

Understanding National Soccer Jersey Design from a Material Culture Perspective: A Content Analysis and Wardrobe Interviews with Canadian Consumers

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Abstract : The purpose of this study was to understand what design attributes make the most ideal (wearable and memorable) national soccer jersey. The research probed Canadian soccer enthusiasts to better understand their jersey-purchasing rationale. The research questions framing this study were: how do consumers feel about their jerseys? How do these feelings influence their choices? There has been limited research on soccer jerseys from a material culture perspective, and it is not inclusive of national soccer jerseys. The results of this study may be used for product developers and advertisers who are looking to better understand the consumer base for national soccer jersey design. A mixed methods approach informed the research. To begin, a content analysis of all the home jerseys from the 2018 World Cup was done. Information such as size range, main colour, fibre content, brand, collar details, availability, sleeve length, place of manufacturing, pattern, price, fabric as per company, neckline, availability on company website, jersey inspiration, and badge/crest details were noted. Following the content analysis, wardrobe interviews were conducted with six consumers/fans. Participants brought two or more jerseys to the interviews, where the jerseys acted as clothing probes to recount information. Interview questions were semi-structured and focused on the participants' relationship with the sport, their personal background, who they cheered for, why they bought the jerseys, and fit preferences. The goal of the inquiry was to pull out information on how participants feel about their jerseys and why. Finally, an interview with an industry professional was done. This interview was semi-structured, focusing on basic questions regarding sportswear design, sales, the popularity of soccer, and the manufacturing and marketing process. The findings proved that national soccer jerseys are an integral part of material culture. Women liked more fitted jerseys, and men liked more comfortable jerseys. Jerseys should be made with a cooling, comfortable fabric and should always prevent peeling. The symbols on jerseys are there to convey a team's history and are most typically placed on the left chest. Jerseys should always represent the flag and/or the country's colours and should use designs that are both fashionable and innovative. Jersey design should always consider the opinions of the consumers to help influence the design process. Jerseys should always use concepts surrounding culture, as consumers feel connected to the jerseys that represent the culture and/or family they have grown up with. Jerseys should use a team's history, as well as the nostalgia associated with the team, as consumers prefer jerseys that reflect important moments in soccer. Jerseys must also sit at a reasonable price point for consumers, with an experience to go along with the jersey purchase. In conclusion, national soccer jerseys are considered sites of attachment and memories and play an integral part in the study of material culture.

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