

The Metrosexual Image in S/S 2005

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I . Introduction

With the gradual disappearance of traditional gender roles in the society, a new consumption style known as metrosexuality has emerged. A metrosexual person is a masculine figure who embraces the latent femininity inside him and who believes that a man can “dress up”—i.e., subscribe to fashion trends, observe beauty rituals, and maintain a beautiful body—without losing his masculinity. The metrosexual trend reflects a current social reality: that the role boundary between men and women is gradually becoming obscure. Metrosexuality has become a global trend.

The term metrosexual is certainly not new; it has been around for some time now. It was only recently, however, that the term became popular as it was used to represent one of the latest top-10 trends in the world. The interest in metrosexuality is increasing; it is rapidly emerging as a consumption subject with astonishing potentials, enough to replace the already-saturated fashion and beauty industry for women in the global market. The metrosexual trend is not irrelevant to other current trends in the world, namely: the lookism and appearance suprematism culture, the rapidly increasing number of celibate individuals, the liberal atmosphere among the professionals in the workplace, and the unbridled expression of individual idiosyncrasies. It can also be said that the metrosexual trend is related to the well-being trend because both trends emphasize an active investment in self-management.

In this study, the characteristics of metrosexuality, which is the leading cultural trend of this age, will be analyzed by looking closely into the attributes of metrosexual fashion or of the metrosexual image model in S/S 2005. Moreover, futuristic visions in the fashion and modeling fields will be presented in this study, which can serve as a foundation for defining the fashion and modeling industries' future directions.

II . Background and Definition of the Word Metrosexual

It was Mark Simpson, the foremost literary critic of U.K., who first used the word metrosexual in his discussion of the current changes that have taken place among men in the Nov. 15, 1994 issue of the magazine *Independent*. The word metrosexual, which some people insist came from the unique fashion lingo of gays, has come to refer to those men who have an eccentric interest in fashion styles.

The gender identity of the metrosexualist is definite. Metrosexuality is bisexuality, a strong

masculinity and emotional femininity that both exist in a single person. It is not the same as the neuter image. Metrosexual people simultaneously pursue masculine and feminine beauty, caring meticulously for their faces and bodies. They are characterized by urban elegance, tenacity, an attractive face, a well-shaped and strong body, accessories, make-up, and a feminine or idiosyncratic hairstyle or fashion sense.

A number of young professionals have metrosexual characteristics. Metrosexual people are deeply interested in leading a feminine lifestyle—i.e., subscribing to fashion trends, enhancing their beauty, beautifying their interiors, and cooking—and, as such, prefer to live in metropolitan areas, adjacent to shopping malls, fitness centers, and beauty shops. Metrosexual people are men with a strong consumption tendency, who invest much in clothing articles and in maintaining their body figures, wanting to appear more aesthetically appealing. Moreover, they have a strong egoism, focusing on themselves or their families rather than on their social relationships, and pursuing excitement to the hilt.

In summary, the word metrosexual pertains to the leaders in the 21st-century trend among men—men in cities, with a distinct gender identity and an elevated aesthetic sense, men who invest money and time in caring for their appearance and in shopping, and men who embrace their feminine personas.

Accordingly, the men's fashion and beauty industry has been rapidly growing, and those businesses that target men, such as plastic surgery hospitals, dermatology clinics, skin clinics, hair salons, and scalp and hair care shops, have been continuously expanding. The refreshing appearance of new-age men and the obscure gender boundary between men and women are indeed outstanding characteristics of the 21st century.

III. Metrosexual Fashion

Hair and skin: A natural style that is characterized by natural wave and disheveled hair or a romantic style is proposed. The medium-length hair style (i.e., between the short cut and bobbed hair) is more natural than the short cut. Two colors rather than one for the hair create the look of overall natural vitality.

Metrosexual people use a variety of men's cosmetics, such as moisturizing packs, anti-wrinkle and repair essences, exfoliating creams, eye creams, pore control lines, whitening lines, and color lotions as well as basic care lines. They attend diverse kinds of beauty programs for men, such as skin care or hair care programs. More and more men are visiting spas or nail shops and are enrolling in skin care programs.

Style: Metrosexual men prefer a design that simultaneously communicates a romantic and feminine emotion and demonstrates a glamorous, urban, and elegant masculinity. Smooth and natural shoulder lines, slim sleeves, and the Y line, emphasizing the dimensional chest and waistline as well as the body line, are characteristic of metrosexuality. A sense of youth is highlighted by the inclusion of a slim and narrow lapel, created by raising the waistline. In addition, low-rise trousers and thin neckties are popular among metrosexual men.

Metrosexual men also prefer products that emphasize the body lines, such as knits that show the chest line, with a deep V-neck and a cozy touch, and sleeveless shirts. The slim look (with the cloth clinging to one's body, highlighting one's silhouette) and the layered look (where one puts on several clothing items with thin textures) draw much attention.

Color and fabric: The most significant change in men's fashion is in the realm of color. The undaunted primary colors (red, green, blue, yellow, hot pink, orange, aqua blue) and pastel tones (pink, sky blue, mint green, purple, lavender) are showing a strong tendency to dominate men's fashion. Different shades of green, such as apple green, lime green, and spring green, are widely used for all kinds of clothing items—knits, shirts, and jumpers. The leading patterns include the floral pattern, daringly mixing several colors; stripes, using an impressive color contrast; and the geometric pattern, such as the checks-and-dots pattern, giving one a retrospective feeling. White mixed with such colors creates a neat image in various items, such as jackets and trousers.

The materials used for men's clothing articles have also substantially changed. Silk or chiffon is now favored, and materials emphasizing natural moods—materials with pleats, lustrous materials, or delicate and thin cotton—are now widely used. In particular, the use of silk, which exudes elegance and which is one of the most popular materials in the fashion industry during this season, is introduced as a new fashion trend along with the use of metallic yarn and coated materials. Another feature of this season's fashion trend is the emphasis on practicality, enhanced by the stretching feature in materials such as silk or mohair-blended fabric. We cannot miss the thin knit, which looks as if it is flowing and which emphasizes one's silhouette, and jersey, with a slight luster. Christian Lacroix Homme, one of the leading metrosexual brands today, recently launched men's products similar to women's wear, such as purple shirts with seasonal flower patterns, and orange silk trousers.

Accessories: Colorful and feminine belts have emerged as "must-have" items for fashionable metrosexual people. The use of scarves in place of neckties with formal suits, as well as cross bags with traditional business suits, demonstrates another style shift that is gaining wide popularity.

Rings, necklaces, and earrings are now a mainstay in men's get-ups. Light chains have replaced the round medal types and heavy chains. A number of accessories use cubic or gem stones. Another popular item is the choker-style necklace worn with a deep-V-neckline shirt. Various clip- or drop-style earrings are also donned. Cubic accessories are favored, as popularized by the soccer player Beckham. Rubber or urethane is rapidly replacing leather as the most popular material for necklaces and bracelets, a trend that began last year. These necklaces and bracelets are decorated with gold, silver, and steel.

IV. Metrosexual Models

The recent metrosexual image model mixes the masculine image characterized by well-shaped muscles with the masculine image characterized by a white, gentle face and a thin

bodyline. The image models for metrosexuality include Gwon Sang-Wu, Jo In-Seong, Gang Dong-Won, B, Hyeon Bin, Eric, and Brad Pitt.

Jo In-Seong embodies the sensuous fashion style with his handsome appearance and his typical versicolored dress shirts, dark-colored ties, and body-fitting, green trench coats. B is on a high with his boyish face exquisitely harmonized with his sexuality. The soccer player An Jeong-Hwan also exudes masculine beauty in the TV commercial for men's cosmetics. David Beckham, the soccer player of U.K. who is famous for his manicured nails, fashionable shirts, accessories, and a variety of hairstyles, became a cover model of a men's magazine. Gang Dong-Won is widely regarded as a man who exudes a bisexual image, with feminine and masculine aspects beautifully harmonized in his appearance.

The above-mentioned men, with a handsome appearance, a muscular body, and sexual and elegant styles created a new image for men by adding feminine touches to their intrinsically masculine features. As Michael Flocker recently said, men no longer devote themselves to defending their masculinity. By this he means that men are no longer afraid of shining brilliantly.

In the history of commercials, most of the male models for cosmetics lines were the popular stars at the time. Their styles then, however, were different. Male models assumed full masculinity and a traditionally handsome appearance in the 1970s, evolved into masculine, sexual, and attractive hunks in the 1980s, and turned into "beautiful, handsome guys" in the 1990s. In the 21st century, the models for men's cosmetics—such as An Jeong-Hwan, Won Bin, B, Jo In-seong, Yi Byeong-Heon, and Gwon Sang-Wu—have a metrosexual image, with a feminine face and a muscular body.

Yi Gui-Ok analyzed the concept of masculinity communicated in advertisements in men's magazines over the years. The results of the analysis revealed that men who were physically strong and adventurous, those who led successful lives or were famous, and those who cared about their appearance accounted for the highest percentage of male models in the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s and 2000s, respectively. Interestingly, it was also found that such trends were closely related to the products being promoted by the advertisements. Fashion products accounted for 23.6% of the products advertised in men's magazines in the 1970s, 45.1% in the 1990s, and 40.9% in 2000. Cosmetics and health products, on the other hand, accounted for 15.8% of the products advertised in men's magazines. The shift in social and cultural values was clearly reflected in the special-product category, and defined the leading concept of masculinity during the period. This proves that the people behind these advertisements deliberately selected and propagated the concept of masculinity that was required by the period, and did not simply reflect social change.

As explained above, the metrosexual image is preferred by the present male models. A feminine face and emotions as well as elegant styles are expressed by a masculine body.

V. Conclusion

A metrosexual person is a masculine figure with distinct gender identity who embraces the latent taste and sensibility of femininity. Characteristics of metrosexual in S/S 2005 are as follows:

1. A natural or romantic style and the medium-length hair style are proposed.
2. They use a variety of men's cosmetics, such as moisturizing packs, eye creams, anti-wrinkle and repair essences, and whitening lines. Also they have deep interest in skin care.
3. They prefer slim, glamorous and sophisticated style which emphasize the body line.
4. Various vivid tone, pastel tone, different shades of green are showing. The floral and stripe pattern which are daringly mixing several colors and coordination with white color are widely used.
5. Fabric such as chiffon, silk, jersey, fine or crinkled cotton, stretch fabric, lustrous fabric and fine knit are favored.
6. Various accessories such as colorful belts, scarf, cross bag, light necklace, earring and bracelet are used.
7. Mixed image with masculine like well-shaped muscles and feminine image like gentle face and a thin body line is preferred.
8. A number of young professionals who prefer to live in metropolitan areas, adjacent to shopping malls, fitness centers and beauty shops have metrosexual characteristics.

It is hoped that the results of this study will lay the foundation for future studies on the metrosexual image as seen in magazine advertisements. It is likewise hoped that the results of this study will contribute to setting future directions for the fashion and modeling fields.

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