

JapTex Co.

New York City College of Technology

BUF 3300

Dr. Adomaitis

We have decided to take on Japan for the manufacturing aspect in the Harajuku region due to its centralized interest in fashion and showrooms of apparel in this district. With the amount of progressive designers such as Hiroki Nakamura and Toshikiyo Hirata reconstructionist garments made of Western and American clothes, we thought it aligned with what we strive towards and have an interest in. Repurposing garments and introducing idiosyncratic differences into the apparel making it truly Japanese and distinct. Hiroki Nakamura's Visvim is strong for its artisanship and attention to detail when constructing their garments. Visvim is known for its deep and distinctly Japanese fascination with traditional American workwear (Business of Fashion, 2015).

FBT

Before Visvim turned into the undeniable line that we know today, it was an unassuming footwear maker. Effectively the name's most famous shoe, and the model that shot the brand to stardom, is the moccasin slipper/tennis shoe cross breed known as the FBT. Roused by great Native American sandals, which initially featured a removable periphery utilized as an additional layer of lower leg warmth to battle brutal winter atmospheres. The style was modernized by taking the outline and applying it to an EVA Phylon padded sole—a manufactured foot bed all the more generally connected with shoes that gave extra solace—and the completing touch. Both tribute and something completely new, the shoe, established in a large number of long periods of custom yet at the same time completely present day, fills in as an ideal relationship to the way of thinking of Visvim: continually looking to the past, yet never bound by it.

The name 'FBT' originated from the English new wave pop band, Fun Boy Three. The front of The Best of Fun Boy Three arrangement collection, band part Terry Hall wears a couple of dim dark colored softened cowhide sandals, fitting account for Nakamura's vision of East meets West. While their prosperity was a long way from ensured at dispatch, plainly the FBT had taken advantage of something new and energizing. The shoe immediately ended up one of Visvim's most notorious and prevalent models.

Nakamura outlined his manner of thinking behind the FBT, "The essential idea was genuinely straightforward: to keep the crude appearance of Native American slippers, yet with the additional usefulness of being wearable in the city. The calfskin uppers on shoes like the FBT are enlivened by old Native American one-piece cowhide slippers. The upper is fundamentally one bit of calfskin—there's no crease so it's entirely agreeable. The outsole is a running shoe outsole. Local Americans most likely utilized a calfskin sole, yet this is increasingly agreeable on cement—in those days, individuals didn't have walkways. So I feel that is what I'm attempting present: Things for the cutting edge world"(Grailed, 2017).

Textile/Fabric (Natural Resources) Analysis (Humzah)

The Visvim FBT, apparently the line's most acclaimed footwear outline, has been produced with a wide variety of distinct fabrics and textiles. The shoe takes a moccasin motivated upper and spots it on an EVA Phylon padded sole. The moccasin is known to be originated from the Native Americans and the function being for warmth for their feet while they were traveling by foot in harsh weathers. Hiroki Nakamura said it best when it came to his inspiration for the FBT model:

“At the age of 17, I was discovering the same functional benefits and beauty in the shoes that Native Americans had worn for centuries before me. They were unlike any shoes I had ever worn before: an upper that covered the foot and wrapped around the whole outsole area, made from natural tanned elk leather that was incredibly soft and well-aged from years of wear. This particular pair that I was wearing were already modified for city life with an add-on rubber outsole; like the plains and desert dwelling Native Americans who had added an extra layer of hard leather to the bottom of their moccasins, I had learned that a rubber sole is an absolute necessity for someone living in an urban environment” (Kan, 2019).

EVA stands for Ethylene-Vinyl Acetate and is a polymer that is rubber-like in both softness and flexibility when it comes to creating the sole of the shoe. The model also has an engineered footbed which are more generally connected with the construct of sneakers. Since the FBT has been introduced, there have been many iterations of the model while using different materials such as corduroy, deer leather and cow suede. The use of these materials once again stems back to the animals that the Native Americans would kill to use for consumption as well as use their skins for warmth and their moccasins. When it comes to the fabrics/textiles used for the FBT, Nakamura makes sure select the fabrics and the mills is chosen from him personally because the fabrics that get used are specifically designed for Visvim exclusively. The fabrics are also dyed by hand. “Leathers and sheepskin are all vegetable-tanned; a process that can take two weeks, while industrial chrome tanning takes only a day” (Rabkin, 2015). Vegetable tanning dates back to 8000 B.C. and is the chemical process of turning animal hides into leather through various kinds of techniques. An example for vegetable tanning a fabric for the FBT would be the *FBT (Red Deer)* which is composed of a “German vegetable-tanned red deer leather” (Visvim,

2019). The Visvim FBT model has taken some initial criticism for appropriating Native American culture but in my opinion, I believe that Visvim is bringing their culture into modern times while showing appreciation to their finest innovations in life.

Geography/Climates (Erick)

Japan is made up of thousands of islands, of which Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku are the four biggest (Japan-Guide, 2019). In spite of being comprised of small islands, tropical weather is not signature to Japan. It's climate is comparable to that of the East Coast region of the United States in which both regions share a four-season cycle (Titus, 2018). A distinctive feature of its climate are typhoons that start from September to November (Japanese Meteorological Agency). These typhoons affect the distribution of the product as well as the production of the FBT visvim shoes. These typhoons hinder labor and retailing to happen adequately as well as it should outside of the typhoon season (Esteban, 2009). This directly affects the Tokyo region in which Visvim and its retail stores are closed due to weather conditions. (Facebook, 2019) These typhoons also incapacitate things like transportation and commerce aside from retailing (Esteban, 2009). If the materials needed for the FBT are not transported to the manufacturing facility, visvim must play catch-up in constructing the shoes.

Japan's nearest neighbors are Korea, Russia and China. And due to its proximity to Siberia, Japan suffers increased snowfall brought on by the displacement of the cold air from Siberia. (Japan Meteorological Agency), further affecting regular retail hours in a visvim store. The weather and geography also contributed to Nakamura's vision for the moccasin. The moccasin is built for the city but also for colder climates and protecting and keeping one's feet warm in cold temperatures. Japan's region is practically identical to that of Germany or

California. Japan's northernmost islands are situated on topographical landscape which could be comparable to cities such as Milan or Portland, and is marked by mild summers and rough winters whereas Japan's southernmost islands are comparable to islands such as the Bahamas for humidity during the summer and milder winters (Japanese Meteorological Agency). Specifically Tokyo, the summers are humid and the winters resemble that of New York's (Esteban,2009). The FBT moccasins are made for any weather but specifically made for colder seasons.

Population (Derian Pryce)

The population of a country directly influences the choices that brands make when attempting to effectively sell and market their products. The country of Japan is known to be very homogeneous with a strong sense of national identity and very little ethnic and racial diversity. The population in Japan is 126,733,916 as of Tuesday, October 29, 2019 (Japan Population (LIVE). n.d.). Visvim's founder Hiroki Nakamura who was born in Kofu, Japan and raised in Tokyo, Japan decided that when creating the brand and his design and subjects for his merchandise were going to be heavily influenced by tribes in the Native American culture throughout North America. This decision was most likely due to the social climate of the country at the time. Visvim was founded in 2001, which is post reconstruction era of World War II when the Allied powers led the occupation and rehabilitation of the Japanese state. The people of Japan were influenced heavily by casual American clothing during and after that time period because of America's occupation. Nakamura began looking into the history of America's population and started developing pieces utilizing patterns and designs from their indigeneous people which fascinated him but maintaining the functionality of being wearable in the city. In order for Visvim brand to assimilate selling strategies that would help market their products better in a

modern Japanese society they decided to use elements of traditional Japan to create a buyer friendly space for selling by opening F.I.L. (Free International Laboratory) concept stores in addition to the Visvim flagship location. F.I.L. stores offer a generously lit, spacious retail space filled with a small but coherent collection of stock and decor. (Smith, 2018). These concept stores embody the traditional Japanese ideologies of minimalism and simplicity while also bridging the gap between the American population and Japanese population through modernization and assimilation of the demographics that they intend to reach.

Demographics (Derian Pryce)

Demographics are an integral part to understanding retailing both locally and internationally. This collection of statistical data allows a brand to locate their target market and tailor their brand image and services to that particular group of people. With the median age in Japan being about 46.7 years of age and ranking number 11 in the list of countries by population. A large portion of the population of Japan are people that are in their adult years 25-54 years old and 55-64 years of age, (Japan Population (LIVE). n.d.). being the biggest sections of the population currently. Unfortunately, the population of Japan has been on a rapid decline. Since the population is getting older and the younger generation are having less kids the GDP growth of the country are also on the decline. Rob Carnell, head of research and chief economist for Asia-Pacific at ING said “*A rapidly ageing population and shrinking labour force are hampering growth, the impact of ageing could potentially drag down Japan’s average annual GDP growth by 1 percentage point over the next three decades*” (Romei, 2018). With the labor force and population decreasing the domestic market will have less and less people buying goods and services but instead taking care of their elders and sustaining their lifestyles. Because of this

Visvim who once sought out to target the youthful streetwear customer when they first emerged have quickly shifted to try and captivate a more mature audience who might be unfamiliar with their products. Nakamura described his brand as a place “*His father-in-law might feel comfortable shopping in.*” Li, R. (2017). Naturally, in order to adapt to the current economic state of the country the brand the target market for visvim would have to alter so that it mirrors the demographic that it more likely represents. Technology helps to develop the ideas that demographics allows us to see and analyze.

Technology (Mitchell S. Louis)

Throughout the years technology has played a key role in developing footwear for the masses. Footwear has become smarter, lighter and more functional than ever. One of the growing technology in Japan today is 3D technology to offer perfect fitting shoes for men and women. This technology functions by virtually fitting shoes to a person’s feet and using 3D scans (Japan Times, 2017). This new tech is perfect for luxury footwear companies and labels. The Visvim FBT is considered a “luxury moccasin” by most. People tend to have a hard time choosing the perfect fitting shoes especially when it is of luxury quality. Luxury shoes often fit a size bigger than the wearer's regular shoe size. According to a statement from Flickfit Inc,” *areas indicated by warm colors show a tight fit, while areas in cool colors indicate wriggle room. The differentiation allows customers to choose shoes based not just on how they feel but also on data*”(Japan Times, 2017). Eventually, department stores in all regions will hop on this trend when it becomes available to a wider scale and audience.

Another company that recently released a technology to help consumers pick the perfect shoe size is an online retailer named, ZOZOTOWN. The ZOZOMAT can be printed and is

compatible with an app on the person's smartphone. The mat scans the feet of the consumer and gives detailed measurements in length, width and girth of the feet. With this, the consumer can shop online at ease without having to go to the store to try a shoe on or rely on an online size guide. Preorders for the ZOZOMAT started back in June 24th, 2019 in Japan (ZOZO News, 2019). This concept is of disruptive innovation because it is new and its goal is to make it easier for people to pick the correct shoe size. According to the text, "*disruptive technologies represent a radical change ...*". This new technology also creates competition in the same region because of two companies selling similar products. Eventually these two companies will both try and stay above the competition by making their products user friendly for consumers.

Culture (Mitchell S. Louis)

Being that we are speaking about footwear such as the Visvim FBT it should be important to include a cultural norm when it comes to the proper shoe etiquette in Japan. Interestingly, people remove their shoes before entering a home in Japan. Most Japanese homes have entryway areas called genkan, where people remove shoes. The genkan is a step lower than the main floor of the house. The shoes also have to face the outside of the house that one resides in. The genkan has slippers for guests to put on while inside the house. Guests have to wear the slippers until they leave the home. Even if one enters a room that has tatami, which is a woven mat, they should remove the slippers too. On a tatami, one should either be barefoot or in socks. Temples, shrines, inns, resorts and some schools require their guests to remove their shoes (KCP International, 2017). Some restaurants also have a no-shoes policy. They may provide slippers and a locker for your shoes. A restaurant personnel directs you to a bench for shoe removal, so you know for certain when it is required. One must wear special footwear even in the toilet area.

Toilet slippers stay inside the toilet room. People switch from indoor slippers to toilet slippers on a wooden platform at some inns and then switch back to indoor slippers before reentering the rest of the living area (Village Hiker, 2017). Removing your shoes is common in other cultural households. From experience, when visiting Caribbean or West African households it was deemed respectful when I had to take my shoes off and leave them on a shoe rack by the main entry of the home. It is interesting that this applies in many cultures and how serious it is in Japanese culture.

Labor and Employment Law in Japan (Erick Chavez)

Labor and employment are highly revered in Japanese society and taken as a symbol of pride in one's country if a person works long hours. The 90's economic boom in Japan pushed the country to the apex of the technological race between countries. This created a culture of overworked and tireless workers who strived to please bosses rather than the customers of a service or product. (White, S., & Kaneko, K. (n.d.)). This culture of overwork might have brought forth people such as Hiroki Nakamura who work tirelessly to churn out quality products reappropriated from Native American culture. Visvim often emulates their techniques of dyeing and construction for functionality and designs them for a cityscape setting.

The introduction of Shinzo Abe as Prime Minister gave way to job reform in April to reduce overwork and thus increase economic growth. This means excising unnecessary job roles and reposition employees to "learn rather than repeat"(White, S., & Kaneko, K. (n.d.))and forces visvim to teach its employees to provide a quality output in a short amount of time without overworking themselves. This reform will affect how one might distribute labor amongst workers to source the raw material of the visvim FBT now that there is a cap on how much

overtime a person can work. The Japanese law also includes mandatory paid days off. This will influence the distribution of work dispersed between employees and their co-workers who will be paid while taking time off for things such as responding to emails and shipping items out via e-shops as well as physical stores. Hours between work days are also accounted for in the reformed Law which make sure “employees can enjoy longer nights to rest between work schedules” and thus increase efficiency and productivity at the highest quality possible (Collins, E. C., Ornstein, D., & Martinez, T. S. (2018, December 10). This can work well for a brand like visvim in order to maintain a high quality of product and service and operating to the highest degree without sacrificing their employees’ well-being and risking turnover.

References

Collins, E. C., Ornstein, D., & Martinez, T. S. (2018, December 10).

Japan's Labor Reform Caps Overtime in a Bid to Curb

Geography. (n.d.).

Retrieved from <https://www.japan-guide.com/list/e1000.html>.

Japan Population (LIVE). (n.d.).

Retrieved from <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/japan-population>.

Japan Meteorological Agency. (n.d.). Climate of Kanto/Koshin district.

Retrieved from

Titus, M. (2019, January 15). Climate of Japan.

Retrieved from <https://traveltips.usatoday.com/climate-japan-62407.html>.

Japanese Shoe Etiquette. (n.d.).

Retrieved from

<https://villagehiker.com/travel/travel-japan/shoe-etiquette-in-japan-vh-ce-03.html>.

Li, R. (2019, February 12). Visvim Visions The Brand Hiroki Nakamura Built.

Retrieved from <https://www.grailed.com/drycleanonly/visvim-master-class>.

Rabkin, E. (2015, February 4). For Japan's Visvim, Old is the New New.

Retrieved from

<https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/intelligence/japans-visvim-old-new-new>.

Romei, V. (2018, May 16). How Japan's ageing population is shrinking GDP.

Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/7ce47bd0-545f-11e8-b3ee-41e0209208ec>.

Smith, J. (2018, July 18). Visvim - History, Philosophy, and Iconic Products.

Retrieved from

<https://www.heddels.com/2018/07/visvim-history-philosophy-and-iconic-products/>.

Retrieved from <https://shop.visvim.tv/us/en/product/?PID=0117201001001&PNM=FBT>

(RED DEER).

UNUniversity. (n.d.). Wilder Typhoons May Mean Bigger Yen Losses.

Retrieved from

<https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/wilder-typhoons-may-mean-bigger-yen-losses>.

Tokyo IT firm taps 3-D technology to offer perfect-fitting shoes.

Retrieved from

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/04/14/business/tech/tokyo-firm-taps-3-d-technology-offer-perfect-fitting-shoes>

White, S., & Kaneko, K. (n.d.). Japan's labor shortage eats away at backbreaking work culture.

Retrieved from

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/05/08/business/japans-labor-shortage-eats-away-backbreaking-work-culture/>

Yasuka. (2018, August 16). Shoe Removal in Japan: KCP International Japanese School.

Retrieved from <https://www.kcpinternational.com/2017/10/shoes-and-slippers/>.

ZOZO announces the ZOZOMAT. (2019, June 24).

Retrieved from <https://corp.zozo.com/en/news/20190624-4620/>.