## ABSTRACT

## FOOTWEAR COUNTER FOR EASIER ENTRY AND REMOVAL

An article of footwear includes an upper (16) and sole structure (14), and the upper (16) includes a foot receiving shoe opening. The article of footwear further includes a heel cup (52) attached to the upper (16) and extending from the sole structure (14) to at least a portion of the rear heel collar (74) of upper (16). Additionally, the heel cup (52) is uniformly molded with an upper portion (64), midportion (58), and lower portion (54) and the upper portion (64) has a smaller mediolateral length than the midportion (58), and the midportion (58) and lower portion (54) form a concave structure configured to receive the heel. The upper portion (64) has a first configuration and is capable of distorting into a second configuration under a load of a user's foot when the user is donning the footwear. In the second configuration, at least part of the upper portion (64) is lowered relative to the first configuration and the upper portion (64) is capable of returning to the first configuration after the load of the user's foot is removed. The midportion (58) includes a peripheral portion (70) having a first thickness and a central portion (50) having a second thickness, and the second thickness is less than the first thickness.

[Fig .1]