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Investigación

## Sports Shoe for Everyday Activities: The Transformation in Consumption Patterns of Sports Fashion in The Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

*Calzado deportivo para actividades cotidianas: La transformación de los patrones de consumo de la moda deportiva a finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX*

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### Resumen

La presente investigación está dedicada a estudiar las particularidades de la moda deportiva desde el siglo XIX hasta el siglo XX. Además, considera las influencias en la imagen cultural del calzado cotidiano. Este documento considera cómo se diseñan los zapatos para el deporte, pero se han

### Abstract

The present research is devoted to studying the specifics of sports fashion from the 19th century to the 20th century. Also, it considers the influences on the cultural image for everyday shoes. This paper considers how shoes are designed for sports, but they have been included in daily wear.

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incluido en el uso diario. Se aporta la evidencia de que la actividad deportiva ha generado una demanda insuficiente, respondiendo a las crecientes motivaciones. Recíprocamente, los fabricantes han promovido la moda deportiva y la ropa informal para crear nuevos consumidores para un mayor flujo de producción. Los enfoques empleados para la base de la metodología de investigación se incluyen como: teórico, multifactorial y sistemático-histórico. Además, se utilizan enfoques cronológicos y comparativos para analizar los problemas. Así, los autores plantean que los productores utilizaron nuevos métodos de estimulación, y atrajeron la retórica de la novedad tecnológica como medio de aplicar el interés general de la innovación publicitaria. En este sentido, una confirmación más es que los parámetros de aceptabilidad cultural de la ropa se redefinieron a principios del siglo XX para que comenzaran a introducir un look deportivo práctico y liberado en el calzado de todos los días.

### Palabras clave

Calzado deportivo, Calzado de uso diario, Historia cultural, Teoría del diseño, Moda casual.

The evidence is provided that sport's activity has generated insufficient demand, answering to the growing motivations. Reciprocally, manufacturers have promoted sports fashion and casual clothing to create new consumers for an increased production stream. The approaches employed for the basis of the research methodology are included as: theoretical, multifactorial, and systematic-historical. Also, there are used chronological and comparative approaches for analyzing the problems. Thus, the authors suggest that the producers used new stimulation methods, and they attracted the rhetoric of technological novelty as a means of applying the general interest of innovation by advertising. In this regard, further confirmation is that the cultural acceptability parameters for clothing were redefined at the beginning of the twentieth century so that they started to introduce a practical and liberated sporty look in everyday footwear.

### Keywords

*Sports Footwear, Everyday Shoes, Cultural History, Design Theory, Casual Fashion.*

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## 1. Introducción:

Shoes with rubber soles became a desirable target for the consumer mass at the beginning 20th century. Consequently, the distinction between fashion and sport, specificity and generality was erased even more. This uninterrupted trend started in the 1870s with the introduction of the first lawn tennis shoes, and it has continued to this day. Spreading various sports by the 1940s, critical characteristics of the Victorian tennis shoes were in demand as casual shoes, which most of them made with rubber soles. At the same time, sports shoes with their appearance provoked the image of street culture, although they remained shoes for sports.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in West Europe, America, and particularly in late Victorian England, urban communities witnessed a sport's boom. John Lowerson describes this boom as being widely accepted as a general pattern. As an interconnected sphere of material culture, the restoration of physical strength has become a medium by some social formations, like class, gender, ethnicity, and age, stratified by systematization and interpretation in a new way. Moreover, the growing popularity of sport made it a promising target for entrepreneurship because Great Britain gradually moved from industrialization to developing a financial service sector. Understandably, it was the stimulus for the commercialization of sport, reflecting a growing number of consumers' attitudes towards leisure activities and how they lived in private and public spaces to spend their salaries. When the sport was the image of Victorian "respectability," the development of sports enterprises coincided with the expansion of capitalism. Interestingly, despite commercialization, they still retain their original values (Lowerson, 1993, p. 2).

In addition to these social changes, the emergence of the modern sports economy has been stimulated by great collective and professional interests: the rise of the international media and advertising industry is the most important. Individual competitors could be promoted as celebrities and teams positioned as celebrities' assets. Instead, it resembles the American model, influenced by the principles of the commercial entertainment industry. This model becomes dominant in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. John Horne describes this change as a shift from "Olympism to Prolympism," or non-professionalism to professionalism, stimulating a decrease in governmental support for sports initiatives and strengthening modern capitalist branding techniques (Horne, 2006, p. 4).

## 2. Sport shoes in consumer culture of early 20th century

In the nineteenth century, a very similar model could be claimed to develop the modern fashion industry. At the same time, clothing was used as a primary indicator of social

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status, occupation, and unshakable moral foundations. The potential for mass production also influenced its semantic content so that mid-twentieth century fashion could be considered more influenced by popular sports culture, like football and tennis. In this sense, the transition from amateurism to professionalism in sports organizations (or the transition from local to global) can be compared with the gradual decline of production methods, e.g., individual tailoring. The transformation is conducted to the mass-produced fashion with brand symbols rather than haute-couture and personalized products (Fig. 1) (Beward, 2003, pp. 5-12). The result of these two trends is the combination of concepts such as novelty, attractiveness and, and the glorification of a well-trained character. According to the comments of Vogue magazine in 1926, "everyone is convinced with the perfection of the adaptation to the needs of the game which modern dress has evolved" (Warner, 2006, p. 3). So, in the first place, sport is to contribute to the evolution of modern fashion.

As Beward confirms, in the Victorian era, men were active participants in the consumer culture, and fashion was a meaningful way masculine characters and traits were demonstrated. In his book *The Hidden Consumer*, he highlights the suburban style of tailoring for sportswear, which emphasized "relaxation" and "replacing the archaic introversion ... with the over-familiar heartiness of the playing field" (Beward, 1999, pp. 197-201). The clothes, worn in the evening and on holidays, were "white flannels and straw hat became synonymous with a respectable release from the daily round" (Beward, 2009). Likewise, Shannon argued that sportswear's popularity and the wide variety of sportswear in the late Victorian era unbraced dress codes, and it allowed middle-class men to learn gracefully dressing aesthetics, which defied the ideals of dark-suited masculinity (Shannon, 2006, pp. 10-12).

Neither Beward nor Shannon concentrates specifically on sports shoes. However, it is clear that producers and their male customers challenged the existing image of what was acceptable in terms of dressmaking and that tennis footwear was part of this type of new aesthetics. Loose-fitting shirts with roll-up sleeves accented the body nature more obviously defined the body, while school caps, colored ribbons added a riot to blazers<sup>1</sup>. Tennis shoes became part of such clothing, providing a lighter color and weight alternative to the dark boots and shoes worn in other styles. Shannon mentions that based primarily on athletic and sporty clothing; men developed a style that differed a masculine, middle-class identity from the non-

1. Blazer is like a formal Jacket with a sporty cut. The terms "blazer" and "sports jacket" often refer to the same model, but there are apparent differences in the US. A blazer is a jacket with patch pockets and contrasting buttons; that is, the main differences are the details borrowed by the blazer from the jacket. Metal buttons are arranged in one or two rows and can be copper, brass, and silver, gold. The buttons on the blazers of members of closed aristocratic clubs and prestigious universities are often molded with heraldic insignia. (Encyclopedia of Fashion. See also for more details: <https://wiki.wildberries.ru/things/clothing>).

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flexible formality of the early Victorian period. It was a style that combined practicality with enjoyment. Thus, they provided new insight for creating sports shoes that are easy to wear, as they were designed for comfort and ease of movement. Clothing that was intended for specific sports was worn outside of their narrow intended use, while the wardrobe was composed of lightweight materials with a more relaxed style and more bright color schemes that reflected the energy and simplicity of the tennis game, and easy walking on the playground (Breward, 2009, pp. 179-188). However, Shannon does not concentrate on the role of mass producers in changing the culture of tailoring fashion. As an example, lawn tennis shoes prompted shoe companies to broaden their product offerings and thus contributed to a shift in what was socially acceptable. Sporty style in fashion from the late nineteenth century was not universally approved, but some found the abundance of youth men's clothing too much.

In the last years of the 19th century in Europe, the summer months were too hot, which aided in promoting sportswear and made tennis footwear more appropriate for everyday use. Regarding the spread of new ideas in men's clothing, we can mention the correspondent of the *Freeman's Journal* was surprised to see Mr. Balfour – the British statesman – on a Sunday stroll along with downtown London, “dressed in a light blue serge suit, a flannel shirt, a soft felt hat, and tennis shoes.” He can be called a tennis fan. The “lawn tennis” was mentioned in 1869 as the early version of the game (Todd, 1979, pp. 49-51). The *Leeds Mercury* newspaper reported a similar example about casual dressing at the beginning of the twentieth century, in which explained the sport-inspired costume and white tennis shoes worn by another British statesman. Neither of the reports mentioned above was related to sociocultural revolutionary figures, but their clothing represented the impact of sportswear on mainstream fashion and the spread of casual wear. It likewise indicated the growing acceptance of the simplistic style compatible with the middle-class youth (Fig. 2). (Shannon, 2006, pp. 161-190).

### 3. Role of fashion and industry in shaping modern sport shoes

Manufacturers became instrumental in promoting tennis shoes as a fashionable element of casual wear. The wide variety of shoe styles they produced led to consumers looking at them as fashion items. At the same time, it became possible to make a choice based on aesthetics. The advertising emphasis was on the attractive look that corresponded to the forms, and the new models were often positioned as “shoe of the season,” which indirectly allowed them to be connected to the fashion world—their images in stores and shopping centers connected them with the new culture of fashion consumption. Most notably, the example of the boots featured in the *British Medical Journal*: the innovations for sports footwear is most evidently

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the rubber sole, but also it better adapts to the foot, and made of soft leather, so, it will readily be used as everyday footwear (Howden & Richardson, 1893).

Although tennis became an increasingly popular game for the lower strata of society, in practice, it remained the privilege of the strata of society that did not need to earn money. Well-known fashion houses were conscious of this. So, Jean Patou, Lanvin, and Coco Chanel made special arrangements in their elegant boutiques dedicated to sportswear and footwear. However, aesthetic aspects of sports shoes were not a priority for industrial manufacturing companies. Just, they wanted to enhance the quality of their shoes from a technical point of view, subsequently, to promote the athletic performance for professional players to be admired and interested in the mass to be reflected in worldwide advertisements. (Pereira, 2004, pp. 29-30). This period marks the beginning of modern marketing<sup>2</sup>.

°One of the most critical factors in developing modern sports shoes has been the growing popularity of sports. As a result of the beginning global trend before the First World War, sports accessible for the wealthy classes began to overspread into the middle classes. This social strategy led to sports federations and professional ruling for several sports by some governments. Ascending the level of sports activities by societies has led to the need to consume appropriate footwear. Mass popularization created a need for products that could be differentiated, sorted, and classified according to the customers' income, the competition status, and the games in which they participated. Since the 1880s, a wide variety of sports shoes have been offered to customers, and it promoted the rubber industry progress and accelerated the popularization of sports activities. The widespread acceptance of tennis footwear as a casual shoe was serendipity for manufacturers who stimulated more informal dressing styles to increase rubber consumption. Advertisements developed the relationship between youth, leisure, and sportswear. They inspired the designers to rethink the sports footwear, which was made of canvas upper with a rubber sole as a fashionable summer shoe that everyone could wear. The promotional brochures spread the message that footwear with rubber soles is stylish and socially acceptable, and they clarified the advantages of rubber outsole compared to traditional materials.

2. For example, at the beginning of the twentieth century, The Dasslers Company started producing sports shoes with this strategy by Adi Dassler in Germany. He later introduced Adidas in 1949.

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#### 4. Conclusion

For most people in the early twentieth century, lawn tennis shoes were suitable for everyday use. They reflected the extensive structural changes that were taking place in Victorian society, including the availability of new raw materials, the rise of the culture of consumption, the growth of the well-being of the middle class, the increase in the popularity of sports activities. Their forms were shaped by the practical aspects of playing tennis on the grass courts, their designs exposed the social value of the game in middle-class life, particularly among young people, and their utilitarian aspects reflected the changing in mass consumers' culture.

As tennis shoes designed to meet specific practical and social needs, they have been adopted for other athletic fields as well. Also, they shaped the reliable character of footwear for non-sport applications. Perhaps more significantly, rubber-soled tennis shoes have been implicated in a broader cultural change as middle-class youth redefined clothing acceptability by introducing a realistic and calm style into casual wear. Since then, sports shoes have become part of a generational movement that has shaped a more modern attitude towards life. By the time we entered the new century, most of the qualities associated with sports shoes had already been established. Sports shoes confirm the products' dynamics and how they are open to re-interpret alternative applications as being used more widely.



Figure 1. Fashionable tennis suit, the 1900s (Todd, 1979)

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Figure 2. Women's clothing and footwear for lawn tennis (left) at the end of the 19th century; (right) the 1930s. (Boone, 2015)

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