

# Understanding the role of Corporate Social Responsibility in Consumer Psychology: A case study of Keen Footwear, Rothy's Shoes, Supra Footwear and Toms Shoes

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## ABSTRACT:

In recent years there has been a rise in brands that help with social issues. This paper will try to compare brands that have a social impact with brands that are attached to celebrity. I will compare the consumer's choice between four companies, Keen Footwear, Rothy's Shoes, Supra Footwear and TOMS Shoes. The purpose of this study is to prove that the consumer responds more to the social message over the celebrity that chooses to endorse it. A strong and transparent corporate social responsibility fulfillment of a company actually makes a consumer choose it more.

## INTRODUCTION:

According to the Zion Market Research report, global footwear market was valued at approximately US\$ 246.07 billion in 2017 and is growing at a compound annual growth rate [hereinafter, referred to as CAGR] (2017-2023) of around 4.5%.<sup>1</sup> The US revenue from footwear in 2018 in US\$83.782 Billion. There is a projected annual growth rate of 2.6% as per CAGR(2018-2021).<sup>2</sup> While, the Indian revenue from footwear in 2018 in US\$ 16.980 Billion. There is a projected annual growth rate of 10.1% as per the CAGR (2018-2021).<sup>3</sup> Their segment wise revenue is as follows:

| Country – Footwear Segment                 | Revenue (2018)     | Projected Growth Rate (CAGR) |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| USA - Athletic Footwear Segment            | US\$ 16.14 Billion | 7.8% <sup>4</sup>            |
| USA - Sandals, Textiles & Other Footwear   | US\$ 33.08 Billion | 2.1% <sup>5</sup>            |
| India - Athletic Footwear Segment          | US\$ 3.23 Billion  | 13.6% <sup>6</sup>           |
| India - Sandals, Textiles & Other Footwear | US\$ 9.76 Billion  | 8.8% <sup>7</sup>            |

Footwear is market that every year spend billions of dollars on marketing and advertising. There is a general tendency amongst brands to use celebrities to increase sales. Though, these footwear brands could use their Corporate Social Responsibility [hereinafter, referred to as CSR] as a product strategy. CSR is voluntary in the United States of America and mandatory but voluntary in India.

## Keen Footwear

<sup>1</sup>Global Footwear Market Will Reach USD 320.44 Billion By 2023: Zion Market Research' (*GlobeNewswire News Room*, 2018) <<https://globenewswire.com/news-release/2018/05/14/1501388/0/en/Global-Footwear-Market-Will-Reach-USD-320-44-Billion-by-2023-Zion-Market-Research.html>> accessed 9 December 2018.

<sup>2</sup>'Footwear - United States | Statista Market Forecast' (*Statista*, 2018)  
<<https://www.statista.com/outlook/11000000/109/footwear/united-states#market-globalRevenue>> accessed 7 December 2018.

<sup>3</sup>'Footwear - India | Statista Market Forecast' (*Statista*, 2018)  
<<https://www.statista.com/outlook/11000000/109/footwear/united-states#market-globalRevenue>> accessed 7 December 2018.

<sup>4</sup>'Athletic Footwear - United States | Statista Market Forecast' (*Statista*, 2018)  
<<https://www.statista.com/outlook/11000000/109/footwear/united-states#market-globalRevenue>> accessed 7 December 2018.

<sup>5</sup>'Sandals, Textile & Other Footwear - United States | Statista Market Forecast' (*Statista*, 2018)  
<<https://www.statista.com/outlook/11000000/109/footwear/united-states#market-globalRevenue>> accessed 7 December 2018.

<sup>6</sup>'Athletic Footwear - India | Statista Market Forecast' (*Statista*, 2018)  
<<https://www.statista.com/outlook/11000000/109/footwear/united-states#market-globalRevenue>> accessed 7 December 2018.

<sup>7</sup>'Sandals, Textile & Other Footwear - India | Statista Market Forecast' (*Statista*, 2018)  
<<https://www.statista.com/outlook/11000000/109/footwear/united-states#market-globalRevenue>> accessed 7 December 2018.

Keen is an American footwear company founded in 2003. It is now headquartered in Portland, Oregon. They produce sandals and shoes for Men and Women with toe protection. Since its inception Keen has donated over US\$ 15 Million to Non-Profit Organizations around the world. Keen Footwear believes in an approach that gives back to the world, in 'taking action' and reducing their social and environment impact. In 2004, when the Indian Ocean Tsunami Tragedy occurred, Keen Footwear pulled their entire advertising budget and diverted it to disaster relief.<sup>8</sup> The Hybrid Care Program is dedicated time and resources to social and environment organizations, with a commitment to volunteerism, supporting local communities and embracing Corporate Social Responsibility.<sup>9</sup> Keen Footwear's net sales for 2017 was US\$ 128.29 Million.<sup>10</sup>

## Rothy's Shoes

Rothy's is an American footwear company founded in 2016. It is headquartered in San Francisco. Rothys was founded to create stylish, comfortable and sustainable shoes for working women.<sup>11</sup> The company makes the shoes out of recycled plastic bottles, and is said to have recycled 20 million bottles in the two years.<sup>12</sup> The insoles are made out of recycled foams. The rubber soles are carbon-free. All adhesives are non-toxic and vegan. While the packaging of the shoe is biodegradable.<sup>13</sup> Rothys's revenue is US\$ 3.5 Million annually.<sup>14</sup>

## Supra Footwear

Supra is an American shoe brand founded in 2006. It is headquartered in Los Angeles. It launched in partnership of Angel Cabada and professional skateboarders; Chad Muska, Jim Greco and Erik Ellington. Supra uses a mix of sports celebrity and music celebrity from Los Angeles to release their individual shoe design lines.<sup>15</sup> Music celebrities such as Lil Wayne and Jay-Z have been used for collaborations and release videos. Its net sales for 2016 were US\$ 120,000.<sup>16</sup>

## TOMS Shoes

TOMS Shoes is an American shoe brand founded in 2006. It is headquartered in California. TOMS produces Argentinian alparagata designed shoes. TOMS sales model donates a pair of shoes for every shoe that is sold. It started with shoes, now has expanded to eye wear, coffee and bags. Where the sale of said goods donates to eye operations, water, maternal health support and other social projects.<sup>17</sup> TOMS net sales for 2017 were US\$ 24 Million.<sup>18</sup>

## Consumer Psychology

Consumer Psychology is the study of individuals or groups and their consumer activity, and its effect on them. It is understanding their cognitive process and behavior to explain consumer behavior. Consumer activity can impact people's identity, express their identity or display their social status. Early consumer psychology developed from advertising and now covers the fields of marketing, advertising, sociology and psychology.<sup>19</sup>

## Direct and Indirect CSR or Celebrity Influence

In the four companies that are chosen, there is a concept of direct or indirect. Under CSR, there are the companies that directly display their CSR to the consumer, like TOMS' 'buy one, donate one' or Rothys' recycling of plastic bottles. The CSR can also be indirect, like Keen's CSR efforts with community projects and Hybrid Care Project. Where the consumer knows about the CSR, but does not feel actively a part. While there can be direct Celebrity Influence, like Supra, where the ownership of the company and designs are based on the celebrities themselves. Or indirect Celebrity Influence, where Rothys is seen adorned on the feet of the New Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle.

## CSR

<sup>8</sup>'Our Purpose & Reason For Being' (KEEN Footwear, 2018) <<https://www.keenfootwear.com/our-purpose.html>> accessed 9 December 2018.

<sup>9</sup>Jenifer Walker, 'International Marketing Strategy Keen Footwear' (KTVB, 2011).

<sup>10</sup>Lexis Nexis Academic, 'Keen Inc. Dossier Report' (2018).

<sup>11</sup>'About Rothys | The "Go To" Shoes For Versatility Comfort & Style' (Rothys, 2018) <<https://rothys.com/about>> accessed 10 December 2018.

<sup>12</sup>'Twenty Million Bottles And Counting' (Rothys, 2018) <<https://rothys.com/blog/sustainability/articles/twenty-million-bottles-and-counting>> accessed 10 December 2018.

<sup>13</sup>Connie Chen, 'Women In New York City And San Francisco Are Obsessed With These Comfortable Flats Made From Recycled Water Bottles — Here's What They Feel Like' (Business Insider, 2018) <<https://www.businessinsider.com/rothys-comfortable-work-flat-review-2018-6?IR=T>> accessed 10 December 2018.

<sup>14</sup>'Rothys' (Crunchbase, 2018) <<https://www.crunchbase.com/organization/rothy-s#section-competitors-revenue-by-owner>> accessed 10 December 2018.

<sup>15</sup>Supra Footwear, 'WE ARE SUPRA: LOS ANGELES' (Supra Footwear, 2018) <<https://suprafootwear.com/blogs/news/we-are-supra-los-angeles>> accessed 10 December 2018.

<sup>16</sup>Lexis Nexis Academic, 'Supra Footwear Co. Dossier Report' (2018).

<sup>17</sup>'Improving Lives | TOMS® Giving' (Toms.com, 2018) <<https://www.toms.com/improving-lives>> accessed 10 December 2018.

<sup>18</sup>Lexis Nexis Academic, 'TOMS Shoes, LLC. Dossier Report' (2018).

<sup>19</sup>Cathrine V Jansson-Boyd, Consumer Psychology (Open University Press 2009).

CSR affects the emotion of Hope. If the communication of the CSR activities is effective, then the company would benefit from its activities. The advertisement should convey the same hope, in order to focus the consumer's purchase.<sup>20</sup> Jiyun Kang and Gwendolyn Hustvedt, proposed that the consumer's perception about the company's labor practices, CSR and transparency in processes, affects their trust in a company. Which in turn effects the purchase decision and the brand awareness that the consumer will create.<sup>21</sup>

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

In this paper, the book 'Consumer Psychology' by Catherine V. Jansson-Byod has been used to further the author's understanding of the subject and to understand the theories that guide Consumer Psychology.

### **Identity and Consumption**

There is seen an intrinsic relationship between the consumption of a consumer and their identity. The consumer may buy products that express their identity. While often the society might judge the consumer on their material possessions. An adult tends to incorporate their emotional status, religious beliefs, political beliefs, marital status, age, physical appearance, social categorization and gender in their consumer choices. The classification of an object happens via the marketing and advertising. While the individual may categorize themselves by assigning stereotypical characteristics. Social Comparison on the other hand is the individual's comparison of material possession with other individuals. Ideals tend to develop from the consumer culture. There can be downwards social comparisons, where the comparison is to those on an inferior material scale, which serves the self-esteem. There can also be an upward social comparison, where the individual compares to someone on a superior material scale, this is bad for the self-esteem. Symbolic Interactionism is for human interaction, people use symbols that have a shared meaning; like a Mercedes-Benz symbolizes success. Symbols may also affect the consumer's membership to certain human groups.<sup>22</sup>

### **Emotions and Consumer Behavior**

To measure the emotional response to a stimulus of the consumer self-report is used (or questionnaires. They help establish scales to explore individuals' emotional responses. Emotions also affect attention and recall. Even unrelated decisions get affected by the individual emotions. There are four types of 'atmospheric stimuli':

External Variables – Like the exteriors of a shop or the look of a website

Internal Variable – Like the interiors of a shop or the speed and technical aspects of a website.

Layout and Design – In a store it might be the organization of the products while in a website it may be the way the website display and organizes products and events

Point-of-Purchase and Decoration Variables – In a store it would be cash counter displays while on the website it may be the program used for checkout.<sup>23</sup>

### **Attitudes**

Attitudes can predict the consumer behavior. Media plays a role in influencing the attitude of individuals. A person's attitude is influenced by politicians, family, friends, television (and advertising) and schooling. Attitudes help us steer towards the group of products of a consumer's preference quicker<sup>24</sup>.

### **The Expectancy Value Model**

"A person's expectation is a function of their expectation and the value of the goal towards which they are working."<sup>25</sup> Human's as goal oriented beings and they behave in way in order to achieve their goals. Like, wearing TOMS will identify them as socially conscious.

### **Implicit and Explicit Attitudes**

Explicit attitudes are the traits of attitude that people are conscious about while implicit attitude are the uncontrollable aspects of an individual's attitude. Advertising may change the individuals target in one or both aspects, which creates a discomfort. The self-esteem is threatened. So an individual has to strive for equilibrium.

### **Cognitive Dissonance Theory**

Its goal is the consistency between the target behavior and a target attitude.

### **Motivational Theories**

"Motivation can be said to involve three features (Arnold, Robertson, & Cooper, 1995):

Direction: What a person is aiming to do.

<sup>20</sup> Anita Rajamurugan and A. H. Sequeira, 'A Study On Cause-Related Marketing: Examining The Role Of Hopes With CSR Approaches' [2017] SSRN Electronic Journal.

<sup>21</sup> Jiyun Kang and Gwendolyn Hustvedt, 'Building Trust Between Consumers And Corporations: The Role Of Consumer Perceptions Of Transparency And Social Responsibility' (2013) 125 Journal of Business Ethics.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. N (19)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. N (19)

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. N (19)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. N (19)

**Effort:** How much effort a person is willing to make in order to achieve the desired goal.

**Persistence:** How long a person is prepared to try and achieve a goal.”<sup>26</sup>

**Intrinsic Motivation** is when people have the desire to engage in a certain activity for themselves.

While **Extrinsic Motivation** is when a certain benefit needs to be provided for the motivation.

## **Maslow Hierarchy of Need**

In this paper we are concerned with the level of ‘Belonging and Love Needs’ and the level of ‘Esteem Needs’. ‘Belonging and Love Needs’ are the essentials of human craving acceptance by a certain group or individuals, for gaining of belonging or love. While, ‘Esteem Needs’ are needs of an individual to feed their ego.

## **Balance Theory**

“How the relations are organized will determine whether or not they are balanced. The balance between them can be viewed as a triad whereby each of the corners represents something: a person (p), another person such as a friend or a celebrity (o), and a stimulus such as a product, event or a service (x). If the triad is not balanced, people can feel tense and will consequently be motivated to reduce the tension that they are experiencing”<sup>27</sup>

## **Arousal Theory**

Humans need to maintain a certain level of arousal. When the balanced amount of arousal is maintained, people become motivated.”<sup>28</sup>

“**Involvement** is a motivational construct, which can be activated by many different antecedents. The level of involvement can vary from indifference to great passion and the more passionate the consumer is the more motivated they are to purchase a product or service.”<sup>29</sup>

## **Consumer and the Environment.**

Recycling can be a good way of ensuring that valuable materials are reused instead of being wasted. However, there is a need to conventionalize the process for people or they are likely to put their ‘rubbish’ into the bin instead. There are also present cultural variations which influence the habits of consumers regarding recycling. This is the reason for the difference in the reception of environmentally friendly products. Some countries endorse a positive outlook on eco-friendly products while others do not necessarily see them in a positive light. Ignorance in semi-literate, third world countries, or negligible consequences in less populous countries can be the eroding factor when it comes to recycling. Though, if these footwear brands were to use their Corporate Social Responsibility Obligations as a product sales strategy, it should increase their consumer loyalty. While such a huge market’s percentage of revenue could provide necessary relief where needed.

## **Questionnaire**

The first part of the questionnaire is general information; which includes full name gender and monthly budget. Then is the brand familiarity question. The questionnaires’ next section concerns the consumer’s personal choice. How many shoes they buy in a month. How much is the average price of the shoes that they buy. What kinds of shoes that they like between Ballerinas, Lace Ups, Canvas Shoes, Loafers, Trainers and Brogues. Then the questionnaire asked which facts influence the customer, using the Likert Scaling.

1. Supra is a company that is owned Professional Skateboarders Jim Greco, Erik Ellington, Tom Penny, Chad Muska, and Dennis Martin. They also design the shoes. (direct celebrity)
2. Keen takes its Corporate Social Responsibility very seriously and donates to community programs. (indirect CSR)
3. Toms donates one pair of shoes to children in need in a third world country, for every pair that you buy. (direct CSR)
4. Rothy’s is one of Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle’s preferred brand? Do you want to buy a pair of Rothy’s Shoes because of Meghan Markle? (indirect celebrity influence)
5. Rothy’s recycles woven flats and shoes made from recycled plastic. They can also be washed. Does this make you want to buy Rothy’s Shoes?

Question No. 9 in the questionnaire being “If you had to make your purchase decision based on the above facts, which among the following shoes, would you have purchased. Rank them (1 = highest priority for purchase; 2 = medium priority for purchase; 3 = low priority for purchase; 4 = no priority) according to your priority in terms of your purchase decision.”

## **The Response Analysis**

The questionnaire was answered by 25 individuals. The sample group was both from India and the United States. These individuals have access through the internet to purchase the products and often buy products online, with international shipping.

## **Brand Familiarity**

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. N (19), p. 115

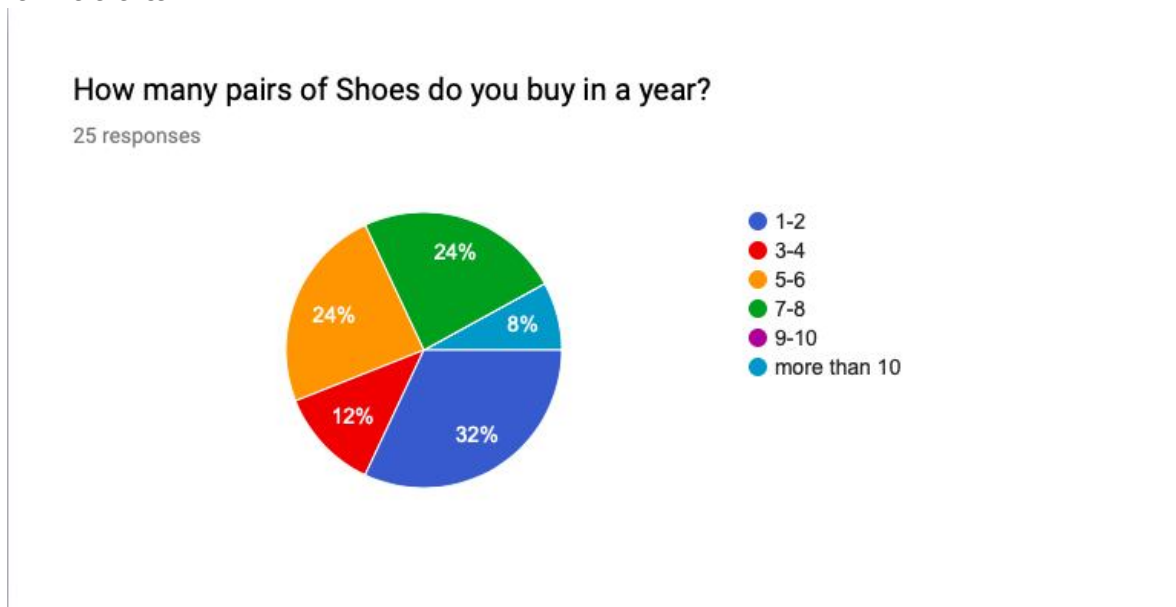
<sup>27</sup> Ibid. N (19)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. N (19)

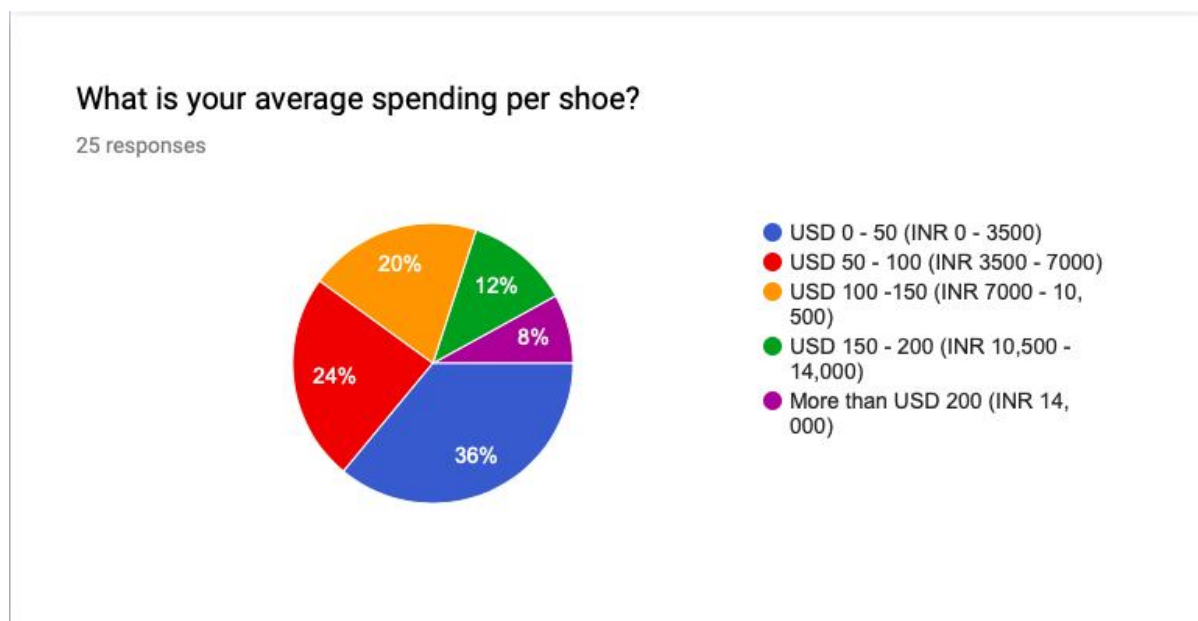
<sup>29</sup> Ibid. N (19)

Most consumers in the sample group, knew about TOMS Shoes, being eighteen out of twenty-five. While Keen Footwear was the least known amongst the group, only ten out of twenty-five consumers were aware about it. While Supra Shoes and Rothys Shoes were known by relatively lower number of people from Toms Shoes, being thirteen out of twenty-five.

## Consumer Preference



32% of the sample group bought only one to two shoes in a year. While 8% of the group bought more than ten shoes in a year. Most number of consumers bought five to six or seven or eight. Most consumers (36%) spent US\$ 0-50 (• 0-3,500). Followed by the 12% that buy footwear for US\$ 50-100 (• 3,500-7,000). While, only 8% spent more than US\$ 200(• 14,000). Amongst the type of shoe that was preferred by the group, 52 % of the group agreed that they like Ballerinas and Loafers. While 40% of the group established that they like Lace Ups and Trainer. Brogues were liked by 32% of the group. Lastly, Lace Ups were the least picked preference with only 28% admirers in the group.



## Supra Footwear Fact – Celebrity Influence

Eight or 32% consumers out of the sample group believed that Supra's celebrity connection does affect them either positively. Six (24%) people strongly disagreed that the fact had an effect on their purchase decision. Five (20%) individuals agreed that it did influence them. While it only 3 (12%) persons strongly disagreed that it affected their purchase decision.

#### Keen Footwear Fact – CSR

Eight or 32% consumers out of the sample group agreed that Keens social programs affect their willingness to buy Keen. While, seven (29%) people stayed neutral about whether the fact had an effect on their purchase decision. Five (20%) individuals strongly disagreed that it did influence them. While it only 3 (12%) persons disagreed that it affected their purchase decision. Only 2 (8%) strongly agreed that the fact affects their consumer behavior.

#### TOMS Shoes Fact – CSR

Eight or 32% consumers out of the sample group strongly agreed that Keens social programs affect their willingness to buy TOMS Shoes. While, seven (29%) people stayed neutral about whether the fact had an effect on their purchase decision Five (20%) individuals strongly disagreed that it did influence them. While it only 4 (16%) persons disagreed that it affected their purchase decision. Only 1 (4%) disagreed that the fact affects their consumer behavior.

#### Rothy's Shoe Fact - Celebrity Influence

Seven (29%) people consumers out of the sample group strongly disagreed that the celebrity Influence affect their willingness to buy Rothy's Shoes. Seven (29%) people consumers out of the sample group disagreed about whether the fact had an effect on their purchase decision. Five (20%) individuals stayed neutral that it did influence them. While it only 4 (16%) persons disagreed that it affected their purchase decision. Only 1 (4%) disagreed that the fact affects their consumer behavior. While 3 (12%) persons agreed and another 3 (12%) persons that it affected their purchase decision

#### Rothy's Shoe Fact – CSR

Seven (29%) people consumers out of the sample group strongly agreed that the environmental CSR affect their willingness to buy Rothy's Shoes. Seven (29%) people consumers out of the sample group stayed about whether the fact had an effect on their purchase decision. Both strong agreements and strong disagreements were five (20%) individuals each. Only 1 (4%) disagreed that the fact affects their consumer behavior.

#### Purchase Priority

We see that TOMS Shoes displays the highest purchase priority by largest number of consumers (8 or 32%) out of the sample. TOMS Shoes was in the highest or the high-moderate priority for most sample group consumers (14 or 56%). Although Keen Footwear has a more uniform preference pattern from the consumer. Here, we see that even though Keen is indirect CSR, it remains and more than half of the sample group (13 or 52%) felt that it requires to be bought in highest to high-moderate priority. While only 5 (or 10%) of the sample group chose Supra as their highest priority, which would be categorized more as a Symbolic Interactionism. What stands out is that 12 (or 48%) individuals put Rothy's model of direct CSR and indirect Celebrity Influence as their lowest priority purchase, while 7 (or 28%) put it as their highest priority. This may depend on the cultural differences, as we have a mixed consumer group from India and USA.

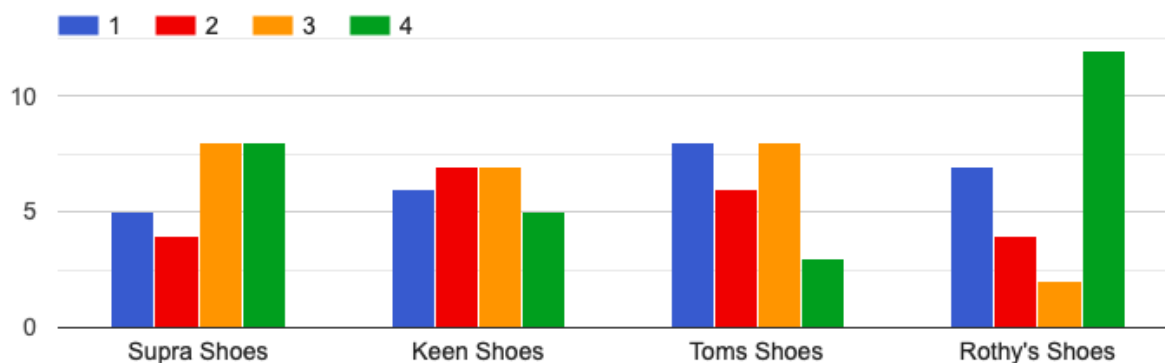


Table of Priority

X-Axis = Brand & Y-Axis = Number of Respondents Who Answered

(1 = highest priority for purchase; 2 = medium priority for purchase; 3 = low priority for purchase; 4 = no priority)

#### CONCLUSION:

The purpose of this paper was to understand whether when given the choice between Celebrity Influence or CSR as the brand Unique Selling Point, what does the consumer feel inclined to choose. From the

given analysis, the conclusion that is derived is that consumers are more preferential towards brands that use CSR as a marketing strategy. While, Celebrity Influence does increase consumer activity, consumers are looking for more socially conscious brands. Where, TOMS direct approach of making the customer feel more involved in the CSR, by 'Buy one, Give One' Campaign has invoked brand loyalty and preference. While Rothy's direct CSR where the shoes are made out of plastic may end up feeling too involved. Keen's stable approach towards community base gives them a more stable clientele. Supra depend on its direct connection to a celebrity. While Rothy's too does benefit from its indirect Celebrity Influence. Though the same celebrities might become points of aversion for other groups of consumers. CSR is more widely accepted by the Consumer.

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