



Exploring the Role of Hairstyles on Footballers and Their Teams: A Multi-Dimensional Analysis

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Published Online: 14 October 2026	The study explores the multifaceted role of hairstyles in football, examining their influence on individual players, team dynamics, and broader social and commercial contexts. Using a systematic literature review of 55 relevant studies from major academic databases, the research analyses how hairstyles function as tools of identity, self-expression, and non-verbal communication among footballers. The findings indicate that hairstyles significantly contribute to players' self-confidence, visibility, and personal branding, while also influencing team cohesion, unity, and collective performance. Historically and culturally, hairstyles have served as markers of tradition, social identity, and even resistance, with notable examples such as coordinated team hairstyles symbolizing solidarity. Additionally, the study highlights the growing importance of hairstyles in sports marketing, where distinctive player appearances enhance fan engagement and commercial opportunities. The paper further discusses the psychological and socio-cultural implications of hairstyles, emphasizing their role in shaping group dynamics, inspiring youth, and strengthening the bond between players and fans. Overall, the research demonstrates that hairstyles in football extend beyond aesthetics, acting as powerful instruments that impact performance, identity, team spirit, and global cultural trends.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Football is a sport known for its strong team dynamics and camaraderie. In recent years, hairstyles have become part of the Identity and culture of football teams. Players often use their hairstyles to express themselves and solidarity with their teammates [40]. This game is filled with iconic hairstyles from different eras, which used to reflect statements on culture, politics, and personal identity, reinforcing techniques that stimulate individuality and confidence among players and their team. This phenomenon has sparked interest among researchers and sports psychologists in understanding the effect of hairstyles on team cohesion and Identity in Football [1, 2]. Studies have shown that a coordinated or uniform hairstyle in a football team can increase the players' sense of unity and belonging. Unity can translate to better on-field communication, trust, and team performance. In addition, individualistic hairstyles can also contribute to a player's self-confidence and sense of individuality, which in turn can positively impact their performance on the pitch [41]. As

Football continues to evolve, it is important to delve deeper into the importance of hairstyles in fostering team unity and Identity. By understanding the role of hairstyles in Football, coaches and team managers can take advantage of this aspect to enhance team dynamics and maximize performance further on the pitch. In ancient Greece, hairstyles played a significant role in sports and society. Athletes often competed, and their hairstyles were part of their overall appearance and Identity [42].

Football is widely considered a low-investment sport accessible to individuals from various backgrounds [3]. In contemporary sports marketing, athletes' specific outfits and appearances are crucial in product promotion, making it highly effective and successful [4,43]. It enjoys global popularity not only as a sport but also as a powerful marketing tool. Footballers have become prominent social figures due to the extensive media coverage they receive on and off the field. Fans are particularly interested in their favourite players' appearances and personal lives [5]. A notable

historical moment in Football occurred during the 1998 World Cup when the entire Romanian team dyed their hair golden blond, this event marked a significant milestone in the intersection of hairstyles and sports, particularly within the football community [44]. The decision to go blonde was partly a sign of solidarity and partly a way to stand out on the global stage. It was also seen as a psychological tactic to show their opponents that they were a close-knit and fearless group; it was a strong milestone in the football era.

2. IMPACT AND LEGACY

In the sports industry, the prevalence of hairstyle appearance is notable nowadays, but its origins can be traced back to the 5th century. Historical evidence suggests that ancient Olympic athletes used short hair with oil to keep it in place. Over time, hairstyles have become an identity marker for people from various countries. This has led to discrimination, especially in the sports industry, primarily due to racism [6]. According to researcher Tanus, hairstyles may differ based on geometry, environment, climate, water quality, and way of living. Individual hair types can help identify racial origins, such as African, Caucasian, and Oriental. Football is a widely played sport worldwide, attracting many spectators [46]. People play Football for various reasons, including leisure activity, rehabilitation, sports competitions, celebrations, or memorial tournaments [7]. People have chosen Football to engage in physical activity in some areas due to a lack of sports infrastructure.

- Here are a few key points about using hairstyles in ancient Greek sports:

- **Symbol of Status and Identity:** Hairstyles were used to signify social status and Identity in different peoples in various countries, including in sports as a gesture [45].
- **Practicality in Sports:** Athletes sometimes tie their hair back or wear it in a way that would not interfere with their performance, this was imperative in combat sports especially.
- **Cultural Significance:** Hairstyles were also tied to religious and cultural practices. Certain hairstyles were associated with the beliefs of deities and were seen as a method to honor them [26].

Adornment and Decoration: Athletes might adorn their hair with wreaths or other decorations, especially if they were champions in competitions to celebrate the athlete's winning moment. There was an incident around the 20th century: The Gibson Girl hairstyle was popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, characterized by its voluminous up do with soft, wavy curls, the style was often associated with feminine beauty [47]. The hair was practical for sports as hair was off the face and neck, making it simple and easier to play any sport. In football history, 1960 and 1980s were when the hairstyles of football players came into the limelight [8]. Specifically, renowned footballers like George Best, Ronaldo

Nazario, and many more became identically popular for their hairstyles, and they became the iconic symbol that identifies a player.

3. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

In professional sports, footballers' hairstyles have long been a fascinating subject, sparking discussions that go beyond the purely aesthetic realm and delve into deeper philosophical underpinnings of personal expression, cultural Identity, and the intersection of athleticism and personality [56]. Exploring footballers' hairstyles through a philosophical lens can provide valuable insights into the complex interactions between individuals, teams, and the broader societal influences that shape their choices. From this perspective, football players' hairstyles can be seen as a form of non-verbal communication, a language of self-expression that extends beyond the boundaries of the playing field. By examining the symbolic significance of these hairstyles, we can gain insight into the players' identities, cultural affiliations, and even their philosophical perspectives on the role of the individual within the larger context of the team and sport [57].

4. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR), based on a thorough literature analysis, this study examined hairstyles and their effects on football players and viewers. Google Scholar, Scopus, Springer, and PubMed research databases were searched for reviews relevant to this topic. A total of 72 research papers that were downloaded from the aforementioned databases have been reviewed; of these, 55 review papers that are closely linked to the issue have been used, researchers examined the effects of hairstyles on athletes, teams, traditions, cultural influence, psychological effects, and commercial influence in this article. This study focuses on how hairstyles are important in football games, whether it's to promote the player's brands, highlight cultural differences, or influence the game's audience, who may be more inspired by the players in general. A striking haircut can help you stand out from the crowd and help you concentrate, and athletes are self-assured enough to advertise their new hairstyle, perform better, and be the greatest. Using various haircuts is always an older approach to encourage the team or to motivate the younger generation in football.

Inclusions

This paper discusses about hairstyle appearance and its influences in and around the globe via sports (football). It discusses about some of the influences based on previous historical incidents on the football era, such as Individual identity, Unity of a team, Team Cohesion, team spirit, self-confidence, performance, traditional significance via hairstyle and so on [7]

Exclusions

In this review paper many aspects have not been included for example:

- Personal interviews of the players were not taken for collecting any sort of data.

- There economic background of player's is not considered.
- Player's personal data, their health profile, club name and other related information were not included in this study.

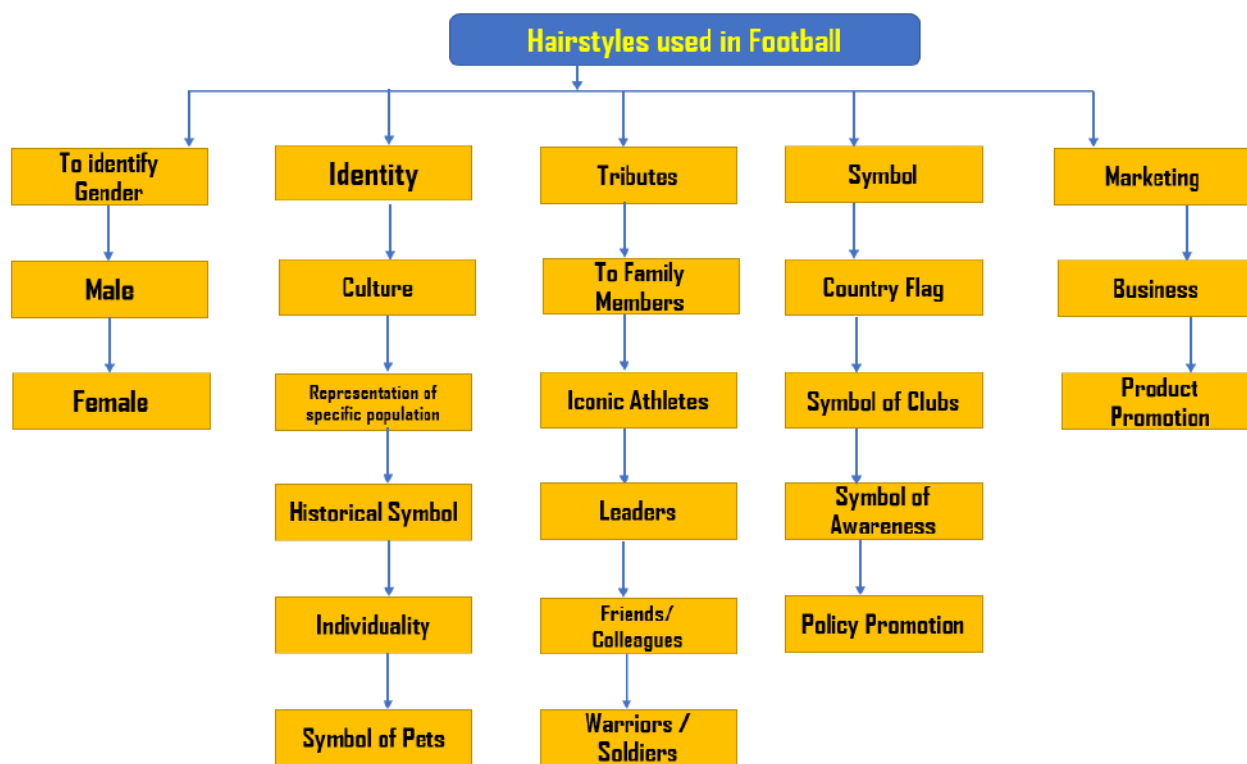


Diagram 1: The above diagram represents the hairstyle utilization in football for various demands.

5. HAIRSTYLE'S IMPACT ON THE INDIVIDUAL

5.1 IDENTITY

In world football, the character of most players differs when wearing or not wearing a hairstyle, both on and off the field. The current-day appearance of players is one of the major factors in the game of football [27]. Here, the researcher overviews the functions of hair plug ins as body paint and how they can be used to differentiate players from fans. The unique haircuts of renowned football players such as Ronaldo Nazario, David Beckham, and Neymar are examples of such visual cues; they shape visual Identity [28,29]. It also brings forth new things about how haircuts have been associated with different players, like using a Mohawk and other using blonde highlights, alluding to this idea of visual brand-building that is successful for players among the audience. Through hairstyle and appearance, the brand can be affected by these identifiers, as well as whether the player has the potential to be endorsed [30]. Mainly, the appearance of Iconic players can impact the individual and team identity among the spectators in and around the world in a specific sport.

5.2 SELF-CONFIDENCE

Appearance with a different hairstyle plays a significant role in shaping self-confidence. The way players set their style of

hair represents their thoughts and thinking with a quality mindset, and it may reflect in their team as well as their own [16,31]discussed in his study that physical appearance in sports positively influences various psychological benefits in social contexts: self-esteem, self-confidence, self-worth, body image, self-belief, self-care, self-consciousness, self-realization, and social comfort [20,17]. This interlinked parameter collective sets a quality foundation for athletes in choosing the right path and setting a target in sports at higher-level competitions. Notably, the physical appearance of the team or individual creates a positive gesture and fosters a situation that would empower the team to pursue and march their aspirations towards success in sports; it not only influences individuals but also enhances team confidence and promotes collective achievements [21]. Through quality appearances, players' expression, competitive spirit, self-confidence can be built among athletes and their team.

5.3 THE ROLE OF UNIQUE HAIRSTYLES IN INCREASING VISIBILITY

Many footballers nowadays have eye-catching hairstyles, in line with the current global trend, which can attract more fans, media, and sponsors to take notice of a football player, thereby increasing their visibility and popularity in the market [33].The importance of media and social media reporting lies

in presenting publicity for players whose hairstyles differ from those of other players, as well as applications through various hairstyles, which can lead to increased endorsement opportunities and a potential boost in merchandise sales, [34]. The popular appearance of athletes' economy may grow personally on a global level, with distinctive hairstyles, such

as Cristiano Ronaldo, David Beckham, Paul Pogba, Messi, Neymar, Mbappé, and others are furthering the economic effects of personal grooming on football. Different hairstyles can be a massive advantage for a sportsman regarding his market appeal and public image, mainly with performance consistency in specific sports/skills [32].

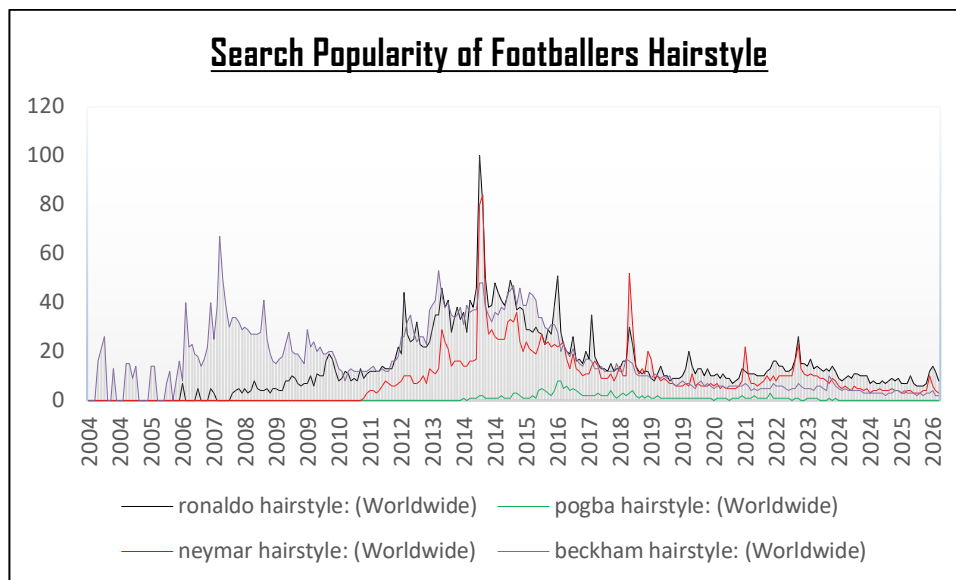


Diagram 2: Search popularity index of footballer’s hairstyle from the year 2004-2026 (Google Trends)

5.4 INFLUENCE OF ICONIC HAIRSTYLES AMONG YOUNG ATHLETES AND FANDOM

Popular football players' hairstyles inspire their young followers to imitate them, making them unique and setting a goal to gain admiration with their signature skills. Football players knowingly or unknowingly play the role of role models, as both the players and the fans who follow them, embodying their hairstyles, are a form of worship or the real thing. Moreover, the youth admiration effect on players, where young children are greatly influenced by the aesthetic replica of their jerseys, is also worn by their athletic idols, which inspire them with fashion and youth culture [25] in which iconic hairstyles are as important as the football fan base. Hence, this may go deeper into underlying mental health, specifically looking at hairstyles as a tool for young people to diversify their Identity and self-image [24]. Even more illuminating is the media's and social media's role in communicating and promoting these styles to a worldwide audience, which increases their universal appeal.

David Beckham – Beckham’s hairstyle is one of the most iconic in football history. His ever-changing looks, from spiky hair in the 90s to his famous shaved-side haircut, have been widely copied by children and young adults. In

particular, his “Mohawk” or “fauxhawk” look became a huge trend among boys in the early 2000s [35].

Cristiano Ronaldo – Cristiano’s haircut has also been a huge inspiration. His clean, sharp look, like the “Caesar cut” and slicked-back style, has been copied by kids everywhere. His popularity and attention to detail in his looks have made his hairstyle a huge trend [36].

Neymar Jr. – Neymar is known for his bold and creative hairstyles, which are constantly being updated. He popularized the “bleached hair” trend and has been seen in a variety of styles, such as mohawks, curls, and even shaved designs on his hair. His distinctive look has been widely copied by younger fans [37].

Paul Pogba - Pogba's haircuts are a real eye-catcher, as he loves to experiment with bright colours and patterns. His colorful and often intricate designs, such as bleached blonde streaks or geometric patterns, have influenced many children to go for bolder and more unique haircuts. This player's hairstyle not only sets trends but also gives kids a way to express their fandom and personality. Whether they're copying their favourite players' styles for the big game or just for fun, footballers play a big role in shaping youth culture and fashion [55].



Figure 1: Images of iconic footballers with different hairstyles.

6. HAIRSTYLE'S TEAM IMPACTS

6.1 TEAM SPIRIT

Several football clubs emphasize team spirit via dress code and uniform hairstyle features, which may be a success story for a team. Team unity can be enhanced by the adoption of uniform hairstyles by the team throughout the history of the team in football [14, 15]. Hence, it would help to build the collective spirit of the team. The psychological impact would

be higher when all the team members have a similar kind of hairstyle, which reinforces the collective mindset, overall team spirit, and fosters quality connections among the team members. Apart from the obvious development of a strong team through strict adherence to the rule of tearfulness, morale building and team synergy. It can also play a vital role in promoting uniformity and spirit, and the impact of initiative on the team atmosphere.



Figure 2. Romania team in 1998 world cup with same blonde hairstyle

6.2 PERFORMANCE

Hairstyles can have an impact not only practically but also psychologically. Practical considerations may arise during competitions in physical activities such as distraction and visibility, temperature control and comfort, achieving aerodynamic speed, and injury prevention. Psychological strategic considerations can be harnessed by players such as confidence & identity; this perception collectively determines better performance in football [39]. Current themes revolve

around the suitability of certain hairstyles affecting players' performance in football, which is one practical aspect. One goal is to investigate whether players view hairstyles solely in terms of function and choose them based on reasons like less hair, air absorption, or playing without wind [38].

6.3 HAIRSTYLES AS A SYMBOL OF UNITY

The hairstyles on the football team serve as more than just a fashion statement; they symbolize unity in the team. By accepting and celebrating players' diverse hairstyles, teams

can foster a sense of inclusion and unity. Encouraging open discussion about hairstyles and allowing players to express themselves through their hair choices can create a supportive and inclusive team culture [58].

Additionally, a team-wide decision on hairstyles for a particular event or match can further reinforce the idea of unity and togetherness. The hairstyle's influence extends beyond the team and resonates with the fan base. Fans often form strong emotional connections with players, and hairstyles can become iconic symbols that enhance the bond between a team and its supporters. Fans often associate players with their distinct hairstyles, and capitalizing on this connection can enhance a team's identity and appeal.

6.4 TEAM COHESION THROUGH HAIRSTYLES

When investigating the relationship between hairstyles and team cohesion, assessing the cultural and socioeconomic influences that drive players' decisions to express their personalities through their hairstyles and appearances[48]. Cultural traditions, personal views, and societal standards significantly impact how players wear their hair. Hairstyles may be a strong form of self-expression, allowing players to convey their identity and individual creativity[49], also, collective acceptance and appreciation of different haircuts within the team can enhance team cohesion and build a sense of belonging. When players feel recognized and valued for their own choices, including hairstyles, team members form deeper connections and camaraderie[50, 51].The effect of hairstyles on fans' perception of a team as a cohesive unit is a fact that is very high in the game of football and needs to be explored [9].

6.5 PSYCHO AND SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF HAIRSTYLES

Hairstyles can function as a non-verbal communication, conveying messages of unity, individuality, and Identity among the team players. Understanding the underlying motivations behind players' hairstyle choices can shed light on their personal and collective psyche [10, 52].Psychologically, hairstyles can contribute to a player's confidence and self-image, influencing their performance on the pitch. The adornment choices of players unique personalities. To foster unity, a group adopts a common adornment while individual adornments highlight creativity [11]. Appearance of athletes may help to perceive themselves within the team, their relationships, and their connection in to cultural norms. Recognizing and valuing these choices creates a highly inclusive environment. Football players' hairstyles are more than just fashion statements—they're powerful cultural tools that can unite teams psychologically and culturally, which may help to inspire fans and challenge societal norms. From the Romanian blonde unity of 1998 to Mohamed Salah representation of African and Muslim identity, these moments transcend sports and leave a lasting impact on global culture[23]. They remind us that football is

not just a game but a reflection of society, identity, and human relationships.

7. HAIRSTYLES IMPACTS IN SOCIETY

7.1 TRADITIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The cultural and traditional significance of hairstyles among football players reflects the players' origins, cultural affiliations, and the traditions of their respective clubs or countries. Moreover, different cultural hairstyles, such as cornrows, dreadlocks, and topknots, and their meaning and significance in different communities, and players use hairstyles to show the roots of their culture, honor their heritage by using hairstyles to reflect cultural habits and respect of their cultural practices and traditions like how teams and national teams provide inter-group integration, multiracial practices in a non-racist environment that includes all different traditions [7]. Before wearing certain hairstyles, respect the culture and the function of personal grooming in expressing and preserving cultural Identity in sports, via Football.

7.2 CULTURAL EXPRESSION AND TEAM BONDING

Players can express their cultural mix through their hairstyles, which creates a more inclusive environment within the team. This inclusion can lead to a stronger sense of unity and camaraderie, ultimately improving team dynamics and performance on the field [53]. Additionally, the hairstyle's influence extends beyond the players and resonates with the fan base [54]. By recognizing the role of various hairstyles, teams can build unity, improve performance, and strengthen their relationship with fans, ultimately contributing to the team's overall success.

7.3 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF HAIRSTYLES ON GROUP DYNAMICS IN FOOTBALL

Exploring the psychological impact of hairstyles on group dynamics in Football reveals the complex ways in which personal expression intersects with collective Identity. Hairstyle is not merely a superficial aspect of sports but rather reflects the individual Identity and culture of the player. When players can express themselves through their hairstyles, it contributes to a more inclusive and supportive environment within the team. The psychological importance of hairstyles in football team cohesion goes beyond visual representation. Different hairstyles can symbolize unity, signify shared values , and promote a sense of collective purpose among team members. This visual unity can foster a deep sense of belonging and commitment, ultimately improving team performance and camaraderie on and off the field [22].

The influence of hairstyles extends to the emotional connection between fans and players. Fans often develop strong attachments to players, and hairstyles act as iconic

symbols that strengthen the teams and its supporters bond [12]. Football player's haircut significantly impacts many areas of their life and career. Among these is Identity: Players' hairstyles frequently act as a distinctive identification, making them stick out to fans and on the field. Team Spirit: By encouraging cohesion and camaraderie among team members, uniform hairstyles can improve team spirit. Self-Confidence: A player's performance on the field may improve if their haircut is well-chosen to increase their sense of self-worth and confidence. Performance: A player's performance may be impacted by specific haircuts selected for pragmatic reasons, such as lowering distractions or enhancing aerodynamics. Team Cohesion: Coordinated or shared haircuts can represent a group's Identity and cohesiveness, fortifying the relationship between team members [13].

8. ROLE OF HAIRSTYLES IN MARKETING

Becoming iconic football players due to their hairstyles/appearance is also used for promotional actions, such as sports equipment and accessories, to promote business opportunities. Several case studies of potentially successful marketing campaigns involving certain football players with easily recognizable hairstyles in advertising hair care products, sportswear, and other gadgets. The economic impact of these campaigns can be appraised through the

increase in sales and brand awareness; it generated through the players' efforts to influence the consumer to purchase the specific products in the market. Most of the global-level product brand ambassadors are from sports, especially from football. Commercializing players' looks can also give rise to ethical considerations and challenges, such as the pressures applied to maintain particular looks and their impact on players' autonomy. The relationship between personal grooming, marketing, and business in the context of Football is a powerful tool for economic gain in sports [18].

The iconic appearance becomes a talking point, as players and spectators engage with the sponsored commercial environment. These personalities are appealing to businesses, and they help to define the campaign's image [4]. On-field achievements are just one aspect of the thrilling world of football. Because of their fashion choices—especially their hairstyles—players have become global style icons off the field, influencing millions. Through their transformation into effective marketing tools that influence personal brands, increase fan engagement, and unlock significant financial value for teams and sponsorship partners. These cuts and colors, which range from bold to iconic, are more than just fashion; they are declarations of purpose, powerful brand symbols, and evidence of the dynamic interplay between fashion, sport, and business.



Diagram 3: Growth of the global men's grooming product market (In \$Billion Dollars) Source:([Link](#))

A footballer's hair is more than just a fashion statement; it is a powerful, dynamic asset that holds huge potential for clubs, players and brands alike. It is just waiting to be carefully incorporated into contemporary sports marketing.

Football players' hair can generate significant amounts of money through endorsement deals in addition to personal talent. Their distinctive looks provide a unique avenue for product placement and brand extensions, and brands are aware of the immense visibility and influence these athletes' command. Luxury goods manufacturers, fashion labels, and

hair care product manufacturers are all keen to partner with companies whose aesthetics complement their target markets [19]. Player's hairstyle is prominently featured in advertisements that influence global purchasing decisions. This clever integration demonstrates the measurable economic value of a well-maintained image by turning personal hygiene decisions into effective marketing tools. The goal is to leverage every aspect of a player's identity to achieve the greatest possible market impact.

9. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The main goal of this study is to compile historical data on the haircuts of football players from various historical periods and examine the effects of those hairstyles. In today's world, football players' haircuts have a significant impact on many areas of their lives and careers. Among them is Identity: A player's hairstyle often acts as a personal identification, making him stand out to fans and on the field. Team Spirit: By promoting unity and camaraderie among team members, uniform hairstyles can improve team spirit. Self-Confidence: A player's performance on the field may improve if their haircut is chosen to boost their self-esteem and confidence. Performance: Player performance may be affected by specific haircuts selected for pragmatic reasons, such as reducing distraction or improving aerodynamics.

Team Cohesion: Coordinated or shared haircuts can represent Group Identity and cohesion, strengthening ties between team members. Conventional significance: A player's hairstyle may represent their heritage, club customs, or country. It can also have traditional or cultural importance. Club/Country Affiliation: Players can express their allegiance to their club or country through their hairstyles. Attention from Spectators: A player's visibility and marketability can be enhanced by attracting the media's and fans' attention with a distinctive or trendy hairstyle. This study aims to comprehensively understand the evolution of football players' haircuts and their varying influences. Fans tend to associate players with their distinct hairstyles, and tapping into this connection can enhance a team's Identity and appeal, both on and off the field.

In conclusion, researching the psychological effects of hairstyles in Football reveals that it not only fosters team unity and Identity but also strengthens the emotional bond between the team and its fans. By recognizing the multifaceted role of hairstyles, teams can promote unity, improve performance, and strengthen their relationships with fans, ultimately contributing to the team's overall success. Qualitative studies involving interviews with Football players and coaching staff may provide valuable insight into the thought processes behind hairstyle decisions and the perceived influence on team dynamics in detail that may be help to construct future route map.

10. OTHER INFORMATION

Data Availability Statement: All information analyzed in this study is included in the published article and its references. No new datasets were generated during the current study.

Funding: No external funding was received for this study.

Conflict: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical: This study did not require ethical committee approval as it involved only literature review/secondary data analysis.

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