

**PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR OF UITM
STUDENTS SABAH BRANCH ON HIGH HEELS**

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1.1 HISTORY OF HIGH HEELS

The need to gain height above the ground may have originally been inspired by the weather and street conditions rather than money or vanity. During medieval times, special wooden soles called pattens were attached to the bottoms of fragile, expensive shoes made for wearing indoors so they could be kept out of the mud and damp when converted for outdoor use. Pattens were elevated in the heels and under the ball of the foot so the wearer could walk more easily by rocking forward on them; these shapes clearly foretold of high heels.

The entire shoe was elevated in the style called the *chopine* that originated in Turkey in about 1400. These shoes were effectively miniature stilts that were flat on the bottom and made of cork and covered with leather or fabric. The wearer slipped her feet into the tops that were open-backed slippers called mules or straps similar to sandals. Chopines were typically 7-8 in (18-20 cm) high, but, in the extreme, they were as much as 18 in (46 cm) tall. Chopines kept the wearer's skirts out of the mud, assuming the lady could walk at all. When the style became fashionable in sixteenth century Venice, chopineshodd ladies walked with a servant on either side of them so they wouldn't fall. The ladies loved the attention and the additional height, but chopines were so restrictive that women were also forced by their footwear to stay at home. The 18 in (46 cm) extreme was reached in France and England where the fashion spread from Italy.

Catherine de Medici (1519-1589) is credited with wearing the first true high heels and with taking the style to France in 1533 when she married the Duc d'Orleans, who was to become France's King Henry II. Italian designers created the high heel by modifying the chopine to eliminate its awkwardness while still raising the height of the wearer. A cork wedge was placed under the front of the shoe, with a high section under the heel. These high heels served vanity another way by making the feet appear smaller and the arch of the foot higher; both of these

physical attributes were considered signs of noble birth. Catherine's Italian style was quickly adopted by the French court.

The French Revolution caused a revolution in footwear as well, and many shoe fashions vanished temporarily in the name of democracy. The red heels of the nobility disappeared completely, and showy buckles and rosettes were replaced by ribbon or cord ties. Flat shoes or very low-heeled shoes known as pumps replaced the arrogance of high heels, although high-heeled shoes and boots were restored to respectability by the mid-1800s.

Until high heels were invented, shoe soles for the left and right feet were identical and were called straights; shoes were formed on a single mold, called a last, for both feet. Shoes were bought not as a pair but as two single shoes of matching size and style. The arch shape of high heels, however, required different soles for the two feet, so, from 1818 onward, lasts were designed specifically for the left and right foot, and shoes were sold in pairs. Early pairs of shoes were termed crooked, as opposed to the old-fashioned straights. The high-heel portions were originally made of wood or cork and were up to 6 in (15 cm) high. The French called them *chaussures a port* or bridge shoes, because of the open arch, or *chaussures a cric*, meaning clicking shoes for their sound. Usually, heels on men's shoes were larger in shape and heavier. The extreme heights of narrow heels were popular among gentlemen as well as ladies, and eighteenth century Englishmen who wore 6 in (15 cm) high heels usually walked with canes to be able to walk at all.

After World War II, the high heel regained its popularity primarily because of the growth in consumer spending and the variety and availability of designs produced. Stiletto heels, named for the narrow-bladed knives, soared into fashion in the 1950s. These 4 in (10 cm) spiked heels narrowed to pinpoints; they were made possible by seating a thin metal rod in the broader part of the wood or plastic heel that was attached to the shoe. A plastic tip was attached to the metal end, but these tips often fell off causing floors to be gouged and carpets to be