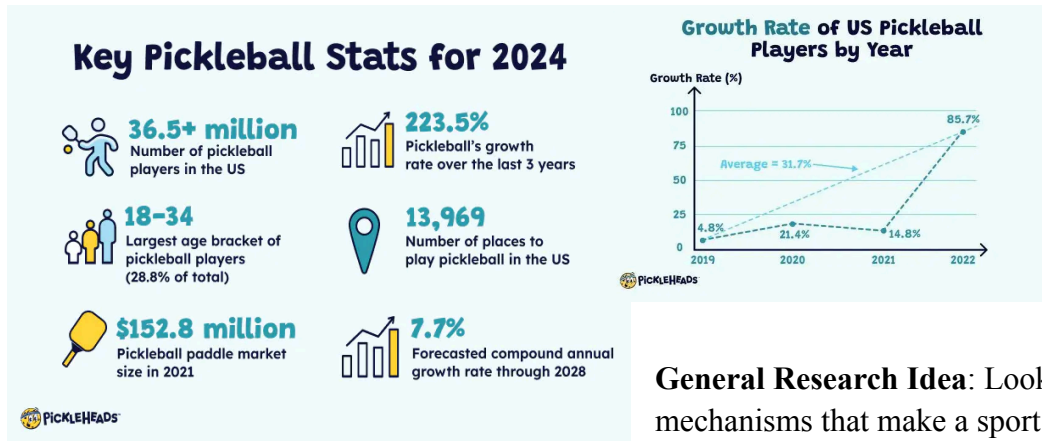


The Unexpected Rise of Pickleball

Context: Pickleball has risen in popularity and has gradually been taking over basketball and tennis courts. Being a relatively old sport from the 1960s, the game has taken off and has experienced a renaissance while also containing major aspects of tennis, table tennis, and squash. While the game is easy to learn, I am interested in the causal mechanisms at play that has resulted in the sport becoming so popular.

Figure 1: Documents key metrics for pickleball in 2024¹

Figure 2: Indicates the stark rise in pickleball players. (Note the increase from 2021- 2022)



General Research Idea: Looking at key factors/mechanisms that make a sport popular to a certain demographic is an interesting start to later

pinpointing a specific question. It is already clear that pickleball has been one of the fastest-growing sports in the US. It's easy to learn, has a social atmosphere, and with its increased media attention, organized tournaments, and backing from organizations, dissecting the factors that have fueled its expansion would be intriguing.

Potential Research Questions:

What are the major causal mechanisms that explain the rise of pickleball?

Does the low caloric usage in pickleball (compared to other sports) make it ideal for the youth and elders?

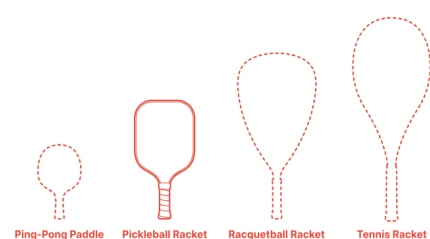
In racquet sports how does the relative size of the court, paddle, or ball affect its popularity?

How does the fast paced nature of pickleball make it popular (over tennis)?

Do aspects of rallying (in racquet sports) make the sport more popular?

How did media coverage of pickleball cause the sport to become more popular? (sentiment analysis)

2



Potential variables:

Dependent variables: Popularity score, number of players, paddle sales, media coverage (affecting sales)

Independent variables: Size of paddle relative to ball, size of paddle relative to court, number of players, game speed*, difficulty, social atmosphere, scoring, type of sport

¹ <https://www.pickleheads.com/blog/pickleball-statistics>

² <https://www.dimensions.com/element/pickleball-paddle>