

“Men shaving body hair is

Philips has off late been trying to expand the neglected men's grooming category. Last year, it roped in John Abraham as its brand ambassador to showcase how men could experiment with styles with their facial hair. Lately, Philips has ventured into the men's body grooming space too with products – Philips BodyGroom – that let's men trim or shave their body hair. Aarushi Agarwal, Director Marketing, Personal Care, Consumer Lifestyle, Philips India, tells Dhaleta Surender Kumar of Pitch, how men are more open to experimenting and shedding off their body hair now. Excerpts from the interview:

Before launching your body shaving products for men, you ran a teaser campaign that gave some statistics that almost 65 per cent men 'would like to do' it and about 80 per cent women would 'want' their boyfriend or husband to 'do it'. Has the trend already started or is it still "would like to"? We met about 1,100 people across the country in the age group of 16-25 years. We realised that there is this nascent style evolution happening amongst men, which we didn't credit them for. We think that it's only women's right to dress themselves up, look good, go to salons and spend lot of time on themselves. But, a lot of men have started indulging in it in their own way...

So are you giving the men enough credit? As a marketing community, as a country, we don't really credit them for that because even though it's happening, no one has really focused on it and taken it to what they really need. We realised that there was

this huge need gap in the market of male grooming, which the consumer was really indulging in. They were going regularly to salons to pamper themselves with everything from facials to pedicure and what was considered unacceptable before is now more the norm, rather than the exception.

More men were saying that this is something even my girlfriend or my wife is really open to. So, we had two phases of campaigns - Style Sutra-1 & Style Sutra-2. In Style Sutra-1 the focus was more on the men's face. We

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came up with grooming tools and products which focused on how men could get different styles, at home and on their own. And for the same, John Abraham was roped in and we saw five Johns in a campaign with different styles. What really did well for us was an augmented reality application on Facebook, where people could actually try twelve different looks on their face.

Did you leave it at online?

It was not about exclusion that you need to buy my products to see results, it was all about inclusion. We carried this forward where we were teaching people how to do it themselves. So whoever was interested, we were offering services free of cost and we fully realised that this is a space where we're creating a category.

What was Style Sutra-2 then?

This year, we did a survey which went be-

yond the face – Style Sutra-2 – and we got a little more intimate and asked more questions on body grooming, per se.

Did you take women's opinion too in that?

Yes. We did ask women that if excessive hair on men turned them off and 80 per cent of them said "Yes". Today's new age man is too evolved to let women force him into what he wants to do. It becomes important because a lot of men in India think that women find hair on their body sexy or

masculine. It was equated to virility till a few years ago – "the more carpet of hair I have on my body, the more masculine I am". So we just wanted to see if that still continues. There were conflicting opinions. It was mostly about figuring out what is the right balance. You may not want your man to be completely clean shaven but that does not mean that you want him to look like a bear. So, it could well be about trimming your body hair.

And how did the men react?

Sixty five percent of the men we surveyed considered doing something about it, which is quite a large proportion. We'd expected it to be a much smaller proportion. Men are more aware about the fact that they need to look a certain way for themselves, as much as they do for the opposite sex.

What has come now in style and fashion is what they call the "casual cool". One doesn't want to show the amount of effort put in having to look that way. It should look casual and at the same time, effortless. So BodyGroom offers a versatility of clean shaving your body or also trimming any part of your body.

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You aren't talking to the metrosexual man?

We are talking to a larger space. It doesn't have to be about a guy who's all about his looks only. He's not so self indulgent but he still wants to look well groomed and more acceptable to himself, his peers and the opposite sex.

Were men comfortable talking about body grooming in the survey?

If you look at body grooming, they were very open. He was supremely conscious that I have body hair and I have to do something about it. We realised that men weren't vocalising and verbalising this need and there's also a self-consciousness, which comes if I say it in a larger group. The consciousness doesn't lie in that fact in doing something about it but in saying that "I have too much hair on my body."

Are Indian men going for body waxing too?

Our idea was not to try and understand how they're removing body hair. We were pretty clear that it's not the space we want to target. It's a niche phenomenon, I'm sure it's happening. But we're looking at a much more mass phenomenon. Whether they want to do it on their own or go out and do it. Most men wanted to do it on their own. We got responses on how it's more convenient and a response of how it was about their self consciousness. Whatever experimentation one needs to do, it could be done in a more confined space.

So are you positioning the products as a style statement?

The way we've currently positioned it is



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INTERVIEW AARUSHI AGARWAL

more of coming of age and evolution. For some people that decodes into hygiene. For example, men who are married, it would become more about hygiene and the fact that my partner will demand it from me, if I need to get intimate. Whereas, for a younger guy, it will be more about the fact that I'm wearing a shirt, where my chest buttons are open and I don't want too many hair popping out. So our positioning is more on the coming of age and the next phase. We haven't gone for functional positioning here. It's more of an emotional positioning, rather than functional.

How are you helping the men accept that body shaving is 'cool'?

We are having live mannequins in certain stores in New Delhi on weekends. These men are bare chested, have tattoos on their

bodies, which obviously get highlighted on a clean look. It's more of an experiential service, letting the guys try the products and giving them confidence that it's acceptable.

Are you using pester power of women too in your campaigns?

As of now, we're not using any female pester power. We decided that we want to do something 'By the Men, For the Men and Of the Men'. Also, it was an attempt to not follow what competition (read 'Gillette Women Against Lazy Stubble' campaign) is or was doing. As a brand we want to have our own unique identity as far as marketing is concerned. We want to come up with campaigns which are new age. If you see a campaign with live mannequins in store, it's unthought-of.

Aren't you taking the campaign online

with augmented reality as you did for Style Sutra-1?

On BodyGroom currently, we're not planning on going online with it. We would stick to more safe spaces. It was more a conscious call as a brand for us to not go too much into the online space for this, because, it can get a little tricky. Sensitivities are there in the body grooming space. If I post something on Facebook, it goes live immediately and it's not being moderated. So it can get into spaces and genres where I don't want to get into. So we were very particular about how we managed it and our focus was more on facial grooming in the online space. For anything which is more visible and is limited to confined spaces, we did not want to have an in your face activity.

In the future, we may go into the online space with body grooming, but there's no plan as of now for this year. For us also the survey came as a shocker to even realise the fact that people do consider it.

Also, let's understand that we're not creating a category on body groomers per se. It is a category for any kind of grooming which is happening with the hair. Anything beyond going to a barber and getting your hair cut is what we're focusing on.

So how's been the response so far in terms of sales?

Honestly, we've far sold out beyond our expectations. Though we are keeping the productions low. You always want to go mass with something you're confident about and you know that the audience is ready for it. I can only say that we're having triple digit growth for the entire category and this is from a value perspective.

Are you looking at diversifying this portfolio of body grooming?

Yes. Currently, we have two models in the price point of ₹ 2,495. We're looking at a much wider range. We're looking at models with attachments. The attempt is to help the consumer as much as possible – reaching out to difficult parts like the back. So products which come with attachments would stretch the price point to most of ₹ 4,000. ■

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