Product Cycle of Sneakers

Research and development is the beginning step in the product life cycle. Companies begin by looking at the market and what is currently wanted by consumers. There is no reason to make a shoe that consumers won’t want. Style and performance are the biggest pulls for consumers. The style changes with the culture of the consumers. The norm for current sneakers is vivid colors and surreal designs. Depending on what type of shoe is being made, there are different strategies to develop them. A shoe is made specifically for a certain activity and is supported and cushioned in different areas to increase comfort and decrease chance of injury.

Marketing is an essential process in selling a sneaker. Without the audience to sell to, what is the point of making the shoe? There are many different tactics used by shoe companies to sell their products. Many companies use nostalgia to sell their products. Nike, for instance, uses the popular movie “Space Jam” and the cartoon character Bugs Bunny to sell their basketball shoes. Michael Jordan sold his shoe by wearing the unreleased shoe when he hit a game winner in the NBA finals. Many companies put celebrities or athletes at the front of advertisements to sell their shoes by saying you could up your game to their level by using their shoes. The most major form of advertising is being the manufacturer of choice for a professional league. Adidas is currently the NBA and MLS manufacturer of choice, and makes the clothing and shoes for all of the teams in the league.

The main materials in sneakers are rubber and cotton. Usually natural rubber is used for the soles of the shoes since it’s more elastic and is produced in Southeast Asia. The cotton for the
shoes is either produced in China or the United States. In shoe production, the cotton is gathered and shipped to synthetic material firms where fiber-based products are made and sent to other shoe-component maker firms. These companies make the laces and other components of the shoe. After being gathered and processed the materials used in the making sneakers are brought to the company factories. Due to the higher wages in the United States, most of the major shoe companies including Nike, Reebok, Adidas have 100% outsourcing. This means all products are manufactured in developing countries, particularly China, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Outsourcing causes increased difficulties of monitoring the quality of their products and the actual working conditions in the factories, however subcontractors usually compensate for some of these problems. Smaller shoe companies usually produce their shoes within the country benefiting from domestic advantages such as monitoring, skilled workforce, government stability, job creation, and well understood labor rules.

Shoes are primarily packaged in cardboard boxes. However, companies like Puma have decided to package some of their shoes in bags. Most shoe companies have moved to sustainability and are using shoe boxes, shoe stuffing and wrapping paper that are entirely made up of recycled materials. Some of these companies include Nike, Adidas, and Reebok. Also, the shoe boxes have moved from double walled cardboard to single walled. This move to sustainability in packaging is not only eco-friendly but also cuts packaging costs.

Most shoe are made in Asia so they must be transported to America for consumers. First shoes are loaded into metal shipping containers that can hold up 6,000 pairs in one container. Then the shoes are shipped overseas. Once in America shoes are sent to distribution companies such as FDRA (Footwear, Distributors, and retailers of America). These distribution companies
take the shoes to department stores, athletic stores, online stores, etc. From the stores the shoes are put on sale for consumers to buy.

Just like most material things, Americans value shoes greatly and spend a lot of money on them annually. Every year 13 billion dollars is spent on shoes alone in America. On average, Every American spent about $230 on seven pairs of shoes in 2012. Shop Smart magazine estimated from a study that the average American woman owns 17 pairs of shoes and the average man owns 3 pairs. The shoe consumption has also risen tremendously in the past decade. From 2009 to 2010 footwear consumption jumped 14 percent. Americans have admitted, on average, that they spend a smaller percentage of their income on necessities just to buy more shoes.

According to REI, the average pair of walking or running shoes should last up to 500 miles. While factories around the world are creating around 20 billion shoes each year, 300 million are being thrown in the trash can. Unfortunately, it can take 25-40 for a leather shoe to decompose, and up to 80 years for a rubber boot sole. Ethylene Vinyl Acetate, which is a material found in the sole of a running shoe, can take up to 1,000 years. As for the shoes that are not thrown away, Nike, which is one the leading shoe producers in America, has a program called reuse-a-shoe. This recycling program creates things like fields, courts, tracks, and even other shoes, out of the old ones. Since the program was created in 1990, Nike has collected over 28 million shoes. They uses many different parts of the shoe to create different materials. For example, Nike Grind Foam, made from the midsole, is used to make outdoor basketball and tennis courts. The upper fabric, called Nike Grind Fiber, is used in the creation of cushioning pads and indoor courts. Even though the program is very effective, not enough shoes are recycled each year and take up a lot of space in landfills.
Consumer Use: Annually, 13 billion dollars is spent on shoes in America. Shoes are considered a high priority to most Americans and about 230 dollars is spent on them each year, per person.

Disposition: On Average, about 300 million shoes are thrown in the trash each year, and take a long time to decompose. Nike, however, has a very efficient recycling program called Reuse-a-shoe.

Research: Companies look at different demographics when producing different types of shoes, and they also look at the audience's needs. Shoes are usually made for specifically one activity.

Packaging: Sneakers are primarily packaged in cardboard boxes and are stuffed with wrapping paper which are made entirely of recycled materials.

Distribution: Shoes are transported to America in large metal containers, and then taken to distribution centers who take the shoes to retail stores.

Manufacturing: Materials for sneakers, mainly cotton and rubber, are made in separate factories then shipped to the company factory. Most sneakers are made overseas.

Marketing: Many companies use nostalgia to sell their shoes by bringing back memories from the audience's childhoods or favorite memories. Many companies also sponsor certain professional sports.
Works Cited


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