

Do Athlete Identification and Shoe Design Mitigate Perceived Injury Risk in Nike KD Low-Top?

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Abstract

Despite rising NBA Achilles injuries linked to low-top shoes, models like the Nike KD series continue to enjoy massive commercial success. This study investigates this paradox by examining whether athlete identification and aesthetic shoe design override perceived injury risk in shaping purchase intention. Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from 300 basketball enthusiasts in Indonesia, purposively selected for their interest in the NBA and awareness of Kevin Durant. Results confirm that athlete identification and aesthetic design directly drive purchase intention, whereas perceived injury risk acts as a significant deterrent. Notably, moderation analysis reveals that safety concerns attenuate the emotional drive of athlete identification but unexpectedly amplify the influence of aesthetic design. Consequently, while athlete identification is the primary driver, aesthetic design becomes paramount when injury risk is taken into account. This indicates that consumers actively repurpose risky low-tops into casual streetwear, prioritizing visual appeal over performance. Therefore, sportswear manufacturers should market low-top models as lifestyle apparel while improving their structural integrity.

Keywords: Athlete Identification; Low-top Basketball Shoes; Perceived Injury Risk; Shoe Design.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2024-2025 National Basketball Association (NBA) season marked a notable medical anomaly in modern professional basketball, characterized by an unprecedented spike in Achilles tendon ruptures among elite players across both the regular season and playoffs. Severe structural injuries afflicted key athletes, including Damian Lillard during his tenure with the Milwaukee Bucks (April 27, 2025), Jayson Tatum of the Boston Celtics (May 12, 2025), and Tyrese Haliburton of the Indiana Pacers (June 22, 2025) (Irmalia, 2025; Nodisa, 2025a,

2025b). The fallout from these injuries proved highly destructive, impairing not only the athletes' physical capabilities but also their perceived market value. A clear manifestation of this occurred when the Milwaukee Bucks traded Lillard back to the Portland Trail Blazers in the postseason. Such management decisions are strongly suspected to stem from doubts regarding post-injury durability, compounded by the increasingly restrictive NBA "Second Apron" regulations that penalize team flexibility (Kunz, 2025; Riccardi & Paul, 2025). Compared with historical Achilles rupture data from 2010 to 2025, the incidence rate in the early 2010s was relatively low and rarely affected multiple high-profile players simultaneously (Hopkins, 2020; Hashtag Basketball, 2026). This recent escalation suggests a fundamental shift in external variables within the game's ecosystem, pointing directly to the structural evolution of basketball footwear, which is now heavily dominated by low-top configurations.

From a technical standpoint, low-top footwear is defined as having a collar height just below the anatomical ankle, although a standardized metric for this exact clearance remains undefined. (Barrett & Bilisko, 1995; Rahman, 2024). Modern athletes predominantly favor this design due to biomechanical demands, specifically the need to maximize range of motion for aggressive maneuvering into the paint or mid-range areas (Zhou et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2025). This preference extends beyond the NBA and has heavily influenced the Indonesian market. Low-top models currently stand as the primary commodity among domestic consumers, accounting for 43.6% of purchases, with an average buying frequency of one to two times per year. (Annur, 2023). Supporting this, Kurniawan et al. (2024) found that the utility score for low-top shoes among Indonesian consumers is 13.7% higher than that of high-top models. Paradoxically, historical injury data from the past decade suggest that the reduced structural support inherent in low-top designs correlates with an increased risk of tendon injuries. (Hopkins, 2020; Hashtag Basketball, 2026).

Table 1. Historical Data of Achilles Tendon Ruptures in the NBA from 2010 to 2025

Seasons	Team	Player	Injury Statement	Shoe Model	Shoe Brand	Shoe Series
2010-2011	Charlotte Bobcats	DeSagana Diop	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	Not mentioned	Nike	Not mentioned
2011-2012	Memphis Grizzlies	Darrell Arthur	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
2011-2012	Los Angeles Clippers	Chauncey Billups	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	High-top	Adidas	Crazy Shadow 2
2012-2013	Los Angeles Lakers	Kobe Bryant	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Nike	Kobe 8 Elite
2013-2014	Charlotte Bobcats	Jeff Taylor	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	High-top	Air Jordan	Superfly 2 GS
2014-2015	Detroit Pistons	Brandon Jennings	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Under Armour	Curry 1 Low
2014-2015	Portland Trail Blazers	Wes Matthews Jr.	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	High-top	Nike	Kobe 9 Elite
2015-2016	Memphis Grizzlies	Mario Chalmers	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Nike	KD 8 BHM
2016-2017	New Orleans Pelicans	DeMarcus Cousins	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Nike	Zoom Rev 2017
2017-2018	Indiana Pacers	C.J. Wilcox	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
2017-2018	Golden State Warriors	DeMarcus Cousins	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Puma	Men's Uproar Spectra
2018-2019	Dallas Mavericks	Jose Barea	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Nike	Kyrie Low
2018-2019	Washington Wizards	John Wall	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	Not using shoes	Not using shoes	Not using shoes
2018-2019	Golden State Warriors	Kevin Durant	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Nike	KD 12
2019-2020	Portland Trail Blazers	Rodney Hood	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Nike	Kobe IV Protro
2019-2020	Brooklyn Nets	David Nwaba	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	Mid-top	Nike	Zoom KD 12
2019-2020	Dallas Mavericks	Dwight Powell	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Nike	Kobe VI Protro
2020-2021	Golden State Warriors	Klay Thompson	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	Not mentioned	ANTA	Not mentioned
2022- 2023	Memphis Grizzlies	Brandon Clarke	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Nike	KD 15
2024-2025	Indiana Pacers	James Wiseman	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Nike	Kobe IX Low

Seasons	Team	Player	Injury Statement	Shoe Model	Shoe Brand	Shoe Series
2024-2025	Indiana Pacers	Isaiah Jackson	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	Mid-top	Nike	Kyrie 4
2024-2025	Miami Heat	Dru Smith	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Nike	Kyrie Low 4
2024-2025	New Orleans Pelicans	Dejounte Murray	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	Low-top	New Balance	Two WXY v5
2024-2025	Milwaukee Bucks	Damian Lillard	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Adidas	Dame IX
2024-2025	Boston Celtics	Jayson Tatum	Torn Left Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Jordan	Tatum 3
2024-2025	Indiana Pacers	Tyrese Haliburton	Torn Right Achilles Tendon	Low-top	Puma	Hali 1

Source: Hopkins (2020), Hashtag Basketball (2026); data processed by the Authors (2026).

Referring to the data in Table 1, which records 26 cases of Achilles tendon ruptures in the NBA between 2010 and 2025, a stark disparity in risk emerges. While wearing footwear with enhanced ankle support (mid-top and high-top models) does not guarantee absolute immunity from injury, the data reveal that the vast majority of incidents involved players wearing low-top shoes (16 cases). This figure significantly eclipses the occurrences among those wearing mid-tops (2 cases) and high-tops (3 cases), with the remaining instances either unidentified or occurring without specific shoe data. Laver (2020), as cited in Dirgantara (2022), notes that footwear with robust structural integrity, such as high-tops featuring moderate torsional stiffness, reduces lower-extremity injuries by 49% and overuse injuries by 52% compared to shoes with minimal torsional stiffness. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2025) demonstrated that high-top footwear significantly limits inversion angles (7.56%–19.61%) and angular velocity (3.67%–14.92%) through mechanical collar support, playing a critical role in alleviating the load on lateral ligaments compared to low-top alternatives. From an anatomical perspective, the injury distribution is perfectly symmetrical—13 cases on the left tendon and 13 on the right. This parity suggests no significant biomechanical imbalance between the two lower extremities regarding their tolerance for inversion loads. Shifting focus to the commercial landscape, Nike is the brand most frequently associated with these incidents, logging a total of 16 cases across its main and Jordan subsidiary lines. Statistically, the Nike Kobe line recorded the highest usage frequency during these injury events (5 cases), including Kobe Bryant's own injury in the 2012–2013 season. This is closely followed by Kevin Durant's low-top signature series, the Nike KD, with 4 recorded cases. (Holmes, 2021; Le et al., 2025).

Negative publicity surrounding an athlete, particularly injury reports, typically triggers a decline in the sales of their endorsed products. As Prameswara & Sjabadhyani (2018) assert that such adverse exposure theoretically degrades consumer purchase intention by generating negative associations. This mechanism operates by instilling a deep sense of apprehension and perceived risk within the consumer's mindset. (Hsiao & Chen, 2021). Perceived risk entails anxiety about the potential negative consequences of a decision, which, in the context of sports, translates into the fear of injury, encompassing both its probability and severity. (Jacoby & Kaplan, 1972). Recent findings consistently indicate that across various footwear categories, an elevated fear of functional risk directly diminishes purchase intention. (Jung & Oh, 2021; Ouyang & Wang, 2025). Despite the tangible nature of these functional risks, global and domestic market responses reveal a striking contradiction. A notable market anomaly emerged following Tyrese Haliburton's Achilles injury during the 2024–2025 season. While he was actively recovering, his signature low-top line exhibited impressive commercial performance. According to Puma's Q3 2025 corporate financial report, despite an overall 9.9% decline in the brand's total footwear sales to €1,045.8 million, its basketball performance category remained highly resilient, delivering healthy growth driven by the successful launch of the HALI 1 shoe. (PUMA, 2025). The commercial viability of these products was further reinforced when legendary NBA figures, such as Reggie Miller and Stephen Curry, were seen wearing the Puma Hali 1 during specific events. (Agness, 2025).

The apparent disconnect between heightened perceived risk and robust market enthusiasm suggests that other psychological determinants override functional concerns when shaping purchase intention. A primary factor is consumer loyalty tied directly to the athlete's persona. This loyalty is best explained through athlete identification theory, a specialized extension of celebrity identification (Brown & Fraser, 2003). Athlete identification is a psychological bond in which fans feel an intrinsic alignment with their idol, prompting them to adopt the athlete's image through physical merchandise to reinforce their self-concept (Prasetyo & Akbar, 2025). Contemporary research confirms that this emotional connection serves as a dominant driver, compelling consumers to purchase gear worn by their idols primarily for identity validation (Shezi, 2022; Setyawan & Harsono, 2024). Concurrently, the physical attributes of the footwear also dictate purchasing behavior despite recognized injury risks. Shoe design encompasses the total integration of function, aesthetics, and tactile feel engineered to meet user needs (Kotler, 2002). Recent studies on general footwear markets and specific brands like

Bata confirm that design elements—ranging from comfort and durability to stylistic appeal—consistently drive consumer desire to acquire the product (Dewa & Untarini, 2023).

Consequently, a critical question emerges: do loyalty to an athlete's persona (driven by athlete identification) and specific shoe design configurations exert a greater influence on consumer behavior than the product's perceived functional risk? Addressing this inquiry is particularly urgent given the massive market share of low-top footwear users in Indonesia. Therefore, investigating the impact of athlete identification and shoe design on the purchase intention of low-top basketball shoes, moderated by perceived risk, is highly necessary. The findings of this study will not only bridge existing gaps in the academic literature but also deliver substantial managerial implications for sports equipment manufacturers. It provides actionable insights for formulating marketing strategies that leverage athlete figures during publicity crises or product safety controversies, specifically in the Indonesian consumer landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purchase Intention

In the consumer behavior literature, purchase intention represents a conscious planning stage in which individuals process information and evaluate alternatives before executing a final transaction. (Kotler & Keller, 2016). According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), a consumer's purchase intention is determined by three core constructs: their attitude (favorable or unfavorable evaluation of buying the product), subjective norms (perceived social pressure from peers or idols), and perceived behavioral control (the perceived ease or difficulty of executing the purchase) (Ajzen, 1991). This intent emerges from value perceptions constructed through marketing stimuli and personal preferences. Ferdinand (2014) operationalizes purchase intention into four measurable dimensions: (1) Transactional Intention, the tendency to buy the product; (2) Referential Intention, the inclination to recommend it to others; (3) Preferential Intention, the behavior of positioning the product as the primary choice over competitors; and (4) Explorative Intention, the drive to seek deeper information about the item. Recent studies highlight diverse determinants of purchase intention across different product categories and platforms. For instance, Apriliani & Ali (2025) noted that social media marketing and perceived product quality significantly influence Generation Z's intent to buy Rosca tumblers. On a broader scale, Fernandez et al. (2025) confirmed that YouTube advertising is vital for building brand awareness, which subsequently drives user purchase intention on Agoda. Specific to basketball footwear, Henry et al. (2023) proved that attitudes toward the endorser (Kobe Bryant), brand attitude, and subjective norms positively and significantly dictate consumer purchase intention for Nike shoes. Parallel to this, Adawiyah et al. (2025) found that social value, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control directly affect Generation Z's intent to purchase global running shoes. In contrast, brand awareness and functional value have no direct impact. Conversely, earlier research by Herwindo (2016) concluded that purchasing decisions for the Kobe X in South Jakarta were heavily dominated by the product's superior design features, rather than relying solely on Bryant's persona as a celebrity endorser.

Athlete Identification

The concept of athlete identification is a specific derivative of Celebrity Identification theory. Brown & Fraser (2003) define celebrity identification as a process wherein audiences attempt to adopt the values, beliefs, or behaviors of a prominent public figure or media character. This adoption aims to emulate their perceived image or solidify a parasocial relationship. In sports, Athlete Identification refers to the degree of psychological overlap between fans and their idolized athletes, in which fans integrate the athlete's identity into their own self-concept (Brown et al., 2003). This psychological dynamic suggests that consumers seek alignment between their self-concept and the celebrity's image (self-congruity) to reinforce their self-identity. Consequently, they utilize attributes or products associated with the celebrity to personify or extend their self-concept (self-personification) into tangible forms (Prasetyo & Akbar, 2025). Athlete identification is commonly measured using the Celebrity-Persona Identification (CPI) Scale developed by Brown & Bocarnea (2007), which comprises 20 direct statements assessing cognitive-psychological identification with an idolized persona or athlete. Recently, Kara et al. (2024) established the Athlete Identification Level Scale (AILS), categorizing identification into four dimensions: (1) Athlete Identity; (2) Image and Career Maturity; (3) Social Values; and (4) Communication Skills. These are measured across 26 indicators. However, while novel, the AILS is primarily designed to assess peer-to-peer identification among athletes, rather than the fan-to-athlete dynamic captured by the CPI. The literature on celebrity identification consistently emphasizes the central role of emotional connections in sustaining purchase interest. Prameswara & Sjabadhyni (2018) proved that high consumer identification with Agnez Mo directly elevates perfume purchase intention, remaining resilient against negative news interactions. Wang & Kim (2020) expanded on this in the context of mobile phones endorsed by Tom Cruise, noting that highly identified fans tend to employ moral rationalization to excuse celebrity scandals, thereby preserving their purchase intent. In sports, Shezi (2022) asserted that an athlete's credibility is key to strengthening fan identification, positively impacting purchase intention. This trend is reaffirmed by Setyawan & Harsono (2024) in their study of Ortuiseight

shoes, which finds that, alongside Dr. Tirta's expertise and honesty, celebrity identification remains a significant determinant, compelling consumers to buy products endorsed by their chosen authority figures.

Shoe Design

Kotler (2002) defines product design as the totality of features that influence a product's appearance, feel, and function, based on customer needs. Ravasi & Stigliani (2012) map product design literature within management studies into three primary dimensions: design activities (focusing on the creation process), design choices (decisions regarding aesthetic, functional, and symbolic elements), and design outcomes (impacts on financial performance and consumer response). They conclude that existing research is fragmented, necessitating a holistic integration of these perspectives to grasp the strategic role of product design within organizations fully. As cited in Setiawan & Santosa (2020) Durvasula et al. (2004) measure product design through four indicators: (1) latest models; (2) attractive styling; (3) variety; and (4) up-to-date trends. Kotler et al. (2022) Divide product design measurement into three metrics: (1) Performance; (2) Aesthetics; and (3) Features. Specifically, Shoe Design operates as a practical derivative of product design applied directly to footwear. Research linking shoe design to purchase intention highlights the vital roles of both functional and aesthetic aspects in driving consumer decisions. Park & Lee (2022) examined orthopedic shoes for patients with mild foot conditions, finding that functional and symbolic design characteristics heavily influence customer satisfaction, which subsequently drives repurchase intention. Anshita & Chhikara (2023) reviewed the footwear market in Delhi, concluding that specific product attributes like comfort, price, and durability are primary determinants shaping consumer purchase intent. Dewa & Untarini (2023) analyzed Converse shoes, proving that excellent product design, coupled with product quality, exerts a significant positive influence on purchase intention. Advancing consumer behavior analysis, Latifah & Mubarak (2026) identified product design (specifically, shoe design) as the most influential variable dictating purchasing decisions for Cekhas shoes. Recent applied explorations in product design consistently employ various methodological approaches, notably Kansei Engineering. The intensive utilization of this instrument is evident over the past half-decade, dominated by non-physical product engineering across categories (193 publications), followed by packaging design (75 publications), and the development of physical product forms (48 publications) (Irawan, 2024; Al-Baihaqi et al., 2025; Irawan et al., 2025).

Perceived Injury Risk

Perceived risk, rooted in Jacoby & Kaplan (1972) Theory is defined as the subjective uncertainty consumers experience about potential negative consequences of a purchase decision. This risk is multidimensional, encompassing financial, performance, social, and physical risks. (Jacoby & Kaplan, 1972; Bhukya & Singh, 2015). In the sporting context, the most dominant dimension is Perceived Physical Risk, more specifically, Perceived Injury Risk. This refers to the consumer's subjective belief regarding the probability of sustaining an injury. (Deroche et al., 2012). Narrowed down to sports equipment, Perceived Injury Risk translates to the consumer's subjective assessment of their injury vulnerability when utilizing specific gear. Because this perception is strictly confined to the physical risk dimension, its indicators are derived as: (1) perceived susceptibility, the subjective appraisal of injury likelihood; and (2) perceived severity, the estimated seriousness of the resulting physical impact. (Soelistya & Agustina, 2018; X. Zhang & Yu, 2020). Theoretically, high perceived risk correlates negatively with purchase intention; elevated perceived risk diminishes the desire to buy (Bernarto et al., 2022). Recent studies on perceived injury risk demonstrate its significant impact on safety behaviors across various contexts. Cardoso-Marinho et al. (2022) concluded that while soccer players possess a deep understanding of the injury risks they face, this high awareness often fails to translate into consistent adherence to injury prevention programs. Conversely, Rod et al. (2023) showed that among pedestrians in Brisbane, perceived severity and susceptibility to injury strongly dictate walking intentions, particularly among women who tend to perceive higher risks. Research linking perceived risk to purchase intention reveals significant yet context-dependent impacts. Jung & Oh (2021) examined smart shoes, discovering that the effect of perceived risk on purchase intent relies on the shoe's function: performance risk actually correlates positively with purchase intent for GPS shoes, whereas economic risk clearly deters intent for gaming-based shoes. This is corroborated by recent work from Ouyang & Wang (2025) on Li-Ning fashion products within a green marketing context, which firmly concludes that perceived risk negatively and significantly impacts purchase intention, indicating that heightened consumer risk anxiety directly lowers their willingness to acquire the product.

Conceptual Framework

This study positions consumers and basketball enthusiasts as empirical subjects to investigate the determinants of purchase intention for low-top basketball shoes, the primary focus of the inquiry. Structurally, the conceptual framework is designed to unravel the paradox of purchasing behavior by integrating two exogenous predictors of Purchase Intention, which is operationalized through the four dimensions established by Ferdinand (2014). These predictors comprise Athlete Identification, anchored in the Celebrity-Persona Identification Scale (Brown & Bocarnea, 2007), and Shoe Design, referencing the three dimensions delineated by Kotler et al. (2022).

To bridge these conceptual relationships, the model incorporates Perceived Injury Risk as a moderating variable, grounded in the physical risk dimension articulated by Jacoby and Kaplan (1972). The interplay between psychological attachment, product attributes, and risk assessment forms a complex mechanism that ultimately dictates consumer behavior toward these low-top configurations.

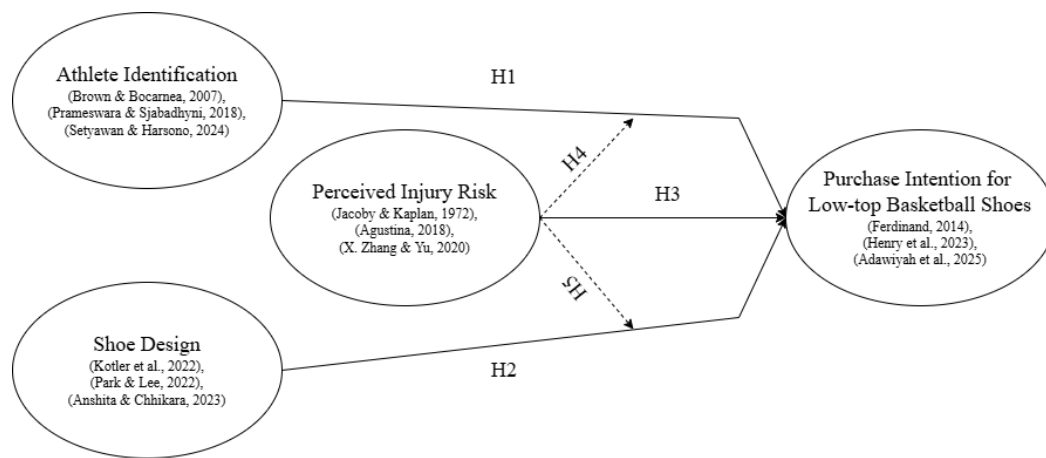


Figure 1. The Proposed Research Model

Athlete Identification on Purchase Intention

Prior literature emphasizes the profound impact of athlete endorsement and consumer loyalty on purchasing behavior. For instance, Shezi (2022) demonstrated that consumers' emotional attachment to sports figures directly accelerates their purchase intentions. Furthermore, Henry et al. (2023) found that strong loyalty to an athlete often triggers moral rationalization, which effectively overshadows objective fears of injury. Setyawan & Harsono (2024) demonstrated that celebrity identification remains a significant determinant compelling consumers to buy products backed by their chosen authority figures. Driven by this strong psychological alignment, consumers are more inclined to commit to a purchase. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: Athlete identification positively influences purchase intention.

Shoe Design on Purchase Intention

In addition to psychological drivers, the physical attributes of athletic footwear play a crucial role in consumer decision-making. Anshita & Chhikara (2023) identified that specific product attributes such as comfort, price, and durability are primary determinants shaping consumer purchase intent in the footwear market. Dewa & Untarini (2023) highlighted innovative product features significantly enhance consumer product evaluation. Supporting this perspective, Latifah & Mubarak (2026) asserted that superior aesthetic and technical design provides visual compensation and a sense of security, effectively offsetting the perceived structural deficits of low-top models. Consequently, high-quality design parameters are expected to drive consumer demand. Therefore, this study postulates:

H₂: Shoe design positively affects purchase intention.

Perceived Injury Risk on Purchase Intention

Conversely, the inherent structural characteristics of low-top basketball shoes elevate consumer apprehension regarding physical harm. While the impact of perceived risk can vary depending on specific product functions (Jung & Oh, 2021). Its overarching deterrent effect on consumer behavior is well documented. For example, Ouyang & Wang (2025) confirmed that heightened risk anxiety significantly diminishes consumers' willingness to acquire products. In athletic contexts where physical safety is paramount, objective fears of injury systematically outweigh anticipated functional or psychological benefits, thereby deterring transactions. Based on these empirical findings, we hypothesize:

H₃: Perceived injury risk negatively influences purchase intention.

The Moderating Role of Perceived Injury Risk on the Athlete Identification–Purchase Intention Relationship

This research framework posits that the psychological transition from consumer identification to actionable purchase intent is nonlinear and highly contingent on specific boundary conditions. In sports marketing, celebrity identification—operationalized herein as athlete identification—serves as a fundamental antecedent that determines an endorser's overall efficacy. (Um, 2018). Although prior literature confirms that such endorsement

effects must channel through purchase intention before manifesting as actual buying behavior, the strength of this trajectory is inherently subject to consumer risk evaluation. (Henning & Kirchgeorg, 2025; Parayitam et al., 2020). In the high-impact context of basketball footwear, perceived injury risk emerges as a critical dimension of perceived risk. It is hypothesized to moderate the path from athlete identification to purchase intention. Consequently, even a profound emotional attachment to an athlete may fail to stimulate purchase intention if the perceived threat to physical safety is deemed prohibitive, thereby attenuating the positive influence of the athlete-consumer bond. Accordingly, the fourth hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H4: Perceived injury risk moderates the effect of athlete identification on purchase intention.

The Moderating Role of Perceived Injury Risk on the Shoe Design–Purchase Intention Relationship

While superior shoe design—encompassing both aesthetic appeal and advanced technical specifications—naturally enhances consumer evaluations, its translation into tangible purchase intention is not absolute. Prior literature establishes that the structural attributes of a product do not operate in a vacuum; their effectiveness is heavily contingent upon the consumer's risk assessment. For instance, Majeed et al. (2024) demonstrated that perceived risk acts as a significant moderator between product-driven consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions. Corroborating this underlying mechanism, Phamthi et al. (2024) emphasized that although favorable product attributes significantly elevate initial consumer evaluations, the ultimate transition to a concrete purchase intent is fundamentally constrained by perceived risk. In the context of athletic footwear, this implies that even if a low-top shoe boasts highly innovative design features, an elevated perceived risk of injury can systematically attenuate its inherent appeal. This heightened physical risk effectively weakens the consumer's willingness to complete the transaction, regardless of the shoe's aesthetic or functional merits. Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: Perceived injury risk moderates the effect of shoe design on purchase intention.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative survey approach based on positivist philosophy to collect numerical data for statistical analysis, hypothesis testing, and generalization. (Sugiyono, 2021). It employs a correlational design to examine relationships among constructs. To evaluate these complex relationships, the study employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which offers greater analytical power than traditional path analysis. (Hair & Alamer, 2022). Specifically, Partial Least Squares SEM (PLS-SEM) is used because the conceptual framework involves exploratory relationships and new theoretical constructs. (Hair & Alamer, 2022). This variance-based technique maximizes the explained variance of endogenous variables to validate hypotheses and assess the model's predictive power. The PLS-SEM analysis follows a two-stage evaluation: first, assessing the measurement model for validity and reliability; and second, evaluating the structural model to test the hypotheses. (Hair & Alamer, 2022). Operationally, the research extracts respondent data by centering the questionnaire on Kevin Durant and his signature low-top Nike KD footwear line. This selection is based on three reasons: the Nike KD series is the second most common shoe linked to Achilles ruptures in the NBA, Kevin Durant himself experienced a highly publicized Achilles rupture, and he is a common focus in research on athlete identification. Furthermore, the sample adequacy follows the guidelines by Hair & Alamer (2022).

To operationalize the athlete identification construct, this study selectively adapted 7 out of the 20 original items from the Celebrity-Persona Indicator Scale. This extraction specifically isolated the metrics most relevant to the intention of purchasing low-top basketball shoes. Concurrently, the measurement indicators for the remaining constructs were systematically tailored to reflect their respective theoretical dimensions.

Table 2. Variable Indicators

Variables (References)	Dimensions	Indicators	Measures
Athlete Identification (Brown & Bocarnea, 2007; Prameswara & Sjabadhyni, 2018; Setyawan & Harsono, 2024)	-	Value Sharing	What is important to Kevin Durant is important to me.
		Behavior Modeling	I try to model the behavior of Kevin Durant
		Action Imitation	I try to do things I believe Kevin Durant would do.
		Desire for Similarity	I want to be more like Kevin Durant.
		Belief Alignment	I believe many of the same things Kevin Durant believes.
		Advocacy Alignment	I advocate the same things that Kevin Durant advocates.
		Persona Imitation	I sometimes imitate Kevin Durant.
Shoe Design (Kotler et al., 2022; Park & Lee,	Aesthetics	Visual Appeal	The low-top design of the Nike KD shoe series looks very stylish and modern.
		Visual Appeal	The visual appearance of the low-top Nike KD series makes me feel more confident when walking around in them.

Variables (References)	Dimensions	Indicators	Measures
2022; Anshita & Chhikara, 2023)		Color Appeal	The color combinations on the low-top Nike KD series are visually appealing to me.
		Texture Appeal	The selection of patterns and textures on the surface of the low-top Nike KD series is visually appealing to me.
	Performance	Court Feel & Footing	Nike KD shoes provide excellent footing and court feel when walking or running.
		Ankle Mobility	Nike KD shoes specifically provide maximum ankle freedom of movement during maneuvers.
Perceived Injury Risk (Jacoby & Kaplan, 1972; Agustina, 2018; X. Zhang & Yu, 2020)	Perceived Physical Risk	Collar Ventilation	The low-top collar of Nike KD shoes indirectly promotes airflow, helping prevent feet from feeling hot.
		Perceived Susceptibility	I am concerned that wearing the low-top Nike KD series will increase my risk of ankle sprain.
		Perceived Susceptibility	I am worried that the low-top Nike KD series does not provide a secure enough lockdown to hold my foot's movement during maneuvers.
		Perceived Susceptibility	I feel the low-top Nike KD series lacks adequate protection to ensure structural stability when landing after a jump.
		Perceived Severity	I am concerned that continuously wearing low-top Nike KD shoes may compromise the durability of my Achilles tendon, as happened to Kevin Durant.
		Perceived Severity	Overall, I consider wearing the low-top Nike KD series to have a high level of physical risk.
		Perceived Severity	I am concerned about the high medical and recovery time I would have to bear if I were to sustain an injury from wearing the low-top Nike KD series.
Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes (Ferdinand, 2014; Henry et al., 2023; Adawiyah et al., 2025)	Transactional Intention	Future Purchase Intent	I intend to purchase low-top Nike KD basketball shoes in the future.
		Willingness to Spend	I plan to spend my money to buy low-top Nike KD basketball shoes in the future.
	Referential Intention	Recommendation Willingness	I am willing to recommend low-top Nike KD basketball shoes to my friends or basketball teammates.
		Purchase Priority	I make low-top Nike KD basketball shoes my top priority when purchasing basketball shoes.
	Exploration Intention	Active Info Search	I actively take the time to search for information regarding the price, availability, or product reviews of the latest low-top Nike KD series.
		Review Seeking	I look for reviews from other users discussing the advantages of low-top Nike KD basketball shoes to strengthen my purchase intention.

With a total of 26 questionnaire items, an initial estimation multiplied this figure by a parameter of 10, aligning with the recommendations of Fanfa et al. (2024), which yields a baseline of 260. However, to maximize data robustness, the study incorporates a modified approach proposed by Oesman et al. (2024). This modification integrates the four main research variables into the item count before applying the multiplier. Through this specific formula—(26 indicators + 4 variables) × 10—the final optimal sample size was determined to be 300 respondents. Empirical data were collected through a web-based questionnaire administered via Google Forms, with data collection spanning from February 16 to March 11, 2026. For the subsequent statistical evaluation and structural modeling, this study used the SmartPLS 4 software package to perform a nonparametric bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples, testing the directional hypotheses using a one-tailed threshold of $t > 1.645$ and $p < 0.05$. A one-tailed test was deemed appropriate for testing the hypotheses, including the moderation effect, because the study postulates a clear directional interaction: perceived injury risk either suppresses or amplifies the established relationships.

RESULT

Respondent Demographics

This study involved 300 respondents who met the screening criteria, specifically, an active interest in the NBA and cognitive awareness of Kevin Durant. As shown in Table 3, the gender distribution is relatively balanced, though slightly female-skewed, with 55.3% female and 44.7% male. The majority of participants (69.7%) fall within the 17–25 age bracket, which is categorized as young adults from the Department of Health of the Republic of Indonesia. (Al Amin & Juniati, 2017). When mapped to birth years, this cohort predominantly aligns with Generation Z, defined by Andrea et al. (2016) As individuals born between 1995 and 2010, by synthesizing data on age, occupation (48.7% private-sector employees), and highest education level (51.7%

holding a bachelor's degree), the core profile of the respondents emerges as that of young professionals, ranging from recent graduates to those with up to 4 years of work experience. Geographically, the survey responses span across the major islands of Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi. On a provincial level, the distribution is heavily concentrated in West Java (36.0%), followed by DKI Jakarta (14.0%) and Lampung (12.0%). Notably, within West Java, the city of Bandung alone accounts for the vast majority of the sample (29.0%). This prominent representation of Bandung residents is a logical outcome of the data collection procedure, which was actively facilitated by the INABA Basketball Club in that region.

Table 3. Respondent Demographics

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
- Male	134	44.7%
- Female	166	55.3%
Age		
- 17 - 25 years	209	69.7%
- 26 - 35 years	75	25.0%
- 36 - 45 years	3	1.0%
- 46 - 55 years	10	3.3%
- 56 - 65 years	3	1.0%
Occupation		
- Government Employee	12	4.0%
- Private Employee	146	48.7%
- Professionals (Lecturer, Doctor, Judge, Police, etc)	51	17.0%
- Entrepreneurship	36	12.0%
- Student	55	18.3%
Highest Education Level		
- High School	61	20.3%
- Diploma	30	10.0%
- Bachelor's Degree	155	51.7%
- Postgraduate Degree	54	18.0%
Domicile		
- Nanggore Aceh Darussalam	15	5.0%
- North Sumatera	10	3.3%
- West Sumatera	5	1.7%
- Riau	1	0.3%
- Riau Archipelago	3	1.0%
- Bengkulu	5	1.7%
- South Sumatera	5	1.7%
- Bangka Belitung Archipelago	2	0.7%
- Lampung	36	12.0%
- Banten	16	5.3%
- Special Region of Jakarta	42	14.0%
- West Java	108	36.0%
- Central Java	10	3.3%
- Special Region of Yogyakarta	12	4.0%
- East Java	18	6.0%
- West Kalimantan	1	0.3%
- South Sulawesi	9	3.0%
- Southeast Sulawesi	2	0.7%

Measurement Model Assessment (Outer Model)

To establish the reliability and validity of the respondents' data, an assessment of the measurement model (outer model) was conducted. This analytical procedure specifically evaluates the outer loadings, construct reliability, validity, and discriminant validity.

An analysis of the measurement model, presented in Table 4, reveals that certain measurement items failed to meet the recommended validity criteria and required elimination. Specifically, within the 20-item Athlete Identification construct, indicators X1_2 and X1_6 were discarded due to insufficient factor loadings. Furthermore, the evaluation of the Shoe Design variable demonstrated that only the aesthetic dimension (items X2_1 to X2_4) attained satisfactory validity. Indicators intended to measure performance (X2_5 and X2_6) and structural features (X2_7) were deemed invalid and consequently removed. As a result, the product design

construct operationalized in this study strictly captures the aesthetic elements. All remaining items were retained for further analysis, as their outer loadings successfully surpassed the established 0.708 threshold recommended by Hair & Alamer (2022) for indicator reliability.

Table 4. Outer Loadings Results

	AI	PIR	PI for LBS	SD	PIR x AI	PIR x SD
X1_1	0.71					
X1_2	0.69					
X1_3	0.77					
X1_4	0.71					
X1_5	0.66					
X1_6	0.77					
X1_7	0.72					
X2_1				0.79		
X2_2				0.80		
X2_3				0.82		
X2_4				0.79		
X2_5				0.67		
X2_6				0.69		
X2_7				0.53		
Y1			0.84			
Y2			0.88			
Y3			0.79			
Y4			0.86			
Y5			0.85			
Y6			0.79			
Z1		0.83				
Z2		0.88				
Z3		0.85				
Z4		0.85				
Z5		0.85				
Z6		0.81				
PIR x SD						1.00
PIR x AI					1.00	

Table 5. Discriminant Validity Results

	AI	PIR	PI for LBS	SD
Athlete Identification	0.72			
Perceived Injury Risk	-0.21	0.84		
Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes	0.50	-0.38	0.83	
Shoe Design	0.46	-0.22	0.47	0.73

To establish discriminant validity, this study employed the Fornell-Larcker criterion. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This methodological standard dictates that the square root of a construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) must strictly exceed its highest correlation with any other latent variable in the model. The empirical findings confirm that all proposed constructs possess adequate distinctiveness. Specifically, the square root of AVE for Athlete Identification stands at 0.72, which is demonstrably higher than all off-diagonal values in its respective column. A similarly valid pattern is observed for Perceived Injury Risk (0.84) and Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes (0.83). Furthermore, the Shoe Design variable—which, as previously established, exclusively captures the aesthetic dimension—yielded a satisfactory score of 0.73, comfortably surpassing its corresponding inter-construct correlations. Consequently, the measurement model demonstrates robust discriminant validity.

The empirical results demonstrate that all constructs integrated into the model achieve adequate convergent validity, as their Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores consistently exceed the 0.50 threshold established by Hair & Alamer (2022). Furthermore, robust internal consistency is confirmed across all variables. This reliability is evidenced by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (rho_c) values surpassing the acceptable 0.70 benchmark. Hair & Alamer (2022), alongside rho_a metrics that also exceed 0.70 (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). Having successfully met these prerequisite measurement criteria, the analytical procedure can proceed to evaluate the structural model (inner model).

Table 6. Construct Reliability and Validity Results

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho a)	Composite reliability (rho c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Athlete Identification	0.84	0,85	0.88	0.52
Perceived Injury Risk	0.92	0,92	0.94	0.71
Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes	0.91	0,92	0.93	0.70
Shoe Design	0.86	0,88	0.89	0.54

Structural Model Assessment (Inner Model)

The structural model (inner model) evaluation is conducted to assess the predictive capabilities and overall quality of the proposed framework. This analytical phase systematically assesses the coefficient of determination (R^2), F^2 effect sizes, and the approximate Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) metric. (Henseler et al., 2015). The empirical results reveal that the R^2 and adjusted R^2 values for the purchase intention of low-top basketball shoes are 0.393 and 0.383, respectively. This demonstrates that the exogenous constructs integrated into the model collectively explain 39.3% of the variance in consumers' purchase intention. According to the established guidelines by Hair & Alamer (2022) This percentage indicates a moderate yet highly satisfactory level of explanatory power for behavioral studies.

Table 7. Effect Size Results

	Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes
Athlete Identification	0.11
Shoe Design	0.07
Perceived Injury Risk x Athlete Identification	0.01
Perceived Injury Risk x Shoe Design	0.02

To determine the substantive impact of each exogenous construct on the endogenous variable, the F^2 effect sizes were systematically evaluated. Following the established benchmarks by Cohen (1988) and Hair & Alamer (2022), F^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 correspond to small, medium, and large effects, respectively. Furthermore, methodological literature on moderation analysis indicates that interaction terms typically yield smaller effect sizes, with values as small as 0.005 to 0.02 still considered practically meaningful. (Hair & Alamer, 2022) The analytical results presented in Table 6 indicate that the direct impacts of Athlete Identification ($F^2 = 0.11$) and Shoe Design ($F^2 = 0.07$) are small to medium. Regarding the moderating variables, the interaction pathways generate F^2 values of 0.01 and 0.02. While these figures appear modest in quantitative terms, they are theoretically sound and structurally relevant to interaction effects. Consequently, both the primary predictors and their respective moderation mechanisms contribute substantively to shaping the consumers' purchase intention within this structural model. To assess the overall model quality, this study employed the Goodness of Fit (GoF) index, which is calculated as the geometric mean of the average Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the average coefficient of determination (R^2) (Tenenhaus et al., 2005). The computation yielded a GoF value of 0.49 for the proposed framework. Based on the evaluation criteria established by Wetzels et al. (2009) This result comfortably exceeds the 0.36 threshold, thereby classifying the model fit as 'large'. Substantively, this indicates that the empirical data strongly corroborate the proposed structural framework, reflecting excellent overall predictive power and robust model performance.

Hypotheses Testing Results

The hypothesis testing procedure relied on assessing path coefficients and their significance levels using the bootstrapping method. In alignment with standard PLS-SEM evaluation criteria (Hair & Alamer, 2022) Empirical support for a given hypothesis is established when the statistical analysis yields a t-statistic greater than 1.65 (one-tailed test), corresponding to a p-value less than 0.05.

The evaluation of the structural model confirms that all proposed hypotheses are statistically supported (p-value < 0.05). Regarding the direct pathways, both Athlete Identification and Shoe Design positively influence Purchase Intention (H1 and H2 supported), whereas Perceived Injury Risk has a direct negative effect (H3 supported). Furthermore, the empirical evidence substantiates the role of Perceived Injury Risk as a valid moderating variable that triggers a rational shift in consumer behavior; specifically, its presence amplifies the importance of Shoe Design while simultaneously attenuating the influence of Athlete Identification on the intention to purchase low-top basketball shoes (H4 and H5 supported).

Table 8. Hypotheses Testing Results

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Athlete Identification -> Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes	0.30	0.31	0.05	5.69	0.00
Perceived Injury Risk -> Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes	-0.29	-0.29	0.05	6.00	0.00
Shoe Design -> Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes	0.25	0.25	0.05	5.40	0.00
Perceived Injury Risk x Athlete Identification -> Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes	-0.07	-0.07	0.04	1.75	0.04
Perceived Injury Risk x Shoe Design -> Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes	0.12	0.11	0.05	2.29	0.01

DISCUSSION

Athlete Identification on Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes

Assessment of the structural model provides empirical evidence that Athlete Identification has a meaningful, positive direct effect on Purchase Intention for low-top basketball shoes, independent of moderating variables. This relationship indicates that stronger emotional attachments and identification with Kevin Durant's persona—encompassing both his core values and on-court playing style—directly translate into a heightened intention to purchase his signature footwear. Theoretically rooted in symbolic consumption, this internalization of the celebrity persona drives fans to adopt Durant's signature low-top silhouette, under the psychological projection that wearing the footwear will tangibly imbue them with a comparable level of his elite offensive fluidity and on-court prowess. (Belk, 1988). This consistency aligns with prior investigations by Henry et al. (2023), which established that fan identification with sports figures such as Kobe Bryant is a primary driver of consumption of their signature lines. In Kevin Durant's case, this profound connection is cultivated by his established reputation, exceptional achievements, and dominant professional track record. Durant is widely acknowledged as one of the most dominant professional basketball players, often equated with the top stars of his generation, Stephen Curry and LeBron James. (Chaudhary, 2026). His elite reputation is firmly validated by a comprehensive portfolio of prestigious accolades, including multiple NBA Championships, Finals MVP awards, and over a decade of All-Star selections, including the recent 2025-2026 season. (Nagelhout, 2018; Yoga, 2026). Beyond his extensive trophy cabinet, Durant's technical ability earned direct acknowledgment from the late Kobe Bryant, who publicly cited him as the only player he could never figure out defensively. (Starjacki, 2023). This culmination of historic achievements and peer validation ultimately fortifies the appeal of Durant's persona among consumers, forging a solid fan identification that motivates them to adopt his signature footwear as a tangible extension of his on-court legacy.

Shoe Design on Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes

When interpreting this pathway, it is crucial to reiterate that the Shoe Design construct in this study captures only the aesthetic dimension, as performance and feature metrics were excluded during the outer model evaluation. The structural assessment reveals that aesthetic design is a robust, positive determinant of purchase intention, independent of technical specifications. This occurrence can be attributed to the functional evolution of basketball footwear within modern culture, where such products transcend technical athletic gear to become definitive fashion statements and integral components of the athleisure lifestyle. (Grovey & Garza, 2023). Consequently, visual appeal often compensates for the absence of explicit performance evaluations during the consumer decision-making process. (Hoegg & Alba, 2011). Consumers show a strong appreciation for the modern, lightweight, and dynamic visual profile of low-top sneakers. Furthermore, the visually low-profile design is often associated with agility and superior court feel, which particularly appeals to individuals who prioritize precision-based footwork over vertical leaping. This indicates an aesthetic-functional halo effect, in which a sleek, minimalist silhouette psychologically conveys speed and responsiveness to prospective buyers. The notion that design aesthetics heavily dictate purchase intentions in the athletic footwear industry is strongly corroborated by the findings of Dewa & Untarini (2023) and Latifah & Mubarak (2026) whose respective empirical analyses confirm that visual superiority and stylistic relevance consistently emerge as paramount determinants of consumer acquisition behavior in contemporary sports retail.

Perceived Injury Risk on Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes

Although Perceived Injury Risk is conceptualized primarily as a moderating variable within the theoretical framework, assessing its direct impact remains methodologically essential. This step determines whether the

construct operates as a quasi-moderator or strictly as a pure moderator. (Sharma et al., 1981). Substantively, this direct pathway establishes a baseline of consumer rationality before other intervening factors are introduced. The structural assessment confirms a robust inverse relationship between risk perception and acquisition behavior, indicating that heightened consumer apprehension about injury risks—such as ankle sprains or Achilles tendon injuries due to the minimal protection of low-tops—systematically diminishes purchase intention. Rather than focusing on raw variance, this proportional deterrent effect highlights a critical consumer trade-off; as the cognitive awareness of physical vulnerability increases, buyers instinctively penalize the product's value proposition. This reflects a highly rational psychological response mechanism rooted in Perceived Risk Theory, wherein consumers exhibit calculated risk aversion, actively suppressing their impulse to purchase footwear perceived as physically hazardous. (Jacoby & Kaplan, 1972; Mitchell, 1999). For recreational practitioners and everyday consumers, sustaining a sports-related injury carries significant lifestyle disruptions and occupational repercussions; consequently, the anticipated real-world costs of such physical vulnerabilities rapidly overshadow the aesthetic or symbolic appeal of the low-top silhouette. (Stone & Grønhaug, 1993). These results reinforce recent literature by Ouyang & Wang (2025), which identifies perceived risk as a consistent barrier to the adoption of functional sports products. As corroborated by their work on Li-Ning merchandise, heightened consumer risk anxiety serves as a primary cognitive filter that systematically reduces overall willingness to acquire specialized athletic gear.

Athlete Identification on Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes (Moderated by Perceived Injury Risk)

Upon evaluating the interaction terms, Perceived Injury Risk emerges as a statistically significant negative moderator, attenuating the relationship between Athlete Identification and Purchase Intention. Although statistically significant, the negative valence of this interaction explicitly indicates a relatively weak dampening mechanism. As consumers become increasingly aware of the physical hazards associated with low-top shoes, their emotional drive to purchase—typically fueled by admiration for the athlete—is only marginally suppressed. This moderating effect illustrates a distinct cognitive shift in consumer rationality, in which the self-preservation instinct attempts to override affective attachment to idols. Even when a fan harbors intense admiration and emotional identification with Kevin Durant, the salient awareness of elevated injury risks associated with low-top shoes activates a self-preservation mechanism that dampens emotional purchasing impulses. This phenomenon can be understood through Mitchell's (1999) framework, which argues that regardless of a consumer's profound attachment to a brand or product, perceived physical and functional risks (such as the threat of injury) typically trigger a rational mechanism that extinguishes the urge to buy. Interestingly, regarding the purchase intention for the low-top Nike KD series, this negating influence is remarkably weak. The interaction term yields a negligible effect size, making it practically dismissible. Such a minimal deterrent effect is undoubtedly tied to the sheer magnitude of Kevin Durant's public profile.

However, pushing fans past mere admiration into actual consumptive behavior and unquestioning loyalty can only occur because they resonate deeply with the highly humanized, multidimensional nature of Durant's persona. "Beyond his on-court achievements, Durant is widely known for his highly vocal internet persona and emotional vulnerability, establishing a character dynamic that blends competitive arrogance with genuine human duality. For instance, he frequently engages in unapologetic online confrontations with critics, yet simultaneously displays profound sincerity, famously exemplified by his heartfelt "you are the real MVP" tribute to his mother (Franz, 2022; Powell, 2024). This complex, highly humanized persona contrasts with traditional commercial sports archetypes, rendering him a deeply relevant figure for youth to adopt in their self-identity formation processes (Cohen, 2001; Foy, 2020; Prasetyo & Akbar, 2025). Corroborating this phenomenon, empirical findings by Franz (2022) demonstrate audience polarization in digital spaces, specifically, a split into cohorts of negative critics and fiercely loyal KD defenders. Ultimately, it is this very duality of humanity that allows fans to fiercely identify with him while still retaining their objective rationality regarding practical concerns like footwear injury risks. Ultimately, safety-oriented rationality intervenes against unquestioning loyalty to the athlete. This indicates that although the dampening effect is statistically significant, it does not entirely negate the underlying purchase intention. The tension between emotional attachment to idols and rational risk boundaries supports the theoretical postulates advanced by Slovic et al. (2004), who argue that cognitive risk assessments can serve as regulatory boundaries that override intense affective impulses. Within this dual-process framework, human decision-making is naturally governed by two competing forces: the experiential system, which fuels immediate emotional desires, and the analytic system, which logically evaluates potential hazards. Consequently, experiencing this internal conflict is a standard psychological response; it simply reflects an individual's innate self-preservation instinct actively negotiating with their affective motivations.

Shoe Design on Purchase Intention for Low-top Basketball Shoes (Moderated by Perceived Injury Risk)

Conversely, the interaction analysis of this specific pathway reveals a compelling psychological phenomenon in which Perceived Injury Risk exerts a modest yet statistically significant amplifying effect on the positive impact of Shoe Design aesthetics on purchase intention. Statistically, this positive interaction indicates an additive mechanism rather than a replacement of the original relationship; as injury concerns rise, the predictive power of aesthetic design demonstrably strengthens beyond its baseline effect. Logically addressing why such hazards would enhance design appeal requires an understanding of motivations for shifting usage. When consumers are acutely aware that low-top models lack adequate safety for high-intensity competitive basketball, they do not necessarily abandon their purchase intent. Instead, they mentally reframe their purchase justification, repurposing the footwear strictly for casual lifestyle or leisure wear to mitigate the risk of on-court injuries. (Hockey et al., 2013). Consequently, reflecting the measured scale of this amplification, the relative importance of aesthetic design becomes definitively magnified for injury-averse consumers, as the product's primary value proposition shifts entirely to its visual appeal rather than its competitive performance. However, theoretically, this validates the existence of psychological compensation in consumer behavior, resonating with recent findings from Hong & Byun (2025), who demonstrated that superior aesthetic design serves a protective 'beauty premium' role, effectively mitigating the decline in consumer purchase intention even when confronted with severe functional product failures or performance risks.

The tangible impact of this psychological compensation becomes especially apparent when evaluating the comparative predictive power of these specific antecedents for purchase intention toward low-top basketball shoes. In the baseline model, Athlete Identification serves as the most potent direct driver of purchase intention. However, as consumers' apprehension regarding injury risks intensifies, the predictive power of Athlete Identification is notably attenuated. At the same time, the influence of Shoe Design simultaneously surges, thereby establishing aesthetics as the paramount catalyst for acquisition. This empirical displacement strongly resonates with earlier findings by Herwindo (2016), who demonstrated that consumer acquisitions of Kobe X are ultimately driven by superior design features rather than solely by the athlete's endorsement. Ultimately, these findings conclude that while Athlete Identification is insufficient to override safety apprehensions, the pure aesthetic appeal of Shoe Design successfully mitigates Perceived Injury Risk, acting as the definitive psychological safeguard that sustains purchase intention for low-top basketball footwear. From a managerial standpoint, these shifting dynamics dictate a strategic pivot for brand executives: to maximize the commercial viability of the low-top signature series among safety-conscious demographics, Nike must shift its promotional framing away from purely competitive on-court performance and instead emphasize the footwear's avant-garde streetwear aesthetics and lifestyle versatility.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the influence of athlete identification and shoe design on the purchase intention for low-top basketball shoes, with perceived injury risk acting as a moderating variable. The findings indicate that while emotional attachment to an athlete and the aesthetic appeal of the footwear fundamentally drive consumers' purchase intentions, perceived injury risk significantly alters this rationale. Specifically, safety concerns directly deter purchase intentions and suppress the emotional drive associated with athlete identification, as consumers prioritize physical well-being over unquestioning loyalty. However, this risk perception unexpectedly amplifies the influence of shoe design aesthetics. This shift reveals that while athlete identification is insufficient to override safety concerns, the footwear's pure aesthetic appeal successfully mitigates perceived injury risk by serving as a psychological safeguard. Instead of abandoning the product, buyers repurpose low-top basketball shoes as casual lifestyle streetwear, prioritizing visual appeal and modern styling over competitive athletic performance.

This study has several limitations. First, it focused on Generation Z consumers in West Java and the Special Region of Jakarta, meaning the findings may not represent all Indonesian basketball enthusiasts. Second, the cross-sectional design captures data at only one point in time, missing potential shifts in sportswear trends. Third, the model only evaluated shoe aesthetics, excluding performance and functional features. Therefore, future research should expand the demographic scope, adopt a longitudinal approach, and include variables such as price sensitivity, brand loyalty, and peer influence. Furthermore, future researchers are strongly encouraged to investigate the functional features of shoe design alongside aesthetics to determine which specific elements effectively mitigate safety concerns. Additionally, exploring the psychological shift toward repurposing performance footwear as lifestyle streetwear across different cultures and generations will provide a deeper understanding of this evolving consumer behavior. From a managerial standpoint, sportswear brands should adapt to this shift in consumer behavior by strategically marketing low-top basketball shoes as versatile streetwear, emphasizing modern aesthetics for digitally active young consumers, while concurrently innovating the shoes' structural integrity to alleviate on-court safety concerns.

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