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Citation

Sneakerhead Culture: Consumers and their Ecological Consciousness

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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the unique subculture of "sneakerheads" and their buying behavior/attitudes, catering carefully to the Northwest Arkansas community and their small community. Sneakerhead culture has gained significant popularity in recent years, with decades of history to back up the phenomenon. Sneaker connoisseurs collect these glamourous, expensive, and rare footwear and are keepsakes of self-expression and identity formation. The study employs an ecological approach to their purchases and seeks to find whether retail and non-retail sneakerheads are conscious of their ecological footprint. The research methodology involves a questionnaire that is catered towards retail or non-retail employees based on your response. The thematic analysis is used to identify recurring themes and patterns of their footwear purchase history, providing a rich comprehension of consumers buying behavior. Statistical testing played a crucial role in this analysis and thesis in order to properly interpret the data.

Introduction

Background and Need

In the year 2020, World Footwear calculated that 24.4 billion pairs of shoes (48.8 billion individual shoes) were manufactured. To put it into perspective, it takes approximately 2,200 gallons of water to make a single pair of shoes. With approximately 25 billion pairs of shoes being produced yearly, that equals fifty-five trillion (55,000,000,000,000) gallons of water (World Footwear Yearbook, 2020). According to the Footwear Distributors & Retailers of America (FDRA), the industry produces 700 million metric tons of CO_2 emissions, and this is only an estimation, which could be conservative.

A large warehouse in London takes in a fraction of discarded items (including sneakers and apparel); Textile Recycling for Aid and International Development (TRAID) houses a second-hand charity shop that is responsible for mounds of discarded shoes and clothes, which are thrown away for unknown reasons, as items appear to be in good shape. With the rise of shoe consumption and the decrease in quality, recycling of these materials has become harder for TRAID to do. The organization used to collect two hundred and seventy tons of shoes and recycle them, but that amount has now decreased by 5% (Hoskins, 2020). Despite the industry practice of 'greenwashing' or materials being marketed as sustainable when they are not, the best-found solution is to recycle older materials (Kenton, 2022). Taking final waste out of the equation, one can find that the number of emissions and water waste the footwear industry produces is a clear issue (FDRA, 2020).

Problem Statement

A major reason for the increase in shoe consumption is the rise of **sneakerhead** culture. Sneakerhead culture has been around since the late 1980's (Matthews & Cryer-Coupet &

Degirmencioglu, 2021). The term, *sneakerhead,* was coined to acknowledge the uncommon relationship that people hold with their sneakers. Even though Sneakerheads are a subgroup of their own, there are even more niche subgroups within the larger community who hold brand preferences (for ex. *checks over stripes;* a subgroup that only buys Nike shoes) and are extremely loyal to the brands they consume because they seem to identify with the brand itself (Matthews & Cryer-Coupet & Degirmencioglu, 2021). Nike connoisseurs, for example, identify with Nike as a brand because they believe in what Nike stands for. For example, working with athletes such as Colin Kaepernick, someone who stands for a very polarizing topic.

The impact of the community has increased by establishing reselling, with local sellers growing by the day. Resale occurs when suppliers (mostly companies like StockX or Goat) purchase items at a retail price and sell them for as much as someone will buy. These items are considered collectibles and valued as more than a functional shoe (Choi & Lee, 2021). The price can vary depending on the style of shoe, size of shoe, if it is sold with the box, or if it is used or not. A lot of these trends fluctuate so fast that a shoe worth $700 a year ago, could be worth $110 today. The reselling business is a lucrative one that exploits people's perceptions of product scarcity (Choi & Lee, 2021). How long will the popularity of these shoes continue? And how will the patterns of consumers' purchasing habits affect the environment?

Purpose Statement

Minimal research over exploring how consumers' actions negatively impact the environment is a large part of the issue. This quantitative project will examine consumers' sentiments over their shoe purchases in relation to their environmental beliefs (or practices), their behavior towards basic trends and sneakerhead knowledge.

Research Objectives and Questions

The following research objectives guide this project:

- Compare retail employees versus non-retail employees' attitudes and how it relates to environmental awareness.

- Does retail experience affect consumer behavior/attitudes?

- Analyze how basic trends and sneakerhead knowledge drive ecologically based consumer behaviors.

Literature Review

With the rise in sneakerhead culture, it is imperative for consumers and corporations to analyze how this shift will later impact the environment. Studies looking into sustainability in the footwear industry typically focus on the simple production and disposing of shoes. This section will discuss the literature that focuses on environmental sociology, corporate responsibility, and the assessment of footwear after they are discarded.

Greenwashing and Green Capitalism

Environmental sociology has impacted the sentiment towards unethical companies because consumers have begun analyzing the quantitative data of the philosophy behind green capitalism, thus influencing their consumption (Dunlap et al., 2002). Green capitalism refers to wanting to use the system of capitalism to fix the environment (Rogers, 2011). With environmental sociology only having 25 years of data, it is still considered premature (Dunlap et al., 2002). The footwear industry has only a handful of sustainable or ethically sourced companies such as Allbirds, SAOLA and SoleRebels. Other footwear companies "greenwash" or convey a false impression or provide misleading information about how a company's products are more environmentally sound (Kenton, 2022). However, there is no current legislation to

combat or even restrict greenwashing from happening. Companies that are in the unregulated greenwashing market include Nike, Adidas, and others.

A study was conducted looking into consumers' reaction to environmentally friendly products and how the marketing sector can better sell "green" products. Visser et al. (2015) found that consumers have begun to research companies further and analyze their morals. When companies investigate the personal benefits for the customer and how they can blend well with the green layout, they have a better chance of making their company a true, sustainable, profitable company (Visser et al., 2015). The green layout refers to drawing influence from sustainable research and incorporating it into the design, manufacturing and selling of a product. This also benefits companies, not only because more people are buying their products but also because more investors are drawn to environmentally safe products. A green layout is when companies make sure that their product design is sustainable and not false advertising of sustainability (Cui, 2013).

Sustainability Assessment of the Footwear Industry

The footwear industry is responsible for the production of 24.4 billion pairs of shoes every year and this brings huge environmental problems at hand because of the microplastics like PVC that are found in the worldwide brand, Nike (Derrig et al., 2010). Microplastics are miniature breakoffs of bigger plastics that are hard to recycle and impossible to decompose. Microplastics are considered a problem, not only because it takes around four hundred and fifty years to one thousand years for a microplastic to properly decompose (Littschwager, 2019), but because when shoes enter landfills the runoff affects aquatic life with other forms of microplastics that kill aquatic animals (Kim et al., 2021). The toxicity screening for microplastic fragments in the *soles* of shoes alone released benzothiazole and ethyl acetate, among other types

of fragments, which added supportive evidence that aquatic life had started to diminish in streams with landfill runoff (Kim et al., 2021).

Corporate Responsibility

Companies like Nike, the 'poster child' for major environmental scandals, have been a case study for many about why the responsibility for sustainable footwear should fall on the corporations producing the problem (Derrig et al., 2010). The problem with companies not being held responsible by unknowing consumers is that there is a larger issue at hand. For example, with the Vietnam Nike scandal, reporters found that Nike was severely underpaying and abusing its employees in a Vietnamese plant, revealing their unethical and unsustainable practices (DeTienne & Lewis, 2005). After the 1997 Vietnam Nike scandal, investors began to morally screen the companies they bought into, with hopes of holding companies responsible (Detienne & Lewis, 2005). Since then, Nike has increased their public relations by trying to be as transparent as possible with consumers but because of past neglectful practices, greenwashing could still very much be occurring within Nike.

Consumer Behavior

With the perceptions that accompany limited shoe releases or 'drops', such as higher values and higher demand, the market has had to adjust to a specific market segment (Chae et al., 2020). Because there is a relationship with brand loyalty and perceived value, the market for reselling shoes has grown (Choi et al., 2021). When studying the social identity amongst men and the shoes they decide to wear, specifically within the sneakerhead community, it can be found that brand identity has become the largest contender to why consumers decide to spend such copious amounts of money on shoes (Matthews et al., 2021). Clothing is seen as a form of expression to most people but to sneakerheads, in every corner of the world, clothing is seen as

an investment (Akdemir, 2014). The price of the shoe itself fluctuates based on different circumstances every day, like the climate, trend changes, celebrity scandals and even colorways and shoe sizes (Chae et al., 2020).

Focusing on literature will emphasize environmental sociology, corporate responsibility, and a sustainability assessment of sneakers, to analyze and gain a greater scope for how to review the footwear industry and consumer buying behaviors. With the rise in sneakerhead culture, there must be an analysis of how this culture could impact the environment, whether negative or positive, and how much this will make consumers demand a sustainable product.

Methods and Materials

This chapter discusses the design of the study, the process for addressing rigor, survey instrument development and data collection procedures used to achieve the objectives of this study. Using a quantitative research design approach to analyze the sneakerhead culture and its future impact on the environment.

Research Design

To accomplish the purpose of the study, survey research "is a systematic set of methods used to gather information to generate knowledge and to help make decisions" (Lavrakas, 2008, pg. xxxv). The approach was quantitative to analyze the attitudes in a culture and its effects on the environment. In this study, consumers actions and attitudes towards their footwear purchases and its environmental implications were examined. The survey was the ideal administration for this research design because of the easiness in delivering concise results.

Rigor

The design of this study uses a quantitative approach. Using the *Environmental Consciousness: An Empirical Study* written by Daniel Krause (1993), one can focus on the

specific inquiries about environmental awareness and its relation to the sneakerhead community. The survey instrumentation was administered through Qualtrics and given to people in the Northwest Arkansas footwear industry and kept confidential. It was also sent out to University of Arkansas Apparel Merchandising students, as they have a better gauge for consumer behaviors regarding the footwear industry. There were also random participants to expand the data collected by marketing the survey on surveyor's social media. Using both the Apparel Merchandising students and Northwest Arkansas footwear retail employees this helped gain credibility due to the specific experience in the industry. The transferability of the study can be applied towards any other consumer behavior that involves environmental consciousness.

Population and Sampling

The data was collected through a convenience sampling method. This method of sampling was favored because it sampled the most convenient and accessible population to the researcher. Footwear retail employees in Northwest Arkansas who have knowledge of sneakerhead culture were sampled. The sampling procedure used was cluster sampling, which involves using members of a group that have proximity to each other, in this case experience with the footwear industry (Leong & Austin, 1996). The survey instrument was focused on two groups, retail and non-retail employees and the survey was specific based on those criteria. Both groups were assessed. The survey was sent to all University of Arkansas Apparel Merchandising and Product Development student through email. Recruitment materials were also posted on researchers' social media. In total, the survey had forty-one respondents. Incomplete surveys were removed from the data analysis, and the remaining twenty-nine were analyzed. Those responses were categorized into two categories, retail, and non-retail employees. There were eleven (38%) retail employees and eighteen (62%) non-retail employees.

Measurement

The design of this study is a quantitative survey approach. The initial data collection used a survey instrument created by Chowdhury and Samuel (2014). The survey was modified to match the proper criteria and will be administered through Qualtrics. The survey is influenced by Krause (1993), as his questionnaire is right on par with the objectives of this study. As well as Perkasa et al., (2019): *Assessing students 21st century attitude and environmental awareness: promoting education for sustainable development through science education* and *Collaborative consumption: An investigation into the secondary sneaker market* written by Slaton and Pookulangara (2021). These surveys studied the environmental awareness and attitude of consumers and their buying behaviors, combining secondhand shoes purchases and reselling. Questions were adapted to match the theme of the final survey. The survey was a Likert scales quantitative questionnaire containing four separate parts and forty questions in total that examined consumer buying behavior and ecological consciousness (See Figure 1*).

Figure 1

Please click on the number that best describes your thoughts and opinions about your footwear purchase experience.

Strongly Disagree—Disagree—Disagree Somewhat—Neither Agree nor Disagree—Agree Somewhat—Agree—Strongly Agree

| 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

1. All things considered, I classify myself as an environmentalist.
2. I am aware of the pollution produced by the footwear industry.
3. I am concerned about lake and river pollution.
4. I am concerned about landfills.
5. When buying footwear, I choose the most environmentally friendly option.
6. I know what a sneakerhead is.
7. I consider myself a shoe aficionado.
8. I express myself through my shoes.
9. I am easily persuaded by social media trends.
10. It is possible that I could be influenced to purchase products from a sneaker resale store.
11. Since working at a footwear retail store, I find myself purchasing more footwear.
12. I find that consumers' shopping behavior is based highly on trends.
13. As long as it is similar to the trending style, consumers will buy it.
14. I have participated in reselling shoes.

15. I believe consumers buy too many shoes.
16. Consumers are misinformed on sneakerhead trends.
17. I believe I buy too many shoes.
18. I consider myself a sneakerhead.
19. Consumers go above and beyond to find their preferred style.
20. I express myself through my shoes.
21. I consider myself a shoe aficionado.
22. I am easily persuaded by social media trends.
23. I know what a sneaker reseller is.
24. It is possible that I could be influenced to purchase products from a sneaker resale store.
25. I want to purchase a lot of trendy sneakers.
26. Trends influence my sneaker purchases.
27. I know what a sneakerhead is.
28. I consider myself a sneakerhead.
29. I believe I buy too many shoes.
30. If I like the shoe, I will purchase it no matter the price.
31. I am aware of my footwear retail purchases and how they affect the environment.
32. I do not really think about what I buy and how it will affect the environment later.
33. I am willing to change my lifestyle for the environment.
34. I am knowledgeable of environmental problems linked to the footwear industry.
35. I would like to buy sustainable sneakers.
36. I prefer sustainable sneaker purchases.
37. I research my sneaker purchases.
38. I do not impulse buy sneakers based on trends.
39. I research the company that I am buying from and their environmental practices.
40. I would recycle my shoes, if given the option.

Data Collection

The data was collected through the survey, which was distributed to the Apparel

Merchandising & Product Development (AMPD) department at the University of Arkansas.

There was a drafted email that was sent out to the department administrator who has access to

the email list for AMPD. As well as sent out to people who have access to investigator's social

media and specific members of the footwear retail community.

Data Analysis

This study on the attitudes of the footwear industry analyzed data collected through a

survey to evaluate the buying behaviors of sneakerhead and non-sneakerhead members

according to seven different categories. Data was reviewed using SPSS to analyze demographics

of the surveyed and determine the significance between: Environmental Awareness, Retail

Sneakerhead Knowledge, Retail Consumer Behavior, Retail Basic Trends, Non-Retail

Sneakerhead Knowledge, Non-Retail Trends and Consumer Behavior, and Ecological

Consciousness. The first variable, Environmental Awareness, was analyzed using the

questionnaire items 1-5; (1) All things considered, I classify myself as an environmentalist, (2) I

am aware of the pollution produced by the footwear industry, (3) I am concerned about lake and

river pollution, (4) I am concerned about landfills, (5) When buying footwear, I choose the most

environmentally friendly option. These questionnaire elements were used to determine the

awareness of footwear consumers and the relation of environmental issues. Adjustments were

made to the questionnaire regarding the variables and had a total of seven variables. Retail

Sneakerhead Knowledge analyzed the results with elements 6,7,8,14,18. The elements stated as

follows: (6) I know what a sneakerhead is, (7)I consider myself a shoe aficionado, (8) I express

myself through my shoes, (14) I have participated in reselling shoes, (18) I consider myself a

sneakerhead. These elements analyzed the retail employees and their personal sneakerhead

knowledge. Retail Basic Trends analyzed the questionnaire items of 9, 12, 13, and 16. The

elements were as follows: (9) I am easily persuaded by social media trends, (12) I find that

consumers' shopping behavior is based highly on trends, (13) As long as it is like the trending

style, consumers will buy it, (16) Consumers are misinformed on sneakerhead trends. These

elements analyzed basic trend attitudes from a footwear retail employee point of view. Retail

Consumer Behaviors analyzed elements 10, 11, 15, 17, and 19. The elements are as follows: (10)

It is possible that I could be influenced to purchase products from a sneaker resale store, (11)

Since working at a footwear retail store, I find myself purchasing more footwear, (15) I believe

consumers buy too many shoes, (17) I believe I buy too many shoes, (19) Consumers go above and beyond to find their preferred style. These elements were used to analyze consumer behaviors. Elements 20, 21, 23, 27, and 28 were subject to Non-Retail Sneakerhead Knowledge and were detailed as follows: (20) I express myself through my shoes, (21) I consider myself a shoe aficionado, (23) I know what a sneaker reseller is, (27) I know what a sneakerhead is, (28) I consider myself a sneakerhead. These elements were used to examine non-retail employees and their personal sneakerhead knowledge. Non-Retail Basic Trends and Consumer Behavior used elements 22, 24, 25, 26, 29, and 30. Those elements are as follows: (22) I am easily persuaded by social media trends, (24) It is possible that I could be influenced to purchase products from a sneaker resale store, (25) I want to purchase a lot of trendy sneakers, (26) Trends influence my sneaker purchases, (29) I believe I buy too many shoes, (30) If I like the shoe, I will purchase it no matter the price. Retail vs non-Retail was written to compare the attitudes and knowledge on various footwear topics. The last variable is Ecological Consciousness with elements 31-40 and they are as follows: (31) I am aware of my footwear retail purchases and how they affect the environment, (32) I do not really think about what I buy and how it will affect the environment later, (33) I am willing to change my lifestyle for the environment, (34) I am knowledgeable of environmental problems linked to the footwear industry, (35) I would like to buy sustainable sneakers, (36) I prefer sustainable sneaker purchases, (37) I research my sneaker purchases, (38) I do not impulse buy sneakers based on trends, (39) I research the company that I am buying from and their environmental practices, (40) I would recycle my shoes, if given the option. Ecological Consciousness was measured through carefully worded scenarios that measured their attitude about being environmentally aware of their footwear purchases. These seven variables were used to compare consumer attitudes with their environmental awareness.

Environmental Awareness

The elements for environmental awareness were tested through the SPSS software and yielded such results. The scale was strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) with results yielding towards "somewhat agree" and deviating either way based on their individual standard deviation. The standard level of significance that was used for the t-test was 95% confidence interval or $p<0.05$. A t-test is a statistical hypothesis test that is used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the means of two groups (Kim, 2015). The independent samples test was used because there were two independent groups that were being compared. Descriptive statistics were also used to summarize the main features of the dataset. It can be seen in Table 1, based on elements 3-4 (I am concerned about lake and river pollution, I am concerned about landfills), that participants are aware of the problems concerning the environment, answering at a high 5.48 and 5.62, respectively. Contrary to those results, the answered element 5 (when buying footwear, I choose the most environmentally friendly option) with a significantly lesser mean of 3.24, which is smaller than the previous statements. There was no significant difference in elements 1-2 (All things considered, I classify myself as an environmentalist, I am aware of the pollution produced by the footwear industry) as these statements analyze the implications of what the public seems to deem as true. The significant difference was the lower mean of 3.24 for element 5 (when buying footwear, I choose the most environmentally friendly option). The independent samples test was done for the question; does retail experience affect consumer behavior/attitude? Since the significance level was .05, looking at the p-values in the independent samples test one can see which element rejects the null hypothesis and which accepts it. (Refer to Table 3.) The null hypothesis is that retail experience does not affect

consumer behavior/attitude and the alternate hypothesis is that retail experience does affect

consumer behavior/attitude. Elements 1,2,4, and 5 all accept the null hypothesis that retail

experience does not affect consumer behavior with significant levels over .05: .188, .333, .312,

and .205, respectively. Element 3 rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate

hypothesis that retail experience does affect consumer behavior/attitude with a p-value <.05,

.018. (Refer to Table 3.)

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics for Environmental Awareness

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. - All things considered, I classify myself as an environmentalist.	29	1.00	7.00	4.4483	1.42894
2. - I am aware of the pollution produced by the footwear industry.	29	1.00	7.00	4.7931	1.85894
3. - I am concerned about lake and river pollution.	29	1.00	7.00	5.4828	1.70337
4. - I am concerned about landfills.	29	1.00	7.00	5.6207	1.44948
5. - When buying footwear, I choose the most environmentally friendly option.	29	1.00	7.00	3.2414	1.74551
Valid N (listwise)	29				

Table 2.

Group Statistics for Environmental Awareness in Relation to Retail Experience

	Do you have experience in the footwear retail industry?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1. - All things considered, I classify myself as an environmentalist.	Yes	11	5.0000	1.84391	.55596
	No	18	4.1111	1.02262	.24103
2. - I am aware of the pollution produced by the footwear industry.	Yes	11	5.3636	1.62928	.49125
	No	18	4.4444	1.94701	.45891
3. - I am concerned about lake and river pollution.	Yes	11	5.0909	2.21154	.66680
	No	18	5.7222	1.31978	.31108
4. - I am concerned about landfills.	Yes	11	5.6364	1.68954	.50942
	No	18	5.6111	1.33456	.31456
5. - When buying footwear, I choose the most environmentally friendly option.	Yes	11	4.0000	2.09762	.63246
	No	18	2.7778	1.35280	.31886

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Table 3.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance Two-Sided p
1. - All things considered, I classify myself as an environmentalist.	Equal variances assumed	1.823	.188	1.677	27	.105
	Equal variances not assumed			1.467	13.825	.165
2. - I am aware of the pollution produced by the footwear industry.	Equal variances assumed	.973	.333	1.308	27	.202
	Equal variances not assumed			1.367	24.220	.184
3. - I am concerned about lake and river pollution.	Equal variances assumed	6.382	.018	-.967	27	.342
	Equal variances not assumed			-.858	14.425	.405
4. - I am concerned about landfills.	Equal variances assumed	1.061	.312	.045	27	.965
	Equal variances not assumed			.042	17.577	.967
5. - When buying footwear, I choose the most environmentally friendly option.	Equal variances assumed	1.685	.205	1.915	27	.066
	Equal variances not assumed			1.726	15.154	.105

Retail Sneakerhead Knowledge

The elements for Sneakerhead Knowledge for retail employees were run through the

SPSS software and yielded such results. The scale was strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7)

with these specific results yielding in the "somewhat agree" to "agree" range. The results deviate

either way based on their individual standard deviation. Retail Sneakerhead Knowledge included

elements 6, 7, 8, 14, and 18 and was focused on examining the footwear employee's knowledge

of sneakerhead culture and their own involvement in the community. These employees'

information was kept confidential, specifically their location of employment. Table 4 shows that

most retail employees are within the same range of 4-6 attitude-wise. The descriptive statistics

show that they know what a sneakerhead is based on element 6, yielding the highest result of a

6.10 mean out of 7. This solidifies that these retail employees are aware of the sneakerhead

community and based on element 18 (I consider myself a sneakerhead) there was a mean of 4.10

of participants who are a part of the community.

Table 4.

Descriptive Statistics for Retail Sneakerhead Knowledge

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
6. I know what a sneakerhead is.	11	1.00	7.00	6.1000	1.91195
7. - I consider myself a shoe aficionado.	11	2.00	7.00	5.0000	2.05480
8. - I express myself through my shoes.	11	3.00	7.00	5.5000	1.50923
14. - I have participated in reselling shoes.	11	1.00	7.00	4.3000	2.98329
18. - I consider myself a sneakerhead.	11	1.00	7.00	4.1000	2.60128
Valid N (listwise)	11				

Retail Basic Trends

The elements for Sneakerhead Knowledge for retail employees were run through the

SPSS descriptive statistics software and yielded such results. The scale was strongly disagree (1)

to strongly agree (7) with these specific results yielding in the "somewhat agree" to "agree"

range. The results deviate either way based on their individual standard deviation. Basic Trends

for retail employees' variable included elements 9, 12, and 13 and was focused on finding retail

employees' opinions on their consumers' sneaker trend patterns and their own sneaker trend

patterns. With elements resulting in footwear retail employees believing that consumers and

themselves are very easily persuaded by shoe trends, as well as social media when making their

purchases, using elements 9,12, 13, and 16 (refer to *Figure 1)* of the survey instrument.

Table 5.

Descriptive Statistics for Retail Basic Trends

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
9. - I am easily persuaded by social media trends.	11	3.00	7.00	5.2000	1.47573
12. - I find that consumers' shopping behavior is highly based on trends.	11	1.00	7.00	5.5000	1.84089
13. - As long as it is similar to the trending style, consumers will buy it.	11	1.00	7.00	5.8000	1.81353
16. - Consumers are misinformed on sneakerhead trends.	11	2.00	7.00	5.0000	1.63299
Valid N (listwise)	11				

Retail Consumer Behavior

The elements for Sneakerhead Knowledge for retail employees were run through the

SPSS descriptive statistics software and yielded such results. The scale was strongly disagree (1)

to strongly agree (7) with these specific results yielding in the "somewhat agree" to "agree"

range. The results deviate either way based on their individual standard deviation. Retail

Consumer Behavior included elements 10, 11, 15, 17, 19 and was focused on examining the

retail employees and their opinions on consumer behaviors Most employees, whether current or

former, believe that their environment highly increases their buying choice, using element 11

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(since working at a footwear retail store, I find myself purchasing more footwear) to draw the

result of 5.30 as a mean out of 7.

Table 6.

Descriptive Statistics for Retail Consumer Behavior

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
10. - It is possible that I could be influenced to purchase products from a sneaker resale store.	11	1.00	7.00	5.3000	2.21359
11. - Since working at a footwear retail store, I find myself purchasing more footwear.	11	1.00	7.00	5.3000	2.16282
15. - I believe consumers buy too many shoes.	11	1.00	7.00	5.6000	1.89737
17. - I believe I buy too many shoes.	11	1.00	7.00	5.4000	2.01108
19. - Consumers go above and beyond to find their preferred style.	11	2.00	7.00	5.8000	1.68655
Valid N (listwise)	11				

Non-Retail Sneakerhead Knowledge

The elements for Sneakerhead Knowledge for non-retail employees were run through the

SPSS descriptive statistics software and yielded such results. The scale was strongly disagreed

(1) to strongly agree (7) with these specific results yielding in the "somewhat agree" to

"disagree" range. Sneakerhead Knowledge for non-retail employees, elements 20, 21, 23, 27, and

29, was used to examine non-retail employees and their knowledge of the sneakerhead

community. Non-retail employee's knowledge of sneakerheads was high on attitude based on the

level of experience in the footwear industry. Elements 21(I consider myself a shoe aficionado) and 28(I consider myself a sneakerhead) were relatively low compared to the other means.

Table 7.

Descriptive Statistics for Non-Retail Sneakerhead Knowledge

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
20. - I express myself through my shoes.	18	1.00	7.00	5.0000	1.49509
21. - I consider myself a shoe aficionado.	18	1.00	6.00	3.5556	1.72259
23. - I know what a sneaker reseller is.	18	1.00	7.00	5.5000	1.85504
27. - I know what a sneakerhead is.	18	1.00	7.00	5.8889	1.67644
28. - I consider myself a sneakerhead.	18	1.00	5.00	2.2778	1.60167
Valid N (listwise)	18				

Non-Retail Basic Trends and Consumer Behavior

The elements for Basic Trends and Consumer Behavior for non-retail employees were run through the SPSS descriptive statistics software and yielded such results. The scale was strongly disagreed (1) to strongly agree (7) with these specific results yielding in the "somewhat agree" to "disagree" range. Basic Trends and Consumer Behavior for non-retail employees was used to examine non-retail employees and attitudes over sneaker trends and their consumer behavior. They did not believe themselves to be sneakerheads or have too many shoes, and they are more cognizant of the price of their footwear, considering elements 28 (I consider myself a sneakerhead), 29 (I believe I buy too many shoes), and 30 (If I like the shoe, I will purchase it no matter the price. *See Table 9 for results.*

Table 8.

Descriptive Statistics for Non-Retail Basic Trends and Consumer Behavior

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
22. - I am easily persuaded by social media trends.	18	1.00	7.00	3.8333	1.85504
24. - It is possible that I could be influenced to purchase products from a sneaker resale store.	18	1.00	7.00	4.3333	1.87867
25. - I want to purchase a lot of trendy sneakers.	18	1.00	7.00	4.2222	1.92676
26. - Trends influence my sneaker purchases.	18	1.00	6.00	4.0000	1.68034
29. - I believe I buy too many shoes.	18	1.00	7.00	3.1111	1.64098
30. - If I like the shoe, I will purchase it no matter the price.	18	1.00	7.00	2.9444	1.69679
Valid N (listwise)	18				

Ecological Consciousness

The elements for Ecological Consciousness were run through the SPSS descriptive statistics software and linear regression which yielded such results. The scale was strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) with these specific results yielding in the "disagree" to "somewhat agree" range. Ecological Consciousness brought both non-retail and retail footwear employees into consideration and analyzed their actions when buying shoes. The results gave an understanding of the level of concern, awareness and understanding for individual participants and their personal impact. Based on Table 4, one can analyze the results with little variance. The largest significant difference is element 39 (I research the company that I am buying from and their environmental practices), having a low mean of 2.93. There seems to be a lesser connection

with consumers and their affirmations with their consciousness and how to accurately practice what they know to be true. These results were visibly less than the other parts of the survey. The higher mean of 5.89 was for element 40 (I would recycle my shoes, if given the option), which is a higher and more positive significant difference than the other results. A linear regression statistical test was run on the comparison of retail versus non-retail employees and their ecological consciousness factors like Element 33. (Refer to Table 10.) The significance level was .05, looking at the p-values in the linear regressions test one can see which element rejects the null hypothesis and which accepts it. (Refer to Table 10.) The null hypothesis is that retail employees do not want to change their lifestyle for the environment and the alternate hypothesis is that retail employees do want to change their lifestyle for the environment. Element 33 rejects the null hypothesis which means that retail employees are willing to change their lifestyle for the environment because the p-value <.05, at a .001.

Table 9.

Descriptive Statistics for Ecological Consciousness

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
31 - I am aware of my footwear retail purchases and how they affect the environment.	27	1.00	7.00	3.9630	1.80771
32 - I do not really think about what I buy and how it will affect the environment later.	27	1.00	7.00	3.9630	1.78630
33 - I am willing to change my life-style for the environment.	27	1.00	7.00	4.9630	1.69800
34 - I am knowledgeable of environmental problems linked to the footwear industry.	27	1.00	7.00	3.9630	1.93115
35 - I would like to buy sustainable sneakers.	27	1.00	7.00	5.2222	1.57708
36 - I prefer sustainable sneaker purchases.	27	1.00	7.00	4.4815	1.76222
37 - I research my sneaker purchases.	27	1.00	7.00	3.6296	1.96406
38 - I do not impulse buy sneakers based on trends.	27	1.00	7.00	5.0741	1.89992
39 - I research the company that I am buying from and their environmental practices.	27	1.00	7.00	2.9259	1.77430
40 - I would recycle my shoes, if given the option.	27	1.00	7.00	5.8889	1.62512
Valid N (listwise)	27				

Table 10.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	4.500	1.221		3.687	.001
	Do you have experience in the footwear retail industry?	.278	.705	.079	.394	.697

a. Dependent Variable: 33 - I am willing to change my life-style for the environment.

Conclusions

The elements under Environmental Awareness conveyed the results that the general participant was somewhat of an environmentalist and was concerned with landfills but is generally hesitant to practice that in their buying behavior. There was a lack of confidence with their environmental awareness, as most participants were concerned with pollution but did not know the cause of their pollution nor practiced a greener lifestyle, with their footwear. This was a common theme between retail and non-retail employees. When answering element 40, I would recycle my shoes, if given the option, participants responded with a high mean of 5.89, meaning if it was more convenient to be green, they would do so. A lot of their inaction is simply perceived as inconvenient. Element 32 asked to rate the statement, I do not really think about what I buy and how it will affect the environment later, there was a low mean of 3.96, meaning that most participants agree with that statement and do have consciousness when purchasing footwear (*Refer to Table 9)*. In the following statement, element 33, when asked to rate this statement, I am willing to change my lifestyle for the environment, participants answered with a mean of 4.96, which is rather high. There seems to be confusion and a lack of resources with their knowledge of what the footwear industry does (*refer to table 1),* and this can cause individuals to not act to better their sustainable practices. The comparison of retail versus non-retail employees' independent samples t-test yielded some very important conclusions. Non-retail employees like those working in healthcare, construction and others are more focused on practicality and comfort. They have different job demands and their purchase intentions are driven by their industry needs or standards, footwear retail employees are considerate of the brands they are wearing and care more about their shoe trends and if they are on par with the newest trend cycle. The t-test results shown in Environmental Awareness in relation to retail

experience, analyzed the relationship of whether retail experience resulted in a change in consumer behavior/attitude, and it resulted that only the knowledge in river pollution was the deciding factor in a change in consumer attitude based on the significant factor.

Limitations

This survey has several limitations because of the lack of the number of responses and there was also some technical difficulties at the beginning of the survey and that caused some duplicate answers to occur but they were easily filtered through the data software. There was little representation for certain communities as the participants at the University of Arkansas were from more places than Northwest Arkansas. It was also a very specific target market and there was little diversity of location of employment. There was also a sampling bias because most of the participants were people that the researcher knew to distribute the survey to. There should have been a higher variety, to ensure that there were no barriers to an open participation. There was also limited statistical power, because the sample size was so small the analysis of the participants was sometimes inconclusive or unreliable.

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Appendix A- Survey Instrument

Study of Sneakerhead Community
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE:
You are invited to participate in a research study about footwear buying habits and environmental consciousness. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a college student over the age of 18 and/or you are a footwear retail employee.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY:
Who is the Researcher? Maria Cervantes
Email: mccervan@uark.edu
Stephanie Hubert
HOEC 213 University of Arkansas
Email: skhopper@uark.edu

What is the purpose of this research study?
The purpose of this study is to analyze and interpret consumers' buying behaviors in regards to sneakers and their environmental consciousness.
Who will participate in this study?
If you participate in this study, you will be one of approximately one hundred individuals participating in the study. You must be at least 18 years old to participate.
What am I being asked to do?
Provide thoughtful answers to an online survey. You will not be penalized for ending the survey early.
What are the possible risks or discomforts?
There are no anticipated risks to participating in this study. If you feel uncomfortable at any time while completing the survey, you can omit an answer to a question or can terminate your involvement in the study. You will not be penalized for omitting answers or terminating the survey early.
What are the possible benefits of this study?
You will be contributing to increasing the body of knowledge about the sneakerhead community and environmental consciousness. How long will the study last?
The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
Will I have to pay for anything?
No, there will be no cost associated with your participation.
What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?
Participation is completely voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate and can close your browser. Also, you may refuse to participate at any time during the study. Your relationship with the investigator will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate.
How will my confidentiality be protected?
All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law. Your survey response will be anonymous meaning that no identifying information will be asked during the survey.

What do I do if I have questions about the research study?

At the conclusion of the study you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact Maria Cervantes by email at mccervan@uark.edu or Stephanie K Hubert by email at skhopper@uark.edu or via phone at 479-575-4826. You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Integrity and Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research. Ro Windwalker, CIP, Institutional Review Board Coordinator,Office of Research Integrity and Compliance, University of Arkansas, 109 MLKG Building, Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201 479-575-2208, irb@uark.edu.

Informed Consent

I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with the participant. I understand that no rights have been waived by consenting to participate in this study. By filling out the online survey, I am implying my consent to participate in this study.

Demographics
1. Which category below includes your age?
   ___ 18-20
   ___ 21-25
   ___ 26-30
   ___ 31-35
   ___ 36+

2. What is your gender?

   _____

3. Are you from the Northwest Arkansas Region? (Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers, Siloam Springs, etc..)
   ___True
   ___False

4. Do you have experience in the footwear retail industry?

   Footwear retail industry is any job that is within the scope of footwear retailing, or selling shoes. These jobs include but are not limited to; Finish Line, Hibbett Sports, Shoe Carnival, RockCityKicks, Journeys, etc…
   ___Yes
   ___No

5. [THIS QUESTION FOR THE PARTICIPANTS WHO ANSWERED YES ON QUESTION 4]

Which footwear retail company do you have experience with? (Information will be kept confidential).

_____

Environmental Awareness

Part I: Please click on the number that best describes your thoughts and opinions about your footwear purchase experience.

Strongly Disagree—Disagree—Disagree Somewhat—Neither Agree nor Disagree—Agree Somewhat—Agree—Strongly Agree

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

1. All things considered, I classify myself as an environmentalist.
2. I am aware of the pollution produced by the footwear industry.
3. I am concerned about lake and river pollution.
4. I am concerned about landfills.
5. When buying footwear, I choose the most environmentally friendly option.

Purchase Intentions

Part II (For retail): Please click on the number that best describes your thoughts and opinions about your footwear purchase experience in relation to your experience as a footwear retail employee.

Strongly Disagree—Disagree—Disagree Somewhat—Neither Agree nor Disagree—Agree Somewhat—Agree—Strongly Agree

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

1. I know what a sneakerhead is.
2. I consider myself a shoe aficionado.
3. I express myself through my shoes.
4. I am easily persuaded by social media trends.
5. It is possible that I could be influenced to purchase products from a sneaker resale store.
6. Since working at a footwear retail store, I find myself purchasing more footwear.
7. I find that consumers' shopping behavior is based highly on trends.
8. As long as it is similar to the trending style, consumers will buy it.
9. I have participated in reselling shoes.
10. I believe consumers buy too many shoes.
11. Consumers are misinformed on sneakerhead trends.
12. I believe I buy too many shoes.
13. I consider myself a sneakerhead.
14. Consumers go above and beyond to find their preferred style.

Part II (For non-retail): Please click on the number that best describes your thoughts and opinions about your footwear purchases.

Strongly Disagree—Disagree—Disagree Somewhat—Neither Agree nor Disagree—Agree Somewhat—Agree—Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. I express myself through my shoes.
2. I consider myself a shoe aficionado.
3. I am easily persuaded by social media trends.
4. I know what a sneaker reseller is.
5. It is possible that I could be influenced to purchase products from a sneaker resale store.
6. I want to purchase a lot of trendy sneakers.
7. Trends influence my sneaker purchases.
8. I know what a sneakerhead is.
9. I consider myself a sneakerhead.
10. I believe I buy too many shoes.
11. If I like the shoe, I will purchase it no matter the price.

Ecological Consciousness

Part III: Please click on the number that best describes your thoughts and opinions about how you ecologically perceive your footwear purchases.

Strongly Disagree—Disagree—Disagree Somewhat—Neither Agree nor Disagree—Agree Somewhat—Agree—Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. I am aware of my footwear retail purchases and how they affect the environment.
2. I do not really think about what I buy and how it will affect the environment later.
3. I am willing to change my life-style for the environment.
4. I am knowledgeable of environmental problems linked to the footwear industry.
5. I would like to buy sustainable sneakers.
6. I prefer sustainable sneaker purchases.
7. I research my sneaker purchases.
8. I do not impulse buy sneakers based on trends.
9. I research the company that I am buying from and their environmental practices.
10. I would recycle my shoes, if given the option.

Appendix B – IRB Approval

Protocol Number:	2302451366	**Expiration Date:**	
Investigator:	Stephanie K Hubert	**Last Approval Date:**	06/09/2023

University of Arkansas System

Document Overview
Description: IRB protocol for honors student Maria Cervantes.
Explanation:
Organization Doc Num:

Protocol Summary
Protocol Number: 2302451366
Sequence Number: 1
Status: Exempt
Expiration Date:
Last Approval Date: 06/09/2023
Investigator: Stephanie K Hubert

Protocol Details
Type: Exempt
Summary/Keywords:
Application Date: 06/07/2023
Reference ID1:
Reference ID2:
FDA Application No: