



ISSN: 2395-7476
IJHS 2016; 2(2): 121-124
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www.homesciencejournal.com
Received: 24-03-2016
Accepted: 25-04-2016

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Preference of heels among adult Punjabi women of Chandigarh

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Abstract

Now a day's women are becoming more and more involved in activities outside the home; and thus majority of times they remain in shoes. Hence, they need footwear that is suitable and comfortable for various occasions. While doing so women are strongly attracted towards footwear with heels as it enhances their personality and confidence. The city of Chandigarh has a large number of working women and adult student population. The present study is undertaken to find the preference of type of footwear and size of heels among adult Punjabi women of Chandigarh. A total of 600 female subjects divided into four age groups form the sample of this study. The results thus shows that adult Punjabi women of Chandigarh, i) do not reveal any age differences when it comes to choosing a footwear for any kind of wear, ii) are fond of pointed heels, followed by block heels, wedge heels and platforms, and, iii) mostly prefer to use heel size 1.5"-2.5".

Keywords: Footwear, heels, Punjabi women

1. Introduction

Footwear is much more than a protective wrapping for the feet. Footwear selection serves as marker for gender, class, and ethnicity, and status. Fashion also dictates the choice of footwear, especially in women. The right choice of footwear contributes a lot to smartness, personal attractiveness and admiration of social set up. Women, especially younger ones, prefer design and fashion in footwear above all other factors, while men lay greater emphasis on the durability and comfort of the footwear (Marwaha, 1977) ^[5]. Wearing heels could make women more attractive by adding height which would increase confidence and, thereby, attractiveness (Smith and Helms, 1999, c.f. Morris *et al.* 2013) ^[8,9]. Jain (2004) ^[4] reported that younger working women are more fashion conscious about their footwear as compared to older working women. Wearing high heels during the age of 20s and 30s is less likely to do huge damage to the knees than during older ages (Moskowitz, 2001) ^[6].

The common parts of all footwear are sole, heels, shank, vamp, lining etc. A heel is the part of the shoe which elevates either only back of the foot (as in wedge heel footwear) or the entire foot (as in platform type footwear). The heels or platforms may be small, medium, or high. Adolescence period is usually the first time a girl wears heels, while adulthood is when most women look for opportunities to spend time in heels. Depending on the profession or socio-economic status, some women wear high heels more than others (Gifford, 2010) ^[2]. Working women prefer small heels, whereas, non-working women prefer pencil and medium heels (Neelam, 1983) ^[7]. Sonia (2000) ^[10] found that both urban as well as rural school teachers preferred medium heeled footwear.

Heels being an important aspect of women footwear design and selection, the present study aim to find the age wise preference of type of footwear, and type and size of heels used for different kinds of wear, among the urban adult Punjabi women of Chandigarh.

2. Material and Method

The city of Chandigarh is a Union Territory inhabited by people of varied ethnicities and classes. Since it is capital of the states of Punjab and Haryana, important offices of the two states are located here, therefore, a large number of inhabitants of the city are involved in white-collared professions. Further, the city is well known educational hub in North India having a large number of adult student population. The present study is undertaken on the 'Punjabi' who form the largest community settled here. Only those subjects were included in

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the study whose past two generations from both paternal and maternal sides are Punjabi speaking and have been residing in Chandigarh for at least past 3 years. A high percentage of women in urban Chandigarh are involved in activities outside the home; and thus majority of times they remain in shoes. The sample of present study is comprised of 600 adult Punjabi women ranging in age from 18 to 60 years. This sample is further divided into four age groups, 18-25 years, 25-40 years, 40-50 years, and 50-60 years.

The subjects were chosen by means of convenience and snow ball sampling. The subjects belonging to youngest age group include students pursuing graduation or post-graduation courses from various educational institutions, while older subjects are at least graduates and majority of them are working in different offices while a few are homemakers.

Majority subjects of the present study belong to middle class, with family income ranging between Rs. 20,000 and Rs.60,000 per month.

The data on selected subjects was obtained as per the convenience of the subjects either at their place of work/institution or at their residence. All subjects included were apparently healthy. Subjects who were pregnant or with any foot abnormality were not included in the study. Prior consent for the study was sought from each subject. The entire data has been analyzed and interpreted using percentages.

3. Results and Discussion

The number and percentage of women, according to their preference of footwear, heels and the different sizes of heels are presented in Tables 1 to 9.

Table 1: Distribution of sample according to type of footwear preferred

Age Groups	18-25 years		25-40 years		40-50 years		50-60 years		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Only Flat	27	17	15	10	18	12	33	23	93	15.5
Only Heeled	0	0	0	0	3	2	5	3	8	1.3
Both Flat & Heeled	128	83	135	90	129	86	107	74	499	83.2
Total	155	100	150	100	150	100	145	100	600	100

Type of Footwear preferred: It is evident from Table 1 that there are no significant differences between different age groups regarding the type of footwear preferred. Taking all age groups together, most subjects (83.2%) prefer both, flat as well as heeled footwear. Only flat footwear is preferred by few subjects (15.5%), while only heeled footwear are preferred by just 1.3% respondents. Since no significant differences among

age groups are observed, the data for all the age groups have been combined for further analysis. Women, who prefer only heeled, and flat as well as heeled footwear, were further asked what kind of heels do they prefer and for which kind of wear (i.e. daily wear, office wear, sports wear or formal wear). The data generated multiple responses for wedge heels, platforms, block heels, and pointed heels.

Table 2: Preferred use of Wedge Heels

Kind of wear	Frequency	Percent
Daily Wear	30	5.9
Daily Wear & Office Wear	30	5.9
Daily Wear, Office Wear & Sports Wear	2	0.4
Daily Wear, Office Wear, Sports Wear & Formal Wear	3	0.6
Daily Wear, Office Wear & Formal Wear	45	8.9
Daily Wear & Formal Wear	20	3.9
Office Wear	40	7.9
Office Wear, Sports Wear & Formal Wear	2	0.4
Office Wear & Formal Wear	91	17.9
Sports Wear & Formal Wear	1	0.2
Formal Wear	80	15.8

Table 3: Preferred use of Platforms

Kind of Wear	Frequency	Percent
Daily Wear	45	8.9
Daily Wear & Office Wear	33	6.5
Daily Wear, Office Wear & Sports Wear	15	3.0
Daily Wear, Office Wear, Sports Wear & Formal Wear	22	4.3
Daily Wear, Office Wear & Formal Wear	10	2.0
Daily Wear & Sports Wear	11	2.2
Daily Wear, Sports Wear & Formal Wear	2	0.4
Daily Wear & Formal Wear	18	3.6
Office Wear	33	6.5
Office Wear & Sports Wear	8	1.6
Office Wear, Sports Wear & Formal Wear	2	0.4
Office Wear & Formal Wear	20	3.9
Sports Wear	13	2.6
Sports Wear & Formal Wear	3	0.6
Formal Wear	50	9.9

Table 4: Preferred use of Block Heels

Kind of Wear	Frequency	Percent
Daily Wear	2	0.4
Daily Wear & Office Wear	3	0.6
Daily Wear, Office Wear & Formal Wear	2	0.4
Daily Wear & Formal Wear	3	0.6
Office Wear	25	4.9
Office Wear & Formal Wear	42	8.3
Sports Wear	1	0.2
Formal Wear	88	17.4

Table 5: Preferred use of Pointed Heels

Kind of Wear	Frequency	Percent
Daily Wear	1	0.2
Daily Wear, Office Wear & Formal Wear	1	0.2
Office Wear	5	1.0
Office Wear & Formal Wear	46	9.1
Formal Wear	179	35.3

Preference of heels according to kind of wear: It can be seen that 15.8% respondents prefer wedge heels only for formal wear, whereas 17.9% respondents prefer wedge heels for office as well as formal wear (Table 2). A wedge-type shoe is always preferable for any age but especially in the elderly to better distribute pressure throughout the entire foot (Gifford, 2010) [2]. Almost 10% respondents prefer using platforms for formal wear, followed by 8.9% and 6.5% women showing preference for only daily wear and office wear, respectively (Table 3). Block heels is the choice of 17.4% respondents for formal wear and 8.3% use it for both office as well as formal wear (Table 4). Pointed heels are preferred by 35.3% of respondents for formal wear only while 9.1% prefer the same

for both office and formal wear (Table 5). Grewal (1983) also reported that 45% working women prefer platforms and 43.5% prefer wedge heels. According to 'Indian Footwear Market Forecast-2014' (2012) [11], the demand for formal footwear would significantly increase with the rising younger working class population. Further, rising income level of the people and brand awareness would also boost the demand for footwear.

Size of Heels: Those respondents who preferred using heels for any kind of wear were further asked the choice of size of heels. The size of heels was divided into four categories from 0.5" to 4.5", and the data is presented in Tables 6 through 9.

Table 6: Preferred use of 0.5" – 1.5" Size of Heels

Kind of Wear	Frequency	Percent
Daily Wear	15	3.0
Daily Wear & Office Wear	32	6.3
Daily Wear, Office Wear & Sports Wear	8	1.6
Daily Wear, Office Wear, Sports Wear & Formal Wear	14	2.8
Daily Wear, Office Wear & Formal Wear	46	9.1
Daily Wear & Sports Wear	7	1.4
Daily Wear, Sports Wear & Formal Wear	1	0.2
Daily Wear & Formal Wear	15	3.0
Office Wear	61	12.0
Office Wear & Sports Wear	3	0.6
Office Wear, Sports Wear & Formal Wear	10	2.0
Office Wear & Formal Wear	112	22.1
Sports Wear	10	2.0
Sports Wear & Formal Wear	4	0.8
Formal Wear	100	19.7

Table 7: Preferred use of 1.5" – 2.5" Size of Heels

Kind of Wear	Frequency	Percent
Daily Wear	3	0.6
Daily Wear & Office Wear	11	2.2
Daily Wear, Office Wear, Sports Wear & Formal Wear	2	0.4
Daily Wear, Office Wear & Formal Wear	6	1.2
Daily Wear & Formal Wear	1	0.2
Office Wear	28	5.5
Office Wear & Formal Wear	68	13.4
Sports Wear	1	0.2
Formal Wear	171	33.7

Table 8: Preferred use of 2.5" – 3.5" Size of Heels

Kind of Wear	Frequency	Percent
Daily Wear	2	0.4
Daily Wear & Formal Wear	1	0.2
Office Wear	3	0.6
Office Wear & Formal Wear	9	1.8
Sports Wear	1	0.2
Formal Wear	92	18.1

Table 9: Preferred use of 3.5" – 4.5" Size of Heels

Kind of Wear	Frequency	Percent
Daily Wear, Office Wear, Sports Wear & Formal Wear	1	0.2
Office Wear & Formal Wear	2	0.4
Formal Wear	25	4.9

It is clear from above tables that for formal wear majority women prefer heel size 1.5"-2.5" (33.7%) followed by 0.5"-1.5" (19.7%) and 2.5"-3.5" (18.1%). The largest heels size reported by women of present study is 3.5" – 4.5" which is preferred by 4.9% respondents for formal wear only. However, for office wear most women's choice (12.0%) of heel size is 0.5"-1.5". For daily wear and sportswear only few women prefer heels and that too of smallest size. Considering those women who gave multiple responses, it is seen that 22.1% respondents use heel size 0.5"-1.5" while 13.4% respondents use heel size 1.5"-2.5" for office as well as formal wear. According to Dawson *et al.* (2002) [1], all women aged 50-70 years reported at least one foot problem had regularly worn 1" heels and few had worn 2" heels for work when they were in their ages of 20s to 50s.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that adult Punjabi women of Chandigarh, i) do not reveal any age differences when it comes to choosing a footwear for any kind of wear, ii) are fond of pointed heels, followed by block heels, wedge heels and platforms, and iii) mostly prefer to use heel size 1.5"-2.5" as formal wear.

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