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## RESEARCH REPORT

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**U-DESIGN**

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# Executive Summary

U-Design is a mobile app that allows users to customize, sell, and buy their own sneakers. It offers high-quality and name brand sneakers such as Nike and Vans to compliment a niche market of sneakerheads who have built trust with these brands.

**Key Findings**

After interviewing five potential users and current users of shoe customization apps, we have discovered these primary behaviors and patters:

- Users' main choices in shoe brands were Nike and Adidas. This was not to exclude non-name brand shoes.

- Most users liked the idea of customized sneakers but did not want to commit too much effort into an intricate design system.

- Users would spend top dollar on valuable sneakers but oftentimes, the sneakers are not readily available.

- Users are concerned with sizing and comfort when purchasing sneakers online.

- Users wear brands that have a great affinity towards their own personality.

- Users appreciate authenticity especially when they are paying high prices.

**Recommendations**

The primary users of the app lean heavily towards the younger generation (Generation Z) but will need an app that is easy and concise to use when considering the design system. The app should not focus too much on intricate design functions.

- The app will need to include those popular brands stated by users to get them excited to wear something that is deemed as authentic while adding their own personality and style within the customization components.

- Since the app allows users to list their finished designs for sale, users will need a POV system that allows them to track their sales and earnings.

- The app can feature a virtual sizing guide or ruler that can allow users to get nearly accurate sizing for the perfect fit.

- Users who will not use the design feature on the app need to have ease of access to the shopping feature so that they are not lost in the app.

- Since the primary persona group will target Generation Z users, the app will want to have an aesthetic that is appealing and vibrant.

# Introduction

**Goal Directed Design**

The purpose of this report is to display the information that the U-Design team has gathered on the sneaker industry and its users. This information has been carefully analyzed and organized to convey the who, what, when, where, how, and why of this topic so that we as a team may form the best possible solution to suit our user's needs.

The U-Design team used the Goal Directed Design method in order to accumulate the information necessary for this report. Goal Directed Design is the process of analyzing data and managing comprehensive research in order to understand the habits, behaviors, and goals of users.

The U-Design team used the Goal Directed Design approach in this research report for our Interaction Design I class at Kennesaw State University. Our process is as follows:

- To start, our team initiated the **Kickoff Meeting** with stakeholders to introduce our propositions, questions, assumptions, and possible concerns. Since this was a fictitious company, the team had to roleplay as the stakeholders but done in a manner that would get us used to what it would be like to have these kinds of conversations with real stakeholders.

- We take the information from the Kickoff meeting and create a research plan that outlines the information about the stakeholder's goal, concerns, and questions in order to pinpoint the pertinent information that we believe is relevant to our users and the design direction that we wish to go in. This research plan was the blueprint that helped to form the **Literature Review**. The Literature Review comprises of qualitative and quantitative data discovered via industry reports, web searches, and internal documents in order to use as a basis for any further questions that may be important to stakeholders and as a supply of additional knowledge.

- The **Competitor Audit** was conducted to help our team understand what is currently popular in the market and gaps that we may be able to fill based on what our competitors may be lacking.

- Once our Literature Review and Competitive Audits were formulated, we held **Stakeholder Interviews** to get a better understanding of the stakeholder's goals and how these goals tie in with the information collected.

- Next, the U-Design team conducted virtual **User Interviews**. We targeted five people who personally use the products in question (sneakers) to accomplish their goals. These people were a mix of current users and potential users of customized apparel and sneakers and was useful for our team to study how these mix of users think and behave about things.

- Lastly, the U-Design team analyzed all the information gathered during the Kickoff Meeting, Literature Review, Competitor Audit, Stakeholder Interviews, and User Interviews to model into two **Personas**. These models allowed the U-Design team to visualize the most important aspects of the users lives and what they want to accomplish regarding the topic of customized sneakers. These Personas that we have created are fictitious people but are constructed using the motivations and behaviors of the real users that we have studied in our research.

This research report will discuss all the aforementioned details and methodologies. It will be a key asset to the U-Design team in the process of creating a successful app!

# Kickoff Meeting

Before the U-Design team began any work on the development of the app, we needed to understand the initial key questions that the stakeholders want to know. **As a disclaimer, since this company was entirely fictitious, there were no actual stakeholders involved. The U-Design team roleplayed as stakeholders to get a better sense of what to expect in a real Kickoff Meeting.**

The purpose of this Kickoff Meeting was to give the team insight on the way in which stakeholders conceptualize their product, the product itself, the product's users, and the arising design problem. Some of the questions asked during this meeting were "What is the product" and "Who will use this product" and "What are the current challenges that the business and design team face". As basic as these questions may appear, they will more than likely be able to supply the team with valuable clues about how the stakeholder interviews and user interviews will be conducted later, as well as

understanding the product being developed.

Our Kickoff Meeting started with a problem statement that stated:

*"Imaginative artists need a better outlet to not only express their art to others but to be paid professionally as well. Artists need a workable medium to display their creativity and earn money doing so."*

From this statement, we followed up by determining parameters such as what audience we wanted to target, how it fits into our user's lives, how our product looks/behaves, and other pertinent questions. Our discussions have determined that the U-Design app would be suited for Millennials and Generation Z creatives who are looking to create customized sneakers to express themselves as well as to generate income. The U-Design app wants to generate a sense of liberation, creativity, and exploration amongst its users so that users may have an

outlet to showcase their abilities, discover new regions of art, and feel more like their authentic selves. The team feels that in order to grant the users these wishes, we will need to implement an app with the ability to allow users to create their designs, a selling feature that will allow them to make money from their designs, and a gallery that can get them inspired for their next project! We intend for the main value of the U-Design app to be in its creation feature and the commissions earned.

# Literature Review

As we progress further into the research phase, the team decided to use the information gathered from the initial Kickoff Meeting to outline a plan that will guide us through the Literature Review.

The Literature Review is a collection of information by means of industry reports, internal documents and/or web searches as a way of understanding the sneaker and customized sneaker industry. The U-Design team will later utilize this information towards the stakeholder interviews to ensure clarity and project us into the next phase of development. Our first order of business is to understand the sneaker and customized sneaker industry.

### Basis of the sneaker industry

We can trace the history of sneakers back to the late 19th century. The need for advanced and developed footwear was huge and designers and manufacturers had no choice but to produce products suiting the customer's needs. It wasn't until 1917 that manufacturers produced sneakers in large numbers for use by the public. They were given the name sneakers since they were so quiet and a person

wearing them could hardly be heard when moving and could sneak into or out of places without being noticed.



By 1924, Adidas, a company named after its founder of German origin, created a sneaker and thereby placed sneakers into the global market. Initially, athletes wore sneakers for sports purposes, but children started putting them on to pass fashion statements in the mid-twentieth century. It was not until 1984 when the global sports shoe manufacturing company Nike signed a contract with Michael Jordan, arguably one of the best basketball players to have existed and had sneakers widely popularized. Jordan collaborated to have a sneaker label called Air Jordan, which remains popular with advancements made on

the model to suit the changing times. Since then, various companies have produced different types of sneakers and colors decorating the world.

### Types and Purposes of the Most Worn Sneakers

The most worn and most popular sneakers globally in 2021 are the NIKE Airforce 1, as per reports and available data from the leading manufacturers of sneakers. Nike Airforce 1 has gained popularity, mainly due to its availability of varieties for children, women, men, and in styles such as high and low tops. These features make it available to virtually everyone in need of sneakers. They also come in various colors, further improving their availability to customers with different preferences and choices. The market index of the Nike Airforce 1 brand is enormous. As of 2021, the company reported having made sales of more than $800 million US dollars translating to a profit of more than $300 million US dollars over the same period. Nike Airforce 1 has managed such levels majorly due to its adaptability to the current trends and fashion.

## Highest Earning Sneaker Aspect

The highest earning sneaker facet is that it focuses on young people aged between 15 to 35 years and targets women. Naturally, women tend to own more shoes as compared to men. Women are more concerned with their outlook and, as a result, invest highly in having a variety of footwear. In addition to that, the youths like being trendy. Sneakers have been categorized to be classy and command social respect and recognition amongst young people. These are the reasons that make sneakers targeting women and young people highly demanded and ultimately fetch more manufacturers' earnings.

## Marketability of Custom Designed Sneakers

The customization of sneakers has gained popularity in recent years, increasing their marketability. Human beings love being unique and standing out and sneaker customization has presented the opportunity for individuals to express themselves. Through customization, individuals can create their style, and the customized product is usually made with precise attention to detail. The prospect of having unfitting sneakers or those that don't match customers'

preferences lowers by embracing customization. Customized sneakers have a high market since customers get served with what they pay for. Often, the manufacture of many products at once might lead to errors, which is not the case with customized sneakers since a limited number gets manufactured on request. Some great personalities and influencers also customize their sneakers to market their trademarks and brands. Their followers end up purchasing the customized sneakers of their icons and feel very attached to the activities they perform, such as sports and other influential practices of society. The ability of customized sneakers to pass specific messages makes them marketable, for, in some instances, they act as moving billboards reaching a targeted audience.

## Highest Selling Point of the Sneaker Industry

The highest selling point of sneakers is their ability to provide stability and ease of movement. These factors, coupled together, provide individuals with protection from injuries. When exercising or involved in intensive activity putting pressure on the lower hips, the foot is the last receiver of such pressure. The

shoe's ability to absorb that pressure protects the knees and ankles from injuries that could otherwise have resulted from the pressure. Sneakers are comfortable and light, and this provides a person with an opportunity to do activities easily when wearing them. Sneakers' design provides comfort and protects customers from sustaining blisters. They are well aerated and have the innersoles well designed to absorb heat that could lead to blisters. Another important selling point of sneakers is that they are versatile. There are sneakers made virtually for any activity. There are various sneakers giving customers the option to choose those that fits them best, giving sneakers an edge over other types of footwear.

These selling points are marketed and branded highly by advertisements and contractual collaborations with celebrities and icons in various fields. Sports icons are one of the most targeted groups in sneakers marketing. They sign sponsorship deals that make them ambassadors and promoters of sneakers. Their popularity increases the customer base and influences individuals to own part of the merchandise marketed. Collaborator deals with famous established brands and markets sneakers. The main brands are the various sporting companies and clubs involved in different sports. Sneakers' reach and promotion of the brand are enhanced by the sponsorship of global events like the Olympics and the soccer World Cup, where advertisement and brand promotion are done in the events.

### The Going Trend in Custom Designed Sneakers

The latest trends in sneaker customization involve the inscription of individual names on the sneakers. Other individuals are also having the names of the companies they market or own written on the surface of the sneakers. Symbols and initials of importance to customers have also emerged to be part of the popular customization ways. The signs include a particular date and places visited or some treasured belongings. Another trend in customization is the use of different colors in the manufacture of sneakers. Traditionally, sneakers consist of one color for one

particular shoe. However, individuals have had sneakers bearing various colors, with some having the colors of their national flags or other meaningful and significant colors to the customers.
In conclusion, the market for sneakers keeps on growing daily. The current technological advancements are also going to be pivotal in the manufacture of new sneaker models. The future for sneakers is promising, and we can only wait to see the latest developments that will emerge with time.

### Millennials and Generation Z

According to research studies, as far as generational variations, millennial and Gen Z shoppers dominate online spending typically. These two generations understood fast about the convenience and exposure of online shopping. In order to understand who these generations are, let's start from oldest to youngest. The oldest of the two generations are the Millennials. Anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (ages 23 to 38 in 2019) is considered a Millennial. They work more hours each day than prior generations and are more educated than earlier generations. The youngest of the two generations are Gen Z's. Gen Z's are born after 1996. Gen Z grew up with technology, the internet, and social media, which sometimes causes them to be stereotyped as tech-addicted and anti-social. Unlike Millennials, which are work martyrs, 56% of Gen Z's consider themselves creative compared to

the 44% of those over the age of 24. You could say they could be the next bohemian generation with more liberal views and artistry.

### Where do they shop?

Since the pandemic in 2020, online shopping has grown vastly. The online shopping experience has changed into a new retail reality. Both Millennials and Gen Z's are more likely to shop online for convenience and price comparison as their top online shopping benefits. Social media is a big influence on purchasing decisions too. Additionally, both generations care a great deal about ethics, sustainability, and equality. As for the technology itself, most younger generations browse on their smartphone to shop rather than the typical desktop. According to an IBM study, 75% of Gen Z'ers selected their smartphones as their device of choice. As for Millennials, they respond to using mostly their smartphones based on push notifications. Since MySpace and Facebook was released, Millennials have a faster reaction to notifications as a sign of interest or belonging.

**What is their lifestyle?**

The question of what lifestyles of the Millennials and Gen Z's can seem broad. Each person has a different path in their life compared to others. So instead, we will look at it in the big picture. One of the largest generations, Millennials, is about to move into its prime spending years. They are poised to reshape the economy. Student loan payments are taking up a growing chunk of postgraduate Millennials' income. With less spending, Millennials are putting off commitments like marriage and home ownerships. As for brands and retail, Millennials are the reason why retail reality has been reshaped. Millennials turn to brands that can offer maximum convenience at the lowest cost. On top of that, they rely on online networking before making a purchase online. For the younger generation, Gen Z's, they are easily adaptable when it involves technology. Starting at a very young age, Gen Z'ers were exposed to technology whether it was from a development learning tablet or experimenting with their relative's smartphone. Their understandings of the physical world and digital world are blended into one reality. This is not necessarily a negative, but a positive result. This positive result presents a clear understanding that the Gen Z have both strong capabilities and adaptation flipping into two realities of online and offline.

**Where do they hang out?**

When trying to figure out where our user groups hang out, we wanted to understand the user demographic of the most common shoe buyer and shoe Enthusiast used apps. We looked at StockX, GOAT, and Nike. According to a StockX article with the company's CMO, Gen Z makes up most of its users today. The pandemic helped that platform grow even more thanks to a general increase in online shopping as well.

In terms of physical locations where users hang out, we wanted to look at which shoe brands most users found more likable and would be an accurate depiction of physical locations. This could be anything from Footlocker, Hibbett Sports, Shoe Carnival, etc. But narrowing it down to the most popular shoes is a good start. According to an article by the FDRA (Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America) Nike is by far the world's largest athletic shoe manufacturer, with an estimated market share of about 50%. "Nike has been the undisputed leader in athletic footwear for some time now and is several times larger than its nearest competitor. Despite all its success, the company is still managing to grow at a very impressive rate". So, it may be safe to say that users tend to accumulate more to areas where Nike shoes are being offered.

**What are their motivations? Fears?**

Looking at our user groups' motivations and fears paints a good picture for us to use in understanding concerns and pain points for our app. It also shows us what would potentially motivate our users to use our app more as well. Fears from our user research data ranged from financial concerns to the fit and feel of the physical shoe. How much more would a custom shoe be, some users asked?

Would the shoe look the same in person as it did on the app? Would designing a custom shoe take a lot of time? There were a variety of motivations from our users as well. Some were simply out of necessity for a new shoe if their old pair needed to be replaced. Others could maybe be motivated to make something custom for a particular occasion. Maybe a certain design or exclusive make caught their eye. Overall, we found all this information useful in creating a better app for our users.

## What questions are they asking?

The biggest question that most of our users are asking is, "Can I afford this sneaker?" and "Why are sneakers so expensive?" Most users' main concern aside from who is buying sneakers, is, whether they can afford them. Sneakers have been popular since Team USA  made them cool to dunk-in while playing basketball. Back in the 70's they wore a shoe called Converse, better known as Chucks or Chuck Taylors. Fast forwarding to the present day, Chucks are still alive and active. Although the shoe is not the best for playing basketball people still wear them casually. The price has gone up significantly from $3.95 to about $70 or more. To address the question of why sneakers are so expensive is a matter of how we place value in only certain brands. Companies like Under Armor knew that they needed a face to sell their shoes and so they offered Stephen Curry a contract and suddenly Under Armor shoes went from

a lower valued brand to a top competitor.  The sports community loves Stephen Curry which became incentive to buy Under Armor shoes. Having that kind of traction helped to place a high value on the brand itself.

## How do they prefer to be communicated with?

Many of our users use Printify, Shopify, and FreshPrints, and Snaptee to obtain the customized look that they want. Our users are utilizing different apps/websites to find inspiration and tools to create the look they are going for. The Matboard, Art Authority, NikeID and The Hunt are just a few different apps that users typically use if they want to design or create or draw inspiration. A lot of our users utilize these apps to see what other users are creating and what to design.

## Needs and Goals

Based on reviews and insight into competitors and social media conversations, users' number one stipulation to purchasing custom apparel and sneakers is communication. Many users require constant and clear communication on their order from the point of considering a product to the point with which they have received their item(s). Thorough communication between an app and the user ensures trust and value. When the user feels valued, they become loyal customers which helps to build the

app's reputation. Another need for users is that they want their desires and/or needs met under all circumstances. This means that they typically expect there to be a supply of the product they desire in the variation they desire as well. When apps have several options that aren't available, consumers become frustrated and equate that to a poor experience. Users typically buy sneakers with the goal of wearing a design that they deem as "nice" or "trending" with more aims towards an aesthetic rather than absolute necessity. Many users seem to be on alert for a certain style of sneaker once it launches into mainstream media. Oftentimes, they aim to buy these sneakers before they sell out only to be disappointed that they missed their opportunity. Some users feel overjoyed that they managed to purchase a limited pair of sneakers while other users feel annoyed that their digital system has failed them at alerting them in a timely fashion to secure these shoes. These users want to be able to own a pair of sneakers that they desire whether they are limited editions or not. Buying custom sneakers allows many users to feel unique especially when they get to choose the design that they want. For those users who do not want to follow trends, they are able to tailor their style to the design of sneakers that they wear. Authenticity has become of utmost importance to the users who want to break free from societal norms.

# Competitive Audit

The custom shoe and apparel industries are a growing market as a multitude of consumers strive to be unique in our modern individualistic society. Our design team decided to focus our audit on products and services that were created to cater to this expanding market. These companies are: AliveShoes, TeeSpring, Shoe Zero, and Kin Custom. This analysis will be centered around the

price, features, navigation, brand identity, and mobile experience.

We found many similarities in what each brand offered. However, each had an area that could have been improved or implemented. These aspects are available in all the websites we analyzed for this audit.

What was found is that there were many similarities in what each brand offered however, each had an area in which they were lacking. Improvement is available in all of the websites we analyzed for this audit.
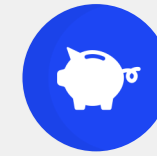
# AliveShoes

As a custom shoe provider, AliveShoes allows their customers to design their own shoe art, which is then printed and shipped out to the customers. The website features a designer promotion section to display the top shoe designers with the most popular shoe. Their target audience includes a range of fashion designers, entrepreneurs, Millennials, and Gen Z. AliveShoes is an innovative website experience with areas of great creativity and areas that could be improved upon. The main areas of improvement would be accessibility since the website is only available in English and limiting the amount of content on the page to reduce extraneous cognitive load.
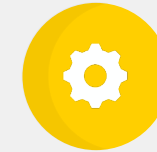
# AliveShoes Mobile Website
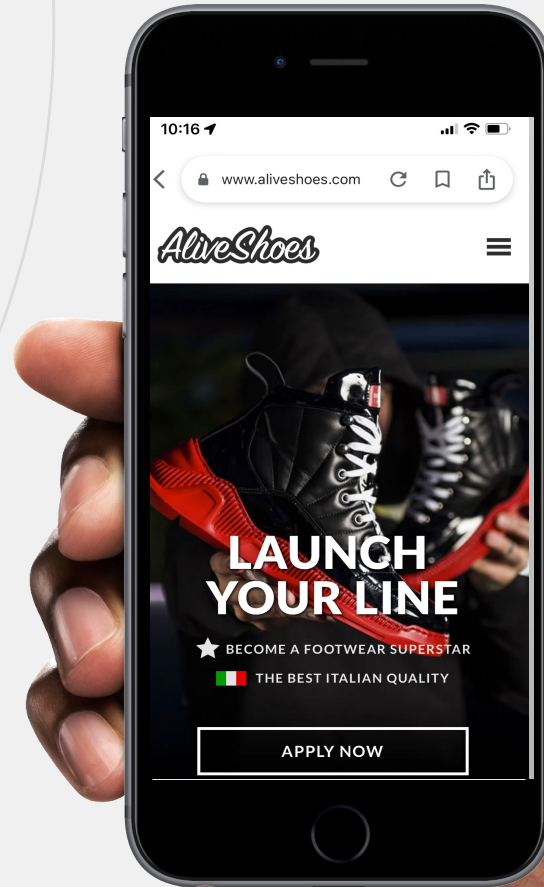


## Price

Most shoes are $200 - $250

## Features

+ "Create account" feature
+ Designer program
- Can't click on featured designed shoes

## Navigation

- A lot of scrolling to navigate the home page
- Some elements seem clickable but are not

## Brand Identity

- Lacking
- Relies on images heavily
- No apparent color scheme for the brand

## Mobile Experience

+ Fully responsive
- Excessive scrolling with smaller screen

# TeeSpring

TeeSpring is a custom apparel provider. Their website allows customers to design clothing, phone cases, backpacks, and other merchandise. Customers can also purchase pre-designed apparel if they choose. The TeeSpring website incorporates multiple sections dedicated to pre-designed products, featured creators, and staff picks. Their target audience consists of fashion designers, entrepreneurs, Millennials, and Gen Z. While the products are displayed well and there is a fun and direct tone in their branding, the menu can be difficult to find on the mobile version and the layout is not consistent with the other layouts on the website. The shop lacks organizational features to sort and filter the different products and they do not offer the option to customize sneakers.

# TeeSpring Mobile Website
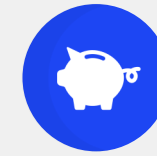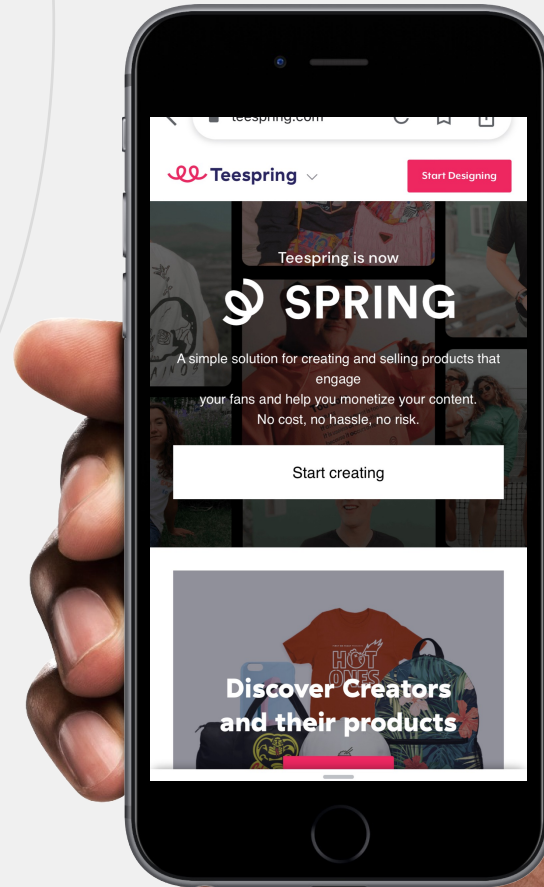


## Price

$1 - $50

## Features

+ "Create account" feature
+ Online customization feature
+ Online shop for pre-made items

## Navigation

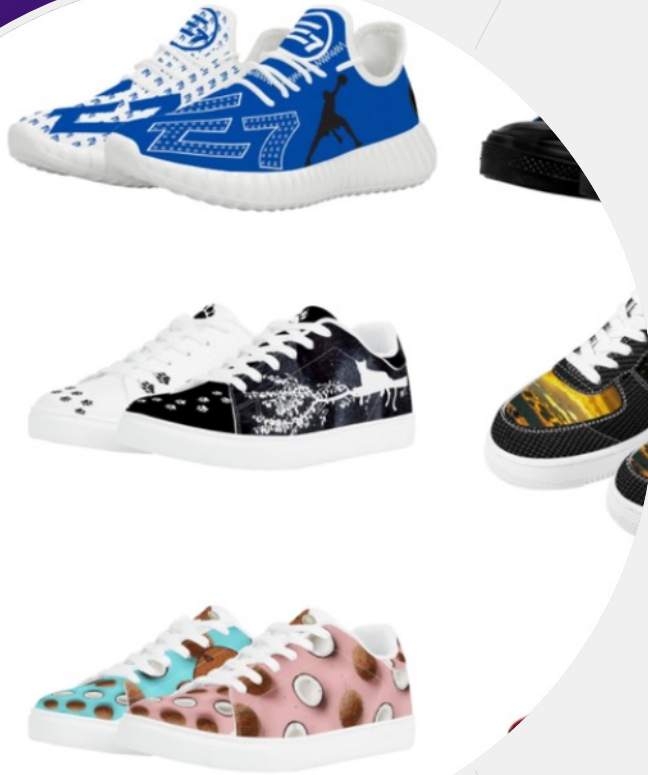- Takes longer to navigate
- Not enough tabs on the header

## Brand Identity

+ Good brand identity
+ Color scheme, font choice, and logo reinforces the fun mood presented

## Mobile Experience

+ Key information present
+ Fully responsive
- Menu hard to find

# Shoe Zero

Shoe Zero is a custom shoe service. Customers can design their own pair of shoes and have them delivered to them. Their features include a video explaining how their shoe design process works at the top of the page. Fashion designers and entrepreneurs are the target audience they are aiming to draw in. The site is visually unappealing and there are sizing issues with the mobile experience. The company is very short and concise with the information given on the page. This helps give the brand a serious and indirect tone on the site.

# Shoe Zero Mobile Website
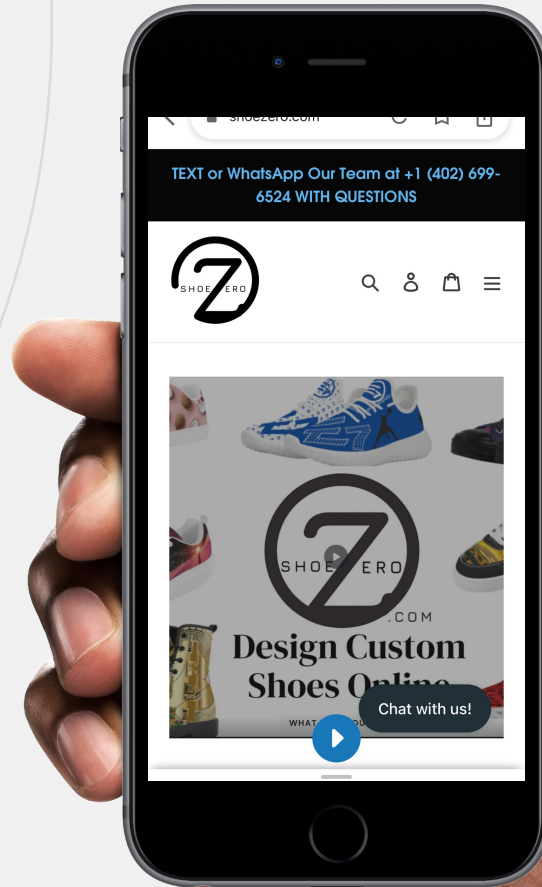
## Price

Most shoes are $99 - $200
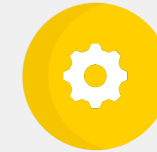
## Features

+ Affiliate program
+ "Create account" feature
+ Search feature

## Navigation

+ Very easy to navigate
+ All navigation in header

## Brand Identity

- Lacking an appealing color scheme
- Imagery is lacking
- Looks unreliable

## Mobile Experience

- Logo is too large
- Icons too close together
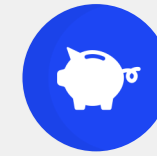- Text alignment different in certain paragraphs

# Kin Custom

Kin Custom is a custom shoe and apparel brand. Customers can design their own pairs of shoes and clothing. Customers can also pick from pre-designed shoes and apparel if they desire. Their website features a video at the top of the page that promotes some of the different items they offer. Fashion designers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z, and entrepreneurs are the target audience they are aiming to attract. The site is visually appealing, and the target audience is reinforced through the imagery on the site. The video and animations also help build the visual interest on the site. The page is divided into sections to make navigation easier. The most important sections are also placed in the header for ease of access.

# Kin Custom Mobile Website
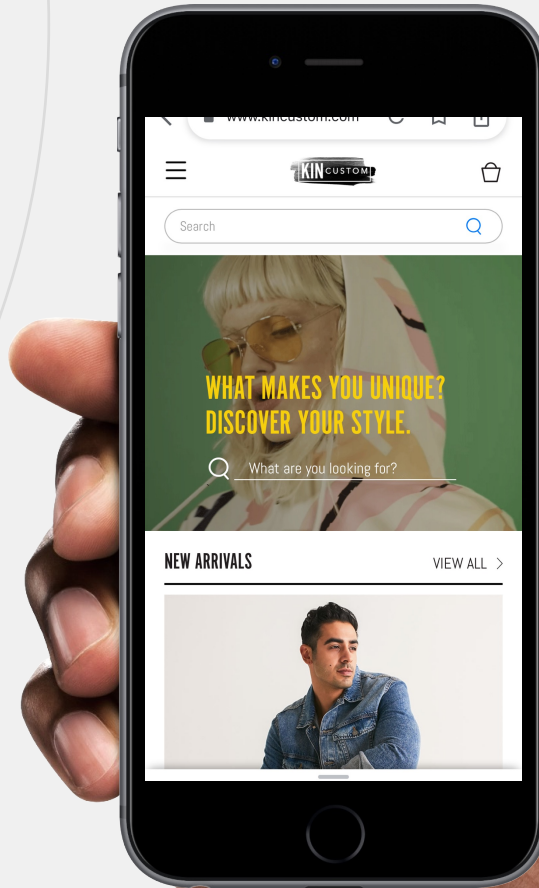


## Price

Range from $1 - $100

## Features

+ "Create account" feature
+ "New Arrivals" section
+ " Recommendations" section
+ Search feature

## Navigation

+ Easy to navigate
+ Many tabs on the header

## Brand Identity

+ Strong brand identity, including colors, font, style, motion, imagery, and photography

## Mobile Experience

+ Fully responsive
+ Good layout for content
- Header doesn't match desktop version

# Stakeholder Interviews

The U-Design team now takes this chance to reach back out to stakeholders to discuss the information gathered and to determine the relevance of this research to the individual goals of each stakeholder.

**DISCLAIMER: Since this was a fictitious company, we did not have any real stakeholders to interview. The U-Design team roleplayed as stakeholders to get a better sense of what to expect in a real Stakeholder Interview.**

### The Power of the Stakeholder

When it came to gaining the senses of the stakeholder, the U-Design team understood that our stakeholders were those people who are commissioned for the purpose of designing a system. The stakeholders hold an authority for what is being designed and can consist of managers, executives, product management, sales, marketing, design, usability, and other positions held by people.

### The Interview Process

The U-Design team was interviewed individually by the team leader of the design process (Jammal Lee) to gauge where each member stood and each member's views on how they expect to move forward. We wanted to view the design and its outcome through the eyes of our members by determining the preliminary product vision, constraints and opportunities, design drivers, and their perceptions of the users. From what we gathered, some of the stakeholders envisioned the design to be a creative outlet for persons who had an interest in design or persons who are professional creatives. Other stakeholders felt the need to create the app design in a manner that wasn't restrictive to non-creatives and could be user friendly to people who weren't specifically designers or artists. The perceptions of the users played a huge role in how each individual stakeholder thought and was a determining factor in

the design of the whole thing. Ultimately, the U-Design team was able to combine the needs of the stakeholders to create an app that would perfectly unite the strategies of the way in which users operated the app.

# User Interviews

After the stakeholder interviews, the U-Design team jumped right into the user interviews. Our goal in conducting these interviews was to collect valuable qualitative information about our current and potential users as well as what their goals may be.

The U-Design team formulated a set of pertinent questions to ask each user we interviewed. Some of these questions were, "What is your relationship like with shoes/apparel", "Can you see yourself ever wearing custom designed sneakers", and "How do you think wearing custom designed sneakers is going to help you". These questions helped us to delve deep into the user's goals and desires so that we may better understand how to serve them.

### Persona Hypothesis

Without a complete analysis of who our users were, the U-Design team had to make some assumptions. We needed to identify who our interview candidates might be before we started recruiting for volunteers. We pulled information from our previous research (stakeholders, literature review, competitive analysis,

etc.) and created a hypothesis to get the ball rolling in the right direction. This hypothesis needed to address high level questions regarding the different kinds of people who might use the app, the ranges of behavior and types of environments that needed to be explored, and the variations of  users' needs.

### User Interview Plan

The U-Design team has determined whom to recruit and now we need to take action. We developed a plan that outlined the interviewees we'd reach out to and the questions that we'd ask them. We also determined who our facilitators were and who our moderators were. Depending on the level of comfortability, the team switched between facilitators and moderators so that the interview process ran smoothly. We set a time goal for each interviewee and ensured that each interviewee signed a consent form for the process.
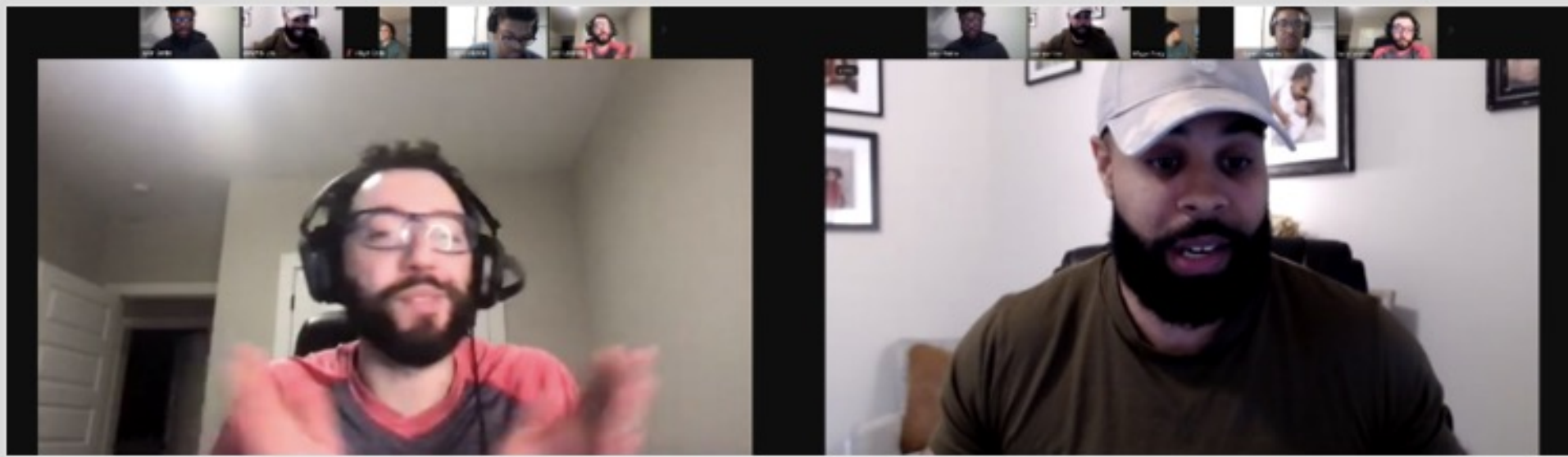
### The Interviews

The U-Design team was able to accumulate 5 volunteers for this process. During the duration of the

interviews, we noticed similarities and differences. Each interviewee had a different lifestyle and so their responses to our interview questions were all unique. Nevertheless, those similarities and differences were the starting point to the development of our user personas.
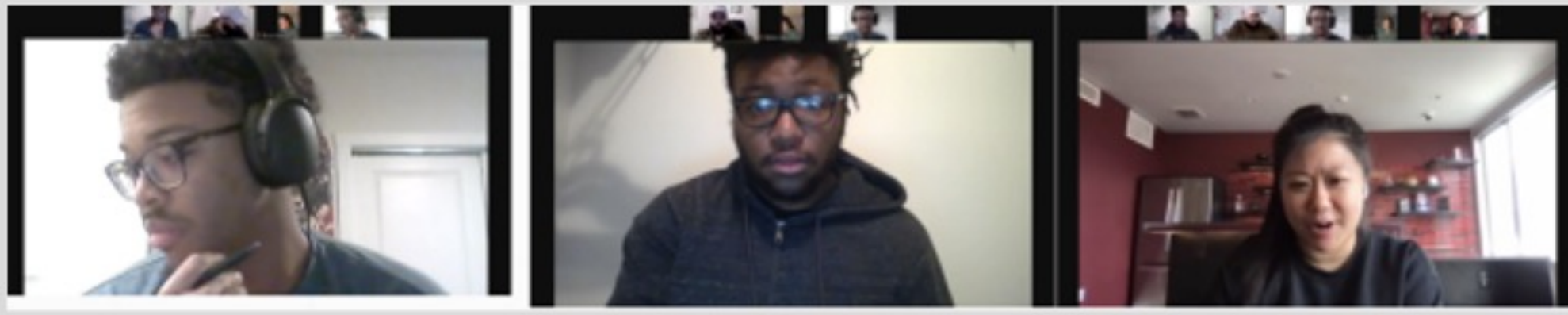
# User Interview #1



We began with our first user research interview with Dr. Jack Labriola. A full-time millennial-aged professor who teaches at Kennesaw State University. Some of our main takeaways from this interview was that Dr. Labriola is a heavily active person. He enjoys running and he is on his feet for the majority of his day. This extends into going to and from work. When Dr. Labriola is looking at different types of shoes, comfort was a major factor for him. If the shoe was comfortable, it was more of a priority over style for him.

When discussing his style and stylistic choices, Dr. Labriola really preferred bright and vibrant colors as opposed to neutral colors. Some of the issues he expressed were the limited options he would have when looking for shoes. In addition to variety, whether the quality of the shoe would be worth the money was also a major factor for Dr. Labriola.

# User Interview #2



For our second user research interview we talked with a young woman from Washington, Tiffany Tan. She is an active gym-goer and enjoys hiking or going to new or "trendy" restaurants in her free time. Tiffany is a millennial who engages with common sneakerhead outlets such as "StockX." She favors a shoe's form and comfort over design and color. However, she would tend to go towards more vibrant colors if she had the option to select a certain color. One of her few pain points included shoes not fitting properly to her foot size. The reason for this pain point is because of the online environment where she is unable to try-on the actual shoe on person. For Tiffany, going to a physical store to buy shoes in person would not be an issue. Tiffany also prefers to adhere to a budget. She questioned how much more would she pay for custom shoes. In addition, would they be within her budget? From the data we collected, we noticed that Tiffany would fit into our consumer user group as opposed to a designer user group for our mobile app. She stated that she wouldn't be very motivated to design a shoe and that she wasn't very creative.

# User Interview #3



Our third interview involved Kayla Holmes. She was quite the contrast in comparison to the other interviewees we talked to. Kayla's age falls under the Gen Z age category, and she is currently attending college. Kayla stated that she had a diverse style, and that fashion was something that really interested her. She stated that she would be interested in designing custom sneaker under the right facets. Her dream job is to become a fashion designer. From this information, we believe she would best identify as the designer user. Some recurring pain points that most of the interviewees shared, including Kayla, were the sizing issues for an online shoe and fashion app. She noted that finding the right size shoe is difficult for her. This is because some shoes do not fit the same as others. This can occur even if they are listed as the same size.

# User Interview #4



Adonis Cody, our fourth interviewee, is a split based on our predictions of user groups. He belongs to the Gen Z generation. He is also very familiar with the shoe industry. In our interview, Adonis considered himself as a "sneakerhead". A sneakerhead is someone who keeps up with sneaker trends and follows the culture that has been created around sneakers. Like most of our users, Adonis really enjoyed brands such as Nike, Jordans, and Adidas. Adonis was also aware of apps such as the "GOAT" mobile application and "StockX". Adonis stated that he loved the idea of customizing shoes. He also has used this method before with other tools such as "NikeID." Based on this information, our team believes that Adonis would not only be a designer user for our app, but also a consumer. This is because,  he has been very interested in getting custom sneakers of his own.

# User Interview #5



Finally, our last interview was with Megan Woodruff. Megan is an older Millennial age. She is married and a mother of two children.
Megan does not consider herself a "sneakerhead". However, she would like to have a sneaker or shoe that is stylish and cute. She stated that the shoes needed to be functional. Comfort was a big priority of hers as well. When discussing custom shoes, Megan could understand the cost and the time it takes to create one. If the task of customizing was time consuming, then this would be a main issue for her. Megan is an occasional shopper and has an infrequent relationship with fashion and shoes. Whenever she is in the market for shoes, Megan finds interest in neutral colors or something that is more casual in style. From this information collected, we could see Megan being a casual consumer of our app and not really looking into the custom design aspects of it.

# Personas

In this next step of the Goal Directed Design Process, the U-Design team has gathered all of the information from investigating our users' lives, environments, and motivations to form two personas.

Personas can be described as descriptive, yet fictitious models of our users that help to provide us with more accurate ways in which  we can communicate and think about how our users may behave, accomplish their goal, and why they may go about doing so.

By studying the data gathered during the Literature Review, Competitive Audit, User Interviews, and even the Stakeholder Interviews, the U-Design team was able to build our persona models with sophistication which helped us to understand our users' goals.

The U-Design team was able to pay attention to specific behavior patterns which helped us to recognize ongoing trends in decision-making. Certain behavior patterns that we've accumulated into our persona models were the fact that our users preferred the Nike and Adidas brand even when

considering customized sneakers. Other trends that we noticed were how age distinguished our users' styles. For example, the younger generations (Gen Z) were more attracted to vibrant colors while older generations (Gen Y) preferred neutral colors and shoes that were more comfortable than they were flashy. The U-Design team has deduced that the younger generation would be more suited towards creativity and design and so these users were implemented into our primary persona base. Generation Y became our secondary persona since they seemed less likely to use the design feature on the app.

## Primary and Secondary Personas

The U-Design team fashioned our primary persona after a young African American male. This was significant since we found in our research and user interviews that this group of people had a strong appeal to customized sneakers. This personas name is Brennan Johnson. We decided to make Brennan a social media influencer since he wears his sneakers as

a fashion statement rather than for comfort alone. The team also wanted to incorporate extra detail about Brennan's wants and frustrations, as well as his favorite brands to ensure that we are solving his pain points and meeting his needs.

The same construct was built for the second persona whom we named Stephanie Yates. Stephanie personifies our Generation Y user group and is considered secondary as a consumer of the the app rather than a designer. This is not to exclude Stephanie from ever using the design feature of the app. She is created as a user who would consume much more than she creates.

# Brennan Johnson
*-primary persona-*

👤 26

📍 Atlanta

💼 Social Media Influencer/College

🏠 Living with roommates

## Bio

Brennan is a rising social media influencer star with an affinity for fashion. As a college student, Brennan finds himself amongst the social crowd quite often and loves to dress to impress. He's studying Communications and Media at his university so having a creative outlet is very important to him.

## Wants & Needs

-Stylish
-Comfort
-Affordability

## Tech

| | |
|---|---|
| **Internet** | ●●●●● |
| **Social Media** | ●●●●● |
| **Online Shopping** | ●●●○○ |
| **Gadgets** | ●●●●○ |

## Favorite Brands

Nike, Apple, Jordan

## Frustrations

-Needs access to authentic shoes
-Needs an outlet to express creative side

## Stephanie Yates
*-secondary persona-*

👤 30

📍 Washington D.C.

💼 Mom/Social Worker

🏠 Married/Homeowner

### Bio

Stephanie is a new mom and newlywed who enjoys spending lots of time with her new little family. After giving birth, she wanted to get back into shape by going to the gym and doing fun activities such as hiking and swimming. All her attention goes towards her family now and she has little concern over fashion, but she still enjoys looking and feeling pretty.

### Wants & Needs

-Affordability
-Comfort

### Tech

| | |
|---|---|
| Internet | ●●●●○ |
| Social Media | ●●○○○ |
| Online Shopping | ●●●○○ |
| Gadgets | ●●●○○ |

### Favorite Brands



### Frustrations

-Needs sneakers that are family friendly
-**Needs sneakers that are easily** customizable

# Conclusion

This report demonstrates how we used the Goal Directed Design process to understand who our users are, their goals, their pain points, the market, our competitors, our stakeholders, and how we formulated our data to create the best personas.

With the U-Design teams' newfound understanding of what it may take to successfully create an app experience that reaches our user's needs, we are able to move forward into the next phase of the Goal Directed

Design process.

From the research report, we learned that users have particular interests in shoe brands, but these brands are oftentimes not readily available. We also learned that some of our users hold a high regard to their fashion sense while our other users are more concerned with comfort and cost. The U-Design teams' understanding of the market climate is that many trends dictate how, why, when, and who wears certain kinds of sneakers. Customized sneakers will

also fall in line with what is currently trending in the market. Even more importantly, the data gained from speaking with real potential users was especially valuable in our journey to culminate how to satisfy user goals. The user interviews brought us clarification on user lifestyles, their habits, their fears, and so much more. From this, we can shape the U-Design app into a system that fits perfectly into their lives.

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