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Outstanding Academic Paper by Students

Title : A Love-hate Relationship Between High Heel Shoes and Women's Lives

高跟鞋與女性間的愛恨情仇

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Abstract

Nowadays, high heel shoes are regarded as an essential accessory in dressing. In fact, about 3500 B.C., high heel shoes first appeared. Then, high heel shoes began to create new trend of fashion. My research paper is divided in three parts. In the first part, I summarize the development of high heel shoes. In the following part I use a journal article as my reference to discuss men's and women's viewpoints about high heel shoes. The final part centers on how to ease and prevent the pain resulted from wearing high heel shoes. In my opinion, even though numerous scientists indicate the shortcomings caused by high heel shoes, the importance of high heel shoes can never be replaced.

Keyword :

Feminism
Foot deformity
High heel shoes
Sexuality
Social class



中文摘要

西元前三千五百年起，高跟鞋首次出現在埃及，逐漸流傳至希臘、羅馬、及法國，在各國歷史中扮演重要地位。在古代，高跟鞋是給具有特殊身分地位的皇宮貴族才能穿，這種現象到法國路易十四統治時期特別明顯。如今，任何人都能穿高跟鞋。雖然古今中外都崇尚高跟鞋，出席重要場合或辦公環境穿著高跟鞋也被認為是基本的禮儀表現，但是其所引發的身體疼痛卻不能輕忽。在這篇報告中，除了闡述高跟鞋的誕生及發展外，更希望透過相關學術論文來了解高跟鞋對女性和男性的意義為何。除此之外，本文以醫療研究文獻為參考資料，來介紹如何緩解，甚至預防高跟鞋所導致的傷害。即使很多學者列出許多因為長期穿高跟鞋造成姿勢不良或其他難受症狀，我個人認為高跟鞋有其存在的價值，更有穿著的必要性；因為高跟鞋能散發專屬於女性的魅力，還能不知不覺中增強女性的自信心。



關鍵字：

女性主義
足部傷害
社會階級
性感
高跟鞋

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Marilyn Monroe once said that “I don't know who invented high heels, but all women owe him a lot” (Brainy Quote, 2015). The high heel shoes, with their heels higher than toes, express a specific message about sexuality, sluggishness, or social class. In fact, women who stand in high heel shoes are in the position of half-walking, which is actually against the usual body. There are more and more types of shoes appearing nowadays, but the high heel shoes always stay as the main choice for Hollywood actresses to show up in important occasions or for women to wear in daily life. Actually, the high heel shoes not only affect women but also the whole world from ancient times to modern ages. Both experts and professionals discuss the noticeable phenomenon. I will explain the significance resulted from high heel shoes for women and cover their influence in positive and negative ways.

The article named “Dangerous Elegance-A History of High-Heeled Shoes” (Random History, 2008) mentioned the development of the high heel shoes. High heel shoes first appeared in 3500 B.C. in Egypt and spread to Greece, Rome, and France. Besides Egyptian aristocrats, Greek actors and Roman prostitutions wore high heel shoes as well for different reasons. During the 1700s, France's King Louis XIV began the fashion of wearing the high heel shoes with five inches named “Louis heels,” which is restricted to anyone but only the nobles who could wear and immediately became a symbol of status. Ironically, it was the French Revolution that witnessed the disappearance of high heel shoes when Napoléon Bonaparte claimed to show equality. Anyone who wore the high heel shoes at that time would be regarded as a target of public criticism or even received death penalty. Not until the mid-nineteenth century did the high heel shoes come back. Finally, since the post-war period, it is French designer Christian Dior and Roger Vivier that had recreated the Western modern high heel shoes fashion, which impacts the dress code all over the world nowadays. As time went by, the high heel shoes once made for men are now especially for women with different reasons. The purpose of wearing high heel shoes has turned from functional use to mainly accessory collocation.

In 1533, one of French women, called Catherine de Medici, added the height on the formal shoes to improve her femininity and appearance. By doing so, her husband, the future French king, indeed did not fool around with other women any more. Noticeably, women in ancient times or in the current period gradually comprehend the magical power expressed by the high heel shoes. In “The Shoes Aren't made for Walking: Rethinking: High-Heeled Shoes as Cultural Artifacts” by Claudia Wobovnik (2013), the high heel shoes can convey superiority and charm, especially being added onto womanhood. Christian Louboutin, a famous high heel shoes designer also said that “The higher the better. It's more about an attitude. High heels empower women in a way” (Brainy Quote, 2015). That is to say, women in high heel shoes can express a

specific message that they are ready to face any kinds of difficulties in workplace. Ironically, many women would rather lose the mobility or put up with the feeling of discomfort when wearing the high heel shoes than giving up the chance to strengthen or show themselves.

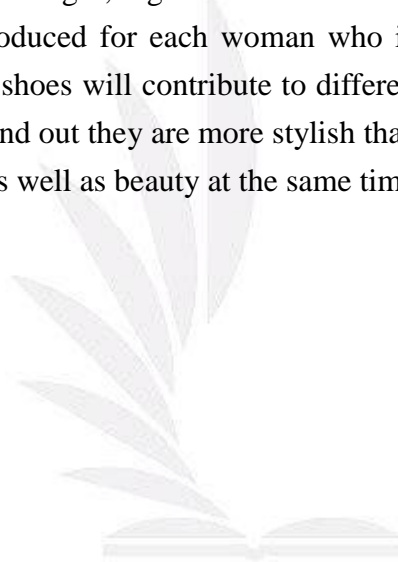
In the Wobovnik's tone, "Women and the high heel shoes are like butter and bread" (p. 83). In other words, almost women are born to have the potential to become master in the high heel shoes. A famous sentence said by Coco Chanel can emphasize the importance of the high heel shoes: "A woman with good shoes is never ugly" (Brainy Quote, 2015). The high heel shoes seem to characterize certain features that only the females owe. Nonetheless, plenty of men do not think the high heel shoes can transmit a sense of aristocrat but a message of sex. Based on the research by Wobovnik (2013), women in the high heel shoes are regarded as seduction while at the offices they can be viewed as professionalism. In any case, a pair of high heel shoes can indicate several meanings at the same time depending on different environments and who wear them. I think nothing can be more feminist than one in the high heel shoes. Women are individuals; therefore, when they try to figure out what to wear and how to make themselves more attractive, their solution is to make good use of the high heel shoes.

Nonetheless, apart from enjoying the effect resulted from high heel shoes, women should be aware of their health problem of wearing such shoes for long. French footwear designer Christian Louboutin admitted that "High heels are pleasure with pain" (Brainy Quote, 2015). According to Professor Neil J. Cronin in "The effects of high heeled shoes on female gait: A review" (2014), "As well as foot deformity, habitual high heel shoes use has been linked with foot pain, due partly to a reduced foot length and increased arch height in high heel shoes" (p. 260). Namely, informal shape of toenails or wrong unnatural position arose from long term wearing in high heel shoes. The more minutes women accompany with high heel shoes, the more pain they should tolerate.

Fortunately, some important concepts are provided by American Osteopathic Association (2015) for women to enjoy rather than abandon high heel shoes. The first thing is to decide when to purchase high heel shoes. Because feet will generally expand without consciousness at different times, the perfect period of time is in the late afternoon or evening. Another useful way for protecting feet from suffering is to insert a pad in the problem areas of high heel shoes. It is also crucial to have other shoes to change such as sneakers; by doing so, it can help stretch muscles and release feet. According to "How to Avoid Foot Problems from Wearing High Heels" (2014), most important of all is to have a pair of suitable high heel shoes and persist in taking good care of feet after taking off. As a result, women can fully express themselves in

high heel shoes without enduring discomfort. After all, “One of the things feminism is about is freedom – and that means being able to choose what you feel comfortable wearing” (Freeman, 2013). Wearing high heel shoes for a long time will lead to a series of severe feet problems, which can deprive the choice for women to wear high heel shoes. However, if women can correctly wear high heel shoes and treat their feet nicely, high heel shoes can become one of women's best friends.

Today, the proper way that females recognize to let themselves look more professional, confident, and elegant is wearing high heel shoes. Through the history, it is easy to discover that not only women but also men are ever obsessed with high heel shoes because wearing them can make genders, men and women, more attractive. Although the high heel ever hid for a few years before, it could still revive and keep controlling the world fashion. During recent years, wearing high heel shoes has been regarded as a polite behavior when having meals in high class restaurants or attending important meetings. In modern ages, high heel shoes are no longer used by particular groups; instead they are produced for each woman who is in need. In my opinion, although wearing high heel shoes will contribute to different degrees of pain, women can get used to it, for they find out they are more stylish than ever before. In a nutshell, women can possess health as well as beauty at the same time.



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