

Introduction:

Rapidly growing children often barely make it a year before needing their next pair of shoes. In some parts of the world, even getting that first pair can be challenging. A shoe that grows with the child would be a valuable product for children in developing regions who would otherwise have to continue wearing shoes that fit poorly or do without entirely. In order to subsidize the shoes for these children, adjustable shoes would be sold to the US market as well. While similar children's shoes could also be sold in the US, for now we will focus our attention on the market of college aged consumers with other adjustable, customizable shoe products. Potential concepts include athletic shoes that are molded for a perfect personal fit, women's adjustable heel shoes, and other convertible shoe designs.

Consumer surveys:

Several US consumers in the target market were interviewed about their preferences for shoes and concerns about adjustable shoes. Among the 11 responses (7 female), the following results were collected:

Priorities for characteristics of shoes:

Most Important

comfortable
gives support
fashionable
secure fit
durable

Somewhat Important

color/pattern options
good traction
protection of feet
multifunctional
low price

Lower Priorities

water shedding
breathable
versatility
projects right image
lightweight
good material
slimming
easy to clean

Most of those surveyed said that they pay **\$40-\$60** on shoes and that they are somewhat more likely to purchase shoes knowing that they subsidize shoes for children in developing regions. Nearly all surveyed use or are interested in **athletic sneakers**, followed by hiking boots, heels, leather dress shoes, and boat shoes.

We will also take into consideration the following comments from those surveyed about children's adjustable shoes:

"Not only length but also width must be adjustable. If the purpose is to allow them to survive with just one pair for a very long time they must also be very durable, which is difficult if they're also adjustable."

"The durability of the shoe may be reduced. Or the children would wear the shoes long past the point that they should (shoe no longer give adequate support) simply because they fit."

"Something that prevents sand or water from coming into their shoes would be nice. The shoes should be light weight as well."

"Making sure that they fit properly. Kids don't always know what to feel for and may end up getting a shoe that is too large or small."

"Will they fit snugly enough to not cause blisters but still have a range of size adjustment?"

"Support and comfort."

"Making sure the arch is in the correct position at all sizes, expanding the instep height along with the length and width."

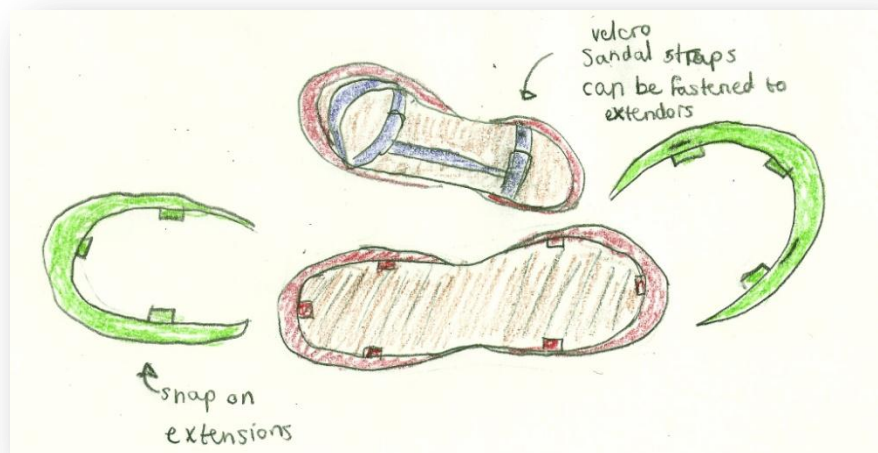
"the size adjustment would make it less able to stand up against the elements."

"durability—Would shoes last long enough for youth to benefit from adjustable sizing?"

Concept Sketches

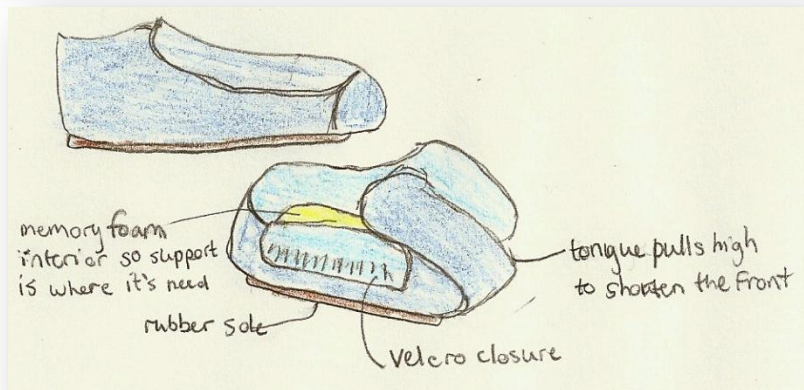
Concept 1: Snap on extensions for sandals

The rubber length and width extensions would attach to the base. Straps can be reattached to the extension portion of the shoes. The straps provide a wide range of options for a secure fit.



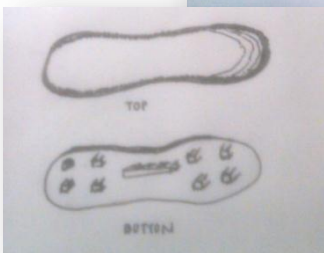
Concept 2: Memory foam support and length and width adjustment using Velcro.

The insert of the shoes will be made of a high density memory foam so that there is always support under the user's arches, wherever they fall in the shoe. To shorten the shoe, the tongue is pulled higher. To adjust the width, the side flaps are fastened appropriately.



Concept 3: Moldable soles with bungee closure

A moldable substance, similar to what's used for mouth guards, would be used to fit to the user. This will include cleat-like traction on the bottom of the shoe. Bungee laces will hold the shoe securely on the user's feet.

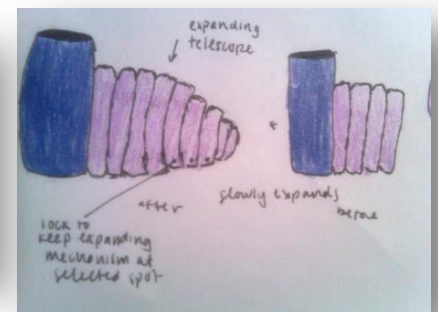
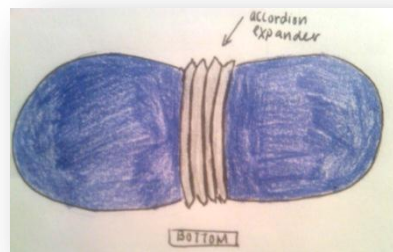


Concept 4: Zip up shoes

This shoe is made up of a mesh material that can be extended by zipping on additional pieces. The bases of the shoes are fastened using snaps. These bases also have cleats for better traction.

Concept 5: Collapsing shoes

These shoes have an accordion center portion that can be fastened at different extensions to meet the needs of the user. Additionally, there is an optional covering for over the entire shoe to hide the extension mechanisms.



Concept Selection Matrix

Need	Weight	C1: Snap on Extension Sandals	C2: Memory Foam and Velcro	C3: Remoldable Shoe	C4: Zip Up Shoe	C5: Collapsible Shoe
comfortable	3	0	1	1	1	1
provide support	3	-1	1	1	-1	-1
durable	3	0	-1	1	0	1
low cost	3	0	1	-1	0	0
good traction	2	1	1	1	1	1
secure fit	2	1	0	1	0	0
protect feet	2	0	1	1	1	1
fashionable	1	1	0	0	1	0
versatile	1	1	0	1	1	1
breathable	1	1	0	0	0	0
easy to clean	1	1	-1	-1	0	-1
Net Weighted Total		5	9	12	6	7
Rank		5	2	1	4	3
Continue?			Develop	Develop		

Conclusions

Of the five concepts, **C3: Remoldable Shoes** and C2: Memory Foam and Velcro were determined to be the best candidates for development. These top two concepts received their higher ranking because they were “comfortable,” “provide support,” have “good traction,” “protect feet,” and are “versatile.” Although the other concepts scored higher for being “fashionable,” we find this need to be less essential; Durability and versatility are the top two criteria we hope to address while building these shoes for those in developing countries.

As for college students in the United States, there is a noticeable trend of customizable shoes that include both sport and casual versions of Nike products. We believe that this personalized product movement combined with the philanthropic nature of TOMS Shoes that led to its popularity, will make our opportunity a success. Also, for those in the US, “versatility” is less important than if the product is “fashionable” and “comfortable.” While creating shoes for college students, we will focus on meeting *these* criteria with customizable color and shape options.