

*An investigation into the social acceptance of
metrosexuality in Irish society*

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Abstract

The level of acceptance towards metrosexuality has increased significantly over the last number of years. Males are now showing more of an interest in fashion and beauty as documented in industry reports and academia. The objective behind this research is to determine if this trend has entered the Irish market. In determining this, research will also aim to attain information on the Irish male's consumption behaviours, in terms of motivations and influences.

The method chosen to complete this research is a quantitative analysis. Through surveying Irish males, it is the objective of the analysis to gather information which can support the hypotheses developed throughout this thesis.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Declaration	3
Acknowledgements	4
Table of contents	5
Chapter 1 Introduction	7
Chapter 2 Literature review	10
2.1 The metrosexual	10
2.2 History of male consumption	13
2.3 Factors contributing to the emergence of metrosexuality within society	14
2.2.1 Changing households	14
2.2.2 Media	14
2.2.3 Societal changes	15
2.4 The Retrosexual	16
2.5 Gender and consumer behaviour	17
2.6 Fashion and consumer behaviour theory	19

2.6.1 Types of shoppers	19
2.6.2 Shopping motivations and behaviours	20
2.6.3 Social conformity and individuality	21
Chapter 3 Hypothesis	24
Chapter 4 Methodology	25
4.1 Participants	25
4.2 Design	25
4.3 Materials	26
4.4 Procedures	28
Chapter 5 Analysis and Findings	30
5.1 Descriptive statistics	32
5.2 Metrosexuality score	32
5.3 Inferential statistics	33
Chapter 6 Discussion	37
Chapter 7 Conclusions and Recommendations	43
Chapter 8 Bibliography	46
Chapter 9 Appendix	49

Introduction

A recent development in fashion and consumer behaviour is the emergence of the metrosexual man. This is one of the most interesting concepts produced by marketers in the last two decades. The metrosexual man is a shift away from the traditional prospect of the male sex role which defines manliness as tough, strong, aggressive, independent and only interested in sports related activities (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010). In terms of fashion purchasing, the traditional male consumer is one of little interest in the act. Their motivation is to satisfy utilitarian needs by buying functional items and not purchasing for pleasure. They display a negative attitude towards the act and will primarily enter one store to satisfy all their purchasing needs (Holmberg et al, 2010).

The metrosexual male is a contrast to the traditional archetype of the male consumer. Metrosexuality describes an urban straight male who enjoys fashion shopping, beauty care and other activities that were once deemed effeminate. This increased interest in personal care and fashion has had a positive effect on the fashion and beauty industry. Reports by skin care line L'Oreal Paris, state that men's beauty products are now one of the fastest growing sectors (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010).

But how integrated is the metrosexual man in today's society? Dr Diego Rinallo suggests that men can display elements of metrosexuality but there are limits due to ridicule and criticism from one's peer group. He states metrosexuality is the evolution of the male sex role but this evolution faces social stigma as men who display metrosexual traits can be deemed vain, superficial or even gay. He proposes that there are safe areas to the males' interest in fashion. They may show an interest in fashion to the point where they are not sloppy, unrefined or old fashioned but cannot go too far to the point where they are too refined or too fashionable. This level of interest that the male can display is defined by his parents, friends or partners. This theory can be seen through consumer behaviour such as shopping alone. The male can update his wardrobe and enjoy the act of shopping just as long as he is not seen by friends and family doing so (Rinallo,2007). Also by buying clothing items from one or two stores or buying the same brands, this allows the male to keep up to date with trends but not displaying this interest among his peer group as it might be deemed feminine or

superficial (Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell, 2006).

According to Thompson and Haytko many have argued that metrosexuality is just a marketing ploy invented to manipulate male consumers into believing that they should be interested in grooming and fashion trends (Thompson and Haytko, 1997). Their response to this belief is fashion conservatism or taking an anti-fashion tactic, but is this tactic based on marketing ethics principles or just a tactic to halt the blending of gender roles? This evolution of the male role in society can prove to be a very sensitive issue. In today's society men are continually being bombarded with definitions on what a man is and what is gay. Homophobia is a huge factor to why metrosexuality has faced so much social stigma in the past. Simpson who first coined the term metrosexuality described it as "male consumers living in/near metropolitan areas who adopt the aesthetic sensibility often associated with gay men" (Simpson, 2002). This term alone can prove confusing for young males. How can they look gay without being branded gay, this is a fear for many men (Kimmel, 2004).

However according to recent findings by the International Business Times the tide is turning, men are now more than ever displaying an interest in fashion as sales in the US from January to September have increased by 6.5%. They have even been described as fashion's new darlings (Sieczkowski, 2011). Men's grooming products tripled in sales to 781 million between the years of 2002-2006 (Mintel, 2007). Superdrug, Britain's second largest beauty and health retailer claim that 83 minutes of an average male's day is spent on grooming, which is estimated as four minutes longer than the average woman's beauty regime. (Gough, 2012)

Popular media also reflects this tide, for example reality TV series 'Geordie Shore' displays the lives of the average young men of Newcastle who incorporate tanning, hair removal and fashion consumption in their daily lives. In one episode one of the male cast members was ridiculed by the rest of the cast because he refused to wax his eyebrows. Another show which incorporates this message that metrosexuality is cool is that of 'Queer Eye For a Straight Guy' in which a team of gay fashion and interior design experts set to makeover a straight man's wardrobe and home. (Simpson, 2002) Both these shows convey to the population that just because you are straight does not mean your fashion or grooming techniques should have to suffer.

While looking at all this information it is important to evaluate how relevant these theories and statistics are to the Irish market. Yes metrosexuality is alive and well in the more fashion forward countries such as England and Italy, but has it truly attained a strong grasp in the Irish market. Authors such as Duffy (2013) question as to whether the Irish male will ever feel comfortable looking good as the Irish society can be quite suppressive when it comes to self- expression (Duffy, 2013) However sporting figures such as Paul Galvin could be seen as a move away from this theory. On one hand Paul is a senior Kerry footballer, on the other writes for the Irish Independent as a fashion columnist. Two conflicting sex role expectations but Paul and other Gaelic footballers make it work. Another inspirational figure for young Irish males could be Niall Horan from One Direction. Niall and his band mates are seen as style icons for their generation by gracing covers such as GQ, making it acceptable for young males to emulate their style without feeling effeminate. Editor of the Irish Tatler magazine Alexander Fitzgerald has noticed this trend in the Irish market and states that it is down to a decrease in the stigma of Irish men taking pride in their looks (Kelly, 2013). This type of media would suggest that metrosexuality has entered the Irish market as media can act as a paradigm to communicate what has become a norm in our society (Louw, 2012).

Very little focus has been given to Irish fashion consumption academically, let alone male fashion consumption, so it is the aim of this study to determine if metrosexuality has a place in the Irish market and how strongly is this behaviour accepted.

The Metrosexual

During the 90's a concept known as the metrosexual, coined by Simpson (1994) was identified. Despite popular belief Simpson did not invent the metrosexual but simply identified that there was a wave of male interest in fashion and grooming. In his article named 'Here Comes the Mirror Men' Simpson illustrates a new genre of the male fashion consumer, one who is not afraid to appear effeminate or homosexual (Simpson, 1994). Simpson described metrosexuals as straight young urban males who displayed interests in cooking, fashion, beauty care and home décor. Simpson used international soccer star David Beckham as the poster boy for all things metrosexual saying that he was as well known for his wearing of sarongs as he is his football skills (Simpson, 1994). In short the metrosexual has been described as the following:

1. 21st century male trendsetter
2. Straight young urban male with heightened aesthetic sense
3. Men who spend time and money on their appearance and shopping
4. A man who is willing to embrace his feminine side (Flocker, 2003)

According to Carniel (2009) the metrosexual is a straight urban male whose interests lie in hairstyling, facial cleansing and attending the gym for aesthetic purposes, not for fitness (Carniel, 2009). This type of consumer is a very attractive prospect to marketers as it gives them a new market to target. A target that is knowledgeable in clothing and culture (Stamps, 2013). These male consumers are essentially becoming more sophisticated shoppers. They are displaying female shopping behaviours in their need to feel and try on clothes before purchasing them (Wildrick, 2007). In essence the more independent males become in society, the less influence women have on their dress sense, as before women were the main shoppers in each household. When women are no longer there to be relied on, narcissism becomes their survival mode (Simpson, 2002)

As referenced earlier Dr Diego Rinallo's (2007) theory on the metrosexual lifestyle is built on the notion of safe areas. These areas denote what is acceptable metrosexual behaviour and what is deemed gender inappropriate (Schroeder and Zwick, 2005). At

one end of the spectrum the male could face ridicule for being far too untidy and old fashioned, on the other is the danger of appearing too feminine or possibly gay. Men face anxiety as to whether they are being fashion forward or losing their masculinity in the eyes of others so the safest area is based strictly in the middle. However this safe area is constantly changing as society's perception of gender identity changes. For example if a man were to wear pink 20 years ago he would face scrutiny and sceptical glares. This type of behaviour would be seen to be in the danger zones. Today this behaviour lies within the safe zone. Which bears the question what type of behaviour lies within the safe zone currently in the Irish market? Men are continuously engaging in boundary work and redefining what is acceptable for men to wear, especially in recent years as statistics are showing men's increased confidence in shopping and beauty care (Rinallo, 2007). This will be further investigated throughout this research.

Another issue with metrosexuality that keeps young males shying away is that it may invoke a heteroerotic gaze. Dressing well and taking pride in your presentation may grab the attention of women but also other men (Cole, 2000). Simpson called this the queering of the male gaze which the traditional Irish male may find uncomfortable and unusual (Simpson, 1994).

The metrosexual lifestyle is becoming more widely accepted through media such as television and celebrities endorsements. As previously stated TV shows such as *Queer Eye for a Straight Guy* made it not only okay to display feminine behaviours in the consumption of fashion but made it obligatory so as not to appear unattractive or outdated (Simpson, 2002). A study performed by Yankelovich (2007) discovered that more married men are taking an interest in retail consumption. Approximately 45% of the males surveyed admitted to liking shopping, saying they found it to be relaxing (Yankelovich, 2007). Also according to a study noted in the *Independent* one in five women claim that their partner will only wear branded clothing and spends longer in the bathroom than they do getting ready. This study also noted a trend among men to wax their entire bodies, which was primarily once viewed as a feminine activity (Woods, 2013).

Similarly to Rinallo's theory on safe zones, retail industry fellow Stephen Ogden 's (2011) industry report findings show how men were attempting to show fashion interest but in a conservative manner so not to evoke criticism from their peer groups as male fashion consciousness was still not fully accepted by society. This report prepared by Barnes is a combination of a number of studies on male consumer behaviour performed worldwide. The report firstly found that men did in fact enjoy the act of shopping for clothes, but did not see it as a recreational activity like women. The act was that of achievement, they would enter one or two stores to purchase their goods and would not be satisfied with the act until they had purchased everything they had originally intended to buy. Women in contrast found satisfaction in the act itself as it was more of a social and relational experience. Women shop in groups asking each other's opinions and interacting with retail staff so to seek additional information about products. Men however were identified to shop alone and were hesitant to seek assistance from retailers. Men were also noted as not engaging in the topic of fashion in conversation or asking for fashion advice from peers as shopping was more of a competitive act than a social one for males (Barnes, 2011).

In Duffy (2013)'s work, she discusses the research on five young Irish males aged 22-27 and their interest in self-presentation. They were interviewed on their attitude towards dress code, physique, grooming products and hair styling. During the interview one of the five males discusses how he pioneered the use of GHD straighteners by his fellow class mates. When he first began straightening his hair, his friends taunted and ridiculed him but as time went on they too began to follow suit to where this type of behaviour became the norm. Another interviewee discussed how the only way fashion for male could succeed on an Irish media platform is for them to take a traditional Irish male celebrity with no dress sense and each week give them makeovers in a comedic and light hearted setting. This interviewee said if the judges were to mock him this would grab the attention of the Irish male audience as according to all the interviewees they viewed Ireland as quite suppressive and the use of satire could create a more comfortable atmosphere to broach the subject of fashion and grooming to Irish males. (Duffy, 2013)

History of Male Fashion Consumption

Through study of the male fashion consumer throughout history, it has become evident that the metrosexual is not a modern lifestyle but in fact a turn back to the old. Grooming and interest in fashion were a common aspect of the male lifestyle as far back as the 17th and 18th centuries. In this time it was common for men to adorn silk stockings, high heeled shoes, makeup, perfume, and brightly coloured ostentatious garments (Conseur, 1999).

By the 19th century a phenomenon known as the Dandy had come into place, which was quite like the metrosexual we know today. Dandies like metrosexuals displayed a keen interest in fashion and their appearance. It was their aim to dress in a manner to stand out from the crowd wearing elaborately decorated ensembles. (Laver, 1969)

The era of the dandy and fashion conscious men came to an end following the French Revolution. Being elaborately dressed and groomed was seen as an act of the aristocracy and the upper classes. People were trying to separate themselves from this type of parody and influence men to dress in a way that did not show men as figures of beauty. (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010)

From here fashion consciousness and interest in beauty became to be known as effeminate and men aimed to display a caveman like notion of the male sex role. Men looked to assert themselves as the dominant leaders in society and as the main bread winners of the household. This influenced them to consume fashion for functional purposes only, for example purchasing business suits for work and meetings. Men no longer used fashion to convey their personalities or as an extension of self. They were merely garments worn for professional or leisurely activities. (Edwards, 1997)

During the 1980's a concept emerged called the new man, whereby heterosexual men in urban areas could take an interest in fashion without feeling effeminate or having their sexuality questioned. This emergence of the 'new man' was due to the increasing role of women in society. Household dynamics were changing and men were no longer the primary breadwinners in the home, which essentially questioned gender roles based on males being the providers and women being the care givers (Woodruff-

Burton, 1998).

Factors contributing to the emergence of metrosexuality in society

It has been widely accepted throughout literature that two factors have contributed to the emergence of the Metrosexual. These factors are as follows:

Changing Households

The modern family in society is a shift from that of the traditional family household. The traditional household was by definition made up of a working father, a stay at home mother and their children. However times have changed and so has the average household archetype. Women are now working outside the home and men are now taking up roles as stay at home dads. This is a sign of breaking down major sex roles (Conseur, 1999). According to the social learning theory, individuals develop their attitudes, tastes and opinions by watching those around them and base their social behaviours on these observations (Sheldon, 2010).

Families are the first social group an individual is integrated into. They are influenced by the values and everyday working of their household. If the household is changing, this thus will change individuals' conception of gender identity and move away from the traditional working father, stay at home mother idea of a family (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010).

Media

Media has proven a huge influence in the emergence and acceptance of metrosexuality into society. Simpson (1994) used David Beckham as his poster boy for the metrosexual movement. Painting his nails, wearing women's underwear and his continual change of hair styles won him his place as the ultimate Metrosexual but it is his celebrity status and popularity that allows him to influence others in this lifestyle (Simpson 1994). Theories such as the cultivation theory suggest that television can be an influencing factor in how we learn the values and norms that are accepted in society. Men displaying an interest in fashion can be seen throughout TV programming and movies. An example that comes to mind is that of the movie Crazy Stupid Love in which a young charismatic male performs a makeover on a middle

aged male divorcé in the hopes it will allow him to get his life back on track. The young male insisted the importance that updating your wardrobe had on attracting women as no woman today would accept a man wearing 'mom jeans'. As stated by the cultivation theory this type of message will be translated back to the male consumer and thus influence his opinion that metrosexuality is not effeminate but necessary in order to attract women (Sheldon, 2010).

Societal Changes

This final factor is one which could have influenced this new wave of social acceptance of metrosexuality into society. Society began to take notice of the gay rights movement in 2010 when 11 gay youths committed suicide due to homophobia in their school system. This influenced individuals in society to support the gay rights movement and to integrate anti-discrimination acts into law. Acts such as this made it mandatory for schools to promote gay inclusivity in school systems across the UK. Anti-gay and homophobic behaviours thus became stigmatised allowing young males to dress and act in any way that felt natural to them without fearing that others may brand them as gay (McCormack, 2012).

This type of freedom could explain why in 2011, when this act was introduced, also marked a 6.5 % increase in male fashion purchases from January to September (Sieczkowski, 2011).

The Retrosexual

However many are just not ready for Simpson's Metrosexual child. A movement known as the Retrosexuals was born. These were men in society who displayed anti-fashion conscious behaviour and ridiculed and stigmatised men who were interested in their appearance and fashion consumption. They stated that metrosexuality was merely a marketing ploy used to manipulate male consumers into believing they needed to consume fashion excessively in order to be deemed successful or attractive.

The Retrosexual was perceived as a real man, strong, hairy, homophobic and aggressive. (Anderson, 2008) This anti metrosexual wave can be traced back to the 2004 US Presidential elections in which Howard Dean stated he was a Metrosexual but quickly attempted to back pedal away from the label when he was questioned by George Bush on the subject. Dean made it seem as if metrosexuality was something to be ashamed of and the US election marked the war of the Retrosexual (Bush) versus the Metrosexual (Dean) (Watson, 2011). Retrosexuality was celebrated in the media by such shows as South Park, which conveyed the idea of metrosexuality to be a comedic notion and that it was just a way for a man to explain his homosexual tendencies without being labelled as a gay man. The episode was thus called "South Park is Gay"(Anderson, 2008). This type of media portrayed the idea that to be fashion conscious and to take an interest in your appearance were signs that you were homosexual. This insecurity by males has its derivation in womens' changing roles in society. Women are no longer kept in the home, taking care of the children but are independent and working alongside or even a station above men, causing men to feel emasculated (Watson, 2011). This type of backlash contributed to the following behaviours evoked by the metrosexual man of the 90's and early 00's.

Studies performed by Bakewell et al (2006) observed a high resistance to fashion among British males of the time. Many viewed it as de-masculinising to show an interest in fashion or to wear clothes that weren't bought to fulfil utilitarian purposes (Bakewell et al, 2006). This return to the more traditional gender identity of a man was described as the new lad. Instead of tweezing their eyebrows and shopping for this season's latest fashions, the new lad spent his time heavily drinking, watching

sports and participating in heterosexual promiscuity. His attitude towards fashion is casual and uncaring while still managing to look good without showing any effort had gone into his appearance. (Gough et Hall, 2011)

Thompson et Haykto (1997) also recognised an anti-fashion stance but for entirely different reasons. Many males considered taking an interest in fashion as a waste of time which could be spent on more serious matters. Their idea of retrosexuality was to represent how unmaterialistic they were and that they believed in substance over style. It was essentially their belief that the fashion industry was another way to separate the classes and to decrease individuality amongst those in society (Thompson et Haykto, 1997).

Gender and Consumer Behaviour

According to previous literature based on men's shopping behaviours:

“The two sexes shop differently. Many women love to browse. While for some males, shopping is a chore that is best done quickly with a specific goal in mind”

(Debbie Howell

Retailing Today,1997)

The notion of gender or gender expectations is a key factor in the acceptance of metrosexuality. From birth individuals are met with certain roles they must conform to. In terms of gender expectations these roles are influenced in the home, in media and by culture. In the home gender roles are established by an individual's parents.

The father would go out to work while the mother stayed at home cooking and cleaning. This image is also reinforced by TV families such as the Brady Bunch. Shopping is primarily seen as a feminine chore as it falls in among the household duties the average woman in required to do. However as previously discussed, the average family mould is changing due to divorce rates and working mothers, which essentially means men are required to shop from themselves. However, does this mean they shop the same. (Solomon et al, 2010)

Previous research dictates that men and women display different shopping patterns. Traditionally men were viewed as the world's worst shoppers and didn't add anything

to consumerist culture (Carniel, 2009). Throughout previous literature men are noted as viewing retail shopping as a chore. Women on the other hand see shopping as a recreational activity and enjoy browsing around shopping centres for hours. Men's shopping patterns are also said to differ in frequency and time spent. Women could spend hours entering several shops in an average trip. Previous research states that men will attempt to enter one store to satisfy all their purchasing needs and spend as little amount of time in that store as possible (Jorgensen et al, 2007). In terms of in-store behaviours research acknowledges that both men and women will wander from aisle to aisle equally but men will do this at a faster rate. They simply will look for the item they are looking for and nothing more. If they cannot find the item they will not ask for assistance but will leave the store without it (Underhill, 2000). Women have also been noted as having a much higher tendency towards compulsive shopping. This type of behaviour is in part due to women's noted emotional, psychological and symbolic connection with shopping. (Dittmar, 2005)

When purchasing fashion, the traditional male shopper will purchase with longevity in mind. They are noted as displaying a negative attitude towards shopping. To them it is more of a task than a social activity. They ideally will search for clothes of good quality that will last more than one season. This is so they can reduce the frequency in which they have to shop again. Women on the other hand believe in buying fast fashion. They will purchase clothes that will either wear or go out of fashion each season but are not so expensive that they cannot be easily replaced by next season's items (Dittmar, 2005). A study performed by WSL found that 64% of men are looking for long lasting items when they go shopping as compared with 56% of women who value price over quality (Dittmar, 2005).

Fashion and consumer behaviour theory

Types of Shoppers

In previously stated theory consumers can be segmented into groups according to their attitudes towards shopping. These groupings are outlined as follows:

The Economic Shopper: Shopper has a goal when entering a store, which is to satisfy their purchasing needs at the lowest price for the greatest quality. They are quite rational and will do their research on clothes and pricing before entering a store.

The Personalized Shopper: Shopper who can gain very strong attachments to a store, its personnel, clothes or brands.

The Ethical Shopper: Shopper who consciously buys clothes or enters stores that specifically help the community or environment.

The Apathetic Shopper: Shopper who only engages in the act in order to satisfy basic needs. Hates the act of shopping and will primarily attempt to enter one store to satisfy all their purchasing needs.

The Recreational Shopper: Shopper, who enjoys the act of shopping, sees it as a fun social activity with friends. Will enter several stores per trip and enjoys keeping up to date with the latest trends.

The Hate- to- Shop Shopper: Shopper will avoid shopping as much as possible. They hate the hassle of finding clothes, busy changing rooms, and queuing for the cashier (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010).

The metrosexual shopper, from the previous literature provided, can be said to be a mix of the recreational shopper and the personalised shopper, as they have been described as enjoying the act of shopping and are very brand loyal. (Woods, 2013)(Simpson, 1994)

Shopping Motivations and Behaviours

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs describes the various stages of needs an individual will possess. They begin with the most basic needs which are as follows:

Physiological: An individual needs to satisfy their most basic needs of food water and sleep in order to survive.

Safety: Once Physiological needs are satisfied an individual will turn interest towards needs such as shelter and protection in order to feel safe.

Social: Individuals also have a basic need to be social and surround themselves with friends and family in order to feel accepted and loved by others. Many use shopping and fashion as a way to bond with one's peers.

Esteem: Gaining status among their peers is another feat an individual will desire to satisfy. In terms of fashion this can be by purchasing the latest and most expensive trends from high end brands.

Self- Actualisation: Looking to achieve self- fulfillment through experiences or rewarding yourself with an expensive item that you feel exemplifies how much you have achieved to earn it (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010).

The previous list provides the basic understanding of what drives every consumer. Whether it be a need for shelter or food, or to experience uncharted territory for someone's own personal fulfilment. This list of needs can give a basic insight into the drives and motivations of the male consumer. The metrosexual is clearly looking to fulfil esteem needs through grooming and fashion consumption in order to portray an image of higher status to their peers.

Along with the Hierarchy of Needs, fashion consumption can be motivated in order to satisfy certain hedonic desires which can result in specific behaviours. The following desires and behaviours have been identified:

Anticipated Utility: Desire to obtain product for the benefits the product will bring to their lives.

Choice Optimisation: Desire to acquire the best quality product in the market.

Affiliation: Desire to enter shopping centres and stores for the social opportunities they present.

Stimulation: Desire to shop as the individual finds it to be a fun and exciting activity.

Role Enactment: Taking on the shopping norms prescribed by one's culture which could involve price comparisons, brand loyalty or ethical shopping.

Negotiation: Bargaining with sellers in order to receive a lower price for an item.

Mainly done for economic reasons, sometimes done as individual finds pleasure in achieving a lower price.

Power and Authority: Enjoys entering stores so to have personnel wait on them.

Individual likes the feeling of superiority over staff members (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010).

The metrosexual behaviours which have been identified by previous authors can be a result of one of several of these needs and desires. Anticipated utility for example describes an individual's need to buy products which will benefit them in some way.

This is illustrated by the metrosexual's desire to buy beauty and grooming products to enhance their physical appearance, and not going to the gym for fitness purposes but to going for purely aesthetic reasons. (Carniel, 2009)

Social Influence, Conformity and Individuality

Social influence can be described as mimicking the behaviours of those around them in order to fit in or be socially accepted by their peers. This can account for how fashion trends catch on or why those in the same social circle may demonstrate the same taste in clothes.

Individuals are said to feel pressure to conform to society's influence through the following ways:

Cultural Pressures: Certain cultures encourage individuals to conform for the greater well-being of society.

Fear of Deviance: When individuals defy their society's rules or values they may fear the repercussions of doing so. For example some cultures will engage in shunning or alienating an individual for rebelling against what society has dictated to them.

Commitment: Conforming to a group's beliefs or values through their actions shows commitment to the group. For example wearing your local team's football jerseys can be seen as a sign of support and commitment to the team.

Group Unanimity, Size and Expertise: The pressure to conform becomes even greater when the size of the group becomes larger and when they show a level of expertise on the subject they are talking about. This can be seen through the acceptance of fashion trends. When a trend is introduced there is less pressure to conform as many of your own social circles are not accepting it but as the numbers grow, the pressure grows.

Susceptibility to interpersonal influence: If an individual is more aware of what others think of them and cares about being accepted and well liked, they will be more likely to conform to avoid ridicule and judgement (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010).

Individuality or Uniqueness

Many individuals pride themselves on being unique or independent; when they feel they are being pressured to conform they react negatively and strive to set themselves apart from everyone else. This type of reaction can be seen through fashion. During the 50's when the youth of American began to rebel away from societies expectations, they took to wearing denim jeans, torn up t-shirts and leather to demonstrate to society that they would not conform to their standards (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010).

Identifying if social influence has been a cause for Irish metrosexuality will be an aim of this research.

There has been a growing amount of literature based on metrosexuality. Metrosexuality is a concept that has excited the marketing world as it highlights the emergence of a brand new customer base, men who are interested in fashion and beauty products. This metrosexual segment has recently become more and more common throughout society as evident by research performed by Sieczkowski (2011), Mintel (2007) and Gough (2012). Men are establishing themselves as powerful consumers in the fashion and beauty industries. According to research they are no longer being advised what to wear by their significant others but are taking a personal interest in fashion and beauty trends and creating their own styles (Stamps, 2013) (Wildrick, 2001) (Simpson, 2002). The reasoning behind this shift in gender identity

has been negotiated as down to changing households (Conseur, 1999) (Sheldon, 2010) (Bamosy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010), media influence (Simpson, 1994) (Sheldon, 2010) and the gay rights movements (McCormack, 2012).

Through looking at these factors as the recipe for metrosexualitie's emergence within a society, it is only natural to associate them within the Irish context. Research conducted by the Economic and Social Research institute has stated that one in three families in Ireland does fit within the model of a traditional family (Iona institute, 2006). Media celebrities such as Paul Galvin and Niall Horan's metrosexual personas also give indication that the Irish society could be more accepting of metrosexuality. This idea is backed up by research which identifies that consumption on men's grooming products in Ireland has gone from 79 million to 108 million Euro in 2010 (Kelly, 2013).

With these type of statistics and literature in mind, it is the aim of this research to identify if metrosexuality has entered the Irish market and to what degree has this affected the consumption behaviours of Irish males.

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses have been developed having critiqued the above literature:

- Hypothesis 1: Metrosexuality is existent among Irish males. Based upon findings from Kelly (2013) that purchasing of male grooming products had gone from 79 million to 108 million Euro in 2010 and publications stating that this metrosexuality is evident in Ireland due to a decrease in stigma, it seems justified to believe that metrosexuality has entered Irish society (Kelly, 2013).
- Hypothesis 2: Irish males who are more celebrity influenced will place greater importance on their style and image. This hypothesis is based on the definition of metrosexuality created by Simpson (1994). Simpson (1994) explains that males justify their interest in their style, image and grooming by looking to celebrities such as David Beckham who has a strong metrosexual image. Media culture has also been noted as one of the influences for metrosexuality in society (Simpson, 1994). When considering the effect that media culture has on society it is quite plausible that celebrities such as Paul Galvin or Bressie could be paving the way for a more fashion conscious Irish male (Sheldon, 2010).
- Hypothesis 3: Irish males who are a part of a fashion conscious peer group will be more influenced to believe in the importance of style. According to previous literature, fashion interest and behaviours can be influenced by those around them. Individuals will adapt certain behaviours in order to conform to what their peers dictate as acceptable gender behaviour (Salomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010). If metrosexuality has gained popularity within Irish society then it is possible that peer pressure and conformity could have played a part in this, as according to Rinallo (2007) male's fashion interest is defined by one's peers (Rinallo, 2007).
- Hypothesis 4: Irish males who enjoy clothes shopping feel more comfortable in asking sales assistants for their advice. The traditional male shopper is

described as hating the act and reluctant to ask for advice on fashion purchases. Assuming that the Irish male's enjoyment of shopping is high, this could possibly cause the adaption of other fashion consumer behaviours like asking sales assistants for advice or perhaps visiting more than one store per visit (Barnes, 2011) (Underhill, 2000).

- Hypothesis 5: Younger Irish males will display more metrosexual characteristics than older males. By definition the metrosexual is a straight young urban male so it is safe to assume that metrosexuality will be more popular among Irish youth than the older population (Simpson, 1994) (Flocker, 2003).

Methodology

Participants:

In terms of sampling the non-probability procedure was adopted. This method was instituted as only a certain part of the Irish population would be chosen (Males) and due to limited resources most males used in this study were from the Kildare and Dublin areas, meaning this study can only represent a fraction of the entire Irish male population. Respondents were chosen through convenience and snowball method sampling through Facebook and email on the one requirement that they had to be male. This data collection method took place over the months of June and July and all ages, classes and sexualities were not exempt from this study. The survey was sent to over 100 males and 73 surveys were collected. Due to time restrictions 73 was the highest number of respondents that could be accessed for this study.

Design:

For the basis of this research in determining how wide spread metrosexuality is within Irish society quantitative surveys were employed as they could represent a broader audience's opinion than a qualitative interview or a forum could. The qualitative method may have the advantage of more indepth answers but will only represent the opinions of 10-20 males rather than a proportion of the Irish male society (Bryman et

al, 2007).

The main design method instituted for analysis was the correlational method. This type of analysis is used to identify if there is a relationship between variables and also the strength of this relationship and the nature. This type of design was chosen as the purpose of several of the hypotheses are to identify if certain behaviours are connected, which could possibly provide a reasoning for these behaviours. This type of design can determine how an independent variable can affect a dependent variable. The independent variables are the variables which can cause the dependent variables to react in a specific way. The correlational design can analyse how the independent is effecting the dependent variables and if it is actually the cause for specific behaviours. For example does age determine how metrosexual an individual is as described by Simpson (1994), or does one's peer group attitude towards fashion influence how important the Irish male deems style and image (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010).

Descriptive analysis was also used to gain a summary of the information gained on the sample. For example the main ages used in the sample were between the ages of 18-24 and 25-34. Information was also received on the marital status of the sample and the employment status.

The final design for analysis was to create a metrosexuality score. This score was based on the Janowska metro score which was used to identify who were the most metrosexual men out of their entire sample. The score was developed by using rating the respondent's answers out of 5. If the respondent has mainly chose 4 and 5's from the scale their metrosexual score was higher. The scores were then all added to identify how metrosexual the sample were as a whole. This score could then support or reject the hypothesis that metrosexuality is existent among Irish society.

Materials:

The survey itself was based upon one found in a study performed by Janowska (2008). This survey was developed in order to identify the most metrosexual men in Vaxjo to take part in interviews. The men were chosen on the basis of how well dressed they were on the day. The survey consisted of 18 questions which were scaled from 1-10. In order to be selected the respondents had to score a higher than the average score, so from 1-10 they needed to have answered mainly 7, 8, 9 and 10.

From this 20 males were selected to take part in the next stage of research. This survey seemed appropriate for this type of research as the research by Janowska (2008) aimed to determine metrosexual men's shopping habits in Vaxjo, Sweden, which is quite similar to the research which has been discussed in this study. The main body of the survey remained the same for this study however with some alterations. The demographic questions at the beginning of the Janowska (2008) survey consisted of just asking were respondents from Vaxjo as this was the only requirement for taking part in the survey. This question was removed as was deemed unnecessary to use for research which is based around Irish society. It was replaced with questions such as age, relationship status, employment status and sexual orientation. The inquiry of age was used in order to analyse if age had an effect on Irish male's acceptance of metrosexual behaviours. Relationship, employment and sex orientation questions were used to get an idea of how representative the responses were from each demography i.e. if the majority of the sample are employed, this would have an effect would have on the research.

The 14 questions chosen from the original Janowska (2008) survey were chosen as they seemed the most valuable in retrieving the necessary information to evaluate the hypotheses. These questions were based around shopping patterns, opinions towards image, clothing, appearance and style and the role of clothing in their lives. Based on their relevancy towards this specific research they were chosen over questions such as how important is the prestige of the clothing. Some questions were exempt as they seemed quite repetitive, for example 5 questions were based on image and these were not all deemed necessary for inclusion.

In addition, 8 questions which were designed which were specific to the research taking place. They were developed through analysis of the previous research detailed in chapter 2. The first question was based on Rinallo's (2007) theory that men like to shop alone so that other men would not see them enjoying the act. Another question was included based around the idea that individuals consume fashion in order to conform to values or beliefs followed by their peers (Salomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010). In order to identify if media and celebrity influence was a determinant for the emergence of metrosexuality in Irish society, a question about celebrity influence was also included (Simpson, 1994). Flocker (2003) previously described the metrosexual as a trendsetter, so a question was developed to identify how willing the Irish male is to stand out rather than blend in (Flocker, 2003). Finally Barnes (2011)

notes that males traditionally do not feel comfortable engaging in conversation about fashion or are willing to speak to sales assistants as this could be showing too much interest (Barnes, 2011) (Underhill, 2000). These two topics were the basis for questions which were added to the survey.

For the last section of the survey two questions were included to gain an insight into the amount of time men spent and how many stores they entered when shopping. Previous research describes men as spending as little time as possible shopping and will attempt to enter one store to satisfy all their purchasing needs (Jorgensen et al, 2007) (Barnes, 2011).

The layout of the survey consisted of the first four demographic questions being multiple choice, followed by 20 questions which asked the respondent to rate their agreement with statements provided on a likert scale from 1-5 (1 meaning strongly disagree and 5 meaning strongly agree). The last two questions of the survey asked respondents to fill in the boxes with single answers in order to answer the question. Each question was checked as important to ensure respondents answered every question before they could proceed onto the next.

The research instruments used to reach respondents and collect data were Facebook and Google drive. The sample were contacted through Facebook emails which asked them to take part in a three minute survey which would be used as part of a research project. The email also contained a link which directed them to the Google drive survey if they wished to participate.

Procedure:

To pilot the survey, five respondents were contacted to test for any issues that may have been overlooked during the design stage. Test respondents were chosen on the basis of convenience and reliability. This test pilot asked if participants could complete the survey attached and provide any feedback as to the functionality of the survey e.g. any questions they did not fully understand or were there any technological problems. The survey received back all positive reviews and was deemed fit for use.

The official survey was distributed during the month of June and responses were collected until the end of July through Google Drive.

When respondents reached the landing page they were assured of the confidentiality

of their responses by the following message:

'The following survey is being conducted as part of the MSc in Marketing course at the National College of Ireland. This research examines consumer behaviour of males, specifically with regards to fashion and beauty products. You will be asked to answer a few short questions on your own shopping habits. Please give your honest and unbiased opinion. You are not required to disclose your identity to ensure confidentiality of the results provided. If you have any further questions with regard to this study or its results contact me by email at fiona.harris@student.ncirl.ie. The survey takes approximately 3 minutes to complete.'

This message was used to fully inform participants about the research project, the part they would play, what their participation would involve and that the information they provided would be completely private and confidential (Bryman et al, 2007).

Analysis and Findings

Descriptive Analysis

Demographic Information:

Analysis began by taking a look at the participants sample and the first part of the survey which were demographic questions designed to provide a brief summary of their description. The sample consisted of 73 respondents. 32 respondents were between the ages of 18-24, 34 respondents fell between the 25-34 bracket and 7 made up the 35-44 bracket.

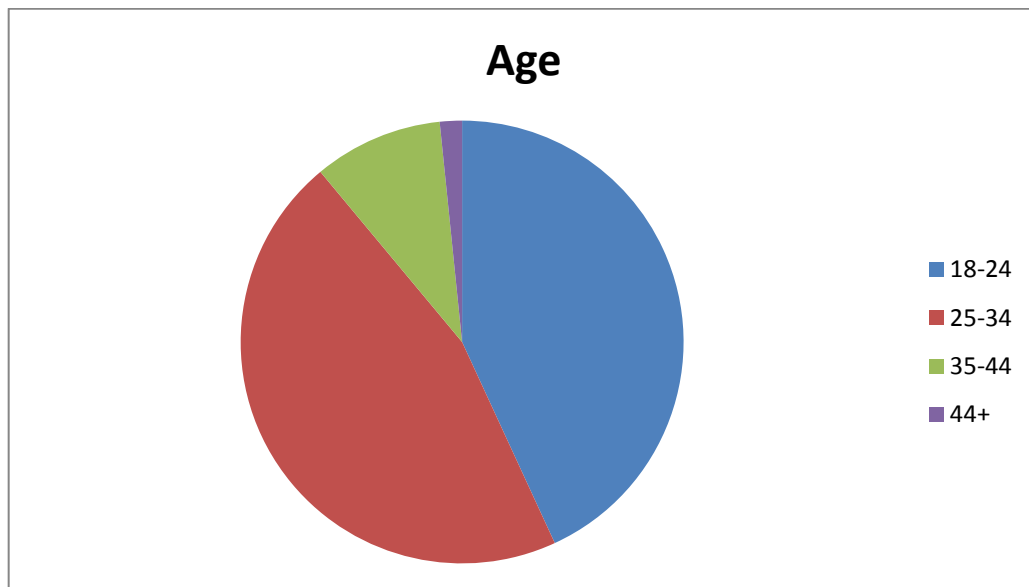


Figure 1: Age breakdown of participants

When asked about employment status 40 respondents indicated that they were full-time employed, 9 respondents were part-time employed, 11 being full-time students, 9 were unemployed and 4 represented their employment status as other.

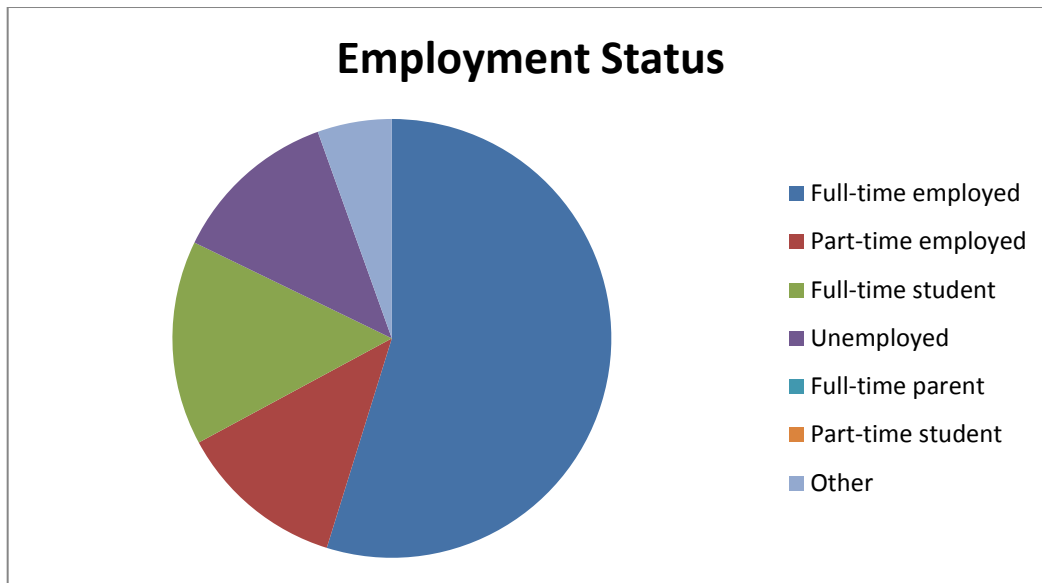


Figure 2: Employment status of participants

Relationship status results revealed 9 respondents from the sample were married, 41 were single, 22 in a relationship and one participant was divorced.

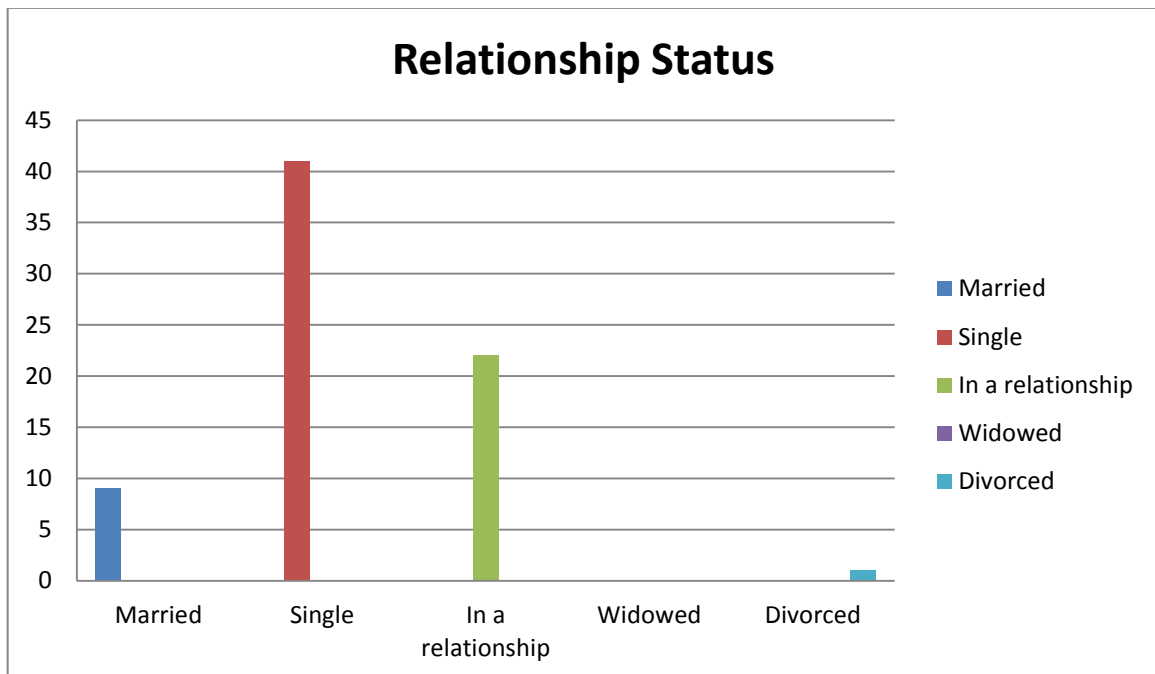


Figure 3 Relationship status of participants

Finally sexual orientation results showed that 69 of the participants identified themselves as straight, 3 were gay and one respondent was bisexual.

Descriptive Statistics

The following represents a summary of the participant's responses to a selected sample of the survey. N represents the total number of responses per question. The minimum category will identify what was the lowest number selected overall from a scale of 1 to 5 and maximum will show the highest number selected. The mean will represent the average from all the scores selected. This type of data provides an overall description of the sample in terms of shopping behaviours.

	N	Min	Max	Mean
How many stores visited per trip	72	1	10	5.4
How many hours spent shopping per trip	72	10 mins	10 hours	2 hours 20 mins
Feel comfortable asking sales assistants for advice	73	1	5	2.4
Influenced by fashion conscious celebrities	73	1	4	1.8
Compliment other men on their fashion choices	73	1	5	3.3
Buy clothes to stand out rather than blend in	73	1	5	2.6
Feel being well dressed is important among peers	73	1	5	2.9
Prefer to shop for clothes alone	73	1	5	3.2

Total Metrosexuality Score

In order to determine if metrosexuality is existent in the Irish context, a metrosexuality score was created. This score evaluates each individual's answers and determines overall how metrosexual the sample is on a scale from 1-5. This score was based on the existent metrosexual survey created by (Janowska, 2008), on the basis that the (Janowska, 2008) survey was created for the purpose of identifying individuals with the strongest metrosexual tendencies in order to interview them for the latter part of their study. The answers for questions taken from the (Janowska, 2008) survey were all added together, with 5 representing the highest score a respondent could achieve and 1 being the lowest. These metrosexuality scores identify how metrosexual the group is overall. The following table represents the above information.

	N	Min	Max	Mean
Metro Score	73	1	5	3.2

Inferential Statistics

The second part of the survey asked participants to answer questions based on their shopping/ beautification attitudes and behaviours. To analyse these results in order to support the aforementioned hypotheses, a correlational design was applied. Correlational studies aim to assess if there is a relationship between two variables provided. For example to analyse if there is a relationship between how celebrity influenced individuals are and how much of an importance they place on being stylish. By using a bivariate correlational analysis, the relationship between the two variables can be determined depending on significance and strength. To interpret this data the Pearson's r correlation coefficient was used. According to Pearson's r the closer the coefficient is to 1 the stronger the relationship, if the two variables are closer to 0 the weaker the relationship will be. Also the relationship will be either positive or negative. Positive meaning if one variable increases in value, the second variable will also increase in value. For example if age and the amount of time spent shopping coefficient is positive, this will mean that as the respondents increase with age, their time spent shopping will also increase. If the age and the time spent shopping coefficient is negative, this will mean that as age increases, the amount of time they spend shopping will decrease (Bryman, 2007).

Test 1

Age: The first analysis was to determine if age had a relationship with any of the other variables used. Using the Pearson's correlation coefficient a weak negative relationship was found between the following two variables.

Variables	Results
Age & fashion conscious celebrity influence	$r = - .242, n = 73, p = .039$
Age & how many stores visited per trip	$r = - .292, n = 73, p = 0.13$

In order to assess if a person's age and how influenced by celebrities they were, the Pearson's correlation was used. The analysis determined that there was a negative relationship between the two variables. Overall there is a weak negative relationship between the two variables. Meaning that increases in age mean a decrease in the influence celebrities will have on them, however this is not the case for all men as the relationship is weak.

The Pearson's correlational analysis also determined that there is a negative relationship between age and how many stores were visited per trip. The variables here are related negatively which signifies as age increases, stores visited per trip decreases. Once again this relationship is weak so it may not always be the case for every male.

However age did not appear to have a relationship with any of the other variables tested.

Test 2

Influenced by fashion conscious celebrities: In order to support the hypotheses that those who are influenced by fashion conscious celebrities are also concerned about how stylish their clothes are and the image they portray, a Pearson's correlation coefficient test was run. The results are as follows:

Variables	Results
Influenced by fashion conscious celebrities & believe in the importance of being stylish	$r = .271, n = 73, p = .020$
Influenced by fashion conscious celebrities & like to buy well-known brands	$r = .306, n = 73, p = .008$
Influenced by fashion conscious celebrities & prefer to spend more on brand/fashion/status/image	$r = .318, n = 73, p = .006$
Influenced by fashion conscious celebrities & consider type of image I wish to portray	$r = .342, n = 73, p = .003$

Believing in the importance of being stylish did have a relationship with influenced by fashion conscious celebrities but this relationship is very weak. The relationship is also positive meaning the more influenced an individual is by a fashion conscious celebrity the greater the importance of style is to them.

Although influenced by fashion conscious celebrities had the strongest relationship with considering the type of image they wish to portray, this type of relationship would be deemed as weak. However it did not represent the entire samples behaviours or opinions.

Relationships with influenced by fashion conscious celebrities was also found between liking well-known brands and preferring to spend money on clothing because of the brand/fashion/status/image. These relationship are both weak positive relationships but this does indicate that the celebrity influence does have an impact on Irish males shopping behaviours to some degree.

Test 3

Enjoy shopping: The Pearson's correlational coefficient was used to identify if there was a relationship between enjoyment of shopping and feeling comfortable with asking sales assistants for advice. Enjoyment of shopping was tested and the results received are as follows:

Variables	Results
Enjoy shopping & buy clothes regularly	$r = .745, n = 73, p = .000$
Enjoy shopping & feel comfortable asking sales assistants for fashion advice	$r = .293, n = 73, p = .012$

Findings suggest that enjoying shopping and feeling comfortable asking sales assistants for fashion advice has a positive relationship but this relationship is very weak.

Enjoying shopping in fact had the greatest relationship with shopping regularly. This result was however not at all surprising.

Test 4

It is important that clothes are stylish: The final test was to determine if there was a relationship between those who believed that it is important that clothes are stylish and those who belong to a peer group where being well dressed is very important. The results are as follows:

Variables	Results
Important that clothes are stylish & being well dressed is important among peers	$r = .622, n = 73, p = .000$

Results have concluded that there is quite a strong relationship between believing in the importance of style and being a part of a group that believes being well dressed is important. The relationship between these two variables is strong and positive, suggesting that the more fashion conscious a peer group is the more an individual will see the importance of being stylish.

Discussion

The objective of this research was to test the validity of the hypotheses discussed above in chapter 3.

The results of this analysis support the first hypothesis that metrosexuality is existent among Irish males. This test used an overall metrosexuality score of all the answers retrieved throughout the survey from the sample used and was based on descriptive statistics. This score was then rated out of one to five (five being the highest possible metro score achievable, one meaning there was no sign of metrosexuality). The sample achieved a score of 3.2 out of a possible 5, so if it is assumed that 3 is the average then Irish males are displaying slightly above average metrosexual characteristics. This type of result supports the trend previously observed by Kelly (2013), that Irish men are taking more pride in their appearance (Kelly, 2013). This would also address Duffy (2013) hypothesis on how comfortable Irish society is regarding self-expression. Duffy (2013) questioned if the Irish society could accept the metrosexual as it can be quite suppressive to expressions of individuality. However this kind of score shows how the Irish male is becoming more accepting of gender blending behaviours and while many may remain retrosexual, this type of score highlights a possible lucrative future for the male fashion industry in Ireland which could be similar to the one experienced by the male beauty product industry in 2010 (Kelly, 2013).

Further analysis aimed to evaluate if Irish males who are more celebrity influenced would place greater importance on their style. Results from this analysis concluded that celebrity influence does have a relationship with how stylish Irish males are but to a very small degree. According to the cultivation theory individuals within society are influenced by what they see on TV or in the media (Sheldon, 2010). Currently celebrities such as Paul Galvin, Niall Horan and Bressie are engaging in fashion and grooming activities which can all be influential to Irish consumers. Many of the respondents did not believe they were influenced by celebrities, however how willing are the sample to admit to this influence has to be questioned. Many of the sample may be unaware of how influenced they are and may not want to acknowledge this

influence for egotistical reasons. Simpson (1994) identified celebrity influence as a significant factor for metrosexual popularity, describing David Beckham as the poster boy for all things metrosexual (Simpson, 1994). However assuming that there is no egotism affecting the samples responses it would indicate that celebrity influence is not a major factor as to why Irish males are accepting metrosexuality. Although celebrity influence did have correlations with a number of other variables such as choosing items to portray an image and brand consciousness, this type of connection with this many variables can give support to the hypothesis that fashion conscious celebrities do to some degree influence Irish males purchasing behaviour.

Following this a correlational test was performed to see if Irish males who are a part of a fashion conscious peer group will be more influenced to believe in the importance of style. Results attained have supported this hypothesis, as the degree in which there was a relationship between having fashion conscious peers and how important style was to the individual was very strong. This hypothesis is based on the consumer behaviour theory of social influence and conformity, in which individuals dress or consume products like those around them in order to fit in with their social group (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2010). This type of result could explain the increase of metrosexuality among Irish males as caused by a need to conform to those around them who have already adapted to these behaviours. As previously discussed by Rinallo (2007) males may face social stigma when they breach the barriers of safe zones, at one end of the spectrum it is deemed unacceptable to have no interest in fashion, at the other end individuals could face ridicule for showing too much interest e.g. shopping in groups (Rinallo, 2007). This could indicate that deeming style as important is within the barriers of the safe zone and to not care if clothing is stylish would result in the individual facing social stigma. Which could leave one to believe that metrosexuality is not only accepted within society but expected to some degree.

However there are some behaviours that are still not fully accepted among Irish males. When the relationship between men's enjoyment of fashion and asking sales assistants for advice was tested the results were negative. The objective of this hypothesis was to determine if Irish males were displaying more feminine characteristics while shopping. Traditionally males are described as having a negative attitude towards shopping and dislike asking for assistance, even if it is just to find an

item in the store (Barnes, 2011). They will also leave the store without the item instead of speaking to a staff member (Underhill, 2010). From the results it is unclear if this has changed within the Irish context. The survey has indicated that the majority of the sample does enjoy shopping but this enjoyment has a very weak relationship with asking sales personnel for assistance. This suggests that just because the Irish male may enjoy the act of shopping, this does not necessarily make them more comfortable engaging in all shopping related behaviours. Some behaviours may just be too feminine and outside of their comfort zones. Talking about fashion with sales assistants or friends could in fact border behaviour that is seen as gender inappropriate within Irish society (Rinallo, 2007). This lack of communication with retail staff could also suggest that for Irish males shopping is still not seen as a social activity but a competitive one (Barnes, 2011). Irish males could shop in order to out-do one another and be seen as the most stylish.

Another characteristic associated with metrosexuality is youth. Previous literature has indicated that younger males will display more of an interest in fashion than older males. In order to test if this was the case in the Irish context, age was tested in order to determine if younger males were connected to more metrosexual characteristics than older males (Flocker, 2003) (Simpson, 1994). However according to research performed by Yankelovich (2007) married men were taking more of an interest in fashion which could be the case in Ireland. Research revealed that age only had a relationship with two other variables which were how celebrity influenced the respondents were and how many stores they visited per trip. Each relationship was weak, but the results did indicate that the higher the age the less prone the respondents were to celebrity influence. While this applied to only a small percentage of the respondents this result does support Simpson's (1994) definition of the metrosexual as a young straight urban male influenced by celebrities such as David Beckham (Simpson, 1994). Age also affected how many stores an Irish male would visit per shopping trip, which revealed that the older a male is the fewer stores he would visit. Overall the results demonstrate that age does not have a major effect over how metrosexual a man is in Ireland.

Additional findings

A significant indication that Irish males are changing their attitudes towards shopping would be their response to how much they enjoyed shopping. Males were once pegged as the world's worst shoppers. Gender expectations made males feel as if they should hate shopping as indicated by their families, society and in media. For males to show any enjoyment in shopping they would face ridicule and have their masculinity and sexuality questioned. Other males felt that personal care and interest in fashion was completely narcissistic and men should not waste their time on such materialistic matters (Thompson et Haykto, 1997). This could no longer be the case in the Irish context as a majority of the respondents indicated that they enjoyed shopping and believed in the importance in style. It is possible that Irish males are no longer looking upon fashion with such snobbery and cynicism. This new wave of acceptance could also be down to the changing of family dynamics within Ireland. The emergence of metrosexuality has previously been connected to women entering the work force forcing men to take on male and female gender roles (Conseur, 1999) and according to research conducted by the Economic and Social Research institute only one in three families in Ireland fit within the traditional model of a family (Iona Institute, 2006).

Further results received from the survey gave some interesting insights into the shopping behaviours of Irish males. Firstly men are traditionally associated with entering one store to take care of all their purchase needs (Barnes, 2011) (Jorgensen et al, 2007), however according to results received Irish males visit an average of 5 stores and 10 being indicated as the maximum amount of stores they would visit per trip. In terms of the amount of time spent shopping, the results identified that Irish males spend an average of 2 hours and 20 minutes shopping with 10 hours being identified as the maximum amount of time being spent shopping per trip. This would further support the hypothesis that on average Irish males are stepping away from traditional male shopping behaviours by spending more time and visiting more shops than acknowledged by previous literature.

Another interesting result with regard to Irish male's consumption of brands indicated that Irish males are not very brand conscious. A survey conducted by the Irish independent stated that one in five women claim that their partner wears more brands than they do, but according to the survey used for this research the sample reacted

negatively to when they were asked if they like to buy well-known brands and did they prefer to spend more on clothing because of its brand/fashion/image/status (Woods, 2013). Many of the respondents indicated they disagreed/strongly disagreed with these statements which does not support the results published by the Independent. This could either be in part due to the location of the males who took part in this survey as they were mostly from rural areas or it could be because the Independent's survey asked from a female's perspective and not a male's.

Another insight into the shopping behaviours of Irish males is their opinion towards quality of clothing. Traditionally males shop with longevity in mind, meaning they shop at the start of every season and purchase items of good quality that will last all season. For males quality over quantity and price is important, as opposed to female shoppers who prefer price over quality and often purchase fast fashion. According to the analysis this type of behaviour has not changed. Most of the male participants felt quality was very important (Dittmar, 2005). This could possibly indicate that fast fashion will not grow in popularity amongst Irish males in the near future.

Finally from the results received it could be suggested that Irish males are engaging in safe zone work as described by Rinallo (2007) and Barnes (2011) who identifies males as displaying an interest in fashion but in a conservative manner (Rinallo, 2007) (Barnes, 2011). Barnes and Rinallo both suggest that males wanting to take an interest in fashion will do so in a safe manner so as not to encourage ridicule from their peers. They may wear pink but will refuse to wear a purse as this would be stepping outside the safe zone (Rinallo, 2007) (Barnes, 2011). This explanation very much resembles the behaviours of Irish males according to the results retrieved during this research. Firstly the sample indicated they enjoyed shopping and that image/appearance was important to them. They stated that quality of clothing was very important to them and that clothing had a significant role during first impressions. They also indicated that they felt quite comfortable complimenting other men on their fashion choices which is in contrast to the findings presented by Barnes (2011). However the sample also indicated that they were uncomfortable with asking sales assistants for advice and that they preferred to shop alone, they did not feel they were influenced by celebrities and were not particularly conscious of brands. From these results it could be safe to assume that while Irish males are becoming more sophisticated shoppers they are not fully metrosexual. They are simply engaging in boundary work (Rinallo, 2007).

Limitations

In terms of limitations the findings of this research does not identify any reasoning behind the behaviours found. Why do Irish males engage in some of the metrosexual behaviours and not others, for example to determine the reasoning for why Irish males feel comfortable complimenting other males on their style choices but prefer to shop alone than in groups.

Also if possible another interesting element of the research could have been to identify if this emergence of metrosexuality in Ireland had any correlation to the gay rights movements which are currently taking place in society. Duffy (2013) discussed how Irish society can be quite suppressive to the subject of fashion and grooming (Duffy, 2013). Could this current social movement be in part responsible for the Irish males changing opinion on fashion and grooming? This type of analysis could have been quite interesting but as this research did not have a qualitative element, reasoning for behaviours and opinions could not be identified.

Another element which could have distorted the findings is how biased the sample was when answering. This research must acknowledge that when answering some of the questions, many of the respondent's egos have to be taken into consideration. Even though this survey was completely anonymous some of the results such as how brand conscious the respondents are and how influenced they are by celebrities did not match what was indicated by previous research (Simpson, 1994) (Woods, 2013). If researched through a qualitative method questions about celebrities could have gone into deeper detail e.g. giving the respondents examples of celebrities such as sports stars. This may have given a more positive light to the influence of celebrities. Whether this result is completely valid is debatable.

In addition the sample mainly consisted of males aged 18-24, who lived in the Kildare/Dublin area. Due to the limitation of the variety of the sample this could distort the findings and cannot be deemed entirely representative of the Irish male population.

Finally when considering the question on whether respondents prefer to shop alone, this could have been rephrased to enquire as to whether they feel comfortable in shopping with other males. Upon further analysis shopping alone could just be the

respondents way of getting their purchases done faster and not an indication that they do not feel comfortable socialising while shopping which was the purpose behind the question.

Overall the results achieved throughout this research have provided valuable insights into the fashion consumption behaviours of Irish males which is a topic rarely touched upon throughout literature. If these results are any indication for what is to come, the Irish retail market is in for a lucrative future and what was once defined gender roles could face increased blending in the future.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To conclude, the basis of this research was to examine metrosexuality and its place among Irish society. The term metrosexuality which was first coined by Simpson (1994) describes males challenging gender expectations in terms of fashion consumption and grooming (Simpson, 1994). The metrosexual is a young straight urban male who enjoys shopping and beauty care (Flocker, 2003). However this progression of the male consumer has faced resistance and backlash from more conservative males in the form of the Retrosexual. Retrosexuality looks down on metrosexuality as being effeminate and superficial and celebrates masculinity in its most traditional form. In terms of metrosexuality's complete acceptance into society, previous literature has viewed it as entering at a slow pace, in order to not induce criticism from society (Bakewell et al, 2006) (Thompson et Haykto, 1997). For example developing safe zones of how effeminate a male can consume fashion and engage in personal care without prompting judgment from those around them (Rinallo, 2007).

From an Irish perspective, male fashion shopping behaviours are relatively unknown and not discussed throughout academic literature. Irish males are generally seen as more traditional in their fashion consumption and shop to satisfy utilitarian needs. However times are changing as indicated by statistics stating that in recent years there has been an increase in the consumption of male grooming products in Ireland (Kelly,

2010). This type of shopping behaviour serves as an indication that Irish males are taking more of an interest in metrosexual activities such as fashion and beauty care. This trend has gained popularity world-wide and the Irish market has not been left untouched.

In order to verify this hypothesis research was conducted into the shopping behaviours and opinions of Irish males. In order to evaluate the magnitude of this trend in the Irish market a quantitative method was used. A survey was developed based on previous research of a similar topic and then sent to over 100 males using snowball and convenience sampling. In total 73 males participated in the research and provided the necessary feedback to develop the following conclusions.

Firstly results provided support the hypothesis that metrosexuality has entered the Irish market. The respondents scored an above average tendency towards fashion consumption. This test was based on one used by Janowska (2008) which was developed in order to find the most metrosexual men in Vaxjo. The sample's enjoyment of shopping and frequency in which they go shopping in the survey tested also serve as support that metrosexuality has emerged among Irish men.

Secondly the research has provided some interesting insights into the fashion consumption behaviours of Irish males. Previous research of male shoppers describes them as the world's worst shoppers, entering one store to satisfy all their shopping needs and spending as little time as possible in that store (Jorgensen et al, 2007) (Holmberg et al, 2010). According to this research Irish males spend on average 2 hours shopping and visit 5 stores per visit. This is an indication that Irish males no longer view shopping as a chore but take genuine interest in their style and image and realise the importance of fashion.

In terms of influences the research did not give a clear indication of the sample's motivation for displaying these metrosexual behaviours. Celebrity influence did have a relationship with several variables but not to a large degree. Age also did not provide any strong correlations to believe that it may be a determinant into how metrosexual a man may be. Fashion conscious peers proved to be the highest ranked influential factor as it was strongly correlated to how important the sample deemed style. Further investigation into Irish males shopping motivations through qualitative analysis would be necessary to validate this hypothesis however.

Finally based on the overall research, the findings would suggest that Irish males are engaging in metrosexual behaviours but in a conservative manner. According to Rinallo (2007) there are certain do's and don'ts of fashion consumption that males must abide by in order to avoid social stigma. Rinallo (2007) identified that males are not allowed appear too sloppy but are also not to appear too refined (Rinallo, 2007). If this is the case for Irish males, based on results provided it would appear Irish males are allowed to enjoy shopping, compliment other males on their fashion choices and take an interest in their style and image. They are not however allowed to shop in groups, ask sales assistants for advice or openly admit the influence celebrities may have on their style. These types of behaviours could be seen to be outside the safe zone and could be seen as too effeminate or narcissistic.

In terms of future research Irish males shopping behaviours and motivations are topics which need further investigation. Very little information is available concerning Irish male shoppers, which is something that is in need of remedy as the information could prove valuable to academics and industry fellows alike.

As previously discussed the research performed was based on a very limited sample of the Irish market for a more accurate analysis, research would need to be performed on a wider scope or ages and locations. This type of research could represent the Irish male more precisely. While this research is valid it is also open to criticism.

Lastly a topic touched upon in the research was the influence that society has on metrosexuality. Currently the gays rights movement is a major topic within society and could explain metrosexuality's growing popularity. Males may no longer feel they will be characterised as gay if preconceptions of what homosexuality is, are abolished. Males within society could feel more comfortable in embracing their feminine side without fearing mockery from their peers (McCormack, 2012) (Sieczkowski, 2011).

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Appendix

Janowska (2008) survey

1. Do you live in Växjö?

- Yes
- No

2. How often do you buy clothes?

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Not often enough

3. To which extend would you say that you like buying clothing?

I hate it 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 I enjoy it

4. When buying clothes how important is it for you that it's stylish?

Not important at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

5. When buying clothes how important is it for you that it's prestige?

Not important at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

6. When buying clothes how important is it for you that it's latest fashion item?

Not important at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

7. When buying clothes how important is it for you that the brand is well known?

Not important at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

8. Do you prefer to spend relatively more money on clothing you like because of it's brand/ fashion status/ image?

Not important at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

9. When buying clothes how important is the quality?

Not important at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

10. Do you think that clothes are an important aspect in making a good first impression?

Not important at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

11. How often do you buy latest fashion items?

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very often

12. To which extend is clothing and appearance important for you?

Not important at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

13. Do you think that wearing specific brand clothing will indicate an image?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Yes, to great extend

14. Do you consider what kind of image you will send out to others when selecting clothing and various brands?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Yes, to great extend

15. Do you think that appearance and image is something that everybody should care about?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Yes, to great extend

16. To which extend would you say that yours appearance important for you?

Not important at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

17. To which extent would you say that your image is important for you?

Not important at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very important

18. Would you say that you consciously influence your image through clothing?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very much

19. Do you agree that it's worth spending more money on fashion clothing?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very much

Survey

1. What age are you?

18-24

25-34

35-44

44+

2. What is your employment status?

Full-time employed

Part-time employed

Full-time student

Unemployed

Full-time parent

Part-time student

Other

3. What is your relationship status?

Married

Single

In a relationship

Widowed

Divorced

4. What is your sexual orientation?

Gay
Straight
Bisexual

5. I buy clothes regularly

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

6. I enjoy clothes shopping

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

7. It is important that the clothes I buy are stylish

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

8. I like to buy clothes from well-known brands

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

9. I prefer to spend relatively more money on clothing because of its
brand/fashion/status/image

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

10. Quality of clothing is important to me when buying clothes

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

11. I think that clothes are an important aspect in making a good first impression

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

12. Clothing and appearance are important to me

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

13. Image is important to me

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

14. I believe wearing certain brands will portray a desired self-image

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

15. I consider the type of image I wish to portray when choosing clothing and brands to purchase

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

16. I believe appearance and image is something everyone should care about

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

17. I consciously aim to portray an image through clothing

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

18. I believe it's worth spending money on fashion clothing

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

19. I prefer to shop for clothes alone

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

20. Being well dressed is important among my peer group

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

21. I buy clothes to stand out rather than blend in

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

22. I feel comfortable complimenting other men on their fashion choices

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

23. I am influenced by fashion conscious celebrities

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

24. I feel comfortable asking sales assistants for their fashion advice

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

25. On average how many hours would you spend shopping per trip?

26. On average how many stores would you visit per trip?

