Consumer Product Lifecycle: Headphones

Research and Product Development:
Put simply, there are three steps to designing headphones
1. style
2. quality
3.sound

Usually when designing a product, producers are looking at a certain target market. Companies use new trends in style as well as quality to develop new products. These designs are developed through testing and often one company breaks through with a new design while others follow.

Sound quality is another big area for development. Long lasting and non-tangling headphones. Strong bass is often one of the qualities that many companies try to develop in their headphones.

Marketing:
Big Companies try to get stars to link to their headphones such as Beats by Dr. Dre, Sol and swimming star Michael Phelps. Apple gives you a free pair of headphones when purchasing most of their products. There are many commercials for varying brands of headphones. Each brand has their own claim about theirs being the best. They also market through users with their distinctive styles.

Manufacturing:
The method of production and materials used depends mainly on the application of the headphones. The most common type of headphones on the market are the in-ear and over-head design or DJ style headphones.

Materials used:
- Polycarbonate
- Polyester material
  - These materials withstand daily wear and tear and also moisture that often occurs within the ear
- Some earphones that sit deeper in the ear have hypoallergenic components to avoid germs

- Molded plastic is used for the casing due to cost

Process:
- Micro-electronics and small silicon chips are used within the circuitry of headphones, the internals need to be manufactured and wired before being placed into a casing
- Made with machine tools and human intervention methods
- Completed headphones go through automated computer testing and simulation programs which pass sound frequencies in them. It could be costly equipment but it saves a lot of time

In general, headphones are manufactured in a factory using many different machines and different steps. The internal wiring is made with certain electrical factory and the casing and wiring is made at a different factory.

**Packaging**
The packaging of any product’s goal is to attract the customer to buy it; to catch their eye
Some companies have distinct packaging like beats or apple usually has white packaging.

The main idea of packaging headphones, as in any product, is to have them be appealing to the eye but also small enough to be able to transport

**Sales and Distribution**
Headphones are made and sold by many companies around the world. Some are very cheap and some are expensive.
The most known maker of headphones today is Beats, a company owned by ex hip hop artist Dr. Dre.

**Consumer Use**
Consumers use earphones or headphones to listen to music, phone calls, or videos so that no one else can hear it.

People have to constantly buy new headphones because of many reasons.
- Cord Snaps
- Shorts/stops working
- Easily loosable

**Final Disposition**
When people’s headphones break they usually are thrown out without thought but there are other disposable methods.
You can mail them to Thinksound a company that gives you benefits for letting them recycle your headphones.
You can also turn your broken headphones into DIY speakers.

**Sources:**
http://www.head-fi.org/t/108036/designing-manufacturing-headphones-thought-process