



Shaving Creams In Search of the Smoothest One

Clean-shaven or bearded, or that salt-and-pepper look, men across the world are divided into the ones who shave and the ones who do not. Among the ones who shave, there are some who complain about ‘having’ to shave—calling it a chore that gives them razor bumps and dry skin, and irritates them in front of the mirror. On the other hand are the ones who smiling shave everyday and presumably enjoy the experience – feeling their skin softer, cleaner and smoother, soaking in the refreshing fragrance and the few minutes with oneself in front of the mirror. Of course, the experience of liking or not liking to shave is primarily determined by the toiletries, especially the razor, the shaving cream and the shaving brush.

Here, we chose to identify the most used, the most sold and probably the most common shaving creams across India to find out which one is the best ‘experience giver’ and tested them on various parameters. We compared all of them to check their mood-emulsifying ability through fragrance and

froth, their beard-softening talents, as also the aspect of friendliness with the skin.

We put them under the scanner to see if their range of characteristics are as per the applicable Indian Standard and also if all their claims written on the packs – weight, ingredients and other properties – are only claims or the truth.

Interestingly, we did not find any alarming results, not many disputable claims, and no health hazards while testing the shaving creams. Frankly, our first reaction was: 'now what will make this test story interesting?' Then realization set in – brands are adhering to the Standard and are keeping consumers' interests paramount. (Perhaps it is time to raise the Standard, then?)

WHAT'S A SHAVING CREAM?

Our testing team zeroed in on a simple definition: Shaving creams are a category of male-oriented toiletry product that is used prior to the shaving to wet and soften the beard. The rich foam it produces helps to hold the facial hair erect for cutting. Shaving creams are basically soaps composed of sodium and potassium stearate, mixed with water and glycerol to give a creamy texture. As per Indian Standards, there are two types of shaving creams: Type 1 – lather and Type 2 – brushless.

Here we have tested only the Type 1 – lather-based creams.

DOES CREAM MATTER?

If you have (under compulsion) ever shaved without a shaving cream, then you would know how much it matters. It not only makes shaving easier and enhances the experience, it is also an essential hygiene commodity as it prevents the skin from bursting into rashes and protects it from getting cuts while shaving. More importantly, the good shaving creams help in retaining the natural tone of your complexion while a bad one can directly influence your confidence levels (here is not the best place to discuss how).

CONSUMER VOICE VERDICT

OVERALL BEST

Yardley has performed very well in terms of overall performance and key test parameters including total fatty substance (TFS), lathering and water content, and hence has bagged the Rank 1 position.

BEST IN SENSORY TESTS

In the sensory users' tests, Wild Stone and Super Max are rated on the top; they are closely followed by the best brand Yardley.

KEY FINDINGS

- All brands had more fatty substance than the minimum specified requirement (30 per cent). Yardley had 41.7 per cent TFS, followed by Super Max with 40.09 per cent. Old Spice had the lowest TFS among the lot, but with 31.28 per cent it too complied with the minimum mark.
- Yardley generated the highest quantity of lather (390ml initially and remained 330ml after five minutes), followed by Wild Stone (380ml and 330ml). Palmolive generated the lowest lather but stayed well above the minimum standard limit.
- Park Avenue had 33.08 per cent water content and Yardley 34.85 per cent. Vi-John with 49.96 per cent followed by Old Spice with 46.71 per cent had the maximum percentage of water – still, these are way below the allowed limit (about 60 per cent).

THE TEST

This test programme for comparative testing (CT), like all our test programmes, is based on relevant national standards (IS: 9740 in this case) and other related standards. We tested, assessed and evaluated 10 most popular brands of shaving creams (lather type) available in retail markets. Given here are the test parameters with the performance/results of each brand.

Which One's Value for Your Money?




There is a significant variation in the maximum retail prices of all shaving creams. Among the brands we tested, Vi-John and Godrej cost cheapest – at Rs 32 for 125 grams and Rs 35 for 100 grams, respectively. The other brands, including the top three, cost anything between Rs 55 and Rs 63 for 70 grams (with schemes giving 18–30 grams extra). If you are looking to economize, you may buy two packs of higher quantity (125 grams) of Vi-John, as against one tube for most of the brands (weighing 70–90 grams) except Godrej.

COMPARATIVE TEST

Rank →		1	2	3	4
Brand →	Wt. %	Yardley	Wild Stone	SuperMax	Axe Denim
					
Parameters ↓					
MRP (Rs)		57	55	55	63
Pack weight (in grams)		91* (70+21)	70	100* (70+30)	78* (60+18)
Unit price/10 gm (incl. extra cream)		6.26	7.85	5.5	8.0
Subjective sensory test	14	10.74	11.37	11.13	10.1
Total fatty substance (TFS)	20	19.856	18.43	19.09	15.246
Lathering power	20	20.00	19.79	16.74	17.71
Water content	5	4.815	4.876	3.903	4.461
Heavy metals	4	3.93	3.94	3.95	3.96
Net weight (actual vs claimed)	4	3.99	3.2	3.99	3.98
Packaging and marking	8	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4

*Extra creams as promotion scheme

SHAVING CREAMS

5	5	5	6	7	8
Park Avenue	Godrej	Dettol	Old Spice	Vi-John	Palmolive
					
57	35	59/	57	32	55
91* (70+21)	100	91* (70+21)	70	125	70
6.25	3.5	6.48	8.14	2.56	7.85
8.49	9.15	9.6	9.5	10.12	8.99
17.57	17.128	17.322	14.89	16.152	16.81
15.23	15.98	14.80	17.33	13.75	12.39
4.99	4.125	4.657	3.625	3.387	4.543
3.95	3.97	3.97	3.96	3.95	3.95
3.99	4	3.98	4	3.98	4
7.7	7.4	7.4	7.7	7.4	7.4

COMPARATIVE TEST



Performance of the shaving cream is related to the quality of the shaving brush. The brushes made of natural hair (animals) are long-lasting and make rich lather as compared to synthetic (nylon) hair brushes. Salons and smaller barber shops always use natural (animal) hair brushes because synthetic hair brushes tend to harden in the long run and often expand when used with warm water, the warm water being normally recommended for a smooth shave with enough lather.

Total Fatty Substance	
Brand	Result (%)
Yardley	41.7
Wild Stone	38.72
Super Max	40.09
Axe Denim	32.02
Park Avenue	36.9
Godrej	35.97
Dettol	37.22
Old Spice	31.28
Vi-John	33.42
Palmolive	35.31

Total Fatty Substance (TFS)

The smoothness of the shave depends on the moisturizing and lather-producing ability of the shaving cream. The lathering and moisturizing potential, in turn, depends much on the 'total fatty substance' in the cream as well as the balance of water quantity. Indian Standard has stipulated that a cream must have at least 30 per cent fatty substance.

Interestingly, all brands had more fatty substance than the minimum requirement. Yardley had 41.7 per cent TFS, followed by Super Max with 40.09 per cent. Old Spice had the lowest TFS among the lot, but with 31.28 per cent it too complied with the minimum mark.

Lathering Power

The foam or lather that a shaving cream generates makes for a better experience while shaving. A shaving cream is essentially soap, so good lathering power is essential. The national standard stipulates that there be at least 100 millilitres of lather whipped up by a shaving cream (in a measuring cylinder for a fixed quantity).

While testing, all brands achieved far more than the minimum requirement. Yardley generated the highest quantity of lather (390ml initially and remained 330ml after five minutes), followed by Wild Stone (380ml and 330ml). Palmolive generated the lowest lather but managed to remain well above the minimum standard limit.



Masked and coded shaving creams being tested in lab

Lathering Power		
Brand	Initial (ml) A	After 5 minutes (ml) B
Yardley	390	330
Wild Stone	380	330
Super Max	330	275
Axe Denim	350	290
Park Avenue	320	255
Godrej	310	265
Dettol	270	255
Old Spice	340	285
Vi-John	290	215
Palmolive	250	200

Water Content

A shaving cream that has high water content is easy to judge even in regular use. The cream will be less compact and if you put it on your finger, it will start to lose its form because of high water content in it. Besides, with high water content you will need to apply more cream to work up a reasonably rich lather. The national standards stipulate that water content should not be more than 60 per cent of the total mass of the cream.

The tests proved that all brands do much better than the laid-down standards. Park Avenue had just 33.08 per cent water and Yardley 34.85 per cent. Vi-John with 49.96 per cent followed by Old Spice with 46.71 per cent had the maximum percentage of water. While these are way below the allowed limit, lower water content is an indicator of high active ingredients.

Packaging

As per Indian Standard, shaving creams should be packed in collapsible aluminium tubes. However, these are no longer packed in aluminium tubes; rather, these now come in better tubes that are made of multilayer PVC-like material – just like that for toothpastes. This material is quite flexible and easily collapsible – you press the tube and get as much cream as you need.

All the tested brands have scored equal points on this parameter.

Marking/Labelling

The minimal content on the packet of the tube may include:

- Name and type of shaving cream
- Manufacturer's name and/or his recognized trademark, if any
- Net mass of the material in tube
- Batch number in code or otherwise
- Any other requirement as prescribed by the statutory authorities
- Instruction for use
- ISI certification mark
- Best before date
- Instructions on usage and storage

Most of the above-mentioned content is there in our pack samples but, a) no brand has any 'standard mark', b) none excluding Park Avenue and Old Spice has instructions for use, and c) none mention the appropriate storage conditions.

Net Weight

Well, all brands give you as much as they claim to be giving you, at least in terms of quantity. Some even give you more.

As per The Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011, the maximum permissible error for shaving creams up to 50gm is 1gm and up to 100 gm is 2gm. All the brands except Wild Stone have net weight well within the permissible limits.

The net weight of each sample was measured and the divergence from claims was calculated in percentage terms.

SENSORY TESTS

These tests were conducted involving selected members (regular users of shaving creams) to assess consumers' preferences. Each panel member was given three different samples and made familiar

All the tested brands are almost free of heavy metals (can be harmful for skin) and free from caustic alkali (can cause irritation and rashes on skin). All brands also comply with the required limits for microbiological counts.

COMPARATIVE TEST

No Deterioration or Coarseness

To check whether the tube is resistible to corrosion and deterioration in normal storage and use conditions, the shaving cream is examined visually by extruding part of the contents. Next, the internal surface of the tube is examined after slitting it open and removing the remaining contents.

For the skin scratch test, a small quantity of shaving cream is taken between the fingers and rubbed to see if it shows any coarse particulars. Alternately, the cream is spread across a piece of butter paper, which is then checked for scratches.

All tested brands meet these vital parameters.

Stability means the shaving cream should not segregate or physically deteriorate during normal condition of storage and use.

Consistency requires the shaving cream to be in the form of a thick emulsion with soft texture and steady consistency. It shall be white, off-white/cream, or pigmented, and of a uniform colour.

Homogeneity requires the shaving cream to be able to extrude from the collapsible tube at 27 °C (± 2 °C permitted) in the form of a homogeneous mass with the application of normal force starting from the crimped end of the tube.

All the brands score equal points on these three parameters.

SENSORY SCORES

Brand	Score out of 12
Yardley	10.74
Wild Stone	11.37
Super Max	11.13
Axe Denim	10.1
Park Avenue	8.49
Godrej	9.15
Dettol	9.6
Old Spice	9.5
Vi-John	10.12
Palmolive	8.99

with the right way to use these. The shaving creams were duly masked and coded to avoid any biasness.

Members used warm water and best brushes for application of the cream and used the samples like any another consumer would use these on a daily basis. Post experiencing the creams, the panellists gave comments on the various attributes including fragrance, consistency, lathering action, softening quality, after-application feel and irritation.

The testing team noted the critical observations and calculated and rated the mean values on a percentage scale.



COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE SCORES OF SHAVING CREAMS

Brand → Test Parameters ↓	Wt. %	Yardley	Wild Stone	Super Max	Axe Denim	Park Avenue	Godrej	Dettol	Old Spice	Vi-John	Palmolive
1. General											
MRP (Rs)		57	55	55	63	57	35	59	57	32	55
Pack wt (gm)		91* (70+21)	70	100* (70+30)	78* (60+18)	91* (70+21)	100	91* (70+21)	70	125	70
Unit price**/10gm		6.26	7.85	5.5	8.0	6.25	3.5	6.48	8.14	2.56	7.85
2. Sensory Tests	14	10.74	11.37	11.13	10.1	8.49	9.15	9.6	9.5	10.12	8.99
3. Physico-Chemical Tests	72	71.59	69.24	66.67	64.36	64.73	64.20	63.73	62.80	60.22	60.69
Total fatty substance (TFS)	20	19.856	18.43	19.09	15.246	17.57	17.128	17.322	14.89	16.152	16.81
Lathering power	20	20.00	19.79	16.74	17.71	15.23	15.98	14.80	17.33	13.75	12.39
Water content	5	4.815	4.876	3.903	4.461	4.99	4.125	4.657	3.625	3.387	4.543
Free caustic alkali	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Stability	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Consistency	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Homogeneity	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Effect on container	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Gritty matter	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Net weight	4	3.99	3.2	3.99	3.98	3.99	4	3.98	4	3.98	4
Heavy metals: Pb & As	4	3.93	3.94	3.95	3.96	3.95	3.97	3.97	3.96	3.95	3.95
4. Microbiological Tests	14	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.7	11.4	11.4	11.7	11.4	11.4
TVC	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Gram -ve pathogen	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
5. Packing and Marking	8	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.7	7.4	7.4	7.7	7.4	7.4
Overall Score (Rounded off)	100	94	92	89	86	85	85	85	84	82	81

*Extra cream as promotion scheme; **Unit price includes extra given cream

Rating: Very good: >90, good: 71-90, fair: 51-70, average: 31-50, very poor: up to 30