

Footwear Preferences of Scouts Who Are Members of the Scouting Federation of Turkey

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the footwear preferences of individuals who are members of the Turkish Scouting Federation and actively participate in scouting activities and camps. The research model was constructed using the general survey method. Data were collected from a total of 390 active scouts through the administration of the "Footwear Preference Scale" and a "Personal Information Form." Responses from 31 participants who either gave irrelevant answers to the instructions or did not respond at all were excluded from the analysis. Thus, the final dataset consisted of responses from 359 scouts, including 153 females and 206 males. The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS 23 software package. For variables with two groups, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied, while the Kruskal-Wallis test was used for variables with more than two groups. In order to identify the relationships between the groups and the variables in detail within multiple-group comparisons. As a result of the analyses, significant relationships were identified across all sub-dimensions of footwear preference factors—excluding the variables of price and socio-environmental factors—with comfort, quality, brand, gender, age, scouting experience, and monthly household income. A closer examination of the data revealed that as scouts' status or the duration of their active participation in scouting increased, their preference for footwear used in camps and scouting activities became more function-oriented, with less emphasis on style and trends. These findings indicate that within the Turkish Scouting Federation, the importance attached to functionality in footwear selection is directly proportional to the time spent in scouting and camp activities. Furthermore, it was concluded that gender, perceptions of quality and brand, and monthly household income are among the determining factors in scouts' footwear preferences. These findings indicate that within the Turkish Scouting Federation, the importance attached to functionality in footwear selection is directly proportional to the time spent in scouting and camp activities. Furthermore, it was concluded that gender, perceptions of quality and brand, and monthly household income are among the determining factors in scouts' footwear preferences.

Keywords: Scout Footwear, Footwear Preferences, Footwear Selection, Scouting Equipment

Özet

Türkiye İzci Federasyonuna Üye İzicilerin Ayakkabı Tercihleri

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye İzicilik Federasyonuna üye olan ve izcilik faaliyetleri ile kamplara aktif olarak katılan bireylerin ayakkabı tercihlerini belirlemektir. Araştırma modeli genel tarama yöntemi kullanılarak oluşturulmuştur. Veriler, toplam 390 aktif izciden "Ayakkabı Tercih Ölçeği" ve "Kişisel Bilgi Formu" uygulanarak toplanmıştır. Anket talimatlarına alakasız yanıt veren veya hiç yanıt vermeyen 31 katılımcının verileri analiz dışında bırakılmıştır. Böylece

analizlerde 153'ü kadın, 206'sı erkek olmak üzere toplam 359 izcinin verileri kullanılmıştır. Toplanan veriler SPSS 23 paket programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. İki gruptan oluşan değişkenler için Mann-Whitney U testi, ikiden fazla gruptan oluşan değişkenler için ise Kruskal-Wallis testi uygulanmıştır. Çok gruplu karşılaştırmalarda ise gruplar ile değişkenler arasındaki ilişkilerin ayrıntılı bir şekilde incelenmesi amacıyla analizler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Yapılan analizler sonucunda, konfor, kalite, marka, cinsiyet, yaş, izcilik deneyimi ve aylık hane gelir düzeyi değişkenleri ile ayakkabı tercih faktörlerinin tüm alt boyutları arasında, fiyat ve sosyo-çevresel faktörler hariç, anlamlı ilişkiler tespit edilmiştir. Verilerin daha yakından incelenmesiyle, izcilerin kıdemi ya da izcilik faaliyetlerine katılım süresi arttıkça kamp ve izcilik faaliyetlerinde kullanılan ayakkabı tercihlerinin tarz ve trendlere olan ilgiden uzaklaşıp işlevselliğe yönelik hale geldiği görülmüştür. Bu bulgular, Türkiye İzcilik Federasyonu bünyesindeki bireylerde ayakkabı seçiminde işlevselliğe verilen önemin, izcilik ve kamp faaliyetlerinde geçirilen süre ile doğru orantılı olarak arttığını göstermektedir. Ayrıca, cinsiyet, kalite ve marka algısı ile aylık hane geliri değişkenlerinin de izcilerin ayakkabı tercihinde belirleyici faktörler arasında yer aldığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İzci Ayakkabıları, Ayakkabı Tercihleri, Ayakkabı Seçimi, İzci Ekipmanları

INTRODUCTION

Footwear preference is shaped by individuals' lifestyles, aesthetic perceptions, socio-cultural factors, and income levels. However, the factors influencing footwear choices are not limited to these. Research indicates that climatic conditions also affect individuals' footwear preferences, and that younger age groups with a heightened awareness of style and brand tend to prefer popular brands, associating these choices with social acceptance (1-6). Additionally, with the rise of sneaker culture, certain brands have gained symbolic value, leading users to choose athletic shoes in everyday life as an expression of their personal style (7-10). While fashion, aesthetics, and trends undeniably influence footwear preferences, other studies have demonstrated that ergonomic sole structures and breathable materials also play a crucial role in footwear selection(11).

Functionality occupies a significant position among the factors that shape individuals' footwear preferences. Footwear intended for daily use or specialized activities is evaluated not solely based on aesthetic appeal and brand perception, but also according to features that align with their intended purpose of use. For instance, footwear designed for extended walking or challenging terrain conditions offers supportive sole construction, non-slip outsoles, and anatomically-appropriate insoles, whereas footwear selected for urban use prioritizes lightweight construction, breathability, and versatility in styling combinations. Furthermore, the emphasis users place on foot health prompts them to consider particularly heel and ankle support, flexibility, and shock-absorbing sole characteristics (12).

Studies on brand loyalty across different demographic groups have demonstrated that the association of certain footwear brands or models with specific status or group identity can directly influence individuals' preferences (13). Within this context, decisions regarding footwear selection are made through the concurrent evaluation of aesthetics, ergonomics, durability, and symbolic values.

In this context, the aim of this study is to determine the factors affecting the footwear preferences of a specific group that already experiences a sense of unity and belonging through wearing uniforms and being accepted as members of a collective. Therefore, the sample group was selected from members of the Turkish Scouting Federation, who gather to improve their skills for living in nature.

This study specifically focuses on scouts, as they represent a unique user group whose footwear needs are shaped not only by general consumer preferences but also by the functional and environmental demands of scouting activities. Understanding their footwear preferences can provide valuable insights for designing shoes that are both performance-oriented and aligned with the identity and values of the scouting community.

While no specific academic studies focusing solely on the footwear preferences of scouts were encountered during the literature review, the findings of this study are significant for filling this gap in the field. However, existing research highlights that scouts, like other outdoor activity participants, should wear footwear that is well-fitted, comfortable, provides ankle support, and is durable (14, 15). Furthermore, a scouting-related website also emphasizes that appropriate footwear selection for scouts should take into account the type of activity, the estimated walking distance, and the weight to be carried(16).

METHOD

This study on scouts' footwear preferences was designed within the scope of quantitative research methods, as it aims to measure individuals' current attitudes, behaviors, and preferences. The general survey model was employed to describe specific characteristics of sample groups selected from larger populations.

Study Group

In footwear use, shoes are chosen with greater sensitivity for special contexts. One such context is scouting. Scouts prefer special footwear according to the conditions of use. For this reason, the study group consists of scouts who are members of the Turkish Scouting Federation (TİF) and engage in scouting activities at a professional level.

The study data were obtained from 391 scouts selected using a convenience sampling method. Responses from 32 individuals who either gave irrelevant answers or failed to comply with the survey instructions were excluded. Consequently, the final sample consisted of 359 scouts, including 153 females and 206 males.

Individuals under the age of 18 were excluded from the study group, as they are unable to make independent footwear choices, do not possess economic autonomy, and do not participate in scouting activities as actively as adults. Therefore, in the analysis of footwear preferences by age, participants were grouped as under 20 years old (18–20) and over 20 years old.

Within the Turkish Scouting Federation, each scouting level is designated by a distinct title (17), and the participants included in the study represented seven different levels of seniority. These are as follows:

Scout Volunteers: Individuals over the age of 18 who are involved in scouting activities but are not authorized to train scouts.

Scouts: Individuals trained by scout leaders up to the age of 18. Scout leaders are certified personnel authorized to train scouts (holding an LTK certificate).

Unit-Leading Scout Leaders: Leaders who are actively responsible for training and managing scout units.

Non-Unit-Leading Scout Leaders: Individuals who participate in scouting activities but are not involved in training scouts.

In addition to these, there are rank distinctions for leaders who have completed branch-specific training:

2 Wood Badge Holder, 3 Wood Badge Holder and 4 Wood Badge Holder.

Data Collection Tools and Scale

A "Personal Information Form" developed by the researchers was used to collect demographic data such as gender, age, duration of scouting experience, household income, and scouting level. To determine footwear preferences, the "Footwear Preference Scale," developed by Uzun and Karaçam (18) and approved by the Scientific Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Architecture and Design on 09.12.2024 (decision no. 06), was utilized and was administered to volunteer members of the Turkish Scouting Federation between February and March 2025. This scale includes sub-dimensions such as comfort, style, quality, price, brand preference, and social and environmental factors.

The scale is a 5-point Likert-type instrument, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). It was developed based on a comprehensive literature review and expert feedback. Validity and reliability analyses were conducted during the development process, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the overall scale was reported as 0.89, indicating high internal consistency.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 23.0 for Windows. To determine whether the data followed a normal distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were applied. According to the results of both tests, the p-values for all variables were found to be less than 0.05, indicating that the data did not follow a normal distribution. Therefore, non-parametric tests were preferred for the analyses. So the Mann-Whitney U test was used for comparisons between two groups. The

internal consistency of the scale was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. The results were evaluated at a 95% confidence interval, with significance set at $p < 0.05$.

The confidence interval was determined to be 95%. Based on the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, all variables were found to deviate from a normal distribution ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the groups lacked homogeneity in their distributions. Therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied to variables with two groups, while the Kruskal-Wallis test was used for variables with more than two groups. Specifically, Tamhane's T2 non-parametric test was preferred because it does not assume equal variances between groups and is suitable for analyzing pairwise comparisons in cases of heterogeneity of variances and non-normal distribution.

Table 1. Normality Test

	Static	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Confort	,195	359	,000	,791	359	,000
Quality	,358	359	,000	,605	359	,000
Price	,162	359	,000	,853	359	,000
Brand Preference	,049	359	,041	,985	359	,001
Social and Environmental Factors	,068	359	,000	,958	359	,000

FINDINGS

The demographic characteristics of the 391 participants who completed the Footwear Preference Scale are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

		n	%
Gender	Male	170	43,5
	Female	221	56,5
Age	18-20	142	36,3
	21-30	75	19,2
	31-40	46	11,8
	41-50	72	18,4
	50 +	56	14,3
Monthly Household Income	0-20.000	56	14,3
	20,001-35,000	80	20,5
	35,001-50,000	128	32,7
	50,001-65,000	66	16,9
	65,001 +	61	15,6
Scouting Period	0-1 year	59	15,1
	1-2 year	46	11,8
	2-3 year	33	8,4
	3-4 year	26	9,2
	4-5 year	26	5,6
	5-10 year	67	17,1
	10-15 year	65	16,1
	15 year +	69	17,6
Scouting Level	Scouting Volunteer	117	30
	Scout	37	9,5
	Leader	63	16,1
	Unit-Leading Leader	83	21,2
	Non-Unit-Leading Leader	20	5,1
	Assistant Leader	40	10,2
	2 Wood Badge Holder	15	3,8
	3 Wood Badge Holder	16	4,1

Using the Footwear Preference Scale, the footwear choices of 391 scouts affiliated with the Turkish Scouting Federation were initially collected, but only the data from 359 participants with valid responses were included in the analysis during scouting activities and camps. Due to the presence of more than two groups in the independent variables, post-hoc tests were conducted using Bonferroni-adjusted p-values. The interpretation of the findings was based on the data presented in the Tests of Between-Subjects Effects table.

Table 3. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results Based on Participants' Comfort Perception and Scouting

	Comfort
Kruskal-Wallis H	15,414
Df	8
p	,052
p>,05	

Since the mean value in the Kruskal–Wallis test was very close to the significance threshold of .052, a post-hoc test was conducted to determine which of the seven scouting levels had a statistically significant relationship compared to the other groups.

Table 4. Post-Hoc Comparison Table Based on Participants' Comfort Perception and Scouting Level

Scouting Level (I)	Scouting Level (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig. (p)
4 Wood Badge Holder	Scouting Volunteer	,61212	,001
	Scout	,49189	,000
	Leader	,42414	,000
	Unit-Leading Leader	,37895	,000
	Non-Unit-Leading Leader	,28889	,000
	Assistant Leader	,30556	,001
	2 Wood Badge Holder	,41667	,229
	3 Wood Badge Holder	,31667	,519
P<05			

According to the Comfort Perception and Scouting Level Post-Hoc Table, a significant relationship was identified between the dependent variable of comfort and scouting level. Specifically, it was found that only scouts at level 4 Wood Badge Holder had a significantly different perception of comfort compared to scouts in the other groups.

Table 5. Kruskal-Wallis Table Based on Participants' Perception of Quality and Scouting Level

	Quality
Kruskal-Wallis H	13,578
Df	8
p	,093
p>,05	

Since the result of the Kruskal–Wallis test was .093, no statistically significant difference was found.

Table 6. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results Based on Participants' Perception of Price and Scouting Level

	Price
Kruskal-Wallis H	4,528
Df	8
p	,807
p>,05	

In the Kruskal–Wallis test, the mean value was .807, which does not indicate a statistically significant result and is considerably higher than the accepted significance threshold. Therefore, a post-hoc test was not conducted to determine whether the Price Perception factor differed among the groups.

Table 7. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results Based on Participants' Footwear Brand Perceptions and Scouting Level

	Brand Preference
Kruskal-Wallis H	11,113
Df	8
p	,195
p>,05	

In the Kruskal–Wallis test, the mean value was .195, which does not indicate a statistically significant result and is considerably higher than the accepted significance threshold. Therefore, a post-hoc test was not performed.

Table 8. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results Based on Participants' Sensitivity to Social and Environmental Factors in Footwear Production and Marketing, and Scouting Level

Social and Environmental Factors	
Kruskal-Wallis H	8,851
Df	8
p	,355
p>,05	

In the Kruskal–Wallis test, the mean value was .355, which does not indicate a statistically significant result. Since this value is considerably higher than the accepted significance threshold, a post-hoc test was not conducted.

Table 9. Mann–Whitney U Test Results for Participants' Footwear Preferences by Gender

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	F
Comfort	Woman	153	195,34	29887,50	13411,50	,013*
	Man	206	168,60	34732,50		
Quality	Woman	153	177,56	27166,50	15385,50	,653
	Man	206	181,81	37453,50		
Price	Woman	153	181,75	27808,50	15490,50	,778
	Man	206	178,70	36811,50		
Brand Preference	Woman	153	176,85	27058,50	15277,50	,620
	Man	206	182,34	37561,50		
Social and Environmental Factors	Woman	153	197,14	30168,50	13165,50	,007*
	Man	206	167,27	34457,50		
p<,05						

Among the scouts who participated in the study, 153 were female and 206 were male. When examining the relationship between participants' gender and their footwear preferences, statistically significant differences were found in the sub-dimensions of comfort and social and environmental factors.

Table 10. Mann–Whitney U Test Results for Participants' Footwear Preferences by Age

	Age	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	F
Comfort	Younger than 20	203	172,97	35112,00	14406,000	,130
	Older than 20	106	189,15	296508,00		
Quality	Younger than 20	203	177,14	35959,50	15253,500	,486
	Older than 20	106	183,72	28660,50		
Price	Younger than 20	203	183,12	37172,50	15201,500	,507
	Older than 20	106	175,95	27447,50		
Brand Preference	Younger than 20	203	190,72	38715,50	13658,500	,025*
	Older than 20	106	166,05	25904,50		
Social and Environmental Factors	Younger than 20	203	170,70	34652,50	13946,500	,052
	Older than 20	106	192,10	29967,50		
p<,05						

Of the scouts who participated in the study, 203 were under the age of 20, while 106 were over 20. When examining the relationship between participants' age and their footwear preferences, a statistically significant difference was found only in the brand preference sub-dimension.

Table 11. Mann–Whitney U Test Results for Participants' Footwear Preferences by Scouting Duration

	Scouting Duration (Year)	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	F
Comfort	Less than 5	177	173,82	30767,00	15014,000	,250
	More than 5	182	186,01	33853,00		
Quality	Less than 5	177	169,55	30010,00	14257,000	,028*
	More than 5	182	190,16	34610,00		
Price	Less than 5	177	187,11	33118,00	14849,000	,190
	More than 5	182	173,09	31502,00		
Brand Preference	Less than 5	177	171,43	30342,50	14589,500	,122
	More than 5	182	188,34	34277,50		
Social and Environmental Factors	Less than 5	177	171,43	30678,00	14925,000	,228
	More than 5	182	188,34	33942,00		

p<,05

Among the scouts who participated in the study, 177 had been members of the Turkish Scouting Federation (TSF) for less than five years, while 182 had been members for more than five years. When examining the relationship between the duration of scouting experience and footwear preferences, a statistically significant difference was found only in the quality preference sub-dimension.

Table 12. Mann–Whitney U Test Results for Participants' Footwear Preferences by Monthly Household Income

	Monthly Household Income	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	F
Comfort	Minimum wage or less	247	179,38	44307,00	13679,000	,862
	Above minimum wage	112	181,37	20313,00		
Quality	Minimum wage or less	247	179,86	44424,50	13796,500	,964
	Above minimum wage	112	180,32	20195,50		
Price	Minimum wage or less	247	188,73	46616,00	11676,000	,015*
	Above minimum wage	112	160,75	18004,00		
Brand Preference	Minimum wage or less	247	180,93	44689,00	13603,000	,801
	Above minimum wage	112	177,96	19931,00		
Social and Environmental Factors	Minimum wage or less	247	182,33	45036,00	13256,000	,527
	Above minimum wage	112	174,86	19584,00		

p<,05

In footwear preferences, price was found to be an important factor for the 247 scouts whose household income was at or below the minimum wage, whereas for the 112 scouts with household income above the minimum wage, price was relatively less important in their footwear choices.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Scouting encourages individuals to connect with nature and adopt a lifestyle that prioritizes simplicity and resilience (19). In this context, preferences regarding basic equipment such as footwear are naturally influenced more by factors like ease of use, durability, and comfort rather than brand preferences that may symbolize social status. When examining the relationship between scouting status and footwear preferences, it was found that scouts at level 4 Wood Badge Holder had a different perception of comfort compared to other scouts. This finding aligns with literature that explains how status-based consumption behavior influences preferences (11, 15).

In shaping the perception of quality in footwear, individuals' consumption attitudes, value judgments, and brand loyalty play a significant role (6, 20). The analyses revealed that voluntary scouts and level 4 scouts did not differ significantly from other scout groups in terms of quality perception, suggesting that these groups share similar social norms and cognitive patterns when evaluating quality. Especially in groups characterized by voluntary and systematic participation, quality perceptions appear to be shaped by experiential foundations and common consumer values (21). Thus, the absence of significant differences between these groups may indicate that quality perception is shaped not only by product characteristics but also by group dynamics and consumer culture.

Analyses among scout groups showed that neither status (e.g., leadership position, seniority) nor scouting experience significantly affected perceptions of price and brand. Although demographic characteristics, social status, and experience level are generally considered determining factors in consumer behavior (22, 23), the findings suggest that structures based on solidarity, functionality, and harmony with nature, such as scouting, influence consumer behavior differently. This highlights the dominance of functional consumption values over symbolic consumption elements (23).

Additionally, the adoption of egalitarian principles within the group may limit the tendency to express identity through brand consumption (24). The principles of scouting, which encourage modesty in social interactions, also lead individuals to make footwear choices in accordance with group norms rather than personal identity.

Although awareness regarding social responsibility and environmental sustainability has increased among consumers in recent years, this awareness does not always translate into behavior across all consumer groups (24, 25). While it might be expected that groups with a lifestyle closely connected to nature—like scouts—would prefer footwear brands that prioritize social and environmental factors, the analyses show that this tendency remains limited regardless of status or experience. The fact that experienced groups like the level 4 scouts do not favor such brands is a noteworthy contradiction. This may be due to two reasons: first, the products of environmentally responsible companies may not adequately meet scouts' needs for ergonomics and durability—reflecting a gap between the 'ideal' and the 'real' often discussed in consumer behavior literature (25). Second, limited accessibility due to high prices or lack of availability may reduce the likelihood of purchase (26), especially for functionality-focused scouts. Consumer decisions are shaped not only by values and awareness but also by the structure of the market and the quality of product supply (27, 28). Thus, a positive attitude toward eco-friendly products may not translate into behavior if such products are underrepresented in the supply chain.

Research on gender differences in consumer behavior shows that men and women have different priorities when choosing products (29, 30). In this study, it was found that men placed more importance on comfort in footwear compared to women. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that male consumers prioritize performance-related features such as functionality and durability (31, 32). Furthermore, the analysis revealed that women are more likely than men to buy footwear from companies that consider environmental factors (33). This supports existing literature suggesting that women are more sensitive to sustainability, ethical production, and eco-friendly brand policies (34, 35). Studies conducted in Turkey also indicate a higher level of environmental sensitivity among female consumers (36).

Age is a key demographic variable that affects purchasing decisions in consumer behavior. Studies show that younger individuals tend to prioritize brand preference more and view brands as a means of expressing identity, belonging, and social approval (37, 38). This trend was also observed among scouts. According to the findings, younger scouts placed greater importance on brand in footwear preferences compared to those over 20. This may be due to their lack of experience in scouting, leading to more image- and brand-driven choices rather than functional ones. It is also possible that younger individuals have not yet developed the awareness that brand-based acceptance is not applicable in scouting groups (39). In contrast, older and more experienced scouts showed a more functional approach to brands, prioritizing durability, comfort, and ergonomics. This reflects a shift from brand-centric to need-based preferences that comes with age and growing consumer knowledge (40). Moreover, studies emphasize that internal satisfaction becomes more influential than external validation in older consumers' decisions, leading them to focus more on quality (41).

Experience is one of the key factors influencing quality perception in product preferences. It is well known that individuals who regularly use products under similar conditions develop a more selective and informed attitude over time (42). In scouting, which involves challenging environmental conditions, it has been observed that expectations for footwear performance and quality increase with the length of experience. As consumer behavior evolves, quality tends to be defined more in terms of a product's ability to fulfill its function (24). The harsh conditions of scouting activities continuously raise the expectations of experienced scouts regarding their footwear. Moreover, long-term scouting experience also affects expectations about product lifespan. Experienced scouts tend to prefer long-lasting, easy-to-maintain footwear that can adapt to various climates, linking the perceived value of quality with product usage duration (43).

According to consumer behavior literature, individuals tend to strike a balance among quality, brand, and price when choosing products. However, for consumers in lower-income groups, price often takes precedence over other attributes (26). Given that comfort and quality are critical for scouting footwear, the fact that scouts from households earning at or below the minimum wage base their choices primarily on price highlights the cost sensitivity in custom footwear production. Studies show that low-income consumers, especially in functional consumption areas, tend to prioritize price over quality (36). The findings of this study confirm that price is a more significant factor for scouts with lower household income, while it is less important for those with higher income. This price-oriented behavior can reduce performance and increase safety risks in long-term scouting activities. Since comfort and quality-enhancing features raise production costs (44), compromising these can render the product inadequate for field use. Therefore, developing products that balance affordability and quality would be a sustainable solution for both producers and consumers.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that among members of the Turkish Scouting Federation, the importance placed on functionality when selecting footwear for camps and activities increases proportionally with scouting experience. Additionally, gender, quality and brand perception, and household income were found to be significant factors influencing footwear preferences.

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