporary approach that resonates with the current generation and aligns with modern advancements in society. In the past, technology was not as advanced as it is now, so grooming products were not as sophisticated. For instance, there were no laser hair removal machines available for men to reduce or eliminate body hair, so they would typically resort to shaving. However, in today's era of technological advancements and increased openness and awareness, consumers prefer opting for laser hair removal services as they consider it to be faster, more practical, and cleaner. In the past, grooming practices were limited and offered only a few options, unlike the present time. In this era, having a higher income and greater purchasing power can provide men with more grooming options, allowing them to feel more luxurious and sophisticated. Additionally, factors such as globalization and evolving gender roles contribute to these differences.

Thus, while modern grooming practices are gaining popularity, the cultural and religious significance of traditional grooming practices ensures their continued relevance and importance in Kuwait and the wider GCC region. Both modern grooming techniques and traditional grooming practices can be observed in Kuwait. Kuwaitis have embraced a combination of contemporary grooming methods, influenced by global trends, as well as maintaining their cultural heritage through the continued use of traditional grooming practices. This unique blend of modern and traditional grooming in Kuwait showcases the diversity and richness of the country's grooming culture.

Kuwait is a country that deeply values its religious and cultural practices and beliefs. As an Islamic country, one of the most important religious practices that is consistently observed is the emphasis on hygiene. Taking good care of one's hygiene is a fundamental aspect of Islam, and it is essential to practice it regularly.

Examples of good hygiene practices include showering before prayer or visiting the mosque, brushing teeth, cutting nails, and presenting oneself cleanly for prayers, Umra, and Hajj. Moreover, Muslim men are encouraged to follow these practices as they are an essential part of Islamic culture. By practicing good hygiene regularly, one can maintain a clean and healthy lifestyle while also showing respect and reverence for the Islamic faith.

Taking care of one's hygiene and appearance is a form of grooming. This practice has been prevalent since ancient times and is essential for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. While it's true that having a presentable physical appearance is important, grooming extends beyond that. Modern grooming services, such as manicures, pedicures, hairstyles, and wearing perfume, have become popularized and are seen as important parts of grooming. These services not only enhance one's physical appearance but also boost self-confidence and promote overall well-being.

It is interesting to note that in the past, these practices were not as common in Kuwaiti culture and were often viewed as unusual or foreign. However, with the increasing globalization and exposure to western culture, these grooming services are now widely accepted and practiced in Kuwait. In fact, many beauty salons and grooming centres have emerged, offering a wide range of services to cater to the needs of the customers. In conclusion, grooming is an essential part of our daily lives. It not only helps us maintain good hygiene and physical appearance but also has a significant impact on our mental and emotional well-being. With the popularity of modern grooming services, people are now more conscious about their appearance and are willing to invest in grooming services to look and feel their best.

In the past, practicing customs and beliefs from other countries was often viewed as unusual and unwelcome in Kuwaiti culture. However, with the rise of globalization and increased exposure to different cultures, there has been a shift in attitudes towards the adoption of such routines. Nowadays, it has become more commonplace and even celebrated to integrate these practices into Kuwaiti culture, as it promotes diversity and inclusivity. As a result, many Kuwaitis have been embracing these traditions, not just as a way to honour their heritage, but also as a way to learn from and appreciate other

cultures. This has led to a richer, more vibrant Kuwaiti community that is more open-minded and accepting of different ways of life.

The male participants reported that male grooming – such as shaving, plucking, waxing and trimming – has created a more welcoming atmosphere among their circle and garnered a greater level of respect in the public sphere. This is indicative of a larger cultural trend of men taking pride in their personal appearance and demonstrating a willingness to invest in themselves. As a result, male participants have reported feeling more confident and better able to express themselves.

Our "body-language" encompasses the habit of personal grooming or taking care of one's body and looks (Liu, 2019; p. 1016). Every culture does have some type of grooming, including clothing, tattoos, and other types of body ornamentation including body paint, aftershave, and cosmetics. In this sense, although humans have bodies, those bodies are frequently well-groomed bodies. However, there is a larger propensity in consumer culture to communicate and write about women's bodies and their challenges in relation to grooming customs and identity politics.

Over the past few years, the trend of buying cosmetics in Kuwait has been consistently on the rise, according to the cosmetic surgeons. This is especially true among younger generations, who are becoming more and more conscious of their appearance and are willing to spend more money on cosmetics and beauty products. The demand for high-quality cosmetics is so great that even the most luxurious brands have set up shop in Kuwait to meet the needs of its citizens. The popularity of cosmetics is evident in the fact that sales of these products have been steadily increasing in the country, and it is likely that this trend will continue in the foreseeable future.

Among the four types of respondents (males, retailers, females, and social media influencers) the common theme that stands out is the influence of culture. There is a gender gap in Kuwait. This gap reduced over the last decade or so and women are seen on the forefront of several government and private arenas. As Ayoubi (2020) points out, men are still prominent in Kuwait. The role of culture on men grooming has positive and negative impacts. The responses received indicate that some men feel out of place when they get certain type of treatment to improve their looks. The response from men stated

that they feel that they could be judged by their friends and relates with their change of habit. The literature states that one of the important factors used to measure and forecast consumer purchasing behaviour is culture (Sreen et al., 2018). Value orientations and cultural components have been included in research on consumer behaviour analysis to explore how culture influences how customers behave while making purchases (De Mooij, 2014).

Some of the men reported feeling too shy to go out shopping for male grooming products and therefore they order them through online platforms. The culture is still not open to accepting men going out shopping for grooming products. Such habits are considered a feminine in Kuwait. At the same time there is certain level of acceptance in the society that has changed the culture. As per the male participants, some men take grooming too seriously and consider different options which could even lead to imitating feminine behaviours. This might not be accepted by a large population in Kuwait. According to one of the male participants, 'Bedouins' have major issues as they are stuck in the traditional way of life with very little changes to the modern lifestyle. The responses also showed that the male respondents would prefer to shop for grooming products and also get grooming treatments when they travel to other countries.

There are multiple studies related to culture and grooming. It could be deduced from the conclusions of previous research that the fashion industry's success in the marketplace also depends on its orientation toward man and nature. For example, high man nature orientation societies think that people can see through cosmetics, and extreme forms of high man nature orientation include cosmetic and plastic surgery (Hsu et al., 2013). Muslims predominate in Kuwait and hold the view that humans are powerless to influence the natural world. Due to the presence of the Sunni and Shia Muslim divisions, Kuwait also has a diverse Muslim community. As a result, although being brought together by a single religion, there are differences based on divisions (Buscemi, 2017). As a result, Kuwait has a culture that might be categorized as having a low man-nature orientation (Al-Kandari et al., 2016). Any generalization, nevertheless, cannot be drawn due to the rising amount of diversity on a worldwide scale and the ambiguous degree of rigidity in the views (Buscemi, 2017). Thus, from an academic perspective, the applicability of consumer culture theory to researchers looked into how culture affects consumers' purchasing behaviour seems to be very appropriate.

The retailers interviewed stated that men are becoming self-conscious about the physical appearance and women have a significant role in this. As the culture started to adopt western styles about physical attributes and needs, women grooming habit changed and women also started demanding the same from men and their children. Hygiene and presentation of oneself have therefore started to become more prominent. Women prefer men who look healthy and presentable, and men have understood that and taken up similar strides.

The female participants added that, although it is not considered as taboo anymore in many countries, there may still be some neighbourhoods in several countries, particularly in the Arab world, where this is still the case. It is important to recognize that this is still a significant issue in some areas, and it is necessary to continue to push for more inclusiveness and acceptance of all genders, races, sexualities, and identities.

The white male middle-aged body has historically served as the cultural personification of normalcy in western modernity. This has been an effective way to ensure privileges while also othering bodies that are different. In this unique era, the mind-related characteristics of masculinity have been associated with the Cartesian mind/body distinction (Hakim 2019). The physicality of the male body has benefited from cultural invisibility because masculinity is defined by the higher qualities of the intellect, not by the manner that now the physicality of women, racialized and/or sexual minorities have and do. As the male body is more and more accepted by the public and consumer society in manners that stigmatize it and portray it as an attractive self-management project, this protected invisibility has already been dissolving for some time (Lefkowich et al., 2017).

Men and women are progressively being "sold" ideals as well as aspirations for men's body types throughout popular culture. Men's lifestyle publications in general are a key source for the prescription of hegemonic ideas of masculinity and appropriate masculine bodies. Fitness and men's health publications continue to promote the strong body ideal as something that anybody may achieve and is essential to good health. This is accomplished by carefully combining commercials and publications with statements about people's moral obligations to constantly work on their physique, pseudoscientific terminology, and before-and-after stories (Parasecoli, 2006; Lefkowich et al., 2017).

Men's magazines simultaneously portray men's bodies as being under attack as well as necessitated by treatment to guard against health risks. Thus, men are persuaded that in order to achieve and preserve their health in addition to their masculine and physical identities, they must participate in self-surveillance but also self-critical appraisals (Lefkowich et al., 2017).

The popularity of male grooming habits and attitudes in Kuwait can be attributed, in part, to the influence of global grooming trends. As international travel and communication have become easier, people in Kuwait have had greater exposure to grooming practices and products from other parts of the world, which has helped to shape their own grooming habits and attitudes.

Moreover, Kuwait's youth are becoming more and more influenced by the Western world, and this is not just limited to fashion trends. It is common to see young Kuwaitis using Western grooming products such as hair gel, aftershave, and beard oil. The influence is not only coming from Western countries, however. The rise of K-pop and J-pop culture in the Middle East has also had an impact on grooming trends in Kuwait. Additionally, the emergence of social media has played a big role in the spread of grooming trends. Instagram and YouTube influencers have popularized certain grooming practices and products among their followers, who then share these trends with their own followers. This has created a cycle of influence that has helped to shape the grooming habits and attitudes of people in Kuwait. In conclusion, while global grooming trends have certainly played a role in shaping male grooming habits and attitudes in Kuwait, there are many other factors at play as well, including youth culture and the emergence of social media.

6.5.1 Religion

Muslims who want to take part in the international consumer culture need to find a solution to ease any tension that may exist among their religion and buying luxuries. According to others, globalization will have a liquefying effect that will dissolve all boundaries and create a "borderless mass society" (Al-Issa & Dens, 2023; p. 563). According to Farah and Fawaz (2016), there is a discernible change in Islamic culture towards individuality, which has led to a greater emphasis on personal luxury ideals than on group membership and status-signalling. Muslims' life values are defined by their

religion (Al-Hyari et al., 2012), and this influences how they behave in terms of making purchases (Billah et al., 2020).

Religion has a significant impact on grooming practices in general and in male grooming. As stated earlier in the male grooming section, Islamic religion has a significant role in the rise of male grooming practices. Islam places great emphasis on cleanliness and the importance of maintaining one's appearance. It is obligatory for men to be clean, have a pleasant fragrance, keep their nails trimmed, maintain a well-groomed beard, and dress appropriately when attending Mosque for prayers. These religious customs have not only influenced the grooming habits of Muslim men within religious settings but also have a broader impact on their overall appearance. Consequently, the surge in male grooming practices has brought about a heightened awareness among females in Kuwait, who now find themselves more attracted to men who prioritize their physical appearance and self-care.

Nevertheless, their religiosity, not their formal affiliation with a religion, should define their ideals regarding luxury (Agarwala et al., 2019). There are behavioural (interpersonal) and cognitive (intrapersonal) subdimensions of religiosity (Mokhlis, 2009). The behavioural dimension represents how much a person actually lives out their religious beliefs, while the cognitive dimension indicates how much they believe in a religion's principles and values. Without showing their religious convictions by their actions, some individuals may be extremely religious in their minds. Instead of actually adhering to only certain religious principles, some people may engage in formal religious events in order to gain social acceptance and/or reputation. An individual could be educated with particular values and ideas, but the true distinction is produced via internalization as well as application of those principles, according to the theoretical underpinning of the importance of religion as a determinant of consumer behaviour (Mokhlis, 2009). Muslims who are more devout internalize and uphold Islamic principles with greater fervour than non-Muslims.

6.5.2 Society

Social acceptance of male grooming is something that is relatively new to Kuwait, and many of the female respondents expressed surprise at this. It's important to note that although it's becoming a normalized practice for men, in many cases it still goes against

the traditional norms of the culture, and so it's been met with a degree of hesitance from some individuals. It is, however, a practice that is becoming increasingly common and accepted, with more and more men choosing to groom themselves in order to look and feel their best. Ultimately, male grooming is a trend that has gained traction in Kuwait, and one that is here to stay.

Men must nurture themselves to function better in their interactions, families, social standing, and careers in addition to their physical appearance (Scheibling and Lafrance, 2019). However, men still have a tendency to implement their beauty rituals covertly to avoid embarrassment and keep their separation from the feminine realm (Chiu et al., 2019).

According to the female participants, men are more likely to use male grooming products in comparison to women because of the societal pressure associated with men's appearance. This pressure encourages men to take extra care when it comes to their grooming habits, leading to an increased interest in the different products available on the market. Additionally, it is believed that men are more willing to invest both time and money into their grooming routine as compared to women, furthering the idea that men are more likely to use male grooming products.

The cosmetic surgeon informants observed that Kuwaiti society has become highly addicted to social media platforms, which has resulted in the need to constantly capture and share their daily lives on those platforms. This includes what they eat, what they consume, what they purchase, and other activities. This behaviour is likely due to the fact that they are so attached to their phones and heavily active on social media. This phenomenon has given rise to a culture where people are constantly seeking out new ways to share their lives with their friends and the world.

It was also added that people in Kuwait are now expecting men to maintain their youthful appearance, to look their best and to be as presentable as women. They have been striving to keep up with the same beauty standards as women, to possess the same aura and confidence, as is often seen in women. This is a growing trend that is becoming increasingly popular as men strive to look and feel their best.

The male participants suggested that girls or woman are not attracted to those men who lack a sense of taking care of their skin, physical look, and basic hygiene. Furthermore, they are more likely to be drawn to those who have a pleasant and well-kept appearance. It is important for men to understand that grooming and personal hygiene is essential for creating a positive and attractive image. These men should take the time to ensure that their skin, hair, and nails are kept clean and well-maintained, as this will have an impact on the way in which they are perceived by the opposite sex.

6.6 SELF-PERCEPTION / SELF-ESTEEM

Men adopt and practice grooming for various reasons based on their self-perception and self-esteem. The discussion in this section is associated with the fourth research question which is “What factors influence and promote men in Kuwait to engage in grooming behaviour?”

Men are being urged more and more to participate in activities that are part of a larger economic process that supports the cosmetics industry and therefore is frequently referred to as "looking for ourselves." Instances include shaving off male body hair, or "manscaping," as a growing ideal (Hall, 2015), or exercising in the gymnasium as a physique initiative (Hakim, 2016). The development of the physique takes place in a competitive environment that supports hegemonic masculinity ideals wherein dominating other men is viewed as an indicator of achievement in a neoliberal environment (Lindisfarne and Neale, 2016).

There has been a significant increase in interest in personal care and self-care among men in Kuwait in recent years. This trend has led to the emergence of male grooming habits and attitudes in the country. Men are now paying more attention to their appearance and taking care of themselves both physically and mentally. They are realizing the importance of investing in grooming products and services as a way to improve their overall wellbeing. As a result of this trend, there has been a surge in the demand for grooming products and services in Kuwait. The market for male grooming products is growing rapidly, with new brands and products being introduced regularly. This has created new business opportunities in the country and has led to the establishment of several new grooming centres and salons catering specifically to men. Aside from the physical benefits of personal care and grooming, there are also mental health benefits associated

with it. Men who take care of themselves tend to have higher self-esteem and are generally more confident and happier in their lives. This is why the trend towards personal care and grooming is expected to continue in Kuwait, and possibly even spread to other countries in the region.

Another prominent factor which emerged from the findings is related to self-perception or self-esteem. Female participants stated this as self-image / Masculinity. The common theme based on retailer interviews was peer pressure / Society. The responses received from these participants indicated a correlation between the themes. Men spoke about grooming based on their dress code. For example, wearing shorts compared to the traditional attire shows most of the body which creates a sense of maintaining their body better. Another example that was shared was regarding hygiene where men who smoke and have teeth discoloration tend to go for teeth whitening as part of the grooming process and making themselves more presentable.

Body image is viewed as a sophisticated psychological phenomenon with many facets (Davis et al., 2020). Body image refers to an individual's perception, attitude, or emotion toward his or her physical self (Damiano et al., 2015). Sociodemographic characteristics and contextual circumstances typically have an impact on this view, that may be either favourable or negative. Fears about body image are currently on the rise lately and affect individuals of all ages, but mainly teenagers and young people (Heron et al., 2013). These outcomes could include, but are not restricted to, depression, low self-esteem, eating disorders, unhappiness with one's physical appearance, and the employment of inappropriate weight-control methods (Burrowes, 2013). The phrase body image dissatisfaction refers to one's unfavourable attitudes, judgments, views, or sentiments about their own physical appearance. This phrase also refers to an individual's discontent with the discrepancy among their real physique and their desired idealized body perception (Alharballeh & Dodeen, 2021). This worldwide issue, which often starts in late childhood and into adolescence, has grown more common (Ferreiro et al., 2014).

The literature provides evidence into the changing habits of men's lifestyle and grooming habits. Tso (2021) investigated Japanese male grooming practices. They noted a pattern of males being motivated by "idols," whose grooming became examples for other men to follow. A rise in grooming techniques and services, as well as the vision of hairlessness,

flawless skin, and delicate crescent-shaped eyebrows, were all part of this trend. Particularly, since the mid-2000s, when the major cosmetics manufacturers introduced products aimed at white-collar men mostly in their 30s or 40s, purchases of facial skin care as well as moisturizing products, involving such facial washes, numerous moisturizing creams, which include facial toner, as well as facial beauty creams, have risen. Previous studies (such as Miller, 2006) discovered that these behaviours and services involve a heterosexual female evaluation and are frequently marketed by appealing to the sophisticated likings of women, such as shaving off different body hair for dating or showcasing proficiency in fresh personal care products for wives and partners.

Men are now under pressure to achieve the optimum physical appearance (Chiu et al., 2019). Body dissatisfaction has indeed been proven to be highly linked to men's interest for cosmetic procedures. According to research by Brown et al. (2007), British men who gave themselves lower self-attractiveness evaluations were more likely to have surgery. Menzel et al. (2011) demonstrated a significant correlation between American men's body dissatisfaction and more positive opinions regarding plastic procedures. On the other hand, according to Frederick et al. (2007), body dissatisfaction in American men was significantly correlated with views toward certain cosmetic surgical treatments, though not with overall interest in plastic procedures. Lastly, Abbas and Karadavut (2017) discovered that males who underwent cosmetic surgery expressed more dissatisfaction with the bodily characteristic than did men in the general population. Based on the careful observations and analysis, it becomes increasingly clear that a growing number of men have started contemplating cosmetic surgery as a viable solution to address their deep-seated dissatisfaction with their physical appearance. This profound dissatisfaction, in turn, has been found to be closely linked to a significant decline in confidence levels and notably low self-esteem among men. Therefore, it can be asserted that men are increasingly recognizing the potential benefits of plastic surgery as a means to uplift and refine their overall appearance, influenced by a multitude of factors and societal cues that have contributed to this shifting mindset.

Female respondents were clear in their opinion that the use of male grooming products does not diminish the masculinity of men. In fact, many of the respondents even went as far as to suggest that men who take the extra effort to groom and take care of their

appearance are perceived as more masculine than those who do not. Furthermore, it was suggested that the use of male grooming products does not necessarily mean that men are any less confident or self-assured.

Male shoppers emphasize their self-image with gender-specific cosmetics. Consumers who are driven have faith in the self-image merchandise. Male users of cosmetics use it as a means of reproducing the fragmented self-image of individuals. The literature demonstrates that male customers make decisions about what they want to buy based on their ideas and mental representations of themselves and their characteristics. The customer receives relevant and useful advantages from self-image projective items. The utilization of such items has understood the great role of men by increasing the self-image of male consumers and communicating this via a symbolic significance.

The vast majority of studies previously concentrated on body dissatisfaction, that is the evaluating aspect of body image (Giovannelli et al., 2008), whereas in the past ten years, studies on positive body image have increased (Tylka, 2018). An improved awareness of the protective and resilient variables linked to body image in addition to a more comprehensive understanding of body image have been made possible by the growing emphasis on having a good body image (Tylka and Wood-Barcalow, 2015).

Masculinity, according to the female respondents, is not only about male grooming, such as the clothes they wear and the way they style their hair, but it is also about the way they carry themselves and behave. It is not just about looking good, but also about demonstrating strength, bravery and confidence in their actions, as well as showing respect, compassion and understanding towards others. In sum, masculinity is about more than just appearance – it's about the attitude and the demeanour that men exhibit in the world around them. This is related to the concept of extended self which is based on the ideas of materialism and possessiveness. Belk describes materialism as "*the value that a consumer places on material possessions. At its highest levels, these possessions become central to a person's life and are believed to bring the most satisfaction*" (Belk, 1984, p. 291). Furthermore, the concept of extended-self theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the phenomenon of body modification. It emphasizes the significant role that bodies play in shaping personal identity and facilitating social communication. Just as individuals bring personal belongings to their workplace to

alleviate feelings of detachment, people view their bodies as a literal canvas where they can artistically express their own unique reality, beliefs, and experiences (Cano & Sams, 2010). This means that body modification, such as tattoos, piercings, grooming, cosmetic procedures, or other forms of physical alterations, serves as a powerful tool for individuals to visually communicate their inner thoughts and emotions to the world around them.

A number of detrimental mental and physical health effects are linked to body dissatisfaction, or poor body self-evaluation, which is a clinical problem (Becker et al., 2017). Males and females of various ages can experience body dissatisfaction as well as its effects, but past research indicates that younger women are particularly susceptible to these issues and are often less content about their bodies than younger men (MacNeill et al., 2017).

According to the female respondents, men often feel more confident when they appear to be more presentable and accepted by society, and this is where self-esteem comes into play. This increased confidence can be seen in a number of ways, such as the way they carry themselves, the way they speak, and even the way they dress. It is believed that when a man feels that he is accepted by society and is viewed in a positive light, his self-confidence and self-esteem are greatly improved. This can have a profound effect on their overall attitude and outlook on life, leading to greater success in both their personal and professional lives.

6.7 TRAITS OF MALE GROOMING BEHAVIOUR IN KUWAIT

The discussion in this section is associated with the third research question which is “What is the attitude of men in Kuwait towards grooming behaviour and how do personal attributes (such as, education, self-esteem, culture, religion, society, and other factors) influence their purchase decision?”

Consumers engage in a variety of behaviours when making purchases (Badgaiyan and Verma, 2014). To define the purchasing behaviour of customers, previous research has employed the cognitive approach, while some studies have used a trait-oriented approach (Foxall, 2014). As a result, the scientific literature is extensive and in-depth (Joy and Li, 2012). To study customers' purchasing behaviour, new versions and theoretical frameworks were also established. Nevertheless, there is a lack of research when it comes

to examining how internal characteristics affect customers' purchasing decisions (Rani, 2014).

Based on the findings of purchase statistics, it is evident that men have been successfully persuaded to consume goods that are strongly associated with women and femininity. How men genuinely feel about the use of skin care products, meanwhile, is not well understood. The UK has a sizable market for men's face skincare, as was previously mentioned. Around at the turn of the millennium, men's facial personal care products had become accessible in the UK. Yet, the mere existence of male face skincare products is insufficient to encourage their use by men. Although the actual skin colour of males has not changed, societal attitudes of men remain (Hakim, 2016). As a consequence, males are under more pressure than ever to work on improving their appearance due to social changes (Hall, 2015).

Men's beauty and personal care (BPC) products are shedding their stigma. Basic hygiene and shaving products once marked the extent of the masculine grooming regimen. Today, men have a wide range of options for skin, hair, beard and body. A proliferation of categories and brands, from mass to prestige, are targeting the male consumer as they tap a promising segment of the BPC market. Those that find the right formula are pulling ahead (Steingoltz & Santos, 2021). A signal of strength in men's BPC products is that men are increasingly shopping for these items on their own. In addition to this, digital channels are the go-to platform for emerging male-centric brands for both education and conversion. The convenience of online shopping is seldom lost on male consumers, of course, but there's also the benefit of creating a more private, hospitable environment to explore and find new products for personal grooming (Steingoltz & Santos, 2021).

While this trend has certainly been fuelled by the desire to achieve a more attractive physical appearance, it has also led to a greater emphasis on mental and emotional wellness, and the recognition that these are important aspects of overall health and wellbeing. As a result, many people in Kuwait are now incorporating activities such as yoga, meditation, and mindfulness into their daily routines, and making a conscious effort to reduce stress and cultivate a positive mindset. Additionally, there has been a growing interest in alternative therapies and holistic approaches to health, with many people seeking out practitioners of traditional healing arts such as acupuncture, herbal medicine,

and energy work. All in all, the trend towards greater interest in health and wellness in Kuwait shows no signs of slowing down and is likely to continue to be a major focus of attention in the coming years.

This could be due to the increasingly conscious nature of the male population in Kuwait, who are becoming more aware of their own personal appearance and how they can enhance their look with the use of products such as creams, gels, sprays, oils, and other grooming products. Additionally, there could be a larger demand for these products due to the rise in disposable income over the past few years, which could lead to more people being able to afford them. Furthermore, the male population in Kuwait is relatively young, with many of the younger generations interested in keeping up with the latest trends in grooming and fashion. All of these factors could be contributing to the large potential for male grooming products in Kuwait.

The interview findings revealed that the trend of purchasing cosmetics in Kuwait is ongoing and on the rise. This trend is quite unique, as Kuwaitis exhibit a distinctive behaviour that sets them apart not only from other Arabs in the region, but also from Western cultures. Interestingly, while the Kuwaitis interviewed are more inclined to buy male grooming products similar to those found in the West, they tend to be reserved and conceal their cosmetic purchases.

Al-Enezi et al. (2018) investigated how social media as well as the internet influenced shopping choices in Kuwait. Nevertheless, they found that social networking has an impact on younger adults with stable income. The findings suggest that online consumers trust information about the product greater compared to any other method of advertising. Additionally, even the sharing of knowledge did not result in a decision to purchase; rather, it offered other options for information gathering. The results show that customers are progressively relying on product reviews given by numerous other users rather than traditional advertising when making judgments about what to buy. Customers are increasingly placing more weight on their peers' experiences and viewpoints compared to any other information source which is a sign of a change towards decision-making that is guided by the needs of the consumer. Companies must increasingly concentrate on delivering excellent consumer experiences in a bid to win their consumers' trust and loyalty, which has significant ramifications.

According to the male interviewees, there should be more male cosmetics centres, such as those dedicated to female cosmetics, where men could easily access the facilities. These centres should provide a variety of services such as skin care, hair styling, and grooming, which are often marketed towards women but are equally beneficial to men. By providing men with a dedicated space to access these services, it would help to break down gender stereotypes and offer men the opportunity to experiment with their appearance without feeling judged. Additionally, it would create a safe and welcoming environment for men to explore the world of cosmetics and feel more confident in their own skin.

6.7.1 Peer Pressure and Influence

Peer influence is a multifaceted concept (Thompson et al., 2007) that includes not just to teasing but is even dialogues amongst peers about looks (Jones et al., 2004) as well as peer attributions concerning the significance of size and physique for popularity (Lieberman et al., 2001). According to research by Jackson et al. (2012), plastic surgery clients frequently experienced bullying and taunting about their appearance prior to surgery. After experiencing a period during which they were mocked for aspects of their appearance, males with higher image rejections tolerance exhibited more curiosity in plastic surgery, according to research by Park et al. (2009). Other types of peer influence and its impact on men have not been studied. Nevertheless, it was discovered that peer attributions (Matera et al., 2018) and discussions about looks with friends (Sharp et al., 2014), are associated with contemplation of cosmetic treatments in women (Matera et al., 2015). This is related to masculinity theory, which pertains to the set of socially accepted and dominant values associated with being masculine. As a result, masculine hegemony can be understood as a multifaceted concept that encompasses various aspects such as roles, statuses, perspectives, behaviours, and personal characteristics (Hakim, 2016). It is important to note that men now find themselves in a position where they are not only evaluated by others but also by themselves, especially considering the growing popularity of the men's skincare industry (Byrne and Milestone, 2023). Therefore, it can be argued that the notion of masculinity and its influence on individuals has become increasingly complex and significant in contemporary society.

The cosmetic surgeons interviewed observed that the pressures of the modern world have led to an increase in demand among Kuwaiti men for cosmetic procedures to enhance their physical appearance and beauty. In a society where first impressions are so important, the cosmetic surgeons suggested that these men feel compelled to alter their physical traits in order to compete with their peers. This has resulted in an increased interest in plastic surgery, liposuction, and other body-sculpting treatments, as men strive to look good, feel confident, and maintain their self-esteem.

The cosmetic surgeon participants also reported that when it comes to purchases, culturally, Kuwaiti men are not usually very open to disclose them to others on social media platforms, but instead only share with very close friends and family which is not even necessary. This is a notable difference between Kuwaiti men and those in other countries, where the willingness to share purchases on social media is much higher. This might be due to the fact that Kuwaiti men are more guarded when it comes to their personal information and prefer to keep it private. The male interview participants gave very similar feedback.

Kuwaiti females play a critical role in the country, not only in terms of influencing men to look presentable and better, but also in terms of making a considerable contribution to society. From teaching and healthcare to business and politics, Kuwaiti women are increasingly taking on an active part in their society and making a positive difference in the lives of their families, communities, and the nation as a whole. As a result, they are seen as an important part of the country's progress and success. Women in Kuwait are continuing to break down the barriers that have held them back, and they are increasingly becoming a powerful force for positive change.

The male respondents also expressed that there is a tendency in Kuwait to imitate and follow others, resulting in the adoption and practice of male grooming. This has become increasingly popular in the modern era, particularly amongst younger generations, as men look to stay up-to-date with the latest trends in fashion and grooming. Male grooming has become a source of pride and confidence for many, allowing them to express themselves through their appearance and unique style. The growing demand for male grooming products and services has encouraged entrepreneurs to come up with innovative solutions to meet the needs of their customers. Consequently, this has led to a surge in the number

of salons and barbershops offering male grooming services, as well as a variety of products designed specifically for men.

A study conducted by Vally (2018) indicates that globally, the total number of cosmetic procedures performed on women still continues to outnumber those of men; however, in the Middle East, there appears to be a significant upsurge in the number of men seeking cosmetic procedures, and initial reports suggest that the number of men compared to women may be relatively equivalent. In order to capitalize on the upward trend and appeal to the Kuwaiti market, cosmetics companies may need to tailor their products and marketing strategies to address the unique needs and desires of this population.

Specifically, younger generations are increasingly accepting male grooming as an important part of their appearance and self-expression. This represents a significant cultural shift, as grooming has traditionally been viewed as "unmanly" in these societies. However, this shift towards acceptance of male grooming is not without its challenges. Some older generations and more conservative members of society still view grooming as a sign of weakness or femininity. This can create tension and conflict between different generations and cultural groups. Despite these challenges, it is clear that men in Kuwait and other GCC countries are increasingly embracing grooming as a way to express their individuality and present a well-groomed image. This trend is likely to continue as younger generations continue to challenge traditional attitudes towards masculinity and embrace new forms of self-expression.

6.7.2 Advertising and Marketing

The connection among social media and customer decision-making shows that social media does have an impact on customer attitudes about advertising, brands, and purchase intent. It may have a moderating impact rather than directly influencing the customer's decision-making. Social media can create brand perceptions that influence consumer behaviour. The customer's choice of making a purchase might be influenced by the brand or item's positive reputation. Social media friends of customers who post or advocate goods or services have an impact on their perception of the company and their purchasing behaviour. However, social media promotion from commercial sources influences customer brand sentiments as well as purchase intent (Yang, 2012). Marketers can build their marketing tactics using that data. Social media is widely used by advertisers in

advertising campaigns. It is a simple method of reaching customers, and it costs nothing to promote a company's services or products (Prasath & Yoganathen, 2018).

In order to boost advertising legitimacy, brand reputation, and customer happiness with brands, it is crucial to continue using the celebrity endorsement advertising strategy. Reliability of the advertising has emerged as being one of the key determinants of repurchase intention in a study by Sutia et al., 2023. They discovered that celebrity endorsement, trustworthiness, and brand happiness can all be important, either directly or indirectly, reasons for high repurchase behaviour.

In line with this, the literature indicates that for a long period of time, old media like TV, newspapers, publications, and banners served as the main forms of communication utilized to connect with a wide audience and convey various messages, whether all the messages carried political, societal, or economic knowledge (Al-Enezi et al., 2018). Studies on social comparisons emphasizes the connection among media internalization and dissatisfaction with one's appearance (Rodgers et al., 2015). Nevertheless, given the interaction among numerous effects on modern social media platforms, these findings have become more difficult to make. Concerns are further highlighted by the fact that social media platforms serve as ongoing comparison tools for peer groups, larger online networks, and also the celebrity world (Credos, 2016; Uhlmann et al., 2019). Online dating is yet another characteristic of the digital age, that adds pressure when determining one's position in the dating market, for instance, via same-sex assessments (Hendrickse et al., 2017).

A company's integrated efforts that transform online communication (networks) as well as activities (influences) onto practical strategic ways to accomplish targeted marketing objectives are referred to as social media marketing strategies (Li et al., 2020). Together, user experience with social media marketing efforts can participate in SNS marketing. These two conceptions are linked since, therefore, all of the enterprise's SNS marketing initiatives and/or experiences that users encounter will have an impact on their responses and can be taken into account during their research phase prior to making a purchase. Combined, these two things can create a connection with customers that advances the company's marketing goals (Wibowo et al., 2020).

There seems to be a noteworthy rise in the amount of men's fashion publications released in recent years. These publications can be a useful source of knowledge for men seeking for tips regarding how they can appear their best. Men now have more choices to pick from thanks to the increase of men's fashion magazines, making it easier for them to select ideal publication to complement their individual style (Byrnes, 2006).

The female participants in the study supported the idea that marketing and advertisement have been a crucial factor in making male grooming socially accepted, as well as in the popularization of men's products. In addition, these approaches have been essential in helping men become more aware of the importance of their appearance, and how taking care of themselves can be beneficial. Furthermore, it has been instrumental in creating a positive image of male grooming and a certain standard of beauty that men should strive for, which has greatly impacted the industry.

The female participants added that high-end brands have predominantly used traditional marketing methods, such as television, radio and print media, to advertise their male grooming products. However, they noted that the use of digital and social media channels is also growing in popularity, with these platforms offering a great opportunity to reach their target audience. The participants also suggested that male consumers have become increasingly conscious of their appearance and have become more open to trying new products, which has further provided an impetus for high-end brands to market their products via digital channels.

Any individual or any business that wishes to use the digital marketing medium can offer marketing services, methods, plans, and layouts that show social responsibility and adhere to community standards (Ruangkanjanases et al., 2020). The content marketing within SNS must not only depend on commercial factors but must also be socially focused or entail active user participation, which fosters meaningful communication and positive relationships among individuals (Ko, 2018). (Wang et al., 2016). Businesses find it difficult to create marketing content for SNS because they need to be capable of adapting it according to the interests of their customers or the public. Consequently, the company must use the appropriate marketing material to strengthen existing bonds with customers and encourage customer behaviour which results in long-term success for businesses.

The benefits of using digital marketing techniques include the idea that customers will find the online marketing content provided by the company to be far more entertaining and that this will result in social network engagement. Secondly, customization option for clients is direct bespoke searching services offered by the company, tags, or even the SNS default search tool. Thirdly, social media is quick and real-time, enabling users to learn about the latest developments and trends in the company's goods and services instantly. Fourth, a social media strategy enables the creation of personal connections among users, that can result, fifth, the word-of-mouth effects, or the propensity of customers to share the information shown on a firm's social media with one another. Wibowo et al. (2020) claim that those are the five pillars for social media marketing campaigns.

The display of luxury goods and experiences is also often used as a way to signal social status and success in Kuwaiti culture. This is particularly evident in the realm of fashion, where designer brands and high-end clothing are highly valued. The acquisition of luxury goods is seen as a way to demonstrate one's wealth and success, and the display of such items is often used as a means of social signalling. However, the importance of luxury and status symbols in Kuwaiti culture is not without its critics. Many argue that the emphasis on material goods and social status is shallow and ultimately unfulfilling, and that true happiness and success cannot be achieved through the acquisition of wealth and possessions. Nonetheless, the influence of social media and celebrity culture continues to shape Kuwaiti culture and reinforce the importance of luxury and status symbols in the eyes of many. The discussion related to the purchase of luxury goods highlights the idea that the use and acquisition of these items can be linked to an individual's desire to be perceived as having a higher social status. It is believed that consumers aspire to be recognized and placed in a higher social stratum, and they perceive that by consuming and purchasing luxurious products, they can improve their chances of attaining this recognition and fitting into the societal stereotype associated with a higher social standing.

According to the cosmetic surgeons, social media, advertising, influencers, before and after photos, and the influence of television and movies have all contributed to a drastic shift in the perception of beauty in Kuwaiti society. This shift has been so profound that it has led to a significant increase in the number of men seeking out surgical and non-surgical cosmetic procedures in order to alter their physical appearance and conform to

the beauty standards set forth by their peers. This has become an accepted and even encouraged behaviour amongst Kuwaiti men, with many seeing it as a sign of success and acceptance within their culture. Lee & Kim (2019) studied consumer power perception in luxury cruise using the consumer tribe theory. They point out that it has been shown that consumer tribes empower customers and actively participate in the value-creation process. Their findings indicate that members of consumer tribes experience a sense of community, which creates feelings of cohesion with other passengers on themed cruises (Lee & Kim, 2019). This is applicable in this research context as well where male grooming practices can be linked to feeling of cohesion and following others.

The findings from this study indicate that there are several reasons why the male consumers interviewed tend to purchase "luxury" high-end products. They do this to align themselves with a specific social status or group, believing that by doing so, they will be perceived and evaluated as belonging to a higher class. This boosts their confidence and provides a sense of acceptance and respect in society. Particularly among the younger generation, Kuwaiti males have always had an inclination to follow the latest trends and be influenced by their peers in order to fit in. As a result, these male consumers are willing to pay a premium for luxurious products simply to be viewed as individuals who are up-to-date and of high status in society. Their intention is to avoid feeling excluded or judged, so they believe that consuming and purchasing these products will enhance their self-confidence and convey the impression of being part of an exclusive group. Based on the findings and responses, it is evident that many Kuwaitis acknowledge their inclination to conform to societal norms, follow trends, and have a sense of belonging to avoid feeling excluded. It is also worth mentioning the involvement of social identity theory and self-theory in this context. It is possible that Kuwaitis face challenges with self-esteem and self-confidence when they do not fit in with society and fear being judged. Consequently, they exhibit a strong desire to assimilate into the social fabric. A study conducted by Balabanis & Stathopoulou (2021) discovered that individuals who value social status and prestige are more likely to be willing to pay higher prices for products that reflect these qualities, compared to individuals who place less importance on their social standing. This finding aligns with the arguments made earlier regarding the purchase and recognition of luxury products in Kuwait. Existing literature (e.g., Han et al., 2010; Nelissen and Meijers, 2011; Balabanis and Stathopoulou, 2021) supports the idea that the desire for social recognition and the symbolic status associated with luxury products

significantly influence consumer behaviour and their willingness to pay premium prices for these items.

The cosmetic surgeons also reported that in their experience, high end brands are very popular among male consumers in Kuwait, with many men taking great pride in their appearance and looking to invest in top quality grooming products and toiletries. High end brands have become synonymous with quality and luxury, and this has resulted in many men being willing to pay a premium for the products they use in order to achieve the look and feel they desire. Such brands are often associated with the latest trends and fashion, and this has resulted in them becoming a must-have for many men in Kuwait.

6.8 CONCLUSION

In Kuwait and other GCC countries, male grooming is influenced by factors like increased disposable income, awareness of personal grooming, and the regional fashion industry's growth. These factors drive men to spend more on products and services to enhance their appearance. Literature indicates that Muslim individuals, whose luxury values align with their religious beliefs, favor luxury grooming products. These beliefs significantly shape the local culture in Kuwait, impacting grooming practices and behavior shifts.

Recent changes in Kuwait's perception of masculinity have influenced male grooming. Men express themselves through grooming and fashion, leading to an increase in male-focused products and services, including skincare, haircare, and salons. Men are adopting self-care practices like meditation and yoga. Inclusion has led to gender-neutral products. The growing attention men give to their appearance will fuel demand for grooming products and services, attracting new industry players and technologies. This trend reflects the evolution of societal values towards beauty routines.

Kuwaiti society and culture, particularly in grooming and fashion, are shaped by social media and celebrity culture. Instagram and Snapchat are used to follow fashion trends and find style inspiration. Social media influences attitudes towards male skincare products through ads, influencers' recommendations, and personal experiences (Byrne & Milestone, 2023; Boutkaska, 2019). It also promotes personal grooming in Kuwait by providing easy access to information about beauty products and techniques.

Kuwait's global reach and openness to new ideas are mirrored in its grooming trends. Both local and international celebrities and influencers popularize grooming products. Local stars and influencers like Ahmed Al Nasheet, along with international figures like David Beckham and George Clooney, drive demand through their well-groomed appearances on social media platforms.

Studying theories on masculinity, consumer culture, social identity, self-congruity, and Orientalism helps understand Kuwaiti male grooming behaviour. This sheds light on trends, preferences, and behaviours, leading to better marketing strategies. It also highlights socio-cultural factors such as religion, tradition, and norms, allowing businesses to tailor offerings. This research provides valuable insights for Kuwait's grooming industry.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the final chapter that answers the research questions and specifies the theoretical contribution made by this research. It also sets out the managerial implications and contribution to knowledge. Finally, the limitations and directions for future research are provided in the chapter.

The insights shared in this chapter, further elaborated in chapters 5 and 6, stem from empirical data gathered from interviews with Kuwaiti men, retailers, cosmetic surgeons, women, and social media influencers. Chapter 5 offers a data analysis where interview outcomes are examined through thematic analysis and coding. Chapter 6 juxtaposes these results with existing literature. This chapter utilizes findings from those chapters to address the research questions and offer practical implications and suggestions, thereby contributing to the knowledge in this field. These findings also highlight the limitations of the research and the need for additional studies in the future.

People have experimented with a wide range of techniques and strategies to attain their desired appearance. These methods have included not only makeup, clothing, and accessories, but also hairstyles, grooming practices, and even cosmetic procedures. By exploring different avenues of self-expression and personal style, individuals have sought to enhance their outward appearance and create a visual representation that aligns with their own unique sense of identity and aesthetics (Al-Kandari et al., 2016). Moreover, individuals have also utilized various forms of physical activity, such as jogging, swimming, and weightlifting, along with incorporating healthy eating habits and following specific diets, to not only enhance appearance but also improve overall well-being and maintain a healthy lifestyle (Donnelly et al., 2018). It is important to note that engaging in regular exercise routines and adopting a balanced and nutritious diet are essential components for achieving optimal physical fitness and enhancing one's self-image.

This research has focused on the efforts made by men in Kuwait to enhance their physical appearance through various grooming practices. These practices include but are not limited to skincare routines, hair styling, facial hair grooming, body fitness, cosmetic surgeries, and purchase of cosmetic products. The study addresses the motivations behind these grooming behaviours, exploring factors such as societal influences, cultural norms, personal preferences, and the influence of social media. Additionally, the research examines the impact of these grooming practices on men's self-confidence, body image, and self-esteem. The findings shed light on the significance of grooming in the lives of Kuwaiti men and any implications for their psychological and social experiences.

This research has focused extensively on the increasing trend of male grooming in Kuwait in recent years. The study has particularly emphasized the significant role played by various social media platforms in shaping the perception and behaviour of men towards grooming. Through an in-depth analysis of interviews with men, women, cosmetic surgeons, social media influencers, and retailers in Kuwait, the research has explored the impact of social media influencers, beauty bloggers, and grooming brands' marketing strategies on men's grooming habits. Additionally, the study has investigated the motivations behind Kuwaiti men's engagement with grooming content on social media and the influence of peer networks in shaping their grooming choices. Overall, this research has provided valuable insights into the dynamic relationship between male grooming and social media, shedding light on evolving trends and influencing factors in this domain.

Social media's influence can have a dual impact on society and culture. On one hand, it can promote cultural uniformity in certain contexts, while on the other hand, it can bring about significant changes. The findings have revealed that social media plays a significant role in promoting conformity. This occurs when individuals with conservative cultural viewpoints and behaviours utilize social media to share their conventional opinions or seek out content that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs. Consequently, while some Kuwaiti social media users may view the platform as an outlet for personal expression and sharing their views, those around them may be less inclined to express their true thoughts or openly discuss what they observe, in order to avoid challenging the prevailing cultural and social norms and intricacies.

By engaging in social media activities, individuals have the potential to challenge and defy cultural norms and restrictions, ultimately leading to societal transformation. However, the findings suggest that social media can also promote conformity, especially when individuals with conservative cultural viewpoints and behaviours use it to reinforce their pre-existing convictions. This may lead to a hesitancy among Kuwaiti social media users to openly express their true thoughts and opinions, in order to avoid questioning the prevailing cultural and social complexities.

While some Kuwaiti social media users may utilize the platform as a means for personal view sharing and self-expression, the fear of judgment or backlash from others may hinder their willingness to be forthright and expose their true assessments of what they perceive. This is particularly evident due to the existing cultural and social complexities that are deeply ingrained in Kuwaiti society.

This research is mainly based on consumer culture theory (CCT). In addition to this the research also uses the masculinity theory, social identity theory (SIT), and the self-congruity theory (SCT). By adopting a consumer culture theory (CCT), this research explores various dimensions of male grooming, including the influence of cultural norms, societal values, and individual identities (Hungara and Nobre, 2021). This approach has shed light on how men navigate and negotiate their roles within wider cultural and social contexts, uncovering the intricate dynamics that shape consumer behaviour and decision-making processes. Masculinity theory refers to the culturally accepted and prevailing values of masculinity, which shape the behaviours, attitudes, and expectations associated with being a man (Magrath & Scoats, 2019). This theory explores the complex nature of male grooming, examining how societal norms and gender roles influence men's grooming practices and self-presentation.

Social identity theory (SIT) indicates that individuals have a natural tendency to identify themselves with various real or symbolic social groups. By affiliating themselves with these social groups, individuals gain a sense of social identity and establish connections with others who share similar characteristics, beliefs, or goals (Fujita et al., 2018). This theory suggests that social identity is a fundamental aspect of male grooming behaviour and plays a significant role in shaping individuals' attitudes, behaviours, and interactions with others. According to self-congruity theory (SCT), the alignment between consumers'

values, attitudes, and way of life can have a significant impact on this connection (Khalid et al., 2018). This theory highlights the importance of understanding the congruence between men self-identity and the brand image to effectively establish and maintain a strong connection with the target audience.

7.2 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section answers the research questions that were provided in Chapter 1.

7.2.1 Answering Research Question 1

What is the impact of social media marketing on male grooming products in Kuwait?

The first research question aims to explore and analyse the central theme of this research, which pertains to the impact of social media on male grooming practices. This is based on the research objective to understand the impact of social media marketing strategies on the consumer behaviour and sales of male grooming products in Kuwait.

In order to provide comprehensive insights, this research question is thoroughly examined and answered through the analysis of the interview data. This research question is connected to social identity theory, which explores how individuals align themselves with significant groups, promoting self-esteem (Munsch & Willer, 2012). In addition to grooming themselves to improve their image and gain acceptance in society, men also engage in various behaviours and practices that are influenced by their desire to fit in and be recognized (Munsch & Willer, 2012). These behaviours may include adopting certain fashion trends, participating in activities that are popular among their desired social group, and even altering their behaviour to conform to societal norms. By understanding the motivations behind these actions, the researcher gains insight into the complex interplay between social identity, self-esteem, and individual behaviour.

There has always been a strong emphasis on ruggedness as a defining characteristic of masculinity, with men showcasing their behaviour and attitude to embody this ideal (Alkazemi, 2019; Boutkaska, 2019). Conversely, femininity has traditionally been associated with beauty and being subtle (Byrne & Milestone, 2023). However, in recent years, there has been a notable shift in this perspective, with traditional notions being questioned and new opportunities arising for self-expression and the exploration of identity.

Social media has a complex impact on customer decision-making. Studies show it greatly influences customer attitudes towards advertising, brands, and purchase intent. It's not just a passing trend; it's now essential in modern marketing strategies. Brands and businesses are currently using social media platforms to connect with their target audience, establish brand awareness, and ultimately boost sales (Fujita et al., 2018; Jhamb et al., 2020). Social media offers a distinct opportunity for brands to directly engage with consumers, gather valuable feedback, and customize their marketing messages accordingly. Furthermore, the impact of social media extends beyond mere advertising; it shapes consumer perceptions, influences brand loyalty, and even impacts the decision-making process (Hungara & Nobre, 2021).

As customers are constantly bombarded with a vast array of content from various sources, including social media, their decision-making process is heavily influenced by what they see and hear. It is essential, therefore, for brands to not only have a mere presence on social media but to establish a robust and impactful presence that resonates with their target audience. By fully understanding and harnessing the power of social media, brands can effectively influence customer perspectives, elevate brand perception, and ignite a heightened interest in their products or services, ultimately leading to increased sales and customer loyalty. According to the male participants of this study, there has been an increase in the demand and options for men's fashion. This increase can be attributed to the growing interest and awareness among individuals regarding men's fashion, leading to a higher demand for informative and engaging content in this field. One of the main factors contributing to this trend is the use of social media and related platforms.

Female participants noted that marketing and advertising are vital for facilitating social acceptance of male grooming and popularizing of men's products. These strategies also raise men's awareness of appearance and self-care benefits, shaping a positive image and setting beauty standards. High-end brands traditionally use TV, radio, and print ads for promotion, but digital and social media platforms are now gaining popularity. Male consumers are becoming more appearance-conscious and open to trying new products, leading luxury brands to use digital channels for promotion.

The cosmetic surgeons interviewed stated that social media, advertising, influencers, before and after photos, as well as the impact of television and movies, have all contributed to a significant shift in how beauty is perceived in Kuwaiti society. This transformation has resulted in a noticeable increase in the number of men choosing surgical and non-surgical cosmetic procedures to alter their physical appearance and conform to the beauty standards established by their peers. This behaviour is now widely embraced and even promoted among Kuwaiti men, who view it as a symbol of achievement and belonging within their culture.

According to the cosmetic surgeons who were interviewed, as well as the female participants, male consumers, and employees from the retailing sector, social media platforms have become important tools that can greatly influence and shape brand perceptions. As a result, this can have a significant impact on consumer behaviour. It is important to mention that when people are considering a purchase, they are often influenced by the positive reputation and image of a specific brand or product. This shows the great influence that social media has in shaping consumer choices and preferences.

Retailers' feedback showed that customers' purchasing behaviour can be influenced by their social media connections. Understanding and leveraging the impact of social media in marketing strategies is crucial for companies (Fujita et al., 2018). Active engagement on social media platforms helps build relationships, trust, and drive sales. Additionally, customer feedback on social media provides valuable insights to enhance products or services, ensuring satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, acknowledging the significance of social media connections and proactively engaging with customers is essential for success in the digital era.

It can thus be concluded that with the ever-growing emphasis on marketing and promotions, there has been a significant surge in the demand for male grooming services in Kuwait. As a result, businesses operating in this sector are facing intense competition as they strive to cater to the evolving preferences of their target customers. It is worth noting that social media marketing and advertising have played a pivotal role in shaping men's perceptions of beauty and attractiveness, thereby influencing the ideal male appearance. This encompasses various aspects such as well-defined abdominal muscles, a specific hairstyle that complements their facial features, gleaming white teeth, a

carefully crafted beard style, broad and strong shoulders that exude masculinity, and a confident posture that radiates self-assurance. It is undeniable that these visual cues exert a profound influence on men's perception of beauty and ultimately impact their personal preferences.

7.2.2 Answering Research Question 2

What is the perception of Kuwaiti society towards male grooming behaviour?

The second research question explores the concept of consumer culture theory, which offers a unique perspective on how culture influences male grooming behaviour. This research question is based on the research objective to understand the perception of Kuwaiti society towards male grooming behaviour.

CCT views culture as a collection of various groups of people who share meanings and interpretations. This perspective recognizes that different subcultures and social groups within a society may have their own unique cultural values and practices that shape consumer behaviour (Arnould and Thompson, 2018). By considering culture as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, the study of consumer culture theory provides a more nuanced understanding of how individuals navigate and make meaning within the marketplace.

The acceptance of male grooming in Kuwaiti society is a relatively new phenomenon, which was surprising to most of the female respondents. It is important to acknowledge that while grooming is becoming more commonplace for men, it still challenges traditional cultural norms in some cases, leading to hesitance from certain individuals. However, male grooming is increasingly prevalent and accepted, as more men choose to take care of their appearance and well-being.

It can be argued that, in today's society, there is a noticeable trend of more women opting for cosmetic procedures compared to men. This can be attributed to the enduring fascination that women have with beauty and their desire to retain a youthful appearance. Additionally, the increasing involvement of women in activism has played a crucial role in challenging traditional norms and advocating for equal rights and opportunities. The impact of media and technology has also contributed to these shifts in attitudes, as they have provided platforms for diverse voices to be heard and for important discussions to

occur. Furthermore, cultural changes over time have significantly shaped societal attitudes, as societal values and norms evolve with the changing times. All these factors combined support the current situation and the positive changes that have occurred in Kuwait.

7.2.2.1 Cultural Support to Male Grooming

The impact of marketing and the involvement of social media influencers have also played a significant role in shaping cultural changes. Moreover, there has been a noticeable move towards a more open-minded attitude among citizens, which has further contributed to this transformation. It is worth mentioning that this change in mindset and perception is not restricted to a particular society, but is applicable to societies worldwide, including Kuwaiti society. By utilizing social media, people can connect with others, express themselves, and highlight their stories, whether it's through images, videos, or written content. This culture of sharing is additionally shaped by the attitudes within the community, where the acceptance and interaction with the information and products being featured on social media platforms hold significant importance. It is through this acceptance and interaction that ideas are disseminated, experiences are exchanged, and relationships are formed, fostering a sense of community and collaboration within Kuwaiti society.

Regarding male grooming and its impact on society, a considerable number of participants reported that male grooming is becoming more and more expected in modern society. For example, this change seems to be influenced by various factors, including the media, the desire to make a positive impression at work, and the growing emphasis on personal appearance, self-care, and grooming habits.

Social identity theory suggests that societal norms exert pressure on men to maintain their physical appearance (Fujita et al., 2018). This pressure is reinforced by workplaces that expect men to appear "presentable" in order to be taken seriously, respected, and perceived as intelligent. In Kuwait, individuals tend to assess others based on their physical appearance, attire, and conduct. Therefore, men are conscious of these societal evaluations and aspire to be perceived as belonging to a particular social stratum.

The responses from Kuwaiti female participants regarding male grooming indicated a general acceptance of it as a normal and widely accepted practice. Interestingly, their answers also revealed an admiration for men who prioritize their grooming, suggesting that Kuwaiti society is recognizing the importance of self-care and the significance of grooming as a sign of respectability. This shift in attitude is a positive development, as it reflects the growing acceptance in Kuwaiti society that men should have the freedom to take care of their appearance just like women. According to the female participants, culturally, men's grooming has become increasingly accepted in recent years. In fact, it has become more common for men to engage in activities such as styling their hair, shaving, and taking care of their skin. According to the findings, those who participate in such activities are viewed as confident and stylish and are often admired. As a result, it is not surprising that men's grooming has gained widespread acceptance in today's society. Kuwaiti men are gradually becoming more aware and accepting of grooming habits. This is because societal norms are evolving and there is increasing recognition of the importance of physical appearance.

The results from male participants and cosmetic surgeons suggest that there is a growing number of beauty salons, plastic surgery clinics, hair removal services, and hair implant clinics that are gaining popularity in society. It is evident that male grooming is on the rise and being more widely accepted in society, as an increasing number of men are seeking beauty treatments to enhance their physical appearance and increase their self-assurance.

Cosmetic surgeons have noticed a significant increase in the usage of social media platforms among Kuwaiti society. This has led to a constant desire to document and share their daily activities on these platforms, including their meals, purchases, and various other experiences. This behaviour is likely a result of their strong attachment to their smartphones and their active presence on social media. As a result, a culture has emerged where individuals are always looking for innovative ways to share their lives with both their friends and the wider world.

It was also mentioned by retailers that in Kuwait that there is an increasing expectation for men to maintain a youthful appearance and present themselves in the best possible way, similar to women. Men are striving to meet the same beauty standards as women

and exude the same aura and confidence that is commonly associated with women. This emerging trend is gaining popularity as men aim to enhance their appearance and well-being.

7.2.2.2 Cultural Hindrances to Male Grooming

In many instances, culture has played a significant role in promoting and encouraging male grooming practices such as adopting to Western grooming standards. This cultural support has often been evident through societal norms, media representation, and the availability of grooming products and services tailored specifically for men. However, according to the study, it is important to note that there are also concerns among men regarding certain aspects of male grooming. It is essential to acknowledge and address these concerns in order to create a more inclusive and holistic understanding of male grooming practices.

The findings from the study also indicate that men generally tend to prefer keeping these grooming behaviours to themselves, opting for a more private approach rather than openly discussing or sharing them with others. This choice is often influenced by concerns about potential judgment from society and the fear of facing stigmatization or being perceived differently by others. It is worth noting that this behaviour is not limited to a specific age group or cultural background, as men from various demographics exhibit similar tendencies. In fact, the fear of being negatively labelled or ostracized can have a significant impact on men's willingness to openly embrace grooming practices and seek support or advice from others. Therefore, it is crucial to create a more accepting and understanding environment where men feel comfortable discussing and engaging in these self-care activities without fear of being judged or marginalized.

The findings also indicate that where individuals have mentioned that their family members and friends come from backgrounds strongly influenced by traditional cultures, this can lead to closed-mindedness and resistance to change. Limited education and the social circles they interact with also contribute to these closed-minded attitudes. These individuals tend to assess others based on their grooming practices and physical appearance changes. Therefore, individuals prefer to avoid being evaluated, as they are aware that many people have different perspectives and levels of acceptance.

Furthermore, many male consumers have expressed that they would feel more comfortable and open about discussing their grooming habits and purchases if they had the assurance that their trusted friends or family members have also undergone similar grooming treatments and could provide valuable advice or recommendations. This sense of shared experience and guidance from familiar individuals is highly likely to enhance their motivation and inclination towards considering various grooming services and products.

Many individuals in society, such as spouses, siblings, close friends, and social media influencers, play a crucial role in encouraging and influencing Kuwaiti men to invest in grooming services. This traditional perspective has been passed down from one generation to another and is deeply ingrained in Kuwaiti culture, with many individuals still adhering to it. Despite the increasing popularity of male grooming, there are still some people in Kuwaiti society who consider it a taboo (Al-Kandari et al., 2016; Rasmussen, 2021), despite the growing awareness among men about the significance of properly caring for their appearance and investing in products that can enhance their look and overall well-being.

The findings suggest that men not only value their physical appearance for personal reasons, but also for how they are perceived by others. This is important for maintaining a positive self-image and cultivating self-confidence. The desire to enhance self-confidence and be accepted in society motivates men to work towards achieving a certain level of physical appearance and receive positive evaluations. Additionally, there is a growing demand and acceptance, both from society and men themselves, for performing minor grooming treatments at home such as shaving or maintaining the beard.

7.2.3 Answering Research Question 3

What is the attitude of men in Kuwait towards grooming behaviour and how do personal attributes (such as, education, self-esteem, culture, religion, society, and other factors) influence their purchase decision?

The third research question aims to explore the intricate relationship between men's attitudes, grooming behaviour, and their purchasing behaviour. This research question is based on the research objective is to explore the attitudes of men in Kuwait towards

grooming behaviour and to understand how personal attributes influence their men purchase decisions of male grooming products.

By exploring this connection, the research gains valuable insights into the self-congruity theory, which posits that customers tend to develop a strong subjective bond with a product or brand when they perceive a high level of self-congruity. In other words, when individuals feel that a particular product or brand aligns with their values, attitudes, and lifestyle, they are more likely to establish a meaningful connection with it (Khalid et al., 2018). This research sheds light on the various factors that contribute to this connection, allowing better understanding of the underlying mechanisms behind consumer behaviour. The exploration of men's grooming attitudes and grooming behaviour in relation to purchasing behaviour can provide valuable insights that can inform marketing strategies and enhance consumer satisfaction.

Both men and women are constantly searching for various methods to enhance their physical appearance (Boutkaska, 2019; Amiri et al., 2021). This pursuit of self-improvement is an ongoing and never-ending journey for individuals of all genders. Whether it's through skincare routines, fitness regimens, fashion choices, or cosmetic procedures, people are consistently exploring new avenues to look and feel their best. The desire to present oneself in the most favourable light is a universal human trait that transcends gender boundaries. Thus, the quest for self-enhancement is a continuous and ever-evolving process that remains an integral part of our lives.

Male participants stated that once they start engaging in grooming behaviour, they often find themselves becoming more "addicted" to it, similar to females. This addiction to grooming can lead to a continuous cycle of behaviour reinforcement and a heightened sense of satisfaction and well-being.

Men's shopping habits have undergone a significant transformation in recent years, with a noticeable increase in their interest in grooming products. In the present day, men are not only focusing on their clothing and accessories but are also placing a strong emphasis on purchasing various cosmetics to enhance their overall appearance and well-being. This includes a wide range of products such as fragrances, skincare items, and other grooming essentials. Consequently, the market for men's grooming products has experienced a

substantial growth as more and more men recognize the importance of taking care of their personal grooming needs.

Men around the world have varying values, norms, rituals, traditional cultural behaviours, and beliefs, which result in diverse preferences and interests in global markets. This diversity is influenced by a multitude of factors, including historical events, social structures, religious practices, cultural traditions, and environmental conditions. Each of these factors plays a role in shaping the unique grooming practices observed among men across different societies. These grooming practices, in turn, reflect the cultural and societal norms that dictate what is deemed acceptable or unacceptable in terms of personal hygiene and appearance. It is fascinating to explore how these multifaceted influences contribute to the rich tapestry of global grooming trends and the ever-evolving standards of masculinity in different parts of the world.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, personal preferences, age demographics, and geographical location can also influence grooming habits among men worldwide. These factors, along with education level, social status, and purchasing power, collectively contribute to the diverse range of grooming practices observed globally. Furthermore, the media, including social media platforms and advertising campaigns, exerts a significant influence on the promotion and evolution of grooming trends for men in different countries, shaping societal perceptions and expectations regarding grooming through targeted marketing and the portrayal of idealized masculine images. Cultural variations also play a crucial role in defining gender norms and societal expectations related to grooming, with different countries and regions having distinct cultural practices and religious beliefs that impact grooming habits among men.

After conducting an in-depth interview with retailers, it became evident that Kuwaiti male consumers exhibit unique preferences and behaviours when it comes to shopping for grooming products and services. Unlike non-Kuwaiti consumers, Kuwaiti males have specific tastes and requirements that must be taken into consideration by brands operating in the global male cosmetic industry. This variation in preferences and behaviours has presented a significant challenge for companies in meeting the specific needs of the Kuwaiti market. Consequently, it is imperative for brands to develop tailored strategies

and offerings that cater to the distinct demands of Kuwaiti male consumers to thrive in this competitive marketplace.

The findings indicate that over the past decade, there has been a remarkable and noteworthy transformation in the culture of men's grooming. This shift has brought about substantial alterations in the attitudes, behaviours, and preferences of men towards their personal care and appearance. The evolving landscape of men's grooming has witnessed a surge in interest, awareness, and acceptance among men, leading to a multitude of changes in the industry. These changes encompass various aspects such as the development of new products tailored specifically for men, the rise of grooming influencers and communities, and the emergence of innovative grooming techniques and technologies. The impact of this cultural shift is not limited to the realm of personal grooming but extends to broader societal perceptions of masculinity, self-expression, and the pursuit of personal well-being. The findings underscore the significance of recognizing and understanding this transformative phenomenon to effectively cater to the evolving needs and preferences of modern men.

In addition to this, the research has also identified that younger men exhibit higher levels of grooming behaviour. However, it is important to note that this does not necessarily mean that older men lack the motivation to explore various methods of enhancing their physical appearance. According to the male participants in the study, their fathers and even their grandfathers were also influenced by Western cultures when it comes to grooming practices. It was observed that certain grooming practices were driven by concerns related to aging, which serves as a significant motivating factor for purchasing grooming products. Therefore, it can be concluded that men across different age groups share a common goal of wanting to appear younger and more presentable, leading them to buy and utilize grooming products.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that an individual's overall well-being can be greatly enhanced by maintaining a healthy and vibrant complexion, which can be achieved through the regular use of various grooming products. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that grooming practices and the consumption of grooming products are influenced not only by personal preferences, but also by societal values and cultural

beliefs. Therefore, it is crucial to take into consideration these factors when considering one's grooming routine and product choices.

Men in Kuwait have been observed to possess a higher level of purchasing power, demonstrating their inclination towards luxury grooming products. Recognizing this trend, retailers have capitalized on the opportunity to appeal to men and boost their sales by employing various advertising and marketing strategies. While social media serves as a prominent platform for retailers to promote their offerings, they also actively disseminate information to potential customers. However, there remains a limited scope for interactive engagement with customers to cultivate stronger customer relationships. It is worth noting that the current association between men and luxury products is largely driven by the brand image and the sense of recognition that men derive from being seen purchasing and using these products.

The findings have also shown that in addition to personal grooming habits, professional aspirations and career goals play a significant role in motivating men to take care of their appearance. It is observed that men who are driven by their desire to succeed in their chosen careers are more likely to prioritize grooming as a means of presenting themselves in a polished and professional manner. By maintaining a well-groomed appearance, men aim to project confidence, competence, and professionalism, which can positively impact their career prospects and opportunities for advancement. Therefore, it can be concluded that the pursuit of a successful professional career serves as an additional impetus for men to engage in grooming practices and maintain a well-presented image.

In addition to competing with women, men also engage in competition amongst themselves to enhance their physical appearance. This desire to excel in terms of looks and physique can lead to various activities and practices, such as hitting the gym, following strict diets, experimenting with different grooming techniques, and even undergoing cosmetic procedures. By striving to enhance their physical attractiveness, men aim to boost their self-confidence, attract potential partners, and gain recognition and admiration from others.

Taking all these factors into account, it becomes evident that grooming habits are influenced by a multitude of factors, including personal preferences, demographics,

geographical location, education level, social status, purchasing power, media influence, cultural differences in gender norms, religious beliefs, and self-esteem-related factors.

7.2.4 Answering Research Question 4

What factors influence and promote men in Kuwait to engage in grooming behaviour?

This is a broad question that addresses various factors that influence male grooming in Kuwait. This research question addresses the research objective to identify the factors that influence and encourage men in Kuwait to engage in grooming behaviour.

There are numerous factors that motivate and contribute to male grooming behaviour. This study reveals that personal hygiene and self-care practices play a significant role in shaping male grooming habits. Furthermore, the rise of social media and the emphasis on appearance in modern society have also contributed to the growing interest in male grooming. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize and explore the multifaceted nature of male grooming behaviour to gain a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. The following section discuss the factors.

7.2.4.1 Influence of Marketing, Social Media and Social Media influencers

The increasing desire for male grooming products and services has created a surge in demand, prompting retailers to develop creative and unique solutions to cater to the evolving needs of their customers. As a result, we are witnessing a significant rise in the availability and variety of options available to men seeking grooming products and services, providing them with a wider range of choices and ensuring that their preferences are met. This trend not only reflects the growing importance of self-care and personal grooming among men but also highlights the commitment of retailers to adapt and provide tailored solutions to their male clientele.

In addition to this, the use of social media platforms has become increasingly popular in Kuwait. One of the key trends on social media is the influence of social media influencers, who have a significant impact on various industries, including male grooming (Hamshaw & Gavin, 2022). By following these influencers and engaging with their content, individuals can gain valuable insights into male grooming practices and discover new products. This interaction with social media and influencers has been identified in the

study as a strong contributing factor to the growth and popularity of male grooming in recent years.

Celebrities who promote grooming products can have a significant influence on consumer behaviour. Social media and celebrity culture play a pivotal role in shaping society and culture in Kuwait (Hamshaw & Gavin, 2022). These influential forces have a profound impact on various aspects of life, including personal grooming, fashion, and beyond. Through the ever-evolving world of social media, individuals are exposed to a constant stream of new trends, styles, and fashion inspirations. This constant influx of information and inspiration fuels a culture of continuous experimentation and exploration in the realm of personal style.

Social media personalities and influencers, both from the local and international scene, have played a significant role in promoting male grooming practices and products among men in the country. For example, male celebrities in Kuwait have been observed with well-maintained beards and hair, with their pictures shared on social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter. As a result, there has been a noticeable increase in the demand for hair and beard grooming products among men in the country who aspire to replicate the same style.

There has been a noticeable rise in the demand for Kuwaiti men to receive cosmetic and beauty treatments, such as laser hair removal, Botox for the forehead, facial treatments, and eyebrow cleaning. This growing demand can be attributed to the influence of celebrities who promote these services, making them increasingly popular and easily accessible. Social media and retailer marketing and advertising have played a significant role in promoting male grooming. With the growing popularity of influencers and social media celebrities, men are increasingly recognizing the significance of looking good and taking care of their physical appearance.

7.2.4.2 Influence of Women

Kuwaiti women have a significant role in the country, not only in terms of encouraging men to present themselves well and improve, but also in terms of making a substantial contribution to society. Many women take on the responsibility of purchasing grooming products for their family members, especially the male members. This includes items such

as shaving cream, razors, shampoo, and other personal care products. These women carefully consider the needs and preferences of their family members to ensure that they are purchasing the right products. They may also compare prices, read reviews, and stay updated on the latest trends in grooming products. This task requires time and effort, as these women strive to keep their loved ones well-groomed and presentable.

Female respondents in the study expressed their strong support for male grooming and emphasized their role in influencing men to prioritize their appearance. They emphasized that their opinions and suggestions in this regard hold great value and should be acknowledged. Furthermore, they emphasized the importance of recognizing their efforts in raising awareness and motivating men to take grooming seriously. Women play a vital and influential role in encouraging men to enhance their grooming habits and overall appearance.

7.2.4.3 Self-esteem and Competition among Men

In today's modern society, the concept of masculinity and its impact on individuals has evolved to encompass a multitude of intricate aspects that hold great importance for men and people around them. In light of the evolving times and changing societal norms, there has been a broader understanding of masculinity, leading to a more in-depth exploration of its different aspects and impacts.

Male grooming has become an important trend in recent years, with more and more individuals embracing it to boost their self-assurance and express their unique personalities. Nowadays, men are no longer limited to the traditional notion of grooming; instead, they are actively exploring various grooming practices and products to enhance their appearance and create a distinct style that sets them apart from others. This newfound focus on male grooming not only allows individuals to take pride in their personal presentation but also serves as a means of self-expression and a reflection of their individuality.

Kuwaiti men have also expressed that there is a prevalent inclination in Kuwaiti society to emulate and conform to social norms, leading to the widespread acceptance and implementation of various grooming practices among men. This cultural tendency not only influences personal grooming habits but also fosters a sense of conformity and social

cohesion among Kuwaiti men. Younger men, who are eager to stay ahead of the curve and maintain a stylish appearance, actively seek out and embrace the latest trends in fashion and grooming. By staying up-to-date and experimenting with new styles, they can express their individuality and showcase their personal sense of fashion to the world.

Further, social media platforms, celebrities, and marketing agencies have played a significant role in actively promoting a specific "fit" look for men. This has resulted in a growing sense of competition among men, as they constantly compare their appearance not only with family members and friends, but also with potential partners. As a result, there is an increasing pressure on men to conform to this idealized standard of physical attractiveness, which can have both positive and negative effects on their self-esteem and body image. It is important to be mindful of the impact that these societal pressures can have on men's mental health and overall well-being.

As per the findings, there is also a tendency in Kuwait to imitate and follow others, resulting in the adoption and practice of male grooming. This has become increasingly popular in the modern era, particularly amongst younger generations, as men look to stay up to date with the latest trends in fashion and grooming. Male grooming has become a source of pride and confidence for many, allowing them to express themselves through their appearance and unique style. The growing demand for male grooming products and services has encouraged entrepreneurs to come up with innovative solutions to meet the needs of their customers. Consequently, this has led to a surge in the number of salons and barbershops offering male grooming services, as well as a variety of products designed specifically for men.

7.2.4.4 Influence of Culture

In recent years, there has been a notable shift in the attitudes of younger generations towards male grooming. These individuals are now recognizing the importance of grooming as an essential element of their overall appearance and a means of self-expression. This cultural transformation is particularly noteworthy considering that grooming has long been stigmatized as "unmanly" within these societies. As a result, we are witnessing a fundamental change in societal norms and perceptions surrounding masculinity and personal care practices.

Some older generations and more conservative members of society may still perceive grooming as a symbol of vulnerability or femininity, which can create a divide between different age groups and cultural communities. However, it is becoming increasingly evident that men in Kuwait and other GCC countries are embracing grooming practices to express their individuality, enhance their personal style, and present a refined and sophisticated image to the world. There has been a significant rise in the number of salons and barbershops that now offer grooming services for men in Kuwait. Furthermore, there is a diverse selection of products that are specifically tailored for male use. As a result, Kuwaiti society embraces a dynamic and vibrant fashion scene, where individuals are encouraged to express themselves through their clothing choices and personal grooming practices. The interplay between social media, celebrity culture, and fashion in Kuwait creates a rich tapestry of influences that shape the way people present themselves and interact within society.

To fully capitalize on the burgeoning trend and successfully capture the attention of the Kuwaiti market, cosmetics companies should consider the importance of tailoring their products and marketing strategies to precisely match the unique requirements and individual preferences of this particular population. By doing so, they can ensure that their offerings resonate deeply with Kuwaiti consumers, establishing a strong and loyal customer base that will contribute to their long-term success in this lucrative market.

Kuwaiti citizens have a strong enthusiasm for exploring diverse aspects of culture. They are particularly interested in delving into the realms of food, fashion, entertainment, and education, showcasing their genuine curiosity and eagerness to embrace new experiences. This profound interest is evident through the remarkable growth and prevalence of international business chains in Kuwait, which have expanded their presence in response to the growing demand and appreciation from the local population.

Kuwaiti culture has a long-standing tradition of being open and receptive to other cultures, eagerly embracing their customs and allowing themselves to be enriched by them. This cultural openness can be seen not only in the way Kuwaiti men take care of their appearance but also in their preferences when it comes to selecting grooming products. Kuwaiti men are enthusiastic towards trying out various grooming styles and staying updated with the latest trends, showcasing their cosmopolitan mindset. As a result,

they are always on the lookout for high-quality grooming products that cater to their diverse needs and preferences, ensuring that they stay ahead of the curve in terms of personal care and grooming.

Kuwaitis are not only known for being open to new ideas and the Western lifestyle, but they also actively embrace and share their unique way of life. This can be seen through their active participation in posting pictures on various platforms, showcasing their traditions, cultural events, and daily activities. By sharing these images, Kuwaitis aim to promote their rich heritage, foster cultural exchange, and create a sense of unity among different communities. Through this digital medium, they can connect with others, build relationships, and celebrate their shared values. The act of posting pictures serves as a testament to their pride in their culture and their desire to connect with the global community.

With the relentless expansion of globalization and the ever-increasing influence of western culture, it is no surprise that these grooming services have garnered immense acceptance and are now deeply ingrained in the fabric of Kuwaiti society. The widespread practice of these services has become a norm, illustrating the extent to which they have permeated various aspects of Kuwaiti life.

7.2.4.5 Influence of Education

Education level and quality in Kuwait have experienced significant enhancements, making them highly developed and advanced. These improvements have not only elevated the overall educational landscape but have also fostered a profound level of awareness among individuals. As a direct consequence of these advancements, people now possess a deeper understanding of a wide range of issues and perspectives, contributing to a more informed and enlightened society.

Education and increased purchasing power have played a significant role in shaping men's attitudes towards their grooming habits. As men have become more educated and financially empowered, they have embraced a more progressive and open-minded approach to grooming. This has led to a greater willingness among men to experiment with different grooming products, styles, and techniques. Furthermore, the availability of information and resources related to grooming has also contributed to this shift in

mindset. Men now have access to a wealth of knowledge and options when it comes to grooming, allowing them to make informed decisions and explore new possibilities. Overall, the combination of education, purchasing power, and a changing cultural landscape has empowered men to break free from traditional stereotypes and embrace a more diverse and individualistic approach to grooming.

7.2.4.6 Influence of Luxury Brands and Religion

There are several reasons why male consumers in Kuwait tend to purchase "luxury" high-end products. They do so to align themselves with a specific social status or group, believing that by doing so, they will be perceived and evaluated as belonging to a higher class. This boosts their self-confidence and provides them with a sense of acceptance and respect in society.

Particularly among the younger generation, Kuwaiti males have always tended to follow the latest trends and be influenced by their peers in order to fit in. Consequently, these male consumers are willing to pay a higher price for luxury products simply to be seen as individuals who are current and hold a high social status. The goal is to prevent feeling left out or criticized, so they think that using and buying these products will boost their self-assurance and give the impression of belonging to a special community.

Muslims' attitudes towards luxury values are shaped by their Islamic values and their aspiration to be seen as religious consumers. The perception of luxury values is influenced by the extent to which these values are in harmony with their religious beliefs and how they wish to be perceived.

7.2.4.7 Influence of Society

Surgeons have noticed that the demands of today's society have led to a rise in the desire among Kuwaiti men for cosmetic procedures to improve their physical appearance and attractiveness. In a culture where initial impressions carry significant weight, these men feel obligated to modify their physical characteristics to keep up with their peers. As a result, there has been a growing interest in plastic surgery, liposuction, and other body-shaping treatments as men aim to appear attractive, boost their self-assurance, and preserve their self-worth.

Retailers in Kuwait have observed that, when it comes to purchases, Kuwaiti men are generally reluctant to publicly share them on social media platforms. Instead, they prefer to only disclose their purchases to close friends and family, even though it may not be necessary. This cultural behaviour sets Kuwaiti men apart from their counterparts in other countries, as the inclination to showcase purchases on social media is significantly higher elsewhere.

Overall, the reluctance of Kuwaiti men to publicly share their purchases on social media showcases a distinct cultural behaviour that sets them apart from their counterparts in other countries. This preference for privacy and intimacy in their interactions highlights the importance of personal relationships within Kuwaiti society, while also challenging the societal norm of seeking external validation through showcasing material possessions.

7.3 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Current research significantly contributes to the existing literature on men's behaviour and attitude towards grooming and the purchase of grooming products. This research provides valuable insights into the various factors that influence men's grooming habits and preferences. Moreover, it sheds light on the evolving trends in the grooming industry and the implications for marketers and businesses in this field. By examining the motivations, perceptions, and decision-making processes of men when it comes to grooming, this research offers a comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics and consumer behaviour in this domain. Overall, this study adds depth and breadth to the current body of knowledge on men's grooming, making it an essential resource for researchers, practitioners, and industry professionals alike.

The research has found several factors that contribute to patterns of male grooming in a community that may be perceived as reluctant to make changes or adopt values from other cultures. These factors include societal norms and expectations that have been ingrained in the community for generations, limited exposure to alternative grooming practices, and a strong sense of cultural identity that is tied to traditional grooming habits. Additionally, economic factors such as access to grooming products and services, as well as affordability, can also play a role in shaping grooming behaviours within the community. Overall, it is evident that there are multiple influences on male grooming in this specific

community, and understanding these factors is crucial for implementing effective strategies to encourage acceptance and adoption of new grooming practices.

The findings of the study reveal that the grooming behaviour of Kuwaiti men is influenced by a variety of factors. One significant factor is the impact of Western culture, which has introduced new grooming practices and styles. Religion also plays a role, as Islamic teachings and traditions may influence the grooming choices of Kuwaiti men. Additionally, the observation of women and their grooming habits can have an influence on men's own grooming behaviour. Higher education is another factor that can shape grooming choices, as individuals may be exposed to new trends and grooming techniques during their academic pursuits. Finally, the influence of social media cannot be ignored, as platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok have become popular sources of inspiration for grooming styles and trends. Overall, these various factors work together to shape the grooming behaviour of Kuwaiti men in today's society.

The study's key findings will contribute to the existing body of literature on male grooming by providing new insights and perspectives. Through its comprehensive analysis of the interview data, this research aims to fill the identified research gaps in the current literature, shedding light on previously unexplored aspects of male grooming. The implications of these findings extend beyond the borders of Kuwait. By offering a valuable reference point, this study may be used to guide and inform industry professionals, researchers, and policymakers in their decision-making processes, ultimately driving innovation and progress in the field of male grooming.

7.4 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While marketing and advertising campaigns can serve to promote products, it is important for them to also consider their influence on society's perception of beauty. Rather than promoting narrow and unattainable beauty ideals, these campaigns should celebrate diversity and individuality, spreading positive messages that empower men to feel self-assured and at ease in their own skin.

Self-perception, societal beliefs, and personal preferences are the primary factors that influence the purchasing decisions of male consumers when it comes to cosmetic products. It is important to note that advertising plays a vital role in not only informing

but also persuading male consumers to make a purchase. Therefore, marketers should focus their efforts on developing an innovative and captivating advertising strategy that not only grabs the attention of male consumers but also resonates with their self-image and identity. By tailoring the messages in advertisements to align with the self-perception of male consumers, marketers can effectively connect with their target audience and drive sales. Additionally, retailers should prioritize building a deep understanding of their customers' needs and desires. One way to achieve this is by actively engaging with male consumers through various social media platforms. By actively participating in conversations, sharing relevant content, and responding to customer inquiries, retailers can establish a strong online presence and foster a sense of community with their male consumer base. This approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also strengthens brand loyalty and increases the likelihood of repeat purchases.

7.4.1 Social Media Strategy

Developing a robust social media strategy is essential for engaging male consumers and meeting their grooming needs. Social media platforms offer a quick and up-to-date way to share information about new product releases, upcoming events, special promotions, and important updates. By staying connected through social media, customers can stay informed and never miss out on relevant information.

Furthermore, a well-executed social media strategy can enhance the word-of-mouth effects by fostering personal connections among users. This encourages customers to share their positive experiences with the brand, amplifying brand awareness and engagement. By interacting with the company's social media profiles, users can connect with like-minded individuals, share their grooming experiences, and engage in meaningful conversations. This sense of community and connection not only strengthens the bond between customers and the brand but also elevates brand perception.

7.4.2 For Marketers

It is crucial for marketers to understand and cater to the needs and preferences of diverse male consumer segments to effectively tap into this growing market. By conducting thorough market research and segmentation analysis, marketers can identify the specific needs, preferences, and behaviours of different groups of male consumers. This understanding will enable them to develop targeted marketing strategies, personalized

product offerings, and tailored communication approaches that resonate with each segment.

Additionally, it is recommended for marketers to prioritize establishing a strong and impactful presence on social media platforms. Social media has become a powerful tool for connecting with consumers, sharing information about new products and promotions, and fostering a sense of community. By developing a robust social media strategy, brands can engage with male consumers, provide valuable information, build relationships, and encourage user-generated content and positive word-of-mouth.

Furthermore, brands should consider the growing trend of male grooming and the increasing interest in non-surgical cosmetic procedures. By offering innovative and effective solutions, such as quick-result treatments and personalized grooming products, brands can cater to the desire for visible and immediate results. This can enhance customers' self-esteem and confidence, leading to positive feedback and brand loyalty.

Overall, by understanding the diverse preferences and needs of male consumer segments, leveraging social media platforms, and providing innovative grooming solutions, marketers can effectively tap into the growing male grooming market and meet the desires of male consumers in Kuwait.

7.4.3 For Retailers

Retailers need to cater to the specific needs and preferences of Kuwaiti male consumers when offering male grooming products and services. This includes providing products that address personal hygiene concerns such as teeth cleaning and skincare, as well as offering a wide range of grooming products for different stages of life, including puberty and acne-prone skin. Additionally, it is important to consider the preference for products that have a pleasant scent, as this can greatly influence the popularity and preference among men.

Furthermore, there is a growing interest among Kuwaiti men in beauty treatments, particularly facial hair removal. To meet this demand, it is recommended to offer specialized services and products for facial hair grooming, such as trimming, shaping, and removal options.

To effectively promote these offerings, it is recommended to develop a strong presence on social media platforms. Social media can be utilized to showcase the benefits and features of the products and services, share customer testimonials and success stories, and engage with the target audience. By leveraging social media as a marketing tool, businesses can create a sense of community and facilitate word-of-mouth effects, enhancing brand awareness and engagement.

7.4.4 Grooming Centres

There is a strong demand for grooming services in Kuwait that needs to be addressed according to the male participants in relation to provision of more grooming services, clinics, and hubs exclusively catering to men's needs. Currently, many grooming establishments are geared towards women and do not provide the same level of services for men. To meet this demand, it is recommended to establish more male cosmetic and grooming centres, like female salons and beauty centres, that are accessible to men.

These male-focused grooming centres can offer a wide range of grooming services specifically tailored to men's needs, such as beard trimming, hair styling, skincare treatments, and more. Additionally, these centres can serve as hubs for men to socialize, network, and share grooming tips and advice with each other. By creating more options and opportunities for men to take care of themselves and their appearance, these grooming centres can meet the needs of male consumers.

Furthermore, it is recommended for marketers to understand the diverse preferences and needs of male consumer segments to effectively tap into this growing market. This can be achieved through targeted marketing efforts, personalized product offerings, and understanding the importance of personal hygiene and grooming for men.

To effectively engage with male consumers and meet their grooming needs, it is recommended to develop a robust social media strategy. Social media platforms provide a quick and up-to-date way to share information about new product releases, upcoming events, special promotions, and important updates. By staying connected through social media, businesses can keep customers informed and engaged. Additionally, social media

can foster personal connections among users, enhancing word-of-mouth effects and amplifying brand awareness and engagement.

By considering the managerial implications and implementing these recommendations, businesses can tap into the growing male grooming market and cater to the needs and desires of male consumers in Kuwait. This can also provide male consumers with better choices and decision-making in their grooming practices and purchases.

7.5 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This research opens a new avenue of exploration into the understudied topic of male grooming behaviour in Kuwait. This is a subject that, up until now, has not received the comprehensive investigation that it warrants. The research findings reveal that male grooming is not just a passing fad, but an emerging trend in the community that is gaining a certain level of acceptance. The study uncovers a significant shift in societal norms, with men now more focused on enhancing their appearance, which in turn is driving the growth of the grooming industry. This shift in behaviour indicates a change in societal perceptions and expectations of men and their appearance. However, despite this growing trend, the study also reveals that many men prefer to keep their grooming habits private, perhaps indicating a level of societal pressure or stigma still associated with male grooming. This study, therefore, serves to lay a solid foundation for further investigations in this field. It offers a starting point for other researchers to dig deeper into the motivations and pressures behind male grooming in Kuwait, and to explore its societal implications. The findings of this study could also potentially impact the marketing strategies of grooming product manufacturers and retailers.

This study on "Male Grooming Behaviour" explores deep into the intricacies of men's grooming practices, the usage of various products and services, the prevalence of cosmetic procedures, and the purchasing habits ingrained in men's lives. This research illuminates the profound impact that grooming habits have on men's overall confidence, self-esteem, and the substantial lifestyle changes that occur because of these practices. Moreover, this research furnishes a meticulously crafted framework backed by substantial evidence that draws a clear correlation between male grooming behaviour and a multitude of influencing factors. These factors encompass the substantial influence exerted by women in men's lives, the impact of nuanced marketing and advertising strategies

specifically tailored towards men, and the pivotal role that social media influencers and cosmetic surgeons play in raising awareness about male grooming practices. The research findings therefore suggest that these elements, when amalgamated with the widespread availability and accessibility of grooming products, dedicated salons, professional stylists, experienced surgeons, and other environments that actively promote and encourage male grooming, play a significant role in propelling the growth of the male grooming industry. This is particularly noticeable in a progressive society such as Kuwait where male grooming has seen a substantial surge in recent years.

This study offers significant evidence to support the idea that marketing and advertising campaigns play a vital role in shaping and promoting a specific portrayal of male beauty standards and grooming practices in today's society. The results suggest that these campaigns have a significant impact on how individuals perceive and expect male beauty standards, thus contributing to the continuation of specific ideals and norms. It is important to mention that this influence goes beyond traditional media platforms and includes different digital and social media channels, which further enhances their impact on shaping cultural perceptions of male attractiveness and grooming practices. Therefore, it is crucial for marketers and advertisers to recognize the important role they have in shaping and promoting societal standards of male aesthetics, and to embrace responsible and inclusive approaches in their campaigns to encourage a broader and more diverse representation of male beauty.

While a significant amount of the existing research has predominantly focused on the patterns and trends of male grooming behaviour within Western contexts, it has often overlooked or ignored the Arab region. This oversight has led to the creation of a widespread misconception that male grooming behaviour is predominantly a Western phenomenon, largely limited to Europe and North America. However, the findings from this study reveal that male grooming is not an exclusively Western behaviour but is also equally prevalent among Arab men. The study specifically highlights the grooming habits of Kuwaiti men. Due to their greater purchasing power, they show a strong inclination towards luxury brands, indicating a high value placed on personal grooming and appearance. This trend is further amplified by the increasing influence of social media celebrities endorsing male grooming products, signalling an upward trend in this region. These findings underscore the urgent and growing need for more academic focus in this

area. They challenge the existing narratives and call for a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of male grooming behaviours across different cultures and regions. Neglecting these trends in non-Western societies may result in an incomplete understanding of the worldwide male grooming market and its varied consumer behaviour. Hence, the Arab region, with its unique social and economic characteristics, presents a rich area for further academic exploration in this field.

The availability and purchase of luxury grooming products is a recent development in the field of male grooming. This emerging information brings forth new insights and expands our understanding of this area. Furthermore, these findings highlight the importance of delving deeper into the study of male consumers' purchasing behaviour specifically in the context of luxury products. By exploring this aspect, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the market and identify potential opportunities for further growth and innovation.

There is a significant gap in the existing research on male grooming in Kuwait. The available studies are limited and do not focus on the Arab region as a whole. This lack of research makes it difficult to understand the specific grooming practices and preferences of Arab men, especially considering the cultural nuances and differences that exist within this population. Therefore, the findings of this research will not only contribute to the existing body of knowledge on male grooming, but also shed light on the grooming practices among Arab men, who belong to a culture that is often perceived as less open compared to other cultures. By exploring the grooming habits, preferences, and attitudes of Arab men, this study aims to provide valuable insights into a topic that has been relatively understudied in this region. Through a comprehensive analysis of cultural factors, societal norms, and individual grooming choices, this research will offer a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of male grooming practices within the Arab context.

This thesis presents an innovative exploration into the sphere of male grooming behaviour in Kuwait and similar cultures. It introduces fresh perspectives, as well as a robust, comprehensive structure that could serve as a foundation for subsequent studies on this topic, which has traditionally been overlooked and unexplored. Instead of focusing on what might be perceived as a “problem,” this research brings a new approach to the table

by emphasizing male grooming behaviour as an “opportunity.” This reframing allows for a more positive and constructive discussion of the topic, which could be instrumental in breaking down barriers and opening up new directions for future research in this field.

This study on "male grooming behaviour" can greatly benefit men in Kuwait and various other regions. By shedding light on this behaviour, it empowers men to embrace it with confidence and ease, integrating it into their lifestyle without any reservations or limitations. Moreover, this study offers a robust framework and compelling evidence that male grooming is not exclusive to or solely practiced by females. As a result, it effectively raises awareness among other men regarding this previously unfamiliar behaviour, opening up new avenues for them to explore and embrace male grooming practices.

This research was conducted and studied during a period of global crisis, specifically the COVID-19 pandemic. This unique study offers distinct findings and data due to the observations and interviews conducted during a challenging time for the entire world. As a result, the analysis and data collected by the participants present unconventional insights not typically found in other studies. The participants' moods, behaviours, attitudes, and mindsets were significantly influenced by the crisis, leading to the emergence of new actions and behaviours that were previously unexplored. Therefore, this research provides fresh and unique insights into male grooming behaviour, particularly in the context of a global crisis, shedding light on how individuals adapt and change their grooming habits in unprecedented circumstances.

The knowledge presented in this research makes an important contribution, in a way that sets it apart from previous studies. This is attributed to the remarkable and rapid evolution of male behaviour and mindsets in Kuwait over the past few years. As a result, the observations and data collected for this research will not only offer valuable insights but also provide an in-depth analysis of the speed at which behaviours and attitudes are currently transforming. This comprehensive examination will shed light on the dynamic nature of societal changes and their impact on individuals in Kuwait.

Another important factor that needs to be taken into consideration in this study is the longitudinal aspect. It is worth noting that this research has been conducted and studied over a significant span of four years, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the topic

at hand. This is particularly noteworthy because previous studies on this topic may have had varying timeframes for their research, some of which might have been shorter or longer than the duration of this study. This variation in timeframes can have a profound impact on the analysis and findings that each study produces, highlighting the significance of the duration of a research study in shaping its outcomes.

This research is particularly noteworthy due to its focus on a sensitive topic that has not been extensively examined in the past. It specifically explores the grooming behaviour of males from Kuwait and neighbouring GCC countries. As the primary researcher, I am a Kuwaiti female who possesses a profound understanding of the culture and can openly discuss this subject matter. This unique perspective enables me to shed light on the specific aspects that contribute to the advancement of the field of male grooming behaviour, particularly in Kuwait, which has not been thoroughly explored before. Consequently, this study will effectively bridge the existing gap in research on this topic. Furthermore, it should be noted that other academics may not possess the same level of comprehension of the Kuwaiti market and consumer behaviours as I do. Therefore, my insights will provide valuable contributions to the academic community.

7.6 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study encountered challenges because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Being stationed outside Kuwait, where the empirical study was conducted, posed a hindrance to the interview process. The recruitment of interviewees and the actual interviews themselves took longer than anticipated. Moreover, the government-imposed lockdown and restrictions on in-person meetings posed additional limitations on conducting the interviews. As a result, several interviews had to be conducted remotely using video and audio communication platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp.

Time constraints and limitations posed challenges, especially during the fieldwork process amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. The overall mood and enthusiasm of people felt less welcoming than they were before COVID-19, making it slightly difficult to find participants for interviews. Moreover, coordinating Zoom meetings proved to be a challenge due to the geographical distance and varying time zones between myself as the researcher and the participants. Additionally, some of the participants, including retailers, cosmetic surgeons, and female participants, were parents

with children, which further complicated the situation as they had additional responsibilities towards their families during the lockdown.

The absence of personal interaction and a female interviewer posed a challenge in conducting interviews with male participants. Some of them had reservations that hindered recruitment and made it difficult for them to share their information during the interview. It was a challenge to make them feel at ease and encourage them to share. However, they were assured that their identity would remain confidential, and that the information provided would be used for research purposes. This assurance instilled a certain level of confidence in them, leading them to open up and share information.

The chosen sample size and selection for this research (male grooming consumers, social media celebrities, female participants, cosmetic surgeons, and the retailing sector) are intended to be representative of the thesis sample. However, it is important to note that these specific groups of people may not accurately represent the broader population of Kuwait society, and as a result, the findings may not be applicable to the general population.

COVID-19 restrictions also presented challenges in contacting retail managers to request permission for conducting interviews with the staff. The response time from the retailing members was prolonged, making it difficult to schedule interviews promptly. Moreover, the researcher faced difficulties in traveling to Kuwait to conduct the interviews in person, which further delayed the process. Significant time was utilized waiting for interview approvals and conducting the interviews. Virtual interviews also required obtaining contact details of each employee for communication through platforms like Zoom and WhatsApp. The absence of face-to-face interaction also raised concerns among retail managers and employees about sharing information. However, they were briefed about the research objectives and the ethical measures taken to ensure data confidentiality, which helped build trust and encourage their participation.

One aspect that needs to be considered is the limitations of the sampling methods and the samples used in this study. It is important to note that these samples may not be entirely representative of the entire population under investigation. Therefore, the findings and conclusions drawn from this study should be interpreted with caution, as they may not be

applicable to the broader population. Further research with a more diverse and comprehensive sample is recommended to obtain a more accurate understanding of the population as a whole.

The exploratory study provides relatively limited empirical evidence based on data collected in Kuwait. However, it is important to note that this study serves as a valuable starting point for further research in this area. By conducting more extensive data collection and analysis, future studies can build upon the findings of this exploratory study and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Additionally, exploring different geographical locations and cultural contexts could further enrich the empirical evidence and contribute to a broader understanding of the subject matter.

The beauty and personal care industry, valued in the billions of pounds, has experienced continuous growth for many years, particularly in the Western world. Although the female market remains highly competitive and well-established, the men's grooming market is currently experiencing a significant surge in popularity and sales. Through the research conducted, it has been discovered that consumers in Kuwait have a strong preference for and tend to purchase luxury grooming products. However, there is a lack of comprehensive evidence and research on this topic specifically within Kuwait and the wider Arab region. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further research in order to fully understand the sales trends and patterns of luxury products in this market, as well as their overall contribution to the growth of the luxury product industry. By obtaining this additional research, valuable insights can be gained into the retention, marketing, and consumption of luxury products. This information can then be utilized by industry professionals to make informed decisions and develop effective strategies to further enhance the growth and success of luxury product sales in Kuwait and the Arab region.

This study has examined the grooming habits of Arab men in great detail. However, it is worth noting that this study is based on data from a specific time period, which naturally restricts its scope to some extent. It is crucial to acknowledge the ever-changing nature of the phenomenon of male grooming. Although this research has offered invaluable insights into the subject matter, it is of utmost importance to acknowledge and consider the inherent limitations associated with utilizing cross-sectional data. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that further extensive and in-depth research be conducted to further explore

male grooming practices and acquire a profound and holistic comprehension of this captivating phenomenon.

In this study, qualitative research methods have been employed to explore the male grooming phenomenon in depth. Through this exploratory research, valuable insights have been gained in areas that have been largely overlooked by previous studies. However, it is important to acknowledge that the qualitative approach does have its limitations, particularly in terms of the number of participants that can be interviewed. Therefore, in order to further enhance our understanding of male grooming practices, it is necessary to expand the sample size and take an explanatory approach in our research. This can be achieved by conducting a comprehensive survey that allows us to examine and analyse the explanatory relationship between the various variables and male grooming practices. By doing so, we can gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of this phenomenon.

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APPENDIX I: RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST



This serves as the First Stage Ethical Review of your research project.	Yes	No
Please confirm that you, the student, have read and understood the SOAS Research Ethics Policy (available at: http://www.soas.ac.uk/researchoffice/ethics/file99610.docx)	✓	
Please confirm that you and your supervisor have discussed research ethics and safety issues and put plans in place to mitigate any risks to you or your subjects	✓	
Please confirm you have consulted the guidelines of a professional association relevant to your discipline in completing this checklist (please consult your supervisor if necessary)	✓	
Please confirm you have completed the online Research Integrity course and enter your certificate number here:	2614420135	

After discussion between student and supervisor, students should answer each question below by ticking the appropriate box:	Yes	No
Will the research involve gathering personal information on identifiable living individuals?		✓
Will the research involve gathering confidential information of any kind		✓
Will the research involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g., children, adults with learning difficulties)?		✓
Will the research require the cooperation of a “gatekeeper,” e.g., an authority figure who has the power to grant access to groups and individuals possibly without their informed consent?		✓
Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the research without their knowledge and consent at the time (e.g., research involving deception or covert observation)?		✓
Will participants be remunerated in some form for the information they are asked to		

APPENDIX II: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER



SOAS, University of London Thornhaugh Street Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG T +44 (0) 20 7637 2388
www.soas.ac.uk

November 2020

To whom this may concern:

Dear Participant,

I am a PhD candidate at SOAS University of London, supervised by Dr Senija Causevic. My research focuses on “The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour – A Case of Kuwaiti’s male grooming Retail Market.” The research aims to evaluate the impact of social media advertising on male consumers' buying behaviour in the Kuwaiti market, specifically focusing on the male cosmetic industry due to the high demand observed in recent years. Increased education, career developments, Western culture, and social media influence have contributed to men's concerns about their appearance.

The empirical data for the research was collected through interviews with men, women, managers of cosmetic and beauty product retail businesses, social media celebrities, and cosmetic surgeons. The research explores the impact of social media advertising on Kuwaiti male consumers of cosmetics. The research identifies the factors that influence male grooming behaviour and purchase of grooming products by men.

The interview will last approximately 30 minutes. The objective is to gain an understanding of male grooming behaviour, societal acceptance, factors that motivate men in their grooming behaviour, the influence of social media, their purchasing behaviour, and their attraction towards grooming products. The discussion can also cover other areas related to male grooming.

Any information you provide during the interview will be treated confidentially and will not be shared with anyone. This research does not involve collecting or sharing any data or confidential and personal information. The information you provide will only be used for the purposes of this study and your identity will remain completely anonymous.

Yours truly

Sharifa Soudan AlEnezi

APPENDIX III: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEETS



Information Sheet for “The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour – A Case of Kuwaiti’s male grooming Retail Market”

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you with information, so you can decide whether to participate in this study. Any questions you may have will be answered by the researcher or by the other contact persons provided below. Once you are familiar with the information on this sheet and have asked any questions you may have, you can decide whether or not to participate. If you agree, you will be asked to fill in the consent form for this study or record your consent verbally.

Research Title:

“The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour – A Case of Kuwaiti’s male grooming Retail Market”

Name and contact details of researcher:

Sharifa Naser Soudan AlEnezi (674091@soas.ac.uk)

Name and contact details of Principal Investigator:

SOAS University of London, United Kingdom

What type of research project is this?

PhD research

Who is funding this research project?

The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training PAAET – Kuwait. Kuwait Cultural Office – London.

Who else is involved with the research project?

The researcher alone is mainly the one involved and engaged with this research project.

What is the research project's purposes?

The interview for which you are being asked to participate in, is a part of a research study that is focused on exploring the behaviour of Kuwaiti male consumers towards grooming products. The researcher is also interested in exploring the factors such as social media that influence and impact Kuwaiti male consumers towards purchasing grooming products. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how social media marketing has on consumer buying behaviour in Kuwait.

Why have I been chosen?

The benefit of your participation is to contribute information on how has male grooming products been introduced in Kuwait and what impact has this new trend caused to Kuwaiti male attitudes. This may assist your current experiences and position. There are no risks associated with participating in the study.

Do I have to take part?

You are not required to answer the questions. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify the researcher that you would like to stop the interview and your participation in the study. There is no penalty for discontinuing participation.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Your participation in this study will consist of an interview lasting approximately one hour. You will be asked a series of questions about your experiences and perception regards male grooming products and behaviour in Kuwait.

Will I be recorded and how will the recordings be used?

The recording method of this interview will be done by an audio device such as a recorder. This recording method will then be used for analysis and recordings will be transcribed. No one else will have access to the recording other than the researcher with full confidentiality.

Risks and benefits of participation

The benefit of your participation is to contribute information on how has male grooming products been introduced in Kuwait and what impact has this new trend caused to Kuwaiti male attitudes. This may assist your current experiences and position. There are no risks associated with participating in the study.

What if something goes wrong?

This study poses no risk to its participants. I will do my best to ensure that confidentiality is maintained by not citing your actual name within the actual study. You may choose to leave the study at any time, and may also request that any data collected from you not be used in the study.

Where will information I provide be transferred to?

Your participation in the study will involve an interview with an estimated length of one hour. This interview will be tape recorded for later analysis. Information you provide will later be transferred to a private computer with only access to the researcher.

How will information I provide be kept secure?

The personal computer (hard drive) in which the data will be stored will be encrypted and password will be required to access it. Moreover, Google Drive is also password protected. Anyone without the password will not be able to access the data.

Will I be kept anonymous in this research project?

The interview will be tape recorded; however, your name will not be recorded on the tape. Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research. All of your information and interview responses will be kept confidential. The researcher will not share your individual responses with anyone other than the research supervisor.

What will happen to the results of this research project?

This study intends to provide a better understanding of the impact of social media marketing on Kuwaiti male consumers behaviour towards male grooming products. The data collected in this study will be used to draw conclusions to help understand and answer the research questions for this research paper.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The data controller for this project will be SOAS University of London. The SOAS Data Protection Officer provides oversight of SOAS activities involving the processing of personal data and can be contacted at dataprotection@soas.ac.uk

Your personal data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this Information Sheet. The legal basis that would be used to process your personal data under data protection legislation is the performance of a task in the public interest or in our official authority as a controller. However, for ethical reasons we need your consent to take part in this research project. You can provide your consent for the use of your personal data in this project by completing the consent form that

has been provided for you or via audio recording of the information sheet and consent form content.

Your Rights

You have the right to request access under the General Data Protection Regulation to the information which SOAS holds about you. Further information about your rights under the Regulation and how SOAS handles personal data is available on the Data Protection pages of the SOAS website (<http://www.soas.ac.uk/infocomp/dpa/index.html>), and by contacting the Information Compliance Manager at the following address: Information Compliance Manager, SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG, United Kingdom (e-mail to: dataprotection@soas.ac.uk).

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, please contact SOAS In the first instance at dataprotection@soas.ac.uk. If you remain unsatisfied, you may wish to contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Contact details, and details of data subject rights, are available on the ICO website at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-reform/overviewof-the-gdpr/individuals-rights/>

Copyright Notice

The consent form asks you to waive copyright so that SOAS and the researcher can edit, quote, disseminate, publish (by whatever means) your contribution to this research project in the manner described to you by the researcher during the consent process.

Contact for Further Information

Sharifa Naser Soudan AlEnezi

674091@soas.ac.uk

+44 7554143991

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research study.

APPENDIX IV: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



Consent Form for “The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour – A Case of Kuwaiti’s male grooming Retail Market”.

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an equivalent explanation about the research

Project Title: “The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour – A Case of Kuwaiti’s male grooming Retail Market”

Researcher Name: Sharifa Naser Soudan AlEnezi

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
I have read and understood the project information sheet dated DD/MM/YYYY, or it has been read to me.		
I have been able to ask questions about the project		
<p>I agree to take part in the project and understand that taking part involves:</p> <p>Your participation in the study will involve an interview with an estimated length of one hour. This interview will be tape recorded for later analysis. Information you provide will later be transferred to a private computer with only access to the researcher.</p>		
<p>I agree that my interview is recorded:</p> <p>The recording method of this interview will be done by an audio device such as a recorder. This recording method will then be used for analysis and recordings will be transcribed. No one else will have access to the recording other than the researcher with full confidentiality.</p>		
I understand that I can refuse to answer questions.		
I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time by notifying the researcher/s involved and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.		
I understand that that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name or where I live, will not be shared beyond the research team.		
I understand information I provide will be stored securely by:		

The personal computer (hard drive) in which the data will be stored will be encrypted and password will be required to access it. Moreover, Google Drive is also password protected. Anyone without the password will not be able to access the data.		
I understand that the information I provided will be used for PhD thesis		
I agree to waive copyright and other intellectual property rights in the material I contribute to the project.		

Contact Information

Telephone No: +44 7554143991 / +965 99991591

Email Address: 674091@soas.ac.uk

Postal Address: NW1 3DS – 20 BROCK STREET

Alternative contact:

Supervisor name: Senija Causevic

Email: senija.causevic@soas.ac.uk

Research Participant Declaration

Name of Participant [printed]

Signature

Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and to the best of my ability, ensured that that participant understands what they are freely consenting.

Name of Researcher [printed]

Signature

Date

SOAS Consent Form Adapted From UK Data Archives Model Consent Form and licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share-Alike 4.0 International Licence

Please ensure a copy of this document is retained safely for future reference

APPENDIX V: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND TOPIC GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE: MALE GROOMING CONSUMERS)

Tell me about yourself and how do you usually take care of your physical appearance?
Do you use any grooming habits or use cosmetic skincare products to maintain a healthier look?

Self-perception

1. Do you use any cosmetic skincare products?
 - a. If yes, then what are the products you normally use? A specific brand?
 - b. If no, then is there any particular reason for not using these products? Is there any chance that you may use these products in the near future?
2. Do you remember when and what you have purchased your first male grooming product?
3. What were the factors that influenced you for that purchase?
4. What are the reasons of buying male grooming products?
5. Do you think that self-image, self-esteem and appearance is the main factor among Kuwaiti's male in buying the male grooming products?

Sociocultural factors

1. Do you think that Kuwaiti's typical sociocultural norms accepts men to buy and apply the male grooming products?
2. Can you share with your friends as a man that you are using male grooming products?
3. Is there any social pressure on you that makes you buy or not buy male grooming products?
4. Do you think that man's masculinity plays any role in deciding whether to purchase or not the male grooming products?
5. How do you feel if buying these products publicly?

Role of Social Media

1. Do you use social media, how often and what is your preferred social media platform?

2. Have you ever been under influence of a social media advertisement to buy grooming products, please explain?
3. Do you think that the social media celebrities play a vital role in defining your next male grooming product purchase?
4. Is there any specific type of advertisement such as content, successful man or anything else that influence your buying behaviour in purchasing such products?
5. How do you feel of social media advertisement, useful or useless?

Potential Market

1. Do you think that Kuwaiti market has the potential in male grooming products?
2. How often do you purchase such products and what is your main mean of buying them such as online, store or else?
3. How much do you think you are spending on male grooming products weekly or monthly? Roughly speaking, how much are male grooming treatments and/or products costing you monthly/weekly?
4. For how long do you think you've been using male grooming products?
5. What is your favourite product and brand in male grooming industry?

Attitude and behavioural factors

1. How seriously you are considering your personal physical appearance to others?
2. Do you think that male grooming products help you to achieve your aim of looking presentable?
3. Do you buy the same such products every time or try new different things?
 - a. If new different things, then is it the different products from the preferred cosmetic company or different product from a different company?
4. Do you continue to buy the male grooming products?
 - a. if yes then will you increase buying or follow the same routine
5. Do you buy these products by yourself or someone else such as spouse, sister or any other family member buy for you?

Is there anything else you would like to add? How did Covid19 situation affect your physical appearance?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: FEMALE PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you think skin care/grooming/beauty products are more of a woman than a man area?
2. Have you noticed any change in Kuwaiti males' behaviour towards grooming habits in your environment? Such as brother/friend/husband/colleague etc.
3. In your opinion, what factors do you think influenced Kuwaiti men into grooming habits/behaviour? What are the reasons of buying male grooming products?
4. How important is self-image and appearance for men in Kuwait? Does self-esteem and self-confidence play a major role to their men's appearance?
5. Does your workplace and society play a role in how you should care for your appearance?
6. Do you think that Kuwaiti society currently accepts the use of grooming products used by men?
7. How do you perceive a man's masculine identity? What are the characteristics of masculinity to you?
8. Do you use social media, how often and what is your preferred social media platform?
9. Have you ever been influenced of a social media advertisement to buy grooming products, please explain?
10. How do you feel of social media advertisement/celebrities, useful or useless?
11. Do you think that Kuwaiti market has the potential in male grooming products? Do you think that men's grooming is becoming a growing sector in Kuwait and why?
12. Would you recommend a male to use certain grooming product or get a cosmetic service done to enhance and improve his physical appearance?
13. How would you perceive or view a man sitting beside you in a cosmetic/grooming beauty clinic? Would you judge him?
14. Do you think a man taking care of his physical appearance makes him "less" manly?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: RETAILERS AND COSMETIC SURGEONS

About the respondent

Q0: Tell me about yourself and your experience in the cosmetic industry? How long have you been working in this industry for? Are there any other sectors you previously worked in?

(Note: position, years in the field and knowledge)

Q00: Can you tell me what you generally think of the latest trends related to buying behaviour in our current time.

Consumer behaviour/attitudes

Q1. Do you think that men in Kuwait are self-conscious about their physical appearance?
*prompts: (If answer is Yes) Do they purchase cosmetic products? Do you believe that self-consciousness leads them into buying grooming products?

Q2. Do you believe that brands play any role in persuading men's physical appearance and self-image? Is it really what advertising wants?

Q3. Who are usually your average customers? (age? gender? social class/status? Segment?) What about males? Who's your average male customers? Do you see any increase within male customers?

Q4. Have you noticed the difference between Kuwaiti's male and western's male in consuming cosmetic products?

Q5. What kind of trend have you noticed in male grooming products? Growth trend? Or a trend of purchasing a specific product?

*prompt: (What do you believe are the reasons behind it?)

Is there anything else you may find important to add regarding the behaviour and attitudes of consumers?

Advertising/social media celebrities

Q6. What influences the decisions for male consumers buying cosmetic products? What do you believe is the main influence that leads to buying such grooming products?

*prompts: such as (What about media? Social media celebrities? Female/family members etc.?)

Q7. Do cosmetic companies rely on social media celebrities/influencers to market their products? (if they say Yes) Do they have any influences towards the market?

Q8: What promotion campaigns create positive effective on selling grooming products? What is the preferred way of marketing your products to your consumers? (promotion campaigns such as free samples, discount codes, etc.)

Role of brands

Q9: Do you think that there is potential growth in the male grooming products especially in Kuwait?

Q10: Which such products are more popular among Kuwaiti men?

Q11: Do men buy their products, generally, or their family or friends buy or them?

Q12: What are the main means of purchase? Online shopping? departmental store? stalls in the big malls? (How did Covid19 change their purchase behaviour?)

*Prompt: How did this change and differ now with Covid19? Do they purchase products online now with the Covid19 situation?

Q13: Do you use social media platforms to market? Which platforms does your company prefer to use and why? Does it help?

Q14: Are there any preferred specific demographics when targeting your audience for male grooming products? Such as age, income, locality and student vs professional? Those who worked or studied abroad?

Q15: Do you think that there is an acceptance in the Kuwaiti society for the male to use such products?

Q16: How likely the male consumers are willing to share their purchase with others either on social media and friends and family?

Q17: What specific actions and behaviours of male consumers are shown while purchasing male grooming products? (observation)

Q18: Have you noticed any change during the Covid19 period? What do you think after Covid19 the things (sales? Consumer behaviour? Advertising?) What impact did Covid19 have to the beauty industry?

Q19: Is there anything else you would like to add or share?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: SOCIAL MEDIA CELEBRITIES

1. Social media advertising has become the new/latest method of advertising globally, traditional advertising seems no longer preferable by both the consumers and the businesses. What do you think?
2. How does social media advertising make you feel? Did you face any pressure or find it uncomfortable when you first started advertising through social media platforms?
3. How and who influenced you into getting to social media advertising? Is there any demand and acceptance from the society?
4. How often do you advertise on social media? Which social media platform do you use most often?
5. Do you search for companies as an advertising agency, or do the companies themselves search for you to promote their products and services?
6. Do you feel that social media advertising changed the way Kuwait males behave?
7. Do you view yourself as an important advertising method for the success of businesses?
8. Does the Kuwaiti society get influenced by you as a social media Influencer in terms of appearance and behaviour?
9. How easy/difficult is it for you to get the audience to trust you and your advertising products? Do you see that there will be an increasing demand for social media celebrities in Kuwait?
10. In your opinion, are social media influencers only a trend and a phase that will end? Or will they become a dominant method for advertising, businesses and to consumers?

Grooming questions:

1. Have you advertised for a male grooming/cosmetic company?
2. Do you think skin care products are more towards the feminine side rather than males?
3. Who do you usually target when advertising for beauty/grooming products?
4. In your opinion, how important is self-image and appearance for men in Kuwait?
5. What are your perceptions towards male grooming consumers? How do you perceive a man's masculine identity?
6. Do you think that Kuwaiti society accepts the use of grooming products used by men? Is there a growth in the demand of men's cosmetics and grooming sectors in Kuwait and why?