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### An Exploration of Viewers' Perceptions and Experiences at Action Sports Events in the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Game

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#### Abstract

Activities traditionally considered leisure pursuits, such as breaking and skateboarding, have been reclassified as action sports and incorporated into prominent international sports competitions, including the Olympics and the Asian Games. This study aims to explore public perceptions and experiences concerning the inclusion of these action sports at the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games. Employing a hybrid methodological approach, the study analysed responses from an 182 online survey comprising closed and open-ended questions. Drawing upon quantitative and qualitative analyses, three key findings are presented. Firstly, a significant portion of the survey participants viewed the addition of new action sports, such as breaking and skateboarding, to international sports events favourably. Secondly, whilst most recognised these activities as legitimate sports, a minority perceived them otherwise. Thirdly, the acceptance of these activities as sports was widespread, yet concerns were raised regarding the transparency and precision of the judging and scoring systems. This article underscores the evolving nature of global sports consumption and advocates for a broader, more inclusive definition of sports. It also emphasises the necessity of establishing clear, transparent evaluation criteria for new action sports to bolster their legitimacy and foster broader acceptance.

**Key words :** Action sports, breaking, skateboarding, the Olympics, the Asian Games

주요어 : 액션스포츠, 브레이킹, 스케이트보딩, 올림픽, 아시안게임

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## I. Introduction

The Asian Games represent a significant multi-sport event that occurs quadrennially, gathering athletes from across the Asian continent. Acknowledged and endorsed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), these Games are often likened to the Olympics, albeit with a distinct focus on Asia. Esteemed as the second most extensive multi-sport event globally, the Asian Games hold a prestigious position in the international sporting arena. The most recent Asian Games was hosted in Hangzhou, China, in 2023, having been postponed from the original schedule of 2022 due to COVID-19.

The Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games are particularly noteworthy for their inclusion of action sports. Action sports encompass a range of extreme, lifestyle, and leisure activities that primarily emphasise individual feats, including skateboarding, BMX, breaking, and parkour (see Collins & Brymer, 2020; Rinehart, 2000; Wheaton, 2004; Ellmer & Rynne, 2019). Skateboarding first made its appearance at the Jakarta-Palembang 2018 Asian Games and, following this successful debut, returned for the 2022 Hangzhou Games. Breaking, an athletic form of urban dance deeply rooted in hip-hop culture and often referred to as breakdancing, also made its inaugural appearance at the 2022 Asian Games.

This inclusion aims to symbolise a paradigm shift within traditional sports, embracing new forms of athleticism and competition that resonate with younger generations (Thorp & Wheaton, 2011). This decision is set against a backdrop that blends elements of classic sports

stadiums with urban, street-style environments, epitomising the fusion of tradition with modern youth culture.

However, the majority of practitioners engaged in action sports tend to resist the incorporation of their activities into global sports competitions (Renfree et al., 2021). This resistance to incorporating action sports within mainstream sporting contexts is largely attributed to their inherent characteristics and subcultures, such as a pronounced anti-establishment attitude, a deep-rooted sense of individuality, and a commitment to a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethos (Renfree et al., 2021; Thorp & Wheaton, 2011; Humphreys, 2003). These elements foster a culture that significantly diverges from the normative values and operational structures typically associated with conventional sports, leading to challenges in their assimilation into the broader sports landscape. Importantly, while existing research primarily examines the viewpoints of action sports participants, there is a notable dearth of exploration into how the general public perceives the inclusion of these sports in the Olympics.

This gap underscores the imperative for a more comprehensive understanding of how action sports are perceived, not solely by participants but also by the wider audience engaging with these sports as spectators.

Within this context, this article examines the perspectives and experiences of spectators who watched the action sports events at the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou. It centres on two primary research questions: 1) How does the public perceive and experience the introduction of breaking and skateboarding at the 2022 Asian Games?; and 2) How does

the public categorise breaking and skateboarding: as legitimate sports or merely as cultural and leisure activities?

This exploration is pivotal for understanding the public reception of integrating these relatively new sports into a traditional and esteemed event, such as the Asian Games. Analysing the spectator experience, which encompasses their reactions, engagement levels, and overall satisfaction, offers invaluable insights into the acceptance and success of incorporating these activities, traditionally viewed as leisure, into a prominent sporting framework.

The article commences with a comprehensive review of the literature concerning action sports, tracing their historical inclusion in global sporting events. Subsequently, it delineates the research methodology employed for this study. This paper then unveils the public's perception towards the inclusion of action sports in a major sporting event. Finally, it underscores the imperative of establishing clear and transparent evaluation criteria for emerging action sports to enhance their legitimacy and facilitate broader acceptance.

## 1. Action sports

Action sports encompass a range of extreme, lifestyle, and leisure activities that primarily emphasise individual feats (see Collins & Brymer, 2020; Rinehart, 2000; Wheaton, 2004, Ellmer et al., 2019). The sports include, but are not limited to, breaking, sport climbing, skateboarding, and parkour. Action sports present a marked contrast to the more conventional, institutionalised sports typically

showcased in events, such as the Olympics (Wheaton, 2004). For example, they include a predisposition towards anti-establishment sentiments, a strong sense of individualism, a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethos, and an overarching spirit of freedom and fun (Coates et al., 2010; Turner, 2013; Wheaton, 2004, 2015; King & Church, 2015; Sterchele et al., 2017).

As a result, such sports, particularly resonate with specific demographics, especially the youth (Coates et al., 2010). The global proliferation of action sports cultures has been swift, spurred by a harmonious convergence of factors, such as widespread mass communication, corporate sponsorship, the entertainment industry, and the growth of a young, affluent demographic (Booth & Thorpe, 2007). What started as informal and non-institutionalised activities have now gained substantial momentum in numerous Western nations. Moreover, they have also made significant inroads into several Eastern countries, including China, Japan, and South Korea (Thorpe, 2008).

## 2. The Background of Inclusion of Action Sports into the International Sporting Events

The global appeal of action sports has surged remarkably over the past decade. This growing interest is exemplified by the X Games, a premier action sports event. The X Games, an annual event showcasing extreme sports, has been organised, produced, and broadcasted since 1995 by ESPN (Rinehart, 2008). This event has been instrumental in propagating and expanding the action sports industry and its associated culture on a worldwide scale (Rinehart, 2000). According to

data from the ESPN Press Room in 2021, there was a 34% rise in viewership within the 18–24 age demographic compared to the figures recorded in 2019. This surge in interest among younger viewers underscores the growing appeal of extreme sports to a youthful audience. Additionally, the same year saw a remarkable upsurge in digital engagement, with the event garnering over 105 million video views. This marked an astounding 439% increase from the video views tallied in 2019, (ESPN Press Room, 2021).

In recent years, action sports have carved a niche in international sporting events. Skateboarding was introduced at the 2018 Asian Games, and breaking debuted at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games. In a significant move, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics featured skateboarding as a new event, and the Paris 2024 Olympics is slated to premiere breaking as an official sport. This deliberate incorporation of action sports into the Olympic programme aligns with the Olympic movement's aspiration to appeal to younger audiences (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2011). The recent addition of breaking to the roster of the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games, along with skateboarding's continued presence, further attests to the escalating prominence of action sports internationally. Nevertheless, there remains a gap in understanding public perceptions of these sports when showcased in major global events and the audiences' viewing experiences. Delving into how the public perceives and experiences these contemporary action sports can offer crucial insights into societal viewpoints and the evolving status of these sports on the global stage. The next section

presents methods adopted for examining how the audience perceives the action sports inclusion into the Asian Games.

## II. Method

### 1. Data collection

This study utilised a hybrid approach, quantitative and qualitative methodology. Data was gathered through Google Forms, a widely used online survey tool. The questionnaire's foundational structure was based on the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) developed by John Flanagan (1954). The demographic section consisted of two closed-ended questions addressing participants' gender and age. In this article, a meticulously crafted questionnaire consisting of fifteen questions was utilised to delve into the viewers' experiences and perceptions of breaking and skateboarding.

The questionnaire comprised a balanced mix of both open-ended and closed questions, specifically eight of the former and seven of the latter. The open-ended questions were crafted to elicit detailed, empirical responses (see Table 1), whereas the closed questions were designed to collect more structured, objective information. This dual approach was strategically implemented to capture a broad spectrum of insights, thereby facilitating an in-depth examination of the participants' perspectives and experiences in relation to these two sports.

Furthermore, within this questionnaire, three questions were particularly focused on the audience's perception and experience of overall action sports. These included one closed and two

open-ended questions. For example, participants were asked about their opinions on the incorporation of skateboarding and breaking into major international sports events, such as the Asian Games or the Olympics. Another question sought to understand whether the respondents considered skateboarding or breaking to be sports, thereby probing their views on the classification and recognition of these activities within the broader sports context.

To ensure the survey's reliability and validity, a pilot test was conducted with ten individuals, including an expert, before initiating the primary data collection.

Following the conclusion of the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games, a structured and random distribution process was implemented for a survey across Korea through various Social Network Services, with a primary focus on platforms, such as Instagram. The sampling

technique employed hinged on simple random sampling as delineated by Olken and Rotem (1986), further enriched by the integration of snowball sampling as expounded upon by Naderifar et al. (2017).

Importantly, survey links were dispatched exclusively to individuals who not only expressed a voluntary desire to participate but also had a clear understanding of the study's purpose. In an effort to broaden the survey's reach, mobile messaging services were further used. The timeframe for data gathering spanned from the 24th of November to the 15th of December in 2023. Upon completion of the survey period, the study had successfully procured 184 responses. The design of the questionnaire mandated respondents to answer each question comprehensively before advancing to the following questions or sections. This structure largely guaranteed genuine engagement from

Table 1. Open-ended questionnaire

	Question
Breaking	Did you find watching breaking competitions distinct from traditional sports (e.g., athletics, gymnastics)? Please describe any unique or special aspects you observed.
	If you are interested in watching breaking competitions again, what motivates this interest? Please elaborate on the elements that captivate you.
Skateboarding	Conversely, if you are not interested in revisiting breaking competitions, could you specify the reasons for your disinterest? Are there aspects of the competition that deter you?
	Did you find watching skateboarding competitions distinct from traditional sports (e.g., athletics, gymnastics)? Please describe any unique or special aspects you observed.
Overall	If you are interested in watching skateboarding competitions again, what motivates this interest? Please elaborate on the elements that captivate you.
	Conversely, if you are not interested in revisiting skateboarding competitions, could you specify the reasons for your disinterest? Are there aspects of the competition that deter you?
Overall	What are your thoughts on the inclusion of skateboarding and breaking in recognized international sports competitions, such as the Asian Games or the Olympics? Do you see this as a positive development, and why or why not?
	In your opinion, why might skateboarding or breaking not qualify as sports? Are there criteria or characteristics you believe these activities fail to meet?

participants, with only two exceptions where responses were not sincere. This study received ethical approval from the Institutional Bioethics Committees in Korea before data collection.

## 2. Data analysis

This study collected a total of 182 responses (see Table 2) via Google Forms, which were subsequently archived in a structured Excel spreadsheet for systematic analysis. The dataset originating from the closed-ended questionnaires was systematically isolated and conserved in a specialised Excel file, optimising the environment for subsequent numeral appraisals.

Table 2. Demographic information

	Object	n	%
gender	male	65	35
	female	117	65
age	20-30s	111	61
	30-40s	35	19
	40-50s	36	20

Descriptive statistics pertaining to the general characteristics of the subjects were computed using SPSS version 27. Furthermore, to determine whether the perceptions of action sports differed significantly among the subjects participating in this research, a one-sample t-test was utilised. The application of a one-sample t-test to assess the distribution of 'Yes' and 'No' responses within the general population necessitated the establishment of an appropriate test value, especially given that 'Yes' was encoded as 0 and 'No' as 1. Opting for 0.5 as the test value was considered judicious, representing the midpoint between the 'Yes' and 'No' responses and signifying an

equal distribution of both. Thus, employing 0.5 as the test value, with a significance level set at  $\alpha=0.05$ , ensured that the analysis accurately captured the central tendency of the dichotomous responses, facilitating a meaningful evaluation of their proportions.

On the other hand, the data derived from open-ended questionnaires were meticulously organised in a separate Excel file for rigorous analysis. This Excel file was subsequently converted into a PDF format to aid the categorisation process for each open-ended question. This meticulous approach enabled structured thematic analysis, allowing for an in-depth examination of the qualitative responses. By categorising the data in this manner, the research aimed to uncover patterns and themes within the participants' answers, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics at play.

To enhance the analytical precision and efficiency, the data were integrated into NVivo 12. This software facilitated a structured approach to the analysis, amassing evidence and orchestrating it into interconnected thematic categories, as elucidated by Alhojailan (2012).

Adhering to Braun and Clarke's (2006) renowned six-phase guideline for thematic analysis, the data corresponding to the open-ended responses underwent exhaustive multi-tiered reviews. Firstly, the data was repeatedly and critically read. During these repetitive examinations, an initial stage of manual coding was executed, and surfacing thematic patterns were scrupulously categorised. This phase of analysis harnessed a hybrid coding paradigm, seamlessly merging both inductive and deductive techniques, as expounded by Fereday

and Muir-Cochrane (2006). Codes were then systematically organised into broader themes and sub-themes. For instance, dominant themes included (1) the infusion of youthfulness and harmony into international sporting events, (2) the recognition of action sports as legitimate sports, and (3) the need for appropriate judgement criteria and evaluation systems.

The survey questionnaire was originally written in Korean. Any quotations from this questionnaire included in this paper have been translated into English by the author, taking the utmost care to maintain anonymity. The subsequent section presents the interpretation of this study's findings.

### III. Results

#### 1. Breaking

##### 1) The Recognition and Viewership of Breaking at the Asian Games

The average response to the question 'Were you aware that breakdance (B-boying or

breaking dance) was adopted as an official event for the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games?' was 0.53 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) (see Table 3). This indicates that the half of respondents were not aware of the fact that breakdance had been adopted as an official event ( $t=0.889$ ,  $df=181$ ,  $p=0.375$ ).

Secondly, the average response to the question 'Did you watch the breaking event at the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games?' was 0.74 ( $\pm 0.44$ ). This suggests that the respondents generally did not watch the breaking event ( $t=7.213$ ,  $df=181$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

Among those who engaged with the breaking event, the average response to the question 'Do you want to continue watching breaking events?' was 0.21 ( $\pm 0.41$ ). This indicates that a majority of the respondents expressed an interest in continuously watching breaking events ( $t=-4.924$ ,  $df=47$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

##### 2) A Blend of Rhythm and Performance vs. Traditional Norms and Judging Challenges

In a survey exploring the distinctions and uniqueness of breaking events compared to traditional sports, respondents identified several

Table 3. Result of one sample t-test

Questions	n	M	SD	t	df	p
Were you aware that skateboarding was adopted as an official event for the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games?	182	0.43	0.50	-1.942	181	0.054
Did you watch the skateboarding event at the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games?	182	0.70	0.46	5.795	181	0.000***
Do you want to continue watching skateboarding events?	55	0.13	0.34	-8.218	54	0.000***
Were you aware that breakdance (B-boying or breaking dance) was adopted as an official event for the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games?	182	0.53	0.50	0.889	181	0.375
Did you watch the breaking event at the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games?	182	0.74	0.44	7.213	181	0.000***
Do you want to continue watching breaking events?	48	0.21	0.41	-4.924	47	0.000***
Do you consider new sports like skateboarding and breaking to be sports?	182	0.17	0.38	-11.798	181	0.000***

\*\*\*  $p<0.001$

central themes. Many emphasised that while traditional sports often operate in silence, breaking events prominently feature music, transforming the competition into a rhythmic performance:

The [breaking] event had a distinct feel to it, making the game stand out due to its darker tone compared to other sports. The dynamic nature of singing added to my enjoyment of the sport (Respondent 43).

The combination of dance and music ensured it wasn't dull, providing entertainment for the viewers (Respondent 30).

However, introducing novel elements into established domains often brought with it a level of unfamiliarity and scepticism, particularly in relation to judgment criteria. This phenomenon is evident when new practices or concepts are incorporated into traditional settings, where established norms and expectations are already in place. The introduction of such innovations can prompt questions and doubts, especially regarding how these new elements are assessed and integrated within the existing framework:

The method of scoring is unclear, I'm sceptical, particularly since the judging seemed questionable (Respondent 3).

I believe breaking that involves bodily expression, like gymnastics and figure skating, has an indigestible subjective scoring system (Participant 4).

These perspectives indicate a complex reception of breaking as a sport, where its

distinct characteristics—such as the fusion of music and athletic skill—offer a refreshing and entertaining alternative to traditional sports, yet also present challenges in terms of standardisation and acceptance in the broader sports community.

### **3) The Motivation Behind Future Viewing Decisions for Breaking Events**

The factors influencing future viewing choices for breaking events are varied and multifaceted. This diversity in motivations encompasses a range of aspects, from personal interest and cultural appeal to the perceived entertainment value and the sport's uniqueness.

Among those who expressed a desire to watch breaking events at future games, Respondent 65 stated, "I have a keen interest in observing how the existing culture around breaking will evolve and adapt, especially as it gains more prominence on larger stages". This perspective highlighted an eagerness to witness the dynamic evolution of breaking dance, both as a form of artistic expression and as a competitive sport. Furthermore, the motivation for wanting to watch breaking again stemmed from a desire to experience something that is not only interesting and exciting but also embodies a sense of novelty and transformation:

I'm interested in the promotion and increased recognition of less popular sports or those recently added to the Olympics and Asian Games. Also, it was refreshing to see new events instead of the same ones every time (Respondent 8).

On the other hand, the reluctance to view breaking in future sports events was attributed



to a perceived lack of excitement and passion, especially when compared to the authentic atmosphere prevalent in traditional breaking battles. This viewpoint points out that the transition of breaking to an organised sports setting might not successfully convey the authentic fervour and spirited atmosphere intrinsic to its traditional, grassroots origins.

Furthermore, Respondent 43 expressed the viewpoint, “I think it takes time to accept it as a sport. So, while I might watch it if it’s on, I don’t expect to go out of my way to actively seek and watch it myself”. The next section reveals the findings of skateboarding.

## 2. Skateboarding

### 1) The Recognition and Viewership of Skateboarding at the Asian Games

The response to the question ‘Were you aware that skateboarding was adopted as an official event for the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games?’ was recorded as  $0.43 \pm 0.5$ , suggesting that approximately half of the respondents were not aware that skateboarding had been adopted as an official event ( $t=-1.942$ ,  $df=181$ ,  $p=0.054$ ).

Of the 182 participants, the average response to the question ‘Did you watch the skateboarding event at the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games?’ was  $0.7 \pm 0.46$ . This indicates that respondents generally did not watch the skateboarding event ( $t=5.795$ ,  $df=181$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

Among those who viewed the skateboarding competition, respondents answered  $0.13 \pm 0.34$  to the question ‘Do you want to continue watching skateboarding events?’ This response suggests that there is a general tendency

among the respondents to be interested in continuously watching skateboarding events ( $t=-8.218$ ,  $df=54$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

### 2) Skateboarding’s Youthfulness, and Cultural Resonance in the Modern Sporting Arena

In a survey conducted to examine the unique aspects and distinguishing features of skateboarding events in contrast to traditional sports, participants generated a unique array of reactions. One of the most prominent perceptions centres around the freshness and novelty of the sport. Many spectators are drawn to skateboarding events, seeing them as a refreshing departure from the traditional sports they have grown accustomed to. Participant 68 commented, “The attire for skateboarding is casual, giving a sense of freedom,” while Participant 111 expressed, “It appears liberating yet risky”.

Furthermore, the youthfulness of the competitors is also notable. Skateboarding events often showcase younger athletes, infusing the competition with a vibrancy and energy that mirrors the sport’s deep ties to youth culture. Observations of young participants, some even sporting everyday electronic accessories that cannot be observed in traditional sports, underscore the sport’s alignment with modern urban life. Participant 163 remarked, “I was surprised to see young athletes wearing AirPods”. Participant I noted, “A lot of the athletes were youngsters, below the age of 20”. Alongside these observations, Participant 37 added, “I believe it’s a sport that evolves with the generation”.

### 3) The Motivation Behind Future Viewing Decisions for Skateboarding Events

For skateboarding, the public's interest in viewing future international sporting events featuring skateboarding is evident. Respondent 34 shared, "I feel disappointed about missing the gold medal, and I also want to enjoy the exciting sight of the younger generation skating". This interest is driven by the sport's fresh approach to entertainment, its thrilling and high-energy performances, and its appeal as a combination of artistic and athletic expression.

However, the reluctance of some spectators to engage with skateboarding events at international sports competitions has been attributed to prevailing perceptions that skateboarding does not embody "The traditional characteristics of a sport," according to Respondent 63, and is perceived as less captivating compared to other sports.

### 3. Public Perception of Breaking and Skateboarding's Emergence in International Sports Events

Interestingly, in terms of recognising skateboarding and breaking as legitimate sports, the majority of participants affirmed their status within the realm of sports. Respondents gave an average answer of 0.17 ( $\pm 0.38$ ) to the question "Do you consider new sports like skateboarding and breaking to be sports?" This response indicates that, in general, they recognise these activities as sports ( $t = -11.798$ ,  $df = 181$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Those who recognised them as sports, and supported their inclusion in international events, including the Asian Games and the Olympics,

shared the following insights:

If it involves physical activity and sportsmanship, I believe it qualifies as a sport (Respondent 5).

I view it favourably because the range of sports has broadened, offering diverse opportunities for participation (Respondent 6).

Their recent recognition as sports reflects a shift towards a broader and more inclusive understanding of physical activities that demand skill, discipline, and training. Although the acknowledgement by some is noteworthy, others who did not perceive these leisure activities as sports present a significant counterpoint. The primary reasons cited for not perceiving such action sports as a sport predominantly revolve around perception as a personal hobby or leisure activity rather than a professional sporting discipline, along with a lack of clarity in its rules and scoring systems. Furthermore, it is worth noting that even within the domain of action sports, opinions about skateboarding and breaking have been varied:

I'm unsure if skateboarding is about timing records or assessing the technological and artistic aspects, but I believe it should be acknowledged as a sport, especially when activities like skiing, skating, and inline are considered sports. On a personal note, I perceive Breaking differently. While it can be seen as a sport with technical and artistic evaluations, akin to gymnastics or figure skating, I view it more as a form of dance and art. The debate about categorising dance, art, and dance as sports lacks a universal agreement, and this

ambiguity extends to Breaking, even if some consider it a sport (Respondent 7).

#### IV. Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the public's perceptions and experiences of the action sports events at the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these events were received by the viewers. Additionally, the section offers a critical examination of the audience's perspectives and experiences in relation to action sports, exploring the various dimensions of their engagement with and reactions to these events.

The public did not recognise the introduction of breaking and skateboarding into the Asian Games. The low viewership of newer sports such as breaking and skateboarding at the Games could be attributed to the dynamics of broadcasting rights. "Basically, the breaking event was scheduled at the same time as other big sports events, and there weren't enough channels available to show it", said Participant 9. Kim et al.'s (2021) point out the impact of broadcasters' prioritisation on television viewership, revealing that the choice of matches for live telecasts, especially those focusing on traditional and popular sports, significantly influences audience ratings. It means potentially overlooking less mainstream sports such as breaking and skateboarding. This strategy, while commercially sensible, may contribute to a lack of exposure and recognition for emerging sports, affecting their

audience reach and popularity.

Renfree et al. (2021) highlight significant concerns within the action sports community, particularly regarding the potential constraints on freedom due to the regulations and competitive structures imposed by international sporting events.

However, despite these apprehensions among practitioners about the loss of autonomy, audiences are drawn to the very elements of novelty, evolution, excitement, and artistic expression that characterise these activities. More specifically, the results reveal two key themes common to the audience's interest in both breaking and skateboarding, such as 1) attraction to novelty and evolution; and 2) inherent excitement and artistic expression. Both breaking and skateboarding are perceived as thrilling and high-energy, contributing to their attractiveness. This excitement stems from the sports' inherent energy and the skill and artistry of the performers. Breaking, with its dance elements, offers a unique blend of athleticism and artistry, captivating audiences with its creative expression. Skateboarding, too, is appreciated not just as a sport but as an artistic endeavour, with its high-energy performances and stylistic elements. This dual appeal as both sport and art form enhances the spectator experience, making these sports appealing for future international events (see Heere, 2018; Thorpe & Wheaton, 2011).

This finding further emphasises Participant 18's view on including action sports in events: "It's like a festival of the new generation, so it's nice. The existing sports are also the joy of the present generation". This perspective emphasises the importance of integrating contemporary

action sports into sporting competitions, ensuring they reflect and resonate with every generation's preference. The notable participation of young athletes in these sports emphasises their roots in youth culture and their appeal to younger demographics (see Thorpe & Wheaton, 2011).

While there is a substantial appreciation for integrating these sports, there is also a strong call for efforts to ensure they meet the standards of other established sports, particularly in terms of impartial evaluation and scoring systems. The findings underscore the audience's strong expectation for action sports to conform to the same exacting standards established in traditional sports. This encompasses a particular emphasis on the creation of fair and effective methods for evaluation and scoring.

However, Renfree et al.'s (2021) study reveals a widespread apprehension among action sports enthusiasts about the application of strict regulations. While acknowledging the concerns raised, this study supports the view of Hao et al. (2023) that implementing sophisticated and precise evaluation and scoring systems in sports can enhance fairness and efficiency in judging competition outcomes. Such improvements not only help align action sports with the standards of traditional sports but also could maintain and possibly increase the interest and engagement of fans in international sports events over time, as argued by Park et al. (2021).

Furthermore, many individuals now recognise these leisure activities as sports. Several scholars argue that any endeavour involving physical exertion and upholding standards of sportsmanship should qualify as a sport, whether it be a time-honoured tradition

or a recent innovation (Park, 2020; Heere, 2018). This finding also supports incorporating new sports into global competitions, praising such initiatives for diversifying and enriching the sporting landscape.

Nevertheless, the discussion on the classification of activities, such as skateboarding and breaking within the action sports domain is indeed complex and multifaceted. This complexity arises from the diverse nature of these activities, which blend elements of sport, art, and dance (Park et al., 2021). Skateboarding, for example, straddles the line between being a timed, performance-based sport and an activity that is evaluated for its technical and artistic merit (IOC, n.d.). The fact that skateboarding is widely recognised as a sport, similar to established sports, such as skiing and inline skating, suggests a shift towards a more inclusive definition of what constitutes a sport.

Breaking, on the other hand, exemplifies an even more pronounced debate. It is seen by some as a sport, where its technical and artistic aspects are evaluated in a manner akin to gymnastics or figure skating (see IOC, n.d.). However, others view it primarily as a dance form, focusing on its artistic, expressive, and cultural dimensions (see WDSF, 2023). This dichotomy is not just about breaking but speaks to a larger conversation about the boundaries between sports, dance, and art. The difficulty of breaking lies in the subjective nature of art and dance, which traditionally resist quantification and standardisation, key aspects of sports (Li & Vexler, 2019). The challenge may be further compounded when considering the cultural and historical contexts of activities, breaking, which originated as a

form of street dance and has evolved into a competitive activity.

## V. Conclusion

This article sought to explore the perspectives and experiences on action sports inclusion in international sporting events among individuals who watched the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games. The findings revealed a significant acceptance of skateboarding and breaking as bona fide sports. A vast majority supported such action sports integration into premier international sporting venues. However, despite the evident enthusiasm, there was a palpable concern regarding the evaluation and scoring mechanisms associated with these sports. Such reservations underscore the challenges inherent in assimilating new disciplines into established sporting frameworks, especially in ensuring equitable and transparent assessment criteria.

Furthermore, while the majority's acknowledgement is pivotal, the dissenting views from a segment of the respondents, who perceive these activities more as cultural expressions than sports, also offer valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of such integrations. The study's implications are manifold. Firstly, the widespread embrace of action sports highlights the evolving nature of global sports consumption and calls for a more expansive, inclusive definition of what constitutes a 'sport.' As societal tastes shift, there's an evident appetite for diverse, contemporary forms of athletic expression. Secondly, the study underscores the importance of transparent, well-defined evaluation criteria for new sports,

ensuring their legitimacy and fostering broader acceptance.

While this study provides valuable insights into spectator attitudes at the 2022 Asian Games, its scope is limited and may not fully reflect wider global sentiments. To address this, future research should explore the relationships between demographic variables such as gender and age and attitudes towards action sports through quantitative studies. This would enable a deeper understanding of how different groups perceive and accept these sports. Additionally, qualitative research involving in-depth interviews with spectators who have experienced action sports at international events would enrich our understanding of individual perspectives and experiences. Expanding the research scope to include global event, the Olympics could further our comprehension of the international reception of action sports. A comparative analysis between traditional and action sports, focusing on aspects such as viewership trends, commercial appeal, and engagement with younger audiences, is also recommended. This approach would provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving dynamics in the international sporting arena.

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