

Gondoliers' footwear

A capricious survey of shoe choices among Venetian watercraft operators.

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ABSTRACT: Gondoliers, often overlooked in the realm of occupational safety, navigate the intricate waterways of Venice while providing essential services to wealthy tourists. The footwear choices of these professionals are crucial for their performance, especially on wet, unstable surfaces. This groundbreaking study sheds light on the diversity of gondoliers' footwear preferences. Analyzing 74 discreetly photographed gondoliers on a tax-deductible research trip, the authors have shone light on

a new area of academic inquiry. The greatest strength and simultaneous weakness of this study involved the researchers being blinded through the befuddling effects of Aperol. Other beverages will be considered to reduce investigator bias in future research of this series.

Introduction

Despite their crucial role in Venice's tourism industry, gondoliers remain understudied. There are no prior investigations into their footwear choices. In fact, a PubMed search returned no results for the search terms "Venetian boatman" or "gondolier." Operating within the confines of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, these skilled professionals engage in high-risk activities on slippery surfaces. Their tasks range from

propelling vessels to assisting passengers, which often requires strength and agility. This study begins the exploration of their footwear preferences, with the expectation that future research will enable safety recommendations. It is our aspiration that an exhaustive series of studies will not only advance knowledge but also facilitate investigator tax deductions for European travel research expeditions.

Methods

The methodology involved discreetly capturing images of 74 consecutive gondolier footwear selections while seated at a bar along the Grand Canal. A Google Pixel 7 cellphone was used for the remarkable zoom capabilities of the purpose-acquired

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FIGURE 1. Data collection. Aperol spritz obscuring footwear leading to data loss. The diversity of gondolier movement may be noted in the background of the photo where a gondolier is pushing off the wall with his foot, highlighting the need for traction.

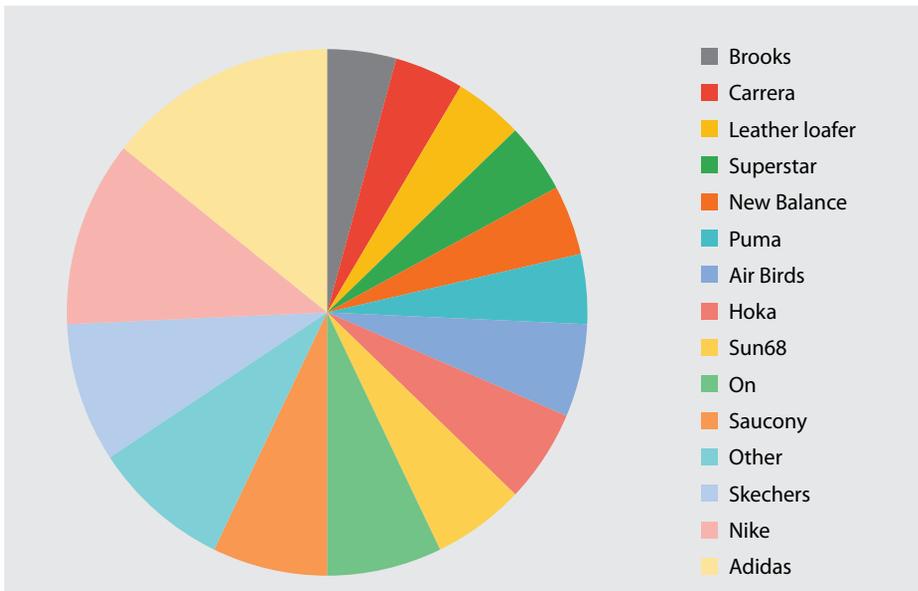


FIGURE 2. Frequency of shoe brands identified. One pair of Skechers not included as it was not being worn during the data-collection phase.

device (which the authors believe to be tax-deductible). To ensure impartiality, gondoliers remained unaware of being photographed, and the researchers consumed numerous Aperol spritzes and one limoncello. Researcher inebriation was a great asset to this study. Post-data collection, when the researchers had sobered from the exhaustive 3-hour session, footwear photos were carefully analyzed. Attempts to conduct interviews with the gondoliers proved futile due to diminishing communication skills, although the researchers' inability to speak Italian was not felt to be an impediment to the attempts. Exclusion criteria were based mainly on low-quality photos caused by the optical effects of wine glasses obscuring the view of gondoliers' feet [Figure 1].

Discussion

The results indicate a notable diversity in the footwear choices of gondoliers, with some trends emerging. Predominantly, minimalist shoe brands such as Nike (10.8%) and Adidas (13.5%) were common. However, intriguing anomalies included

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the maximalist Hoka shoes, representing 5.4% of all footwear observed. Notably, one gondolier was observed barefoot, with cushioning Skechers left on the boat's deck. The significance of this observation remains unclear, as Skechers were a prevalent choice among study subjects. Interviews with less-intoxicated data collectors might be of benefit. Future studies should aim to better manage researcher inebriation levels. Additionally, potential secondary endpoints, such as the correlation between red- or black-striped shirts and shoe types, could be explored with a larger sample size.

Conclusion

This preliminary investigation highlights the considerable diversity in footwear choices among professional gondoliers. Looking toward future exhaustive studies, we hope to embark on tax-deductible research expeditions to further explore this fascinating topic. ■

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