

HOW HIP IS IT?

CHOSEN PRODUCT -

TOMS SHOES at www.tomsshoes.com



MY FIRST ENCOUNTER -

I heard about the shoes on NPRs market watch and immediately wanted my own pair! <http://marketplace.publicradio.org/shows/2007/07/25/PM200707257.html>

DESCRIPTION -

Two years ago while Blake Mycoskie was in Argentina he saw locals wearing shoes known as *alpargatas*, basic shoes with canvas tops and rope soles. Later on his trip while volunteering, he saw children who wore no shoes at all and suffering from swollen, blistered, and damaged feet. Upon his return to California he decided to make his own version of alpargatas and called them TOMS (or shoes for TOMorrow). For each pair of shoes he sells, the company donates a pair to an impoverished child. See some fun online videos of TOMS shoes in action at <http://www.myspace.com/blakemycoskie>.

HEALTH -

This company was founded based on the motivation of improving the quality of life for underprivileged people around the world. Many families in impoverished areas cannot afford simple basics such as shoes, a fact that unfortunately, can result in injury and disease. TOMS' charitable shoe donations improve the health of children around the world, giving them a chance to protect their feet and engage in day to day physical activities outside without fear of injury. That said, to date, they are only measuring how many shoes they give out - not the impact on the community that it has or will have.

WEALTH -

Blake Mycoskie was able to sell more than 8,000 pairs of shoes his first year in business and expects to sell 80,000 this year and 175,000 pairs in 2008. Mycoskie is earning revenue for the company AND sharing the profits with kids around the world; this redistribution of wealth is improving sustainability and opportunities worldwide. In Fall 2007, Mycoskie and 50 volunteers are planning a trip to put TOMS on the feet of 50,000 kids in South Africa."¹ Again however, they are only measuring their results in the number of shoes donated.

EARTH -

The shoes are true to their *alpargatas* inspiration in that they use a minimal amount of materials and resources in their production, beneficial to the environment by creating less waste and using recycled materials.² It would be GREAT to see numbers on if these shoes are "greener" or more sustainable than other popular shoes on the market today.

Equality -

TOMS has initiated a clever marketing strategy - shoe decorating parties! A person orders shoes, TOMS provides decorating materials and voila, instant fun (they even have space online to post pictures of decorated shoes!). The parties are often used for class projects, volunteer days at work and other fun events - highlighting how everyone in the world can come together around the basic issue of providing shoes! By generating excitement about TOMS shoes, the company is engaging consumers around the world as part of a global community, committed to making shoes for all a reality.

¹ <http://marketplace.publicradio.org/shows/2007/07/25/PM200707257.html>

² <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/01/17/news/rtom.php>