



Psychological and sociological aspects of image formation through barber style

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Abstract: The paper considers psychological and sociological aspects of the male image formation via barber style - a set of hair and beard care routines that join aesthetics with historical tradition and social functions. The paper sets out to trace mechanisms through which barber style can affect self-esteem, social perception, and professional success, while also reviewing cultural and historical factors in the choice of style. The study is relevant because visual self-expression acquires ever greater importance in the context of social and professional competition, where the image forms an integral part of non-verbal communication. Scientific novelty is expressed in the combination of retrospective analysis (from ancient barbershops to modern-day practices) with data from sociological surveys aimed at establishing the role played by barber style as an identity management tool. The methodical base was ten sources: academic articles, web publications, and sociological studies were analyzed. Main findings emphasize that barber style serves a dual function: it boosts self-esteem through the creation of a controlled external image and forms a socially acceptable image regarding professional and cultural norms. Cultural differences make their point: conservative styles dominate in Western corporate environments, in other areas preferences are determined by religious or subcultural aspects. Practical advice would be to adapt the style to the context (classic haircuts for work, creative ones for self-expression) and regularly visit barbershops as an emotionally releasing ritual. This will be of use to psychologists, sociologists, specialists in the beauty industry, and HR managers who wish to help optimize the corporate image by understanding the role of visual self-expression in a professional environment.

Keywords: barber style, image formation, psychological

aspects, sociological aspects, self-esteem, social perception, cultural norms.

Introduction: Barber style comprises a male-oriented service portfolio concerning hair and beard grooming, including haircuts shaves styling and additional treatments connected to achieving and sustaining a distinct male aesthetic [1]. This allows the technique of hairdressing and the aesthetic principles through which men can flaunt their identities via their looks. Contemporary barbershops offering these services rest on traditions that have long been established in history when such places had not only utilitarian but also great social roles. The specific institution for men's appearance started developing in ancient times [2]. In ancient Greece and Rome, they served as places of men where besides just grooming the hairs and beards, came to meet for discussions on public matters which gave these places the status of somewhat a social forum. Barbershops have played different roles over the centuries with the same ultimate function of male image care and social space. Versatile as they were within such dynamic periods as the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, often combining hairdressing with medical treatments like bloodletting, they proved very flexible about their roles in society. In contemporary times, an additional dimension has been added to barbering as an image-forming tool that shapes how a person is viewed socially and professionally. Services offered in barbershops that provide men with accurate haircuts, beard shaping, and hairstyles accord men the opportunity to bring their appearances into line with cultural standards and personal tastes. In this way, not only does barbering continue to fulfill tradition regarding history's grooming demand but also it fulfills society's modern requirement wherein appearance plays a key role in social contact and self-determination.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

Psychological and sociological factors constitute the process of image formation through barber style based on an analysis of ten sources, among them academic articles, web publications, and sociological research

data. The psychology of visual perception formed the theoretical basis for works devoted to that theme; a study by Y.-N. Seok [1] revealed color patterns and shapes in image creation and an article by C.Y. Cheong and A. Bahardin [9] systematized key principles of image construction through the prism of social psychology. The historical context of barber culture was studied through materials on the origin of barbershops [2], demonstrating their evolution from medical institutions to spaces of social communication and self-expression. Data on appearance influence first impressions [3] and interpersonal communication [5] underlined that well-groomed barber style should be considered as a non-verbal signal of competence and confidence. The research by U. Orth and R.W. Robins [4] on the link between high self-esteem and social adaptation added to this thesis by proving that regular grooming can boost the feeling of self-acceptance. Some sociological data from Modern Barber [7] shows that 70% of men feel insecure about their hair, practically fulfilling barbers' roles as psychological support agents. Methodologically, this work united historical practice [2] and modern ones [6, 8] in a comparative analysis that demonstrated the stability of barber style as an instrument of social identity over time. Content analysis of web resources [3, 5, 7] and media outlets [8] gave a chance to systematize narratives about perceptions of beards and haircuts; for instance, one study conducted by The New York Times [8], confirmed that a well-groomed beard implies manliness and trustworthiness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The concept of image as a set of external characteristics and behavioral patterns of personality occupies a central place in modern society. Visual perception significantly influences the development of interpersonal and professional relationships. In conditions of globalization and competition in many spheres of life, appearance factors play important roles, particularly because the first impression, according to research data is formed within the first 7 seconds of interaction [3], it long biases other people's perceptions regarding such qualities as competence, reliability and attractiveness; directly with respect to barber style as a tool for managing appearance.

Table 1. Likely First Impression for Observed Feature or Behavior [9]

| Observed Feature or Behavior | Likely First Impression |
|--|--|
| Physical beauty | Healthy, better than me |
| Dressing smartly | Successful |
| Appearing smart and wealthy | Influential / important |
| More eye contact | Intelligent |
| Speaking faster | More competent |
| Easy, effortless gait | More adventurous, extroverted, trustworthy |
| Baby face (rounded, large eyes, small nose and chin) | More trustworthy, naïve |
| Straight posture | More competent, focused |
| Multiple facial piercings | More creative, but less intelligent |
| Multiple tattoos | More promiscuous, less reliable |
| More makeup | More feminine, more attractive |
| Practical / affordable shoes | More agreeable |
| Stylish shoes | More wealthy |
| New / highly polished shoes | More anxious / needing to belong |

The relationship between image and self-esteem is through the psychological channels by which the external appearance affects the internal self. One evidence of this theory is that satisfied people with their looks show greater self-confidence, positively enhancing their mood and capacity to face daily challenges [4]. The barber style adds an extra factor by giving men an opportunity to stress individuality while following social standards, therefore helping men raise their self-esteem through conscious creation of outer images. As for social perception, it relies on how much

individual images fit cultural expectations and interaction contexts. Research study [5] indicates that no makeup does not go well in the eyes of others. The preferred one is natural makeup; otherwise, it gives a negative assessment if looks like heavier. For regular users of makeup, there might not seem to be much difference between no makeup and natural makeup, but to others, a certain degree of attention towards them is sensed just by the way makeup is applied. The extent to which the people around perceive the makeup usually depends on the location as well as the occasion. Figures 1 and 2 show results from this study.

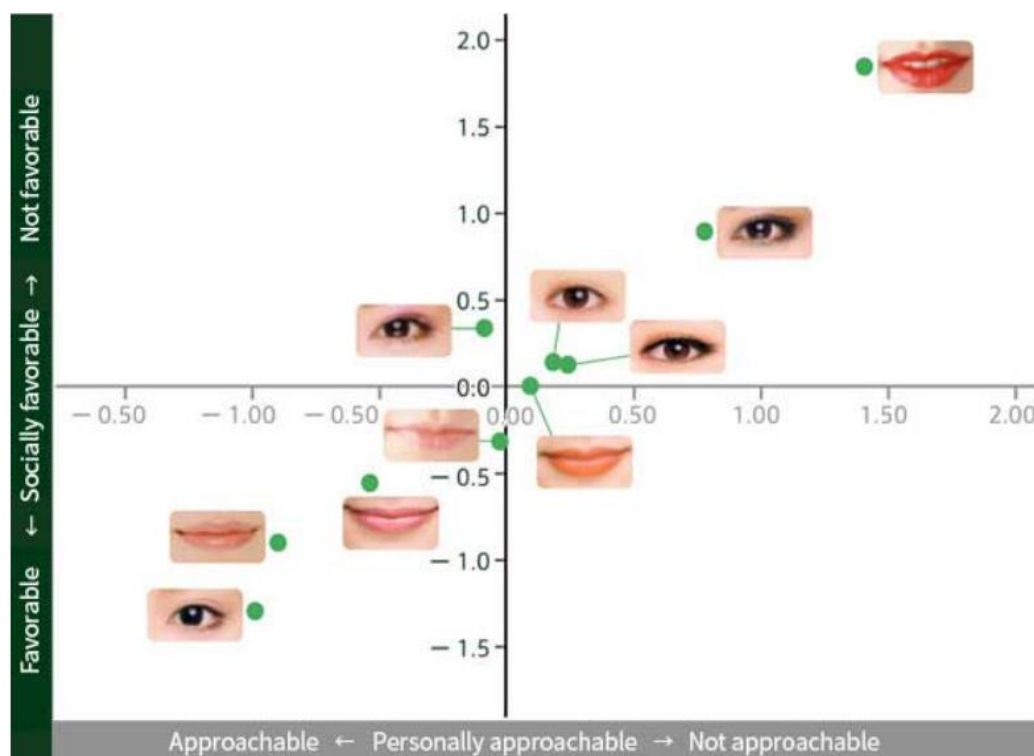


Fig. 1. Impressions of eye makeup and lip colors [5]

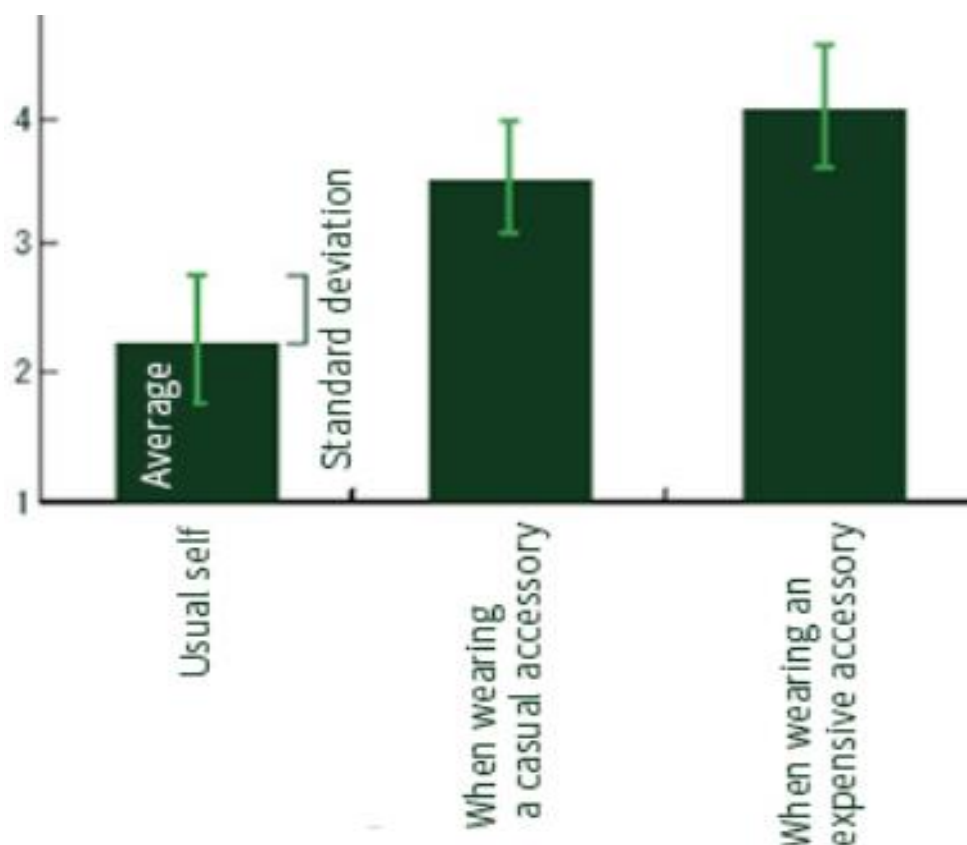


Fig. 2. Effect of a sense of superiority [5]

Like the above study, a neat haircut and well-groomed beard in the professional environment come to many as signs of discipline and responsibility; hence, they

might associate it with an increased probability of success in their careers [6]. Research proves that satisfaction with one's image can be achieved by changing one's appearance through a professional

haircut or beard styling. For instance, in one survey [7], a third of men (32%) said that solving difficult situations at work entails having confidence and thus requires a good haircut. There is added confidence in social settings for men with good haircuts reported by 81% of the men surveyed. The percentage of men who feel bad going out without a fresh haircut and/or beard is 84%. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that matching appearances give an enhanced positive self-image both on personal preference levels and societal standards. The way barber style affects self-esteem is through the psychological function of looks as an external representation of inner identity. Professionally groomed hair and beard make men feel more attractive and like they have their lives sorted out, ready to face others; this seems to be of high importance in the type of society where visual perception holds so much power. Barber style adds to self-esteem through the medium of confidence since, with well-groomed men, there exists readiness for social and professional interactions. Well-groomed appearance goes hand in hand with confidence; societal expectations have already been discussed whereby a neat look is considered related to discipline and one being on the ball. Just barber style works here; it works as an aesthetic tool but also as a psychological weapon that really gives men inner belief which relates directly to their success socially and professionally.

Barber style helps to differentiate the way one is looked at in different social contexts. There is quite an important contribution from appearance, hairstyle, and beard grooming in first impressions about somebody. A well-cut hair and groomed beard adds to the good discipline and social and professional competence of a person. In fact, it matters most in a professional environment. Generally social situations the barber style affects looks of attractiveness and trustworthiness perceived [8]. It was established that men with neat haircuts and groomed beards were found more attractive and friendly than those with unkempt grooming. Hence, barber style becomes a tool through which males can manipulate the impression they leave on others; hence its significance in image formation. Men's emotional well-being has quite significant evidence toward the influence of barber style; their mood and stress level. Haircuts and beard trims contribute to one's satisfaction and control over his image, which makes him feel good psychologically. This is due to the fact that changes on the outside are interpreted as a sign of renewal and an increase in self-improvement, boosting self-confidence; hence, it has the same effect as the image plays in self-esteem. In addition, grooming in a barbershop under comfortable circumstances with

some chatter helps one relax and lose tension. For these reasons, barbershop styles keep one well emotionally as they improve appearance; this complements the general picture previously described regarding grooming and its effects on image formation. Choices for barbershop styles relate sociologically since their selection and interpretation are influenced greatly by social standards, cultural traits, and the stereotypes that dominate our society. Social norms and gender stereotypes largely influence men's perceptions of and choices regarding their appearance. For instance, in most traditional societies, a beard is related to masculine and mature traits; hence, men may feel compelled to keep a style that meets such expectations[8]. On the other hand, modern Western cultures have placed much emphasis on being clean-shaven as part of professional standards—that a clean look symbolizes discipline and neatness. Social norms thus dictate not only individual barber style choices but also the perception of others, greatly influencing social interaction and career prospects.

Cultural differences play a very important role in the perception of barber style. Aesthetic preferences, the symbolic meaning of hairstyles, and beards vary an enormous lot according to ethnic and regional characteristics. In some cultures, such as that of the Middle East, the beard may not only be a mere element of style but also an article of religion; thus, it comes to assume very much symbolism in image formation. On the other hand, Western societies particularly embed conservatism within their corporate hairstyles short haircuts and cleanliness with shaved faces equating to professionalism and reliability. The difference underlines that barber style is not a global tool for image formation but is molded through cultural contexts where individuals are placed in juxtaposition with images' effects on social perception. Barber style also affects how one views social status and professional competence, something that plays out significantly in the advancement of careers as well as social interactions. In most cases, professional environments regard a well-kept hairstyle and a trimmed beard as signs of discipline, attention to detail, and general respect for other people; qualities that add up to an individual's success in the long run. Apart from the general perceptions of barber style on social status in different contexts of interaction, it can define group or subcultural membership. For example, in contemporary youth subcultures, stylish cuts and unconventional beard styles may indicate membership with creative or alternative communities thus enhancing group identity within a broader society. The barber style therefore acts as a powerful means through which males may wield their social capital; this is very much in line with

psychological considerations regarding self-esteem and confidence based on appearance. The analysis of psychological and sociological image-creating factors through barber style helps individual psychological effects relate socially with factors that define perception and choice of appearance. The sociological factors illustrate how style choice and perception depend on societal norms and cultural expectations. As an example, in a business environment, a disciplined man is attributed to a clean haircut and a well-groomed beard, an argument that appears valid since most employers consider appearance as a significant factor during hiring. Cultural aspects also come in: conservative styles are preferred in the West; elsewhere, such as Latin America, some more colorful choices might be preferred. From this perspective, there is an enhancement of psychological effects like confidence due to the setting where social norms relating to the value of appearance are strong, hence creating synergy. Social stereotypes, at the same time, can restrict the choice of style which sometimes reduces emotional comfort much if the individual's preferences do not match the expectations of the environment. Thus, the barber style serves as a tool that links internal self-perception and external social perception in the image formation dynamic process.

These trends are brightly reflected in survey, conducted in the UK [10]. The sociable and relaxing feel attached to visiting barbershops contributes to making them a favourable destination for men. Barber shops have always been synonymous with having a place for men to get their hair done while unwinding and chatting with other men. This social network is one that many clients find to be valuable, at a time when many interactions are digital. 72% of British men said they enjoyed the social side of visiting the barber's whereas 68% said they felt more relaxed post a visit to the barber's.

From the relationships that have been identified, practical recommendations can now be made for using the barber style to enhance personal and professional images. A man who wants to improve his professional image should adopt a style that corresponds with corporate expectations: in a corporate setting, classic haircuts and a well-groomed beard are important since they add to an image of a reliable and competent professional. In informal social settings, the barber style can speak about one's personality; it thereby stresses individuality through trendy or unconventional hairstyles, primarily when intended for use within circles of creativity or youth. Also, regular barbershop visits are recommended as an auto-support practice aimed at creating positive emotions

and reducing stress levels; this becomes more essential in high social and professional tension conditions. These tips enable blending the barber style under strategies for personal development while having internal well-being coupled with external success.

CONCLUSION

Results show the barber style is a key part of male image, mixing both psychological and sociological factors. Through hair and beard care, men express individuality and create a socially important image that affects how one sees their character in work and daily life. Traditionally, barbershops were social places; today's services keep this goal, linking looks with mental comfort and boosting self-confidence.

The barber style has psychological manifestation in boosting self-esteem and emotional well-being. Research proves that 81% of men feel more confident socially, and 32% professionally after visiting a barbershop. The neat appearance is considered as the reflection of internal discipline and control which makes one perceive oneself positively; the positive look enhances one's self-perception. Also, the mere fact of taking care of oneself reduces stress, it acts as a relaxation ritual as well as a means of showing support for oneself. The sociological context of the barber style highlights dependence on cultural norms and social stereotypes. In professional circles, classic haircuts plus a well-groomed beard are marks of competence and reliability, therefore boosting one's chances of success in a career. Cultural differences thus determine the stylistic variations: in some cultures, the beard is a symbol of masculinity or religion; in others, corporate culture demands a clean-shaven face. These attributes show how the barber style reacts to societal expectations by riding on the balance between individual self-expression and conformism. In practical terms, this translates into choosing a style appropriate to professional and cultural contexts and maintaining regular visits to barbershops for emotional equilibrium. The influence of barber style on intercultural communication and gender stereotypes should be studied further, with subsequent programs integrating grooming into personal development strategies. The significance of the barber style remains as it relates through numerous interfaces between historic tradition, psychology, and contemporary social issues.

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