

## 47 Blood, sweat and tears: how did skateboarding's Thrasher T-shirt become the fashionista's 'off duty' look?

### Author

Kirsty Smith  
Royal College of Art  
[Kirsty.smith@network.rca.ac.uk](mailto:Kirsty.smith@network.rca.ac.uk)

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### Abstract

While the rise of skateboard companies such as Supreme and Palace have usurped the ranks of fashion's hierarchy, there remains conflict and tension within the skateboard community regarding the industry's legitimacy to convey authentic cultural meaning to the images and artefacts pertaining to skateboard lifestyles. Typically characterised as outcasts, lawbreakers and nuisances, skateboarders now signify a visual representation of cool. High fashion brands embody the lifestyle on the pages of fashion magazines, within the frames of fashion films and on international catwalks. The outcome of this has led many of skateboarding's self-identified 'rebels' to negotiate the desires of their community alongside the yearnings of aspirational youths determined to authenticate themselves by appropriating the aesthetic and textual lives of skateboarders.

This paper presents a discussion on one specific case study, the iconic American skateboard magazine, Thrasher. A dominant voice within the skateboarding community, Thrasher magazine is an anti-establishment, subcultural publication (Worley, 2017). It shapes a sense of currency within the skateboard community while hinting at the future. Identifying with Skateboarding's every day practices the magazine emphasises the artistic and visual dissemination of tricks, locations and products, forming a framework of characteristics which examine behaviours, values and social interactions. This paper seeks to describe the history of the magazine's spirit, identifying the stakeholders who advocate the 'Thrasher lifestyle', and hypothesising why the magazine's merchandise became synonymous with the notion of cool. The paper enquires how Thrasher's t-shirt became a focal point of fascination for the fashion obsessed, addressing some of the tensions felt within the skateboard community on the reporting of this 'new trend'.

The study adopted an ethnographic qualitative approach using mixed methods of non-participant observation, focus groups and in-depth interviews. Primary research in the form of interviews with Thrasher's publisher, Tony Vitello and editor at large Mike Burnett provided in-depth knowledge of the history of Thrasher. Secondary research including review and analysis of editorial content, interviews and readers' comments from online publications including *Dazed and Confused*, *GQ style*, *Hypebeast*, and *Vogue* explored the subject and aided the researcher's conclusions. Content analysis was used to look for key themes and patterns within the observations, commentary and interviews (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, Turner 2007).

The paper acknowledges the pressures of current fast fashion journalism but asks if there is a need for discussions around commentary on specific areas of subculture fashion, in this case Thrasher magazine, so as not to alienate those who identify with the appropriated lifestyle.

## **Introduction**

'Individuals who shed blood sweat and tears.' (Burnett, 2018)

Current literature on 'authentic' identity in subcultural media magazines, finds that the main focus of anthropological content is to provide 'insider knowledge' centred around 'participants doing it,' Wheaton and Beal (2003). For the consumers of skateboard media there are two very distinctive genres of content: the first, the authentic voice (Harper, 1989) is articulated through methods of dissemination in the form of articles, advertisements and the 'give away.' Echoing the skateboarding scene, this authentic voice can be envisaged as the print magazine in visual and written form, online video content or as the paraphernalia that comes with the magazine in the shape of stickers, DVDs, beanies or t-shirts.

The second voice to gradually appear over the past decade within skateboard magazines is the inauthentic voice (Edwards, 1997). In most cases this voice is characterised by broader advertisements or products. Located within the field of skateboarding, these brands adopt the image of skateboarding, aiming their product at an audience who may find skateboarding interesting but are not always participating in the lifestyle. Such companies are seen to align themselves with customer focused values (Zott, Amit and Massa, 2011) occupying a distinctive place so as to associate themselves with this particular group of people.

Although the majority of the content distributed in these skateboard specific magazines reflects the publication's values through a combination of global and local perspectives, research with focus groups has indicated that while there is an awareness of 'outsider' brands advertising in skateboard magazines, they are often dismissed as having no value, paying little or no attention to the advertisement or product itself. Conversely, the research indicated that these same focus groups identified similar attitudes to non-skateboarders who style themselves in authentic clothing, the former considering the latter to have no value. Yet the members of the focus groups were incredibly vocal, concerning the lack of knowledge reported by journalists reviewing skateboard brands, in particular clothing brands.

Reflecting on the customer focused value of subcultural American skateboard magazine, Thrasher, this paper considers how Thrasher respects its audience via its visual culture, heritage and tradition, echoed in its logo, its t-shirt design and its considered links with those who engage with the skateboard scene. The paper seeks to examine what the Thrasher lifestyle means to those who live it, the 'Individuals who shed blood sweat and tears.' (Burnett, 2018) How the 'Giveaway' Thrasher t-shirt captivated the fashion obsessed and what tensions have been felt within the skateboard community due to the reporting of the rising Thrasher trend by 'outsiders'.

'Anti-authority, anti-normal, anti-complacency.' (Burnett, Malakye, 2008)

Thrasher magazine plays a significant cultural role in the dissemination of iconic visual representations of the skateboard community. The viewing and sharing of

visual imagery pertaining to skateboarding is a big part of everyday lives for those who work for the magazine. Across the pages of the publication and online, subject specific content and advertising communicates worldwide motivating messages that encourage skateboarders to try new tricks and keep moving forward. The authentic experience of the sponsored and everyday skateboarder is replicated in the visual imagery supported by words that explain what the Thrasher lifestyle is and how it filters out to the global community.

Under the current direction of Tony Vitello and Jake Phelps, Thrasher magazine has continued to stay in print while a multitude of global skateboard magazines have either moved online or folded. With consumers of this specialist media turning to Instagram, YouTube and dedicated sites for their daily digest, Thrasher has not only upheld a constant readership but has managed to preserve a level of communication that has a strong and significant message. As Tony explained in a recent interview, 'The magazine elicits a positive brand feeling, it facilitates a strong consumer-brand connection that seeps from the visual imagery into the merchandise we give away and sell.' (Vitello, 2018) For Tony, Thrasher magazine is both traditional and future focused. It is appreciative of the skateboarder's everyday existence and the kinds of characters that are associated with the lifestyle. One thing he admits is it's not a 'G rated family friendly version of skateboarding that other media sources cover.' (Vitello, 2018). It maintains its rebellious attitude, almost thrives on it, providing skateboarders with a space where they can think, feel, act and say what they want without fear of reprisal.

This same attitude is reflected in the company logo which is branded across the t-shirts it gives away for free as part of the subscription process, and which consumers can also buy on Thrasher's website. While the logo has evolved over time it maintains its roots with the original text created by graphic artist Roger Excoffon. Considered unfashionable for many years, it wasn't until the font was used on the Cover of the 1974 Bob Marley album: Natty Dread that it became popular. Over the years the Banco typeface has been adapted, including a burning emblem most often used on Thrasher's merchandise. Regarding the logo's aggressive look, Tony explained that while he never discussed its origins with his father, he believes 'It has become popular with skateboarders as it reminds them of their childhood when they felt freer and they maybe had a little bit more of an edge to their personalities, before jobs, partners and kids.' (Vitello, 2018)

Together with the font, one of the original Thrasher logos drew from a Satanic icon parodied in the form of a Skategoat pentagram. To the outsider the logo has been viewed as Luciferian promoting Satanic Baphomet worship representing negative values associated with the skateboard culture. To Thrasher, the logo is simply a symbol of defiance, not in an occult form but in a questioning of rules, society's pressures, curiosity and the acceptance of others' values. The basic premise of the logo is more a nod to the Baphomet images which appeared on the cover of heavy metal albums.

'Thrasher has made f\*\*\*ing history.' (Phelps, 2017)

To further understand Thrasher's mass appeal, the research sought to examine how a foul-mouthed DIY magazine from California transcended its roots to become a fashion label worn by fashion world insiders, capturing an account of its history from the perspective of Tony Vitello, son of co-founder Fausto Vitello, and from editor Mike Burnett.

In 1981, Eric Swenson, Kevin Thatcher and Fausto Vitello saw something in skateboarding that propelled them to start Thrasher Magazine. Initially set up due to a lack of hard-core magazines and to help promote Swenson and Vitello's company, Independent Trucks, the magazine soon surpassed its creative intention. Vitello, an avid bike enthusiast working for Harley-Davidson as an engineer, found skateboarding's renegade attitude appealing. Professing similar values to their anarchist character, the magazine reflected Thatcher, Swenson and Vitello's renegade natures. Its original motto still reads, 'Skate and Destroy'. The articles, interviews and photos revolve around a reckless approach towards lawlessness. The ethos of the magazine defies authority. As Thrasher's current editor-at-large, Mike Burnett explained when asked in an interview with trade magazine Malakye, 'Why is Thrasher so punk?' Burnett replied 'Skateboarding is anti-authority, anti-normal, anti-complacency. That has nothing to do with fashion or musical tastes, and everything to do with why we think skateboarding is unique.' (Burnett, 2008)

In order to hypothesise on what Swenson, Thatcher and Vitello 'saw' during the early years of skateboarding, it is important to pay attention to the perception of the initial descriptions associated with skateboarders. Notions of rebellious attitudes (Pountain and Robins, 2000), lawlessness (Green and Burke, 2012) non-conformity (Heath and Potter, 2004), and individualism (Hebdige and Potter, 2008) were the values and norms applied by the press during the first wave of skateboarding's 1960's narrative timeline. At the time, these associated behaviours led the media to call for skateboarding to be outlawed, with newspapers including the Los Angeles Times proclaiming it to be dangerous, if not deadly, 'Constituting a public nuisance that should be banned.' (Yochim, 2010). It should be noted that even in current society, while skateboarding is no longer seen as deadly, opinion has scarcely changed. 'To outsiders, skaters are thought of as rebels, social deviants, or simply different. Participants are banned from public areas and signs are routinely posted prohibiting the activity.' (Moore, 2009)

While discussing these 1960's values it would also be key to address some of the main protagonists of the period who were helping to shape these beliefs, encapsulating the Thrasher lifestyle. During the late 1960's the outlaw legacy associated with skateboarding was no more evident than in the anti-authority figures of the Dogtown Z-Boys. Tony Alva, Stacy Peralta and Jay Adams brought about huge changes in the skateboard scene. In his first ever interview for Skateboarder magazine, Alva's attitude was clear to read on the pages. When asked, 'Some observers have characterized you and your friends as being highly aggressive.' Alva commented 'It's true...When the boys are together, you could never find a more aggressive, arrogant, rowdy, perhaps ignorant bunch of people than me and my friends. That's just the way we are; that's the way we skateboard; that's the way we talk... party... surf... travel... you name it.' (Skateboarder, 1977) In James Renhard's 2017 interview for Mpora magazine, Alva went on to describe the group as 'self-identified rebels' who set a precedent for many who followed, not only on the streets, but reflected on the pages of Thrasher magazine.

The early 1980s brought with it a lull for skateboarding. While other manufacturers and publishers were pulling out, Swenson, Thatcher and Vitello recognised that skateboarding was only just finding its feet. The Dogtown era had brought with it a wave of new tricks and an aggressive draw to backyard pools, proving that skateboarding had much more to give. While others shunned the characters establishing skateboarding's temperament, Swenson, Thatcher and Vitello were hooked. For them, Thrasher Magazine was a tool to promote skateboarding's

protagonists at a grass roots level, recognising its attraction towards a very unique person: the outcast of society. The magazine framed these risk takers in the articles they wrote and the images they showcased: unruly, brazen and unapologetic, these kids drank, smoked, took drugs and partied like it was their last day on earth. With a heady mix of skateboarding and music the magazine became a manual on how to live an unaccepted way of life.

Thrasher's growing prominence within the skateboard community ran alongside the articles they published on the Californian punk and hardcore music scene. In 1983, Thrasher released the first of twelve cassette-only compilation albums, Thrasher Magazine's 'Skate Rock'. Most of the bands had skaters amongst their members, with a number of the bands featuring pro-skateboarders. The synergy of these characteristics was communicated on the pages of the magazine, in the music featured on Thrasher's skateboard DVDs and in the iconography which appeared on their merchandise. Evidence of Thrasher's widespread influence with music could be seen every year at the Warped Tour and later South by Southwest. This combination of skateboarding and music journalism led to an upsurge in subscriptions. In response to this rise in circulation, Thrasher began offering additional apparel as part of their new 1988 mail order scheme. T-shirts and sweatshirts emblazoned with Thrasher's iconic designs were splashed across the pages of the magazine. This enticed the committed, the unruly and the skaters living the Thrasher lifestyle to invest, and unlike other clean-cut skate brands of the time, their slapdash approach to promoting the clothing was only heightened by their flippant approach to advertising, claiming 'Thrasher products rule the world.'

The Thrasher t-shirt was just one element of the merchandising range. A moving billboard, it acted as an embodied commercial recognised only by those on the inside. A freebie to those who subscribed to the magazine, the t-shirt soon represented something more than its intention, it became a symbol of the magazine's personality. To wear it was an indication of an uncontrollable attitude, a free spirit, the personification of a risk taker who would be up in the face of anyone who got in the way. The iconic status of the Thrasher t-shirt both in its statement and function solidified the magazine's standing within the skateboard community. As with other skateboard brands, the Thrasher t-shirt became one of many signifiers notifying skateboarding's in-crowd that you too were an anti-social, anti-authoritarian 'nerd'. Associated with unfashionable text, with links to satanic iconography, how did this piece of clothing move from a merely emblematic form of wearable satisfaction to a fashion insignia?

By the mid 1980s Thrasher recognised that their print magazine would not survive the future without a 360-degree media house. In order to maintain their print edition, they needed to have a strong visual and digital presence. As Tony Vitello recalled, 'To strengthen the magazine we needed to explore more opportunities. Merchandising came out of a growing subscriber base. The unrealised opportunity we had with the merchandise, with the clothing and stuff was never really something we had considered. Positioning ourselves that way was kind of a realisation that has allowed us to preserve the print product.' (Vitello 2018)

During the 1980s, musicians had been expressing their genuine interest in skateboarding from the way they dressed to onscreen appearances in music videos. Bands like Devo, the Beastie Boys, Sonic Youth, Flogging Molly and Dinosaur Jr traded on their knowledge of skateboarding to shape their alternative status. For Thrasher, this interaction was mutual and continued to mature over the next two

decades. Tony Vitello considers 2011 to be the point at which Thrasher became a fashion style believing it to be purely about this interconnected authentic relationship.

*We hosted a party at South by Southwest, a music festival in Austin, Texas. We held a four-day non-stop party and every day we'd have about fifteen bands playing. When these bands were going onto stage to perform, they were like: "can we get some Thrasher gear here?". They were so excited about it. And for a lot of them, like the metal bands, Thrasher was a huge part of their upbringing. It was part of their attitude, they were associated with it. They had read the magazines, they were part of it. We'd always covered music in Thrasher even at the very beginning. There always were music features. There's a symbiotic relationship between both worlds. That music and skateboarding connection is what I think really drove the merchandise to another level. (Vitello, 2018)*

The following year Tyler the Creator and ASAP Rocky both appeared at South by Southwest. While Tyler instigated a riot and was subsequently arrested, ASAP Rocky was photographed striking a member of the public during a theatre event. Both musicians were wearing Thrasher T-shirts. By association, the perception of these events subliminally propelled Thrasher into the limelight. As in the early days of Thrasher this behaviour was not considered wild - if anything it was well suited - as it emulated the Thrasher lifestyle. Suddenly there was a new generation of musician who again had a genuine interest in skateboarding. In a recent interview with The Berrics, ASAP discussed the allure of skateboarding and why it matters to his music, 'It's punk aesthetic. And it's skate aesthetic. Like skaters and punks, we grew up in Manhattan. Most of my friends still skate. It just be like that. It's just regular shit. We would watch our skate videos and clips, and go to clubs. This is the shit we saw.' (The Berrics, 2018) Skate culture was a major influence on ASAP during his formative years, evidenced in his more recent works including the music video for 'Praise The Lord (Da Shine)' where there are signs of fashions and technologies applied to the production of past skate videos.

By 2015 a familiar narrative was alluding to the rise of the Thrasher t-shirt. Spreading from The Idle Man to GQ style from Vogue to W Magazine, journalists described Thrasher's upsurge as being the result of celebrities Ryan Gosling, Rihanna and Justin Bieber being photographed wearing Thrasher t-shirts. As leading fashion magazines followed suit and ran a number of articles commenting on 'How the Thrasher Tee Became Every Cool Model's Off-Duty Staple,' (Vogue, 2016) 'Thrasher Takes London,' (W Magazine, 2015) 'How to Achieve the Skater Style with Ease' (The Idle Man, 2015) and 'How to Do Skater Style Like a Model, (Vogue, 2016) so did the fashion-obsessed. With China's cheap replicas hitting eBay and amassing sales, the story had been told. Not concerned with the approval or acceptance of interlopers, Thrasher at first felt no impulse to confront this adaptation.

The skateboard community however had taken issue with the way journalists were reporting on fashion's preoccupation with Thrasher. Describing Thrasher as a brand that seemed to have popped up out of nowhere, columnists had linked the phenomenon to the series of Instagram posts of models wearing Thrasher t-shirts alongside paparazzi images of Ryan Gosling, Justin Bieber & Rihanna wearing a multitude of Thrasher merchandise. At the same time as they were reporting on the new 'cool trend', pictures of the fashion obsessed wearing Thrasher were bursting onto social media sites, alongside street-style images shot at haute-couture fashion weeks where editors, influencers, bloggers and models alike were adorned in

Thrasher merchandise. Thrasher's unsought far-reaching influence began to prompt questions from the skateboard community over the misinformed reporting of the Thrasher lifestyle from 'outsiders', as well as a growing wave of backlash towards designers mimicking the look.

The pavement is where the real shit is. Blood and scabs, does it get realer than that? (Phelps, Hypebeast, 2016)

Not everyone in the skateboarding community was happy about models, influencers and bloggers appropriating their looks. While skaters had been dressing this way for years, reading comments by some fashionistas proclaiming to be on the cutting edge of fashion was somewhat offensive. Moreover, the responses from skateboarders were not pretty. The commentary that flowed from below these articles became aggressive and hostile towards the ill-informed and the procurers of a misunderstood lifestyle. As the number of online articles grew, skateboarders bluntly wished the fashion industry would just 'F\*\*\* off.' (DC, 2015)

The research focus groups were provided with content and threads connected to these remarks and asked if they were representative of the skateboard community's position. Participant three of the Californian focus group, male, 34 commented, 'Skateboarders will always feel angry about companies who have nothing to do with skateboarding coming in and trying to take ownership of its looks. The thing is you can't own skateboarding's looks, they are always changing.' Participant one of the same focus group, male, 26 commented, 'If someone has the money to start their own 'skateboard brand, you can't stop them but you sure as f\*\*\* can see right through them. The problem is the average follower of fashion is clueless and instead of them supporting the community, they're just lining the pockets of some rich f\*\*\*.' Echoed by participant one in UK focus group, male, 28, 'Vogue is just a bunch of dumb f\*\*\*s with no clue. They write about skateboarding like they've stepped on a board and nailed themselves. They should just leave it well alone or at least involve us in the conversation instead of trying to represent our views. But I'm not sure Vogue gives a shit'

Thrasher magazine's outspoken editor, Jake Phelps, loudly expressed his opinion at such practices with widespread criticism towards the designers and fashionistas who replicated or attempted to form new mainstream identities while wearing Thrasher apparel. In a 2016 interview with Hypebeast, Phelps famously commented "We don't send boxes to Justin Bieber or Rihanna or those f\*\*\*ing clowns, the pavement is where the real shit is. Blood and scabs, does it get realer than that?" (Hypebeast, 2016). His remarks were quickly picked up by skateboard and fashion magazines prompting a transformation by journalists on how aspects of the narrative were reported. In an interview from 2012 with Dazed magazine Phelps had begun to make his feelings heard.

*You can tell that people want to bite it because skateboarding is the hardest f\*\*\*ing thing known to mankind... It's f\*\*\*ing hard! It ain't no friendship club, that's for damn sure. And now you've got rappers like Lil Wayne trying to get into skateboarding. Any saturation of skateboarding into the mainstream is good, in a way, because it's good for us. But at the same time, it's corny as f\*\*\*. What's sad but true is that a lot of the clothing companies that suck are what's propelling the industry right now. So now you can buy the skateboard look and look like a skater, but not ever take a hit in your life. If you're dressed like that*

*and you've never slammed on a skateboard, then you know that you're just f\*\*\*ing lying to yourself, basically.* (Dazed, 2012)

Now coveted by designers including Vier, Gosha Rubchinskiy, R13 Denim and Vetements, who recreated a Thrasher inspired Logo on an oversized \$1,000 USD hoodie, Thrasher has responded by collaborating with skateboard clothing brands HUF, Diamond Supply Co. and Supreme. Working together with established artists and skateboarders including Neckface and Mark 'The Gonz' Gonzales, the magazine has expanded its merchandise, offering collaborative collections. Nevertheless, during this time, Thrasher has upheld its traditions, giving away their \$25 t-shirt free to all new subscribers while offering their staple merchandise at original 2010 prices.

'Thrasher glorifies the physical and mental fight involved with skateboarding.'  
(Phelps, Hypebeast, 2016)

The research indicates that there is a nuanced relationship between the act of wearing Thrasher merchandise and the way in which the t-shirt has been perceived and reported on by the mainstream fashion community. Currently seen as a badge of rebelliousness associated with the notion of cool, this attitude is in stark contrast to the views of skateboarders interviewed, who described the years spent honing their craft while running from security guards and taking abuse from the general public for being too loud, unruly and uncontrollable. While some in the community perceived the attraction of fashionistas as one that would be short lived, there were those who took to online sites to ridicule others who wore the brand, criticising these individuals for not understanding the established history of Thrasher.

At its heart, Thrasher is a media network, not a fashion label. The merchandise they sell helps spread the word to generations of skaters while supporting the publication to stay in print. For Phelps and others, wearing a Thrasher t-shirt 'Empathises with the skater's battle...you should earn the right to wear one'. (Phelps, Hypebeast, 2016) Thrasher magazine's consistent authentic voice is fundamentally for the real fanatics, for those who seek out the magazine, the diehards. One hundred plus pages, the magazine isn't just one voice on one platform. It's a series of collective authentic voices that dive deeper providing in-depth interviews while further video content is posted online. For those who experience surface level skateboarding on Instagram or those who watch a couple of videos every now and again there seems to be a lack of understanding regarding the significance of Thrasher media and the connotation of its merchandise.

This research has gone some way to show that to the skateboard community the outsider wearing the Thrasher t-shirt isn't the issue, it is the lack of awareness concerning the appropriation of iconic emblems that enrages the thriving subculture. It is clear from the analysis of online articles that the skateboard community was not consulted or invited to participate in the mainstream editorial discussion until Jake Phelps expressed his thoughts on the matter. While skateboard clothing brands such as Supreme, Palace, Bianca Chandon, and Sex are successfully breaking into the fashion market, members of the skateboard community feel that they have a right to be angry about the way it's presented in the fashion arena with little or no recognition regarding authenticity. Breaking bones, shredding skin and working through the pain are rites of passage. Thrasher's apparel is a meaningful authentic visualisation of skateboarding's subculture. From the beginning, the magazine has expressed the spirit of rebellion that has drawn many into the skateboard scene. To skateboarders,

simply slipping on a Thrasher t-shirt doesn't enhance your street cred, it just goes to showcase how ignorant some celebrities and stylists are of the t-shirt's origins.

Whilst this research paper focused on one particular case study, Thrasher Magazine, further research needs to be undertaken, examining a cross-section of the skateboarding industry to see if the findings of this paper hold true. While the interviews and focus groups explain attitudes by providing a context, one has to be reminded that the participants represent a small sample of a larger community.

## **Methodology**

The approach for this paper was undertaken using a mixed method line of enquiry. Implementing ethnographic qualitative methodology including primary research in the form of interviews and focus groups, the research also undertook a series of non-participant observations focusing on journalistic commentary in the form of visual and written communication (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, Turner 2007). The primary research techniques employed included in-depth semi-structured interviews (Leech, 2002) with Thrasher's current publisher and son of co-founder Fausto Vitello: Tony Vitello and editor-at-large Mike Burnett. The interviews undertaken in person and over the telephone facilitated discussions that provided a much deeper and detailed understanding of Thrasher's history as a curator of skateboarding's narrative, the magazine's position within the skateboard community as seen from Thrasher's perspective and their thoughts on the rise of Thrasher merchandise as a fashion trend. In conjunction with these interviews the research was informed by two focus groups (Morgan, 1998) run in London and California. Gathering together sponsored professionals and skateboard enthusiasts, they were selected based on their comprehensive knowledge of the industry. There were four members at each meeting: seven males and one female in total, ages ranged from 19 to 49.

Secondary research involved in-depth analysis of interviews with Jake Phelps and online media, with a focus on journalistic coverage to evaluate key themes and patterns (Dey, 2003). The research was dependent on online availability. To determine the paper's outcomes the research was largely informed by selected online publications that offered an extensive and varied case study (Hearn, Tacchi, Foth, Lennie, 2009). Careful selection was undertaken to identify which magazines would meet the benchmarks. All the publications selected had a firm and well-thought-of reputation as fashion publications. Each one had written more than five articles on skateboarding within the last five years with at least one article focusing on Thrasher. Data analysis was completed using content analysis methodology (White, Marsh, 2006) to draw out patterns within the gathered texts so as to establish the findings.

The research was substantiated by investigating debates pertaining to subcultural media theory, communication theory and authenticity in consumer counterculture, in addition to informing the conversation on fashion appropriation and subcultural media communication.

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