

THERAPEUTIC FOOTWEAR: MARKETING & RETAILING PERSPECTIVE**ES. Ezhil Arasu, RD. Singh****Footwear Design and Development Institute (FDDI),
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Chennai, Tamil Nadu.****Abstract:**

Footwear are not only for foot protection, it plays many roles, of which protection, comfort, fashion, performance in sport and improved foot health are the main elements. Now a day's therapeutic shoes heel the different types of pains and of course preferred for diabetics also. This article reviews these types of Footwear and Quality of these.

Key words:

Natural Leather-It's having elasticity and plasticity, Sole: The outermost part of the shoe which is direct contact with earth, online order: Shoes available by mail order only with virtual selection.

Introduction:

Footwear marketing is a sensitive job because more than 90% people do not know about the real leather or not. Fabrics and other man-made materials are being used more and more in the shoe making production. Along with leather, lot of synthetic materials – construction of all types of footwear. Textiles in all the well-known matching synthetic categories are specially produced to meet the particular needs of the shoe industry. There are two basic reasons for the introduction of so many materials other than leather into Footwear. Fabrics both natural and man-

made, give certain properties of four for that could not be achieved with the leather. Second is increasing of population who would need shoes, and other clothing materials, and traditional natural resources are limited and could not long continue in sufficient supply. Animal hides and leather are now relativity in limited supply and their prices are increasing day by day. Some footwear manufacturer used non leather materials in invisible part to reduce the cost. So, the customer feel that they have been cheated or over charged, when they find out that the uppers or inner materials are not all of genuine leather.

FOOTWEAR MARKETING

For footwear marketing quality and quantity play an important role because quality reflects reputations of the organization, consumer acceptance and competitiveness in internal and external markets. The quality control starts with the raw material inputs, through each unit process in the production line to the final product. Hence, the process and product controls are the basic ingredients of the modern technological production. For leather footwear point of you we use natural RO Material is (hides or skin) – Non-uniform in size, shape, thickness, weight, fibre structure and texture. They vary with age, sex, breed, food sources the same animals. The process of

leather footwear making is essentially as sustained series of equilibrium reaction, each affected by the previous and subsequent reactions come on reacting agent and operation affect both the structural, physical and chemical properties. Thus A judicial adjustment of method and material required to tailor and keep eagle eye on process to meet a wider variety of end users, this complexity is the despair and delight of the organisation. All the greater is the need for stricter standardisation of the purity of the input materials, Maintaining physical make control over the physical and human space in which we live. They are the **Materials used in footwear manufacturing:**

Various materials are used in footwear manufacturing. According to their use, they can be classified as many materials and as auxiliary ones.

MAIN MATERIALS :

- Natural leather
- Poromerics
- Leather fabric
- Textile fabric
- Plastic coated fabric
- Rubber under thin categories.

NATURAL LEATHER :

Leather is most important of all materials mention in main materials. It is superior to all materials in its characteristics and hence it is one of the most suitable materials for making any type of footwear. It is fibrous in nature and due to this it can provide the feet extra comfort. Also the lather has got four thermal conductivity, keeping the weather cool in summer, heat and warm when it is cold. The elasticity and plasticity of leather allows it to adjust the individual foot shape. The tensile strength, Bursting strength, tear strength, flexing endurance, shrinkage temperature etc.

parameters, latest machineries and modern technology with qualified an experienced manpower.

Footwear is more than a simple wrapping or Protection of the foot. The notation that shows indicate a great deal about a person's taste and identity- National, regional, professional class, status and gender, it's not an invention of modernity. Shoes or footwear have, for centuries, give hints about a person's character, social and cultural place, even sexual preference. Shoes are powerful things as they physical and principal intersection between body and physical space.

Additionally the leather is repairable and eco friendly justifying its suitability as the best material. Now the structure of hides and skins under the tanning methods involved to determine the actual properties of the given leather. Leather is fibrous in nature And is still the most suitable material to be used as upper making because of its physical Properties like elasticity, strength, plasticity, flexibility, easy of work, availability in varieties of colours and finish, their thermal conductivity etc.

For making footwear, Leather is being replaced nowadays by varieties of synthetic materials available in the market due to the cost factor. But leather is still the most suitable material for making footwear and is superior to the synthetic material or any other leather substitute.

SHOE COMPONENTS

The only things constant in shoe manufacturer is "change". Let's make a look at the evolution of shoe making During the past few decades. From the handcrafted shoes, using leather components of high-tech chemistry, One has to admit changes have been constant.

Quality and price are two major criterion of particular significance to a shoe consumer.

The primary interest of a consumer is to buy a shoe of decide quality as a low price. Similarly the primary interest of manufacturer is to make a shoe of acceptable quality at a minimum cost.

In the present market orientation, when the consumer will accept and buy, which in the end determines the quality standards of a shoe quality as a result on the parameters of fashion comfort and reliability. Shoe or footwear made assembled from a number of components. Apart from the design aspects, the quality of components is primarily responsible for the quality of the footwear. The quality of components mainly depends on the quality of materials from which they are made.

From times, Immemorial leather was the only material used for the manufacture of shoe components. In 1791 **Samuel peal** Attend a process involving the use of rubber and turpentine solution in the form of latex for the manufacture of waterproof gummed fabric for shoes. This may have been the first attempt to make an alternative upper material in place of leather. The discovery of rubber vulcanization of good year of the United States in 1839 and **Hancock of Britain in 1840** Paved the way for the use of rubber as a soling material. In 1930, the German chemist **Dr.C.L.Nottebohm** in co-operation with Dutchman, **Blaupote cate** developed a process for the manufacture of artificial Leather substrate or backing materials out of a fibre was bonded with natural rubber. In 1936, this process was acquired by **Carl freudenberg** of Germany and started commercial production of nonwoven material of shoe upper. During the latter half of the century a number of manmade materials like **PVC, PU, EVA, TPR, POLYESTER, POLYAMIDE,**

POLYPROPYLENE and **POLYSTYRENE** have been introduced for the manufacture of footwear components.

Acceptance of footwear components in the International market mostly depends on the components with influence design concept and visual impact. Further, the most important component on modern shoe making is now widely acknowledged because of their aesthetic and Functional properties. All these facts are influencing innovative and developments in shoe components manufacture.

In broad terms footwear components can be divided into two main categories, those which are largely hidden such as insoles, toe puff, counter stiffness etc and those that are visible such as uppers linings, etc. Today, leather is being Only by the manufacture of visible components of upper, lining and sole.

Material quality system in footwear industry :

Monitor quality of all inputs materials so as to avoid rejection and loses during bulk production. The list of materials is as follows:

1. Leather for upper manufacturing
2. Leather lining for lining purposes
3. Synthetic linings
4. Interlinings
5. Threads
6. Counters
7. Toe-puff
8. Insole
9. Sole

- Establish standards for each material for your industry. This should be an integral part of every purchase order placed by the company.
- Define management responsibility for quality of all above materials. In case of failure, this person is fully accountable.

- Have a documented plan for checking materials.
- Keep a separate area for rejected materials, so that there is no chance of issue.
- Document corrective and preventive Action in every case of failure. Keep register for this.
- Negotiate unlimited testing facility with recognise the testing labs to simplify the system.
- Have a quality monitoring system every few month under review progress.
- Start a cost of quality study to monitor this project.
- Do not purchase anything unless clear specifications and quality standards are available.

FOOTWEAR RETAIL:

Retail footwear is a complex area in its own right and it may be surprising to find it included in a specialist text such as this. However a thorough and up-to-date knowledge of technological developments and therapeutic options which become available from such a wide-ranging footwear supply is extremely useful in practice. The market is continually changing and keeping up with what's new innovative, useful or even discontinued when advising clients on purchasing their footwear, cannot be emphasized too strongly. A strong knowledge base is essential to the clinician's practice, professionalism and credibility. This study examines the concepts of using retail footwear as a therapeutic strategy, the information about footwear which may be obtained from a retail supplier, the assessment of 'good fit' by examining fitting principles in depth, and discusses taking measurements for footwear and shoe size systems.

The ability to assess accurately the fit of any shoe, be it retail or prescription is essential as it underpins and provides the basis of a footwear evaluation programme. Without

this understanding, practice will be undermined and advice will be meaningless.

Therapeutic Applications for Retail Footwear.

A shoe is much more than just a foot covering. It has many roles, of which protection, comfort, fashion, performance in sport and improved foot health are the main elements.

It appears that the majority of people with foot problems will not connect this to their footwear, may deny any relationship between their foot health and their footwear and may fail to relate the discomfort they feel when wearing footwear with the actual shoe.

For the majority of patients, retail footwear may be used effectively to improve foot function and foot health. However, practitioners may be reticent about giving advice and guidance to patients about their footwear because of insufficient knowledge and understand about the basics of shoe fitting and styling.

There is a huge range of footwear outlets throughout most developed countries. A number of them specialize in footwear for particular activities or in size ranges such as extra narrow, extra large, etc. however, when patients require specifics such as these, they may not be aware of what is available. It is therefore important that the practitioner has the information readily available so that the patient may be guided to the source of suitable footwear. The majority of patients are not only willing to purchase the correct type of footwear or fitting recommended, but are also grateful for the advice and guidance. However, this does require that the practitioner is knowledgeable about footwear styling and sizing and is able to approach and advise patients in a manner which is helpful to, rather than being critical of, their previous choice of footwear.

Footwear can be used to successfully treat the systems of diseases which affect the feet and, when appropriately prescribed, footwear should be considered as a therapy. However, most people cannot perceive their own footwear in this Way and, perhaps even more significantly, many professionals also fail to appreciate the value of footwear in improving and maintaining foot health.

In conditions such as diabetes or arthritis, where the feet are vulnerable or showing classic signs of damage, footwear will have an important role to play in improving the environment which surrounds the foot. Many practitioners may wish to treat such conditions with orthoses, insoles or inlays, but generally in normal depth retail footwear there will be insufficient accommodation for such devices. Adding extra bulk, in the form of inlays, orthoses or dressings into a shoe that was not designed to accommodate it, will cause pressure elsewhere on the foot, distort the upper and greatly diminish the effectiveness of the orthotic or inlay prescription. Every prescription for orthotics should be derived only after considering the footwear within which they are to be worn. Footwear and orthoses must be considered to be a single therapeutic entity

Assessing the foot for signs of trauma, shape, deformity, depth and limitation in function is part of a foot specialist's professional skills, and it is only a small shift to apply the same criteria to the consideration of footwear. Most practitioners will examine a patient's footwear for signs of abnormal wear, creasing or general fit and suitability. However this is only one part of the equation. Understanding and evaluating the fit and function of the footwear, and identifying the means of addressing any anomalies in a practical and affordable manner and in a way that appeals to the patient, are challenging but achievable,

given that all the necessary information is at hand.

There are now many more extra wide and deep fittings available in the retail sector (some now as wide as a prescription option, which until recently was not available to purchase readily). Many manufacturers produce shoes and sandals with extra inlays that may be removed so that prescribed orthotics may fit adequately. There are also styles that allow for better foot protection, better entry for wide bunion joints or with additional depth to accommodate clawed toes. Other common pathological features may also readily be accommodated within retail footwear, and shoes that are specifically designed for accommodating oedema, such as those with stretch vamps and larger heel seat, may be easily found. Also helpful for patients who have difficulty in bending or using their hands, shoes with Velcro fastening instead of laces are readily available. Other features include shoes with built-in rocker soles and shoes with ready-made orthotics. There are numerous sports designs for the active person to choose from. The investment into sports footwear by large brands is quite staggering, and as more research is undertaken, new materials, designs and technology make for a large range of footwear choices. Much of the development is aimed at the professional sports player, but the general public also benefits from the investment as brands make their latest developments available across the market segments. By comparison, the retail footwear industry has been slow to research and undertake technological developments. Coupled with this, the demand for sports footwear has increased dramatically and it is interesting to see how the popularity of the styling has become a fashion trend. It is important that those who offer those offer footwear advice should be familiar with the entire spectrum of retail footwear. There may well be very many

more options on the retail shelf, via mail order or the Internet than may be initially recognized, but the practitioner should be aware of them and should be able to use them as they form a very useful adjunctive treatment.

Retail Footwear Outlets and Suppliers.

Local directories, Internet searches and local shop research are helpful in identifying sources of retail footwear with specific features. Most large department stores will have a footwear section and specialist retailers such as sports shops will carry a wide range of running/walking shoes and boots. It is helpful for the practitioner to visit personally and discover what choices each store offers to the public. However, it is useful to frame some fundamental questions in order to make a clear comparison between suppliers and to build up a useful list of local footwear sources. The following points are important to consider:

- **Brands:**

Does the supplier carry more than just one brand? It may be that independent retailers carry a very small range from a variety of manufacturers, whereas a 'named brand' shop will have a comprehensive selection of their styles, colours and sizes.

- **Size range stocked:**

Does the outlet stock the average size range or do they cater for extra small and/or larger ladies'/men's ranges (i.e, ladies' sizes 2,3,8-10; and men's sizes 5-7,12-15).

- Does the outlet stock half sizes or are only whole sizes available?

- **What range of fittings is available:**

Wide or extra wide D, E, EE, EEE, etc; narrow AA, A or B? (Shoe suppliers in the USA carry a much wider range of width fittings than their counterparts in the UK).

- **What types of shoes are stocked:**

Does the range focus solely on current fashion or does the outlet also stock leisure shoes, sports, smart wear, work/safety or a combination of all types?

- **Gender and age specific:**

Does the retailer supply only ladies' shoes, only children's shoes or do they cater for all ages and genders?

- **Measuring and fitting service:**

Is this available for children only, or is the service also available for adults?

- **Are the fitters professionally trained?**

For example, in the UK, there is a professional qualification leading to Membership of the Society of Shoe Fitters (MSSF). In the USA, the National Shoe Retailers Association (NSRA) is recognized in shoe retailing, and the Pedorthic Footwear Association (PFA) offers more specialized fitting. Outlets will display the logo of the associations to which they are affiliated. The associations themselves also have web sites and lists of members which can be easily accessed.

- Special order services will the retailer place an order for a colour or size for a customer, without additional charge and without an obligation to purchase?

- **Odd size service:**

Will the retailer help by supplying a pair of shoes with right and left of different size without the necessity of buying one pair in each size. If the retailer requires that two pairs are purchased, is their willingness to offer them at a discounted price?

- **Home visiting:**

Is a home visiting service available for house-bound people locally. If so, does this service incur an extra charge and an obligation to buy?

- **Returns policy:**

Does the retailer display the returns policy in the store, and advise as to what is appropriate for returns? It may be necessary for the patient to use a store which will exchange unworn footwear in cases where the clinician needs to examine it for fit and suitability. This may be necessary for footwear which needs to be raised to

accommodate a limb length discrepancy or needs to accommodate orthotics. If the patient purchases footwear which proves to be unsuitable for purposes such as these, will the retailer exchange the footwear or refund the purchase price?

It is useful to keep a list of stores which meet the specific needs identified by the healthcare professional for a range of patients. Ideally, the practitioner might visit stores at quiet times and meet the manager or proprietor to discuss the professional interest in their business. It is useful to forge a link with the retailer who may then correctly interpret the footwear prescription needs of the patient. Cooperation from the shop staff is essential to support patients who are prepared to go out and buy new shoes as part of their foot treatment. Time taken by the foot health professional in discussing with retail staff the features required in footwear is time well spent. This relationship works conversely too, as shoe fitters quite frequently come across severe foot problems and can, if asked, recommend a local foot health practitioner. Having completed a local search of footwear suppliers within a reasonable travelling distance for patients, it is useful to prepare a list of suppliers addresses and telephone numbers and to identify the type of footwear that each specializes in. The large majority of patients will require footwear advice as part of their treatment strategy. A footwear evaluation should become part of the comprehensive foot health assessment undertaken at the initial consultation and at regular intervals thereafter. A list of suppliers of footwear appropriate for their needs is a useful resource to provide for patients.

Mail Order and Internet Purchases

There are an increasing number of mail order and Internet sites selling footwear. The

obvious advantage is the convenience of shopping from home or office, well outside normal store opening hours. It is also useful for patients to try the shoes over a longer also useful for patients to try the shoes over a longer time period than they would be able to do in store. The disadvantages are that purchasers have to make an estimation of their size and fitting, they cannot see the true colour or overall shape from illustrations, and they are ultimately unsuitable. When researching mail order suppliers, it is worth checking the following points:

- Are the shoes only available by mail order or are there outlets where the footwear can be tried? Some manufacturers have factory outlet stores or may have special sale days when shoes may be tried. They may have a catalogue available in addition to the information on their web site.
- Is the cost of postage and packing included or extra?
- What is the company's returns policy: is there a time limit; is there a fee payable to return the footwear for exchange? Some companies charge a handling fee.
- The delivery time scale is important and needs to be identified
- It is also worth identifying the cost of phone calls to the mail order supplier. Some may be high while others may charge local rates or may even be free of charge
- Some companies offer advice to the customer about size and fittings to enable the best choice of size with first time orders. Some offer a size template to help with accuracy.
- There may also be a choice of payments options, but it is worth evaluating whether these are secure.

It is useful for the practitioner to have collected a variety of mail order catalogues, and to prepare a comparison of choice, variety, price, fittings, etc. Additionally, many suppliers will send out single samples for examination of quality of materials,

construction and overall style features. This is useful as a demonstration aid to patients. Shoes available via the Internet are often from international suppliers, and many sources are overseas. The source of footwear will determine the size system used. The US size system is different to both the English size system and the Continental system. Unless the practitioner can easily convert the size from one system to another, this size variation may cause difficulties when buying shoes on the Internet and could result in expensive return costs. However, the advantages of accessing the specialist suppliers, such as those with very narrow fittings or extra larger sizes which can be difficult to find in retail outlets, may outweigh the initial difficulty, always providing that a clear idea of size or conversion can be established. Once the customer has found their ideal size and fitting, future purchases are then easily made.

Conclusion

As with obtaining the mail order catalogues for reference, it is useful to be familiar with internet sources, discovering the choice and variety available and preparing a list of the best sites to pass on to patients. Such searches need to be updated regularly as new internet suppliers become available virtually every week. Some internet suppliers will also send out samples which are useful for clinical reference.

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