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# How Did Nike Get the Swoosh into Skateboarding? A Study of Authenticity and Nike SB

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## **Abstract**

Skateboarding is widely regarded as a subculture that is highly resistant to any type of integration or co-option from large, mainstream companies. In 2002 Nike entered the skateboarding market with its Nike SB line of shoes, and since 2004 has experienced tremendous success within the skateboarding culture. During its early years Nike experienced a great deal of backlash from the skateboarding community, but has recently gained wider acceptance as a legitimate company within this culture. The purpose of this study is to examine the specific aspects of authenticity Nike was able to achieve in order to successfully integrate into skateboarding. In order to investigate the case of Nike SB specifically, the concept of company authenticity within skateboarding must first be clarified as well. This study involved an electronic survey of skateboarders. This survey examined the various aspects of authenticity that are most important for skateboard companies, as well as skateboarders' attitudes about Nike SB as a skate shoe company. Through this research, a better overall understanding of the concept of authenticity within the skateboard culture was developed.

How Did Nike Get the Swoosh into Skateboarding?  
A Study of Authenticity and Nike SB

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MASTER'S THESIS

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## Introduction

In a 2009 interview with *Transworld Business Magazine*, Brian Hanson, owner of Concrete Wave skateshop, claims that footwear is now his number one selling product, “thanks to Nike.” When asked what his best selling brand has been over the past six months, he replies “Nike SB – HANDS DOWN!! [sic]” (Lewis, 2009). *Transworld Business* is a magazine that focuses on the industries within skateboarding, snowboarding and other sport subcultures. In 2009 the writers at this magazine conducted interviews with 30 skateshops over a period of 30 days, in a campaign they called “Retail Profiles.” One question that was asked of every shop is: “what are your top selling brands?” Many of the skateshops indicated that Nike SB was usually in their top 3 selling brands. In a “Retail Profile” of the Skatepark of Tampa (one of the most well-known skateparks/skateshops in the country), owner Barak Wisner stated that his best selling product is footwear, and that his best selling brand is Nike SB (Sullivan, 2009). Many other skateshops that were interviewed in this campaign seemed to consistently name Nike SB as a top selling product.

The majority of the existing literature regarding the skateboarding subculture describes skateboarding as a culture that is highly resistant and oppositional to any integration or co-option from large, mainstream companies (Beal, 1995, 1996; Brooke, 1999; Wheaton & Beal, 2003; Beal & Weidman, 2003; Donnelly, 2008; Rinehart, 2008; Yochim, 2010). Since 2004, however, Nike has been largely successful in its integration of the Nike SB shoe line into the skateboarding culture (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). The interviews conducted in

the “Retail Profiles” by *Transworld Business Magazine*, along with a number of interviews and articles within the popular press, confirm that Nike SB is now a dominant force within skateboarding.

### **Statement of purpose and research questions**

The purpose of this study is to examine the concept of authenticity in skateboarding and Nike’s successful entrance into skateboarding with the Nike SB shoe line. Through a study of Nike SB, a better understanding of the skateboarding culture, and how company authenticity is constructed and achieved within this community, will be developed. In order to accurately explore the case of Nike SB as an authentic brand within skateboarding, it is first important to discover what it means to be an authentic company in the skateboard community. Therefore I pose the following research question:

RQ1: Which aspects of a skateboard company’s authenticity are most important to skateboarders?

This then leads me into my second research question:

RQ2: Which aspects of authenticity has Nike SB successfully achieved within the skateboard community?

### **Explanation of concepts**

As Beverland, Farrelly & Quester (2010) point out, authenticity is a concept that is often disputed within much of the literature. Grayson and Martinec (2004) note that many scholars have associated authenticity with “genuineness,” “reality,” or “truth” (p. 297). Most definitions of authenticity commonly refer to attributes of actual artifacts and physical objects, such as

works of art or jewelry (Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink, 2008). For this study, however, I will define the concept of authenticity as “a socially constructed interpretation of the essence of what is observed, rather than properties inherent in an object” (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010, p. 839). Authenticity, according to this definition, is both subjective and socially constructed by consumers, and cultural insiders (Beverland, 2009). It should be stressed that the focus is not on the authenticity of the actual physical object, which in this case would be shoes, but the perceived authenticity of the company and brand as a whole. Beverland (2005) suggests that companies trying to successfully market to specific groups of consumers need to “downplay their overt marketing prowess and instead locate their brands within communities and subcultures” (p. 460).

In their article, “Authenticity in the Skateboarding World,” Becky Beal and Lisa Weidman (2003) illustrate how authenticity is constructed within this subculture, which includes an in-depth analysis of authenticity from the standpoint of the skateboarding industry. This study will build on the work of Beal and Weidman, utilizing quantitative data from skateboarders themselves in order to determine the most important aspects of a company’s authenticity. Beal and Weidman (2003) offer a breakdown of the nature of the skateboarding industry, and the ways in which niche skateboarding companies achieve a level of legitimacy and respectability in the eyes of skateboarders and the skateboarding community. Most of the successful companies within skateboarding have started from the ground up by actual skateboarders. If this



is true, then how was Nike SB able to overcome this obstacle and become recognized as an authentic company within skateboarding?

### **Gaps in the literature**

Over the past few decades, scholars have started to focus more on the skateboarding subculture, a community that has grown to an estimated 11 million participants in the United States alone (Donnelly, 2008). This literature has investigated skateboarding from a variety of perspectives. Iain Borden's (2001) study explored skateboarding's relationship to the city, and the ways that this culture offered a critique of architecture and the city through skateboarding. Based on the work of Borden (2001), other scholars have concentrated on skateboarding's relationship to the urban environment, and how skateboarders make use of public space and architecture (Irvine & Taysom, 1998; Howell, 2006; Nemeth, 2004; Nemeth, 2006). A great deal of the literature, however has concentrated on issues of gender, masculinity, and race within the skateboarding subculture (Beal, 1995; Beal, 1996; Porter, 2003; Brayton, 2005; Donnelly, 2008; Yochim, 2010).

Very little research, however, has been done on the subject of authenticity within the skateboarding culture, and how this culture constructs authenticity. Beverland (2009) briefly discusses subcultures and authenticity, using skateboarding as an example. Beverland describes how the shoe company Vans, a core skate shoe company, began to lose authenticity in the eyes of skateboarders when it attempted to branch out to more mainstream sports; almost the exact opposite of this study's premise.

This research hopes to further build upon the work done by Beal and Weidman (2003), which is one of very few studies that mentioned authenticity from the standpoint of the skateboard industry. Rather than looking at companies that grew out of the skateboarding community, however, this study will examine a large, mainstream company that was able to successfully enter the skateboarding market. Beal and Weidman argue that “people who do not understand skateboard culture tend not to get involved in the skateboard industry, and those outsiders who do attempt it are usually unsuccessful” (2003, p. 36). Donnelly (2008) discusses how skateboarding and similar subcultures have consistently resisted association with larger companies, making specific mention to how Nike has “experienced difficulty entering the skateboarding shoe market due to their affiliation with ‘dominant’ sports such as basketball and baseball, and their lack of history with skateboarding” (211).

Even within the relatively small body of literature that touches upon this issue, most of the consensus lies upon the notion that skateboarders are largely oppositional to these attempted infiltrations by the mainstream and large corporations (Beal, 1995, 1996; Wheaton & Beal, 2003; Beal & Weidman, 2003; Donnelly, 2008; Rinehart, 2008; Yochim, 2010). Nike seems to be a very unique case, and there has not been a study that has examined the successful entry of a mainstream corporation into such an exclusive subculture. How was Nike able to go from being an outsider to the skateboarding community to becoming a legitimate company with an increasingly positive status? This is a question that has largely been overlooked by scholars who have focused on

skateboarding and authenticity within this culture. A variety of multi-national corporations including Adidas, Reebok, and Converse have attempted to break into the skateboarding market, which has been estimated to be \$5.7 billion annual industry (Donnelly, 2008). Nike, however, has by far become the most successful of these large companies, now offering twenty-three top-selling shoe models since the launch of Nike SB in 2002 ([www.nikesb.com](http://www.nikesb.com)).

### **Research Significance**

This study is significant for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it will advance the literature on the skateboarding culture and similar subcultures, especially those that may be regarded as consumer cultures. Wheaton (2007) brings up a point that has been made by a number of other scholars (McArther, 2008; Hesmondhalgh, 2005): subculture studies tend to focus strictly on music, style, and dance cultures. Wheaton (2007) states, “cultural studies and mainstream sociological commentators engaging with subcultures have often ignored sport” (p. 284). She argues that lifestyle sports, such as skateboarding, are ideal for academic research in this area. Specifically, this research will advance the work done by Beal and Weidman (2003) on authenticity within the skateboard community. Rather than focusing on companies that are specifically devoted to skateboarding, this study will instead investigate how a mainstream company, which is traditionally devoted to more dominant sports, has managed to achieve authenticity within the skateboard community. Beverland argues that “studies of how brand develop images of authenticity are needed” and that “research into how consumers define authenticity is required” (2005, p. 460).

Not only will this research advance the literature within the fields of sport sociology, youth culture, subculture studies, and media studies, but it will also have a great deal of importance to fields such as advertising, marketing, and public relations. Nike has accomplished what every large retail corporation desires to do: break into a niche, 'hip' demographic of teenagers and adolescents. Through a study of this example, perhaps skateboarding companies and larger retailers alike can gain a better understanding into the aspects of company and brand authenticity that are most important to skateboarders. The relevant findings from this study do not have to remain exclusive to skateboarding alone, and could perhaps be applied to similar sport subcultures such as surfing, snowboarding, BMX, wakeboarding, and motocross.

This is also the first quantitative study of skateboarders to date. All academic studies of the skateboarding subculture have been qualitative in nature, relying largely on interviews with skateboarders, observational techniques, or textual analysis (Beal, 1995; Beal, 1996; Beal & Weidman, 2003; Donnelly, 2008; Irvine & Taysom, 1998; Németh, 2004; Németh, 2006; Porter, 2003; Yochim, 2010). I am not insinuating that these methods or specific studies are weak by any means, but merely pointing out that this will be the first instance of quantitative data gathered from the skateboarding subculture for academic research. This is valuable information, considering skateboarding that in 2008 skateboarding was a \$4.78 billion annual industry with 11 million estimated U.S. participants (Donnelly, 2008, Yochim, 2010).

## **A History of Nike in Skateboarding**

In order to discuss Nike's current status in the skateboard community, it is crucial to understand the history of Nike's entrance into skateboarding.

Although Nike officially entered into skateboarding in 2002 with the Nike SB brand, Nike's history in skateboarding extends well beyond this, dating back to the early 1970s.

### **The 1970s and 80s – Skateboarders discover Nike**

The true arrival of Nike into the skateboarding culture can be traced back to 1972. This is the year Nike released the Blazer shoe model, which was the first basketball shoe to possess the famous swoosh symbol (KicksGuide.com). Skateboarders during the 1970s were searching for shoes that offered ankle support, protection, and board-feel, which they found in non-skate shoes like the Nike Blazer (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). Throughout the late 1970s the Nike high-top Blazers became the preferred skate shoe for many professional skateboarders.

In the 1987, a skateboarding video featuring five legendary skateboarders (including Tony Hawk), titled *Search for Animal Chin*, sparked a Nike resurgence in the skateboarding world (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). Throughout the video, the well-known skateboarders are all seen sporting Nike Jordan I basketball shoes. Along with the release of *Animal Chin* in the late 1980s, the Jordan 2 began initial releases in US stores as well, leading to massive discounts of the Jordan 1 models. These two factors led to a craze for Nike Jordan 1 models in skateboarding that lasted well into the early 1990s. According to Nike SB shoe

designer, James Arizumi, “the Jordan 1 is THE quintessential skate shoe” (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008, p. 107).

### **The 1990s – Nike discovers skateboarders**

Throughout the 1990s Nike began to dabble in the skateboarding industry. In 1994 Nike experienced another brief accidental success with their tennis shoe called the GTS, and a year later Nike sponsored the first edition of the 1995 ESPN X-Games (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). After this unplanned success in skateboarding with the GTS, Nike decided to launch a series of advertisements directed towards skateboarders. The 1997 campaign, called “What if,” featured depictions of mainstream sports participants being treated poorly like skateboarders. The tagline to the ads was, “What if all athletes were treated like skateboarders?”

Unfortunately for Nike, although these clever ads did receive a lot of attention, Nike shoes simply did not meet the criteria for skateboarders. In a review of Nike by Dave Carnie in *Big Brother Magazine*, he described the soles as too thick and simply concluded that, “their shoes suck” (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008, p. 284). Piney Kahn, of Sole Technology, believes that Nike’s flop in 1998 was due to two factors. First, Nike’s plan was too engineered and it tried to “buy its way into the market and camouflage what it was” (Montgomery, 2002a, p. 3). Secondly, the product was simply not up to par and did not hold up to skateboarder’s standards. The poor shoe design alongside the mass-market ad campaign forced Nike to pull the shoe line after only one year (Robertson, 2004).

## **2002 – Nike SB is born**

In 2002 Nike saw another opportunity in skateboarding and decided to take a serious step into skateboarding and released their Nike SB (skateboarding) line of shoes. In a 2005 interview Sandy Bodecker, Nike SB Vice President at the time, believed that those working on the 1998 campaign simply did not get the necessary support they needed and that the 2002 launch was the “first real effort... to get into it in a serious way and not just dabble” (Sneaker Freaker Magazine). Bodecker felt that Nike’s initial success relied on three crucial factors: Nike had to commit to the project for at least 5 years, involve skateboarders in the design processes, and reissue the Nike Dunk shoe model (Robertson, 2004).

After listening to skateboarder needs and employing skateboard insiders for the design team, Nike released the Nike Dunk SB with the 2002 line, a rebirth of the original 1985 Nike Dunk basketball shoe (Crockett, 2005). In order to help successfully springboard the new Dunk SB line, Nike collaborated with other major skate companies, such as Zoo York, and well-known professional skateboarders. Nike also released limited edition lines, like the “City Series,” and sold the shoes only in specialty skateboard shops (Crockett, 2005; Bobbyhundreds).

Nike’s strategy of selling only to specialty skate shops became a major factor to their success in skateboarding (Montgomery, 2002b). Nike stressed that the SB shoe line should not be available in the malls and other large retail stores. Along with reaching out to core skate shops, Nike also hired well-

regarded people in the skateboard community to work on the Nike SB shoe line, including skateboarder Kevin Imamura. Imamura, global marketing manager for Nike SB, believes that hiring people from within the skateboard industry was one of Nike's most important moves (Gumz, 2006). The bottom line was that Nike needed to earn the respect of the core skateboard community. In order to get this "street cred," Nike SB developed a simple overall strategy: sell only to core skate shops, advertise only in skateboard magazines, and sponsor well-respected professional skateboarders (Robertson, 2004; Jürgen & Schmid, 2008).

#### **2004 & 2005 – A turning point**

After only two years, Nike SB had already seen tremendous success in the skateboarding market with the Nike Dunk SB and other shoe models. Many, however, consider 2004 the most important turning point for Nike SB (Berg, 2005; Jürgen & Schmid, 2008; SkateboardingMagazine.com, 2010). 2004 was significant because during this year Nike SB added skateboarder Paul Rodriguez Jr. to its already outstanding roster of professional skateboarders. Paul Rodriguez signed a multi-million dollar contract with Nike and became the first skateboarder to receive a signature shoe from the company a year later in 2005, called the Nike SB P-Rod. Upon receiving this honor, P-Rod (as most call him) also became the first Mexican-American athlete to have his own signature shoe with Nike (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). According to Mr. Imamura, "We don't give out signature shoes to many people. We were looking for someone with a



stature like Paul, in terms of his ability, reputation, and track record. He's someone who can really carry a signature shoe" (Berg, 2005, p. 1).

2004 and 2005 were also important years because during this time Nike was able to sign other renowned professional skaters to their roster including: Chet Childress, Wieger Van Wageningen, Omar Salazar, Stephan Janoski, Brian Anderson (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). In 2005, Nike team rider and skateboarding legend Lance Mountain, also announced the release of the Nike Blazer SB. The Blazer SB would be a transformed version of the original 1972 Blazer that could handle the demands of skateboarders while still appealing to its nostalgic skateboarding roots (SkateboarderMagazine.com, 2010).

### **2007 to present – Nike SB continues to grow**

Riding the waves of success created by the Nike SB P-Rod shoe model and continued demand for the Dunk SB and other shoe models, Nike continued to make positive headway into skateboarding. Nike did not stray from the formula that had proved successful up to this point. Nike SB continued to sign well-known professional skateboarders like skateboarding icon Eric Koston, as well up-and-coming skateboarding prodigies for its amateur team. Nike SB also made it a point to sponsor skateboarding events on both the local and national levels (Higgins, 2007; Hoye, 2007).

Another tactic Nike SB began to use was the release of full-length skate videos. These 30 to 60 minute videos act as both promotional tools for skateboard companies and entertainment for skateboarders. The distribution of these videos is basically a necessity for any company that wants to appear

authentic to the core skateboarder market (Yochim, 2010). Nike SB did not ignore this detail and produced a variety of skateboarding videos including: *On Tap* (2004), *Nothing but the Truth* (2007), *Debacle* (2009), *Don't Fear the Sweeper* (2010), and even a collaboration with skaters from Gift, a Chinese skateboard company, titled *It's a Wrap* (2009).

Nike Also released two more professional shoe models. In 2009, professional skateboarder Stefan Janoski became the second ever to receive his own pro model for Nike, called the Zoom Stefan Janoski SB. The next year, Nike announced the March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010 release of the latest pro model shoe. The Zoom Omar Salazar SB, named after pro skater Omar Salazar, is the third and final pro model shoe Nike SB has released to this date (SkateboardingMagazine.com, 2010).

In 2010, Nike announced its first quarter profits had climbed 9%. Nike stated that this progress was driven by growth in each of the Nike Brand categories, including Action Sports (Lewis, 2010). On May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010 Nike announced its global growth strategy for 2015. NIKE Brand President, Charlie Denson, offered an overview of Nike's strategy for growth until the end of the 2015 fiscal year. Denson described Nike's Action Sports category, which consists of Nike 6.0 and Nike SB, as the fastest growing category within the Nike Brand (Nikebiz, 2010). He also estimated that Nike's Action Sports category currently generates \$390 million in business, and that Nike hopes to double this figure by the end of 2015 (Nikebiz, 2010).

## Literature Review

The literature that currently exists on skateboarding seems to be focused in a few distinct areas. Although skateboarding falls under a variety of categorizations, by and large, skateboarding is considered a subculture within the academic literature; therefore a great deal of the research has been based largely within subculture theories. Since the first usage of the term 'subculture' by McLung Lee in 1945, there has been a great deal of ambiguity and debate surrounding this concept (Young & Atkinson, 2008). Many of the scholars that have studied and written on skateboarding as a subculture have largely grounded their studies in the work done by the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham during the 1970s. What is interesting about this era, is that both the rise of subcultural studies in Birmingham and the emergence of the California skateboarding scene, with the 'Z-Boys' and 'Dogtown', seem to surface in almost perfect chorus. Yochim (2010) describes the beginnings of the Dogtown skateboarding scene as an emergence of a subculture that was deeply rooted in issues of class. These rebellious working class youths were depicted as the pioneers of a new subculture; one that was in direct resistance to the bourgeois beach culture of this time and place. Even during the nascent beginnings of the skateboarding culture, these sentiments of opposition and resistance were already becoming embedded into the shared values of this community.

## **Subcultural Studies of Skateboarding**

One would be hard pressed to deny the claim that skateboarding, within the United States, is a culture that is dominated primarily by white, heterosexual, adolescent males. A great deal of the literature that has focused on skateboarding as a subculture seems to be reflective and critical of this hegemonic masculinity that exists within this culture. Becky Beal's 1995 study is considered to be the seminal skateboarding study, from which many researchers have grounded their research (Donnelly, 2008). Beal's (1995) original study consisted of observation, participant-observation, and semi structured in-depth interviews, all of which took place in northeastern Colorado. The observations that Beal carried out began in 1989, and the interviews took place over a 2-year period from 1990 to 1992. Overall, Beal conducted interviews with a total of 41 skateboarders. Only 4 of the skateboarders were female and all participants, except for two Hispanic males, were Anglo. This research considered skateboarding to be a form of popular culture that resists capitalist social relations. In this study, Beal (1995) relied heavily on Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony. She described skateboarding as a site of social resistance that challenges the dominant hegemonic ideologies, while simultaneously accommodating certain aspects of this very same hegemony.

Using the data collected from this research, Beal released a subsequent study in 1996, which focused on the construction of masculinity within skateboarding. Beal (1996) discovered that skateboarding, as a subculture, operates a site where males can challenge the dominant norms of hegemonic

masculinity, especially those within other “mainstream” sports. Skateboarding serves as a site for these male adolescents to develop a form of an “alternative masculinity;” one that promotes self-expression, individualism, and flexibility, while simultaneously de-emphasizing competition and rule-bound performance (Beal, 1996). Beal (1996) also claims that, while skateboarders do actively construct forms of masculinity that challenge hegemonic norms, skateboarding also serves as a medium for upholding ideologies of male dominance and gender stratification.

While Beal’s work in the early to mid-1990s was certainly groundbreaking, Donnelly (2008) argues that there seems to be an over-reliance on this single ethnographic study, and that sport sociology studies regarding this subculture need to move away from this research. While I do agree in part with Donnelly, it seems that most of the literature that does exist on skateboarding has fallen into similar lines of inquiry. Wheaton and Beal’s (2003) study focused on the niche media produced by the wakeboarding and skateboarding subcultures. Although this was a study of two different sport subcultures, very similar conclusions were still drawn. Within this study the authors concluded that niche magazines dedicated to wakeboarding and skateboarding still produce imagery and messages in which males dominate and hegemonic masculinity is very much prevalent (Wheaton & Beal, 2003). While the subjects of their interviews were hesitant to make any conversation that centered on these issues of race and gender, the niche media that was

consumed by these participants was still very much representative of a white hegemonic masculinity, which stratified both gender and race.

Sean Brayton (2005) also touches on comparable issues of race and white hegemony within skateboarding. Similar to Beal's (1996) analysis of alternative masculinities that skateboarders construct, Brayton (2005) argues that skateboarding provides grounds for a resistance against dominant white ideologies, "symbolized by a co-opting 'blackness,'" while simultaneously promoting whiteness by the marketing white skaters (356). Brayton compares skateboarding to a symbolic flight from middle-class, white conformity and history of oppression associated with whiteness. Brayton sees skateboarders as a modern-day analogy of the "white Negro" narratives of the 1950s, specifically comparing skateboarding road trips to the narratives found in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) and Norman Mailer's *White Negro* (1957).

Emily Yochim's 2010 book, *Skate life: Re-imagining White Masculinity*, provides the most recent investigation into the skateboarding subculture. Similar to many previous studies, Yochim (2010) tackles a variety of issues including masculinity, race, gender, and sexuality within this book. Yochim also makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature by coining the term "corresponding cultures." Yochim describes a corresponding culture as "a group organized around a particular lifestyle or activity that interacts with various levels of media – niche, mainstream, and local – and variously agrees or disagrees with those media's espoused ideas" (2010, p. 4). Yochim (2010) uses this concept of skateboarding as a corresponding culture to build on Beal's

(1996) research. She comes to the conclusion that skateboarders both actively critique the dominant masculine ideologies, while simultaneously maintaining the power that white heterosexual masculinity offers. Yochim's research is significant because it incorporates mainstream, niche, and local media as sites for skateboarders to actively critique white hegemonic masculinity and renegotiate alternate forms of masculinity.

### **Resistance and Opposition in Skateboarding**

A great deal of the scholars who have contributed to the literature on the skateboarding subculture seem to come to the conclusion that skateboarding, by and large, is a culture that is highly resistant and oppositional towards outside incorporation (Beal, 1995, 1996; Brooke, 1999; Wheaton & Beal, 2003; Beal & Weidman, 2003; Donnelly, 2008; Rinehart, 2008; Yochim, 2010). Beal's (1995) groundbreaking research was largely based on the notion that skateboarding operates as a site of social resistance to the dominant hegemonic ideologies. Beal (1995) discovered that skateboarders de-emphasize elite competition and blatant disregard of mainstream sports, along with promotion of self-expression and participant control created direct challenges to capitalist social relations. Since Beal's original 1995 study of Colorado skateboarders, other scholars have also focused on skateboarding as a site of resistance and opposition.

Donnelly (2008) discusses incorporation from the mainstream within skateboarding. She points out that within sport sociology, incorporation is essentially considered to be a negative process, specifically within subcultures

of sport (i.e. skateboarding). Skateboarding, as a highly oppositional and resistant culture, is constantly as coming under threat from corporate commercialization (Donnelly, 2008). Donnelly emphasizes this point by stating:

*“The story of skateboarding that dominates the sociology of sport literature is that skateboarding subculture(s) is in the process of being co-opted through the loss of participant control to corporate interests, and the infiltration of the ‘dominant’ sport model emphasizing competition and winning”* (2008, p. 211)

Rinehart (2008) makes this dilemma of competition the center of his study, which investigates the X-Games as a site of co-option and opposition within skateboarding. It was through the X-Games that the term “extreme sports” originated, as a way to market these various subcultures to a larger audience by “aligning their ethos with more mainstream-sport values” (Rinehart, 2008, p. 179). Rinehart claims that skateboarding is considered to be the most oppositional to co-option by the X-Games and other mainstream intrusions, simply because of the history of skateboarding, which is so deeply rooted in these resistant ideologies, has defined skateboarders as ‘outsiders’ of society (2008). The X-Games continue to be a site of constant opposition for sport subcultures, but Rinehart argues that while ESPN may be able to appropriate the imagery of skateboarding, but it will never truly be able to co-op skateboarding itself.

Nike SB is no exception to this history of resistance in skateboarding. Since Nike’s original foray into skateboarding during the late 1990s, Nike has



seen resistance from certain sects of the skateboarding culture. The most prominent opponent of Nike's skateboarding presence is the owner of Consolidated Skateboard Company, Steve "Birdo" Guisinger (Gumz, 2006; Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). Guisinger started the Consolidated Skateboard Company in 1992, and strongly believes that the skateboard industry belongs in the hands of skateboarders and that Nike has no place in skateboarding. During Nike's original 1997 attempts to enter skateboarding, Guisinger launched his own campaign against Nike called "Don't Do It," an obvious parody on the Nike slogan (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). He took out ads in skateboarding magazines for his "Don't Do It" campaign, asking skateboarders to boycott Nike and other large sports companies (Gumz, 2006). Guisinger and his company revived this brand war after Nike released the Nike SB brand. Those who believed and followed Consolidated's ideologies became known as members of the "Don't Do It Army" (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). In 2007, along with major skate shoe company Osiris, Consolidated even released a shoe called the "Consolidated BS Drunk," which was a mockery of the Nike SB Dunk, featuring a banana in place of the Nike swoosh (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008).

### **Brand Theory: Brand Personality**

In his 1996 book, *Building Strong Brands*, David Aaker lays out four perspectives that a brand can utilize in developing a 'brand identity.' One of these perspectives relates most specifically to this research and the case of Nike's successful entry into skateboarding as an authentic brand: Brand personality, or the brand as a person. In order for Nike to relate to

skateboarders, they needed to portray a personality that was representative of the skateboarding culture as a whole. Aaker (1996) defines brand personality as “the set of human characteristics associated with a given brand.” Brand personalities are also extremely important when a company is trying to distinguish themselves from other brands, and “carve out a niche in the consumer’s mind” (Upshaw, 1995).

The creation of brand personality relies on attributes that are both directly related and non-related to the product. Characteristics that are directly related to a product include price, packaging, and category of product (in this case shoes). It is the non-related product characteristics that will be more important in this specific case. Some important non-related characteristics include: sponsorships, celebrity endorsements, ad style, and user imagery. Sponsorships, in this case, refer to the actual events that the brand or company sponsors and the effect that these sponsorships have on the perceived personality of a brand. Does Nike SB sponsor large events like the X-Games or smaller, localized events like skateboard demos at local shops? A celebrity endorsement, in this case, refers to the professional and amateur skateboarders that Nike SB sponsors. The personalities and prowess of each of these skateboarders, and the Nike SB team as a whole, certainly has an effect on the perceived brand personality of Nike within skateboarding. Upshaw (1995) argues that by utilizing a brand spokesperson, the personality traits of that person will transfer into the brand itself.

User imagery refers to the way that the users, in this case the skateboarders within Nike's ads and videos, are seen using the product. If the users are seen having expressing some traditional values of the skateboarding culture in these ads and videos, such as skateboarding for pure enjoyment and de-emphasizing competition (Yochim, 2010), then Nike's brand personality will become associated with these values as well. After learning from its initial mistakes in the late 90s, Nike launched a variety of new advertisement campaigns that were much more successful. Unlike the "What If" ad campaign, which addressed a mainstream audience and referenced team sports, the 2002 "My First Sponsor" campaign focused on the personality of skateboarders. The concept of the ads was to let Nike's team riders choose someone from their background who had a positive influence on them on their way to becoming a professional skateboarder, who would also be featured in the ad with them. The *personalities* of the individual skateboarders on the Nike team were the focus of these advertisements, not the product or even the activity of skateboarding (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). The riders and their family and friends were shown prominently in the ads, while a barely visible, miniature Nike swoosh logo was hidden on an object in the background (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). This subtle concept helped start Nike's rebound in the skateboard community. Through featuring these ads strictly in skateboard magazines, they were able to utilize the personalities of the professional skateboarders to successfully springboard the new Nike SB brand.

As Vaid (2003) describes, brand personality “does not refer to the personality of the consumers. Rather, it’s designed to be a personality that attracts the right people.” In this case, the right people are skateboarders, and in order to attract skateboarders to a product, a brand needs to be very careful in the type of personality it wants to portray. In this research, skateboarders will be asked a variety of questions related to the importance of brand personality and Nike SB’s brand specifically. Questions will focus on team sponsorship, individual sponsorship (i.e. celebrity endorsement), sponsorship of both local and national skateboarding events, presence in local skateboarding shops, and advertising in skateboard magazines and on skateboard websites.

### **Authenticity**

Authenticity is an extremely broad concept, and as Mikkonen (2010) notes, there has been a wide variety of conceptualizations regarding ‘authenticity.’ Beverland (2005) describes the concept of authenticity as one that remains problematic for researchers, as there is no definition or description of this term that is generally accepted.

### **Authentic identity**

Similar to other subcultural studies focusing on authenticity (Moore, 2004; Beverland, Farrelly, & Quester, 2010; Mikkonen, 2010) the literature within sport sociology concerning skateboarding largely seems to discuss the concept of authenticity in terms of membership and ‘authentic identities.’ Wheaton and Beal (2003) provide an in-depth investigation into the discourses of authenticity that emerge within alternative sports, specifically focusing on skateboarding and

wakeboarding. Their research makes note of Sarah Thornton's (1995) concept of "subcultural capital," and its implications for authenticity. The theoretical framework for Thornton's subcultural capital stems from the work of French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. In his 1984 book, *Distinction*, Bourdieu describes what he terms "cultural capital," which he defines cultural capital as "knowledge that is accumulated through upbringing and education which confers social status" (Thornton, 1995, p. 10). In the development of her conception of subcultural capital Thornton describes "hipness" as a form of subcultural and that subcultural capital is something that "confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder" (1995, p. 11). Subcultural capital can take shape in a variety of forms, from physical objects to attitudes and style. Through utilizing the various forms of subcultural capital, skateboarders can portray themselves as more authentic members of this subculture.

In a mutual study, Beal and Weidman (2003) also focused on issues of authenticity with the skateboarding subculture. Based largely on the interviews conducted in previous research (Beal, 1995) and follow up interviews from 1997 to 1998, the authors conclude that authenticity within skateboarding community relies on two central values: participant control and de-emphasis of competition. Through embodiment of these core values, skateboarders work to achieve an individual identity and stylized form of skateboarding. "Each participant identified his or her own criteria regarding training procedures, goals and style. The internalization and personalization of these core values were central to being accepted as a legitimate member" (Beal & Weidman, 2003). The second

half of their study offers a general outline of authenticity from the standpoint of the skateboard industry, which will be the focus of this research.

### **Company authenticity – variables and hypotheses**

The companies that produce, manufacture and distribute various skateboarding products must maintain an authentic image within skateboarding in order to remain competitive (Beal & Weidman, 2003). The owners and managers of skateboarding companies make a concerted effort to maintain an authentic image in the eyes of skateboarders, who are in fact their customers. Beal and Weidman (2003) offer a general guideline of the strategies that companies frequently employ in their pursuit of authenticity. Drawing on this literature, specific variables that may influence authenticity have been selected and identified. Due to a lack of research in this area, it is also necessary to add new variables authenticity to those already outlined by Beal and Weidman (2003).

Beal and Weidman (2003) provide three variables that effect authenticity of skateboarding companies: Self-selection, Sponsorships, and Advertising.

*Self-selection.* Beal and Weidman (2003) argue that self-selection is perhaps the most important factor for a skateboard company's perceived authenticity. According to the authors, Skateboarders will be more apt to support companies that are owned by fellow skateboarders. In other words, skateboarders are more likely to support those who are most like themselves, hence the term self-selection. In this sense, self-selection has to do with the ownership of skateboard companies. Skateboarders have an understanding of

the culture and maintain a better understanding of what their clientele desires. Beal and Weidman (2003) argue that those outsiders who do not possess an understanding of this culture try to become involved in the skateboarding industry are often fruitless in their attempts. Drawing on this discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There will be a positive relationship between the importance of self-selection (i.e. being skater owned) and unfavorable views of Nike SB because of their ownership

H2: There will be a negative relationship between the importance of self-selection (i.e. being skater owned) and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes

Nike seems to epitomize the notion of 'outsider' to the skateboarding culture, so it is important to investigate how Nike was able to overcome or adapt to this concept of self-selection.

*Sponsorship.* For the purpose of this study, the term sponsorship has dual meanings. Firstly, it refers to the exchange of goods or currency to skateboarders who, in exchange, provide feedback and agree to display that companies products. For example, Nike recently signed professional skateboarder Eric Koston. In exchange for the currency and products from Nike, Koston must wear Nike SB shoes in any of his public appearances or any video content. Koston was also encouraged to provide creative input for one of their shoe models called Nike SB Dunk ([www.nikesb.com](http://www.nikesb.com)). Through giving these sponsored skateboarders this creative freedom, it reflects positively on the company and gives the product, and company, a more authentic image (Beal & Weidman, 2003). Sponsorship also refers to the funding and support of both

local and national skateboard events. For example, Nike SB sponsored both small/local associations, such as the California High School Skateboard Club, and large national events like the Tampa Am and Tampa Pro contests (Higgins, 2007; Hoye, 2007). Based on the literature and popular press, the following hypothesis is posed:

H3: There will be a positive relationship between Nike SB's sponsorship of skateboarders and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes

H4: There will be a positive relationship between Nike SB's sponsorship of skateboard events and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes

*Advertising.* The final strategy that Beal and Weidman mention is Advertising. Beal and Weidman argue that "the skateboard industry advertises in skateboarding magazines- and almost nowhere else" (2003, p. 346). This statement may have been true in 2003; however, I argue that the internet now serves as a major advertising platform for skateboarding companies as well. Nonetheless, advertising is important to a company's perceived authenticity within skateboarding, and these ads must appeal to some aspects of what skaters consider to be authentic (Beal & Weidman, 2008). Drawing on this information, I pose the following hypotheses regarding advertising:

H5: There will be a positive relationship between Nike SB's advertising in skateboard magazines and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes

H6: There will be a positive relationship between Nike SB's advertising on skateboard websites and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes

*Online, Video, and Local Presence:* Building upon the aspects of authenticity outlined by Beal and Weidman (2003) for the skateboard industry, I



have decided to add three more variables of authenticity that are of utmost importance within the skateboarding community: online presence, video presence, and local presence.

*Online Presence.* Research on other subcultures has recently started to focus on the way that “offline” subcultures are now migrating more towards the internet (Wilson, 2008; Cuseo, 2006). The current literature on the skateboarding culture, however, fails to focus on the importance of the internet. The Berrics ([www.theberrics.com](http://www.theberrics.com)) is just one example of popular skateboarding websites, with more than six million visitors and 20 million views per month (Malakye, 2009). In today’s internet driven society, it is basically mandatory for any serious company to maintain a functional website. Most skateboarding companies are also using their websites as a method of displaying videos and photography of their team riders as a way to promote their product and company. Maintaining effective “video” and “photos” pages has become the norm for most skateboarding websites. Almost all companies now also engage in the use of social media to promote their company and related products, such as a Facebook or Twitter page; therefore social media will also be used as a gauge of online presence.

*Video Presence.* The niche media generated within the skateboarding community, such as videos and photography, is almost as important as the skateboarding itself. Full-length, 30 to 60 minute skate videos are the most common forms of video distributed by skateboarding companies as form of promotion for their company and its team riders. Yochim has an entire chapter

of her 2010 book, *Skate Life*, dedicated strictly to the importance of these skate videos within this culture. She describes these videos as “widely regarded by skateboarders as *authentic*... Skateboarding videos work to define skateboarding culture; they tell skateboarders who they are” (Yochim, 2010, p. 140-141). The online forum Skate Perception, mentioned earlier, has broad forum topics labeled: “Video and Film,” “Photography,” “Editing and Design,” and “Video Clips.” Each of these forum topics has hundreds of thousands of posts, discussing various aspects of this niche media ([www.skateperception.com](http://www.skateperception.com)).

*Local Presence.* Presence in local skateboard shops is also important for core skateboard companies. Most successful skateboard companies avoid selling their products in large chain stores, and instead distribute to local skate shops throughout the country. Yochim (2010) discusses the importance of the local skate shop within the skateboard community: “The shop operates as a space in which individuals who might not otherwise know one another meet and relate as skateboarders first and foremost. It is here that the community develops and articulates the norms of the culture and its primary values” (p. 79). Nike was very much aware of the importance of this local presence, and during their 2002 launch developed a strategy to sell only to specialized skateboard shops (Montgomery, 2002).

Based on this information, the following hypotheses are posited:

H7: There will be a positive relationship between Nike SB’s online presence and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes

- H8: There will be a positive relationship between Nike SB's video presence and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes
- H9: There will be a positive relationship between Nike SB's local presence and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes

## Methods

### Research Design

This study used a cross-sectional survey of skateboarders. The instrument was an electronic survey that was available online to anybody with internet access. Through surveying a sample of skateboarders, it will allow for a numeric description of the attitudes that this population holds about authenticity within the skateboarding industry (Cresswell, 2009). The internet is a perfect medium for the population I hope to sample, because like skateboarders, most internet users tend to be younger than the general population (Best & Harrison, 2009). The survey was administered on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011 and ran for a two-week period. The IRB approved the study on November 29, 2010. As part of the IRB approval, the electronic questionnaire was prefaced with a consent/assent page. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study as well as the risks, benefits, and confidentiality assurance. It was made clear to participants that the survey is completely voluntary and that they can skip any question or withdraw at any time without penalty (see Appendix A for consent/assent form).

The survey was available on the internet through an online survey platform where participants were able to access the questionnaire at their own leisure. The questionnaire was also pre-tested with a small group of 15 skateboarders to work out any issues of clarity or problematic phrasing. The use of an electronic, online survey permits both a larger sample size and greater geographic circulation. Unlike a physical survey, online surveys have basically

no geographic limitations, and can be taken anywhere in the world with internet access (Best & Harrison, 2009). This, consequently, can also be seen as a drawback to online surveys, as the demographic backgrounds of those with internet access may be considerably different (Best & Harrison, 2009).

Respondents were asked questions about the both the skateboarding industry and Nike SB specifically. There was an introductory filter question, asking if the participant considers him or herself a skateboarder. Only those who answer yes were counted in the results. In order to increase the ability for statistical comparisons, all questions regarding perceptions and buying behavior were ranked on the same Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The first two sections of the questionnaire measured perceptual data about the skateboarding industry and Nike SB. There was a smaller third section of questions that measured behavioral data about Nike SB purchase behavior specifically. This allowed for connections to be made from the various aspects of authenticity to actual purchase behavior and consumer word-of-mouth recommendations. The survey was 35 questions in length and should have taken no longer than 15 minutes to complete (see Appendix B for survey).

### **Sample**

The population that I hoped to sample is straightforward: skateboarders. Anyone who skateboards or considers him or herself a skateboarder is a member of this population. This population consists of roughly 11 million estimated U.S. participants (Donnelly, 2008, Yochim, 2010). I used a non-probability sample of skateboarders in hopes of attaining at least 300

responses, which would be desirable for statistically sound results (Shoemaker & McCombs 2009).

Because skateboarding is largely a youth culture (Beal, 1995; Porter, 2003; Yochim, 2010), it is important that my sample included those under 18. According to Rob Meronek (2009) at The Skatepark of Tampa, data from over 15,000 sales indicate that the average age of customers buying skate shoes from 2001 through 2008 ranged from 13 to 22 years old. The age of customers buying skateboard decks during this period ranged from 11 to 28 years old. Drawing from this data, along with suggestions from the IRB, I decided that the appropriate age range for this study would be 13 and older. Any results from respondents under 13 years old were deleted. Because this is an online survey, I was able to obtain responses throughout the United States and even from other countries.

### **Recruitment for study**

The recruitment for this study was mainly done electronically through the internet. I utilized Facebook and other social media, along with popular skateboarding forums to recruit participant for this study. I have a great deal of contacts throughout the Northeast who skateboard. I sent each of them a message individually through Facebook. I also used snowball sampling and asked that each of them pass the message along to any friends they may have that skateboard. The message included a brief description of the study along with a link to the survey. I also used a variety of online skateboarding forums, such as Skate Perception and MyBerrics.com, to post information about the

survey in order to gain a larger and more diverse sample. Along with electronic recruitment, I used traditional word-of-mouth recruitment in the Syracuse and Philadelphia areas, where I am most well connected to the skateboarding communities.

In order to assure a useful sample size, I offered incentives for participation. These incentives came in the form of a raffle for 9 possible prizes, which include: 1 pair of Nike SB shoes, 1 complete skateboard, 2 skateboard decks, 2 sets of trucks, 2 sets of wheels and 2 sets of bearings (odds of winning are estimated at 1:30). Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants were directed to a separate page where they could provide an e-mail address to enter the raffle. They were made aware that entry is completely voluntary; and that they did not have to enter. Those under 18 were also encouraged to ask parent/guardian permission, as well as enter the e-mail of a parent/guardian. The e-mail address was used only for the purpose of the raffle and remained completely confidential. After the survey ran for a two-week period, 9 participants were randomly selected to receive prizes. The winners were contacted via e-mail for prize and shipping information. Winners under the age of 18 were asked for parent's names and shipping information. The confidentiality of information regarding the participants was guaranteed and remained of utmost importance.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability in survey research refers to the consistency of measurement that the research instrument provides (Fowler, 1988; Lipsey & Hurley, 2009).

The questions used in this research were clear and written in the most understandable wording possible (Shoemaker & McCombs, 2009). Optional wording was also provided where any confusion may occur in order to increase reliability (Fowler, 1988). All questions regarding authenticity, the independent variable, were closed questions measured using ordinal data in the form of a 7-point Likert scale, increasing reliability of these questions (Fowler, 2002; Best & Harrison, 2009). Because this is a self-administered online survey, all respondents were given an equal opportunity to answer the questions at their own leisure and pace. There was no pressure from time constraints or interviewer presence, giving the respondents more control over the survey (Couper, M. P., 2004; Best & Harrison, 2009). Therefore the reliability of this research is relatively strong.

Although this research does address six different variables that may affect the authenticity of skateboard companies, there may in fact be other variables that influence perceived authenticity, which does create a possible threat to the content validity (Cresswell, 2009). Shoemaker and McCombs (2009) argue that the internal validity of survey research may often be lower than that of randomized experiments. This is because causal relationships can be difficult to establish using surveys. Another possible threat to validity may be “research artifacts,” a term used by Strohmetz and Rosnow (2004) that describes the uncontrollable and unintentional researcher biases that can threaten both internal and external validity (p. 25). According to Fowler, the first and foremost means of increasing validity is to create questions that are as reliable as



possible, a tactic that was emphasized in this study (1988; 2002). Because the majority of questions referring to authenticity are subjective in nature, referring to people's feelings, beliefs, and attitudes, "there is no objective way of validating the answers" (Fowler, 1988). This is also the first study of this kind, and exploratory in nature, therefore it is difficult to establish validity of the survey instrument and questions based on previous studies. Because this is an online survey with no geographic limitations, threats to external validity are greatly decreased. Through use of online recruitment methods, I was able to gain responses from a wide demographic of skateboarders in hopes of reaching a sample that is representative of the population as a whole.

## Results

A total of 345 questionnaires were collected from skateboarders who ranged in age from 13 to 55 years of age, with a mean age of 19.4 (see Figure 1).

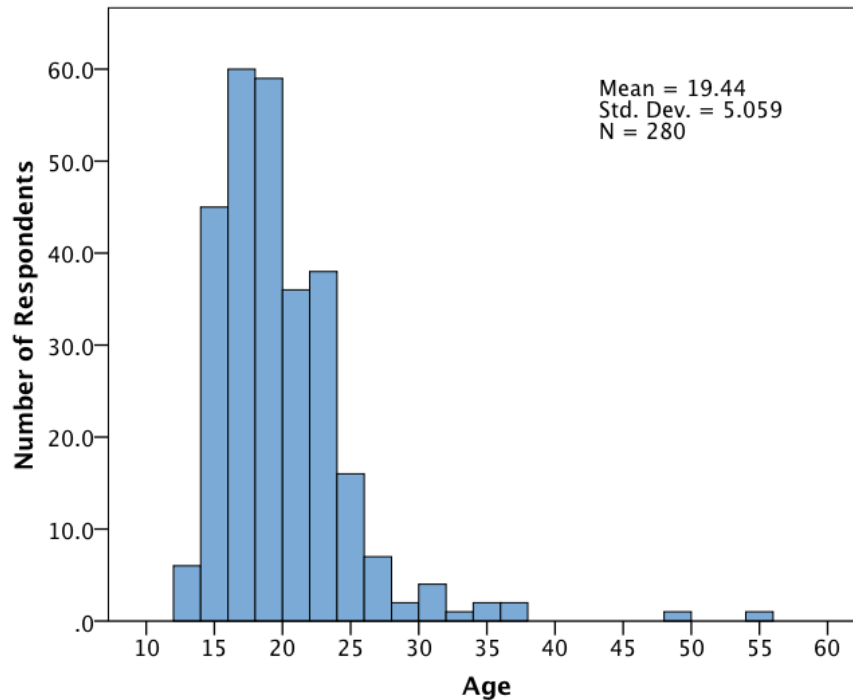


Figure 1. Ages of participants. This figure illustrates the age range of respondents

To measure their skateboarding experience, respondents were asked how many years they've been skateboarding. Those who have been skating less than one year were asked to round up to one. The experience level of participants ranged from 1 to 35 years, with a mean of 6.7 years (see Figure 2).

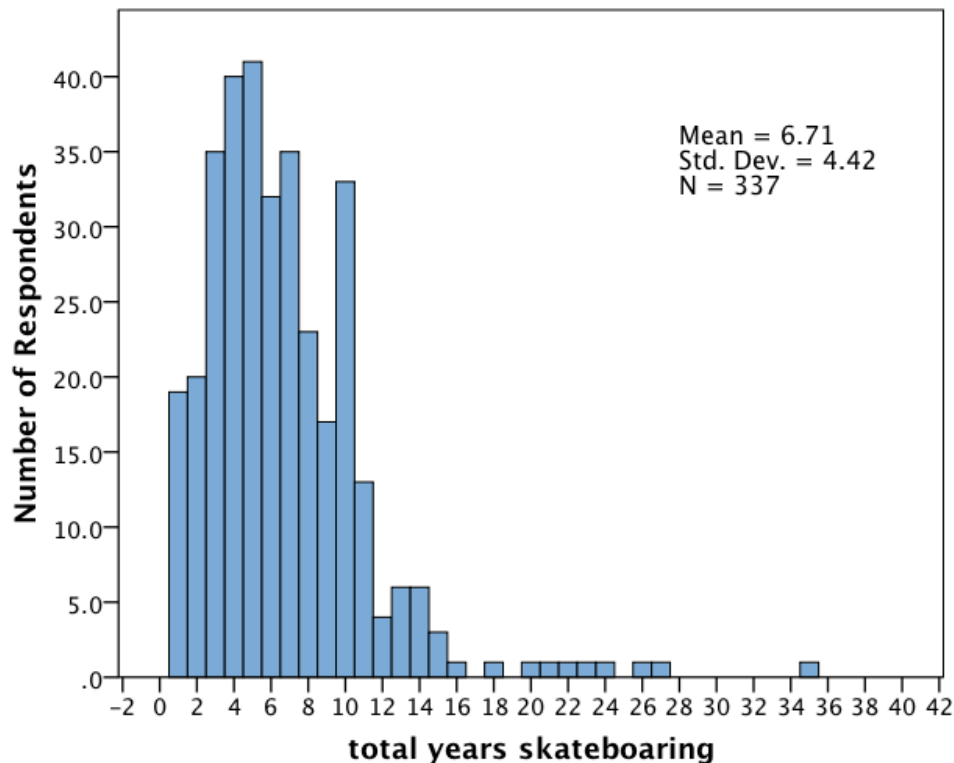


Figure 2. Skateboarding experience. This figure illustrates respondents' total years of skateboarding experience.

The majority of participants lived in the U.S., however significant portions of participants were from Canada and other countries including: Romania, Lithuania, Ireland, United Kingdom, Holland, Australia, and the Netherlands. Because I did most word-of-mouth and social media recruitment in Pennsylvania and New York, most participants came from these states - 13% and 15.1% respectively. As expected, the vast majority of participants were male. Out of the 281 that answered the question regarding sex, 15 (5.3%) were female and 261 (94.7%) were male (see Appendix B, Figure 3).

### Answering Research Questions

This study's principal research question was concerned with the concept of authenticity in skateboarding. The question specifically asked: "Which

aspects of a skateboard company's authenticity are most important to skateboarders?" Participants were asked 12 questions that measured the importance of different variables of authenticity on a scale of 1 to 7. Product availability in local skateshops was the most important factor for authenticity according to participants ( $M = 6.62/7$ ). Other important factors influencing skateboard companies' authenticity were having video and photos on their website ( $M = 6.35$ ), being skater-owned ( $M = 6.18$ ), releasing full-length skate videos ( $M = 6.17$ ), sponsoring good individual skateboarders ( $M = 6.07$ ), and sponsoring small/local events ( $M = 6.02$ ). The least important factors affecting company authenticity according to skateboarders were sponsoring large/national events ( $M = 4.50$ ) and having a Facebook and/or Twitter page ( $M = 4.44$ ). These results are fairly straightforward, and it is clear to see from this descriptive data which factors are most important in developing authenticity among skateboarders (see Table 1 for all descriptive data<sup>1</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> All tables were designed using the Shoemaker method (Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa 2003).

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
It is important for a skate company to have their products available in local skate shops	6.62	.657	300
It is important for a skate company to have videos and photos on their website	6.35	.847	296
It is important for a skate company to be owned by a skateboarder	6.18	1.080	304
It is important for a skate company to release full length skate videos	6.17	1.022	299
It is important for a skate company to sponsor good skateboarders	6.07	.955	301
It is important for a skate company to sponsor small/local events	6.02	.993	302
It is important for a skate company to have a good overall team	5.88	.997	300
It is important for a skate company to have a good website	5.87	1.115	300
It is important for a skate company to have advertisements in skateboard magazines	5.50	1.214	300
It is important for a skate company to have advertisements on skateboard websites	5.21	1.290	299
It is important for a skate company to sponsor large/national events like X-Games, Gravity Games, and the Maloof Money Cup	4.50	1.544	301
It is important for a skate company to have a good Facebook and/or Twitter page	4.44	1.490	300

*Table 1.* Means and standard deviations for the various aspects of company authenticity in skateboarding. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

The second research question focused on the example of Nike SB skateboarding shoes specifically, and asked: “Which aspects of authenticity has Nike SB successfully achieved within the skateboard community?” To answer this question, skateboarders were presented with a section of questions that were identical to those about skateboard company authenticity, but relating specifically to the Nike SB brand. For example, instead of being asked to rate: “It is important for a skate company to have a good overall team,” they were asked to rate: “Nike SB has a good overall team.” Questions about Nike SB were also ranked on the same scale of 1 – 7 as the previous questions so that relationships could be drawn more clearly. According to the descriptive data alone, it is clear that Nike has achieved many aspects of authenticity in

skateboarders' eyes. The highest ranked aspects of authenticity achieved by Nike SB were: sponsoring good individual skateboarders ( $M = 5.87/7$ ), having a good overall team ( $M = 5.82$ ), having products available in local skate shops ( $M = 5.73$ ), and releasing good full-length skate videos ( $M = 5.70$ ), having good videos and photos on their website ( $M = 5.64$ ), and having visible advertisements in skateboard magazines ( $M = 5.59$ ). These results correspond almost perfectly to the overall marketing strategy Nike implemented in its 2002 launch, which included selling only to core skate shops, advertising only in skateboard magazines, and sponsoring well-respected professional skateboarders (Robertson, 2004; Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). Skateboarders also ranked the statement "Nike SB has a good Facebook and/or Twitter page" as the lowest response ( $M = 4.29$ ), which corresponds directly to the least important aspect of company authenticity (see Table 2 for all descriptive data).

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
NIKE SB sponsors good individual skateboarders	5.87	1.246	284
NIKE SB has a good overall team	5.82	1.262	284
I can find NIKE SB products in local skate shops	5.73	1.539	281
NIKE SB has released good full length skate videos	5.70	1.332	281
NIKE SB has good videos and photos on their website	5.64	1.246	275
I have seen NIKE SB advertisements in skateboard magazines	5.59	1.459	283
NIKE SB has a good website	5.42	1.343	278
I have seen NIKE SB to have advertisements on skateboard websites	5.08	1.610	280
I have seen NIKE SB to sponsor large/national events like X-Games, Gravity Games, and the Maloof Money Cup	4.92	1.660	284
I have seen NIKE SB to sponsor small/local events	4.34	1.860	282
NIKE SB has a good Facebook and/or Twitter page	4.29	1.375	279

*Table 2.* Means and standard deviations for the various aspects of company authenticity that Nike SB has achieved. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

## Hypotheses Testing

This study's hypotheses focused on the actual purchase behavior of Nike SB. Purchase behavior was measured in three ways: 1) past purchase behavior, 2) future purchase behavior, and 3) word-of-mouth behavior. Skateboarders were asked whether they have bought Nike SB's in the past, if they would buy them in the future, and if they would recommend Nike SB to friends or other skateboarders. In order to properly determine the relationships between the aspects of authenticity achieved by Nike SB and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB products, it was first necessary to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the aspects of authenticity most important to skateboarders (questions 3 to 14 on questionnaire) and those aspects achieved by Nike SB (questions 15 to 26 on questionnaire). After using Pearson Correlations, the only relationship that was not found to be statistically significant was "sponsorship of small/local events." The difference between all other relationships between skateboard companies' authenticity and Nike SB were statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level (except for presence in skate shops which was significant at the  $p < .05$  level). Therefore the only relationship that was not analyzed was Nike SB's sponsorship of small/local events and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes (see Tables 3 – 7 for all correlations).

<i>Variables</i>	5	6	7	8
1. It is important for a skate company to sponsor small/local events	.039 281			
2. It is important for a skate company to sponsor large/national events like X-Games, Gravity Games, and the Maloof Money Cup		.291 <sup>a</sup> 283		
3. It is important for a skate company to have a good overall team			.327 <sup>a</sup> 283	
4. It is important for a skate company to sponsor good skateboarders				.267 <sup>a</sup> 283
5. I have seen NIKE SB to sponsor small/local events				
6. I have seen NIKE SB to sponsor large/national events like X-Games, Gravity Games, and the Maloof Money Cup				
7. NIKE SB has a good overall team				
8. NIKE SB sponsors good individual skateboarders				

*Table 3.* Pearson correlation coefficients for various aspects of sponsorship in skateboarding and Nike SB's sponsorship. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree  
a.  $p < .01$

<i>Variables</i>	3	4
1. It is important for a skate company to have advertisements in skateboard magazines	.237 <sup>a</sup> 282	
2. It is important for a skate company to have advertisements on skateboard websites		.239 <sup>a</sup> 278
3. I have seen NIKE SB advertisements in skateboard magazines		
4. I have seen NIKE SB to have advertisements on skateboard websites		

*Table 4.* Pearson correlation coefficients for various aspects of advertising in skateboarding and Nike SB's advertising. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree  
a.  $p < .01$

<i>Variables</i>	4	5	6
1. It is important for a skate company to have a good website	.378 <sup>a</sup> 278		
2. It is important for a skate company to have videos and photos on their website		.214 <sup>a</sup> 272	
3. It is important for a skate company to have a good Facebook and/or Twitter page			.511 <sup>a</sup> 278
4. NIKE SB has a good website			
5. NIKE SB has good videos and photos on their website			
6. NIKE SB has a good Facebook and/or Twitter page			

*Table 5.* Pearson correlation coefficients for various aspects of internet presence in skateboarding and Nike SB's internet presence. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree  
a.  $p < .01$



<i>Variables</i>	<i>2</i>
1. It is important for a skate company to release full length skate videos	.301 <sup>a</sup> 279
2. NIKE SB has released good full length skate videos	

*Table 6.* Pearson correlation coefficients for various aspects of sponsorship in skateboarding and Nike SB's sponsorship. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

a.  $p < .01$

<i>Variables</i>	<i>2</i>
1. It is important for a skate company to have their products available in local skate shops	.137 <sup>b</sup> 281
2. I can find NIKE SB products in local skate shops	

*Table 7.* Pearson correlation coefficients for various aspects of sponsorship in skateboarding and Nike SB's sponsorship. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

b.  $p < .05$

## **H1 and H2.**

Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be a positive relationship between the importance of self-selection (i.e. being skater owned) and unfavorable views of Nike SB because of its ownership. This hypothesis was supported, as self-selection and unfavorable views of Nike SB because of ownership were positively correlated and significant at the  $p < .05$  level ( $r=.149$ ). It is important to note that although the relationship was statistically significant, it was not a strong relationship. Hypothesis 2, which stated that there would be a negative relationship between the importance of self-selection (i.e. being skater owned) and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes, was not supported. Although there was a negative relationship found between self-selection and all three measures of actual purchase behavior, none of these relationships were statistically significant (see Tables 8 and 9 for all correlations).

<i>Variables</i>	2
3. It is important for a skate company to be owned by a skateboarder	.149 <sup>b</sup> 286
4. I do not like NIKE SB because they are not owned by a skateboarder	

*Table 8.* Pearson correlation coefficients for self-selection and unfavorable views of Nike SB because of their ownership. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree  
b.  $p < .05$

<i>Variables</i>	2	3	4
1. It is important for a skate company to be owned by a skateboarder	-.034 281	-.043 282	.077 283
2. I have bought NIKE SB shoes before			
3. I would buy NIKE SB shoes in the future			
4. I would recommend NIKE SB shoes to my friends or other skateboarders			

*Table 9.* Pearson correlation coefficients for self-selection and measures of actual purchase behavior. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

### H3 and H4.

Hypothesis 3 states that there will be a positive relationship between Nike SB's sponsorship of skateboarders and actual purchase of Nike SB shoes. This hypothesis was supported fully with significant positive correlations between both Nike SB's sponsorship of individuals and Nike SB's team overall and all three measures of purchase behavior. All relationships were significant at the  $p < .01$  level (see Table 10 for all correlations). In other words, individual skateboarders that Nike SB choose to sponsor and Nike SB's overall team both have a positive effect on actual purchase behavior of Nike products among skateboarders.

Hypothesis 4 was also about sponsorship and predicted that there will be a positive relationship between Nike SB's sponsorship of skateboard events and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes. This hypothesis was partially

supported. As previously stated, there was no significant relationship between the perceived importance of a skate company (in general) sponsoring small/local events and Nike SB's sponsorship of small/local events; therefore the relationship between Nike SB's sponsorship of small/local events and actual purchase behavior could not be accurately measured. There were, however, positive correlations between Nike SB's sponsorship of large/national events (such as X-Games and Gravity Games) and both future purchase behavior ( $r = .210$ ) and word-of-mouth recommendations ( $r = .185$ ). Both relationships were significant at the  $p < .01$  level. It should be noted although these relationships are significant, neither is considered strong. There was no significant relationship between Nike SB's sponsorship of large/national events and previous purchase behavior (see Table 11 for all correlations).

<i>Variables</i>	3	4	5
1. NIKE SB has a good overall team	.324 <sup>a</sup> 280	.344 <sup>a</sup> 281	.344 <sup>a</sup> 282
2. NIKE SB sponsors good individual skateboarders	.358 <sup>a</sup> 281	.352 <sup>a</sup> 282	.352 <sup>a</sup> 283
3. I have bought NIKE SB shoes before			
4. I would buy NIKE SB shoes in the future			
5. I would recommend NIKE SB shoes to my friends or other skateboarders			

*Table 10.* Pearson correlation coefficients for Nike SB's sponsorship of skateboarders and measures of actual purchase behavior. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree  
a.  $p < .01$

<i>Variables</i>	2	3	4
1. I have seen NIKE SB to sponsor large/national events like X-Games, Gravity Games, and the Maloof Money Cup	.047 280	.210 <sup>a</sup> 281	.185 <sup>a</sup> 282
2. I have bought NIKE SB shoes before			
3. I would buy NIKE SB shoes in the future			
4. I would recommend NIKE SB shoes to my friends or other skateboarders			

*Table 11.* Pearson correlation coefficients for Nike SB's sponsorship of large/national skateboard events and measures of actual purchase behavior. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

a.  $p < .01$

### **H5 and H6.**

Hypothesis 5 predicted that there would be a positive relationship between Nike SB's advertising in skateboard magazines and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes. This hypothesis supported as there were weak positive correlations between Nike SB's advertising in skateboard magazines and past buying behavior ( $r = .215$ ), future buying behavior ( $r = .276$ ), and word-of-mouth recommendations ( $r = .263$ ). All relationships were significant at the  $p < .01$  level (see Table 12 for all correlations).

Like H5, Hypothesis 6 was also about advertising, and predicted that there would be a positive relationship between Nike SB's advertising on skateboard websites and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes. This hypothesis was also supported. There were weak positive correlations between Nike SB's advertising on skateboard websites and past buying behavior ( $r = .142$ ), future buying behavior ( $r = .205$ ), and word-of-mouth recommendations ( $r = .248$ ). All relationships were significant at the  $p < .01$  level (see Table 13 for all correlations).

<i>Variables</i>	2	3	4
1. I have seen NIKE SB advertisements in skateboard magazines	.215 <sup>a</sup> 281	.276 <sup>a</sup> 282	.263 <sup>a</sup> 283
2. I have bought NIKE SB shoes before			
3. I would buy NIKE SB shoes in the future			
4. I would recommend NIKE SB shoes to my friends or other skateboarders			

*Table 12.* Pearson correlation coefficients for Nike SB's advertising in skateboard magazines and measures of actual purchase behavior. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree  
a.  $p < .01$

<i>Variables</i>	2	3	4
1. I have seen NIKE SB advertisements on skateboard websites	.142 <sup>a</sup> 278	.205 <sup>a</sup> 279	.248 <sup>a</sup> 280
2. I have bought NIKE SB shoes before			
3. I would buy NIKE SB shoes in the future			
4. I would recommend NIKE SB shoes to my friends or other skateboarders			

*Table 13.* Pearson correlation coefficients for Nike SB's advertising on skateboard websites and measures of actual purchase behavior. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree  
a.  $p < .01$

## H7

Hypothesis 7 predicted that there would be a positive relationship between Nike SB's online presence and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes. Respondents were asked three questions related to Nike SB's online presence. They were asked if Nike SB has a good website, if Nike SB has good videos and photos on its website, and if Nike SB has a good Facebook and/or Twitter page. When asked only about Nike SB's website in general, there were significant positive relationships to all three forms of buying behavior ( $r = .280$ ,  $r = .324$ , and  $r = .375$  respectively). There was also a significant relationship between the videos and photos on Nike SB's website and all three measures of purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes ( $r = .301$ ,  $r = .333$ , and  $r = .354$  respectively). When asked about the Nike SB's Facebook and/or Twitter page,

there were weak positive relationships discovered between two of the three measures of actual purchase behavior: future purchase behavior ( $r = .194$ ) and word-of-mouth recommendations ( $r = .267$ ). There was not a significant correlation found with past purchase behavior. This is not surprising, however, as social media was the least important factor for both skateboard companies' authenticity and Nike SB's achieved authenticity alike. All relationships discovered in H7 were statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level. Therefore, other than social media's effect on past purchase behavior, H7 was supported (see Table 14 for all correlations).

<i>Variables</i>	4	5	6
1. NIKE SB has a good website	.280 <sup>a</sup> 277	.324 <sup>a</sup> 277	.375 <sup>a</sup> 278
2. NIKE SB has good videos and photos on their website	.301 <sup>a</sup> 273	.333 <sup>a</sup> 275	.354 <sup>a</sup> 275
3. NIKE SB has a good Facebook and/or Twitter page	.092 277	.194 <sup>a</sup> 278	.267 <sup>a</sup> 279
4. I have bought NIKE SB shoes before			
5. I would buy NIKE SB shoes in the future			
6. I would recommend NIKE SB shoes to my friends or other skateboarders			

*Table 14.* Pearson correlation coefficients for Nike SB's online presence and measures of actual purchase behavior. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

a.  $p < .01$

## H8.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that there would be a positive relationship between Nike SB's video presence and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes. Video presence was measured by a question regarding the Nike SB's released full-length skate videos. This hypothesis was also supported, with a significant positive correlation between Nike SB's video presence and past purchase behavior ( $r = .326$ ), future purchase behavior ( $r = .370$ ), and word-of-

mouth recommendations ( $r = .352$ ). All relationships were significant at the  $p < .01$  level (see Table 15 for all correlations).

<i>Variables</i>	2	3	4
1. NIKE SB has released good full length skate videos	.326 <sup>a</sup> 278	.370 <sup>a</sup> 279	.352 <sup>a</sup> 280
2. I have bought NIKE SB shoes before			
3. I would buy NIKE SB shoes in the future			
4. I would recommend NIKE SB shoes to my friends or other skateboarders			

*Table 15.* Pearson correlation coefficients for Nike SB's video presence and measures of actual purchase behavior. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

a.  $p < .01$

### **H9.**

The final hypothesis of this study, H9, predicted a positive relationship between Nike SB's local presence and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes. Participants ranked local presence as the most important factor for skateboard companies (6.62 out of 7), and Nike SB was fairly successful at achieving this according to the respondents (5.73 out of 7). This hypothesis was indeed fully supported, as there was a positive relationship between Nike SB's local presence and all three aspects of actual purchase behavior. The relationship between Nike SB's local presence and past purchase behavior ( $r = .353$ ), future purchase behavior ( $r = .400$ ) and word-of-mouth recommendations ( $r = .357$ ) were all significant at the  $p < .01$  level (see Table 16 for all correlations).

<i>Variables</i>	2	3	4
1. I can find NIKE SB shoes in local skate shops	.353 <sup>a</sup> 279	.400 <sup>a</sup> 280	.357 <sup>a</sup> 281
2. I have bought NIKE SB shoes before			
3. I would buy NIKE SB shoes in the future			
4. I would recommend NIKE SB shoes to my friends or other skateboarders			

*Table 16.* Pearson correlation coefficients for Nike SB's local presence and measures of actual purchase behavior. All responses were coded 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

a.  $p < .01$

While analyzing the data, another interesting relationship surfaced. There was a very strong positive relationship found between past purchase behavior and both future purchase behavior ( $r = .613$ ) and word-of-mouth recommendations ( $r = .633$ ), which were both significant at the  $p < .01$  level. These relationships most likely speak to physical quality of the shoes that Nike SB manufactures, which is one aspect that was not specifically covered in this study. Skateboarders who have purchased Nike SB shoes in the past were much more likely to become repeat buyers and recommend the shoes to friends and other skateboarders, therefore Nike seems to be producing quality performing skateboard shoes that are meeting skateboarders' demands. As previously mentioned, during Nike's initial entry into the skateboarding market, it had a strong advertising campaign but the actual shoes that simply weren't up to par in terms of performance (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). Nike seems to have addressed this product issue by developing high performing skateboard shoes. Now the most important challenge for Nike SB may be getting its shoes on the feet of skateboarders who haven't tried them yet.



## Other Responses

The most interesting aspect of the survey was by far the comments left by skateboarders in the final open-ended question. Here participants were free to leave their own responses and comments. Judging from the numerous detailed comments left by respondents, it is clear that the skateboard community is extremely opinionated; especially about this is a topic, which seems to be at the center of a great deal of debate. There were an overwhelming number of responses written by skateboarders, ranging from few words to a few paragraphs.

Many of the responses spoke to the quality and performance of Nike SB's shoes – a topic that was previously mentioned in the results section. One respondent mentioned that he/she did not mind the high price tag of Nike SB shoes because they can perform and last for a month or longer. Another skater remarked that “I'm a big fan of Nike SB, they may not be core, but they make great shoes.” Many skateboarders mentioned the performance specific models of Nike SB, such as the Nike SB Stefan Janoski and the Nike SB Blazer. One respondent referred to the Janoski as “the best skate shoe ever made.” Another participant mentioned the importance of being skater-owned (i.e. self-selection) vs. performance and style, stating that “Although Nike SB is not skater owned, they still make some of the best skate shoes, which is the most important part. As much as I love supporting skater owned companies, I'd rather skate something more comfortable and stylish.”

Another frequently mentioned topic was the importance of “giving back to the skateboard community.” Many participants mentioned that it was important for Nike to give back to the skateboard community if it wants to be accepted as an authentic skateboard company. Whether or not Nike has actually supported the skateboard community and given back is unclear, as there were mixed responses. One participant claims: “Nike SB is too focused on having a super star team instead of focusing on being part of the skateboarding community.” Another respondent makes a similar claim, stating: “I don’t mind Nike SB being a big company and coming into the skateboard industry, but only as long as they give back to the community as well.” From this response it is unclear whether Nike has in fact given back, but it is obviously a key factor. Other participants noted the importance of “giving back,” and believe that Nike SB does actually contribute positively to the skateboard community. For example, one participant says that Nike SB “are a terrific brand, and try to give back to skaters.” The exact meaning of “giving back,” however, is difficult to determine and could come in a variety of possible forms. This concept of giving back to the skateboard community is something that is important to clarify, and should be looked at in advancing skateboard studies.

Finally, another topic of frequent mention and debate was the ownership of skateboard companies and Nike SB’s ownership. This topic was at the center of H1 and H2 of this research and was a major theme of Beal and Weidman’s (2003) study of authenticity in the skateboard industry. Responses about ownership of skateboard companies and Nike SB’s ownership were

extremely varied and ranged to the far ends of the spectrum. Many respondents were aware that Nike SB employs skateboarders and those from within the skateboard industry on their staff. This was, after all, one of Nike's strategies to successfully integrate into skateboarding, which did not go unnoticed by many of these skateboarders. One participant made note of this, stating: "although Nike is a non-skateboarder owned company they have so many people hired from other big skate companies to run that dept., so it kind of is skateboarder ran." This indicates that actual "ownership" may not be as important as the management of the company, and as long as skateboarders are involved in running daily activities at the company, it may be considered authentic by skateboarders. Another respondent also commented on this theme mentioning: "Nike SB may not be 'OWNED' by skateboarders, but the company itself is run by skateboarders. Nike is a huge corporate company, but they've handed the whole 'SB' chain down to skateboarders to operate for skateboarders." Other skateboarders, however, were more critical of Nike and other large companies that may be trying to co-opt skateboarding for monetary gains. One participant remarked "I would rather support a skateboarder owned company than Nike SB. Buy from local skate shops and support the real skateboarders of the USA." Many other participants felt that it was important to support the skateboarding scene by purchasing from skateboarder owned companies as well. Many participants agreed that ownership by skateboarders was important, leaving simple statements such as, "SUPPORT LOCAL COMPANIES," "Core skateboarding companies are what keeps skateboarding alive," and "DON'T DO

IT.” It is obvious that ownership is a topic of great debate, and judging from the wide range of responses gathered, future research on ownership and authenticity could provide more insight into this theme.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Although this research has provided many useful insights into the skateboarding culture and its concept of authenticity, it has opened the doors for even further investigation. The case of Nike SB seems to be a consistent point of debate in the skateboarding world, and grows increasingly fascinating as Nike's presence in skateboarding continues to develop (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008; Yochim, 2010). As one would expect, skateboarders are not entirely one-sided about the concept of authenticity and the entrance of Nike SB into the skateboarding market. There is not a surefire method to achieving authenticity within skateboarding, but there are definitely key factors that skateboarders look for in authentic companies. As the skateboarding culture evolves, the concept of authenticity within skateboarding will most likely change as well. In order for a skate company to be successful, it need to be aware of these changes and remain in tune with its core customers – skateboarders.

### **Discussion of Results**

#### **Discussing research questions**

The most straightforward and perhaps most important information that can be drawn from this study is the answer to RQ1: Which aspects of a skateboard company's authenticity are most important to skateboarders? Respondents clearly valued the importance of skateboard companies having a local presence by selling their products in core local skate shops. Local presence was rated as the most important factor for skateboard companies ( $M = 6.62/7$ ), with the lowest standard deviation ( $SD = .657$ ). Therefore, any

company hoping to remain successful in skateboarding should make it a point to have its products available in local skate shops. Because the questions did not refer to shoe companies specifically, but “skate companies,” it is rational to assume that this applies to any company in the skateboard industry.

Nike was clearly aware of the importance of having products available in skateboard shops during its 2002 launch of the Nike SB line, and made it a point to limit distribution only core skateboard shops (Montgomery, 2002b; Robertson, 2004). Nike has stayed true to this strategy and continues to keep its Nike SB line available only in skate shops. When asked about availability of Nike SB products, participants agreed ( $M = 5.73/7$ ) that they could find Nike SB products in local skate shops. One participant even remarked on this by stating: “Although Nike SB is not skater owned, I respect that they sell their shoes to ‘Core’ shops only.”

Previous research has shown that various forms of media such as video, photography, and websites are very important within skateboarding (Beal, 1996; Beal & Weidman, 2003; Malakye, 2009; Yochim, 2010). The results from this research have greatly supported this notion as well. Therefore companies that wish to remain authentic in the eyes of skateboarders, should make an effort to produce media that skateboarders have grown to expect – such as full length videos. As the internet has grown to play a much larger role within skateboarding, many companies are also beginning to focus heavily on releasing online video clips. Obviously mindful of the importance of online media, Nike SB made a big splash in the skateboarding world when it released a

free high-definition online stream of the full-length video, *Debaacle*, in 2009. This was the first time any skateboard company released a full-length video online in high-definition, for free nonetheless (Yan, 2009).

This research demonstrates that Nike SB has indeed been successful in its creation and distribution skate specific media, including a number of full-length videos. According to this research most participants agreed that Nike SB has released good full-length skate videos ( $M = 5.70/7$ ) and that Nike SB has good videos and photos on their website ( $M = 5.64/7$ ). These responses were ranked within the top four in the Nike SB set of questions, corresponding with top four factors regarding skate company authenticity in general.

Another important finding was that Beal and Weidman's (2003) factor, self-selection, was also ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important factor by skateboarders ( $M = 6.18/7$ ). Beil and Weidman state that self-selection is "arguably the most important factor affecting a company's success" (p. 346). According to Beal and Weidman (2003), self-selection also suggests that professional skateboarders have the best chance to maintain a successful skateboarding company, and that outsiders are normally unsuccessful.

The importance of self-selection was one of the hurdles that Nike SB had to overcome within the skateboarding community. In previous interviews, Nike SB global marketing manager, Kevin Immamura stated that that bringing people in from within the skateboard industry was one of Nike's most important tactics (Gumz, 2006). Some respondents even commented on this issue in the section for "other responses." Responses such as: "I think its okay that Nike is owned

by a non-skateboarder as long as the daily team activities are run by a skateboarder,” and “Nike SB may not be ‘OWNED’ by skateboarders, but the company itself are runned by skateboarders [sic]” demonstrate that some skateboarders are aware and accepting of Nike SB’s strategy to hire from within the skateboarding industry. According to this research then, any company hoping to successfully break into skateboarding should make it a priority to employ skateboarders at top levels within its organization. Recruiting from within the culture could also, hypothetically, prove successful to companies trying to enter into other sport subcultures such as snowboarding, surfing, and BMX.

According to this research, another factor of authenticity that Beal and Weidman (2003) listed in their research, advertising, was also somewhat important to skateboarders. Having advertisements in skateboard magazines ( $M = 5.50$ ) and having advertisements on skateboard websites ( $M = 5.21$ ) were both ranked above 5/7 in importance for skateboard companies. It’s important to note, however, that these factors were noticeably low on the list (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> respectively). Therefore, although it is still important for a skateboard company to maintain a presence through advertising in skate specific media, in the present study it is not as important as previously described by Beal and Weidman (2003).

Finally, a very interesting finding was the lack of importance skateboarders assigned to a company’s social media presence to skateboarders. In today’s era of new media, companies are well aware of the



importance of social-media marketing. The use of social media as a marketing tool by large companies has not gone unnoticed by the academic community, and has already been the subject matter of several books (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). As social media has largely been popular among youth and young adults, especially the age range 18 – 29, it makes sense that skateboarding companies would want to utilize the potential of social media websites (Pew Research Center, 2011). As noted in the results section, when asked about the Nike SB's social media presence, there were weak positive relationships discovered between two of the three measures of actual purchase behavior: future purchase behavior ( $r = .194$ ) and word-of-mouth recommendations ( $r = .267$ ). There was not a significant correlation found with past purchase behavior. Although important, social media is still relatively new, and perhaps the absence of a relationship between Nike SB's social media and past purchase behavior is simply due to the infancy of social media in general.

### **Discussing the hypotheses**

Except for H2, all hypotheses of this research were supported to some degree, with six of the nine being fully supported. It is important to note, however, that most of these hypotheses were supported by weak (although significant) relationships. The hypotheses with the strongest significant relationships were H3, H7, H8, and H9.

Hypothesis 3 states that there will be a positive relationship between Nike SB's sponsorship of skateboarders and actual purchase of Nike SB shoes. This hypothesis is important because it draws on brand theory, and the idea that a

brand's personality can be exemplified through 'celebrity sponsorships' (Aaker, 1996). In the case of skateboarding, the celebrities are the teams of professional and amateur skateboarders that companies sponsor for promotional purposes. It is no secret that successful skateboarding companies will seek out the most popular and talented skateboarders to represent their product (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Jürgen & Schmid, 2008; Yochim, 2010). This practice dates back to the beginnings of modern skateboarding with the notorious Dogtown Z-Boys, who helped put the Zephyr Surfboard Shop on the map with their extraordinary skateboarding skills (Yochim, 2010). Nike was obviously aware of the importance of sponsoring top-name skateboarders, acquiring some of the best amateur and professional skateboarders for its team. Many, however, consider the 2004 acquisition of Paul Rodriguez Jr. to be the most important turning point for Nike SB (Berg, 2005; Jürgen & Schmid, 2008; SkateboardingMagazine.com, 2010).

According to the results here, Nike SB's sponsorship of individual skateboarders and the team as a whole both had positive effects on all three aspects of purchase behaviors of respondents. Participants who felt that Nike SB sponsored good skateboarders and/or had a good overall team were more likely to have purchased Nike SB shoes in the past, purchase Nike SB shoes in the future, and recommend Nike SB shoes to friends. This speaks a great deal to theory of brand personality, and the importance in skateboarding of having credible personalities representing and wearing your company's products (Aaker, 1996). Therefore, any company hoping to successfully break into the

skateboarding market should make it a priority to develop a team of respected and well-known skateboarders.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that there would be a positive relationship between Nike SB's online presence and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes. Online presence was measured by three variables: Nike SB's website, the photos and videos on Nike SB's website, and Nike SB's Facebook/Twitter pages. The strongest relationships for actual purchasing behavior applied to Nike SB's website and the photos and video on Nike SB's website. This finding indicates that skateboarders are actually visiting the company's website and consuming the media presented on the website, leading to positive effects on actual sales of product. What's interesting is that on Nike SB's website, one cannot actually purchase any products; there are just descriptions of shoes and locations of stores that carry Nike SB products. Therefore skateboarders aren't even using the website to purchase the product, and still have to physically travel to purchase Nike SB shoes after visiting the website. While there was also a positive relationship between Nike SB's social media presence and both future purchase behavior and word-of-mouth recommendations, the relationships were both fairly weak. This isn't surprising, however, as social media was rated as the least important factor for skate company authenticity, and the lowest factor of authenticity actually achieved by Nike SB.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that there would be a positive relationship between Nike SB's video presence and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes. Yochim (2010) focused a great deal of her research on the importance of

skateboarding videos within the skateboard culture. Yochim (2010) states that skate videos are: “A central element of the culture... skateboarding videos work to define skateboarding culture; they tell skateboarders who they are” (142).

This is clearly an area of skateboarding culture Nike SB has not ignored, releasing three full-length videos, two tour videos, and one promotional video since 2004 (SkateVideoSite.com, 2011). According to this research, Nike SB’s release of full-length videos was successful, as there was a strong positive relationship between opinions of Nike SB’s videos and all three forms of purchase behavior. Those participants who felt Nike SB has released good skateboarding videos were more likely to have purchased Nike SB shoes in the past, purchase Nike SB shoes in the future, and recommend Nike SB shoes to friends. Another interesting discovery is that the strongest relationship was found in future purchases, indicating that Nike SB skateboard videos have an enduring effect on viewers and those who have seen the videos plan on buying the shoes in the future, even if they haven’t purchased them yet.

Lastly, H9 predicted a positive relationship between Nike SB’s local presence and actual purchase behavior of Nike SB shoes. As discussed earlier, the variable local presence is in reference to Nike SB’s availability in local skate shops. Overall, the relationship between local presence and actual purchase behavior was the strongest relationship discovered. The strength of this relationship makes complete sense, though, as local presence was the highest rated variable of skate company authenticity by participants of this research. Although Nike SB’s local availability was rated 3<sup>rd</sup> by participants, it is clear that

those who could find Nike SB products easily in local skateboard shops were by far more likely to purchase and recommend the shoes to friends. As previously stated, local presence was a part of Nike SB's strategy since the introduction of the line in 2002, and remains critical to Nike's continued success in the skateboard community (Montgomery, 2002).

### **Weaknesses and Strengths**

This research is by no means perfect, and it is important to clarify the possible weaknesses of this study. This study, after all, is exploratory in nature and like any nascent research there are bound to be some weaknesses. Revealing the weak points of this study will also help strengthen any future research in this area.

### **Weaknesses**

One conceivable weakness of this research is that the survey was conducted strictly online. While online research has many advantages, Wright (2005) discusses some of the drawbacks of online survey research. He focuses on the problems of sampling that can arise from online surveys. As mentioned in the Methods section, gaining an accurate sample can prove difficult with online research, as people with certain demographic backgrounds, geographic locations, and socioeconomic status are more likely to have internet access (Wright, 2005; Best & Harrison, 2009). Wright (2005) discusses another possible drawback of online recruitment and how some online communities, bulletin boards, and forums can actually view invitations for online research as offensive or "spam," leading to lower participation rates than anticipated. This problem

did in fact occur during the recruitment process, and the invitation for this research survey was deleted from one skateboarding forum, as it was deemed spam.

Another potential weakness of this study is the possibility of priming within the questionnaire. Feldman (1995) describes the phenomenon of priming within survey research and how: “categories or information that have been recently used are more likely to be retrieved in response to a new question” (p. 260). Therefore, recovery of information from previous questions can potentially alter answers to subsequent questions (Feldman, 1995). The first set of questions focused on skateboard companies in general, hoping to answer RQ1: Which aspects of a skateboard company’s authenticity are most important to skateboarders? The second set of questions was identical to the first, except the questions focused specifically on Nike SB, in order to answer RQ2: Which aspects of authenticity has Nike SB successfully achieved within the skateboard community? It is quite possible that by answering the first set of questions, about the skateboard industry as a whole, participants’ answers to the second set of questions, about Nike SB specifically, could have been affected somehow. Tourangeau and Rasinski (1988), however, stress that priming does not actually generate a specific desired response, and only increases the likelihood that a previous recollection will be triggered.

An additional perceived weakness could be that the question regarding social media presence may be deemed slightly insufficient. The question asked only about a company’s Facebook and Twitter page. While Facebook and

Twitter are both extremely popular social media websites, there are obviously other popular platforms social media. It is important to note, however, that most companies do in fact utilize Facebook and Twitter as the two main social media platforms to reach consumers (Porterfield, 2010). Also, one must understand that the goal of the question was not to measure social media, but to act as one measure of the variable 'online presence.'

### **Strengths**

There are a number of conceivable strengths to this study as well. As mentioned earlier, this research is primarily exploratory in nature and could be considered the foundation for future research in this area. Research on subcultures is limited, and much of the existing research on subcultures has focused on cultures of music, style, and dance (e.g. Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Wheaton, 2007; McArther, 2008). This research is helping to advance the small amount of existing research on the skateboarding culture, while also pushing studies of subcultures into new territory by focusing on the theme of authenticity within skateboarding.

The foremost strength of this research, is the fact that this is the first quantitative study of the skateboard community to date, as all other research has been qualitative in nature (Beal, 1995; Beal, 1996; Beal & Weidman, 2003; Donnelly, 2008; Irvine & Taysom, 1998; Németh, 2004; Németh, 2006; Porter, 2003; Yochim, 2010). This research is truly the first of its kind, and the quantitative data that has been gathered provides a base for future studies as well as potential for further data mining.

The sample for this study is also much more diverse and wide-ranging than previous qualitative studies of skateboarders, which focused on small specific geographic locations. Beal's (1995) pioneering study of skateboarders took place in Jamestown and Welton, Colorado, while more recently Yochim (2010) focused on the small Ann Arbor Michigan skateboarding community. With no geographic limitations, this research was successfully able to cover a much wider range of skateboarders, even reaching those outside of the United States.

Another strength of the study are the results overall. Through this research, clear lines can be drawn about authenticity for companies in the skateboard industry. Beal and Weidman (2003) were the first to discuss authenticity of skateboard companies. In their research, the authors present three separate approaches that skateboard companies utilize to remain authentic: self-selection, sponsorship, and advertising. Beal and Weidman (2003), however, presented these concepts as fact, with no actual input from skateboarders. This research examined these three variables, as well as others, from the perspective of skateboarders. Drawing on the opinions of 345 skateboarders from all over the world, this research was able to clearly present which aspects of company authenticity were indeed most important to skateboarders.

### **Role of the Researcher**

A last strength of this study could be considered the role of the researcher. I have been skateboarding for well over a decade, and as both



media scholar and skateboarder I cannot help but to be fascinated in the relationship between the skateboarding community and various forms of media. The literature in this area seems to be extremely rare, and it is apparent that this is a topic rich with possibilities for important and original research. By and large, all previous research on the skateboard community has been done by outsiders with only slight connections into the culture (Beal, 1995; Beal, 1996; Donnelly, 2008; Irvine & Taysom, 1998; Németh, 2004; Németh, 2006; Yochim, 2010). Yochim (2010) discusses this matter in her book:

Despite my 14-year involvement with the skateboarding and BMXing communities, I remain a relative outsider. I am loath to admit that I operate in this community principally as an observer...

I have little agency within the group... it is clearly their world (p. 5).

Unlike Yochim, I am not an observer or outsider. I am a part of the 'world' she is describing and I feel that my position within the skateboard community adds a much greater depth, accuracy, and integrity to my research. Having been skateboarding for 13 years, I have actually witnessed the arrival of Nike SB into skateboarding firsthand and had many discussions with fellow skateboarders on this topic. I personally know how controversial the entrance of Nike SB and other large companies into skateboarding is for this culture, which is why I felt this would be such an interesting topic to investigate.

### **Future Research**

Like many other research studies, this project was initially meant to be a much larger undertaking. Originally, the plan for this research was a case study

utilizing a mixed methods approach. The case study would have included a survey of skateboarders, interviews with Nike SB staff members, and textual analysis of Nike SB advertising. I soon realized that this was simply far too large of an undertaking for a single study. This is an area that has hardly been covered in previous research, and I felt it was sufficient to focus on a single aspect of the original case study: a quantitative survey of skateboarders.

Because this research is truly the first of its kind, there is a great deal of potential for future research. This research was largely exploratory in nature, with specific variables of authenticity laid out for respondents. Obviously, the variables of authenticity presented within this study are not the only strategies companies employ to remain authentic within skateboarding. This was however, a study of a youth population and the survey had to be limited to a certain amount of questions or the dropout rate may have been too great. Therefore, one option for future research would be to examine an entirely different set of potential variables of authenticity. Afterwards, those results could be examined, and even compared to the results from this research.

A second option would be to develop one or more of the variables from this study even further. As an initial study, this research was not able to delve to deeply into the intricacies of each variable presented. Therefore, future research into a few, or even one, of these variables could prove to be highly promising. For example, one could explore the concept of self-selection alone, as the participants of this research rated it the one of the most important aspect for company authenticity. As one of Beal and Weidman's (2003) original three

values of authenticity in the skateboarding industry, further investigation into self-selection would also support the development of previous research as well.

Social media would also be an area worth further exploration within the action sports industry. Interestingly, the participants of this research rated having a good Facebook and/or Twitter page the least important aspect of authentic skateboarding companies. In the age of new media, with most companies striving to strengthen their social media presence, it is fascinating that a youth culture, such as skateboarding, rated social media so low in importance. Another interesting point to note is that since the survey was administered, Nike SB made an effort to revamp their Facebook page in May 2011 (Freshness Mag, 2011). Nike SB even recruited well-known *SLAP Magazine* writer Mark Whiteley to spearhead the new fan page; another example of Nike hiring from within the skateboard industry (SLAP Magazine, 2011). At the time of this writing, the Nike SB Facebook page was at 456,584 “likes” (<http://www.facebook.com/NikeSkateboarding>) and its Twitter account has 15,425 followers (<http://twitter.com/nikesb>), a clear indicator that Nike has made tremendous strides in its social media presence. It may be interesting to see whether skateboarders’ opinions on the importance of social media have changed since this research was conducted. It seems apparent that further investigation into the usage of social media within the skateboard industry, or even Nike SB’s social media presence alone, could prove to be a productive route for future research.

Another possible direction for future research would be to see whether the results of this research would remain consistent with another product or company within skateboarding. While this study focused on skateboarding shoes, and a large company that was able to successfully enter into the skateboarding market, there are other skateboarding products and companies that could prove worth investigating. Since Nike SB's foray into the skateboarding market, other mainstream shoe companies such as Adidas and Converse have experienced similar success within skateboarding.

There is also vast potential for further expansion on this research through qualitative research methods. As previously stated, the original concept for this research entailed interviews with Nike SB staff and textual analysis of Nike SB advertisements. Looking into these two options could be the next route for future research.

During the early stages of this research, I attempted to reach several Nike SB staff members, including a very key person: global marketing manager, Kevin Immamura. I actually received responses from Immamura and one other prominent staff member. In both cases, however, after I sent a list of possible questions all communication ceased. I sent two follow up e-mails to both and even tried calling, but after no progress I decided to move on. Perhaps, after being presented with the results of this research or through different approaches, key Nike SB staff members would be willing to participate in interviews. Interviews can offer an extensive amount of information and insight into a topic that other forms of research simply don't offer (Amis, 2005). In-

depth interviews are commonly used as one of several methods employed within this type of research, and serve as a “construction site of knowledge.” (Marshall & Rossman, 142).

Analyzing the advertisements that Nike SB has released could also prove to be a productive addition to this research project for the future.

Advertisements serve as an important text within this example because they are artifacts that are produced by Nike SB and located within the niche magazines that the skateboarding culture consumes. Beal and Weidman (2003) note that the skateboarding industry largely advertises strictly in niche skateboarding magazines – “and almost nowhere else” (p. 346). Although since this claim in 2003, advertising within skateboarding has started to move towards the internet, a majority of advertising is still focused within these niche magazines. Also, many times the ads seen on the internet are simply digital replications of the print advertisements. These advertisements will most likely contain little actual text, and would therefore be coded for the visual imagery that is present. Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006) and McKee (2003) describe the necessary procedures for coding images for any themes that may arise.

One could even take the overarching concept of this research and explore authenticity within other sport subcultures, such as surfing, snowboarding, BMX, or motocross. It could prove worthwhile to see where the similarities and differences for company authenticity are for different sport subcultures. Skateboarding is just one of many ‘action sports,’ and investigation into other sport subcultures could help to advance the small

amount of academic literature in this area. By itself, skateboarding is a \$4.78 billion annual industry with 11 million estimated U.S. participants (Donnelly, 2008, Yochim, 2010). The study of company authenticity within these individual sport subcultures could prove valuable for marketing and advertising companies as well.

## **Conclusion**

Like other subcultures, skateboarding is a relatively young culture, in a dual sense. Not only is skateboarding largely a youth culture, with a majority of participants under the age of 18, but skateboarding itself has only existed for a little over a half of a century. Also similarly to other youth cultures, skateboarding is also constantly changing and evolving.

Brooke (1999) talks about the timeline of skateboarding in terms of four “waves” that have taken place since skateboarding beginnings in the late 1950s. Brooke’s *Concrete Wave*, however, was written in 1999, and it is realistic to argue that skateboarding has entered the “fifth wave,” since then. Thanks in part to Television shows such as *Jackass*, *Viva La Bam*, *Rob and Big*, and *Rob Dyrdek’s Fantasy Factory*, and an explosion in internet specific skateboard content, skateboarding has changed dramatically since the 1990s. This new “fifth wave” of skateboarding seems to have taken the skateboard community from VCRs and DVD players to the internet, and the considerable success of skateboarding websites like The Berrics (<http://www.theberrics.com>) and skateboarding forums like Skate Perception (<http://www.skateperception.com>) is proof that skateboard companies need to adapt to these changes.

As I write the conclusion to this research, the world of skateboarding continues to evolve. Nike SB is still a power player in the skateboarding industry, and if it continues to be seen as authentic in the eyes of skateboarders it will no doubt remain successful.

As mentioned in the statement of purpose, one feature of Nike SB that was purposefully left out of this study was the physical quality of the shoe. As many respondents made clear in their comments, Nike SB makes a good skateboarding shoe. I was discussing this research with a fellow skateboarder, who said to me: “I wasn’t a big fan of Nike at first, but I tried their shoes out and they really are amazing for skateboarding.” What is interesting to me about this statement, which is also suggested by many participants of this research, is the “but.” It is no secret that Nike did not have the greatest fan base when entering the skateboarding market in the late 90s and early 2000s, yet it somehow managed to get its shoes onto the feet of skateboarders (Jürgen & Schmid, 2008). If somebody is not a big fan of Nike, why would they try Nike SB shoes out in the first place?

I still remember when the Nike SB shoes began to appear on the feet of skateboarders in the early 2000s. I would overhear conversations with these alleged ‘traitors’ needing to defend their choice to wear Nike shoes to other skaters. Personally, this is the reason why I feel that what Nike did was so very incredible, and why I chose to investigate Nike SB specifically. Skateboarders had to make the choice to go against the grain of their own culture, facing inevitable criticism from fellow skateboarders. This was really the challenge that

Nike needed to overcome within skateboarding. Every single skateboarder who, for one reason or another, tried on a pair of Nike SB shoes during this time was a major victory for Nike.

There is a great deal to be learned from this research. Clearly authenticity within skateboarding is not a subject that is cut and dry. There is no “magical formula” for winning over the skateboard community. This study does, however, dive into the murky waters of authenticity within the skateboarding culture and begin to clarify which aspects of a company’s authenticity are most important to skateboarders. There are many questions still to be answered and many avenues left for exploration through future research.

As skateboarding culture continues to grow and evolve, those interested in marketing to this culture need to be aware of these changes. If companies wish to remain authentic in the eyes of skateboarders, they need to continuously pay attention to what is important to skateboarders. In a similar vein, the little academic research that is focused on the skateboarding culture is by and large rather outdated. In general, there is definitely a lack of research focused on sport subcultures, and this is an area of research seems to remain untapped. My hope is that this research is beginning to look into a new direction and that this study will help to push the literature into the 21<sup>st</sup> century along with the skateboard culture.



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## Appendix A



*An Investigation into the Authenticity of Skateboard Companies*  
Online Survey Consent/Assent Script:

**You must be at least 13 years old to complete this survey**

**Please print a copy of this form for your own records.**

**If you are under 18 please read this page with a parent or Guardian:**

My name is Brandon Gomez, and I am a graduate student at Syracuse University. I am inviting you to participate in a research study. Involvement in the study is voluntary. This means that you do not have to do this survey if you do not want to. This sheet will explain the study to you and please feel free to ask questions about the research if you have any.

### **About this study:**

I am interested in learning more about what makes a company a “true skateboarding company.” You will be asked to complete a 30-question survey about skateboard shoe companies. This will take about 15 minutes of your time. All information will be kept confidential.

*This means that your name will not appear anywhere and your personal answers will not be linked to your name in any way.*

### **Raffle for prizes:**

If you and/or your parents decide to enter an e-mail address at the end of the survey, you will be entered into a drawing for 9 possible prizes, which include 1 pair of Nike SB shoes, 1 complete skateboard, 2 skateboard decks, 2 sets of trucks, 2 sets of wheels and 2 sets of bearings (I estimate that about 300 skateboarders will participate so odds of winning are estimated at 1:30). **This is completely voluntary;** you do not have to enter an e-mail if you don’t want to. When you close or finish the survey there will be a link to the contest. Your e-mail address will not be linked to your survey. I will contact the winners at the e-mail address provided for shipping information. If you are selected as a winner, you will be contacted for shipping information. If you are under 18, you will be asked for the name and address of a parent or guardian. Any information given will remain **completely confidential;** this means no one will know what you write and I will be the only person to see it. Your e-mail will not be given to anybody else, it will only be used for the prize raffle.

### **Benefits of this study:**

A benefit is something that is good. The benefit of this research is that you will be helping us to learn more about the skateboarding culture and the companies in skateboarding. Many people who do research have not written a lot about skateboarding, so this will be a very exciting and new study.

**Risks of study:**

There are minimal risks to this survey. I am simply asking questions about skateboarding shoe companies. If you do not want to take part, you do not have to and can close the survey. If you decide to take part and later you don't want to continue, you can close the survey at any time. All you have to do is close the internet browser and the survey will be over.

**Confidentiality:**

**Your responses will be kept completely confidential. This means nobody will ever see your answers except me.** Also there I am not asking for your name or your parents name so I will not know who you are. Only the researcher will see the responses from the web survey. At the end of the survey, if you wish to be entered into the prize drawing, you will be asked for an e-mail address. This is completely voluntary, and you do not need to use your name. You can use a parent's e-mail address if your parents prefer. If you win, you will be contacted at the e-mail address and asked for a shipping address; you do not need to provide a name for shipping. The list of e-mail addresses will be destroyed after the drawing is complete.

**Decision to quit at any time:**

Participation in this survey is voluntary; you can stop at anytime. If you do not want to continue, you can simply leave the website. If you do not hit the 'submit' button at the end of the survey, your responses will not be counted. You can also skip any questions that you do not wish to answer, by hitting next. If you skip any questions, you can still enter the drawing at the end.

**Contact Information:**

If you have any questions, concerns, complaints about the research, contact the researcher, Brandon Gomez at:  
e-mail: [brgomez@syr.edu](mailto:brgomez@syr.edu)  
phone: 484-716-1118

Research Advisor: Carla Lloyd  
e-mail: [cvlloyd@syr.edu](mailto:cvlloyd@syr.edu)  
phone: 315-443-2305

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you have questions, concerns, or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than the investigator, if you cannot reach the investigator, or contact the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board at 315-443-3013.

*"If you are between the ages of 13 and 17, by clicking continue and starting this survey, you and your parent or guardian agree that you understand this page and agree to be part of this research study."*

## Appendix B

Brandon Gomez  
IRB #: 10-300  
Revised Questionnaire

Scale:

- 1 – strongly disagree (I disagree a lot)
- 2 – disagree
- 3 – slightly disagree (I disagree a little bit)
- 4 – neutral (I'm not sure)
- 5 – slightly agree (I agree a little bit)
- 6 – agree
- 7 – strongly agree (I agree a lot)

1. Are you a skateboarder/Do you skateboard? Yes/No
2. How long have you been skateboarding? (in years; if less than one round up to one year)
3. It is important for a skate company to be owned by a skateboarder
4. It is important for a skate company to sponsor small/local events
5. It is important for a skate company to sponsor large/national events like X-Games, Gravity Games, and the Maloof Money Cup
6. It is important for a skate company to have a good overall team
7. It is important for a skate company to sponsor good skateboarders
8. It is important for a skate company to have advertisements in skateboard magazines
9. It is important for a skate company to have advertisements on skateboard websites
10. It is important for a skate company to have a good website
11. It is important for a skate company to have videos and photos on their website
12. It is important for a skate company to have a good Facebook and/or Twitter page
13. It is important for a skate company to release full length skate videos
14. It is important for a skate company to have their products available in local skate shops
15. I have seen NIKE SB to sponsor small/local events

16. I have seen NIKE SB to sponsor large/national events like X-Games, Gravity Games, and the Maloof Money Cup
17. NIKE SB has a good overall team
18. NIKE SB sponsors good individual skateboarders
19. I have seen NIKE SB advertisements in skateboard magazines
20. I have seen NIKE SB advertisements on skateboard websites
21. NIKE SB has a good website
22. NIKE SB has good videos and photos on their website
23. NIKE SB has a good Facebook and/or Twitter page
24. NIKE SB has released good full length skate videos
25. I can find NIKE SB products in local skate shops
26. I do not like NIKE SB because they are not owned by a skateboarder
27. I have bought NIKE SB shoes before
28. I would buy NIKE SB shoes in the future
29. What is the most you would pay for NIKE SB shoes? \_\_\_\_\_
30. I would recommend NIKE SB shoes to my friends or other skateboarders
31. Sex: male/female
32. Age (on your last birthday) [if participant is under 13 then results will be erased and will not be included in data]:
33. State:
34. Additional comments: (open ended)

At this point (or after withdrawal) participant will be provided a link to a separate page where they can enter an e-mail address for prize drawing:

1. Enter E-mail address for product raffle – completely voluntary and e-mail will not be linked to individual survey responses – will be contacted for shipping info if selected - participants under 18 will be asked to secure permission from a parent/guardian prior and enter the e-mail address of a parent/guardian. Also if the winner selected is under 18, the name of a parent or guardian will be requested for shipping purposes.

## VITA

NAME OF AUTHOR: Brandon Gomez

PLACE OF BIRTH: Coatesville, Pennsylvania

DATE OF BIRTH: October 25, 1986

UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOL ATTENDED:

Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), Indiana, PA

DEGREE AWARDED:

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Dean's List at Indiana University of Pennsylvania all semesters from spring 2006 to present

National Collegiate Communication Arts Award, Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2006 and 2008.2009

IUP Undergraduate Scholars Forum outstanding paper presentation award

Provost's Scholar at Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Recipient of Ronald E. McNair Graduate Fellowship at Syracuse University 2009/2010 academic year

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Operations Officer – Skateistan, Kabul, Afghanistan; Phnom Penh Cambodia, January 2012 – present

Executive Assistant and Overall HR Manager - Skateistan, Kabul, Afghanistan, May 2011 – January 2012

Administrative Assistant in Academic Affairs, Syracuse University, August 2010 to present

Instructional Associate for COM 107 Course, Syracuse University, June 2010 – August 2010

Research Assistant - Blog Mediated Public Relations, Syracuse University, Summer of 2010

Internship - Center City Film and Video, Philadelphia, PA, May 2009 to August 2009