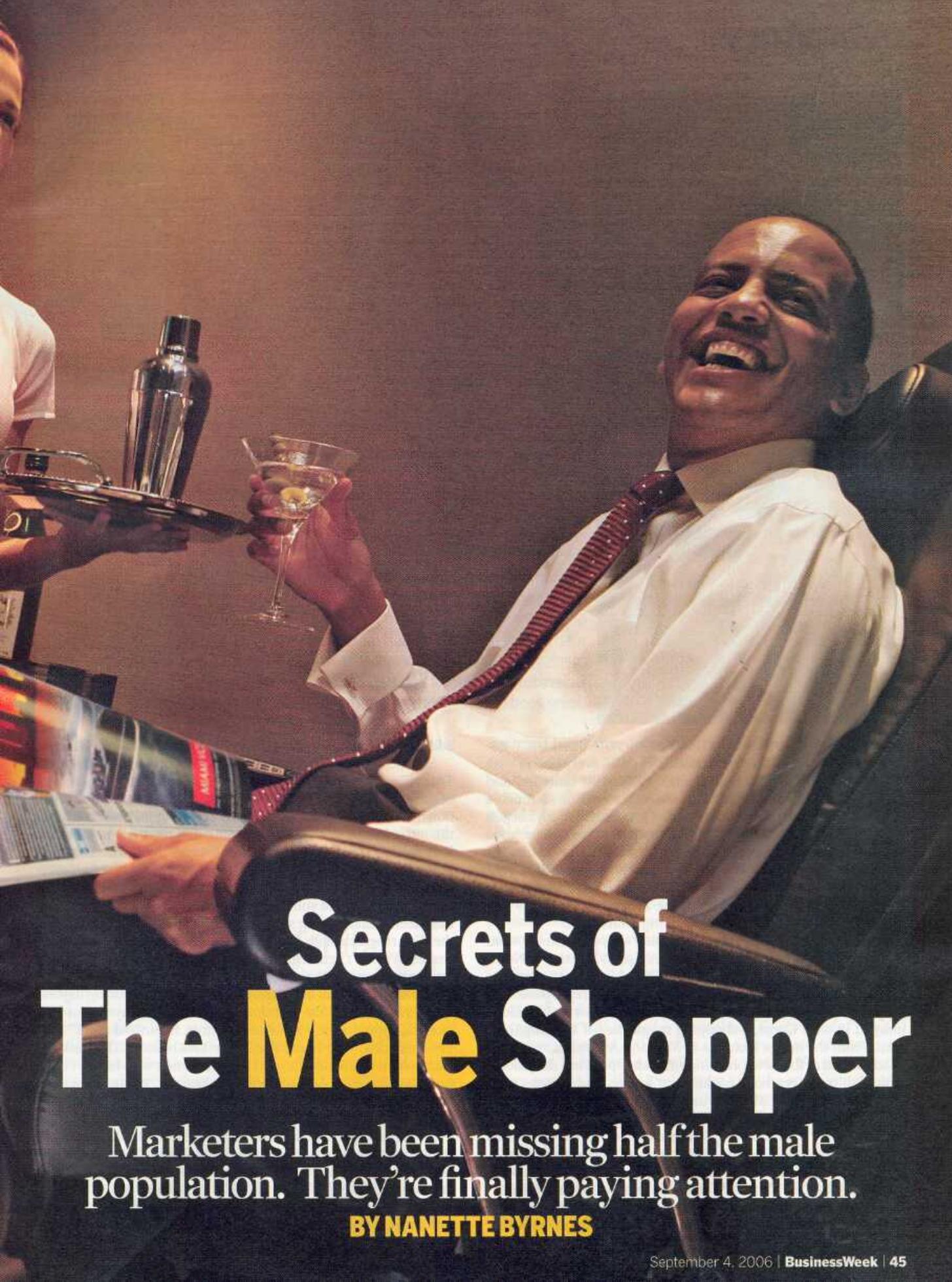




PHOTOGRAPH BY KATHERINE LAMBERT;  
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**HOW SWEET IT IS**  
Greg Gary gets a pedicure at the Grooming Lounge in Washington



# Secrets of The **Male** Shopper

Marketers have been missing half the male population. They're finally paying attention.

**BY NANETTE BYRNES**

## A Handy Guide to the Male Shopper

**WARNING:** Guys may or may not recognize themselves among these archetypes. But a century after marketers drew a big bull's-eye on the female consumer, slicing up the male market is long overdue. Anything to get past the fixation on the metro and the retro.



### The Metrosexual

**Despite widespread reports of his demise, this affluent urban sophisticate aged 20 to 50 absolutely shops on.** To him, it's more than mere commerce. He's not just buying the things he needs, he imbues his consumerism with a deeper meaning, quality, and beauty. Think loafers as objets d'art. Thanks to him, marketing to men may never be the same. Nor will men's grooming. The likes of **P&G, Beiersdorf, and Polo Ralph Lauren** are doing good business with the metro.



### The Maturiteen

**This guy is more savvy, responsible, mature, and pragmatic than previous cohorts.** Culture watchers attribute his poise to baby boomer parents who treated their kids as equals. He's a technology master, so he's adept at online research and often acts as an in-house shopping consultant. These boys never knew a time without the Web, and its interactivity has nurtured in them a radical view of brands. They own them. **Adidas, Sony, and Unilever** are especially skillful at playing along.

**A** COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, YOU COULDN'T ESCAPE the metrosexual. He was everywhere, with his Paul Smith pinstripes, \$100 haircuts, and chemical tan. This character became so much a part of the Zeitgeist that some regular guys began wondering if they were metrosexual. He seemed hip and urban. Women, it was said, loved him because he smelled good and knew gabardine from twill. And if a man wasn't a metrosexual, he risked being tagged as the metro's alter ego: the retrosexual, a guy's guy who wouldn't be caught dead wearing chartreuse.

In the Age of the Metrosexual, mission shopping (know what I want, know where to get it) was out. A visit to Barneys or Nordstrom became an indulgence in style. On cable, ratings soared as the Fab Five of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* repurposed the style-challenged as hip and urbane. Conde Nast Publications jumped in with *Cargo*, a shopping magazine (of all things) for men. From the image factories of Madison Avenue came a slew of ads aimed at the new, preening male shopper. And the folks in white lab coats got busy cooking up lotions and potions with names like Nivea for Men Revitalizing Eye Relief Q10.

Now Madison Ave has turned on the metrosexual. Why? Because he's half the man he was cracked up to be. Not only is this archetype too feminine for most men, he's also pretty rare—maybe one-fifth of the U.S. male population, according to a recent study by Leo Burnett Worldwide Inc. As for the retrosexual, star of the sophomoric beer ad, he's not that common either. Put all the metros and retros together, and they probably

add up to fewer than two in every five men, says Leo Burnett.

So who is the elusive man in the middle of the two extremes? Truth is, marketers are only beginning to understand the secrets of the male shopper. It stands to reason that just as women break down into subsectors, so do men. By targeting just the metro and the retro, Mad Ave has been ignoring half the male population. Largely forgotten are the millions of boomer dads, who shop a lot more than their fathers or grandfathers ever did. Also often overlooked is the army of men in their 20s and 30s who care about their appearance but still like to drink beer and watch sports. The male teen is another big shopper, a sophisticated consumer with the Web research skills to give him an outsize say in family purchases. We don't hear a lot about him, either. (Our guide to these forgotten guys and their metro and retro brethren is above.)

The challenge will be reaching these men and moving beyond the heavy focus on the extremes. "Men are portrayed in a buffoonish, sophomoric way or as sensitive, feminized men," says Erv Frederick, who heads the Miller Lite brand. "The bulk are somewhere in the middle, and those are men who haven't been spoken to." No lie. According to Leo Burnett, 79% of American men say they can barely recognize themselves in advertisements.

The creation of the metro was supposed to rectify that problem by speaking to a generation of men who have taken on many traditional female roles and, yes, buy a lot of things—diapers, skin creams, vacuum cleaners—that women have long shopped for. Consider the explosion in male grooming, where sales of men-only products surged 14% in 1995, according to NPD Group. And in recent years, the average growth in men's apparel sales



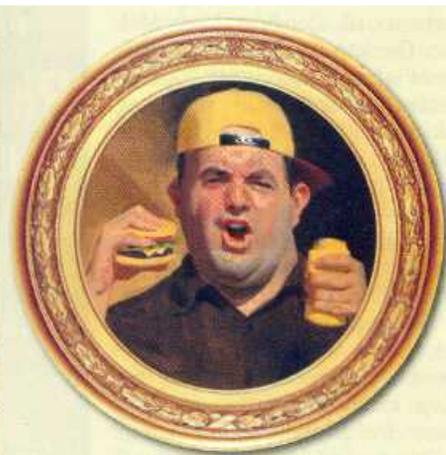
## The Modern Man

**Neither retro nor metro, he's something in the middle.** A sophisticated consumer in his 20s and 30s, he's a bigger shopper than his dad was but just as much a Seahawks fan. He's comfortable with women but doesn't find shopping with them much fun. Think of it this way: Moisturizer and hair gel are perfectly ordinary to him; a manicure is a tougher call. **Philips Norelco** used locker room humor to get the modern man comfortable with its below-the-neck shaver, **Bodygroom**.



## The Dad

**Is any species of guy more ignored? Once men get married and have a few kids, they drop off the radar screen.** When they do appear at all, chances are it's as the goofy father looking for advice from his kid on how to be cool. Yet these men tend to be in their peak earning years. Plus, they are almost as likely to be found strolling down the diaper aisle as mom is. Smart companies such as **Dyson** and **Patek Philippe** are reaching out to these guys.



## The Retrosexual

**If the metrosexual champions the female ethos with a "Go girl!" the retrosexual is screaming "Stop!"** This traditionalist has lived through the same cultural turmoil and consumerism as the modern man and the metro, but rejects feminism and happily wallows in traditional male behavior. He is nostalgic for the way things were in the good old days, before the Fab Five and moisturizers for men. **Burger King** has this dude nailed. So does **P&G's Old Spice** brand.

has held steady at nearly 5.5%, in some years even outpacing the growth in sales of women's clothing.

With the metro losing his mojo, marketers and researchers are now scrambling to come up with a more nuanced view of the male consumer. And a range of companies are going after men as never before. KB Home is building townhouses for single men. Adidas Group and Coca-Cola Co. are stepping up their efforts to win over teen males. And Dyson, maker of the revolutionary British vacuum cleaner, is a hit with boomer dads.

## Shrinking Male Habitat

**IT'S A BIG SWITCH.** After all, men have been a marketing afterthought for more than a century. Starting in the late 1800s, when *Good Housekeeping* and *Cosmopolitan* began teaching generations of women how to be Type A wives and mothers, brand managers painted a giant bull's-eye on the female consumer. They've taken relentless aim ever since. "He makes. She buys: That's the calculation that turned women into shoppers and men into providers," says James B. Twitchell, who teaches English and advertising at the University of Florida.

And if it's confusing trying to sell stuff to men, that's partly because many guys are confused, too. Society has changed a lot, blurring notions of gender identity. Not only have women asserted themselves at work and at home since the 1960s, but bastions of male bonding—the barbershop, golf club, U.S. Army—have largely become unisex, a shrinking of the male habitat that

Twitchell highlights in his book, *Where Men Hide*. Women are acting more like men. And men are acting more like women.

Of course, large swaths of maledom remain defiantly macho. But younger men—those in their 20s and 30s—grew up in a world where women held increasing sway. With nearly half of all U.S. marriages failing, many of these guys were raised by a single mom. Growing up under her roof, it's only natural that they would adopt more of her traits, interests, and habits than their predecessors. "Men under 35 shop more like their sisters than their fathers and grandfathers," says Wendy Liebmann, president of WSL Strategic Retail. "They shop the same kinds of places. They're not just in and out fast, but are people who like to browse, use shopping as a community experience."

That's why Madison Avenue so fervently embraced the metro in late 2003. Where did he come from? Like many fashion-forward individuals, the metro was born in Britain. Author Mark Simpson, the self-described "skinhead Oscar Wilde," coined the term in the mid-'90s to describe a new breed of consumer-narcissist. A flattering appellation it wasn't. By the time the metro surfaced in the U.S. 10 years later, he was a much more appealing character. In four months, the metro went from the subject of an offbeat *New York Times* story to a cultural phenomenon worthy of his own *South Park* episode. Oh yes, and he acquired the feminine persona we've become familiar with.

As the *South Park* creators knew instinctively, the metro was ripe for satire and snickers. For many straight men, the handle has gay overtones. For macho dudes, it spells s-i-s-s-y. And even guys comfortable with their inner female are loath to call themselves

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