

# Shoe Design Requirements for the Physically Disabled Women

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## ***Abstract***

*The physically disabled women have difficulties in entirely incorporating the social and cultural dimensions of shoes into their everyday life due to the lack of products and the bad quality of the existing ones. The few products available in the Brazilian mass market cause embarrassment to their wearers as they result from designs which give priority to the functional aspects without taking the social and cultural dimensions into account.*

*In order to incorporate such dimensions, this present paper describes part of a study consisting of the development of the shoe design methodology, which would be able to allow both effective socio-cultural inclusion and improvement in the quality of life.*

*In addition to partial conclusions regarding such an investigation, this paper presents the ergonomic, aesthetical and symbolical aspects concerning the shoe design for the physically disabled women who live in Sao Paulo, Brazil, with the purpose of responding how such aspects can provide the wearers with effective social cultural inclusion.*

*The qualitative methodology, which collected data from both primary and secondary sources, was applied. Phenomenological approach and semi-structured interviews were used to raise the main concepts, which would be able to allow both effective social cultural inclusion and improvement in the quality of life.*

*By analyzing the interviews, it could be concluded that the shoe design has to meet the safety and comfort criteria related to the ergonomic aspects, the aesthetics harmony and balance, as well as the sensuality and femininity concepts as symbolical aspects attributed to the shoe design by the wearers, so that the shoes can provide them with effective socio-cultural inclusion.*

***Keywords: design for health, shoe design, physically disabled women***

## Introduction

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Shoes are powerful objects of fashion design in the sense of amplifying the symbolic values of an individual's body, emphasizing either individual or collective identities, associated with different life-styles. They are ludic objects, which are able to meet the wearer's needs through the stimulation of senses. Historically, according to Semmelhack (2006), the twentieth-century high thin heels, also known as stiletto heels, have replaced the Belle Époque corselets, which are seen as symbols of seduction and fetish. The interviewees' fetish for shoes was revealed. Nelly Nahum, one of them, claimed that the possibility of not wearing beautiful shoes depressed her. Also Karin Camargo, another interviewee, claimed not to be able to live without high heels.

It is important to add that many Brazilian women sacrifice their physical health for the "magical power" of such aesthetical and symbolic aspects. Actually, the interviewees do not do this any longer. They admit they have already sacrificed their bodies, but today they look for artifacts which are more balanced among practice, aesthetics and symbols. Due to their physical disabilities stemmed from a lower limbs length discrepancy of over 3 cm, they need safe shoes as it will be gone over in the next section and also wish shoes which can further encourage effective socio-cultural inclusion. According to Karin Camargo, finding these two concepts in the same pair of shoes is extenuating and impossible.

The development of shoes focused on health issues in Brazil comprehends the following categories:

- a) diabetics – shoes developed for diabetics. Those shoes can be found in several Brazilian virtual stores like FisioStore, Ortopedia Carlita, Ortopedia Palmipé and Laboratório do Pé;
- b) anatomic, also called anti-stress, which benefit the physical comfort and practical functions, such as the ones by made by Opananken;
- c) orthopedic – mostly developed by ordering by means of a medical prescription, and projected focusing on the wearer's physical needs. Those are products recommended by orthopedists aiming at correcting and/or preventing bone deformation mainly from the spinal cord and lower limbs. The existing available orthopedic shoes are considered to be horrible-looking by their wearers – opinion also shared by 80% of the health professionals interviewed.
- d) accessories – insoles, heel cushions and tips among other accessories to make shoes more comfortable.

The orthopedic goods companies develop projects not considering the aesthetic and symbolic issues of the design; as a consequence, they do not further encourage the socio-cultural inclusion. On the contrary, all the surveyed women feel ashamed of wearing such shoes, doing it in last circumstances, such as when feeling too much pain for example.

This study focuses basically on the consideration of aesthetic, symbolic and ergonomic features to encourage the effective socio-cultural inclusion. In a multicultural country like Brazil, how the wearer's socio-cultural dimensions in the footwear project development should be mapped?

Findeli (2001:16) suggests a qualitative and phenomenological approach to understand the ethical, cultural, social and environmental demands of the contemporaneous period. "Phenomenology of Perception" is the work of the philosopher Merleau-Ponty, which

privileges the world of experiences lived like the forefront of the configuration of the human being and the world of knowledge by perception. It is a meaningful theory is based on human beings' experiences which makes sense in their lives' history, belonging to our experience. It depends on their corporal experience and on the situation of their bodies. It is the communication vehicle which their established with the others humans beings and with the objects, involving their personality, desires and passions. *"It is the fundamental reason for human beings to be in the world,"* Chauí (2000:157).

In this project, the relation between shoes and their wearers was observed by means of reporting their experiences and experiments related to ergonomic, aesthetic and symbolic aspects should be incorporated in the shoe design.

## **Ergonomic, aesthetic and symbolic aspects**

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According to Iida (2005), products should have three desirable characteristics responsible for meeting certain needs of the human being such as technical, ergonomic and aesthetical qualities.

The technical quality is what makes the product work out and, from the mechanical, electrical, electronic or chemical point of view, transform one kind of energy into another one. It is associated to the structure of the shoes, known as waist.

The ergonomic quality is the one to ensure a good integration of the article with the wearer. Handling facility, anthropometric adaptation, movement compatibility and other comfort and safety items are responsible for this quality.

The third quality is the aesthetical one, which provides pleasure to the wearer, involving the combination of colors, materials, textures, etc.

According to Lobäch (2001), the products have three functions:

- a) practical: relation between the article and its wearers in the physiological level of usage;
- b) aesthetical: relation between the article and its wearers on the level of sensorial processes - a psychological aspect of the sensorial perception during the usage;
- c) symbolic: determined by the psychological and social capability of making connections between the appearance noticed on a sensorial level and the mental capability of associating ideas (symbols).

The fashion products generally make intensely use of the emotional factors, which are associated with aesthetics. According to Jordan (2000), personality is attributed to artifacts; in other words, products are "live beings" which build sensitive and emotional relations with their labels. During the interview with the wearers, brands such as *"Havaianas"* and *"All Star"* were mentioned for their comfort, status, and mainly for their presence in special moments of their lives.

Pleasure is an abstract feeling which is found in the relation among the wearer, products and the environment. According to Jordan (2000), based on the Canadian Lionel Tiger's anthropological studies, there are four kinds of pleasure: physical, social, psychological and ideological.

The physical pleasure derives from the relation between products and sensorial organs. The social pleasure is the interaction among several people encouraged by products. The psychological pleasure is associated with people's emotional and cognitive reactions towards products; it refers to the mind pleasure in accomplishing tasks related to the

usage and compatibility of the products considered friendly. The ideological pleasure is associated with the aesthetical and ethical values of a determined culture, generation or individual; sustainable values as well as social, political and moral responsibility are part of the ideological pleasure.

From this perspective, comfort is viewed as a physical and social pleasure relation between wearers and objects. In this context, fads can either insert or exclude a group of individuals.

According to the interviews, Brazilian soap operas cause significant social influence. This means that the desire for shoes is that one shown on soap operas as trendy. When asking the interviewees about the comfort provided by the shoes, the answers were based on the practical function directly related to the physical and physiological issues like *“these shoes hurt my feet, cause me blisters and corns”* or even *“they are too warm”*, *“these ones squeeze my toes”* or *“these are the only ones I can wear”*. And still, *“these are high heels but I feel bare foot with them”*.

Comfort depends mostly upon the perception of the person who is going through the situation. There is no definition universally accepted. (Lueder, 1983; Slater, 1985; Zhang, 1991). Recently, some researchers have suggested that comfort is linked to pleasure, which introduces borderlines not well defined between the usage and functionality (Slater, 1995; Jordan, 2000). Simultaneously, another group of researchers admits that comfort and discomfort hold two dimensions: comfort associated with feelings of relaxation and well being, and discomfort linked to biomechanical factors and to the fatigue. (Zhang, 1992; Zhang *et al.*, 1996; Goonetilleke, 1999). Despite the lack of academic consensus about the theme, the wearers interviewed consider comfort an important issue directly associated with the use of the object, related, therefore, to the usability and functionality of the product and to the physical pleasure.

Usability is defined as *“the effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction with which the specific wearers achieve specific goals in particular environments,”* according to ISO DIS 9241-114 *apud* Jordan (2000:07). It does not depend upon the characteristics of the product, but on the interaction among the wearer, product and environment. What matters is how to use the product in order to do something. Usability tends to be limited, the author defends. The evaluation criteria tend to regard the product as a tool from which the wearers accomplish tasks.

Martins (2006) adds that the usability represents the interface which allows the efficacious usage of the product, making them friendly and pleasant to the wearer. The author has developed *Oikos*, an evaluation methodology of garment usability and comfort in which the act of dressing and undressing are studied as well as maintenance facilities, assimilation, handling and also the comfort levels and safety risks, considering the wearer’s psychological pleasure.

Concerning functionality, Silveira (2008:21-39) argues that it is not a characteristic of the object itself, *“but a series of complex relations among habits and usage, manufacturing techniques and symbolic meanings.”* The author observes functionality through the prism of language, following Bürdek’s focus on semiotics (2005), which makes it non-separable from the aesthetical and symbolic functions of the product design.

A lot of products developed for people with special needs have medical or clinical aesthetics easily recognized by their looks, which communicate the wearer’s disability, leading to social exclusion, and not to inclusion. A socially uncomfortable situation for a wearer, such as the weird looks of shoes for diabetics, discloses the wearer’s disability, which is, according to Roncoletta and Martins (2011), a negative emotional value.

In conclusion, usability and functionality are directly associated with the wearing of the object and its practical functions. They are also associated with its aesthetical-symbolic issues, i.e., the wearing of the object also depends on its communication, on the wearer's context and also on its repertoire of previous experiences, which are subjective aspects.

## Materials and Methods

This study was realized in 3 parts. In the first one, data from secondary sources about the ergonomic, aesthetical and symbolical aspects of the design and shoe design were collected. These aspects were organized regarding the traditional industrial way to build-up shoes in Brazil.

The second part was a phenomenological study focusing on the wearers' experiences (tables 4 and 5). The semi-structured interviews were carried out in the wearers' homes, a familiar environment where they could feel more comfortable, so that some subjective values could be risen was registered through pictures and videos. The wearer's adaptation displays their shoes making comments about their desire and presenting solutions for adaptation. The survey also allowed the wearers to talk about brands, shapes, colors or even aesthetical attributes they wished. Finally, they were asked to express their opinion freely on two products (pictures 1 and 2), talking into account the touchable perception of the materials, shaping of forms and analyses of chromatic composition. As objects, such products also allowed remarks related to social pleasure.



Pictures 1 and 2: Adapted shoes used in the surveys.

Source: Roncoletta (2009)

It is worth mentioning that, due to the variety of foot and lower limb sizes, the women interviewed were not allowed to wear the shoes – this is a restriction of the survey method. The aspects risen in this study concerned the practical functions of the object stemmed from accounts of the women's own experience with previous footwear.

In this project, different opinions of *individuals* from “Instituto do Pé do Hospital das Clínicas da Faculdade de Medicina da Universidade de São Paulo” (FMUSP) were gathered. The word *individual* is used by the Commission of Ethics in Research (CONEP/BR) to describe all people involved, being wearers, orthopedists, physiotherapists or designers. All the interviewees were given feedback by the researchers so that they could learn the partial results and approve the publication.

The interviews and the elements to build-up shoe design in the conclusion section were gathered in the third part of this present study, the conclusion section.

## Industrial build-up of the shoe design

The industrial build-up of the shoes is divided into two main parts:

- a) the upper shoe, localized in the inner and outer upper part of the shoes and
- b) the sole, localized in the inner and outer lower part.

Such elements, which were organized associated with the ergonomic, aesthetic and symbolic aspects analyzed in the shoe design, should be included in the project methodology to encourage efficient socio-cultural inclusion.

### **Upper sole - inner upper**

The inner upper part elements are concerned with the ergonomic aspects so that the wearers feel safety, comfort and physical pleasure.

#### **Weight**

In Brazil, there is a biomechanical analysis of shoes, usually carried out by IBTeC - Instituto Brasileiro de Tecnologia do Couro, Artefatos e Calçados (2007), responsible for the “*selo conforto*” or “comfort label”. The weight level of each shoe is a fundamental element responsible for physical comfort. The lighter the shoe, the less weight for the wearer to carry.

Classification	Heavy	Normal	Light	Very light
Weight	more than 360 gr.	maximum 360 gr.	from 160 to 260 gr.	below 160 gr.

**Table 1: Weight**

Source: IBTeC (2007)

#### **Temperature**

Wearers do not have any device to measure the temperature of physiological comfort in their homes. Therefore, there should be an attempting to develop models with side or even frontal cuts which would allow better ventilation.

Classification	Unpleasant	Bearable	Pleasant
Temperature ° C	Above 30° C	28° C to 30° C	27,5° C

**Table 2: Temperature**

Source: IBTeC (2007)

#### **Fitting**

The existence of enough room for the toes to fit comfortably should be checked, especially while wearers are moving. The ideal sensation is feeling a soft tightening as if the foot were “hugged” around the articulation (location of the toes). The tight and firm shoes are those which do not squeeze their toes and those which, when wearers step with the propulsion triangle, should have no loose space around the heel. In this condition, models having straps with different adjustments on the ankle or instep may help the firmness and safety of the shoes.

#### **Materials and inner finishing**

Natural materials such as goat and buffalo leather should be used for the inner part of the shoe as they allow more perspiration and are softer. In case technological materials are used, the manufacturer should find enough information about their origin, composition and be sure they are reliable. Insoles covered with cloth, like cotton, absorb perspiration. Stuffing with EVA (ethyl vinyl acetate) around the heel and in the propulsion triangle feels like stepping softly. The stitch should be observed so that the joints will not be scratched.

### **Upper sole - outer upper**

The outer upper part elements are concerned with the aesthetic and symbolic aspects. According to the interviewees, wing tips stand for seduction and femininity.

#### **Toe caps fitting**

Square or rounded toe caps which continue rounded while walking should be used. In order to project shoes with wing tips, the manufacturer should exaggerate creating tapered wing tips which become gradually narrowed from the first phalanx of the big toe (picture 3).



Picture 3: Ergonomic and aesthetic wing tips in an Oxford model. Picture 4: Shoes look alike.

Source: Roncoletta (2009)

**Lines and shapes**

The interviewees’ desire is to make both shoes look alike. The original aesthetic lines of the shoes should be followed to cause harmony and flow so that neither shoes contrast with each other. In picture 4 the spaces of the front sole in the original model have been kept by an interviewee in the sole compensation to cause a feeling of continuity, thus, flow.

**Materials e Stitches**

The outer materials, as their stitches are associated directly with the shoe looks; aesthetic and symbolic aspects of the design. Shoes covered with prime materials such as organic leather, satin, etc. are considered sophisticated and elegant by the interviewees. The materials must match the shape of the shoes in order to keep this symbolic aspect.

**Sole - inner**

The analysis criteria of the inner sole correspond to the lower part of the shoes and also responsible for its technical quality.

**Heels and toe caps**

The heels must touch the ground completely regardless of the heel height, being aligned with the foot. The balance axis of the body between the hips, knee and ankle must be prolonged through the shoe. If the heel touches the ground just partially, it will probably alter the natural axis of the wearer’s body, making them feel unbalanced, and insecure.

The ideal heel height is 2 cm because it distributes equally the weight between the toes and the heel. The distribution on the table below should be observed. The height of the toe caps must keep a distance of around 1 cm from the ground.

Classification	Less Pleasant		Pleasant		Bearable		Unpleasant		Terrible	
Heel height	0 cm		2 cm		4 cm		6 cm		10 cm	
Pressure	toes	hell	toes	hell	toes	hell	toes	hell	toes	hell
		43%	57%	50%	50%	57%	43%	75%	25%	90%

Table 3: Pressure

Source: IBTeC (2007)

**Molding sole**

Sturdy platforms, wedge shoes or even flat heels should allow wearers to move their feet. Sturdy structures usually do not allow natural feet movement. Also, the very soft molding

sole should be avoided since it does not protect the spinal cord and might, therefore, cause lumbar pain.



Picture 5: Pictures taken by the authors to help visualize the correct molding sole. The correct molding sole is shown in the picture in the middle.

Source: the authors. Photographer: Cesar Cury.

## **Sole - outer lower**

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For the outer sole, aesthetics and system of symbols of the heel and the sole were analyzed.

### **Outsole**

The original outsole of the sports footwear should be kept. Besides having better aesthetical finishing, there are studies about outsoles which cause more friction, and, therefore, adhere better to the floor, avoiding slipping and providing more safety. Non-slip material in shoes should be used having the outsole made of leather.

### **Heels**

Thicker heels are usually more stable. After all, the ground contact area is wider than with thin heels. Thin heels like stiletto should be avoided. The prolonging of the body balance axis should be assured in both high and low thin heels.

## **Wearer's desire**

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The interviewees report their difficulty in making the adaptations suggested by the orthopedists in the orthopedic stores.

According to Nelly Nahum, bearing the medical prescriptions, the customers look for the orthopedic stores which charge the shoe manufacturing by centimeter and make the product with no aesthetical concern. *"...Besides, I've never been able to wear the product; they were ugly, hurt me and I also paid a fortune for them."* This statement lead to the importance of investigating holistically the relation between the shoes and their wearers in order to learn their longings, desire, will and even their disappointments. Their reasons for not wearing orthopedic shoes, their preferences for brands and their opinions about ergonomic aspects are shown in table 4.

Nahum's account is reported through the desire and will of possessing several pairs of shoes, for instance high-heeled sandals for a party or sneakers for hiking. She also mentions the wish for certain colors, like black and red. Her account stresses the subjective aspects related to pleasure as basic premises of the project development. To her, wearing a pair of shoes belongs to her way of expressing herself; an emotional bond which brings her satisfaction, pleasant feelings, appreciation, among other values attributed by the surveyed. Although Nahum is worried about safety and usability, these are not the factors which make her search for shoes, but the elegance of the shapes, the flow of lines, the desire of several colors for certain occasions. Her fetish for shoes is evident and her acquisitions are based on desire.

Wear of orthopedic or anatomic shoes.	Yes	0%	Reasons				
	No	100%	The orthopedic one is ugly, hurttable and heavy.				
Shoes adapting.	Yes	67%	Where	Upper shoe	50%	Reasons	Fitting better
				Sole	100%	Reasons	Safety
	No	33%					
Preferences to brands	Yes	67%	Which one	All Star, Birkenstock, Franziska Hübner and Havaianas	Reasons		
					All Star and Havaianas – physical comfort, social and cultural dimensions. Birkenstock – physical comfort. Franziska Hübner – social and cultural dimensions.		
Importance of ergonomic aspects	Yes	83%	Where	Upper sole		Reasons	Fitting better
				Sole		Reasons	Safety
	No	17%					

**Table 4: The importance of ergonomic aspects to the interviewees.**

Jacqueline Ramos, another young interviewee, claims that the orthopedic boots are embarrassing. She neither wears orthopedic shoes nor makes any adaptations. For her graduation party, she searched incessantly for a pair of sandals which would make her feel safe and which would be delicate and sensual at the same time. How could a romantic young girl like Jacqueline feel like a princess in orthopedic boots in her commencement? She would rather undergo another surgery than wear orthopedic boots: *“Nobody likes to wear orthopedic boots for the aesthetics, for the shame...Ok, it’s for my own benefit, but they look ugly...If I have to undergo another surgery, I will, but I won’t wear those boots...I don’t see anybody wearing them...”*

According to Morin and Adorno (1967), cultural industry is cruel. The fashion campaigns and shows, the Oscar awards, the several movies and TV series including the Brazilian soap operas, show women on high and many times thin heels. Shoes with thin heels and wing tips stand for power and seduction in the media universe making young girls like Jacqueline feel powerful in the heights of a high heel. Ramos’s words stress the looks of the product concerning social pleasure reported by Jordan (2000). An object of design should never embarrass the wearer.

Finding a pair of shoes which encourages balance between the functions is a task practically impossible and extenuating. Another interviewee, Karin Camargo, who usually has to make one out two pairs of shoes of the same model, but of different sizes, to able to walk, comments:

*“...Imagine, you go shopping around with your husband and he tells you, ‘I can’t believe you haven’t found any pair of shoes.’ How can you buy two pairs? That turns into a drama and you don’t feel like buying anything anymore. It’s already tough to find a pair which is not hard, which doesn’t have the little flap behind, which doesn’t hurt your feet and which holds your feet well. It turns into the shoe drama.”*

After the difficulty in choosing and acquiring a pair of shoes, most of the wearers need to adapt them (table 4) - take them to the shoe repair for the necessary adjustments such as adding anti-slipping soles, ankle cushions to provide a better safety feeling, and also changing the heels to more stable ones and of different sizes according to the difference between the lower limbs.

Choosing, buying and wearing shoes are negative for Camargo, under the psychological pleasure perspective which affects not only the wearers but also their families. The aspects of the physical comfort are mentioned by the interviewee as essential to

encourage safety; however, it is noticed in her speech that the sensuality of the shoes is as important as the comfort. She adds *“Oh, the heels! Women can’t live without them!”* And comments, smiling: *“I’d love to wear heels. They wouldn’t need to be high...those shoes with wing tips! How beautiful! It’s the classical, the black. I keep a pair by Franziska Hübner only for me to remember...it’s my concept of gorgeous shoes.”* The high-heeled *scarpin* represents symbolically a character who Camargo cannot and does not want to abandon. Even not being able to wear her shoes, she cannot give them away. In the end of the interview, she reported:

*“Everything is a process in life. If I had been told ten years ago that I wouldn’t be 100% ok after my last surgery, I’d have said: ‘you’re totally nuts’. Everything is possible. I can do everything...but today I see...Imagine doing everything, absolutely everything with your two elbows all the time. I have backaches, my muscles dislocate... Now I accept things as they come more easily, not like a rock, but how things really are. There are flowers with more petals, flowers with more perfume, flowers with... are still flowers...”*

Karin’s account reflects questions discussed in this study: each human being is unique, provided with his/her own experiences. His/her values are mutable so as life, and so are his/her wishes and will. Camargo’s metaphor has been used: *we are all flowers with their differences*. The challenge of this study is to think of the design that might comprehend the specifications of the differences being integrated with the whole, 100% the interviewees, such as table 5, where the importance of the aesthetical aspects are shown.

Importance of aesthetical aspects	Yes	100%	Preferences		Shapes	Colors	Materials
				Upper sole	67% Square or rounded toe cap	68% Classical (Black or Beige)	Impossible to determined
					33% Wing tips	16% Intensive (Reds)	
						16% Acid (Greens)	
				Sole	Heel		
					Model	Height	Materials
					33% Stiletto	33% 0 cm	Impossible to determined
					16% Thicker	33% 2 cm	
					16% Wedge	16% 4 cm	
	33% Flat	16% 6 cm					
No	0%						

Table 5: The importance of aesthetical aspects to the interviewees.

## Conclusions

During the interviews, it was realized that the context of the disabled customers were far beyond the fashion and design worlds. In Brazil, there is still a great deal of social prejudice. The wearers reported different concerns that surround them quite often such as socio-cultural insertion, labor market inclusion, prejudice, mobility, politeness, access to and lack of information.

This study focuses on the relation between wearers and their footwear, i.e., women’s relation with the shoes and why they are so relevant in their lives. The phenomenological study lead to the results mentioned above as unexpected but fundamental variables for the central reflection on this study.

The wearers wish and need dreams in their lives. The shoe design is one of the tools which allow them to build up social images. The composition of their outfit, in which the shoes are included, may transform them into the romantic princess, which is essential to

Ramos, or into the prom queen, indispensable to Nahum, or even into the powerful entrepreneur, mentioned by Camargo. Shoes are part of this character transition in which they live. The lack of articles together with the difficulty in finding or adapting them is the denial of this possibility of building up characters. It may lead them to depression, as Nahum reported.

The wearers concluded that the shoes need to be easy to put on and take off, easy to clean; they should allow perspiration and their stitch should not hurt their feet. Their shoes must promote safety, i.e., their feet must be held firmly by the shoe upper part. Their shoe heels need to promote stability when walking with non-slip soles in order not to cause the feeling of twisting the foot.

The safety and body diversification matters worked on this study were requirements already foreseen. The sensual and feminine characteristics attributed to the shoes stemmed from the interviewees' accounts. Sensuality lies in the power to seduce others and to seduce oneself through the excitement of the senses. The visual and the touching senses are the most used in fashion design. Soft and sensual materials such as sheep leather literally caress the touching sensitivity of the wearers.

The shoes with feminine and sensual characteristics are the ones which make the wearer feel self-confident, included in the social environment, i.e., the ones which bring them emotional benefits, social and psychological pleasure according to the situational context. In the day by day routine, the wearers are quite happy with the sneakers, ballerina flats and wedge shoe models. On the other hand, in special occasions, often pressured by the cultural industry, shoes like *scarpin* or high-heeled sandals (higher than 6 cm) or medium (around 4 cm), were pointed out by the wearers as models capable of conveying this confidence, directly related to the power of female seduction. That is when they want to delight and fascinate the others. Those moments 'of stars of the catwalk, actually, life's catwalk', are the ones that they are worried about.

Fulfilling their basic needs is not enough. If that were the purpose, they would stick to their orthopedic boots. The shoe is a fashion design object which needs to vary according to the dreams, will and desire of those who wear it in several occasions.

This study observed that the aesthetical-symbolic functions of the shoe may cause effective socio-cultural inclusion of the wearers. The well-being is associated with the possibility of building up personal images according to the wearers' desires, which also influenced by the cultural industry. Power, seduction and femininity are the main symbolic values attributed to the desired shoes by the interviewees. The shoes make women feel good socially, thus improving their well-being. These subjective concepts associated with the technical and ergonomic aspects will function as basis for the shoe design development. The interviewees, therefore, have become active partners of the project. They will be often consulted so that an effective socio-cultural inclusion and some life improvement concerning physical and social aspects can be ensured.

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