

Dissecting the development of skateboarding and its social and business effects

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ABSTRACT

Mina Kourtzi: Dissecting the development of skateboarding and its social and business effects.

(With the supervision of Dr. Antonios K. Travlos, Professor)

Action sports seem to be a highly significant aspect of the popular culture of the earlier years, while specifically, it's really surprising that action sports engagement has dramatically expanded recently, with skateboarding getting a place among the top ones. Skateboarding began on the west coast of the United States of America in the fifties and over time it gained increased popularity as an active form of recreation. The sport has been rather deemed as an adventurous activity, which was widely setting aside the traditional sports, and any type of competitive nature that is predominant in many of them. However, thanks to the sport's inclusion in important competitions, it has developed from a secretive subculture to a well-liked pastime. Skateboarding's extensive exposure is projected to increase through its acceptance in the Olympic program, leading to more funding opportunities, greater recognition, and a stronger infrastructure for the sport, having as a primary aim to cater toward younger skateboarders. Skateboarding has attracted more research attention as an important study topic for a variety of research fields since it was added to the 2020 [2021] Tokyo Olympic Games. This desk study examines documents and historical skating data to gain a complete insight of the industry's development globally and to pinpoint the most pertinent advantages that the skateboarding industry's growth in Greece may bring about. According to the outcomes of the research, it is obvious that skateboarders are no more considered as a bothersome presence in urban environments, while in the contrary thanks to skateboarders' aggressive and creative use of cities' urban settings, the sport has generated a completely unique use of city centers, offering not only a place to train and recreate but also a chance for socioeconomic development.

Keywords: *Skateboarding, Sport evolution, Urban sports and societies, Culture, Action sports*

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Μίνα Κουρτζή: Αναλύοντας την ανάπτυξη του σκέιτ-μπόρντινγκ. Οι κοινωνικές και επιχειρηματικές επιπτώσεις του.
(Με την επίβλεψη του κ. Αντώνη Τραυλού, Καθηγητή)

Τα αθλήματα δράσης φαίνεται να πλαισιώνουν αισθητά ορισμένες από τις δημοφιλείς κουλτούρες που αναπτύχθηκαν στα προηγούμενα έτη, ενώ συγκεκριμένα στο παρόν, είναι εκπληκτικό το γεγονός ότι η συμμετοχή σε αυτά έχει επεκταθεί σημαντικά, με το σκέιτ-μπόρντινγκ (skateboarding) να παίρνει μια θέση μεταξύ των κορυφαίων εξ' αυτών. Το σκέιτ-μπόρντινγκ (τροχοσανίδα) ξεκίνησε στη δυτική ακτή των Ηνωμένων Πολιτειών της Αμερικής στη δεκαετία του πενήντα και με την πάροδο του χρόνου κέρδισε αυξημένη δημοτικότητα ως μία έντονη μορφή αναψυχής. Το άθλημα κατά κύριο λόγο θεωρείτο μια περιπετειώδης δραστηριότητα, η οποία παραγκωνίζει ευρέως τα παραδοσιακά αθλήματα καθώς και τον ανταγωνιστικό τους χαρακτήρα. Εξαιτίας της συμμετοχής του αθλήματος σε σημαντικές διοργανώσεις, αυτό εξελίχθηκε από ασχολία κάποιων μεμονωμένων τμημάτων της κοινωνίας, σε ένα ευρέως διαδεδομένο χόμπι. Η επέκταση του αθλήματος, προβλέπεται να αυξηθεί περαιτέρω, ύστερα από τη συμπερίληψή του στο Ολυμπιακό πρόγραμμα, οδηγώντας έτσι στη δημιουργία περισσότερων ευκαιριών χρηματοδότησης, μεγαλύτερης αναγνωρισιμότητας και εκτενέστερης υποδομής για το άθλημα, με κύριο στόχο τις νεαρότερες κοινωνικές ομάδες. Επιπλέον, το σκέιτ-μπόρντινγκ, μετά από τους Ολυμπιακούς Αγώνες του Τόκιο 2020 [2021], έχει προσελκύσει περισσότερη ερευνητική προσοχή ως σημαντικό θέμα μελέτης σε μια ποικιλία ερευνητικών πεδίων. Η συγκεκριμένη έρευνα εξετάζει έγγραφα και ιστορικά δεδομένα γύρω από το άθλημα, ώστε να αποδώσει την πλήρη εικόνα της ανάπτυξης του κλάδου παγκοσμίως και να εντοπίσει τα πιο σημαντικά πλεονεκτήματα που μπορεί να επιφέρει η ανάπτυξη του κλάδου σε αγορές όπως αυτή της Ελλάδας. Σύμφωνα με τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας, είναι προφανές ότι οι σκέιτ-μπόρνττες δεν θεωρούνται πλέον ως η «ενοχλητική παρουσία» στον αστικό ιστό, ενώ αντίθετα χάρη στη δραστήρια και δημιουργική αλληλεπίδρασή τους με το αστικό περιβάλλον, το άθλημα έχει δημιουργήσει μια εντελώς μοναδική χρήση για το κέντρο των πόλεων, προσφέροντας την ευκαιρία για κοινωνικοοικονομική ανάπτυξη.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: *Σκέιτμπορντ, Εξέλιξη αθλήματος, Αθλήματα πόλης και κοινωνίες, Κουλτούρα, Αθλήματα δράσης*

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I also use this occasion to place in writing what I have repeatedly said to both of them, for as many years as I remember living. My parents, Nikos Kourtzis and Olga Karageorgou, who in addition to the distinctive parental guidance they have provided me and my two brothers with, are the ones who serve as a lighthouse for me in all I choose to do and in everything that I achieve. They instilled in me a passion for learning, a determination to never give up on it, and a sense of calmness in when the steps together bring fatigue. You both, have my highest admiration.

Finally, words cannot express my gratefulness to my Thomas, a great professional, husband and father, and to our young daughter Rosalia, who has already learned the meanings of patience, stoicism, and support at such an early age in life. I am on the side of both of you, just as you are on mine.

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CHAPTER I - Introduction

Action sports, skateboarding and research background

Back in the 2000s, researchers were talking about some informal sports activities, which were totally separated from the traditional sports activities of that time. Those sports are nowadays broadly identified as “action sports” and refer to a wide range of activities which have been known for their free-spirited, creative and self-directed characteristics (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2013).

Taking into consideration that for those sports the core characteristic is that they are an alternative to the mainstream organized ones, several other names were given throughout all those years of their development other than the term action sports: namely extreme, lifestyle, and alternative sports (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2013). Action sports have demonstrated to be a fast - growing industry of the sport business internationally, in both the participation and the distribution of it, following the rapid drop in mainstream sports’ involvement (Zhang et al., 2003).

Action sports have been a very prominent component of popular culture during the last decades, with individuals performing action sports to be on the covers of famous magazines, as well as in commercials for well-known global companies (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2013). Along with several new leisure fads which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, several action sports grew in popularity. Such sports enticed unconventional youngsters, who adopted them and filled them with a variety of euphoric and freewheeling ideologies and subcultural customs (Wheaton, 2010).

It's no surprise that, according to recent numbers, participation in action sports has increased significantly, with skateboarding ranking in the top five, alongside BMX, kite-surfing, surfing, and snowboarding. More analytically, action sports are thought to be played by more than 150 million individuals globally (Salmon, 2004).

As far as skateboarding is concerned, this sport emerged on the west coast of the United States of America (USA) in the 1950s, and gradually became a popular way to enjoy leisure. In light of this, skateboarding, which is basically an individual sport, has been classified as a social activity with a unique history, language and culture overall (Dumas & Laforest, 2009).

Initially, street skateboarding served as little more than a solution to surfers' determination who wanted to keep practicing once the surf went low, and now classifies itself as an action sport, that has long been a common choice for several decades and is expected to stay so for the coming years (Wiggin & Bicknell, 2011).

Surprisingly though, skateboarding has been mostly regarded as an unconventional sport, broadly disregarding conventional sports, as well as any form of competitiveness which is prevalent in plenty of other sporting activities. As already mentioned, it is included in the list with the action sports, and is largely described in literature as a self-governed sport, which discourages competition and is loosely structured, since it focuses only to the joy of participation (Donnelly, 2008).

Nevertheless, the sport has progressed from an underground subculture to a popular activity, thanks to its involvement in large-scale competitions. Events like the Vans Park Series, Street League Series, X-Games, and lastly but most importantly the Olympic Games have played a decisive role in the subsequent development of the sport (Willing et al., 2020). Vast numbers of Gen Y athletes, born during the 80s' and early 90's, participate in action sports because they like the hazardous, independent nature of the activities as well as the culture of disrespect and freedom of expression they symbolize. Its fast expansion has been facilitated by the athletes' diverse cultures and backgrounds but also the fiercely competitive business interests in branding and advertising.

Gap of knowledge/Problem statement

As mentioned, skateboarding has grown from a dynamic urban sport with a mythical heritage and specific cultural characteristics, to one professional sport that provides profits to global markets and corporations. It has evolved and matured, and it now shares certain characteristics with other popular sports. Apart from being included in the Olympic program, some other resemblance to traditional sports is how this activity is utilized to encourage public benefit (Bäckström & Blackman, 2022). This unusual alliance can indisputably help communities overall, not merely skateboarding or the Olympics – and this is a potential that shall not be ignored (Borden, 2016).

Furthermore, during the last years, scholarly interest in skateboarding has developed in conjunction with its rising wide appeal, while lastly the inclusion of

skateboarding in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Programme, suggested clearly both the sport's popularity and its recognition (Li, 2018). However, developing through the decades since its appearance, it's correct to assume that skateboarding history hasn't been identical across all regions of the planet. This thesis, in particular, aids in understanding the forces behind the changes of skateboarding, as well as the consequences that those might bring in local markets such as the market of the capital of Greece, since there is lack of sufficient information that has not been yet explored within this specific field.

Research objectives

This desk research is a document and historical data review of the skateboarding business, and its objective is to assist in the development of a thorough understanding of the global skateboarding business progress, as well as to identify any relevant forces that can be created in Greece's national skateboarding business. The study specifically will try to focus on the perception of what skateboarding can become in the local market of Athens, and in doing so, attention is given to skateboarding's contribution to public challenges worldwide.

The primary objective of this thesis is to theoretically further investigate the aforementioned framework of skateboarding as a sport and as a culture. While secondly, it eagers to offer an analysis of how this structure affects the growth of the skateboarding culture and business in several areas. Overall, this research will look at how skateboarding as a phenomena may influence community's growth, development, and promotion by becoming a part of the culture, sport, and city's heritage, while also it is believed that the insights provided by this exploration will give a better understanding on skateboarding overall, and its possible contributory elements in the Greek skateboarding community and industry.

Research questions

While stating the objectives of the specific research some of the main concerns were the following: (1) what issue has to be resolved? (2) who is concerned about this issue and why? (3) what has already been done? (4) what can possibly be the solution to the issue?

Specifically, in order to attain the mentioned objectives the research tried to provide answers to some specific contextual research issues, so as to define the dynamics of the present conditions within the skateboarding industry. These contextual issues can better described into the following set of questions:

- How and why has the culture of skateboarding changed over time? What social factors influenced the history of the specific sport? What is the business progress of skateboarding? What has happened throughout the years and how did it happen within the skateboarding market?
- Are there any societal changes worldwide due to skateboarding? How did skateboard affect social life and cities? How is the local markets affected through the changes of the skateboarding business? In what way can skateboarding affect social structures, economic and political settings overall?
- What are the consequences that those changes might bring to new skateboarding local markets in the future? What seems to be the success factors? Are there any forces behind the changes of skateboarding business that can affect the capital of Greece?

By placing the research in this environment, it was possible to verify the ideas that have been developed within the body of knowledge on skateboarding and finally provide the research questions of the study, which are narrowed down to the following:

1. How did the social perceptions of skateboarding change over time, and which are the reasons behind the sports' increased popularity worldwide?
2. What are the contributing factors of skateboarding in the emerged markets like Greece and what are the benefits of the sports expansion locally?

In the particular study, the research questions provided the main context for the research's development while these questions clearly acted as guidelines of the discussed topic, determining its constraints and sustaining its continuity.

Research method

For the purposes of the research a desk study was conducted. The study technique called desk study, sometimes known as secondary research or secondary analysis, uses data that have previously been collected, so in order to increase the efficacy of the research, these existing data is compiled and summarized. As explained

by Szabo and Strang (1997), the term "secondary analysis" describes the method of using data from previous studies to address new questions. Analytically, researches that have already been released in academic papers as well as other notable comparable papers are considered as important resources and are examined in this specific study. Apart from the broad variety the mentioned resources, including scientific articles and books, also magazines, website resources, posts and remarks on social media platforms, and videos are included. Examination of those new age media is believed to increase the effectiveness to the survey in the era of the internet, which again are widely utilized by skateboarding enthusiasts and analysts.

The research was carried out over the course of a year beginning in September 2021, with the following key terms being used most frequently: skateboarding, sport evolution, urban sports and societies, culture, action sports.

By utilizing the resources from all those several channels, it actually became possible to evaluate all the gathered information and take into account the viewpoints of skating specialists, non-professional skateboarders, as well as the skateboarding enthusiasts overall – all being crucial parts of the skateboarding community. Moreover, documentary reviews as well as data arriving from several legislations, procedures, and policies was another type of secondary source of evidence that has been used.

CHAPTER II - Literature Review

The Skate history

Evolution of Skate

Skateboarding has gradually evolved over the past decades, experiencing several periods of popularity. As mentioned by several researchers (Donnelly, 2008; Radikonyana et al., 2017), the skateboard has most probably its origins somewhere between the 1930s and the 1950s in the Californian area, whereas despite the fact that its roots are predominantly American, skateboarding has lately become a global sport. Skateboarding has long been marketed as a rebellious, free-spirited, self-directed, and imaginative substitute for conventional sports activities (Beal, 2013).

Originally, this specific sport, which may not have always been called skateboarding, was apparent in various forms with different meanings for both participants and observers, while the actual board was made out of a variety of materials (Donnelly, 2008). Those early versions of skateboard, which dated back in the 1930s, were basically slow and hard to control scooters, which were made out of a steel-wheeled roller skate nailed at the bottom of an unshaped board (Fitzpatrick, 2008).

It was after several decades that Californian surfers took an interest in the so called “sidewalk surfing” or “asphalt surfing”, moving the sport ahead with several innovations even on the material of the board (Fitzpatrick, 2008). With the emergence of this new generation of adventure hunters, and along with technological development (i.e., plastic wheels), the activity regained popularity in the early 1970s raising the number of the youngsters involved in skateboarding up to twenty million only in the United States (Shuman & Meyers, 2015).

On another view, Brooke (1999) mentions that skateboarding grew into four different phases, during which the sport and its followers were influenced by several factors. According to Brooke (1999), the first period lasted from 1959 to 1965. During this phase young skateboarders created their own boards in a more personalized and a do-it-yourself approach while they were practicing their skills on the streets.

The second period lasted from 1973 to 1980. The increased popularity of the skateboarding lead to this second phase, when several privately owned skateparks were developed throughout the United States. During this period, skateboarding became more

common and skateparks became the center of skateboarding's development as a sport. Nevertheless, this developmental wave for the sport had to abruptly break off, since many private skateparks had to close for safety reasons, when high insurance rates were demanded in order to remain open.

The third period lasted from 1983 to 1991. The vast closing of the skateboard parks during the previous era, left skateboarders without any other option than skating back on the streets. The results of this phase were catastrophic for the sport. Skateboarders with no place of their own, were banned by authorities and in some extreme cases they were also arrested. Skateboarders were mentioned as subcultural outsiders since they were in direct conflicts with pedestrians anywhere there was a sidewalk as well as with all other users of the streets. Pedestrians, motorists, and property owners found skateboarding to be destructive and disruptive (Fitzpatrick, 2008).

As skateboarding transitioned from the modern era to new school-skating era in the late 1980s, the limits inside of it altered considerably. This shift was marked by three major changes: (1) the debut of city skating, (2) the abandonment of competitive matches in favor of collaborative filmmaking, and (3) an effort to stop the commercialization of skateboarding. Skaters were now choosing skating just in public spaces and in various semi-public areas, instead of skating in the controlled settings of the park, pool, or half-pipe (Dupont, 2014).

The fourth period started in 1993 and peaked in the early 2000s. As Brooke (1999) mentions, during this period, the excessive broadcasting of the sport, as well as the influx of many new skaters, created a new mainstream and commercial identity to the sport. In many ways, when this fourth wave faded, it left a much higher level of interest in skateboarding across mainstream Western culture.

Notably, Borden (2016) mentions that skateboarding has always had formal competitions. As early as in 1965, ABC televised for its show named "Wide World of Sports", the first-ever skateboard championships that took place at the La Palma Stadium, Anaheim, California between May 22nd and 23rd 1965 (Figure 1).



Figure 1. *International Skateboard Contest 1965.* (Source: Vintage Skateboard Magazines)

During the competition, boys and girls from Mexico, Japan, and America, aged from 13 to 17 years old, battled for US \$ 1,200 prizes and were selected based on their performance several skateboarding styles. It was three decades later when the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) created the first Extreme Games Show – broadly known today as the X-Games – which was explicitly for action sports and which was actually a catalyst for the commercialization of the industry (Batuev & Robinson, 2017).

Mass media and Skateboarding

With the sudden appearance of the X-Games, skateboarding has been promoted not only by old channels such as skateboarding magazines and movies, as well as by mass media, that have played an important role in defining skateboarding's popularity and have been a primary factor in its further commercial exploitation and institutionalization (Beal, 2013).

“The X Games became so popular that ESPN developed a channel, EXPN specifically for action sports. EXPN provided a foundation for the development of the

actions sports industry, and remains a core distribution channel for action sport consumers” (Kellett & Russell, 2009, p. 67). This additional channel which was created due to the success of the X-Games, provided a solid basis for the growth of the actions sports industry, and remains a fundamental distribution channel for action sport consumers up until these days (Batuev & Robinson, 2018).

However, the preservation of skateboard stunts through media such as printed magazines and videos kept initially the skateboarding subculture alive and well (Snyder, 2012). Larry Stevenson, owner of "Surf Guide Magazine," published the first skateboard advertising in the mentioned magazine back in 1963. The very first skater's magazine namely "The Quarterly Skateboarder," was released in 1964 as the sport has risen (Figure 2). Additional magazines, such as the 1975 "Skateboarder Magazine," were released along with several new events (Skatedeluxe).

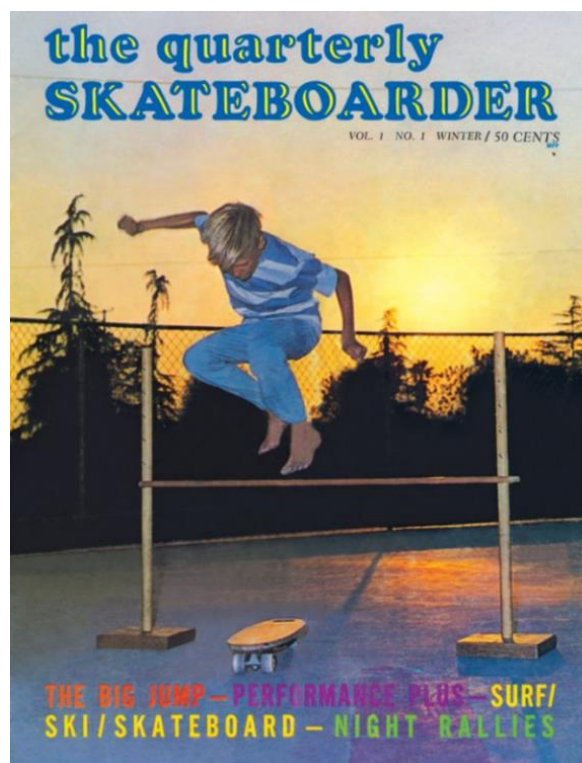


Figure 2. *First Edition of the Quarterly Skateboarder magazine.* (Source: Vintage Skateboard Magazines)

Skateboarding magazines have been originally the only place where the skateboard business used to be promoted. At the 1980s, the skateboarding sector has had something like five skateboarding magazines in the United States, but in relation to

marketing revenue, popularity, and impact, two were the ones to lead the market: Thrasher, that has been released back in 1981, and Transworld Skateboarding, that has been initially issued in 1982. The majority of successful skateboard companies were advertised in either one of these publications on a frequent basis (Beal & Weidman, 2003), among many other magazines all over the world (Figure 3). For more than two decades, those were the two primary channels for skateboarding that have also defined the sport's aesthetic and attitude (Phelps, 2006).

Skateboard Magazines

1960 - 1970	1980 - 1990	
<p>USA Surfer Skateboard Skateboarder Skateboard World Wild World of Skateboarding Skate Streetsurfing Skate Rider Skat'n News National Skateboard Review Skateworld Journal Sessions Free Wheelin' The Quarterly Skateboarder Popular Mechanics - Article Life Magazine - Article</p> <p>UK Skateboard! Skateboard Scene Skateboard Special The Complete Skateboarding Guide Nationwide Skateboarding Special Successful Skateboarding The Skateboard Manual</p>	<p>France Skate Magazine Skate France International Le Nouveau Skate International Skateboard Super Skateboard Skatin' Magazine</p> <p>Germany Skateboard Skateboard Magazin</p> <p>Belgium Skate International Belgie</p> <p>Australia Skateboard Slicks</p> <p>New Zealand New Zealand Skateboarder Free Wheelin</p> <p>Japan Skateboard World</p> <p>Brazil Brasil Skate Esquete</p>	
	<p>USA Action Now Thrasher Transworld Skateboarding Poweredge Lapper Homeboy Skateboard Eastern Vert</p> <p>UK Skateboard! BMX Action Bike RAD Freestyle BMX Invert Skate Action Edge Skateline Skate News</p> <p>Germany Monster</p>	<p>Italy XXX Skateboard Magazine Skate Magazine</p> <p>France Surface Mag No Way</p> <p>Australia Skateboard Australia Skatin' Life Slam Five 40 Speed Wheels Perfect Transition Skating Pro Wild Times</p> <p>New Zealand New Zealand Skatin Style</p> <p>Brazil Overall Skatin' Yeah!</p>

Figure 3. List of skateboard magazines. (Source: Vintage Skateboard Magazines)

However the Skateboard Mag, Thrasher, Transworld, and Skateboarding are now the most popular skateboard magazines, and all of them work with photographers and illustrators who are mainly skaters (Snyder, 2012).

In addition to the magazines, a few other smaller publications and skate businesses sprouted and skateboarding's appeal began to rise significantly due to all of the above. However, it was the very first skate clips on Videotape that made possible the widespread diffusion of new tricks and unknown skate moves (Skatedeluxe). Following the “Skateredater” and the “Bones Brigade”, released 1965 and 1984 accordingly, the 1988 skateboard video “Shackle Me Not” by H-Street is the first ever one that was actually filmed on tape. Although this video lacked those artistic elements of a real movie, it actually served as a record of skating skills which could be shared with the broader skateboarding community, inspiring others to do as well. Skaters began

filming their stunts and compiling video footage to mix into something like a “movie” after that. H-Street continued with “Hocus Pocus” and in 1993, the 411 Video Magazine was founded by a group of skaters. Almost every month, these longer movies were released, featuring riders from all across the United States (Snyder, 2012).

Members of the skateboarding subculture are familiar with the most well-known skateboarding videos, as they used to be such a vital form of their communication back then (Figure 4). By watching skateboard videos, fans have always been inspired and encouraged to skate and congregate with other members of their community. Additionally, the majority of those skateboarding videos are credited for influencing countless generations since the beginning of the sport, but also for helping to shape the sport as it is known today.

1. The Bones Brigade Video Show (1984)
2. Powell Peralta – The Search for Animal Chin (1987)
3. H-Street – Shackle Me Not (1988)
4. H-Street – Hokus Pokus (1989)
5. Blind – Video Days (1991)
6. Alien Workshop – Memory Screen (1991)
7. Plan B – Questionable (1992)
8. 101 – Snuff (1993)
9. Girl Skateboards – Mouse (1996)
10. Toy Machine – Welcome to Hell (1996)
11. Underachievers – Eastern Exposure 3 (1996)
12. World Industries Trilogy (1996)
13. Shorty’s – Fulfill the Dream (1998)
14. Zero – Mised Youth (1999)

Figure 4. *List of the most famous skateboarding video tapes for the 80s and 90s.*
(Source: Skateboardershq)

Nowadays, according to Dupont (2020), skaters use online social media in addition to conventional media. Due to the unofficial structure of the skateboarding community, social media help skaters to freely improve, establish, and preserve their true selves. Moreover, as Dupont (2020) mentions, through the social interactions,

mainly on Instagram, skaters' routines have evolved and transitioned between the real and virtual worlds. Social media are very important for the skateboarding community, since in comparison to the conventional media, skaters' use social media also for purchases, communication, debate, and for the creation of new challenges that they must overcome in order to keep their "genuine" qualities in the requested high levels (Figure 5).

Thereafter, it should be obvious why an elite skateboarder like Shane O'Neill holds the distinction of Australia's most popular sportsman on social media, based on the analysis of the Australian Olympic team's social media accounts, as presented by Shepherd (2021).

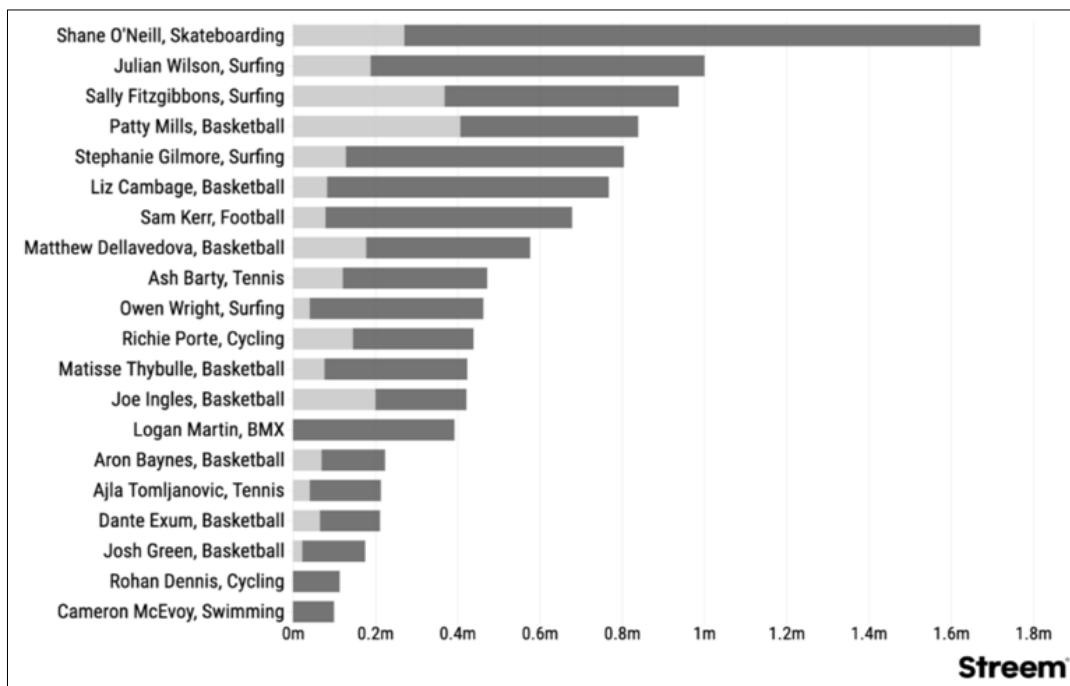


Figure 5. Aussie Olympians with the biggest social media profiles (twitter/Instagram). (Source: Stroom)

According to Figure 5, O'Neill has exceeded by far the one and half million Instagram followers, despite having appeared in just forty-nine different printed publications during the past year – very few compared to other athletes who even reached thousands of publications. The relatively new Olympic sports, that have historically had trouble getting recognition from the general public, appear to have

gained more popularity than the most conventional sports through these new channels of communication.

Previous content practices that traditionally relied on journals and films have currently changed. In recent years, a number of legendary skateboard magazines have stopped publication. Not a few, think that this replacement have followed the growth of Youtube and social media in general (Kerr, 2015).

The commercial incorporation of skateboarding

According to Bourdieu (1998), the term "commercialization of sport" describes the process of creating corporate ethics and profit-maximizing rationale within specific sports, in accordance to the ideals of modern capitalism, and when it comes to skateboarding, the X-Games' introduction was one of the main reasons why the sport abruptly became immensely marketed.

However, ever since skateboard made its appearance, the sport has experienced exceptional but gradual growth not only as far as peoples involvement is concerned, but also in its high visibility across public and private space. Skateboarding, as mentioned previously, might have its roots to an activity which took place in the streets with a basic board as a main gear, yet, only a few decades ago the appearance of the first professional skateboarding athletes, who could earn money from it, occurred due to sponsorships and increased commercial interest (Batuev & Robinson, 2017).

While many descriptions around skating build a resistant narrative against commercialization of skateboarding as a loss of genuineness, skaters generally are not entirely opposed to the commercialization of skateboarding (Lombard, 2010). It was during the 1980s, when a substantial number of skateboarders grew serious about contests and actively participated in tournaments in terms of getting recognition and funding (Batuev & Robinson, 2018).

Until then skaters discovered different locations to ride their skates and record it, so that they could then distribute the actual video in publications, DVDs, and ultimately try to sell it to other skateboarders. The process of establishing their fame as a skateboarder began when users started to create portfolios of recorded tricks, known as "clips" and then give them to the public. Skaters who wanted to be funded by companies managed to actually film themselves while performing their most remarkable stunts. They put together a "sponsor me video", as musicians do with their "demos", and sent it

to their preferred firms with the expectation of getting any type of economic support, fame, or event free merchandise (Snyder, 2012).

Skateboarding events on the other hand, have always been significantly more laid-back than other sporting events while skateboarders actively have encouraged and praised their rivals, and even offered gear when necessary. The mood has always had to do with respect and friendship rather than with direct competition (Borden, 2016). However, skateboarding competitions have often been a professional and marketed activity as well.

As Donnelly (1996) indicated, two significant concurrent phenomena have contributed to the commercialization of professional competitive sport. These two were the TV broadcasting and the sponsorships. As a result of this synchronization, most skating enthusiasts connected professional skateboarding and its promotion, with businesses and managerial attitudes not earlier than in the middle of the 1990s (Batuev & Robinson, 2017).

Skateboarding, had a surge in popularity during the 1990s (Donnelly, 2008). With the X-Games, being debuted in 1995, and the global skateboarding tournaments being held by companies like Vans and Street League Skateboarding, some highly populated events took place back then, which rewarded their sponsors and organizers both directly and indirectly through increased brand awareness (Borden, 2016).

Skateboarding was added to the original X-Games competition agenda in 1995 and remains there up until our days. Throughout the last decades skateboarding and the X-Games together forged a successful partnership, and the X-Games have developed to be quite a successful event and a prominent global sports game, mainly due to skateboarding and a few other major action sports. In accordance to that, it appears from earlier research, that the influence of Generation Y on the sport industry is complex and multi-faceted (Stevens et al., 2005). In America, Generation Y engages with action sports more frequently than traditional sports (Zhang et al., 2003), while they follow action sports live as well as on broadcast media, where they can be watched practically every day if not on a constant basis through the action sports-specific networks.

As mentioned, skateboarding has experienced tremendous growth since the mid-nineties, attributed to the increasing appeal of the X-Games (Donnelly, 2008). It is just over the recent decades, when finally several organizational stakeholders, including

sponsors, management and event production companies, and other global sport regulatory organizations have identified some important business potential linked with the official recognition of skateboarding and with its inclusion in the official Olympic Games programme by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Business progress

After the inclusion of Skateboarding into the Olympic Programme, skateboarding's widespread exposure is thought to rise to more funding opportunities, greater recognition, and stronger essential infrastructure for the sport, aimed mainly at younger skateboarders. According to Goldman (2004), a great example that skateboarding has been more popular in the past few years, is the fact that the yearly sales of gear and equipment totaling a little less than six billion dollars. Also as it is pointed out in the study of Dumas and Lafortest (2009), skateboarding was the 15th most popular game in Québec, Canada with 347,000 participants, while again according to Goldman (2004), it is no surprise that the upscaling popularity of skateboarding has tremendously risen, with the young people who use skateboards to be more than those who play organized baseball. Additionally, skateboarding has greatly increased in the primary market of the United States, where the number of people who participated in skateboarding in the country between 2019 and 2020 has significantly risen by more than two million participants (Figure 6).

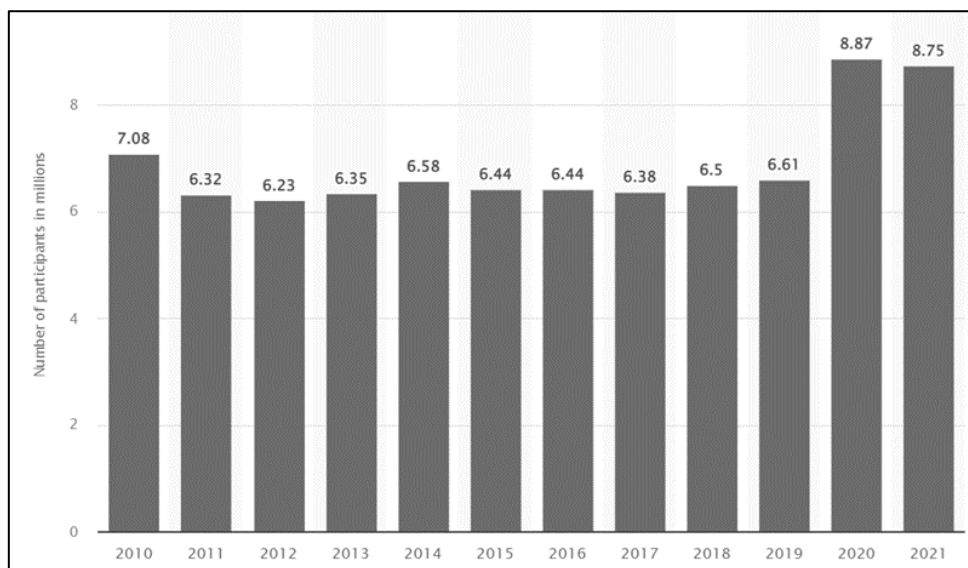


Figure 6. *Skateboarding participants in the United States from 2010 to 2021.* (Source: Statista)

However, consumption in the action sport industry goes beyond either partaking or attending. It consists also of goods that are connected with the specific culture, such as games, apparel, sound and video material (CDs, videotapes), all of them being products which represent the lifestyle of the extreme sport participants. According to Kellett and Russell (2009), these commodities generate considerable revenue for the companies, since customers in fact may be buying more of these products, than the actual equipment needed to engage in the activity. This growing acceptance of skateboarding as a sport in numerous nations and the consequent higher demand for the sports' equipment, explains the findings of the market analysis report, which forecasts a growth of 3,3% from 2017 to 2027 to the global sports' accessories market (Figure 7).

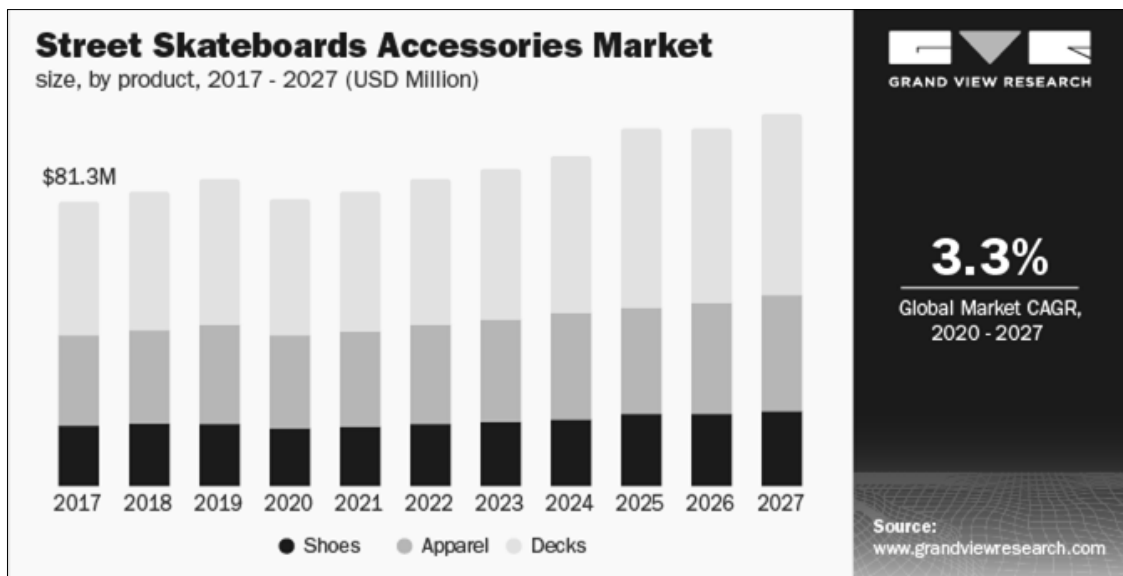


Figure 7. *Skateboarding accessories market size from 2017 to 2027.* (Source: Grand View Research)

Despite all the above, critics have seen the inclusion of skateboarding in the Olympics as a corruption of the underlying philosophy that has guided the skaters movement from its origins (D’Orazio, 2021). The skateboarding society has expressed its worries long time ago, that an Olympic participation may have the unintended side

effects of further dividing professional and non-professional skateboarding and of bureaucratizing the sport (Batuev & Robinson, 2018).

For many, this was the finale of the skateboarding subculture's which steadily has started becoming a mainstream sport over the last few decades. Moreover the skateboarding society has, unfortunately, long expressed worries that an Olympic participation may have the unintended side effects of further dividing professional and non-professional skateboarding and of bureaucratizing the sport (Batuev & Robinson, 2018). For this reason, some skateboarding subcultures kept refraining from organized events and remained opposed to the participation of big businesses (Donnelly, 2008).

However, as Lombard (2010) states, while originally, only skate-related businesses sponsored competitions and individuals, skateboarding later attracted the attention of major companies. In the late seventies with large and known corporations from various other types of businesses (e.g., refreshments, accessories), proceeded into financial deals with individual skateboarders as well as with specific competitions.

Thereafter, this became an obvious choice for both parties. After a decade, skateboarders on one hand, who wanted to earn a career from their favorite sports, and big sponsors and on the other, who wanted to increase their income through advertisement in new markets, cooperating closely drove and drove slowly but steadily the sport to its professionalization era (Batuev & Robinson, 2017).

During this era, on the skateboarder's side, any sponsored elite athlete who belongs a skateboard and has his name on it together some visual design which reflect his personality and unique taste, will most probably get a share of the board sales on top of his monthly wage, as agreed with the sponsoring company. Snyder (2012) mentions that, professional skateboarders can make anything between a few thousands a month, to tenths of thousands a month, based on their rank and recognition, while the premier skateboarders might be able to earn hundreds of thousands to even one million annually.

But from the corporation's side this was not always the case. As Li (2022) points out, among new competitors, several large firms discovered that in order to profit from the skateboarding movement, they needed to be given a feeling of genuineness. An illustration of Nike's approach, concerning skateboarding industry, shows that the company has realized the value of devotion and the genuine portrayal of skateboarding community, when the initial efforts to profit from the specific sport were unsuccessful.

The above two aspects (athletes and businesses) somehow resemble the skateboarding-related events as well, but in certain other ways. Analytically, early in the 1990s, the word "extreme" became popular as a promotion slogan for a variety of sports, including skateboarding. The name pointed out that these sports were often seen to be beyond the ordinary and somewhat resistant since they were not structured or competing like some other sports (Lombard, 2010). As the latter researcher mentions, the word finally was established by the very first televised ESPN tournaments, which also signaled the public acceptance and widespread commercialization of skateboarding,

Almost simultaneously, the IOC evolved from a modest non-commercial organization to a powerful and rich entity, and has also significantly commercialized the Olympic movement, over the past several years (Wenn et al., 2022). The IOC has become a business organization in addition to being the body responsible for upholding the Olympic principles, while the inclusion of skateboarding in the games, proved how corporate philosophy has indeed played a significant role in the Modern Olympic Games so far (Batuev & Robinson, 2017).

Skateboarding is very vital to the wider customer sector of the sports business, thus the Olympic sponsoring partners and the sports broadcasting businesses welcomed its inclusion in the Olympic schedule along with snowboarding.

The road to the Olympic Games and the Olympic agenda

It is of no doubt that the emergence and commercialization of the Olympic movement and the growth of professional skateboarding have practically occurred simultaneously, and also that the addition of skateboarding in the Olympic programme has had the biggest recent influence on the sport itself (Batuev & Robinson, 2017).

With increased competitive pressures from other mega-sports events but also due to the evolving lifestyle preferences, the Olympic Games' longevity depends on their ability to discover different, smaller markets and networking channels. Under this framework, younger fans have now become an important customer, hence their sociocultural demands and expectations were needed to be met. In particular, as Beal (2013) mentions, the younger public was growing less interested in the Olympic Games, and when the IOC recognized this unfavorable situation, during the nineties, it has since actively sought out activities that appeal to people between the younger ages.

According to Thorpe and Wheaton (2011), the IOC investigated in the past the integration of a variety of teen sporting activities into Summer and Winter Olympic programs, owing to the rising success of the X Games and the dwindling numbers of teen Olympic audiences. Besides, as Borden (2016) mentioned in his research, the Olympic Games' governing body wanted to draw younger audiences to help reduce the aging population of the viewers, hence IOC together with several other associated media groups, began to significantly depend on the methods developed by the X Games in order to appeal to the new generations.

As Thorpe and Wheaton (2019) correctly note, the admission of skateboarding in the previous version of the Youth Olympic Games of 2014 in China, has suggested to the International Olympic Committee a way to explore various novel sporting activities and new concepts that can be included in the official game's schedule.

However, despite the addition of several new types of sports, such as skateboarding and other action sports in general, would obviously help to revolutionize the Olympic movement, apparently the journey to it was finally challenged by a series of several external factors (i.e., political, social, ecological, and ideological) (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2011).

As the existing situation proves, the inclusion into the Olympic Games of skateboarding along with other various sports such as the windsurfing, the snowboarding, the BMX, and the climbing, was actually a contentious procedure, that raised internal conflicts between the IOC and the governing sporting institutions, media giants, action sports traditions and their industries as well (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2011). Other than that, global sports organizations (GSOs) came under increasing scrutiny for matters such as fraud, lack of transparency, low morals, and social equity (Allison & Tomlinson, 2017). Through all these difficulties, Agenda 2020 became a fundamental initiative for the International Olympic Committee that was willing to express its improvements against the concurrent situation.

Agenda 2020 is actually the strategic guide for the years ahead of the Olympic Movement and it includes in total forty (40) recommendations, which apart from other major issues, discuss the changing of the bidding process (together with cost savings), the shifting from the core athletic character to a more event-based one, and the enhancing of some good governance practices and ethics. Moreover the Agenda 2020,

strengthens the sustainable development of IOC and provides further emphasis on improving equality between the sexes and on achieving inclusivity (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2019).

Also, the Olympic Agenda 2020, which can be considered as the strategic plan for the Olympic Movement, reaches a new approach for an Olympic Games Organizing Committee (OCOG) allowing the host city to suggest some additional activities for their edition of the Games. Within the recommendation of the Olympic Agenda 2020, it is clearly stated that the IOC would allow the OCOG to submit a request for said integration of one or more additional events on their version of the Olympics (this policy is evidenced in Rule 45 of the Olympic Charter regarding the Olympic Games Program), making the Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee to be the one to have this privilege for the first time in the history of the Games (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2019).

The Tokyo 2020 proposed to the IOC, back in September 2015, to add eighteen events in five sports to their program, along with the three teen action sports of surfing, skateboarding, and sport climbing, as well as the two other popular Japanese sports of karate and softball/baseball. After the submission of the official OCOG proposal, the IOC commenced its own investigation and observation of the Tokyo 2020 event package.

According to the study that Thorpe and Wheaton (2019) did, the Olympic Programme Commission suggested an entire package of sports, events, and athlete quotas in March 2016, and the IOC Executive Board endorsed the plan in June 2016, stating that the five sports provide a key focus on youth. At the IOC Session in Rio 2016, the final choice was made and the officials were announced.

On August 3, 2016, the Tokyo 2020 Skateboarding Commission declared that skateboarding will be included in the upcoming summer Olympic Games, and as Thorpe and Wheaton (2019) describe, for the International Olympic Committee, the inclusion of skateboarding was clearly a beneficial outcome for both parts –the professional skateboarders and the industry insiders, which have been open about this potential leverage. Thorpe and Wheaton (2019) also mention that the IOC has described the introduction of the new urban sports – together with skateboarding, as one of the most thorough modification of the Olympic program in contemporary history.

The alliance of the action sports and the Olympics, on the other hand, has not been a simple process. The IOC's Agenda 2020 and the Tokyo 2020 program modifications recognized that staying relevant to youngsters is an essential and growing concern for the modern Olympic Movement, yet, this was not a recent concern for the IOC.

As mentioned, the IOC has introduced in the past several other initiatives to engage youngsters, acknowledging the obstacles of attracting millennials, many of whom engage in and consume sport in ways that previous generations did not (Wheaton & Thorpe, 2018). Among others, these strategies included the introduction of a variety of other teen action sports into the Olympic program in the past (i.e., windsurfing in 1984, mountain biking in 1996, snowboarding in 1998, BMX in 2000) and the inauguration of the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) (Singapore 2010), together with the Sports Lab (Ninjing 2014).

Overall, the major concern with this type of sports is that many people involved, tend to view action sports as alternative lifestyles instead of professional sports. The fans of these sports very often reflect their counter-cultural, do-it-yourself, and anti-establishment heritage, while also they celebrate openly their value systems that are mainly incompatible with the disciplinary, hierarchical, nationalistic Olympic regime (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2011).

For this reason, the sport's introduction at the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics, which was a defining moment in skateboarding heritage, should also be viewed in the context of the long-standing conflict between skate community and regulatory attempts around it (Romero, 2020).

CHAPTER III – Skateboarding specifics

The Skate culture

Culture insights

Since skateboarding became a part of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, it has gained increased research interest as an important study topic for a wide range of academic fields. Scholars often find the most dominant viewpoints of studying the skateboarding inside the conceptual approach that contextualize the sport as nothing more than a young subculture. This conceptual model which examines the dynamic forms of young subcultural procedures and activities within the skateboarding community, dominates this area of research (Beal, 1996). Scholars have considered so far several ways on how to incorporate subcultural theory into their studies of skateboarding, and they formulated accordingly the existing academic works of this specific field in order to focus on skating participants' normal habits.

On the other side, a new minor but crucial concept in this subject began to develop, one that views skateboarders as makers who revise and produce proper significance within the sport, useful to the subculture's members rather than just as users of the culture (Nichols, 2021). Understanding this changeover between the above mentioned conceptual approaches, serves as a launching point for potential questions to be examined in future studies that strongly consider skateboarding as an important sector, despite having been previously ignored.

Skateboarding is a sport, but it can also be a way of life, a subculture, a mindset, and an artistic expression. As Lombard (2015) points out, skateboarding is essential for the simple joy it provides to the individuals who skate, but also for its ideology, ingenuity, unique view of urban landscape, interaction with contemporary generations, and for its subculture.

Subculture is explained as a community of people whose common interests and ideas are in some ways different from the norms (Becker, 1963). For this exact reason, Snyder (2012) suggests that skateboarding shall be considered as a subculture, that has its own dialect, skills set, philosophy, and belief system that skaters are part of.

Skateboarding varies also from conventional sport in two important respects. Firstly, skateboarding, unlike traditional teenage sports, is neither organized

nor managed by elders. Secondly, skateboarding is not a competitive sport. This distinction from other organized leagues is critical for skateboarders' image (Beal & Weidman, 2003).

However, because of the large duration of the skateboarding subculture, and the increasingly wider appeal of the sport, several generations of skaters now exist, and the subculture encompasses people of varying age groups, genders, and social backgrounds (Lombard, 2015).

Consequently, skateboarding can no more be regarded as just a subculture. The term "subculture" refers to a group that is distinct from the rest of the society, and this distinction has really been eliminated in skateboarding.

O'Connor (2018) mentions that the clearest way to describe skateboarding is as a culture since it represents a unique function of viewing and interacting with the world. O'Connor (2018) also cites that skateboarding has become an universal culture that has been acknowledged and accepted as a genuine recreational activity, a profession, and now an Olympic sport.

Despite skateboarding subculture has sedimented itself so swiftly into the popular culture (D'Orazio, 2021), skateboarding members seem to have a complicated connection with the mainstream culture, despite knowing that they should somehow give up some of their authority above the sport's identity. A great example that proves the challenging interaction with the mainstream culture, is presented by Lombard (2010) who describes an incident that occurred between the athletes and a broadcasting company during the X Games.

Skateboarders who were about to participate in the games, were unexpectedly informed by the officials, that they were supposed to enter in an agreement with a filming agency that would cover their drills. This specific agreement suggested, among others, that the athletes would approve to receive no payment for the film despite monitoring them throughout their whole participation at the X Games.

As a reaction, the athletes decided to organize their own type of union – namely the United Professional Skateboarders Association (UPSA), which took action right away. The union, in response to the proposed agreement, issued a press release just before the competition, urging that this exact condition should be eliminated from the agreement, while also few moments prior to the start of the first drill, representatives of

the union persuaded each athlete to abstain. It is of no surprise that ultimately the union together with any athletes participating in the specific games, succeeded in deleting the specific statement from the agreement, proving the strength and resilience of the skateboarding philosophy overall.

Skateboarding philosophy

According to Beal and Weidman (2003), the idea that everyone's character is defined by its own culture is anthropological. As Yochim (2010) mentions, skateboarding's prevailing philosophy is built on opposing the middle-class norms, which skaters frequently regard as regimented, and conventional. Moreover in her research she states that genuine skate ethics, beliefs, and ideals, in practice, promote self-discovery and growth via innovation, experimentation, independence, apparent poverty, and non-traditional masculinity.

Also, the skaters' perceptions of one's authenticity are so crucial, that skateboarders are prepared to give up any popular acceptability that may be offered to them by the society, therefore, according to Beal and Weidman (2003), it is reasonable to suggest that the most crucial criteria in defining membership in the society is the trait of genuineness.

Skateboarders consider, athletes and entrepreneurs to symbolize rivalry and antagonism, obedience to leadership, and the monotonous quest of economic profit (Brayton, 2005). Skaters frequently reject competitiveness by skating along with others rather than contrary to each other (Dupont, 2014) or by breaking the rules of local competitions (Beal, 1995). It is no surprise why, back in 1996 – when ESPN changed the name of the first extreme games event to X Games, some skateboarders referred to them as the "Exploitation" Games (Lombard, 2010).

Even while current elite skateboarding athletes compete, they do not really recognize the conventional sporting principles of rivalry and success as perhaps the most essential, despite the fact that, within the youngest fans of the sport, there has been a widespread awareness on competitive skateboarding (Batuev & Robinson, 2017).

Skate culture's alternative worldview is reflected in its symbolisms as well. Some of them can be seen on their gear and equipment (i.e., clothes and boards), and include statements such as Skate and Destroy, Skateboarding is Not a Crime, and This Toy Kills Fascists (Romero, 2020). This created a lot of issues to businesses which

wanted to get into skateboarding. As previously mentioned, Nike is an excellent example of a company that had trouble breaking into the skating gear industry, not only because of its association with mainstream sports, but also because of its lack of skateboarding-related heritage (Donnelly, 2008).

Skaters have a deep respect for said sport's past. They pay tribute to renowned skaters from the previous era and value their durability in the sport. Another type of genuineness is a profound and long-term dedication to the sport's lifestyle. Companies who are well-known in the market and are willing to illustrate their authenticity, frequently emphasize in their ads that they have a longstanding tradition in skateboarding and a strong devotion to the sport. (Beal & Weidman, 2003).

According to Borden (2015), one of the really important tactics that helped the Vans company become legitimate in the skating community is its commitment to the sport and its representations. It is well known that in order to encourage the sport, several parks have been built all around the globe. Businesses like Vans focused on offering such facilities that cater skaters' needs, while at the same time they managed to increase their annual income from their interaction with the specific subculture.

But Vans did not stop here. The business sponsored the most prominent team in China at a difficult period for the squad, while also it backed iconic elite sportsmen with sponsorships. For the specific company, the skateboarders' needs come first and Vans' success in the skateboarding industry came as no surprise, while it gained the trust a strong feeling of originality (Li, 2022).

Nonetheless, the skateboarders have long been concerned about losing their independence and insist that the sport should be run by the members of their community (Thorpe and Wheaton, 2011). As a result, international skateboarding has lacked a strong organizational framework and instead operated as a community of athletes and of specific associations. As Batuev and Robinson (2018) point out, the administrators in charge were well aware that the skateboarding community would oppose any major shifts that would imitate the organizational procedures of traditional sports.

Skateboard governing bodies

In general, the term "professionalization of sport" focuses on two concepts: the transition of elite athletes from hobbyist to full-time professionals and the transition from amateur to a more corporate administration through global sports businesses

(Snyder, 2012). So, while the origins of the skateboarding governing bodies stretch further back to the beginning of the sport, however the rise of the regulatory skateboarding bodies fall mainly the period that the X-Games, proving further the intensified commercialization of skateboarding during this time.

Internationally, it is significant to mention that globally, the World Cup Skateboarding (WCS) was the first regulating organization for the sport, which was established back in 1993 (Batuev & Robinson, 2017). The purpose of WCS was to provide top-notch skateboarding contests all over the globe, as well as a rating scale that recognizes and values skaters' achievements in professional skateboarding.

Nationally though, the sport's first regulating organization was the National Skateboard Association (NSA), which was established almost ten years earlier, in 1981, in the USA. During that period, several executives from the key skateboarding businesses, such as board manufacturers, journal publishers, skate park builders, and sporting goods makers, served on the NSA board of directors (Batuev & Robinson, 2018).

The NSA's dedication to organizing a professional and commercialized version of the American skateboarding, by financing all types of competitions across its borders, was highlighted by the participation of so many joint businesses (Beal, 1995), and since the USA has traditionally been the leading nation in the expansion of the skateboarding, the governance of the sport there has largely influenced how it is organized elsewhere (Batuev & Robinson 2017).

Another important governing organization of skateboarding was the International Skateboarding Federation (ISF). ISF was the first officially recognized – from the skateboarding community – international governing body for skateboarding, and it was founded in 2002. The ISF has been extremely focused on the commercialization of the skateboard, since a lot of skateboarders and leaders of skateboarding firms were behind the creation and operation of this organization. Although the ISF has been there for years, the IOC never had officially acknowledged it as a regulatory body of the sport (Batuev & Robinson 2018).

On the other hand, again as Batuev and Robinson (2018) mention in their extensive research, the International Federation of Roller Sports (FIRS) was very much the only global sport organization recognized by the IOC to represent skateboarding,

despite having never actually organized or regulated any significant global skateboarding championships.

For fulfilling the purpose of a more corporate administration through global sports businesses and as a result of the sport's inclusion in the Olympic schedule, the “Tokyo 2020 Skateboarding Commission” was established. This establishment was considered to be an official skateboarding regulating organization, and had the authority to act on behalf of the International Federation of Roller Sport together with the International Skateboard Federation, with the support of the IOC.

According to IOC (2017), the collaboration with the skateboarding movement, together with the appreciation for sport's distinct characteristics, were identified as essential aspects of the Tokyo 2020 preparations. For this reason, the International Olympic Committee started working together with the International Roller Sports Federation (FIRS) and the International Skateboarding Federation (ISF) in order to develop a partnership for delivering skateboarding events at the said Olympic Games while also in order to promote skateboarding at a worldwide extend.

During a discussion with both the FIRS and the ISF representatives, the IOC underlined the importance of the ISF's vast skillset in the production of skateboarding tournaments, as well as the support of skateboarders globally, while also it recognized FIRS as the governing body of skateboarding.

The main outcome of this discussion, was “The Tokyo 2020 Skateboarding Commission” which was formed by the ISF and the FIRS and which had as a main mission to strive on providing world-class skateboarding events at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

The Commission was in charge of the design and execution of the Olympic skateboarding contests' – for both the sports and technical elements of it, while FIRS was in charge of the organizational factors. In March 2017, the Commission participated at the FIRS Annual Congress in Nanjing, where it has been decided that the FIRS' affiliated national federations will be authorized by their local National Olympic Committees (NOCs) so that they can cooperate with and assist the present skateboarding industry for the wellbeing of the skateboarding community.

With respect to existing activities, FIRS has also affirmed that funds from the addition of skateboarding in the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 will be allocated to

skateboarding events and projects. However, ISF which was the preferred organization of skaters', has never satisfied the criteria to be recognized by the IOC, whereas FIRS, did. Several ages before this collaboration, and since skateboarding found it difficult to be officially recognized on an international level (Batuev & Robinson, 2017), apart from those core governing bodies of skateboarding, several other are or have been regulating on behalf of the Skateboarding community.

Skate in the city

Global perceptions

Skateboarding has a wide variety of disciplines and styles, including some that mostly use several specially made skate park equipment, while some other skating activities take place at the typical urban setting. Generally, although skateboarders do not intend to damage public and private property, their activities are often perceived as vandalism, and there exists considerable hostility by authorities towards skating within the city (Chiu 2009). A few perceive skating to be a public disruption, since certain residents of a region sometimes feel insecure or uncomfortable while using the same area with skateboarders (Woolley & Johns, 2001).

A broad percentage of a city's population does not see skateboarders as genuine members of the greater society as a result of their public demonstration of countercultural activities. However, for the skateboarding communities who want to prove their devotion to the sport, giving up any advantages that would come from adhering to broader standards and principles is often not an option (Beal & Weidman, 2003).

Skateboarders were frequently accused of making noise, damaging property (such as flowers, rest areas, stairs, and handrails) while using them, and posing a safety risk to all the other people. It is no surprise why a few decades ago the sport fulfilled the conditions for sociopolitical study when security forces and many other officials were concerned with the youth members who rode their skateboards on the streets, often against the law (Donnelly, 2008).

Moreover, many scholars tend to view skateboarding as nothing more than a sign of adversity against a range of attributes, including governments, businesses, conventional cultural standards, and physical space (Lombard, 2010). Even after the

transition of the skateboarding to a commercial sport, it still borrows elements from the conventional non-competitive sport and it is no surprise why the specific sport differs noticeably from other major and traditional sports today (Batuev & Robinson, 2018).

Against these, today skateboarding is becoming more frequently linked to broader societal advantages. As Borden (2016) mentions, that skateboarding exemplifies the autonomous, daring, and even creative qualities that contemporary society wants to encourage, and since it can be easily practiced to a degree that other organized team sports or maybe more expensive recreational activities cannot, then we may begin to think about changing how society views it.

As it is obvious, there are two opposing viewpoints on this, and while skateboarders have been banned from roads, driveways, and pavements in certain cities due to regulations restricting the activity, in several other municipalities some particular sections of public areas have been labeled as skateboarding-friendly places (Everett, 2002).

Dispelling misconceptions

According to the academics, it is obvious that the perception that skateboarders are indeed an obnoxious presence within the city setting, is slowly fading. A much favorable opinion of the sport and its members is created by skateboarding's positive publicity and popularity in the press (Radikonyana et al., 2017). There are numerous scholars, who highlight the skating subculture and the relevant lifestyle, in order to dispel any popular misconceptions about skateboarders' relation with the metropolitan areas.

As Lombard (2015) correctly points out, skateboarding is widely portrayed throughout the world, from USA to Europe, and Asia to Latin America, whether that is in commercial shots, broadcasted events, electronic games, or footwear and apparel trends. He also mentions that the rise of skateboarding's fame, influenced the appearance of extensively exposed teen action sports a little while before the end of the previous century, and it has since become reference for contemporary streetwear, action sports, and broad marketing idiomatic expressions targeting mainly young generations worldwide. Skateboarding as an activity, a subculture, and a sociological movement may also lead to the growth, promotion, and branding of a whole city.

Additionally, skating offers opportunities to skaters all over the world and attracts bright individuals, to cities with great skateboarding heritage, who wish to engage and pursue careers in the skateboarding industry, beyond perhaps property destruction and misleading statements of disaster (Snyder, 2012).

According to Book and Edén (2020), cultural groups may reach worldwide markets that are unreachable to those who are not being members of those communities, and develop a city's brand image. Specifically, Book and Edén (2020), in their research about the City of Malmö, emphasize that the extensive engagement with the skateboarding society, proves how the cooperation in creating practices, which include both visible and invisible components and allow sociocultural subgroups to materialize their goals, can deliver unforeseen and substantial benefits for both parts.

Moreover, thanks to the fearless and inventive utilization of city's urban spaces by the skateboarders, the sport has produced an altogether new use of city spaces, that offer not just an area to practice and recreate, but also an opportunity for economic sustainability. According to Snyder (2012), the businesses that are owned by skaters in Los Angeles, USA, provide opportunities for several other subculture enthusiasts, and attract brilliant individuals from all over the world to work in the local skateboarding sector.

Over the years, government involvement in skating has either lead to new policy formation against skateboards's use, or to the opposite side of constructing skateparks. Clearly, the regulation of skateboarding differs between regions, towns, and nations, since it is permitted in some locations but it is considered as illegal in others (Lombard, 2010).

Consequently, even though skate parks generally meet the requirements of skateboarders, sometimes they fall short of fostering the distinctive attitudes about territory and environment that skate culture encourages, when combined with negative governmental interference. Development of skate parks and other governmental efforts to restrict skate industry, such as the signs prohibiting skateboarding, the placement of preventive mechanisms on city centers, and even sometimes the penalties, are noticed as governmental control exercises which are meant to limit access and use of open spaces (Romero, 2020).

However from another angle, the benefit of the skateparks, when those are maintained effectively, is that they provide a safe environment within a constrained skating zone, with sufficient light conditions, security checks, compliance to safety equipment standards, and ongoing preservation of the park features. Moreover, with skateparks, athletes are kept separate from cars and crosswalks, areas which are prohibited also for safety reasons (Shuman & Meyers, 2015).

Overall, the existence of a skate park, it is believed to expand the variety of recreational options and serve as an essential gathering spot for those with similar interests and it's unquestionably a result of the sport's development that's been for the better. Some important details and milestones prove the importance of the skateparks, as well as the long history behind them, but also they promote the notion that skateboarding business has a bright future and is now beginning to expand once more (Figure 8).



Figure 8. *Insights of the skatepark industry.* (Source: Skateboardershq)

On a different note, the study of Radikonyana et al. (2017), who discuss how skateboarding contributes to socioeconomic issues, a truly outstanding illustration of the benefits that skateboard holds for the city and its residents is suggested. The following are a few of the interesting examples they provide:

1. The National Skateboarding Association of USA, together with the Kimberly Diamond Cup, an international competition that offers top-notch reward and draws a few of the best skateboarders in the globe, is focusing on creating projects like skate classes and introducing skateboarding to impoverished kids.
2. Charitable groups, like Skateistan in Johannesburg, in collaboration with its greatest sponsors, use skateboarding as a platform to inspire and educate poor children. By fostering equitable possibilities, the specific organization also prioritizes the elimination of discrimination and inequality in skateboarding, while also it supplies the participants with the needed gear, during designated skateboarding events and lessons.

Current trends

Back at the beginning of the century, Borden et al. (2001) were mentioning that although certain nations have lately started aggressively promoting skateboarding in specific urban areas, the most prevalent trend of anti-skate regulation was unfortunately a common global process during that time. However now, skateboarding has developed from a famous subcultural sport with innovative origins, into an Olympic sport that serves as a business hub for big corporations and international firms (Bäckström & Blackman, 2022).

Moreover, participation in the Olympics increased the prominence and legitimacy of action sports, as well as it permitted more funding and incentive for the athletes who wanted to begin genuine careers – a view that Wheaton and Thorpe (2018) have mentioned a few years earlier.

Respectively, the sport's growth rates have become encouraging. As an example, in the previous decade, Kellett and Russell (2009) mentioned that over approximately 1,000 skateparks could be found all across Australia, while in just four years ahead, two skateparks on estimate were built, each and every week, demonstrating the growing game's popularity within the country. Furthermore, the national skateboarding association of the country provided a training program for the sport's future development, which, although not having the anticipated popularity, still shows the governments willingness to establish the sport within the country.

It is not a surprise then, as Borden (2015) proves through the contemporary evidence that he compiled, that even the architecture business has been effectively

incorporated into many skateboarding structures across the globe. Some examples are the following:

- Auditoria Park (Barcelona, Foreign Office Architects)
- Phaeno Science Centre (Wolfsburg, Zaha Hadid Architects)
- Landhausplatz (LHP) Public Plaza (Innsbruck, LAAC Architekten and Stiefel Kramer Architecture).
- Opera House, (Oslo, Snøhetta Architects)

Those above mentioned designers even sought advice from skateboarders on texturing, materials, and skateable terrain and buildings now consist of a diverse mixture of urban activities perfect for passengers, skateboarders, and BMX riders equally,

Skateboarding is thought to be a cultural economy that creates values for conceptual assets rather than actual material things (Li, 2022). It has often been used to solve social concerns all over the world, like for example Skateistan – that strives to motivate teenage people and improve neighborhoods in Afghanistan, and several nonprofit organizations – in Africa, Asia, America, and even in the UK who deal with the improvement of deprived districts and social groups (Borden, 2016).

Because it gives teenagers a leisure pastime, skateboarding is seen to be widespread in several other countries as well. It offers significant chances for socialization and engagement with others, in addition to exercising, while also, it fosters the cultivation of practical competences that emerge naturally as kids practice cooperating, communicating with each other, developing special abilities, and overcoming difficulties (Wood et al., 2011).

In the research of Howell (2005) it is clearly mentioned that academics and experts highly valued the skate parks, which are an essential component of young imaginative and innovative personalities, while also they insist that, not only should they remain, but moreover they should be expanded – otherwise it is like rejecting the newer generations as worthless.

For this reason, it is appropriate to Harvey's (2003) suggestion, that the underground spaces where people choose to skateboard, may sometimes be more luxurious than normal shopping centers or commercial areas, where cafés, stores, and chain eateries are in plenty. According to his opinion, in sceneries like that, when

various people get involved in numerous activities, communities and individuals actually view and appreciate urban environment in unique ways. This implies that the neighborhoods should better be just as diverse as possible — both noisy and peaceful, while furthermore, it implies that the cities and structures that residents mostly appreciate are those that simultaneously stimulate and relax them.

One of the greatest examples of such an urban environment is the city of Malmo, Sweden. According to Joa (2016), Malmo has received recognition as a place that is especially welcoming to skateboarding. The skateboarding club of the city has been having a close working relationship with the authorities, and this collaboration has produced some really outstanding results.

Currently, according to Book and Edén (2020), the city managed to have several designated areas that have been modified for skateboarding, a skateboarding middle school, numerous skateboarding enterprises, a championship winner, innumerable elite athletes, and a skateboarding manager who works for the government.

CHAPTER IV– Discussion

The changing perceptions of skateboarding and the reasons behind its increased popularity

Skateboarding has typically been associated with some sort of rebellious behavior in the minds of most people and skaters, until quite recently, were typically characterized as misfits or anarchists, or even vandals who consume alcohol and smoke tobacco while causing damage to municipal assets.

However, addressing the thesis's first research question, it appears that attitudes about skateboarders have indeed changed in the recent decade among the general public, in a positive way. Skatepark construction began in cities as a way to keep kids busy. Some famous building now even have areas just for skaters while also skateboarding is also included in the official program of the Olympic Games in Tokyo 2020.

Besides even more challenges feature skateboarding, contrary to the most conventional sports. Corwin et al. (2019) mention the following functions of skateboarding, which the general public has not been able to notify thoroughly. Skateboarding can be seen as:

- An increased general wellbeing.
- A means of developing skills.
- A means to display someone's talents through its tournaments.
- A way of teaching.
- Occupation and work.
- A part of the charitable economy.
- A way for teenage activism and cultural diplomacy.
- A means of communicating narratives.

The sport is not as severe as people first thought. Skateboarding may be utilized to help those who have severe impairments as well as to stimulate underprivileged youth. According to Hajkowicz et al. (2013) skateboarding, like any other sport, can foster the engagement of participants of all ages and expand the cultural variety in the sports, improve the wellness of individuals, and encourage the contact between the generations.

Moreover, in the last five years, skateboarding has seen its more glorious days on the business side. Its economy is thriving more than ever before. Experts estimate that the skateboard business would be valued approximately two and half billion by 2025, despite the disadvantages that the global pandemic has brought. It is a common trend for millions of people around the world to wanting to get back into skateboarding.

However, in the past, as the current desk research has shown, the sport possessed the following fundamental traits:

- Inadequate organizational frameworks and generally under-governed past
- Never heavily reliant on public assistance to thrive
- Responsibility crossover between project designers, providers, and users
- Extremely appealing to business owners
- Cultural goods that are essential to the sector and not limited to the mainstream ones (i.e., digital gaming, apparel, and music).

Nevertheless, according to Book and Edén (2020) this has also evolved through time, and despite the above controversial characteristics, skateboarding is now embraced worldwide and is defined as a vital component of the urban, social, and financial welfare, in contrast to the difficult moments of the last century.

Skateboarding in the previous century was largely rejected for being an immature craze, by the press and society, while in some cases it got mysteriously vanished from so many neighborhoods. But really the skateboarding community has a lot to be grateful about right now. As evidenced by the sports rich heritage, and contrary to the popular belief, skateboarding does seem to have a challenging but rewarding connection with the politics, the media, and the financial factors, and without a doubt, the inclusion of the sport in the Olympic Games unquestionably responds to the primary research question of the study regarding its rising popularity globally, as a result of this important development in the history of the sport, Lombard (2010) outlines the obvious results as follows:

- Draw more skaters in the sport.
- Support of the development of additional skateparks.
- Increase of the skate-related community businesses, publications, producers, and specialists.

It is not a surprise why for individuals who take up skating professionally in the recent years, the sport can be a source of success and a means of subsistence in addition to being a way of life. However, skateboarding doesn't have to lose its authenticity and distinguishing features, and neither should the industry want to do so, particularly because of the sport became more prominent due to the massive incursion of large sports brands and social media users.

History has shown that if the parties involved wish to prosper, this can be possible only by respecting the unique traits of the skateboarding culture. This explains how, regardless of the anti-commercial origins of skating, the growth of elite athletes who took advantage of sponsorship possibilities in order to get established within their industry, has had a significant impact on the development of worldwide skateboarding market. Overall, as Donnelly (2008) points out, skateboarding is now popular in the action sports industry and it stands for its independence and uniqueness, while the participants themselves as well as any service suppliers in the business have more or less similar motivations. And this is something that all parties should remember.

The contributing factors and the benefits of skateboarding in local markets

The investigation of methods to unleash the power of skateboarding inside the local markets, like this of Greece, seems crucial, since popularity in skateboarding is predicted to rise after the Tokyo Olympics. The current research has explained a number of important factors as well as the core beneficial advantages of why should entities (municipalities, enterprises, and individuals) invest more on skateboarding.

Ultimately, in response to the second research question of the thesis, it has become obvious that indeed skateboarding can only be vital for the communities since it generally helps increase the social growth through peer-to-peer interaction, and inventiveness, as well as learning of the arts of partnership, bargaining, and negotiating in good faith in comparison to the formalized guidelines of competitive sports.

However, as far as our local national market is concerned, and since in the Greek territory the industry is dispersed while also nothing is clearly documented about its size, the countries that are operating now or wish to engage with the sport in the future, should follow some great examples of other nations, like the Australian government,

which, as Kellett and Russell (2009) describe, opted to take many actions and bring unity and direction to a fragmented industry, as follows:

- to build a viable environment that is reflective of athletes, and to offer athletes worthy career paths,
- to create a transparent communication plan that works, and
- to create reasonable growth schedules.

In detail though, as correctly summed up by Radikonyana et al. (2017), any entity planning to engage in the skateboarding sector should consider the following important factors as described also in the current thesis:

- Skateboarding is somehow still in its initial phase, so the sport's rules still encourage both physical exercise and creative expression.
- Sport sponsorship benefits might result from events which give to the participants the chance to showcase their unlimited and sometimes incredible techniques. Organized competitions would also be beneficial in this economy.
- The fact that participants view skateboarding as a sport, a pastime, or even merely a form of recreation, expands the market's implications, as well as the relevant strategies for the skateboarding development.
- Since relatively new to the world of sport business growth, skateboarding young as a sport, should be given the time to grow and become a real sport.
- Finally, corporations may support and use skateboarding as a vehicle for social responsibility initiatives.

As stated by Németh (2006), and also previously mentioned in this thesis, the foundations of skateboarding are found in the unstructured streets, but many public authorities have banned street skating in order to protect citizens wellbeing and in order to minimize damage to items like stair rails and benches. Skateboarders, nevertheless, rely on a variety of street objects for their stunts, and progress in the sport depends on athletes pulling off these stunts.

Currently, increasing numbers of skateboarders are discovering public spaces including skateparks, roads, and public lands. Hence, in order to accommodate skaters and contests, contemporary skateparks should be built with a variety of elements that mimic urban environments (such as steps, rails, flat sections, and kerb-like ramps) and many other race elements (such as tubes and big ramps). The necessity to transfer

skateboarders away from public areas and the need to create recreational activities for adolescents in local neighborhoods – and consequently suitable facilities, have acted as the underlying reason for the construction of skateboarding facilities in several districts. Skateparks are now considered as the premier skating places after so many years of turbulence, and beyond everything, a skatepark is not only about a place for practicing sports, but also a vibrant and varied social area that offers both skateboarding athletes as well as common fans a place to connect, converse, and interact. This is why, according to Taylor and Khan (2011), with the aim for the city authorities to increase the functionality of a skatepark, when new skate-parks are being build, they should try to improve neighborhood peacefulness by launching briefing discussions that will present both the views of the park's young target audiences and the viewpoints of the professionals residing in the surroundings of the park.

As it turns out, clearly it is not an exaggeration to say that skateboarding and public skateparks should be encouraged nationally due to the positive effects on society and the community. Specifically and contrary to the past perceptions, skateboarding can offer some amazing benefits to the local Greek cities, which will choose to embrace the sport. After the analysis above, while also attempting to offer a thorough answer to the second research question about the advantages of the local sports growth, the advantages of skateboarding may be filtered down to the following:

Authorities can connect with particular social segments: Skateboarding is a naturally productive discipline since skateboarders are constantly exploring different ways to interact with their surroundings. As a result, it encourages those who have a similar passion for art, apparel, graphic and structural engineering, music and literature. Moreover, as mentioned in the thesis, skateboarding connects with a lifestyle which has significant ties to cinematography, style, and arts overall, which is supported by a free spirited attitude. Subsequently according to Corwin et al. (2019), skateboarding is considered as an activity which is considerably broader than just a sport, and since it draws the attention of a significant number of younger generations, authorities should think of it as an excellent opportunity to engage those social groups who are difficult to engage.

New opportunities for investment are provided: Skateboarding has encouraged individuals to take chances, and to start their own businesses. As a result, skateboarding

is connected to a relatively wide number of corporations, producers, and brands, those being mainly small regional businesses. Moreover as Kellett and Russell (2009) mention, since skateboarding is solely based on the infrastructure, not only young businesspeople have identified this importance of the venue itself, but also the market need for the planning and creation of skateparks has increased. This way various individuals can create local firms offering manufacturing services as well as skate-related goods including boards, apparel, and publications improving significantly at the same time the local economy.

More jobs are offered: Some skateboarders use the sport as a springboard for a new profession, possibly even through their participation as athletes in mega sports events. Other skateboarders may obtain recognition on social media, while some may choose to work for one of the several businesses which are associated with the sport. Also, despite all the bad publicity that skating has received, it has now been obvious that the subculture fosters employment prospects and supports certain people in achieving financial independence, which means that by luring people to the cityscapes, it contributes significantly to its economic growth. For example Snyder (2012), mentions that like the Hollywood draws talents to Los Angeles, skateboarders from all over the globe have relocated to LA and other Californian locations to skate the popular destinations and ideally engage in the business which thrives in the city.

Prevent rebellious manners and support deprived individuals: According to Nolan (2003), the several social groups of a community have distinct ideas on what constitutes proper conduct, yet those that are dominant (i.e. authorities) have the power to define some individuals or their behaviours as unconventional. Contrary to this, through skateboarding numerous individuals can start committing to the community and become persons who are seriously interested in how their neighbourhood is organized. Additionally, the presence of skateparks significantly decreases violence, instability, and disruptive behavior in several regions. Also, through skateboarding, a number of organizations may connect with hard- stigmatized parts of the community, and other people who live beyond the public scene. As meeting areas where people can ride and communicate, skateparks are frequently a key component of this approach.

Revitalize neighbourhoods, increase the use of common areas, and create new tourist destinations: According to Book and Edén (2020), recreation and sports indeed have a significant and growing impact in the economies and the businesses globally, since the sport industry is expanding, the participation in sport is increasing on many dimensions and surprisingly sport tourism is becoming more vital than ever before. For this reason, some skateparks can be designed and built as a component of larger urban redevelopment initiatives, aiding in the revitalization of a whole neighbourhood or a section of a region. Moreover, by building new fancy skateparks, not only can the relatively discouraging behaviour toward skateboarders change, but also if any of those parks possesses a distinctive layout it can further draw sports tourist from several countries all over the world. All skateboard enthusiasts are encouraged to visit and interact in these open spaces, generating immediate positive sociocultural and financial benefits in the local market.

Conclusion

Cities were described as a complex of sociocultural universes, which comprised not just deviant groups but also all other groups that embrace some common passion, such as ethnic, professional, and youth cultures. Also many young people now look for occupations where they can make use of some crucial components of who they are and allow certain acceptance of their personalities, which they may have developed via involvement in youth subcultures.

Bearing in mind those two essential components, skateboarding can be taken into consideration by the appropriate governmental entities and commercial enterprises as yet one crucial part of a more comprehensive holistic social growth strategy.

Moreover, with skateboarding being included at the official Olympic program for the first time at the Tokyo Olympics a couple of years ago, the sport it is sure to grow in popularity among enthusiasts and athletes of all backgrounds. This offers undoubtedly a brand new chance to unleash the activity's appealing vision in our countries.

Perhaps it's best to take a better look down and consider how skateboarding can build on its roots once it has seemingly hit its zenith in fame. Skateboarding has now spread to each part of the world, advanced to phenomenal degrees, and begun to

incorporate individuals of all sexes, ethnicities, and gender groups, and there is no better time to start placing the study deeper in this environment.

Given that sports are something that can be observed in the metropolitan setting, it becomes appealing to include them into urban marketing techniques. Participating in sports while also traveling for sports are increasing on many levels. Overall, sport has a lot of promise as a marketing and promotion tool for cities, since it is quite a significant and expanding industry (Book & Eden, 2020).

Scholars need to verify further theories that can be developed within the body of knowledge on skateboarding, using actual empirical data in regions such as Greece, where academics have not yet extensively studied the specific sector and its positive outcomes.

Skateboarding's unconventional and inventive character is acknowledged all around the world as a fascinating approach to promote more socialization, compassion, and social and economic capital within the globe. It only needs for authorities to consider just what great promises skateboarding provides.

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