

### Starting up

- If you have been at home in lockdown for the last two months or more, has this affected your personal grooming habits, such as how often you wash your hair, shave, use perfume or eau de cologne?
- How have you spent your time in lockdown – reading, playing with children, cooking, learning new skills online, etc.?

### Reading

Unilever, the consumer goods maker of household cleaning and personal hygiene products, has seen some clear trends in consumer behaviour during lockdown. Before reading the article to find out more, do the exercise below.

### Vocabulary

Match the words and phrases in Column A with the definitions in Column B.

#### Column A

- 1 to slip
- 2 grooming
- 3 putting off
- 4 to persist
- 5 a boom
- 6 double digit
- 7 prioritising
- 8 a shift
- 9 repurposing
- 10 protocols

#### Column B

- a continue
- b with two figures, e.g. 20 per cent
- c go down (referring to standards)
- d deciding what things are most important
- e changing the products they manufacture
- f making and keeping yourself clean and neat
- g rules
- h big increase
- i delaying
- j movement

## Lockdowns lower personal grooming standards, says Unilever

It did not take long for standards to slip. Only weeks into lockdown and coronavirus is already starting to have an impact on basic personal grooming routines, according to consumer goods group Unilever.

As large numbers of people work from home, they are washing their hair less often, putting off shaving and even abandoning deodorant.

Graeme Pitkethly, Unilever's chief financial officer, said about a quarter of personal care — such as hair washing, hairstyling and use of skincare products and deodorants — was used by people preparing to go to work or school. Homeworking was reducing demand for products in these areas.

In results issued for the first quarter, the Anglo-Dutch company said lockdowns had affected its haircare portfolio in China and India, while skincare sales were also down.

Deodorant sales rose in the three months to March, but Mr Pitkethly said they were among the products likely to suffer.

Unilever makes products including Dove soap, Lynx and Sure deodorants and Toni & Guy haircare and styling products, as well as Ben & Jerry's ice cream.

Mr Pitkethly expected changes in consumer behaviour to persist after the lockdowns ended and said his business was adapting.

He said Unilever believed people were likely to spend “more time at home, more time cooking — which is good for us — and maybe less time going out, when personal care is more important.”

Unilever reported a boom in sales of household cleaning products such as Cif cleaners and Domestos bleach, both of which reported double-digit sales growth in the first quarter.

Alan Jope, chief executive, said: “We are almost certainly going into a period of low economic growth and we'll adjust to that by prioritising the value-for-money products in our portfolio — we're going to be dealing with that for a couple of years.”

“Secondly there is no doubt people's concern about household hygiene has increased . . . and the shift to online shopping is something that will be permanent. We will adjust our approach to reflect that.”

Unilever has been repurposing factories to make hand sanitiser in more than 30 locations around the world, including what had been a “massive” deodorant factory near Leeds; it has also rolled out Lifebuoy soap in 43 new markets.

Overall, the company reported flat underlying sales growth in the first quarter, down from 3.1 per cent a year earlier and below expectations, as lockdowns also cut into its food service business, which serves restaurants.

Mr Pitkethly said the signs from China, which is reopening its economy, showed how social changes were persisting.

“Some restaurants have delayed reopening, while those that are operating are running at lower cover capacity — somewhere between 50 and 70 per cent — because they are having to observe physical distancing protocols,” he said.



### Reading comprehension

Based on the information in the article, find answers to the following questions.

- 1 What change in consumer habits and in the consumption of some of its products has Unilever noticed during the recent lockdowns?
- 2 According to Unilever, how much of the use of personal grooming products is due to people preparing to go to work or school?
- 3 In which countries were Unilever's sales of haircare and skincare products down?
- 4 What other personal grooming products is Unilever expecting to decline in sales?
- 5 How does the company expect things to change after lockdown?
- 6 Why does it expect these changes?
- 7 For what category of products has the coronavirus been positive for sales, and how has that affected sales growth?
- 8 How does Unilever plan to change its marketing approach?
- 9 What other changes are likely to happen in consumer behaviour?
- 10 What other reasons are given for reductions in sales growth?

### Grammar – verbs taking *to* + infinitive or *-ing*

When a verb is followed by another verb, the second verb is either in the *to* + infinitive or *-ing* form. Which it is depends on the first verb. And some verbs can be followed by either form.

- 1 For these three verbs used in the article – *start*, *expect*, *delay* – decide which category they are in:  
Type 1 (followed by *to* + infinitive)  
Type 2 (followed by *-ing*), or  
Type 3 (followed by either *to* + infinitive or *-ing*, with no difference in meaning).

Check the text if you are not sure.

## Level: B1

- 2 Complete these sentences using one of the verbs in the box below. Change the verb in brackets to the correct form:

*to + infinitive or -ing.*

decide	love	afford	practise	avoid
manage	promise	refuse	dislike	postpone

- a I really \_\_\_\_\_ (read) fiction. I find it very relaxing.
- b We \_\_\_\_\_ (pay) the invoice you sent us by the end of the month.
- c In the current economic climate, many people cannot \_\_\_\_\_ (buy) a new car.
- d Due to all the travel restrictions, we will have to \_\_\_\_\_ (go) on holiday abroad till next year.
- e I have \_\_\_\_\_ (change) jobs because my current job is not satisfying.
- f Wherever possible, you should \_\_\_\_\_ (take) public transport because of the risk of infection.
- g I really \_\_\_\_\_ (have) to queue to go into supermarkets. It takes so much time and it's quite boring.
- h Some people \_\_\_\_\_ (follow) all the lockdown rules, which is very anti-social behaviour.
- i Partly because of communication tools such as Zoom, people have \_\_\_\_\_ (do) a lot of work from home.
- j Because of the extra time they are spending at home, some people have been able to \_\_\_\_\_ (play) a musical instrument.

**Discussion**

- 1 Is it your experience that people have reduced personal grooming routines during lockdown?
- 2 If you have spent less on personal grooming products, what have you spent more on?

**ANSWER KEY****Vocabulary**

- 1 c
- 2 f
- 3 i
- 4 a
- 5 h
- 6 b
- 7 d
- 8 j
- 9 e
- 10 g

**Reading comprehension**

- 1 Based on reduced demand for personal grooming products, Unilever has deduced that people in lockdown are washing their hair less, shaving less often and even abandoning deodorant.
- 2 About a quarter.
- 3 In China and India.
- 4 Deodorants.
- 5 The company expects these changes in consumer habits to continue after lockdown.
- 6 Because people will continue to stay more at home.
- 7 For household cleaning products, which have registered sales growth of 10 per cent or more.
- 8 It will put more emphasis on its value-for-money products.
- 9 Consumers will continue to buy household cleaning products and to shop more online.
- 10 With the closure of restaurants, Unilever's food service business has been affected. And even where restaurants have reopened, such as in China, they have lower capacity and therefore fewer customers due to the need for social distancing.

**Grammar**

- 1 start (Type 3), expect (Type 1), delay (Type 2)
- 2
  - a love reading/to read
  - b promise to pay
  - c afford to buy
  - d postpone going
  - e decided to change
  - f avoid taking
  - g dislike having
  - h refuse to follow
  - l managed to do
  - j practise playing

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