

# Gender-specific Body Care Products

MUSTAFID RAIYAN KHAN

From the primitive age of humans, from their very genesis, through the stone ages and the discovery of fire, through the ages of kings, queens, betrayals, dragons and direwolves right down to our chaotic millennia where TV shows are made about the aforementioned, one fact about us humans is and will continue to be constant: we stink.

Going through the sweltering Dhaka summers makes us no strangers to this phenomenon. There comes a point when squeezing into an ancient elevator with 139892 other, profusely sweating strangers after surviving 90 minutes of traffic in a rickshaw on a particularly hot day, makes you want to cut your nose off, if you haven't blacked out already. Deodorants and perfumes help somewhat, until the fumes of scent and sweat fuse into something even more rancid.

On days like this, you come home defeated, drained, and putrid. You wistfully eye your sunburnt skin in the mirror, while your mother murmurs "ekdom kalo hoye geso..." in the background. Wishing for instant relief, you sneak into your sister's bathroom, looking for some decent face wash, grabbing the Glare & Bubbly on your way out. In the comfort of your own bathroom, you dab copious amounts of the darned face wash on your face, scrub your body with Flux (the purple one is really neat), use that smooth and silky Canteen shampoo your mom handed you ages ago and voila! You come out a new man!

So what if your sister finds out you used her girly face wash as opposed to the one specifically made for men, or that you dislike the tan you've got? So what if she proceeds to make an elaborate post about it on your Facebook wall? Who cares? So what if it turns out a lot of people do care, and laugh about it for weeks, months, forever?

The important question to ask here is, "what's really the difference?" Shampoo, soap, face wash, and lotion all serve the same purpose at the end of day – hygiene and an overall feeling of being bearable to be around. All that really differ from brand to brand are the smell, ingredi-



ents, colour and of course, the gender markers. For example, most shampoos these days give you extra, like silky hair, or remove dandruff, or promote volume. But then the gender markers come in and specify which shampoo is for a particular gender, completely disregarding the

possibility that both a male and a female could want to get that extra advantage from the shampoo. While it's no crime to advertise something however a company sees fit a company seldom sells just a product.

Maybe the 'why' behind such gender markers is better business. Corporations market their goods to demographics most likely to buy their stuff – some specialise in men's shampoo, some in women's face wash... whatever sells. And in many cases, organisations manage to sell ideas, thoughts and beliefs. Glare & Bubbly face wash commercials market the idea that fairness is confidence and happiness, and a dark complexion is the opposite. And as unfair, or as untrue as this assertion might be, this idea sells. No one ever seems to ask how a fairness face wash automatically turns the arms, legs and torso of a person fair too. Years and years of marketing ideas eventually lead to the creation of these assertions and gender markers – what product is meant for whom and why – and although things are beginning to shift into a more open-minded position in recent years, gender markers still exist and limit consumers.

Can the purpose of gender markers be the simple fact that a female consumer prefers a product that smells feminine, while her male counterpart prefers a product that'll reek of manliness? Possibly yes. But when someone tells you a product makes you manlier, or more feminine, or more attractive, or that you're somehow not good enough or you have a problem that needs fixing, we should stop and reevaluate the values we're being fed. A gender-neutral product meant for everyone with varying fragrances, why not?

Heck, as long as you can get out of that shower, feeling fabulous, smelling fantastic and looking like the super eligible handsome bachelor your mother always envisioned you to be, it's totally worth using whatever the heck you want.

#FluxOverLifeJoy5ever.

*Mustafid Raiyan Khan is an excellent procrastinator and has mastered the art of doing nothing and regretting his nothingness even further. Help his endeavors at <https://www.facebook.com/mustaaachio>*

