

Waves of Power

The Spectacularisation of Professional Surfing

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School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies

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Elliot Pill

Abstract

This thesis seeks to outline new paradigms in the field of Critical Surf Studies applying critical theory to the systems of power used in the privatisation of professional surfing.

In 2013, a private company, ZoSea Media Holdings (ZMH), assumed control of the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) and began a rationalisation process of the sport. This culminated in the creation of a re-imagined vision for the commercialisation of elite, professional surfing with the invention of the World Surf League (WSL) in 2015.

Using Guy Debord's theory of The Society of the Spectacle as a lens through which to critically examine this transformation, the research adopts an experimental, qualitative research approach, combining data gathered through lived experiences, auto-ethnographies and key figure interviews.

The central research questions ask; what does ZMH mean in seeking to professionalise surfing? How is professional surfing reified under monopoly and private ownership? What does this ownership mean for the wider culture of surfing?

The key findings indicate little resistance to ZMH's global vision for surfing. The findings further identify a range of new media systems of power used to create a new spectacular surfing society.

In branding the WSL as the self-styled 'Home of Global Surfing', these systems include wholly-owned digital media platforms and the construction of sophisticated marketing and promotional practices to meet the owners' political, economic and cultural objectives.

These findings build on, and contribute to, previous work in this field examining the governance and hegemony of surfing. These processes have implications for the way in which lifestyle sports are appropriated, re-packaged and commodified by capitalist owners seeking to gain profit from the commercialisation of sport.

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Thesis introduction

This is not a study of surfers. This is a study of the process by which a venture capital company came to own, dominate and control the sport of professional surfing on a global scale and with little resistance, by creating a spectacular surfing society as a system of governance to build and maintain cultural and political power.

The research seeks to understand the effects of the re-shaping of elite, professional surfing and attempts to critically evaluate ZoSea Media Holdings' (ZMH) role in the creation of a spectacular surfing society to enable the total economic, political and cultural domination of the sport.

Each chapter is introduced with an overview of content and direction of argument before ending with a summary and a lead into the next section of content and analysis to ensure each section of this work is taken forward in a clear and necessary way and has a logical, sequenced structure building on each subsequent chapter. Overviews of previous observations, current arguments and future analysis of this work will also be written into each phase of its development.

The interest in, and motivation for, understanding this process is the result of my own embodied experience of the practice of surfing; professionally writing about surfing as a journalist and, further, being a 'cultural intermediary' (Davis, 2013, Wernick, 1991) in the State of Modern Surfing (SMS) (Hough-Snee and Eastman, 2017), mediating and circulating the mythology (Barthes, 1972) of what it means to be a surfer to those who have never been near a beach.

I am critically intrigued by the way lifestyle sport (Lanagan, 2010, Wheaton, 2004, Thorpe, 2014) brand owners use capital to create, shape and control audience agency by manipulating images and developing powerful storytelling narratives that move those audiences to consume ideas, surf products and brands and in specific and organised ways.

This thesis analyses the rationalisation and privatisation of professional surfing by ZMH and adopts a provocative, Marxist, approach to study the field by using Guy Debord's rebellious Society of the Spectacle theory (Debord, G., 1990, 1994) as a lens through which to evaluate and critically study the transformation of the incumbent governing body of professional surfing – the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) - into an integrated spectacle - the World Surf League - to create a new paradigm in surfing cultural history with the creation of, what appears to be, a new spectacular surfing society.

A Marxist approach was used as a way to critically analyse the framing of surfing as a lifestyle pastime centred around play and born in the liminal coastal spaces of Peru and Hawaii in the 1800's (Laderman, 2014, Hough-Snee). Surfing, as a competitive sport was commodified and reified in the late 1950's by American marketers as an elite competitive sport shaped to appeal, firstly to tourists and later, to the Western-centric counter cultural movements of the 1960's and 1970's. Therefore, you could confidently assume, given the cultural history of surfers' counter-cultural tendencies, strong resistance to change of ownership in the sport of surfing. Particularly given that the ASP was effectively a trade union organisation representing both surfers and sponsors. Under this new ownership surfers would be workers with little say in the direction of the sport. They would lose political power. As such, concepts of alienation, false consciousness, recuperation and aura are important theoretical building blocks of this work and will be explained in both the literature review and explicit examples connecting theory to the data will be presented in the discussion.

Debord's, *Society of the Spectacle*, unpacked more fully in the next literature chapter, was chosen as the most appropriate theoretical approach to the research questions due to the theory's central focus on the use of images and media systems by the powerful to shape societies and influence agency. And, while other notable academics, such as Baudrillard (1983) put these elements at the centre of their theories, no other introduces the notion of resisting power or suggests practical ways of challenging dominant forms of organisation. Debord describes this process of challenge and resistance as *detournement* and the process of the way in which the spectacle intercepts and re-shapes socially and politically challenging ideas and incorporates them back into society, as recuperation. Debord expands this process by further, theorising how citizens could resist the power of the spectacle through *detournement*, and offers insights as to how the spectacle suppresses dissenting voices and opinions through recuperation strategies.

The work in this thesis is important because it studies a paradigm shift in the cultural history of surfing in general and elite, professional, competitive, surfing, in particular. It sits within the developing academic canon of critical surf studies research, most recently and importantly added to by (Hough-Snee and Eastman, 2017 Eds.) and theorised by Douglas Booth (2001, 2005, 2017), Kirsty Comer (2010), Nick Ford and David Brown (2006), Robin Canningford (2017), Clifton Evers (2004,2009, 2010, 2014, 2016, 2017), Dexter Hough-Snee (2016, 2017), Scott Laderman (2014), David Lanagan, (2010), Kristin Lawler (2010), Rebecca Olive (2015), Kent Pearson (1979), Jess Ponting and Greg Borne (2015), Mark Stranger (2011), Holly Thorpe (2014) and Belinda Wheaton (2016, 2013, 2011, 2010, 2004).

This thesis, purposely written in the same register as other academic work in the field of critical surf studies, seeks specifically to build upon Ford and Brown's (2006) guidance for future research directions in the seminal academic work, *Surfing and Social Theory*, and Evers' (2012) application of the Society of the Spectacle to the Association of Surfing Professionals and Scott Laderman's research, critically analysing the US-centric, global export and associated hegemonic cultural transfer of surfing, in *Empire in Waves* (2014).

Stu Nettle's exhaustive and impressive, 2014, 2015 three-part long-form investigation in Swellnet analysing ZMH marketing hyperbole and the construction and control of the ASP and WSL was also inspirational and important to the development of this thesis.

Chapter one gives an overview of the key themes and literature related to the research questions and identifies a knowledge gap where little empirical research has been undertaken in relation to the new paradigm in professional surfing. Further, the literature critically analyses Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, before arguing why this theory is best used to understand the current sweeping changes taking place in elite surfing. The review then moves on to analyse the historical development of competitive surfing to understand the tensions inherent in the current transformative process and locate where this research sits in the academic canon of critical surf studies. The literature chapter also analyses the codification of surfing as a sport and examines the way in which surfing has been governed and presented to audiences. As a natural process, and linking to the method of analysis, the concept of marketing and marketing communications is introduced to demonstrate the processes by which organisations use branding as a business strategy to differentiate one sporting commodity from another. This is then specifically linked to the way ZMH use sophisticated marketing techniques to build and maintain power through a series of global, surfing event spectacles, linked with continuous media narratives, commodifying labourers and manufacturing illusionary and biased media content to ensure the audience gaze stays firmly focused on the WSL branded integrated spectacle.

Chapter two defines the research questions underpinning this thesis and outlines the methodological approaches taken. These are largely qualitative, ethnographic methods commonly used by other academics researching lifestyle sports and physical cultures. A number of WSL webcast events were analysed searching for recurring themes in relation to the research questions and these were applied in detail to one of the most notorious professional surfing events in competitive surfing history; the J-Bay Pro in South Africa. The author also undertook a lived auto-ethnography at a WSL event at Trestles beach, Southern California, to compare the hyperreality of WSL webcasts against the reality of being at the beach and embedded in a professional contest. To extend this examination of the hyperreal

and the real in competitive surfing, the author undertook an auto-ethnographic analysis of making a surfboard - one of the most iconic and central signs in surf culture. The final method used in the exploration of the research questions was a series of key figure interviews.

Chapter three, presented in a number of sub sections related to each method used, outlines a range of findings. These include the identification of a new spectacular surfing system established by ZMH to meet economic, political and cultural objectives. The rapid development of a wholly owned digital media system to create an over the top (OTT) media strategy to distribute illusionary images in relation to this new surfing spectacle. And the creation of a new global surfing brand, the WSL, signifying new systems of power, commodification and codification within the sport of professional surfing.

Chapter four critically analyses the main findings, relates the findings to critical surf studies literature and attempts to identify where this work sits in the current body of knowledge. It balances the practical findings against the critical theory to give examples of this new spectacular surfing landscape. Examples are given of the development, distribution and use of new media technologies to broadcast professional surfing events. The creation of a new brand to signify a new sporting league and a departure from the ASP identity. The adoption of athlete numbers, like other competitive sports, designed to brand and celebrify individual surfers. The copying of the yellow jersey from the Tour De France to use as the signifier for the leader of the men's and women's championship tour at any one point in time. The development of a content marketing studio – WSL Studios – to produce, edit and distribute wholly owned and exclusive media and the launch of a WSL Store to sell WSL-branded merchandise.

Chapter five provides a summary of the key findings and links these findings to the research questions and gaps in knowledge. It makes recommendations for future research directions in relation to professional surfing, given the specific time available to study this topic, coupled with the rapid structural changes taking place within the sport of surfing.

The thesis ends with a short epilogue outlining news coverage of three key steps in the arc of this research. The media publicity announcing the ZMH buyout of the ASP and the strategic direction being taken by the company. The announcement of the resignation of the WSL Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the loss of its title sponsor along with a direct message tweet to me from one of the architects of the ASP and surfing as a commodified, rule bound, competitive sport.

The key findings of significance within this work are fivefold. The first finding is evidence of a new, spectacular surfing society, created to enact significant change within the sport of professional surfing to meet the economic objectives of ZMH.

Secondly, there is evidence of a range of systems of power, deliberately created using an array of illusionary spectacular processes and wholly owned media platforms, diverting critical gaze away from the commercial, cultural and political objectives of ZMH. This has enabled ZMH to achieve its political, commercial and sporting ambitions with, surprisingly, little resistance.

Thirdly, there is overwhelming evidence that professional surfing has been systematically and rapidly commodified and re-represented as a new brand (WSL) to compete with other traditional US League based sports, such as the National Football League (NFL), National Basketball Association (NBA), and the National Hockey League (NHL).

Fourthly, evidence of an array of new media technologies and platforms, wholly owned by ZMH in order to mediate this new surfing spectacle and exclusively control all broadcast imagery, allowing the shaping of the illusionary narrative that the WSL is the home of global surfing.

Fifthly, clear evidence and examples of capital investment and rapid transformation undertaken by ZMH to monetise professional surfing through a WSL media application; new commercial sponsorships with non-endemic brands; an online, WSL sports retail store and significant investment in a wave park business – Kelly Slater Wave Pools (KSWP).

These findings add to, and perhaps extend, the hegemonic discourses in critical surf studies related to the commercialisation and commodification of surfing as sport.

The work will now move forward with an analysis of the key literature in relation to the subject area, research questions and theoretical approach taken during the course of this study.

1. Review of Literature

1.1 Introduction

This literature review seeks to do a number of things in light of the focus of the thesis and the conceptual framework of the research. Firstly, it is important to analyse and critique Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, scaffold the theory and explain why this is the most appropriate and useful theoretical approach in analysing the transformation of the ASP into the WSL. In doing this, the review unpacks literature related to the use of this theory by other scholars and how it specifically relates to both sport in general and surfing in particular. Further, the theory of alienation and how it specifically relates to spectacle is also explained and expanded in the discussion with explicit examples provided.

Secondly, the review examines why Debord's theories were the most suitable and relevant in critically analysing the changing field of professional surfing.

Thirdly, the review needs to critically analyse academic work related to the professionalisation and commercialisation of sport in capitalist societies and more specifically, the academic investigations related to the creation, development and formation of surfing as a professional sport.

Fourthly, the literature needs to explore the governance of professional surfing and explain the process of, and rationale for, ZMH's takeover of the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP).

Further information in this review relating to the history and administration of professional surfing and the launch and re-positioning of the WSL was obtained from a range of surf media, on-line sources and books about and by surfers.

This review is important in that it identifies limited academic work, given the cultural history of surfing, examining surfing as a rule-bound and codified elite sport and, as such, the work may prove valuable in creating an additional body of knowledge within critical surf studies specifically related to the commodification of surfing.

Before critically analysing Debord's work and relating that to the thesis and research questions, it is important to outline and briefly explain some central themes of Marx's work which are important in studying how and why owners of production build, in this case, surf capital (Lanagan, 2010). The central themes developed by Marx and explained here are alienation, false consciousness, and aura. Debord's notion of recuperation, explained below, will also be addressed later in the review and all concepts will be linked to explicit WSL examples in the discussion.

Alienation says the worker, in this case, the professional surfer, is alienated when they do not have capacity or are deprived of the individual right to direct their own life actions in capitalist societies in relation to the work they do and produce. It is important to the work of Debord. In thesis 33 Debord writes of the alienated:

“Though separated from his product, man is more and more, and ever more powerfully, the producer of every detail of his world. The closer his life comes to being his own creation, the more drastically he is cut off from that life.” (Debord, 1994, p,10)

As a result of both this deprivation and the focus of the individual being diverted to meeting the goals and aspirations of business owners, in this context, ZMH and the WSL, surfers are alienated or separated from the ability to express themselves and perform in individual ways as they are employed to meet the needs of employers. This, says Marx, leads to alienation or separation from any product being made, activity being pursued or society engaged in by the worker and leads to emotional feelings of loss, anxiety and depression. In the context of this thesis, the surfer as alienated worker and as part of surfing capital (Lanagan, 2010), is addressed in the discussion section where theory is connected to explicit practical examples.

False Consciousness

The concept of false consciousness in relation to this work is important. False consciousness theorises the process of social conditioning. In opposition to individual agency, a false consciousness in an individual is created through a deliberate process constructed by capitalist owners of production to prevent workers and wage labourers recognising the injustice of their situation.

Economic, political and cultural power is exerted to shape the way workers think about their working conditions. Marx based the concept on an understanding that it was irrational for such a large number of workers to accept the working conditions and practices offered by capitalists or owners of production. Marx maintained that there must be something these owners of production did to ensure workers accepted their conditions of work. This, he maintained, was the concept of false consciousness. This thesis examines this concept and will give explicit examples of how ZMH and the WSL creates elements of false consciousness in the surfing world in the discussion chapter.

The Marxist concept of aura is also important and relevant to this work as it analyses a physical activity often described as a sublime art form, producing strong emotions of stoke in

its participants (Stranger, 1999., Ponting, 2015). The term, stoke, is used by academics in surf studies to refer to the emotional feelings of elation and joy often expressed by surfers.

Aura, originally theorised as being related to the appearance of, and an emotional response to, a form of art. It attempted to describe and capture something of the uniqueness and the magical associated with the painted, still, original art form. Marx was fascinated with the way this aura of the original diminished each time it was copied or reproduced. In surfing, the mechanical reproduction of the surfboard, is a good example. The notion of aura and its relation to surfing will be highlighted later in this thesis, specifically linking the concept to the wider technological and social changes taking place in a society rapidly moving from contemplation to distraction in the digital, reproduced age.

1.2 The Society of the Spectacle

In 1957 four European avant garde groups joined forces to form the Situationists International (SI). The group comprised artists, poets, activists and academics such as Guy Debord, Gil Wolman, Michelle Bernstein, Jean-Isidore Isou and were concerned with 'artistic experimentation, the production of film and the use of poetry to challenge dominant artistic forms of production'. (Barnard, A, p.2)

The group produced twelve issues of its journal, *Internationale Situationniste* and its focus quickly moved from the emphasis of challenging artistic production to challenging wider societal issues such as urban planning, architecture and the search for utopianism. SI's mantra was drift, change, chance, encounter and adventure, typical of the Western-centric, counter-cultural movement of the late 1950's and early 1960's and similar in pattern and intent to the US BEAT group of writers, creatives and artists.

As such, situationism follows the argument that man is a product of the situations he/she goes through and therefore it is essential to personally create those situations and create situations of desire to meet human needs.

Barnard (2004), outlining the developmental history of SI, identified a fundamental shift in its development with a new focus from constructing artistic situations to the construction of political situations. These situations or events were created so passive spectators would be energized and no longer just contemplate the unfolding world around them created by elites but would participate, create and change situations to their advantage. A form of anarchic rage against the traditions of society.

SI used two tactics in trying to create situations. Derive and Detournement. Derive, or drift in its English translation, is a theory developed by Guy Debord and is the unplanned journey in small groups through mainly urban landscapes. The focus is on participants drifting through

environments being drawn by the terrain and encounters. It echoes the field of psychogeography where those who explore urban geographies do so with an emphasis on playfulness.

Detournement, meaning to hijack or re-route in English translation, is the ironic re-routing and re-forming of existing social practices and one of the central tools in social resistance used by SI. I will outline examples of detournement later in this review citing work by Naomi Klein and Douglas Kellner, the two thinkers most associated with exploring situationist theory. In direct opposition to Debord's concept of detournement is Debord's concept of recuperation or the way in which the spectacle confronts radical, subversive and challenging (to the spectacle) views or actions and re-presents them as palatable before being re-introduced to society. For now, I will move on to review how Guy Debord developed his most notable theory and the central theory of this thesis – The Society of the Spectacle and how it extends related theories from Daniel Boorstin and Jean Baudrillard.

Guy Debord developed his seminal work, *La Societe du Spectacle* (Society of the Spectacle) in 1967. He appropriated the term from contemporary Roland Barthes and developed a series of 221 'points' or theses unwrapping his theory of the spectacle as a critique of forms of production and consumption and the way power was used to hide the realities of everyday life.

Debord's original theory comprised two forms of spectacle or power - the concentrated and diffuse. Debord added and updated his original theory in 1989 identifying an emerging third, integrated spectacle. This, said Debord, accounted for the rapidly changing media and technological landscapes of the 1970's, 80's and 90's. Following his death in 1994, Debord's theory was adopted by Naomi Klein in her analysis of branded commodities in *No Logo* (1999) and extended by Douglas Kellner into the digital age with his development of the theory of the interactive spectacle and the development of cyber situations. The theory of the spectacle has been further 'stretched' and re-worked in *Spectacle 2.0* by Briziarelli and Armano (2017).

This work will focus more closely on the development and use of the integrated spectacle by ZMH in creating a Spectacular Surfing Society using a branded commodity – the WSL.

Firstly, the literature exploring the meaning of the Society of the Spectacle will be presented before moving to the specific integrated spectacle while outlining why Debord's 1967 theory is the most appropriate theory to use in the analysis of professional surfing and the World Surf League.

But what did Debord mean when he was talking about a society of the spectacle? Evers, 2013, said Debord was commenting on personal immersion in ‘an endless sea of images’ (Evers, 2013, p.1) and that it was by these images the world became addicted to entertainment and consumption. He suggests the spectacle is a tool for the pacification of capitalist society and that it is this never-ending spectacle of production and consumption which keeps our attention away from the important and true elements of life.

Klein (1999) cites the introduction and marketing of branded commodities as having introduced some of the worst working practices while hidden behind the image-led glamour of spectacle creation and calls for forms of culture jamming to resist the power of the spectacle.

Debord however saw a lack of agency in society’s ability to wean itself off this never-ending cycle of intravenously administered imagery delivered to the masses by brand marketers on the orders of the production owners, moving citizens further away from real and lived lives. He captures this in his thesis one:

“The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation.” (Debord, 2004, p.5)

Kellner, 2003, takes this further by adding that the internet based economy of capitalist countries deploys spectacle as a means of promotion, reproduction and the circulation and selling of goods. He states that the media spectacle has become the defining feature of globalisation and describes society being organised around the production and consumption of images, commodities and staged events – linking thought closely with the work of Daniel Boorstin and the formation of pseudo news and manufactured events which are designed to meet the publicity desires of producers in creating marketable difference between one commodity and another. Kellner extends Debord’s theory for the digital age by introducing the interactive spectacle and describes cyber situations as the new form of situation making.

It is this powerful use of image and meaning making to create spectacles, identified by Debord, that is supported by Broudehoux (2010). The spectacle is described in terrifying terms as a technique of governance where visibility through image making and meaning making renders the important invisible, ‘Debord exposed the spectacle as a manipulation of meaning making processes to serve the production of economic and political power.’ (Broudehoux, 2010, p.53)

Barnard deepens the critique of spectacle formation arguing that the possibility of artistic expression, experimentation and a fully lived human life which is ‘rich in experience,

communication and participation', is blocked by the spectacle. This form of blocking of expression is important, I would argue, when relating spectacle to surfing. The politics of aesthetics, style, the body and the notion of creative expression seem fundamental to the notion of surfing.

Indeed, Debord, in thesis 12, says spectacle monopolizes the realm of appearance. As it shapes a way of being and a way of seeing.

“The spectacle manifests itself as an enormous positivity, out of reach and beyond dispute. All it is says is: “Everything that appears is good; whatever is good will appear.” The attitude that it demands in principle is the same passive acceptance that it has already secured by means of its seeming incontrovertibility, and indeed by its monopolization of the realm of appearance.” (Debord, G. 2004, p.6)

This cynical, all-encompassing vision of the spectacle shaping global production and consumption, is at the heart of Debord's spectacle. From *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1989), it can be argued that he saw spectacle as much bigger than purely 'the media'. He saw it as the 'activities of the world's owners' and indicated that the dominant view of 'the world's owners' is organised via the media and, as such, the media is purely an instrument of the creators of the spectacle.

Debord indicates the mass media is used merely as a 'tactic' in a war, acting on behalf of the spectacle to communicate orders to mass audiences to shape thinking and retain power. He identified industrial capitalism as the natural centre of the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1990) and he named its influence as spectacular power. The heart of this thesis revolves around the notion of Waves of Power, in a Debordian sense, and the recuperation processes and creation of false consciousness used by a venture capitalist backed company to create a spectacular surfing society to render the problems of privatisation, invisible. Silencing voices, stifling debate. It is through a series of spectacular media creations that ZMH managed to become a monopoly owner and controller of production and create a new surfing 'existence'.

Alvesson (2013), applying spectacle theory to organisations, describes the praxis of spectacle creation. Spectacles can be created through branding, accounting or media relations for example. These formations, he said, narrate a particular organizational reality into existence... and these organisations package themselves as something they are not. Clearly, in this context, the ability of an organisation to create spectacles could have a debilitating effect on notions of truth and reality in democratic societies.

The literature review, now having given the over-arching critique of Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, will move on to analyse the different aspects and types of spectacular power and highlight how Debord, through the processes of *Derive* and *Detournement*, argues society could and should resist the spectacle in light of the recuperative efforts countering subversion.

Debord, (1990) identified two forms of spectacular power. The first he labelled as concentrated and the second diffuse. Concentrated power was an ideology of dictatorial personalities, while diffuse power was created by the rise of what Wernick (1994) described as the promotional cultures, the workforce of which Davis (2013) described as cultural intermediaries. This workforce of journalism and public relations professionals, marketing, advertising, lobbying and social media consultants use the media spectacle to circulate concentrated spectacular power. Debord identified that these intermediaries worked in the spectacular industries of television, films and publishing.

Debord said these cultural intermediaries were responsible for driving wage earners to apply their freedom of choice to the vast range of new commodities now on offer and in so doing had represented the Americanisation of the world. This diffuse spectacular power, Debord argued, was stronger than concentrated spectacular power.

Evers (2013) adds to the cultural intermediary argument by adding the society of the spectacle focus on 'cultivating marketable difference'. Marketable difference is the meanings attached to a range of what are essentially the same products and services, serving the same consumers, in order to make consumers believe these products and services are different in some ways and are therefore more attractive to consume. He asserts that in this way we are distracted from actively producing our own lives.

This production of marketable difference can be encapsulated in Debord's third theoretical dimension to the society of the spectacle – the integrated spectacle – the central focus of this work. Eagles (2012) says the integrated spectacle is an updated form of the society of the spectacle and combines both the diffuse and concentrated spectacle. The integrated spectacle, claims Eagles, was Debord's theoretical and philosophical response to the ever-increasing effects of globalisation. Eagles outlined five features which defined societies controlled by the integrated spectacle. Firstly, there was incessant technological renewal; secondly, there was a full integration of state and economy; thirdly, there was generalised secrecy; fourthly, there were unanswerable lies; fifthly, society was defined by an eternal present.

In this society of the integrated spectacle, says Debord, 'the commodity is beyond criticism.' (Debord, 1990, p.21)

Flyverbom and Reinecke (2017) researching spectacles and organisations, argue Debord's vision of consumer society has only intensified with rapid technological, social, big data and virtual developments within society and the birth of new, powerful mediators between reality and its appearance:

"At a moment in time when organizational processes and global economies are increasingly fluid, de-territorialized and digital, it seems pertinent to attend to the explosion and dynamics of spectacles." (Flyverbom and Reinecke, 2017, p.16)

The theory does have its critics. Tomlinson (2013) says there are four 'problems' with the notion of the Society of the Spectacle. Firstly, it trivialises human agency and underplays our ability to make up our own minds and make our own decisions. Secondly, Tomlinson argues modern spectacles are too complex to be neatly encompassed by Debord's theoretical framework. Thirdly, he argues it is sociologically incomplete as the sports spectacle operates on many different levels in producing meaning. Fourthly, Tomlinson describes the society of the spectacle as 'culturally pessimistic' with the only antidote being revolution. Tomlinson, and this is of particular interest when debating surfing, says the society of the spectacle fails to recognise a dimension of fun or pleasure in consumer culture. He suggests sporting spectacles create a range of sub cultural practices while Debord seems to ignore such possibilities.

While these four problems are relevant and need highlighting, Andrews (2006), Barnard (2003), Briaziarelli and Armano (2017), Davis (2013), Evers (2013) and Kellner (2003) are some of the researchers who have powerfully used spectacle theory to explain social and sporting phenomena and Davis (2013) demonstrates the power and influence of cultural intermediaries in influencing and negating human agency by using a range of tactics and techniques aimed at recuperating the spectacle. Further, these four 'problems' will be addressed and countered in later sections of this thesis to highlight how the WSL spectacle is so overwhelming that it challenges some of Tomlinson's critique.

However, Briaziarelli and Armano (2017) look to extend Debord's philosophy by suggesting the work is more profound than merely a tool to analyse media and event spectacles. They argue the spectacle subsumes more spheres of modernity and everyday social life and should be considered on a broader ontological plane. They put forward an argument that an updated, Spectacle 2.0, can act as a heuristic tool which can be used to understand late capitalism.

1.3 Resistance and spectacle

Debord developed the notion of detournement as a way to resist the spectacle and reverse the gaze. Detournement is the hijacking of a spectacle and can be done in a number of ways. Debord's response to the spectacle's creation was clear. As an anarchist, his response was to tear it down, break it up and as soon as anything became normalised to start afresh.

Not as dramatic, but a modern example of this detournement would be the UK artist, Banksy. His latest art piece, once sold by an auctioneer to a buyer immediately shredded itself so the artwork was destroyed.

Klein (1999) suggests detournement be used as a strategic, artistic and linguistic intervention against the spectacle. Examples of this being 'culture jamming' and 'adusting' where corporate speeches are hacked or changed, logos reformed and re-represented presenting a corporate truth. In this way a form of quick fire anarchy from citizens, campaigners, artists and academics can break the gaze from the formation of the spectacle.

In *Images of Power* (2010), Broudehoux offers further examples of resistance to the spectacle. Analysing spectacular architecture in relation to China and the Olympic Games in 2008. Defining the process of the Chinese government's clear development of spectacular sporting sites to meet political and culturally objectives for the 'mega-spectacle' of an Olympiad, Broudehoux also identified strong resistance to the formation of spectacular sites that changed the form of the spectacle. Pressure by critics, activists and academics using petitions and other forms of 'detournement' succeeded in in reappraisals of both the design and modifications of these architectural sporting spectacles.

Further, the work outlines the lobbying by these pressure groups of global media to 'reverse the gaze' back on China to ensure these sporting spectacles were reappraised and the power of the Chinese state to enact their initial vision for the spectacle was slowed, stifled and changed by citizens.

1.4 Spectacle and sport

Although Debord did not write specifically about sport, academics have used the philosophy of the spectacle to tackle the sociology of modern sport. For this review of literature only one article could be found that relates specifically to surfing governance and the Society of the Spectacle and that was written by Dr Clifton Evers for the online surf media platform, Swellnet in 2013.

There is, however, much written about sporting spectacles and this work will now move on to analyse spectacle as related to sport in general and surfing in specific, drawing upon academic work and critique developed by Andrews (2005, 2006, 2009), Evers (2013), Kellner (2003), Silk (2011) and Tomlinson (2002, 2007).

Tomlinson (2007) helps us to understand the potential approaches that could be taken, using spectacle philosophy to understand and explore how the society of the spectacle manifests itself in sport. He outlines that the word spectacle derives from Latin and French meaning to look or 'looking' and has therefore given us the term spectator, meaning the onlooker. Tomlinson (2007, p.418) helpfully suggests those using the theory of spectacle to critically analyse sporting phenomena should ask three questions. 'What is it that draws people to look? What is it that holds their attention? What are the motives of those who stage the spectacle?'

Kellner (2003), like Tomlinson, is critical of Debord's 'general and abstract notion of spectacle' (2003, p3) and instead extends Debord's thinking to an examination of very specific forms of media spectacle in relation to sport, film, television, theatre, fashion, art, architecture, music, food, video and computer games. Kellner says there are specific spectacles created for every sector of society and sport is a rich field of study in which to apply spectacle theory.

Andrews (2006) takes the National Basketball Association (NBA). He analyses the NBA to assess how capitalists seeking to further and develop a different sports culture use basketball as a vehicle of multi-revenue stream capital accumulation. Interestingly Andrews finds that the cultural labourers intrinsic to the creation of the NBA spectacle are not the players but 'more the management, marketing and mass-media-orientated cultural intermediaries' who are responsible for the 'spectacularisation, televisualisation and globalisation of the League, its teams and players.'

Andrews maintains the NBA had been transformed into an 'integrated spectacle' resembling a form of Disneyization. Disneyization is a theory put forward by Bryman (2004) in which something is transformed in our post-modern, globalised society, to resemble a Walt Disney theme park where there is a homogenisation of consumption, merchandise and emotional labour.

American sociologist, Arlie Hochschild, first defined the theory of emotional labour in 1983 while researching the way personal emotions were manipulated by organisations as human feelings were 'commercialised' in the rapidly expanding service industry sector. Hochschild theorised emotional labour was displaying a range of specific emotions to meet the

requirements of a job. In relation to surfing, Evers (2019) studied emotional labour and male surfers, analysing the way the surf industry manufactures surfing 'stoke' for profit and highlighting the way emotional labour strategies are employed by surfers using digital technologies. Explicit examples of emotional labour and the WSL will be highlighted in the discussion chapter of this work.

Bryman's work extends Ritzer's (2010, 3rd ed.) theory of McDonaldization by concentrating on the process of consumerism rather than the processes of rationalisation linked to McDonaldization. Andrews, citing Mandel (1999), says the integrated spectacle creating this late capital consumerism is organised around the industrialisation of the super structural activities that are produced for the market and aim to maximise profit.

This leads on to an analysis of the linked theory of Disneyization, which may also aid in the understanding of the re-imagined world of professional surfing. Understanding and analysing the mythmaking processes inherent in the marketing of Disneyland can reveal the ways in which this process can be applied to professional surfing and the mediated commodity distributed by the WSL. When discussing the notion of mythmaking I am guided by the theoretical work of Roland Barthes who analysed the way elites in societies promoted their values through cultural materials and the creation and circulation of certain myths. These myths being motivated by the need to manipulate sections of society, retain the status quo and political power or increase economic power through selling commodities.

Disneyization is a term which describes the transformation of 'something' into looking like or resembling a Walt Disney theme park (Bryman, A. 2004) and is a critical theory implying the homogenisation of consumption, merchandising and emotional labour

Disneyization can be used more broadly to describe the process of stripping a real place or event of its original character and repackaging it in a sanitized format. References to anything negative are removed and the facts are watered down with the intent of making the subject more pleasant and easily grasped.

When it comes to geographical places, Disneyisation typically means replacing what has grown organically over time with an idealised and tourist friendly veneer as seen in all Disney lands around the world.

Aspects of Disneyization include theming, which is infusing a place or object with a particular idea. This includes hybrid consumption, merchandising (promoting goods and services with objects bearing logos) and performative labour – making employees both entertainers and service providers. Further, Disney relies not upon the theme parks but upon the branded

spectacles delivered via film, video, television, magazine, web and app platforms to shape the core of Disney's media entertainment complex.

Jean Baudrillard (1981), critical of American society and consumer culture said:

“Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and the order of simulation.” (Baudrillard, 1981, p.12)

David Andrews in *Disneyisation, Debord and the Integrated NBA spectacle* (2006), brings the two critical theories to bear on a traditional, mainstream US sport – the National Basketball Association (NBA).

Andrews analyses the NBA in relation to late capitalism and looks at those capitalists who seek to further and develop distinct sports cultures ‘as a vehicle of multi-revenue stream capital accumulation.’

Importantly Andrews says the cultural labourers intrinsic to this sport culture creation are not so much the players but ‘more the management, marketing and mass media orientated cultural intermediaries responsible for the “spectacularisation, televisualisation and globalization of the League (NBA), its teams and players.

Andrews focuses on the manner through which the NBA has been transformed into an ‘integrated spectacle’ resembling a form of Disneyisation by the strategic and commercial mobilisation of various forms of strategic initiatives of cultural labour.

Zygmunt Baumann uses the term liquid capital instead of late capital, but agrees it is marked by the global capitalist economies increasing privatisation of services in the information revolution. ZoSea Media Holdings is owned by a US Venture Capital (VC) company. The late capital/liquid capital model would seem to fit the way ZoSea has acquired and reconfigured professional surfing. As Mandel points out there is a commodification of ever more intimate realms of social existence and activities of late capitalists were organised around the super structure activities that are produced ‘for the market and aim at maximization of profit.’ Therefore, the market will dictate what the commodity will look like. The more spectacular, the better as Kellner (2002, p.66) points out.

Interestingly though in his article, *The Degradation of Sport*, (Tomlinson, A, 2007), Lasch cites an example of hockey crowds becoming more violent when the sport was taken into artificial arenas in cities. The spectators seemed to adopt the mood of the city with increasing anarchy and violence. This theme will be explored a little later in this work, with

the indoorisation of sport. It is an important feature in the re-imagined world of professional surfing with the relatively recent announcement of the WSL purchase of the Kelly Slater Wave Pool Company. This purchase is a bid to develop global surfing training centres inland, and in potentially indoor, spaces – far removed from the seascape theatre associated with surfing expression and competition.

Further, Guttman highlights the way in which modernization theory can be used by elites as a distraction to dupe the audience and public so that they do not notice the negative effects of modernization - such as toxic waste, nuclear issues, war and environmental catastrophe. He asserts this is a technique frequently used by sports marketers.

This Disneyization is further supported by Schiller (Tomlinson, A. 2007) in specific relation to the commercialisation of sport 'As with many marketing practices, the commercialization of sport is an American speciality, rapidly being extended to the rest of the world' (Tomlinson, A, p. 432)

Schiller said:

“With the capture of sports for corporate promotions, the audience is targeted in its most vulnerable condition, relaxed yet fully receptive to the physical action and the inserted sales pitch. It is the ideal ambiance for the penetration of the consciousness by a wide variety of ideological messages.” (Tomlinson, A, p.433)

Further evidence of sport being used by those with the means of production to control those without it comes from Brohm (Tomlinson, A, p,13). He identified that sport was, and always has been, linked to the interest of imperial capitalists and the driving forces in sport such as performance, competitiveness and record breaking are all carried over from the driving forces of capitalism. Productivity, the search for profit, rivalry and competitiveness can all be linked to such driving forces.

Guttman (Tomlinson, A, p. 24-29) supports Brohm's view, arguing that modern sports (as opposed to old sports) are defined by specific elements such as equality, bureaucratization, rationalization, quantification and an obsession with records.

1.5 Surfing and Spectacle

In order to see how this theory applies to the world of surfing it is necessary to gain an overview of the broadly accepted historical development of surfing as a sport. From there it is then possible to explore the colliding issues of professionalism, commercialism and competition that seem to be a consistent problem and on-going source of tension moving through the narrative history of surfing (Booth, 1995; Brown and Ford 2006).

This literature review seeks to identify the source of those tensions, track the development of surfing as an organised and competitive sporting commodity and describe the history of the emergence of the World Surf League:

"One of the most striking aspects of any review of accounts of surfing history is the very high level of consensus concerning the milestones, broad phrases and tensions which pervade the culture or sport." (Brown and Ford, p. 27)

The literature indicates the history of professional surfing to be dominated by three different and distinct geographies and cultures – Hawaii, California and Australia. Further, the research indicates the 'sport' of surfing is a constructed myth of the hyperreal in a response to the rise of capitalism (Booth, 1995).

The development of surfing as a competitive pursuit up until the mid 1990's is brilliantly captured by Douglas Booth (1995). He charts the tensions inherent within the social, structural and cultural formations of surfing as a professional sport and meticulously analyses the historical stepping stones in the creation of surfing as a competitive sport. Booth sets his analysis against the rapidly changing social structures of the post war period in the West where mass consumer capitalism promoted leisure and pleasure seeking as legitimate lifestyle choices.

He highlights that surfing, as a Hawaiian art form, was 'rediscovered' at the turn of the 20th century and spread throughout the Pacific region. By the outbreak of the second world war surfing was a recognised leisure pursuit in southern California, Australia, New Zealand, Peru and South Africa.

In the aftermath of the second world war and with the rise of consumer capitalism, surfing grew in popularity as the middle classes revised notions of leisure and many practices were seen as an extension of work. Surfing, says Booth, was seen as 'hedonistic leisure' and as a result steps were taken to control and discipline youth cultures who surfed. Beaches were closed, taxes placed on surfboards and administrative associations were developed to 'regulate, codify and legitimate' what was now defined as a sport.

The literature outlines a new sport ill at ease with this codification and legitimacy with competitive surfing and the anti-competition position of the youth counter culture as Booth points out, were irreconcilable (Booth 1995, 2001; Brown and Ford, 2007; Pearson 1979).

"The kids started paddling out with numbers on their bodies. Numbers! It was incongruous to the point of being blasphemous. I wondered about myself. I had been a contestant and a judge in a few of those contests when it all seemed innocent and fun. But it never is. The system is like an octopus with long legs and suckers that

envelop you and suck you down. The free and easy surfer, with his ability to communicate so personally and intensely with his God, is conned into playing the plastic numbers game with the squares, losing his freedom, his identity, and his vitality, becoming a virtual prostitute. And what is even worse, the surfers fall for it. I felt sick.” (Kimo Hollinger, 1975 in Booth, 1995, p.196)

The notion of surfing being like other ‘normal’ sports is questioned here. The mere presence of numbers on contestants surfing against each other is seen as blasphemous while the speaker critiques the organisational bodies they see as exploiting surfing and restricting the freedoms inherent in the act of surfing. Indeed, surfing as a form of religious experience and therefore at odds with codified sporting practice, is explored by Bron Taylor (2007). Taylor examines the notion of the ‘soul surfer’ and puts forward an argument that surfing is a new aquatic nature religion because it has a powerful, transformative, sacred and healing effect on many participants. Further, Taylor argues surfing also possesses many of the myths, rituals, symbols, terminology and technology associated with mainstream religions while creating a hybridised form of ‘worship’ from the mixing of Eastern forms of spirituality with Christianity and forms of paganism to build an aquatic form of nature religion.

David Lanagan (2010) developed seminal work introducing the concept of ‘surfing capital’. Lanagan identified the commodification of surfing’s visibility by business organisations and argued that there appeared to have been a transference of the symbolic ownership of surfing as a sport. This transference, he argued, has migrated the ownership of the practice of surfing from surfers and embedded it firmly under ownership of surfing capital. Lanagan, identified this surfing capital as Australian-centric and comprised the three largest surfwear brands of Quiksilver, Billabong and Rip Curl as the epicentres of surfing capital.

I will now examine the political development of surfing as a competitive and codified sport.

Pearson (1979), researching surfing subcultures in Australia in the 1970’s, examined the tensions and the paradox of surfing as ‘sport’ as opposed to a form of hedonistic leisure.

He identified clear tensions between those who surfed as a pursuit and those who saw competitive surfing as a means of extending personal hedonistic pleasure. The former questioning the viability of surfing as a competitive sport:

"Board riding by its very nature is not a good competitive sport. For comparative ratings to be made, rules must be laid down, styles and skills formalised and standardised. To the purist (surfer) this would detract from the freedom of expression that many board riders claim is the essence of their sport. Besides this, heavy emphasis on competition tends to reinforce other tendencies (e.g., increasing

organisation) which the board rider generally evaluates in a negative manner."
(Pearson, K. 1979, p.124)

Indeed, we can look to the work of Huizinga to support the notion of 'serious play'. In, *The Play Element in Contemporary Civilization* (Tomlinson, A, 2007), Huizinga analysed and defined the shift from 'serious play' to a transition from amusement to a system of organised clubs and matches. He says the starting point for modern sport lay in the organisation of teams in the ball sports. This process started in 19th century among English nobility.

The concept of 'games in the form of sport' emerged over the last 25 years of the 19th century. But with the increasing systemization and regimentation of sport, Huizinga suggested something of the pure play quality of sport is inevitably lost.

He also discusses the transition of how business becomes play and talks of the way business uses play spirit to increase up production. Huizinga says the trend is now reversed where 'play becomes business.' This can certainly be seen in the commercial development of competitive surfing and the marketing prowess of the originating brand in professional surfing, *The Bronzed Aussies*.

Krista Comer's work also identifies this 'play as business' narrative in *Surfer Girls in the New World Order* (2010). Comer concentrates on gender in the development of surfing on a global scale and neatly target's 1950's California as the centre of the commodification and global export of surfing. There a Hollywood scriptwriter developed a fictional female Californian surfer named Gidget to counter the reality of subversive male surfers, famed for their attitude of 'localism', who surfed areas such as Malibu. Comer further identifies the creation and export of Californian surfing hegemony to other parts of the world through Bruce Brown's film *Endless Summer*. This film charts the global search by surfers for perfect waves and perfect weather. Of course, these surfing nomads, says, Comer, needed to make ends meet to keep the journey going and so many set up surf schools and taught others to surf in a Californian style.

This US surfing hegemony is further supported by Scott Laderman in *Empire in Waves* (2014) where the political history of surfing is studied in depth through a range of issues and cases. He says the activity of surfing was appropriated by Americans and commodified to act as a marketing hook to draw largely white travellers to the Hawaiian Islands in the early 1900's. Laderman then charts the process by which surfing was reimagined in California in the 1950's as a 'lifestyle' sport and then exported to global surfing centres in Australia, South Africa, Indonesia, Europe and Japan. He critically examines the influence of surfing capitalists on pristine Indonesian seascapes, the initial non-engagement with the issue of

apartheid in South Africa in order to surf some of the world's best point break waves. He also charts the commodification of the surfing experience, where the authentic imagery of surfing has been used and abused by non-endemic clothing brands and describes it as 'industrial surfing'.

He cites the example of US clothing brand, Hollister. It created a fictional past and marketing narrative for the company and its products by developing a 'marketable difference' position of a company born out of the pioneering, early 20th century roots of Californian surfing. The company manufactured its truth and its reality. It had no such history and no such connections to surfing heritage. The positioning was a lie:

"Cultural capital, the company understood, need not be earned; it can be single-handedly contrived. Surfing, in other words, was just another brand. Welcome to industrial surf culture." (Laderman, S, 2014, p.153)

And this notion of surfing as 'industrial' is further extended by Dexter Hough-Snee and Alexander Eastman (2017) who take Yago Colas's thesis of power and domination in basketball and apply it to surfing. Colas (2016) highlighted the way a sporting system or state of power had been created in professional basketball by public and private capital interests. These interests sought to work together to maximise profits from sporting labour by creating stable systems of governance and control and then shape a narrative that this form of dominance and management is both desirable and inevitable. This power system is then legitimised through mythmaking practices carried out by cultural intermediaries employed by the central 'state'.

Hough-Snee and Eastman apply Colas' thinking to surfing and theorise the State of Modern Surfing (SMS) as comprising a range of groups who seek to institutionalise and profit from the sport of surfing. These include governing bodies such as the ASP and WSL; specialist surf media; brand owners and sponsors; wave pool entrepreneurs; travel and tourism organisations; photographers and filmmakers; bloggers and vloggers and, of course, the surfers themselves.

These institutions, and the political push and pull between them, says Hough-Snee and Eastman, define (to those who surf and those who do not) what surfing should look like; what you should look like while you surf; what surfboard you should ride when you are flowing across a wave; How you should carry a surfboard; what wetsuit you need to wear when you are surfing and what clothes you put on after you surf. These are just a few of the areas where Hough-Snee and Eastman maintain the SMS has control over individual agency and control over the way surfing is perceived by audiences who do not surf.

This consideration of hegemony and the notion of a rising SMS neatly takes the discussion on to consider the historical development of professional surfing.

1.6. A History of Professional Surfing

While many places and cultures have their own genealogies of surfing histories, practices and culture; well captured, illuminated and mapped by Evers (2017), Gillio-Whitaker (2017) Walker (2011, 2017) and Laderman (2014), Hough-Snee (2017), the recent history of surfing in Hawaii and California can be viewed in terms of the wider tensions brought about by western colonialism as white, wealthy settlers appropriated and silenced ancient, native cultures. Gillio-Whitaker (2017) described the realities of the modern histories of surfing as:

“Written by white men in the context of popular culture texts like magazines and glitzy coffee table books, surfing history has overwhelmingly consisted of celebratory tomes narrating a history of the near-extinction of a sport allowed to languish by an indifferent indigenous population, but saved by white men for the posterity of all the people.” (Gillio-Whitaker, D, p.1 2017)

While these emerging debates and research challenge historic formations of surf practice, this work focuses on the history of professional surfing at the time of this research and it is to this that the attention of this work now turns.

The foundations of professional surfing were laid in 1908 with the formation of the Hawaiian Outrigger Canoe Club with the notion of providing surfing with a beach base, as part of a strategy to revive the sport for tourist appeal. This club, according to Finney (1970) was restricted to white Americans only. Later, in 1911, native Hawaiian’s countered this with the formation of the Hawaiian Surfing Organisation was formed - the Hui Nalu. This led to the rapid increase in the interest and aesthetics of surfing in both Hawaii and mainland US with the focus on the State of California:

"While Hawaii as a locale might have been regarded as an international surfing Mecca, California was soon established as the world's leading workshop, the design centre, and the origin of the major developments in the sport." (Warshaw, M, 2010, p.34)

The resurgence of interest in board surfing in Hawaii, and its introduction in California, was facilitated by a shift in values in twentieth century American society. Business interests also played a central role in stimulating the interest and surfing was used as a marketing ‘loss leader’ to shape a mythological lifestyle to attract wealthy Californian’s to holiday in Hawaii.

It was actually the Hawaiian Tourist Board which became a driving force in promoting surfing as a legitimate lifestyle activity.

In Australia, the sport of surfing emerged in a different way and, as such, the attitudes toward the sport were completely different to those found in Hawaii and California.

In early 1900's Australia sea bathers had experienced a long running battle with local government authorities just to 'gain the freedom to swim in the surf'. The resurgence of surfing there was based on the extension of life saving techniques which had facilitated the legitimation and social acceptance of surfing (Booth, p46).

In Australia there were very negative attitudes to those surfers who moved away from the rule-bound order of competitive surf-lifesaving. There was a societal hatred of surfers who were often seen as loafers and this imagery was further mediated to create stereotypical views of surfers.

Indeed, work as play was used and adopted by the founders of professional surfing – The Bronzed Aussies - to continue their globe-trotting hedonistic lifestyles by creating a work tour, where the work really was play.

In this way, the foundations were laid for the development of two different forms of surfing sport on opposite sides of the Pacific. One was based on selling the activity as a tourist attraction, the other as a competitive sport. It is important to now analyse the tensions that existed within the developing forms of surfing as sport.

Core tensions within surf culture generally included, on the one hand, the complex interplay of soul or gypsy surfing and on the other, the emerging world of competitive surfing. There is a perennial tension between the antipathy towards commercialisation of surfing on the one hand and the pragmatic desire to make a living from some aspects of the sport on the other. This dichotomy is expanded and supported in research by Nick Ford and David Brown:

"The tension(s) running through surfing culture was seen to revolve primarily around the oppositional interplay of soul surfing and commercial/contest tendencies. The former is associated with a declensionist narrative and counter-cultural surfing as lifestyle perspective, and the latter, within a progressive narrative, linked to an Olympian ethos of the sportisation of surfing, but also seeking to market surfing as a lifestyle." (Ford, N and Brown, D, 2006, p.58)

Further, John Fiske's *Reading the Beach* (1989) an interesting and thorough semiotic analysis of liminal coastal spaces in Perth, Western Australia, associates the activity of surfing with nature, risk and immediacy. He suggests there is a surfing dichotomy at play in

his reading of surfing cultures in this space. On one hand, surfers reject commercial influence on their lifestyle, while on the other hand they buy branded surf products, compete in televised contests and happily use their bodies and surfboards as commodities.

This is further problematized by the mediatisation surfing:

"Surfing imagery involves a complex combination of tropes, myths and desires including for example an aetiological myth of tropical, paradisaal origins, wanderlust in search of the perfect wave, connotations of hedonism, freedom, nature and the raw elements and a rich sense of aesthetics and so on. The strong resonances of these aesthetics has led to the appropriation of surfing as an inspiration for a range of artistic and fashion forms, in turn broadening its wider appeal... And the appropriation of surfing by commercial commodities has led to the current subcultural surfing style to attract, represent and embody the greatest subcultural capital is that of commercialised competitive professional surfing." (Ford, N and Brown, D, 2006, p.165)

And the creation of this sub cultural capital has been, historically, the preserve of men:

"In the 20th century there has been an identified hierarchy of gender relations in surfing that centres around the assumed centrality of the heroic male's experience of wave riding. This has been consolidated by the rise of male dominated competitive surfing. Men still dominate surfing practically and symbolically in terms of organisation, status, practice and visibility. (Ford, N and Brown, D, 2006, p.165)

Belinda Wheaton (2004) looks beyond the purity of surfing itself to understand how and why ranges of lifestyle sports were created. She asserts lifestyle sports are post-modern constructs shaped by Americanisation and associated white, male values and norms.

Rinehart asserts that a defining characteristic of lifestyle sport is a 'participatory ideology' promoting fun, hedonism, involvement, self-actualisation, rush and other intrinsic rewards. The participants often denounce – and some resist – institutionalisation, regulation and commercialisation and tend to have an ambiguous relationship with forms of traditional competition. Wheaton says most lifestyle sports emphasise the creative, aesthetic, and performative expressions of their activities. Rinehart (1998b p 12 in Wheaton) calls these expressive sports (rather than the reward-driven spectacle sports) stating these expressive sports are rarely conducted for spectators or competitive practice, emphasising the aesthetic realm in which one blends into the environment.

Another characteristic of lifestyle sports is the gender and class of participants. While the overwhelming participants group tend to be middle class, white males, much work has been

developed in relation to gender, identity and representation in surfing by, among others, Krista Comer (2010), Rebecca Olive (2016), Lisahunter (2017) and Belinda Wheaton (2004) to analyse and highlight the gender and sexualities imbalances existing in the largely male dominated liminal surf spaces around the world where misogyny, sexual violence, and everyday sexism (s) play out. Another interesting point Wheaton makes is these lifestyle sports tend to be non-aggressive and do not involve bodily contact, yet fetishize and embrace danger and risk and build it into the activity. This is further supported in work by Stranger (2011).

Kusz (2001 in Wheaton, B. 2004 p.197) offers interesting insights into the cultural politics of lifestyle sports in America in the 1990's and draws comparisons with the manufactured symbolism inherent in American masculine ideals of the wilderness man, conquering new frontiers in pursuit of individual progress. Kusz goes on to articulate how these non-traditional such as surfing, skateboarding, BMX bike riding, street luge, sky surfing, B.A.S.E. jumping, snowboarding and in-line skating were created in 1995 when US-based, Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) invented the Extreme Games as a mass media format. Performers tended to be white males and suburban street locales were the habitus of choice:

“Extreme sports were popularly represented as the preferred sporting activities of that so-called lost, apathetic and nihilistic younger generation of slackers popularly known as Generation X,” (Rinehart, 1995 in Wheaton, B. 2004, p.198).

This generation, says, Kusz had been blamed for everything that was wrong in America but by the mid 1990's corporate America had realised these 'slackers' controlled \$700billion of individual and familial spending per year (Greenfield, K.T. 1998) and ESPN then created The X Games which was a mediatised spectacle of these lifestyle sports to appeal to advertisers keen to target the disposable income of this young demographic.

These made-for-television, low attention span 'sort of' sports were initially derided by fans of traditional US sports, but just a few years later, according to Kusz, (2004) lifestyle sports were depicted as adventurous activities involving substantial risk that were now being enjoyed by middle-aged white men in the 20-40-year-old bracket.

Interestingly, research by Kristin Lawler (2017), extends this discussion. Her work indicates the politically right media in the United States, such as Fox News, have used the surfer image as the depiction of everything that is wrong in current US society, associating the 'surfer problem' with a general attitude of a refusal to work. So, it would seem, according to Lawler's research, that there is a recurring theme in the United States where surfing and

surfers have been used to suit the needs of elites. This research now moves on to examine governance and professional surfing.

1.7 Governance and Professional Surfing

The following literature seeks to outline the process of ZMH's appropriation of the ASP in October 2012, leading to the formation of the WSL in 2015. The literature related to this appropriation is largely confined to news reports and news features in surf-related press and press releases issued by ZMH. The literature demonstrates a pre-set strategy of total monopoly ownership of professional surfing by a venture capital company which had identified a very cost-effective way of developing a global sports league at a time when the business of play was becoming a lucrative investment.

ZMH is owned by Paul Speaker and Terry Hardy. Mr Speaker was a Board Director of Quiksilver, one of the world's largest surf-related retail companies, and a former head of marketing and ideas at the NFL. Mr Hardy was eleven-time world surfing champion, Kelly Slater's, manager and agent. Mr Slater, for the past twenty years, has been the highest earning and highest profile professional surfer on the ASP Tour. He is its greatest asset. ZMH funding is provided by Floridian billionaire, Dirk Ziff whose net worth (at this time of research) is approximately \$4.4bn.

One common theme runs through all the literature related to the change of governance and ownership of professional surfing. The ASP, with debts estimated to be in the region of \$30m, could no longer run a global professional surfing tour. Stranger (2010, p. 225) highlighted the ASP's historic attempts to welcome non-endemic commercial sponsors into supporting professional surfing contests. Ultimately the relationships did not work as part of a long term, partnership strategy, as non-endemic brands, outside of the surf industry, only had short term interests in the sport. This was largely due to the need for greater marketing returns on investment. This contributed to the ASP's dependency on the benevolence of surfing brands to sponsor professional surfing events.

ZMH approached the ASP in February 2012 with an offer to take over the business with no financial purchase. Only the purchase of the ASP's debt.

In an article in Surfer Magazine in July 2013, Randy Rarick, founder of the International Professional Surfers (IPS) organisation, the forerunning governing body for international surfing before the ASP, outlined the scale and scope of ZMH ambition:

“The ZoSea pitch wasn't just for the media rights, as this ASP board had seen several times in the recent past... It was a play for the whole sandpit: the ownership

and management of the ASP and its media rights. And the buyout figure attached to the plan wasn't 25 grand this time—it was nothing. Donuts. Zero.”

ZMH could see the potential in, what Mr Speaker described as a, 'once in a lifetime business opportunity'. This was the total ownership of professional surfing, the governance of the ASP, its media rights and performance labour.

The research tells us there was previous unease and criticism of the ASP's business model voiced by Mr Kelly Slater, the star asset in the world of professional surfing. The eleven-former world champion, along with other surfers and his manager and agent, Mr Terry Hardy, mooted a so called 'Rebel Tour' in 2009.

While the new tour plan, led by Mr Hardy, didn't succeed, the seeds of unrest with the ASP's vision for professional surfing were sewn. Mr Slater, prophetically, explained the thinking behind his support for the breakaway tour at the time and, interestingly, we see a resemblance to the rationale central to ZMH plans for professional surfing presented to the ASP just two years later.

Speaking in July 2010 about the reasons behind a breakaway tour, Mr Slater said:

“The inherent problem with the ASP is that it doesn't own all its media rights. It's very fragmented. You have Billabong, Quiksilver and Rip Curl owning all the media to all the events. So, you don't have a package – the most valuable asset to the ASP is that media. The whole purpose (of the breakaway tour) is to reset that foundation.”
(Kelly Slater, July 22, 2010, Surfermag.com by Brendon Thomas)

Mr Slater, in the same article, added that there was too much conflict of interest within the ASP structure to meet the needs of his fellow surfers and the external demands of fans. He added, the current ASP technical infrastructure could not guarantee seamless webcasts of events and decision making was too slow within an organisation where there were too many conflicts of interest as the sponsors of the events were also board members of the ASP.

It was out of this unease of a failing ASP and bleak financial future that the seeds were sewn for the ZMH 'coup d'état', as described by ASP founder and director, Ian Cairns in interview data gathered and presented later in this research.

The foundations of this coup can be pinpointed to September 2011 when the ZMH vision for professional surfing was being formed while surf brands could no longer afford to sponsor ASP events in exotic, hard-to-get-to, parts of the surfing world. These events formed part of the ASP's marketing position of 'The Dream Tour' with the vision and strategic focus of creating events with the 'best surfers surfing the best waves.' As the global financial collapse

of 2007 began to take its toll on the surfing retail industry, the 'dream tour' model became too expensive for the surf brands to support as sponsors. As an alternative, Quiksilver embraced a new big city concept.

Mr Speaker, who was a senior marketing executive at Quiksilver at the time, led a different professional event in New York City and tried to broaden the appeal of the sporting spectacle outside of just a surf contest.

He introduced an event with music, skateboarding, motocross and art integrated into it in a bid to appeal to non-endemic companies seeking to use surfing as a marketing platform to communicate to new audiences. Quiksilver also built a retail shopping space and heavily marketed the surfers as the new stars of the event, offering \$1m in prize money. The new model seemed to offer an alternative to the expensive and exotic locations on the dream tour and gave Mr Speaker the confidence and insight to form a business plan to present to the ASP to take over the organisation.

Randy Rarick, said ZMH's timing was perfect:

"They came in when everybody needed them to come along...You've got to realize the scenario that was unfolding... The ASP, we sat there and said, 'If we don't take the deal we can keep the status quo and tread water for a year, then maybe somebody will go out there and find a big sponsor,' and we all looked around the room and said, 'We been saying that shit for 15 years and nobody has come! Is it really going to happen now? No. You know what, we don't have a better offer, let's roll with it.'" (Surfer, July 2013)

The voting to accept or reject the offer wasn't unanimous within the ASP Board structure but was for the performance labourers. Both Quiksilver and Billabong wanted to accept the offer from ZMH, while Rip Curl and Vans were opposed to the takeover. However, the professional surfers, who were also part owners of the ASP, fully supported the change. Surfer magazine described their support as 'furious agreement' adding that ZMH had placed the surfers at the centre of their thinking with promises of increases in prize money and pensions plans and marketing them as the new stars within the ZMH's spectacular surfing universe.

The spokesperson for, and representative of, the surfers, Mr Kieren Perrow told Surfer (July 2013):

"I think most guys were initially sceptical...Your whole livelihood depends on getting this decision right, and the livelihoods of guys and girls ten years down the track

too... Things were dire, and I wouldn't even want to contemplate the very worst case, which is that it might have fallen over totally."

The takeover of the ASP by ZMH was publicly announced on October 5, 2013 and the process seemed to resemble the last time the ownership of professional surfing took place thirty years earlier in 1983.

The first organisation to regulate and manage professional surfing was established in 1976 and named the International Professional Surfers (IPS). Founded by Hawaiian businessmen and surfers, Fred Hemmings and Randy Rarick, the IPS sought to pull together a range of disparate global surfing events into a single world surfing tour.

While it was the beginning of privatising, professionalising and codifying surfing as a professional sport, there were criticisms that it wasn't developing professional surfing and its opportunities fast enough and one of its leading professional surfers, Ian Cairns, formed a new organisation to market professional surfing and create a global surf tour.

Mr Rarick explains the capitalistic motivation behind the adoption of a new form of governance:

"Ian Cairns walked in with a \$25,000 check from OP and he waves the check in front of everybody and said, 'You want to stay with the IPS or you wanna come with me?'" Rarick laughs [now, anyway]. "So, for 25 grand everybody jumped ship. But that was fine. It was time for a change, Fred [Hemmings] and myself were burned out and Ian came through the door with new energy...and 25 grand." (Surfer, July 2013)

The literature identifies the similarities of this initial coup to 'own' professional with the process undertaken by ZMH. At the centre of ZMH's plan was to put the surfers at the centre of professional surfing by marketing them as athletes and surfing as sport. Digital media would be embraced to enable the organisation to create new systems of power and a series of integrated spectacles around each surfing event in a clear intention to market the sport to new audiences and professionalise the production of the events so they would appeal to non-endemic brands. Surfing, as a commodity, was clearly being shaped as a mainstream sport with its new owner's keen to move the illusion of surfing being an anarchic, counter cultural activity to a new illusion of a mainstream professional sport to rival other American 'league' style sports such as American Football, Baseball, Basketball and Ice Hockey.

By March 2014, the process of change and rationalisation has begun. Mr Speaker had become the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the ASP, whose Board had been disbanded. Mr Kieran Perrow, the surfers' representative was the new Tour 'commissioner'. The Commissioner being the event organiser and administrator, making the final decisions

on when and where each event on the surfing tour would take place. By September 2014 the ASP was re-branded and given a new identity. The ASP would now become The World Surf League (WSL).

The research will now progress to highlight literature defining the commercial concept of a brand, the process of branding and related marketing practices. The analysis will highlight ways in which organisations use specific techniques to dominate traditional and new media landscapes. In this case, the research attempts to highlight the brand as a deliberately created illusion and it will also attempt to draw clear links to Debord's theory of the integrated spectacle.

1.8 Surfing as brand

The business and management process of marketing has been central to the commodification of professional surfing as both lifestyle and sport. Inherent in that process has been the creation of the WSL as a brand.

The process of branding is the performative element of the marketing chain in postmodern organisations to ensure markets are identified or created and suitable products or services are commodified to meet the needs of that market for profitable gain.

That chain begins with the formation of a corporate communications strategy and links to a system identified by Shultz as integrated marketing communication (IMC).

Van Riel (2003) defines corporate communications as the orchestration of all instruments in the field of an organisational identity. These instruments, as Van Riel describes, would be communications, symbols and also behaviour of organisational members. This, Van Riel, says is done in such a manner as to attract and maintain a positive reputation and relationship with groups and audiences with which any organisation has an interdependent relationship. These audiences can be described as target audiences in marketing terms and typically comprise, shareholders, consumers, regulators, government, media, staff and workforce.

In this way, organisations build in the management process of corporate communication, reputation management and integrated marketing communications to their business function to meet economic objectives.

Schultz et al (1993) researched the changing forms of marketing processes within US organisations in the early 1990's as technological changes, media fragmentation and globalisation changed forms of production and consumption. He identified the need for companies, faced with these changing economic, technological, cultural and political

changes, to connect and integrate all communications processes. He developed the notion of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) at the same time Debord was updating his spectacle thesis, identifying an emerging integrated spectacle.

Schultz defined IMC as a deliberate and planned business process aimed at developing short term financial gains and building long term brand and shareholder value through on-going, constant and consistent brand communication programmes delivered by cultural intermediaries.

Shultz (1993) highlighted the co-ordinated way companies were now building the marketing process into the business process to provide profitable gain for shareholders in rapidly changing economic and technological times. The point of interest in the above quote for this thesis and the next section of literature review are the four words - 'persuasive brand communications programs'. It is this process of marketing, through the process of branding, that created Debord's Society of the Spectacle.

The review will now analyse the brand and the historical development of marketing.

Lury (2004) argues that a brand is an object or medium of contemporary capitalism and is central to the exchange of information between producers and consumers and as such there is an associated formulation of a set of relations between both parties. Lury adds that marketing defines products as objects in a competitive market and as objects of consumption. Further, marketing involves the deframing and reframing of the market and makes brands a part of our social lives.

The process of marketing and the creation of brands developed in the age of the graphic revolution toward the end of the 1880's at a time where generic items began to be distinguished from one another by the use of corporate signatures, logos and identifiable brands. Producers began to personalise and brand their products to make them more attractive to consumers. Marketers developed their products by carrying out market research to understand the emotions of consumers and then develop promotional methods to shape consumption patterns, "the brand is a platform for the patterning of activity" (Lury, C 2004, p.1)

This patterning of activity is created by the development of marketing campaigns built on the targeting of economically lucrative audiences or markets. Spearheading the campaigns are company logos that must be understood as the face of a brand, rendering it visible from its

competitors. Marks or logos have been used for thousands of years to show forms of ownership or possession. An example would be livestock, branded with marks of ownership to deter theft and mark out one herd from one another.

The process of marketing is therefore a new media object using sophisticated methods of research to create new markets and publicise and promote brands for consumption by targeted audiences.

Lury (2004, C, p.74) argues the logo is the 'interface' of the brand and as such is the organisational point for the exchange of information or communication to produce relations between products.

This branding process is evident in the business strategy of ZMH as it sought to change the 'logo' and brand name governing professional surfing from the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) to the World Surf League (WSL). The process is illustrated in an official press release – a media technique to communicate, what Boortsin would theorise as 'pseudo news', information to target audiences as part of an integrated marketing campaign. The 'voice' in this press release is provided by Mr Paul Speaker, the Chief Operating Officer (CEO) of the WSL and a former Head of Marketing and Ideas at the National Football League (NFL):

“...the Association of Surfing Professionals is retired, rebranded now into the World Surf League... the change in title will be effective at the beginning of next season and implemented across the board. The aim is for the WSL to be a brand that is easier to sell to sponsors, with an emphasis on non-endemics, in order to bolster the current state of professional surfing onto the next level of exposure and fandom.”
(WSL press release, Dec 2014)

The release in the first person goes on:

“We're making this change because we believe the new name is easier to understand, and gets us on a better track to serve our fans, athletes and partners, and to grow the great sport of professional surfing worldwide.”

The re-branding and marketing process is clear from this promotional literature announcing the reasons why there is a name change. It also outlines the global, strategic direction for elite, professional surfing with very bold and spectacular claims of growth under the ownership of ZMH. Claims such as this rebranding will lead to attracting 'non-endemic' or non-traditional sponsors and commercial organisations to meet the economic objectives of

ZMH and the assumption that the new WSL identity will automatically mean rapid global growth or surfing in general. You can already see the formation of meaning as Lury described earlier in this literature review and the creation of a spectacular surfing society by ZMH to create an unchallenged monopoly position.

Literature Chapter summary

This review of literature has critiqued and explained Debord's Society of the Spectacle and explored his three models of power or spectacles. Further, it has highlighted emerging and updated theories extending Debord's original thesis. The rationale has been explained as to why Debord's theory is appropriate to apply to the changing governance of professional surfing and contributes to critical surf studies work in this field published by Kent Pearson (1979), Douglas Booth (2004), Nick Ford and David Brown (2006), Clifton Evers (2013), Mark Stranger (1999, 2010) and Matt Warshaw (2010). The notions of drift and detournement, as part of resisting Debord's spectacle, seem particularly appropriate, given the praxis of surfing and its sub cultural roots in creative expression and anti-establishment rhetoric. The problems associated with the theory, have also been explored.

It was also important to review literature related to the cultural and historical development of surfing in general and surfing as sport in particular to understand the previous forms of governance as it may have implications related to the research questions.

The final section of the review leads the work naturally into the next 'doing' part of the thesis by unpacking the central business processes and associated tactics used by organisations to produce spectacles – in this case, namely, the process of marketing of professional surfing as a commodified brand, with its 'face' or logo now the WSL.

The research will now move forward and explain the methodological approaches used during the course of this work and outline why they were used as opposed to other methods. Within this discussion, it is important to explain my own positionality in relation to the field and reflect on any bias that may or may not introduce.

Chapter two

Methods and Modes of Investigation

2.1 Introduction

The research philosophy, or ontology, for this work is interpretivist, as I see social life as something that is being constructed continuously. This philosophy has been formed partly by my professional experiences as a former newspaper journalist and marketer. This work will help me to see how 'signs' in the surfing industry are created and circulated and given significance through marketing messages and campaigns, driven by cultural intermediaries on behalf of those with vested interests and capital. My academic career has further convinced me of my research position.

I am also conscious of being reflexive in the way I consider my life experiences and how they could affect and influence this work. Sandra Harding's standpoint theory (2009) is helpful in guiding who I am as a researcher, what questions I get to ask in relation to this subject area and to whom do I address those questions? Rebecca Olive's (2009) analysis of her own standpoint and positionality, when researching the cultural politics of women who surf, specifically in Byron Bay in Australia, was also helpful for this work when considering the methodological biases and field access.

Therefore, epistemologically, I believe the best way to gain knowledge and understanding of social life is by applying a range of qualitative methods to gain answers to research questions and to be open minded and flexible about the research journey and potential outcomes. The following quote by Bryman supports my research position for this work which is qualitative as opposed to the experimental epistemological position, 'In qualitative research, theory is supposed to be an outcome of an investigation rather than something that precedes it,' (Bryman, A, 2008, p. 370)

The data and fieldwork for this research were developed in the run up to, and the duration of, the first operational year of the World Surf League (WSL) via a mixed methods approach.

These methods include key figure interviews; an analysis via WSL webcasts of 23 Championship Tour (CT) events broadcast live on the WSL wholly-owned media application platform; a Micro-ethnography of a CT event at Trestles Beach in Southern California and an ethnographic, embodied study of surfboard building. Further, I drew upon my 30-year experience and credentials as a surfer and previous professional experience as both a journalist and surf industry sports marketer to gain access to some elements of the

professional surfing culture usually hidden beneath the commodified surface. Further information relating to the history and administration of professional surfing and the launch and branding of the WSL was obtained from a range of surf media, on-line sources and books about and by surfers.

Ethical Framework

Before moving on to present the various methodological approaches and research framework, it is important to highlight the ethical procedures and considerations undertaken during the arc of this research. The ethical implications and considerations for this research were discussed with both my supervisors and a Cardiff University, School of Journalism, Media and Culture ethics form was completed and supported by the ethics committee to ensure all aspects of my research ethical behaviour as a researcher were considered; methodologies appropriate and suitable, written, permissions sought from interviewees.

Care was taken to ensure each interviewee was fully aware of the research proposal, research questions and the right to withdraw from the research at any point. All interviewees were adults, over the age of 18. The ethical approach for this work was considered and discussed at each internal PhD progress review to ensure it was appropriate. In addition to my University and School ethical protocols, I was also guided by academic literature related to research ethics and research by Bryman (2008), Guillemin & Heggen (2009), Plummer (2001) and Punch (1994). Plummer's seven-point guide on ethical considerations when telling other people's stories was helpful, both theoretically and practically. As was Guillemin and Heggen's notion of ethical mindfulness.

Care was taken in building rapport and a connection with each participant, but equally remaining respectful of their time and expertise. It was here, on reflection that ethical mindfulness was helpful in guiding my interactions with subjects. For example, care was taken in the timing and place of interviews. Ensuring each participant was comfortable with the form of communication and technology used and the time of the interview as these interviews took place with subjects in different time zones.

Given ethical protocols were discussed through the course of this work and monitored by the ethics committee, my supervisors and guided by literature on the subject area, the work will now move on to present the methodological approach and research framework.

2.2 Methodological approach and research framework

My methodological approaches follow the interactionist tradition where the researcher 'is best able to chart those areas in which he (sic) is already an accredited member' (Rock, 1979: 214 in Stranger, 1999: 266). My reasoning is inductive in nature and seeks to collect data that can be analysed in relation to the process of change within the ownership of professional surfing to provide observations that may link with existing theories and concepts or form the basis of new concepts or theories in relation to the research aims of the study and the global development and hegemonic transfer of meanings within professional surfing as presented by the WSL.

After consideration of the geographically and culturally unique data gathering field, analysing methods used by other researchers in the sports field (Booth, 2001; Canniford and Shankar, 2012; Evers, 2017; Fiske, 1995; Lacono, Symonds and Brown, 2016; Pearson, 1979; Silk, 2005; Sparkes, 1999; Stranger, 1999, 2010; Wheaton, 2000, 2004; Thorpe 2014) and coupled with my personal embodied and lived experience of surfing, I have developed a qualitative and largely ethnographic approach to this subject and field using elements of thematic analysis as theorised by Braun and Clark (2006) and discussed by Sparkes and Smith (2014).

I developed three overarching research questions to guide my methodological strategy.

- ***What does ZMH mean when it says it wants to 'professionalise' surfing?***
- ***What does this professionalisation look like?***
- ***What are the initial effects of this rationalisation process?***

As a researcher, and given my positionality, I felt it important to immerse myself as much as possible, given time, money, distance, work and family constraints, in the field of professional surfing for the data capture period. This enables an understanding of the current culture of professional surfing, the tensions and resistance to change within it and aids the re-imagining of how professional surfing may develop globally as a result of new ownership and governance. As such, the fieldwork, data, experiences and stories from this surfing field combine both realist and confessional tales as defined in related literature (Van Maanen, 2011 and Sparkes, 2002) on ethnographic and auto ethnographic representation. In part, the confessional tales are highly personal and, at times, prone to self-absorption, placing the researcher at the centre of the story while attempting to open up the way fieldwork and access for this work was negotiated. It identified the melodrama of hardships, stories of infiltration, surfing fables, chance, luck and drops in confidence. This is countered

by realist tales where I act as a silent, third party observing and reporting directly on the life observed around me during the various stages of the ethnographic processes.

I will now move on to outline the methodological strategy used to triangulate my research, drawing upon academic work related to the methods to explain the path undertaken. The research questions will also be identified and explain provided as to why those specific methods were used, how they were applied and any problems of validity related to the specific methods will be analysed. I will also discuss the ethical considerations of this research and reflect on the practice of data collection and discuss the limitations of the methodological approach, drawing, at all times, on the established academic literature to explain and debate the decisions and directions the research took.

This approach and strategy also follows the judgement criteria for academic work suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985) where specific actions were taken during the course of the research to ensure its findings are trustworthy. This can be tested in its credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility relates to the truth of the findings, transferability tests if the research has application in other contexts, dependability tests the consistency of the findings and confirmability tests the neutrality or independence of the study. Specific examples will be given later in the thesis.

2.3 Ethnography and its forms

“Ethnography and participant observation are the same thing in that the researcher is immersed in a social setting for some time in order to observe and listen with a view to gaining an appreciation of the culture of the social group.” (Bryman, A, 2008, p. 369)

Atkinson and Hammersley (1995) extend Bryman’s description to encapsulate the potential chaos and messiness of ethnographic fieldwork:

“In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly, or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research.” (Hammersley, M and Atkinson, P, 1995, p.1)

Ethnographic approaches to social science research are not without their critics, but there is overwhelming evidence to support their use and validity as methods to unwrap the unseen. Silk (2005) cites research studies by Donnelly (1985) to answer problems in the social field

of boxing, climbing and rugby; Beal (1995) examines social resistance in skateboarding using ethnographic methods. Wheaton (2000) used participant observation and ethnography and immersion to examine sub cultural identity in windsurfing. To examine the social culture of surfing, Booth (2001), Evers, (2009, 2010, 2014, 2017) Olive and Brown (2012), Pearson (1979) Stranger (2010), Thorpe (2014) have all employed ethnographic methods to study problems within the field.

The term ethnography can be interpreted as the writing (graphy) of or about people or citizens in society (ethno). In research terms, it is a deliberate and planned study of people, society and the cultures and sub-cultures within. The practice of ethnography, in a sense, is like a structured, long form of journalism designed to explore cultural phenomena and artefacts.

The researchers observe and immerse themselves in the field of study. That observation can also take the form of participation in the phenomenon being researched.

Academically, Silk (2005) argues that ethnography, above other forms of research method, can be used powerfully to give voices to academics within the academia to 'explain the prevailing systems of domination and the oppressed' (p.70). He adds that controversial subject areas, such as deviant behaviour from football hooligans and rugby players have been successfully studied and analysed using this qualitative technique. Evers (Evers, C, 2010) uses this method specifically in relation to surfing and understanding male surfers.

Silk argues that ethnography is a form of advocacy and rejects academia's dominant scientific model of research form as it 'fails to capture the true nature of social setting' (p.73). He maintains this position as he says the social world and human behaviour is 'complex, irrational and messy'. To this end, Silk argues that the classic scientific approach to data gathering and experimentation cannot capture social life.

The ethnographer then uses semi structured forms of data collection such as interviews, observations, textual analysis, verbal description and explanation as opposed to quantitative measurement and statistical analysis, Silk (p. 73). It is the opposite end of scientific where there is distance from the subject. The researcher in ethnographic practice is connected to the group they are researching.

The ethnographer takes these observations and attempts to 'place specific encounters, events and understandings into a fuller context through the transformation of meaning into a written or visual form.' (Tedlock, B, 2000).

Ethnography takes time, emotion and energy and sometimes the researcher is just unable to spend that amount of time studying a social phenomenon. There seems to be no set timeline

on the how long it should take to complete an ethnography but there is a notion that 'micro-ethnographies' (Andrews et al, 2001), are not as time dependent as a full ethnography and may end due to the conclusion of a season or an event.

Ethnography is not without its limitations. Andrews, (2001) and Stebbins, (1991) recognise that significant time is spent in other people's social worlds with significant friendships formed and these relationships may be difficult to disengage with on both an emotional and physical front. While there are software packages such as Atlas and Ethnographer to aid the researcher, Richards and Richards (1998) and Stroh (2000) suggest they may actually kill off the intuitive instinct and gut reaction of qualitative analysis.

There is also an argument from the other end of the research spectrum in the science and quantitative data gathering academy, that ethnographic researchers invent questions as to what makes a good story. Sparkes (1995) is clear on the debate and argues for 'colour and culture' in research writing around social lives otherwise 'we experience life but write science.' (Sparkes, A.C. p.113).

Ellis, C, et al (2011) challenge the canonical ways of conducting research by using a more personal form of ethnography called autoethnography. Autoethnography seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. The author combines autobiography and ethnography to conduct and write autoethnography. Ellis et al explain the rationale and motivation for this approach to academic research:

"Many scholars turned to autoethnography because they were seeking a positive response to critiques of canonical ideas about what research is and how much research should be done. In particular, they wanted to concentrate on ways of producing meaningful, accessible and evocative research grounded in personal experience, research that would sensitize readers to issues of identity politics, to experiences shrouded in silence, and to forms of representation that deepened our capacity to empathize with people who are different from us." (Ellis, C et al, 2011, p.2)

This very personalised and systematic branch of ethnography would seem the most logical method in my approach to unearthing answers to my overarching research questions.

'What is clear is ethnographers write culture,' (Clifford and Marcus, 1986) and this, I believe, is the most important approach to studying of the WSL and the changing social, technological and political landscape of professional surfing. It is an approach also used by many academics researching action and lifestyle sports and sub cultures.

2.4 WSL Championship Tour (CT) Event Analysis

It would be practically, and financially, impossible to follow the WSL Tour to each venue around the world and develop field notes. However, I wanted to make comparisons between the WSL-packaged broadcast experience of events and its own storytelling spectacle via the app and the embodied experience of research immersion at such events. I thought this would provide fascinating insight into the constructed spectacle and the lived, on the beach, spectacle and allow a comparison of the 'real and constructed' and the 'unreal and constructed'.

The first step of this ethnographic process was a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of 23 WSL CT events through the live broadcasts via the WSL-developed and owned app platform and this was supplemented with an analysis of how the WSL developed its storytelling narrative via its wholly owned app.

Each event had an event window of eleven or twelve days where competition could occur at any point during that time in daylight hours. Due to the unpredictable nature of ocean swells, producers cannot forecast when the event will begin or end, though the world tour is designed in a way to be at the selected venues when there is a high statistical chance of contestable waves. There is an official wave forecasting partner to the WSL, Surfline, which can accurately predict when contestable waves are approaching the venue, how long they will last, what the quality will be like and when the swell will disappear. This makes broadcast production problematic and there are a number of lay days where there is no surfing spectacle.

In developing my research strategy, I thought it advisable to beta test the first events of the WSL season to identify common themes and cultural phenomena in WSL production and packaging in relation to my research questions. I took extensive, synchronous, field notes of each event of the 2015 season to highlight production values and style, actors, commercial interests, the field in which the events occur and the participants and audience that form the event spectacle. I took notes of the commentary, voices and language used to assess simulacra, meaning the replacement of reality with representations of reality, signs and examples of cultural capital. Importantly, I made notes and observations of what was not captured and what was not seen via the wholly owned WSL app.

I then identified specific recurring themes related to my research questions and colour coded my field notes with marker pens to highlight the occurrence and repetition of these themes across the 23 CT events.

This process is theorised as thematic analysis by Braun and Clark (2006) using a six-step approach in generating and analysing qualitative data. These steps comprise; becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, a search for themes, a review themes, define themes and write up. These themes were then applied in detail to one specific CT event, the J-Bay Pro in South Africa. The themes were also used and applied to the lived, micro beach ethnography at another CT event at Trestles Beach, Southern California:

“The chief objective in recording such details is to map the main protagonists in news reporting in an area and to begin to reveal some of the mechanics involved in the production of information for public consumption.” Bryman, A, (2008: 280).

While this process of information gathering is not without its problems due to a potentially arbitrary nature of theme identification, it is understood that there is a strength in ‘allowing categories to emerge out of the data.’ Bryman, A, (2008:273).

The WSL CT Events Analysed

- April 1-12, Rip Curl Pro, Bells Beach, Victoria, Australia (men’s and women’s)
- April 15-26, Drug Aware Margaret River Pro, Margaret River, Western Australia (men’s and women’s)
- May 11-22, (Oi) Rio Pro, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil (men and women)
- June 7-19, Fiji Pro, Tavarua/Namotu, Fiji, (men and women)
- July 8-19, J Bay Open, Jeffrey’s Bay, South Africa (men only)
- Aug 14-25, Billabong Pro Tahiti, Teahupoo, Tairapu, Tahiti (men only)
- Sept 9-20, Hurley/(Swatch) Pro, Trestles Beach, California, USA (men’s and women’s)
- Sept 29-Oct 4, Cascais Women’s Pro, Cascais, Portugal (women’s only)
- Oct 6-17, Quiksilver Pro France, Landes, SW France (men’s and women’s)
- Oct 20-31, Moche Rip Curl Pro Portugal, Peniche, Portugal (men’s and women’s)
- Nov 22-Dec 6, (Target) Maui Women’s Pro, Honolua Bay, Maui, Hawaii (women only)
- *Nov/Dec: Vans Triple Crown (Hawaiian Pro at Haleiwa, Sunset and Pipe)
- *Dec 5-22, World Longboard Championships (Jeep), Hainan Island, China (men and women)
- *Dec 8, Pe-ahi Challenge, Jaws, Maui, Hawaii (men only)
- Dec 8-20, Billabong Pipe Masters, Banzai Pipeline, Oahu, Hawaii (men only)

*Speciality events

During each event, I identified the actors of each broadcast, analysed production, explored the main focus of attention and flow of the broadcast. I examined the links to commercial consumption in each broadcast and how those broadcasts were being consumed by audiences. I also investigated the unique context and geography of each event.

I developed nine themes identified in the WSL webcast analysis were: media production; marketing and sponsorship; language; surfers as athletes; equipment; waves and nature; technology; dress codes, spiritualisation; governance and rules.

I then colour coded each theme as it ran through each event against my field notes and made new observations of developing phenomena as it occurred. Each event became the coding schedule and my marked up, contemporaneous field notes were my coding manual.

There were also occasions through the season where unforeseen and unique events would challenge me to broaden the themes. For example, at the J-Bay Open in South Africa, professional surfing made the global headlines in July 2015 when a shark 'attacked' three times World Champion, Mick Fanning, during the final of a live broadcast. Nothing like that had even happened before in professional surfing, though this must be more out of luck than judgement given the venues and liminal spaces used for CT contests. Still, it created unprecedented media coverage in both the surfing and mainstream press and created an undercurrent of storytelling in relation to Mick Fanning that ran through the rest of the season.

Running alongside this event analysis, I also critically examined the WSL's storytelling and media production via its own app and media content produced in-house and distributed using a range of public relations techniques such as press conferences, media briefings, press releases, staged events and use of the athlete 'pen'.

2.5. The Watched Event – J-Bay Open, 2015

These themes were then used to critically analyse the J-Bay Open in Jeffrey's Bay, South Africa. The aim of this approach being the deeper understanding of the themes and how they link to both the research questions and theory of Spectacle. The approach is used to provide data and evidence in relation to the rationalisation and codification of professional surfing.

The next phase of research involved more embodied and real, as opposed to hyperreal, experiences of the WSL Spectacle. Hyperreality is a theory developed by Jean Baudrillard. It conceptualises an individual's inability of their consciousness to distinguish reality from simulation. A blurring of the boundaries, if you will, between the real or the original and the fake. In technologically advanced societies, said Baudrillard, the real becomes hyperreal due

to rapid technological manipulation and distortion of the original. Explicit examples will be discussed in relation to the WSL in the discussion chapter.

This embodied approach was designed into the research strategy to gather data and observations exploring the mythologies of surfing Spectacle as represented by the WSL's brand marketing and event production teams. By mythologies, I refer to the work of Roland Barthes (1957) who examined the tendency of social value systems to create modern myths, extending Saussure's system of sign analysis where signs were elevated and constructed as myths. Examples of WSL mythology will be presented in the discussion section.

To these ends, the next methods involve a micro-ethnography of the lived and embodied experience of a CT event in Southern California during the first season of the WSL. To examine myths and simulations in more detail, the researcher also undertook a surfboard making course in the UK to understand the toxic reality of creating surfing's central sign, the surfboard, as opposed to the miniscule, whitewashed surfboards used by CT surfers as both weapons of war and promotional canvas to draw attention to sponsor names and associated logos.

2.6 The Lived & Embodied Experience: Praxis of a beach based Auto-ethnography

The timeframe of the data collection was initially a concern for me. I was unsure as to whether or not one WSL event would be long enough to provide the data needed for this ethnography. However, supported by Wolcott's (1999) Micro-ethnography research and Andrews et al (2001), view that a micro ethnography could be bookended between the start and finish of an event or an occasion and given the WSL event I attended and the access I had and people I met, I believed I would be able to immerse myself quickly in the event and collect valuable field notes, carry out key figure interviews, observe the social life of a professional beach-based surf event and be part of the surf line up at one of the world's most contested and crowded waves.

In choosing the most appropriate event to attend I wanted to ensure I immersed myself in *the* main cultural, commercial and surfing event on the CT calendar in 2015. For just waves the best events are Fiji, Tahiti or Pipeline in Hawaii. However, access to Fiji and Tahiti is problematic for those not involved with the competition and it is expensive. Pipeline was the last event of the season, expensive to attend and its intense nature – both physical and political - might mean I would be unable to gain a broad picture of the new surfing world as defined by the WSL.

The only event on the CT tour combining all the elements I wanted to observe and interact with, and fitted my research schedule and timeframe, was the Hurley/Swatch Pro at Trestles Beach near San Clemente, California, Mid-September 2015. This was in the 'backyard' of the US surf industry, near to the new global headquarters of the WSL and where many of the sport's commercial actors meet to catch up and conduct business. Even talking to locals during my surf sessions at my home breaks in South Wales and asking them where would be the best event to attend, most said Trestles. "They will be surfing right in front of you and you can also surf next to the pros in the line-up."

I attended the WSL CT Hurley (men's) and Swatch (women's) Pro at Trestles Beach, California, which ran between Sept 9-20th, 2015 to carry out an event written, visual and sensory ethnography as participant observer. The rich data collected allowed me to compare and contrast the WSL production, audience consumption and participant performance and field of the live event. It was a startling contrast to the distant and packaged version of CT events as viewed via the WSL app:

"Every field situation is different and initial luck in meeting good informants, being in the right place at the right time and striking the right note in relationships may be just as important as skill in technique. Indeed, many successful episodes in the field do come about through good luck as much as through sophisticated planning." (Sarsby, J. in Bryman, A. 2008, p.401).

The professional surfing events are unique in that they are usually situated in hard to get to places, of outstanding natural and sensual beauty. At such events, the combination of surf, sun, sand, sea, music, art and parties, coupled with the display of bodies in board shorts and bikinis, provides a unique field of negotiation. It can be an intimidating arena to the uninitiated and you need experience to negotiate the landscape.

Indeed, perhaps I relied too much on my comfort in and experience with surfers to negotiate access to the space beneath the commodified surface, as I had no real strategy in attending the event and only a clear idea and confidence that I could 'capture' the reality of it. I was naïve. While access to the site was relatively easy as it was free to enter and the contest site could be seen from the main coastal highway, San Clemente was a good hour drive from San Diego where I was based and so needed a hire car and satellite navigation to get to the event. It was only a chance meeting on my hotel arrival that I mentioned I was here for the surf contest that a porter who was a local surfer came to have a talk and gave me valuable information on the time I needed to arrive at the event site (at the break of dawn) and how much it would cost to park (\$30). Without this information, I would have been a little lost or stuck in a long traffic queue of fans waiting to park up and attend the event. Getting used to

driving on six lane highways on 'the other side of the road' was also a baptism of fire. But it all added to the immersion in the experience.

Another issue was accreditation. You needed accreditation to access different parts of the event site. Without accreditation, you could not move freely around the venue and you could only see what the public saw. I wanted to see behind the scenes, beneath the commodified surface. I had contacted the WSL well in advance of the event to outline my research and inform them that I was going to conduct an ethnographic study of the Trestles event and requested time with the Director of Communications to get a sense of the media production behind the process. While I didn't get any response before I attended the event and was a little concerned about access, I introduced myself to Dave Prodan, the Head of Communications at the WSL at the event site and explained my research. He was helpful and outlined a few points of change in the privatisation model and agreed to be interviewed as part of the study. He did not highlight any potential issues or concerns in regard to the carrying out of observations at the event site. We have had follow up mails since my return to the UK.

Other examples of being in the right place and the right time were in contacting Ian Cairns via a direct message (DM) on Twitter. We followed each other and I dropped him a note informing him I would be at the event and requesting an interview. He was interested in my research focus, had taken part in the live broadcast of the WSL event and was a complete 'insider' and gatekeeper to me. I do not know why it worked this way. He is pro surfing 'royalty' and has a reputation as a fearsome and uncompromising character and expert administrator, yet there we were in the Zebra House coffee shop in San Clemente drinking iced lattes and talking for two hours, non-stop, about professional surfing, its history, characters and potential future. He was so generous with his time and knowledge. At the coffee shop, he also introduced me to the WSL Commissioner, Kieron Perrow and another former professional surfer who works for Nike. Ian also provided me with a guest credentials wristband, which allowed me to access most areas of the event site, except the VIP and competitor sections. This access was invaluable in allowing me a deeper insight into a world I thought I knew a great deal about but was to discover it had changed dramatically in the era of packaged professional surfing:

"Hanging around is another common access strategy. As a strategy, it typically entails either loitering in an area until you get noticed or gradually becoming incorporated into...a group." (Bryman, A, 2008, p. 407).

So, while I was naïve about the practical implications of access, my ‘luck’ of being in the right place at the right time and making the right connections and being confident enough to introduce myself to key stakeholders in the research and explain my research in an overt, open, honest and humble way, enabled me to reap the great reward of getting under ‘the commodified surface’ of professional surfing.

2.7 Surfboard Building – a ‘shapers gaze’

Building on the micro-ethnography of the Trestles event and the content analysis of the live WSL events, a constant talking point for discussion and focus of attention was the surfboard. Its length, width, thickness, rocker, fin placement, and shaper. Also, it is used as an advertising hoarding by all the professional surfers highlighting all their sponsors. I thought the understanding of this process would be an interesting process to go through in order to understand the complexities of and centrality of board making and shapers (those who make boards) to the professional surfing narrative. To this end, I will undertake an ethnography of my attempts to shape a surfboard at a ‘board building’ course in Helston, Cornwall in March 2016.

2.8 Key figure interviews

“Qualitative researchers employing ethnography or participant observation typically engage in a substantial amount of qualitative interviewing” (Bryman, A, 2008, p. 369).

This method was used extensively by Borne and Ponting (2015) in developing their research for *Sustainable Stoke*, where key figures from the breadth of the surf industry were interviewed to gain insight into issues related to sustainability in the surfing world. Other academics researching action sports and lifestyle sports problems also use this method to gain expert insight into a particular issue. This can be seen in the work of, among others, Comer, 2010; Stranger, 2010; Thorpe, 2006, 2014; Walker, 2017; Wheaton, 2004). Purposive and snowball sampling was used to identify key figures who have a clear link to the key aspects of my research and the questions being asked and who could also act as gatekeepers to connect me to other key figures relevant to my research questions.

Purposive sampling is a judgement call when choosing the members of a population. It saves time and the researcher can draw upon their experience and the specific nature of their research to adapt the sample to the research questions. (Black, 2010)

Purposive sampling does have its drawbacks. These include vulnerability to errors in judgement of the interviewee and inherent bias of the researcher in the interviews chosen and questions asked.

There can also be an inability to generalise research findings and chose purposive sampling, instead of alternatives such as statistically more favourable quota and cluster sampling, as the work is not looking to generalise findings and the nature of the surfing field can be difficult to negotiate and gain the trust (and response) of key figures who would have expert opinion on the issues being researched.

The list of key figure interviews was, however, not random. Interviewees were identified as key figures from the global governance of surfing, the media of surfing, the business of surf lifestyle distribution and marketing.

Snowball sampling (Andrews et al, 2005) is where the researcher and existing study subjects recruit future subjects from their acquaintances and contacts. Again, I am aware of the bias this approach may cause, but during the process I found the surfing field to be an open and laid-back environment, however once academic questions or questions of critique are put forward, the research trail goes a little cold. I found myself having to rely upon people I knew would speak and draw on the trust we developed during the process so they would introduce me to their contacts as a trusted researcher. These gatekeepers, defined as any person acting as an intermediary between a researcher and research participants, could grant or deny access to the knowledge I sought for this thesis. As such, I wanted to ensure I could get a rounded picture of the issues I was researching. Given both the open and closed nature of researching this surfing field as described above, the gatekeepers in this work provided opinions and views on the research questions linked to their own expertise and experience. It is justified, in part, due to the broad church of participants and their specific expertise in relation to elements of the research questions. This approach is not perfect, but for this thesis, it was an important sampling process and strategy.

Further, due to the international nature of the research and the geographical location of experts I was unable to use a more personalised face-to-face method of interviewing. New technology platforms were central to the collection of this rich data and I used a mix of Skype, e-mail and phone conversations to conduct each interview and a recording app on my I-pad to record any conversations. Further I used T-line short hand to supplement recordings and make notes in real time. The experience of using Skype was particularly useful allowing me to carry out and record extensive interviews in different parts of the world and different time zones. This allowed the interviewees to be in a familiar setting and also gave them the option of using the full video conferencing facility in order to see the other person or to have a phone conversation. Academic work by Iacono, Symonds and Brown (2016) aided me in the use of Skype as a research tool, as their work was also useful in helping me consider the various internet based methods of communications I could use as a

qualitative methods researcher. Further, academic work by Deakin and Wakefield (2013), Hanna (2012) and Sullivan (2012), was also useful in helping me analyse the use of Skype as a qualitative research tool and for helping me consider both the ethical and practical uses of such technology.

The experience of using Skype was powerful. Interviewing in real time, capturing visual and spoken discourses with participants in various parts of the world and in different time zones. This form of qualitative data capture could not have been completed in the previous millennia.

Due to previous professional training in interview skills, I felt comfortable with both the technology and the process and could use my skills to explore each facet of the research questions I had provided each interviewee in advance and could detect changes in expression, the use of silence, resistance and changes in body language and voice tone during each interview.

The interviewee list grew organically, following the highlighting of key issues and themes within the WSL webcasts, coupled with the specific research questions. I wanted the interviewees to shed specific light on 'inside' industry issues to which I was not party and tap into their expert knowledge to add to the legitimacy and credibility of my other methods and research findings. This type of interview and method is not without its problems. Issues of rapport, empathy and neutrality all had to be considered and balanced to provide pragmatic and critical insight (Andrews et al, p120).

In interviewing the key figures, I had to be aware of the role of power in the process. For example, I was in awe of some of the interviewees due to their professional achievements. One interviewee, Ian Cairns, was a former World Surfing Champion and co-creator of organised professional surfing. He was also voted as one of the top 100 surfers of all time by Surf Europe Magazine in 2015. Steve Barilotti was a former editor of Surfer magazine and a surf journalism hero of mine, while David Carson is widely regarded as leading the US graphic design revolution of the 1990's where he invented surf inspired 'dirty type' to changing design norms of the day. I did not expect to be able to interview such 'icons' of surf culture. I do feel I negotiated this process well, given my previous experience and skills, but it did take time to establish my credentials and move to a point where I could explore the subject areas linked to my research questions. There was also a problem to consider with the volume of data. My two interviews via Skype, with Cairns and Barilotti, lasted over an hour each and the data was so rich. This requires much reviewing to get to the core of what they both say and mean.

I used a semi-structured and unstructured interview format and used a number of platforms to make it as easy as possible to connect with my experts who were in different global geographical locations. Henderson (1991) suggests it is important to be flexible and fit in with the schedule of the participant in developing an interview scheme and those in-depth interviews. Henderson also suggests allowing up to two hours for in-depth, qualitative interviews, but added the proviso that, depending on the schedule of the interviewee, this may need to be adapted.

I based interviews around a core set of similar questions and themes were used for each interviewee and these questions were adapted and discussion broadened to allow for the specific expertise of each individual in relation to this research. The practice of interviewing surfers differs from many in their informality. While this was helpful in many respects it was difficult to keep the interviewee to the research question and as many were also emotionally intelligent and knowledgeable, the conversations moved in many different ways. I did not, however, view this as a negative point, 'Rambling or going off at tangents is often encouraged – it gives insight into what the interviewer sees as relevant and important.' (Bryman, A, 2008, p.437).

Further:

“What is crucial is that the questioning allows interviewers to glean the ways in which research participants view their social world and that there is flexibility in the conduct of the interviews,” (Bryman, A, 2008, p.442).

Other interviews were completed via e-mail and again this was useful in that I did not need to think about transcribing data, but there are associated problems with capturing the spoken word and text.

Bryman states that there are many advantages to e-mail qualitative interviews and cites research by Curasi (2001) who found online interview answers tend to be more considered and correct, with follow up questions easily carried out. This means a greater commitment was needed when filling out the answers to the questions and replies were more detailed.

This was true of my experience with my two e-mail interviews (Sarah Hall and David Carson). There was a mix of synchronous and non-synchronous responses to my research questions but the responses were full, considered, rich and expert. Both interviewees were happy to answer follow up questions.

One interviewee was based on the Hawaiian island of Kauai and did not have computer access for Skype. In this case using the phone was helpful in terms of saving both time and expense. This interviewee, Veronica Grey, and I had previously met at a conference in New

York. I had introduced my work to her and knew she was happy to be interviewed, which ensured the phone interview was quite natural. I sent outline questions prior to the interview so she could consider her responses.

I also sent question outlines to all the other interviewees prior to the formal interviews and all participants were made aware of the specific nature and use of the research and of their ability to pull out at any time.

The interviewees were: Steve Barilotti, Jamie Brisick, Ian Cairns, David Carson, Ted Endo, Veronica Gray, Sarah Hall, Brad Hockridge, Derek Hynd, Jackson 'Jaxon' Fearn, JT (anonymised), Roger Mansfield and Derek Rielly. I briefly describe their experience below to demonstrate their expertise and ability to contribute to this thesis.

Steve Barilotti

Steve Barilotti is an American surf journalist, author, filmmaker and former Editor of Surfer Magazine, one of the iconic brands in surf media history. The interview took place via Skype on October 28th, 2015 at 8pm GMT and 12 noon (San Diego). Mr Barilotti was at home in San Diego. The interview lasted for 60 minutes and was recorded and stored.

Jamie Brisick

A former professional surfer and Fulbright scholar, Jamie Brisick has written about the surfing world extensively for The New York Times, The Guardian, The Sydney Morning Herald, and the Surfer's Journal. Interviews took place via electronic mail.

Ian Cairns

Ian Cairns co-created professional surfing. He is a former world surfing champion and was the founder of the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP). The ASP was the forerunner to the WSL. The interview took place via Skype on October 26th, 2015 at 8pm GMT and 12 noon (San Diego). Mr Cairns was in his home in Laguna Beach. The interview lasted for 80 minutes and was recorded on via I-pad and saved in a recording app.

David Carson

David Carson is an American graphic designer whose unconventional style revolutionised brand and editorial visual communication in surfing during the 1990's. He re-designed Surfer Magazine and art directed the publication with his signature style of 'dirty, grunge' type and non-mainstream photographic techniques. He was the design director for the Quiksilver Pro in France in 2011 and the Quiksilver Pro in New York in 2012. Mr Carson was interviewed via e-mail between Dec 18th and 22nd, 2015.

Ted Endo

Ted Endo is a writer and contributor to the field of surfing studies. He has written for National Geographic, The New York Times and is a copywriter by profession.

Veronica Grey

Veronica Grey lives in Hawaii and is a former professional surfer and self-styled 'Queen of Surfing', author and entrepreneur. She is a personal friend of world champion surfer, John John Florence and campaigns on environmental issues and shark protection. The interview took place over the phone on Nov 2nd, 2015 while she was at a friend's house in Kauai, Hawaii. The interview lasted for 45 minutes and notes were taken contemporaneously using a mix of long hand writing notes and T-line short hand. A comprehensive account of the notes, comments and themes were written up following the interview.

Sarah Hall

Sarah Hall lives in New York and is CEO of Sarah Hall Productions, a leading public relations and reputation management consultancy. Sarah has been a PR advisor to skateboarding cultural icon, Tony Hawke, for many years and is an expert on sport and music promotion. I interviewed Ms Hall via an e-mail exchange with structured questions mailed in advance.

Brad Hockridge

Brad Hockridge is a surf industry entrepreneur and Managing Director of Double Overhead, a surf marketing and distribution company representing a number of surfing brands. These included, Billabong UK, Globe shoes, Realm and Santa Cruz. He is also a former Wales and British surfing champion.

Derek Hynd

Derek Hynd is a former professional surfer, Surfer magazine writer, shaper and innovator of frictionless surf boards. As a writer and cultural commentator, Hynd is considered an influential and controversial figure in the world of surfing.

Jackson 'Jaxon' Fearn

Is a surfboard builder and surfer based in Helston, Cornwall. He runs workshops taking clients through the process of making their own surfboards.

JT (anonymised)

Is a former multiple UK national surfing champion and surf industry marketing and sales director.

Roger Mansfield

Was British surf champion in 1970 and has researched many articles on surfing, British surf culture and history. In 2004, he curated the 'Surf's Up' touring exhibition on behalf of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum.

Derek Rielly

Derek is one of the leading media owners and writers in the surf industry. He was the first to see the opportunity in moving surf media from print to online and digital platforms and he successfully built and ran a range of surf media enterprises. He is the editor of Stab Magazine and Beach Grit. He is also the former Editor of Australian Surfing Life (ASL).

Dave Prodan

Dave Prodan is the Director of Communications at the World Surf League and former Director of Communication at the Association of Surf Professionals (ASP). He agreed to be interviewed and I forwarded a structured set of questions to him at WSL in November 2015. Despite numerous mails and reminders, I have been unable to conduct an interview with either Mr Prodan or anyone else at the WSL.

2.9 Personal Surf Diary, Surf Sessions/conversations and Memories

To supplement the data collection period, I also wrote a personal surf diary and noted any surf based conversations. They were useful in getting the real-world surfer impressions of pro surfing issues. Two interesting conversations revolved around wearing safety helmets and wearing sunscreen. Stranger (1999) says more about this in his article, the aesthetics of risk, but it is not considered cool to wear a 'Gath' helmet or wear high vis sunscreen when surfing. Yet this is an irrational view when surfers surf over hard rock and reef just feet below the surface and spend hours in the water in the sun and suffer the effects of skin cancer.

I also introduced new technology into my embodied surfing experience using a GoPro camera to record mine and friends' 'in sea, in wave', surfing sessions. This was all supported with my personal experience and memories of surfing extensively in the UK (year-round) and overseas surf trips to Hawaii, France, Australia, Sri Lanka, Portugal, Northern Spain, Canary Islands and California. While these observations, notes, conversations do not constitute evidence and data as seen in the previous methodological approaches, they do

highlight my positionality in relation to the subject area and field. I will reflect upon this positionality in the conclusions of this thesis.

Methods Chapter Summary

In conclusion, this methods chapter sought to explain and outline the various approaches used in gathering data in a specific field. In this case, the beach, a liminal space. Neither land nor sea. A range of different approaches were considered, but, given the research questions and the transatlantic nature of the subject, largely ethnographic methodologies were used. These included a thematic analysis of each CT contest broadcast during the first year of the WSL to identify recurring themes related to the research questions. This was followed by a specific case study of the J-Bay Open applying those recurring themes to an integrated spectacle. This, simulated, illusionary experience was then enhanced with an embodied, beach mini- ethnography to observe the cultural norms and realities of a professional CT surf contest at Trestles beach near San Diego, California. Extending the notion of the real and illusionary, the researcher also analysed the importance of a central cultural sign in surfing, the surfboard. This was achieved by participating in a board making course and data gathered using an ethnographic approach. A range of key figure interviews were then developed to underpin the work and provide some unique insights in response to the research questions.

The thesis will now move forward and consider the findings of these methods and processes and the evidence they produced. The data will be interpreted against the three central research questions.

3. Findings

3.1 Introduction

This chapter, divided into five sections, seeks to analyse the data gathered during fieldwork and link extracts of this data to the overarching research questions and themes of study in order to provide some claims as to the study's validity.

Further, this chapter will aim to locate gaps in knowledge and literature in relation to critical surf studies and attempts to explain how this particular work may fill that knowledge gap. The writing and presentation style, deliberately follows the academic styles found in critical surf studies. This blends academic analysis and insights with creative writing, journalise, ethnographic realisms and a certain 'looseness' to the language structure to reflect the culture of surf language and the style of language used by those who surf or who are involved in the surf industry.

The section will also be used to reintroduce the research questions and the theoretical framework in the literature review and relate specific findings and themes to this literature. Extracts of data will be presented, described and used to debate the theoretical themes of the study. Attempts will then be made to interpret the data by using illustrative examples from the range of methods undertaken and data gathered during this fieldwork.

The overarching research questions driving this study are firstly, what does ZMH mean when it says it wants to 'professionalise' the sport of surfing? Secondly, what does this professionalisation look like? Thirdly, what are the initial effects of this professionalising process?

Throughout the work, I use the lens of Debord's Society of the Spectacle to analyse these questions and literature related to the governance and historical development of surfing with the data indicating emerging themes of McDonaldisation, Disneyisation and hyperreality and the praxis of content marketing at the centre of the WSL's promotional culture to reinforce and circulate new meanings.

Further, the findings that follow, highlight ten recurring themes identified in the watched WSL webcast analysis – the process of which was previously highlighted in the methods chapter. These recurring themes were: media production; marketing and sponsorship; language; surfers as athletes; equipment; waves and nature; technology; dress codes; religiosity and spiritualisation; governance and rules.

3.2 Themes from the literature

The governance of professional surfing has been analysed by a number of academics, surf historians and journalists, (Booth, 1995, 2001; Hough-Snee and Eastman, 2017; Laderman, 2014; Pearson, 1979; Walker, 2017; Warshaw, 2010) and the Society of the Spectacle has been specifically applied to the forerunner to the WSL, the ASP by Evers (2013), Little analytical or theoretical work has been applied to the change in governance of professional surfing. There have been a number of news articles circulating the factual background leading to the change in governance (Surfer, 2013) and a range of marketing-led articles and interviews created by the WSL to promote the change in governance. However, no one piece of research has been undertaken during the course of this research specifically critically assessing this change of ownership and what professional surfing would now look like in the hands of capitalists with a monopoly market position.

In terms of the knowledge gap and contributions to the body of knowledge in critical surf studies literature, this space would be the most appropriate and is a tentative step in problematising this new structure of governance and drawing some conclusions from the data as to the meaning of the WSL in the State of Modern Surfing (Hough-Snee and Eastman, 2017) and its role in forming, what the data may suggest is a new addition to, or extension of, an *Empire in Waves* (Laderman 2014).

The process and sequence of data gathering was designed to give a certain level of triangulation or roundedness to the study and these findings first begin with an ethnographic analysis of all WSL CT contests broadcast live via the WSL wholly owned media platform – the WSL app – in the first year of introduction. During this long form, ethnographic study, recurring themes were identified. Of which, nine themes seemed significant in the way they were built into each webcast.

These nine themes were then applied in detail to what can be considered as one of the most infamous and controversial professional surfing contests in recorded history – The J-Bay Pro in South Africa.

This application of themes to a specific event, allow for a deeper analysis and exploration of both the research questions and theoretical underpinnings of this work.

This watched methodological approach is then supported with lived experiences in a bid to explore the hyperreal nature of professional, commodified, codified, contest surfing. These lived experiences include a micro beach ethnography of a WSL CT contest in Trestles, Southern California and the making of the central ‘sign’ in the culture of surfing – the surfboard.

The beach micro event ethnography further compares the watched recurring themes of the WSL mediated webcasts with any new or emerging themes from a lived experience.

Finally, the research is supported with a range of key figure interviews exploring the research questions, the recurring themes and how they might relate to the processes of Spectacularisation, McDonaldisation and Disneyisation.

Before moving into analysing the emerging themes, let us be reminded of the key features of McDonaldisation, Disneyisation and the hyperreal.

Ritzer identified four dimensions of McDonaldisation, a critical theory implying homogenisation. These dimensions are; efficiency and the best mode of production; calculability and the belief that bigger is better and quantity trumps quality; predictability and the production process arranged to guarantee uniformity of product and standardised outcomes wherever the product or service may be experienced. The final feature is, control, through automation and ownership of each process.

Bryman mapped five aspects of Disneyisation. Another critical theory, again implying a homogenising process where the real is stripped of its original character and repackaged in a sanitised format. These five aspects are; theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising, performative labour and control, and surveillance.

As a reminder, hyperreality is a critical theory developed by Jean Baudrillard. He defined it as the inability of the consciousness to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality and applies particularly to technologically advanced societies where virtual reality and digital imagery can be manipulated to make the unreal seem real.

3.3 The Watched: WSL Webcast Analysis – the recurring themes

The aim of this section is to highlight and describe the main recurring themes, as outlined in the previous section, emanating from each live WSL broadcast of each CT event on the 2015 competitive season up until Jeffrey's Bay in South Africa between 10 July and 19th July 2015.

The themes will then be analysed to identify examples of McDonaldisation, Disneyisation and hyperreality within the WSL integrated spectacle using the live broadcast of one of the most controversial and infamous professional surfing contents ever staged – the finals day of the J-Bay Open in South Africa - where former World Champion surfer, Mick Fanning, was hit by a great white shark in the contest zone during a live broadcast to a global audience. I now highlight the themes.

Media Production

This theme relates to the way ZMH uses media production techniques to broadcast and distribute all WSL events. While building upon the production formats of the ASP, the WSL, embraced digital media platforms and developing technology to change the presentation and access to the contest arena for spectators.

The WSL production follows similar patterns for each event in 2015 and migrated broadcast control in-house, mid-season, to its wholly owned WSL application instead of broadcasting each event live via YouTube, where demand and viewing figures could easily be seen by the public and YouTube had control of the media platform.

Further, the production of each event follows a predictable and set format with the core voices, accents, presenters and style remaining the same from contest to contest of the season in this study, supporting the notion of wherever the WSL surfing spectacle takes place in the world, the production and surfing will look and sound exactly the same. This finding mirrors the key theories being used to analyse this sporting and cultural field.

Marketing and Sponsorship

Marketing and sponsorship were also key themes from the data. If we agree with the view that marketing is the heart of capitalism and further, according to Raymond Williams, that modern day capitalism would not survive without it (advertising), then marketing and commercial relationships should be evident and at 'the heart' of the WSL re-imagined paradigm of professional surfing. Indeed, the data demonstrates that marketing is very much at the heart of ZMH's strategy to (reify) professional surfing with a completely new identity, name and structure of governance. The data identifies the formation of the World Surf League with a new brand logo and a new competitive format to meet the needs of customers (fans).

This mirrors the execution of a marketing campaign where the product or service is produced based on a market need defined by market research. The data suggests surfing is now being shaped to meet the needs of new fans and new spectators. The engagement with these new audiences is driven by, in the first year of the WSL, a marketing campaign named: You Can't Script This. This is a global marketing communications campaign launched by the WSL to highlight the unpredictable nature of professional surfing. In fact, and supporting the theories of McDonaldisation, Disneyisation and hyperreality, the WSL, with their use of technology, was ironically doing all it could to script everything in its integrated sporting spectacle. Further examples from the data demonstrating of the WSL as

a brand is the opening of the WSL Store, selling branded WSL products and 'athlete jerseys' with the name of professional surfers on each piece of apparel.

Language

Language, and the use of it, was another recurring theme in the data analysed. The data suggests a non-critical and fantastical language used by commentators at every WSL event and during each heat. I explore this theme further, as with the other themes, in both the watched method, analysing the J-Bay Pro and the lived micro-ethnography at the Hurley/Swatch Pro in Trestles, California. Further, there appears to be a range of language terms which have specific meaning in a surfing context and have either been adopted by the WSL's commentators or have migrated into other fields of popular culture. Adjectives such as 'frothing', insane, cool, radical, awesomeness, litter the broadcasts as do surfer sign language such as the shaka.

Surfers as athletes

The data highlights a deliberate and persistent positioning of professional surfers as 'athletes'. This is in contrast to academic work by Canniford (2015) finding surfing brands marketing professional surfers as primitives and other academic work by Pearson (1979) where surfers and lifeguard clubs in Australia clashed due to lifeguard clubs trying to force members who surfed to be more disciplined and to take part in lifeguard competitions. Pearson identified that the rule bound, competitive and professional approach to being in the water was in opposite to the reason why surfers surfed.

There is a distinct WSL positioning in all its media forms – from its own broadcasts, to marketing communications materials and through its own broadcasters and presenters of the surfer as a professional athlete.

Equipment

Another recurring theme in the data would be the importance of, and the discussions around, surfing equipment used by the professional surfers. Typically, this was wholly restricted to discussions around surfboards, fins and shapers who designed the surfboard. Where shapers were positioned as mystical gurus and craft artists, when in reality the shaper punches the dimensions for the surfboard into a machine and feeds a block of toxic foam held together by a piece of wood into the front of that machine and the rest of the shaping is automated. Once shaped, the shaper checks and perhaps adds some fine finish and then hands it over to a laminator or glasser to cover the toxic core with even more toxic resin to give strength to the surfboard. The surfboard also represents one of the biggest revenue earners for the industry and is a commodity product. This is a good example of the

reality of the surf industry versus the storied and carefully marketed positioning by the WSL of the surfboard as a natural product; white and pure piece of rarefied art, shaped by the hands of an artist and used as by the surfer to draw on the canvas of the wave as a sublime dance. The real is hidden by myth.

In each live event broadcast, there is so much discussed throughout every broadcast about the surfboards and equipment the surfers are using. Different surfboards for different conditions. Different lengths, widths, thickness. Different fin placement. Different sponsor logos. It forms constant presenter dialogue and is used as a focus of production attention in between heats and in every post heat interview. The surfboard is also used as a commercial canvas. Every board is white, perfect white and their sponsor logos are placed uniformly at the tip of the surfboard and held as near the surfer face as they possible can to signify brand support.

During each event graphics are used for each surfer to outline their height and weight and the specifics of their chosen boards for that event. They have brand names from mediatised guru 'shapers' who mostly design the board via a computer graphic and send to a shaping machine with mm tolerances. These boards are then glassed and finished by others. There is a clear mythology surrounding the guru shaper and the 'magic' boards they make for their star surfers. This is supported by WSL presenters talking endlessly about the importance of the right board beneath the surfer's feet. In reality, these boards are so far removed from the everyday surfboard for the majority of surfers. They are too small, too light and too thin to work for the average surfer in general conditions. Much is also made of the fin set up. Is it a quad, a thruster? Then there is the commercial link to the fin make and the technology used in creating the perfect removable fin. Interestingly, each board is mostly made from a toxic foam and toughened with layers of glass fibre. There are only a handful of surfers who use epoxy boards made from different materials and very few use boards with a specific environmental stamp of approval by using different materials and super sap resin which significantly reduces the environmental impact of each board made. This is a good example of the irrationality of rationalisation.

Waves and nature

The WSL has carried on the former ASP event strategy of putting 'the best surfers on the best waves' around the world as part of a 'dream tour' and the event timetable is scheduled to coincide with typically good surfing conditions at each venue. Each contest is given a waiting period in which the event must be completed. The central focus of every contest, apart from the 'athletes', are the contest conditions and in particular, the quality and type of waves. The contest area is celebrated by the almost religious appreciation of the waves

which form the performance canvas for the surfers. The waves seem to be celebritised and are all named and branded and seem to signify specific meaning to those taking part in the spectacle. Indeed, the wave names seem to indicate a form of colonial hegemony with western names chosen to signify waves, replacing the local dialect and names. An example is the WSL event at Teahupoo in Tahiti. The wave has been rebranded as 'Chopes'.

In relation to the whole CT calendar, there are a variety of waves. Some are point breaks, some reef breaks, some beach breaks but all are arenas set in the liminal space between land and sea and the WSL coverage takes the spectator right into both the line-up and the wave itself. It can slow up the action and the wave, it can speed it up, it can show it as it is to the camera lens. But the waves of each event form the central theme of coverage, discussion and debate, while at the same time providing a natural, liquid and fluid platform on which the surfers need to perform to a set judging criteria in order to win the contest.

Only the natural changes this uniformity and predictability of each contest, with the distinct nature of the waves at each venue creating different types of approaches to surfing and the use of different types of equipment.

The data also shows the interest and excitement levels demonstrably increasing by all involved in the production – the presenters, surfers as emotional labourers and the spectators on the beach or in the boats if the event is at a reef pass out at sea and off shore – when the surf nears perfection. Again, irrationally, the more perfect the waves, the more dangerous they become for the surfers (workers).

This supports Stranger's work entitled, the Aesthetics of Risk. He argues professional surfers seem to put safety to one side when the waves get 'perfect' avoiding the use of any basic safety equipment such as helmets. Stranger, highlighted that while surfing was one of the most dangerous sports in the world, surfers seemed resistant to accepting that danger and did little to mitigate that danger or protect themselves. The same could be seen in the production of the WSL events and it is evidence of disneyisation within the production of these contest where danger and the potential to seriously damage your health is actually welcomed and marketed to create fan attraction to the event.

Technology

During the takeover of the ASP, ZMH's CEO, Paul Speaker, announced its strategic intent to use the latest technology to enhance the 'surf experience for rabid fans.' The embedding of this technology at the heart of the WSL experience allows the new owners total control of both the production, mediation and circulation of all professional surfing contests. The

defining technology adopted by the WSL was the development and marketing of its wholly owned WSL app.

In line with concepts such as emotional labour, uniformity and hybrid consumption inherent in the theories of McDonaldisation and Disneyisation, the app also allows the WSL to create marketing led, virtual surf shopping mall to entice and retain relationships with its 'rabid fans'. The app offers a Fantasy Surfer section which apes similar virtual games in other mainstream sports such as football; an events calendar for all WSL events; a rankings page for the current order in both the CT and QS pathways and also has My WSL – a personalised page where the fan can tailor the content to suit their interests. The WSL app is a wholly owned media platform which is the **only** way fans can watch live WSL events. While it is free to download and there is no charge for watching content, the WSL can now also wholly create and circulate its own surfing spectacle for each event it runs and broadcasts due to its OTT strategy and fast adoption and deployment of media technology and marketing tactics as seen in the WSL app. This would therefore seem to indicate a potential for the WSL to create hyperreal surf worlds, designed in California and exported to each event on the CT tour.

This technological development would indicate both a rationalising and controlling process similar to McDonaldisation where uniformity of service is offered wherever you interact with the organisation globally. Further, the creation of its own WSL Studios supports the notion of Disneyisation giving the WSL an ability to create its own 'stories' and shape programming and live action and package highlights as it wishes without mediation or regulation. Indeed, the WSL app and studios forms the heart of its OTT digital strategy and it had been realised within the first few months of the first official season of governance.

The next interesting academic point to note is the WSL app automatically notifies a user via 'push' marketing content that an event is about to start. The user doesn't have to seek out the information, it is 'pushed' to you by the WSL. Again, this links with theory and the predictable pattern of capitalist owners of production trying to make every effort to control the uncontrollable and get fan attention only when it is required and by making the process as convenient as possible for a fan base using a variety of media platforms and whose attention is drawn by other sporting or entertainment brands creating their own spectacles on a daily basis. Again, this can be seen as further evidence for the rationalisation of the sport under new ownership and clear evidence for the creation of a hyperreal surfing world as part of the overall WSL spectacle mediated by content marketing and exchange of images.

The WSL also uses technology to rationalise and automate professional surfing by partnering with Surfline, a global surf prediction portal, to establish when the best conditions will be to run the contest. This technology has developed in accuracy and sophistication during the past twenty years and it gives event organisers and surfers a very specific indication of surf conditions in any part of the world. The systems are now so accurate that event organisers know roughly, to the hour, what the wave conditions are at any selected known surf spot around the world. It means surfers can be based inland, away from the surf and can plan out their surf trips and sessions around the computer aided modelling systems. This level of convenience again is clear evidence of the McDonaldising process in making the commodity (surfing) as easily accessible and uniform as you can make it.

Dress Codes and Bodies

There is a WSL surf dress code visible via the app. Best described as 'dress down Fridays' where presenters wear mostly short sleeved polos or T-shirts or Hawaiian shirts. You can only see the chest and shoulders up during the live WSL broadcasts and this also applies to presenters on the beach who, again, wear similar clothes. Further, presenters in the contest arena reporting on the surf heats wear WSL-branded singlets over their wetsuits and hold WSL branded water microphones.

For the 'athletes' water dress code is board shorts and WSL branded singlets for men in warm water events and thin, full suit neoprene in cold water events. For women, either bikini bottoms and tops under singlets or thin full suit neoprene are the options. It is a perpetual state of semi undress with the body a central theme in the aesthetics and style of competitive surfing. This links to Dave Parmenter's observations on changing body types as professional surfing has evolved from the 'thunder lizards' of the 1960's to the 'gymnasts' of the 1990's onwards.

Governance and Rules

ZMH owns the WSL and ZMH is financed by Dirk Ziff, an American venture capitalist whose family made their fortune in print media. The WSL is both the event organiser, the owner of production and all the elements which go into making the integrated spectacle of a global professional surfing league. To that end, the owners can affect the organisational structure of administering the sport, make new rules, change existing rules and choose new venues for events. They pay the presenters, the judges, the athletes and govern professional surfing. In this new era of governance, there seems little critical separation between those being judged, those doing the judging and those running the events. There are also a range of WSL derived rules binding the athletes to conform to the demands of the owners. This

does all point to clear conflicts of interest in the development of a global, professional sport league.

Further, the WSL has its own rules which determine the way each heat and wave ridden is judged and assessed. The judges, during the year of study, were never seen or interviewed to explain any decisions they made. Again, there could be a clear conflict of interest given the way the sport is governed, organised and controlled by ZMH.

The study now moves on to demonstrate how these themes were manifest in one of the most infamous professional surfing events – the J-Bay Open in South Africa. The work will then be linked to the critical research theories to give specific evidence of McDonaldisation, Disneyisation and hyperreality within the WSL integrated spectacle.

3.4 The Watched Event

Venue: Jeffrey's Bay, Eastern Cape, South Africa

July 10-19th, 2015

Finals Day, July 19th +1hr GMT

WSL Media Production

The day starts with the first branded segment, 'Dawn Patrol'. Dawn patrol is surfer language code which relates to the early start surfers make when they go to check out the surf conditions for the day.

Dawn patrol describes the early, sometimes in the dark, search for surf and surf conditions. The Dawn Patrol segment is also used by the WSL to introduce the WSL Commissioner, a US-centric term to describe the head of governance at each CT event. The commissioner is Kieran Perrow, an Australian former professional surfer precursor, who is in charge of announcing if the contest is going to run or not. His decision is based on the surf forecast for the day and a balancing act of ensuring the event is run in the contest window but also run in the best waves. The Dawn Patrol presenters tell the audience they have a decision from the commissioner and the programme moves to another presenter on the beach interviewing Perrow. This process resembles a coin toss at the start of any sporting spectacle. Perrow confirms the waves are good and getting better and the Finals Day begins. At the same time, a WSL-branded mail pops up in my inbox with the words "it's on" next to an image of a surfer on a J-Bay wave with South African colours built into the promotional content.

The presentation team for Dawn Patrol and the rest of the day in the WSL studio overlooking the contest site are the same as all the previous WSL events – an all-male team of Ronnie

Bleakley, an Australian; Former Hawaiian professional surfer, Ross Williams; Martin Potter, a former World surfing champion born in South Africa, raised in the UK, now living in Australia and Joe Turpel, an Australian broadcaster.

This core team is supported by two other former pro surfers, Todd Kline and Peter Mel. Mel, is also the Commissioner for the WSL Big Wave Tour – another wholly owned and branded spectacular series of events running throughout the year. They provide the additional colour from the beach and also from the contest field with Mel sitting on the back of a jet ski with a radio microphone and broadcasting live with a cameraman sitting on another jet ski.

The production area is based around a specific surfing arena. In the case of J-Bay, the temporary WSL studio sits atop a hill overlooking the sweep of the Bay and looks straight into the various sections of the breaking wave as it travels down a right-hand point.

A small, covered stand for spectators is nearby as is the WSL village holding the media area, sponsor tents, commercial sales areas and the surfers changing rooms. The WSL 'newsroom' for the Dawn Patrol show has the sweep of the break in the background and is branded with WSL logo and Samsung – one of the global sponsors. There is no title sponsor for this event which is unusual.

The setting is unique, the presenting style is formulaic and resembles many other major sports with two or three male 'talking heads' wearing Hawaiian patterned shirts, short sleeved t-shirts, trucker style baseball caps and 'athleisure' wear. All you can see is the head and torso behind a WSL branded desk.

The frame focus of the production is limited to the contest arena in close up and the beach. You see little of the geography around the venue but the broadcast quality is excellent with a variety of angles from the direct close up of the surfer navigating their way along the wave and around sections, to the in-water shots of the surfer doing the same process and that is also captured by drone footage following the surfer along the wave face.

These images are then analysed and slowed down so the commentators take the fan through each surfing manoeuvre and estimates the wave score. Each wave is scored on a five-point scale, devised by the WSL and that five-point scale has different interpretations depending on the type of wave being surfed. At J-Bay the emphasis is on 'power' surfing, speed and the occasional barrel ride.

Judges score out of a maximum of ten marks per wave. The two highest scoring waves are taken to decide who wins the 30-minute-long heats. As many waves can be ridden but in a restricted, 'priority' order. This means a surfer has priority and choice of surfing the next wave. They can leave it but they have the choice. This rule makes it easier for surfers to

navigate the heats and ensure there is no aggressive fighting for waves by surfers in the competition.

I note that there is a lot more WSL production activity as we build to the climax of the competition. There is a water reporter, beach reporter, two commentators and athlete reporter interviewing surfers as emerge from their heats. There is a significant lift in both production muscle and additional 'colour' elements. But all are related to the contest and there is very little about anything outside of the WSL contest bubble. This is true of every event watched through the prism of the WSL app during 2015.

Cut to Rosie Hodge interviewing Slater in the WSL branded beachside media 'pen'. The WSL own and control all the event and production and therefore all media content. Hodge, another former pro surfer, is the first to interview any of the surfers and gets exclusivity in comment and content. Clad in a Roxy branded top (she is sponsored by the brand) the interviews are light and questions designed to let the surfers talk through their heat highlights. Non searching and non-controversial. Nothing asked about the Medina 'spray' incident for example. Hodge, like the other 'reporters' and presenters are not trained journalists and are paid employees of the WSL spectacle. As a result, the questions are limited, observations lack critique but all offer 'inside' perspectives on the contest and are expert surfers, so they understand the cultural norms and fit in with the spectacle. She gives the "back up to you boys," hand over cue for the contest commentators to begin discussion.

The contest is over before it has even begun. I'm watching live via the WSL app as the Mick Fanning is centre screen sitting on his board in the line-up with the water up to the chest of his blue contest singlet. Out of the right of the screen you see a dorsal fin move toward the surfer and nudge Fanning. He seems completely shell shocked but goes into fight or flight mode. My mouth drops in horror as his body is obscured from the screen by an incoming swell that takes up half the screen. My heart pounds as I wait for the swell to pass and think I am going to see a pool of blood and no surfer. All seems on slow motion and Martin Potter, the co-presenter say: "Oh shit, it's a shark." A voice booms from the beach tannoy, "get out of there, get out of there. Get out of the water immediately."

We come back full screen and we see Fanning paddling fast toward the jet ski carrying the WSL broadcast team while his co competitor, Wilson, paddles toward the scene in a bid to help his stricken friend. Pete Mel, the WSL water reporter drags Fanning onto the rear of a jet ski platform as Fanning crumples onto his knees with arms over his bowed head as if praying. Mel, arms over the top of him, comforting him.

Main co-host Joe Turpel says: “Nothing I’ve ever seen before is that dramatic. We are so happy that he is okay. A big thank you to water safety.” We switch live to Mel and Fanning in the water and Mel is interviewing Fanning. There is no time delay here.

Peter Mel’s first comment: “You wrestled a shark!”

A laughing Fanning replied: “I was sitting there and felt something. Grabbed out as something seemed stuck in my leg rope. It kept coming at my board. I saw the fin but no teeth and I punched it on the back.” He told Mel in an a manically exhausted state. He picked up his board to show that the shark had bitten through his leg rope but other than a few scratches he was physically fine.

I check my Twitter feed and J-Bay Open is now trending as the WSL branded content of a shark ‘attacking’ Fanning is shared around the world. I see one Tweet from Paul Mason which typifies the social media stream.

“Holly Hell! Mick Fanning just attacked by two sharks during finals of JBayOpen. Mick punches shark and escapes. #Hardmanofsurfing.”

Pro surfer Coco Ho Tweets: “I feel so ill seeing that.”

Fanning and Wilson are taken down the point after the interviews and reach the beach hugging and kissing family members and fellow competitors. The story spins like a whirlwind through social media and the live footage is attached to millions of Tweets and these spread to mainstream broadcasters who show the WSL-branded footage to non-surfing audiences.

The WSL broadcast moves back to Fanning arriving in the contest area above the beach and he just breaks down in tears. The enormity of what he and Wilson had been through and what could have happened take a grip. He is bear hugged in silence by Kelly Slater as the contest directors try and work through what to do.

The Final was abandoned due to a shark attack on one of its contestants. All the actors in this spectacle seem in complete shock. Which, as a viewer and surfer, I find quite odd. Not from the point of emotion and the thought of ‘what could have been’ but the fact that there have been countless shark attacks on surfers and J-Bay is known as a breeding and hunting ground for great white sharks. It is a dangerous venue for surfers but most chose to ignore the danger to surf the ‘best right hand point in the world’. So, shouldn’t the event organisers have expected it and managed to the worst case scenario? This was going to happen. Of course, to the cynic, this was the best piece of publicity the WSL could have in its first year of operation. The brand and professional surfing trending the world’s social media platforms

that it hits a tipping point of coverage, moving from specialist surf media into mainstream media.

But was this good publicity? You could argue that the WSL failed in their duty of care to the surfers (and viewers) and they were lucky not to be dealing with a death or viewing an horrific spectacle live on air with no delay and no way of not seeing the event. You could argue that the publicity was indeed terribly negative in that it reinforces audience perception that surfing is dangerous which would go against the WSL's strategic mission to widen the appeal of surfing to both non-endemic brands and a new age of potential surfers.

And while the WSL global marketing campaign is based around the unpredictable nature of surfing with the strapline: "You can't script this", in fact, you can predict most of it. You can predict the waves, you can predict when and where they will hit. You can predict shark attacks, you can predict surfing styles of pro surfers. In fact, the truism is most of it can, and is, scripted and this script is written and controlled by the WSL.

Kelly Slater summed it up well when talking to Ronnie Bleakley during an interview following the incident. "I was just saying to Pottz, I think in 20 years' time I think we'll be thinking where you were when this happened" (laughs). He went on to say the waves were so good during that heat many surfers ignored the incident and went back in to surf. "Twiggy (a surfing friend) had two shark zappers as the waves were so good." Said Slater.

Marketing, Sponsorship and Language

During the 30-minute Dawn Patrol production, the presenters discuss the 'match-ups' ahead and the WSL 'wildcard', Dane Reynolds. Reynolds has been chosen by the WSL as an additional specially selected surfer who will surf in the J-Bay competition. Reynolds, who doesn't surf many contests is described as 'the best surfer not on tour' by Blakely during the DP show. Reynolds is considered a maverick who manages his brand by creating his own media and surf videos and pays little attention to competitive surfing. He's a spectacular surfer with a large fan base and the WSL would benefit from his inclusion at the event in terms of promotional and publicity value.

Commercial adverts run every 15 minutes of every WSL production. They feature on average seven commercial sponsors or messages. During the J-Bay event the rolling advertising slots start with lager/beer brand, Corona, then Quiksilver, then Go Pro, then Jeep, then Samsung, the WSL app, then again WSL promoting the Hawaiian events. Each advert runs for 20 seconds ad so for every 15 minutes of live WSL action, you get 1.20 minutes of 'paid for' commercial messages. After around an hour of each event there is a change in commentary team to add different voices and they then swap back and forth right

the way through the event with a range of other presenters providing what is commonly known as 'the colour'. This could be post heats interviews, presentations on board technology, live reporting from the line up with one of the surfers in the water and so on. This base structure repeats through all the events and is rounded out at the end of the day with a summary of the day's events.

It is significant that there is no title sponsor for this event. The WSL deemed it too important to not run and are therefore backing the event with their own funds and not offsetting costs with a title sponsor. The major brands in the surf industry have all been hit by a general economic downturn and a change in the product and brand choices of millennials. To that end, traditional surf brands such as Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver, who had, under the ownership of the ASP, used these events to promote their products, have pulled back from their sponsored-event support and limited the number of events they directly support as the costs are too high. To this end, via the app, you don't see an overdose of commercial interest. To some degree, WSL is now the owner brand and their attempts to promote what they do now are taking centre stage during production as the WSL logo appears in most screen shots and on the temporary tents that form the surf village for the event. You do see the names of some core, global and non-endemic sponsors the WSL said they were trying to attract such as Samsung, Jeep and Tag, but their exposure is relatively minimal save for the in show rolling adverts. Further, Jeep, is publicised through a promotional tactic to clad the current CT ratings leader in a yellow jersey like the Tour De France. So, the CT ratings leader is always defined and identified by the yellow jersey in competition. Another form of in contest promotion is seen with WSL's link with Go Pro. Go Pro makes miniature cameras aimed at the outdoor adventure market and have created the 'Go Pro Challenge' with the WSL. This is a contest open only to the surfers taking part at each event and there are significant financial rewards for the surfer who provides the best free surfing or in contest footage during the event window. The surfers then upload their footage to the WSL and Go Pro and the content is shown during the live events in downtime or during the DP show. The winning entry is selected by an unknown panel. This has led to new ways of viewing surfing and in particular tube riding, where the surfer body is locked inside a breaking wave and seeks to emerge from 'behind the curtain' of the wave lip on open 'seen' face. This is widely regarded as the leading and most exhilarating 'thrill' in surfing. Technology has opened up this new territory of a previously unseen, hidden, space and now the spectator gaze can be taken inside a wave without ever having the ability to surf or be a good enough surfer to get into and ride a tube. This technology also extends to the mechanical where jet skis act as both a taxi service for the professional contest surfer and a safety service when a surfer falls off his or her board in big, dangerous waves. It also helps with the spectacle as it would be

such a dull broadcast to watch surfers spending more time paddling back out to the take off zone than surfing a wave. At J-Bay jet skis were not uniformly used but in many other WSL contests, they are. They also serve as the vantage point for the WSL camera crews and live, in water, broadcast reporters.

During each day the event runs, the WSL media team, under the leadership of Dave Prodan, create content and WSL branded journalise for the WSL app. There is also a heat analyser and heat by heat recaps so 'generation s' can pick up on the action on demand and when they want and also share that content with friends if they cannot see the live broadcast.

Further, the presenting team encourage fan interaction via Twitter and Facebook and try and set twitter trends and run polls to see which surfer in a particular heat the fans are supporting. So, when there is a big name heat, there flashes across the bottom of the screen #GoMedina or #GoKelly referring to the WSL live broadcast hyped clashes between key athletes. These seem to happen when either Kelly Slater, Gabriel Medina or John John Florence are competing in either semi-finals or finals.

The same commercial brands of Jeep, Go Pro, Quiksilver, Corona and Samsung interject the live action on a regular basis while the presenters talk about the wave as the screen is filled with the vista of the contest arena and peeling waves.

"I came here as a twelve-year-old. Overnight drive, run over the sand dunes with a couple in the water... locals were very welcoming not like Pipeline or Snapper where there are more crowds." He added: "Its consistent. Half a dozen waves and you're done. Surfed out and walk away a happy camper."

The presenters make reference to Adriano de Souza in the WSL Yellow Jersey and it mirroring the Tour de France as he enters the water to paddle out for his first heat while all the WSL hype is on the next 'superheat' between current World Champion, Gabriel Medina, and eleven-time World Champion, Kelly Slater. The twitter hashtags scroll across the bottom of the screen with #Gomedina or #Gokelly asking for the audience to use the hashtag for the surfer they want to win one of the heats. There is a discernible increase in energy and excitement level by the presentation team as the contest builds towards the final.

At the moment though the WSL broadcast is firmly focused on the 'superheat' contest and focuses on the younger Brazilian World Champion, Gabriel Medina, top turning his board off a wave right in front of Kelly Slater paddling out and sends a spray of salt water into his face. The action seems one of dominance and challenge. "Right in Kelly's face. Take that!" says Strider as he summarises the incident as the director shows it in slow motion.

Joe Turpel, the co-commentator talks about the 'dream lines running through the line-up' as the wave quality improves as the director cuts to Pete Mel, sitting on the back of a jet ski in the channel watching and broadcasting from the contest arena. He says we have perfect conditions of four to five feet and adds comment pieces on Kelly Slater talking about his age and describing him as an 'old dog' but is managing to 'stay relevant'. He then goes on to talk about Kelly's surfboards and the fact he is using a 'Styrofoam core' which has a different feel as it uses 'epoxy glue' giving a totally different 'feel' but Kelly 'loves them and it gives him a lot more spark'.

The Twitter poll streams across the WSL broadcast and 56% of twitter users want Kelly to win while 44% want Medina to win. Slater supporters get their way and he moves on to the Semi Final.

And to support this, just as the Slater and Medina heat comes to an end, with probably the highest 'eyeballs' on the event around the world, in comes a pop up via the WSL app asking spectators to take part in a WSL research project to "make the pro surfing experience better with every wave". I click on the link and end up going through 20 questions which take me 15 minutes to complete and right in the middle of the quarter finals. Could or would any other sports organisation do this? Another case of the ability of the owners of production to dictate the spectacle and access spectator feedback for free to enhance and increase the commodity value and marketing function of the integrated spectacle. It gives an interesting insight into the strategic direction for future growth or areas of interest.

It starts...

Q: Do you watch any live events?

A: Yes/No

Q: When and where do you spend the most time watching live WSL events?

A: In the morning/day/night

A: At home/commuting/work/school/taking a break/don't watch

Q: How many live WSL events do you watch?

A: All/most/none

Q: How much of the event do you typically watch?

A: Entire/most events/few heats/just final

Q: What do you use to watch WSL events?

A: TV/WSL mobile app/WSL web site

Q: Why do you watch live WSL events?

A: See elite athletes/for the big moments/get to know pros

Q: What would you like to see more of during live WSL events?

A: open ended but asks 'to be specific'

Q: How satisfied are you with live WSL events?

A: very satisfied/satisfied/neutral/dissatisfied

Q: Now we'd like to ask you a few questions about non live surf videos. What kind of surf videos do you watch?

A: Big wave/event promo

Q: When do you spend the most time watching surf videos?

A: Morning/daytime/evening

A: Home/commuting/at school/work/taking a break/don't watch

Q: How often do you watch surf videos?

A: Daily/weekly/monthly/once a year

Q: What do you use to watch surf videos?

A: I wasn't quick enough to write options but from contemporaneous memory this revolved around TV/tablet/laptop/phone

Q: Why do you watch surf videos?

A: Be a part of surf culture/keep up with championships/see event recaps

Q: Which of these streaming devices or services would you like to use to watch live WSL events or surf videos?

A: X box/Roku/smart tv apps/AppleTV/Chromecast/Amazon FireTV/Playstation/Other

Q: Last few questions... How long have you been a fan of pro surfing?

A: Not/less than a year/five years/ten years/more than 20 years

Q: Are you a registered WSL fan?

A: Yes/no

Q: How old are you?

A: Under 18/18-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55plus

Q: Are you male or female?

A: M/F

Q: Where do you currently live?

A: Australia/Brazil/France/Japan/Portugal/New Zealand/South Africa/Spain/UK/US/Other

Q: What language do you speak at home?

A: Open

As the ads roll once more pre-Final, I am drawn to a trailer for the next WSL event at the infamous Tea'hupoo or Chopes in Tahiti. The wave rears over a shallow reef and dumps a surfer into the impact zone. Another beast of a wave roars and smashes on the reef with the scrolling line... 'only the committed'. The spectacle moves from one branded mythologised surf zone to another and the WSL media machine matches words and images to make each event distinctive based around the specific waves in those locations. The waves are the branded stars of the show. But here, right now we are at a classic, long right-hand point break where there is a beach audience; the next is a nuclear bomb of a wave which explodes over shallow reef providing the most spectacular and mediatised barrel riding location in the surfing universe. It is out in the ocean, far off land and only the rich or locals can watch the spectacle from a boat in the channel.

While the language used by presenters has emotional content and difference... words and phrases such as buttery, shampoo, chandelier, amped, best on the planet, blessed, stoked, frothing, on it, smashed the face, best show in the world, ready to do battle, equipment, athletes, goofy foot, regular foot, Brazilian storm, repeat and seem to reinforce the WSL production bubble of exaggeration and an the insider nature of elite commodified sport but with the spectacle lacking critique and mainstream governance.

At each event and heat within the WSL spectacle, employees, who were front and centre of the WSL broadcast, were white with either American, Australian or South African accents. There was little variation, both at J-Bay, or at any other event. There are few voices signifying the 'other' or 'difference'. Indeed, much of the content created for the broadcasts is focused very much on the event and the contest arena and doesn't go outside to show the life, culture and geography of the surrounding areas. As a result, the language used by the

commentators and presenters through the broadcast, as compared to traditional, mainstream sports is specialised and insider-like.

The director cuts to Todd Kline on the beach who says in relation to the atmosphere that it is at an: “All time red line on the froth metre” and that watching the surfers was like watching Nascar drivers on a go cart track.

Surfers as Athletes

They discuss the impending semi-final clash between Kelly Slater and Mick Fanning and compare CT contest wins for both. They are incredibly impressive numbers and are described by the commentators as ‘alien numbers’ and discuss constantly the advancing age of Slater and how incredible it is that he is still relevant. Ross Williams adds: “It is so rare to be relevant at that age. You have the likes of Jordan but they tail off toward the end of their careers. Slater doesn’t.” And most of the cultural references are US-centric with a touch of Australian and Brazilian reference points thrown in but the discussion tends to be quite binary where Australian surfers are referred to as travelling brothers who love to compete while the Brazilians surfers are referred to endlessly as the ‘Brazilian Storm’ as if they are some wild, hunting pack from another country coming to create havoc in the surfing world order.

Further time is dedicated to the boards both surfers are riding, the training regimes and the comparisons of head to head ‘match ups’.

Slater and Fanning know each other well, they sit on boards in the water and wait for sets.

I’m drawn back in to the spectacle as I hear the commentator describe 43-year-old Slater throwing an “Alleyoop right over the bricks” referring to the inside dangerous section of the breaking wave as it nears the rocky shore. “That wave almost going dry on the inside.” Adds the commentator to add to the drama. ‘Dry’ refers to the wave sucking water off reef or rock so it is exposed and hence any surf manoeuvre in this situation is dangerous.

Fanning wins. Slater gives Fanning a high five as they walk up the beach and admits his loss was simply down to ‘wave selection’.

Equipment

J-Bay is a celebrated, right hand point wave and requires a range of different surfboards depending on the size of the waves and period of the swell. This is well documented as part of the J-Bay coverage. Each surfers’ board is poured over by commentators in terms of the shape and the shaper to the length, width and thickness. Kelly Slater is interviewed pre-heat. “It’s gonna be fun. I’m riding a rounded squash, five nine, Rookie model.” While we are

told Fanning is riding a lot of 'channel' bottoms. These are clear indications of the importance of the surfboard as a branded, commodified sign and its importance in providing a competitive advantage.

Waves and Nature

Waves and nature, I note, are referred to in specialist terms. But specialist, myopic terms of resonance to a surfer by surfers. Waves were described purely as they related to the range of breaks and sections of the J-Bay wave. One wave outside, another wave at mid-point, another section at the inside point. Interestingly, each section had its own identifiable brand name. These names signified different types of waves as products or services to be consumed by surfers. They also are used as part of a surfing colonialism by surf capital to suppress indigenous surf histories. For J-Bay, technically a right-hand point break wave, where ocean swells meet land and form waves peeling down a headland with waves breaking from left to right, there are ten branded sections of the wave. These ten sections are endlessly discussed, debated and mythologised by the WSL commentators. The ten sections, I note, in the order the wave is represented are called: Kitchen Windows, Magnatubes, Boneyards, Supertubes, Impossibles, Salad Bowls, Coins, Tubes, The Point and the last section is Albatross.

Each section is storyfied by the commentators, all of whom have surfed this wave many times before. There is a very little discussion about the dangers of the wave. The water is cold, the paddle out to the wave is treacherous, the wave peels across sections of hard rock just feet below the water surface. Waves can vary in size but the commentators tell us the bigger the swell, the better the waves and contest as it as the sections can link up allowing the surfer to surf from Kitchen Window through to Albatross.

I note also, the terms used to brand each section of the wave. Any local dialect or language? Any local surfers have any say in the adoption of these names? I wonder. We are in South Africa. These beaches, at one time in recent history, were segregated. Again, colour and race is whitewashed from the production picture as is any sense of history, local culture and specifically local surf culture. Everything in the WSL broadcast, in relation to waves, appears to reiterate the hegemonic picture of surfing's imperialism as outlined by Laderman and Finnegan.

Nature was also represented through this surfing prism. Commentary by elite surfers, adopting the same sense of male bravado as I note from the commentary about waves. J-Bay is well known for shark attacks on all forms of sea life and that includes human beings. The risk is discussed by the commentators but in a way as highlighted by Mark Stranger in

his article, *The Aesthetics of Risk*, pointing to the way terror and danger in surfing is downplayed and ignored within the surfing world.

The risk of shark attacks on surfers are presented as merely a part of the risk at J-Bay and are seemingly just accepted as part of the deal to ride what is described as in commentary as: 'the world's best right hander', referring to the J-Bay wave. The WSL view, as reflected by its workers, would seem to be their spectacle is greater and more important than the risk of shark attacks on professional surfers.

So, like the discussions around waves, the discussion around nature ignores wider topics of societal importance. Pollution, global warming, plastics and endangered species and focuses mostly on mediating nature, in this event context, as the ongoing Hollywood narrative of a 'jaws' like battle between human and shark.

Technology

The technological investment of the WSL is clear in the contest area. Drones with GoPro cameras hover five metres above the take off point on the wave and follow the surfer along the wave face transmitting manoeuvres in real time to a global audience. Jet ski's pick up each surfer at the end of their wave and carry them quickly out to the take-off zone so they don't have to waste time and energy paddling. The WSL production crew and a commentator sit in boats and on a jet ski to record each wave and interview surfers in the water as soon as their contest had ended, mimicking traditional 'field' sports and the capture of emotional content to extend the impact of the surfing spectacle.

Dress codes and bodies

J-Bay can be cold and so it is interesting to see bodies covered by thermal jackets and surfers wrapped in full wetsuits to keep warm in the cold water of the contest zone. WSL presenters in the studio overlooking the contest zone are still clad in casual wear such as short sleeved, surf-branded shirts, and jeans, while those reporting from the beach are wearing surf branded beanie hats and branded warmer jackets.

Governance and rules

J-Bay provided an excellent example of the conflicts of interest inherent in the new ownership and governance structure. J-Bay, while accepted as a world class wave and contest site, is well known for great white shark activity in and around the contest zone. In running this event, the WSL puts its 'employees' at risk. At the same time, this increasing risk in both the size of the waves and the threat of nature, provides WSL Studios with a strong story telling narrative to support the surfing spectacle being created and distributed to

audiences. An independent organising body may well have provided the voice of caution to consider either cancelling the event and moving it to other venues or building greater surveillance protocols to ensure nature could not threaten ‘workers’ in or around the contest site. Further, there seemed to be no appreciation from WSL commentating staff as to how to cope with the unfolding drama of a shark encounter, broadcast live in the final of a world championship event. This very expected ‘event’ was treated as if it were completely ‘unexpected’. It led to global media coverage for the WSL, the elevation of Mick Fanning as a stereotypical blonde surfer ‘fighting’ a shark and the most infamous professional surf contest ever recorded.

3.5 The Lived: Swatch/Hurley Pro, Trestles Beach

The research now moves from one WSL integrated spectacle in South Africa to the next in Southern California, following the WSL Tour as it arrives at Trestles Beach. The recurring themes and the critical theories, are explored through this event using an embodied and lived research method, alternatively named a micro ethnography. The style of writing and the register used are deliberate, reflecting the language widely adopted in surfing and the modes of writing used by academics publishing in critical surf studies and the cultural history of surfing.

Evidence to support both the recurring themes and the critical theories will be presented with a diarised, travelogue writing approach. Further, attempts will be made to identify any points of difference between the hyperreal of the WSL app contest experience and the lived, at the integrated spectacle event, experience. The research will go on to provide clear examples from the data in relation to the theories being explored and applied to professional surfing.

Hurley/Swatch Pro, Trestles Beach, Southern California

Sept 16, 2015. I get into San Diego in the dark. It’s raining and I head to Avis to pick up my rental car. Thirty minutes after having the keys, I’m still going in an endless circle around the car park as I get used to driving on the left and trusting the American voice coming out of the satellite navigation system.

It takes me to the hotel and as I check in I say I’m here for the surf contest and instantly there comes a voice from nowhere. “Hey, I’m Brian. So, are you here for the surf? “I’m the surf guy around here and I make Surfjax. Here, take a look at my web site.” I look at a page of product still tired from the journey and chat to Brian. He is invaluable in giving me information about getting to the Trestles contest site, the costs and the best time to go.

The encounter also teaches me that surfing is hard wired into Californian culture and the commercial opportunities and marketing linked to it were embedded in the ‘business of play’.

I'd only opened my mouth once and checked into the hotel and already some key features of Disneyisation, such as hybrid consumption, theming, performance labour and merchandising and branding were already being played out before me. Indeed, the very rationalised product of Surfjax, was evidence of the efficiency and automation features of McDonaldisation in relation to the broader surf industry.

I learned that it would take an hour to get to the contest site but I would need to leave early and get to Trestles for day-break around 6am. Brian adds. "It's also \$15 bucks for the car park and a shuttle bus takes you down to the contest site." He moved off into the night cleaning and maintaining the vast hotel complex. I didn't see him again.

I call Ian Cairns after he gave me his mobile number following a Twitter exchange when I saw him interviewed during the WSL broadcast. Ian, a former World Champion surfer and founder of the ASP was interested in my research and would be happy to talk.

We agree to meet at the contest site at 9.30am.

Then I learn of the WSL's control, efficiency and surveillance at contest venues.

"You got any credentials?" He asks. I naively go on about the University at which I work and why I'm in San Diego. He was referring to a wristband to allow free access to both the public and 'private' parts of the contest venue. These wristband credentials allowed the WSL to monitor different types of visitors to the contest site and control where and where they could roam. There is also an efficiency to this to cater for the ever-increasing requests from media and vloggers and bloggers to attend CT events.

I mumbled something about being in touch with Dave Prodan, the Director of Communications at the WSL and he knew what I was doing and that would be fine.

I didn't really know what I was talking about but I was talking to one of the creators of professional surfing as both a competitive sport and a commodity. He was a giant in this State of Modern Surfing. I had to give an air of confidence.

To ensure I knew where I was going and what I was doing, I decide to head up to the contest site in the afternoon sun, when I could see where I was going and get used to this alien environment.

I head out of the hotel and turn left as if still in the UK. A huge horn blows as a truck comes slowly towards me on the right-hand side. My apology hand sign is met with a 'fuck you' flying at me from the window of the truck and leaves me trailing off, resembling the Doppler effect. Already I get the impression people like rules and efficiency and keep others in check if you try and go outside these norms of behaviour.

I get on the right side of the road and find a petrol station to fill up. I stand by the rear of the car with the petrol nozzle in the petrol tank and squeeze to release the petrol. Nothing. I repeat. Nothing. I see a sign and now understand that petrol or gas is prepay – so you go into the shop to pre-pay and have to guess what you are going to use. While it is efficient, it is very confusing but I'm told it is another rule to stop drivers filling up with fuel and driving off without paying.

I head onto the 'Interstate Highway' and head to San Clemente. This highway – with eight lanes in either direction - runs the coast of southern California and giant lorries trundle a well-worn path trying to stick inside the white lines of tight freeway lanes. My head spins trying to work out my left and right as I move onto the highway in a counter intuitive way.

I join the road, get the music on and drive up to Trestles. Easing into the cultural norms of undertaking and sticking to the speed limit, I notice a few things of difference.

The freeway hugs the coast and you can see every surf sport from the car. The air conditioning cools the car interior so you have no idea of the outside temperature but it feels warm. When I open the window, it is like a hair dryer in your face. It is arid, dry and hot. The iconic surf movie, *The Endless Summer*, comes to mind as I drive on.

I notice a veneer of dust on most cars and there is little transport diversity other than car, pick-up truck or full-blown, truck. Most windows are tinted which gives an air of secrecy and privacy and separation.

After an hour and a half of constant driving, the satellite navigation gets me to the small surf town of San Clemente and I spot the first form of theming and branding related to the surf event - a giant red Hurley banner, lit by the soft fading afternoon light, it rippled in the light wind above the contest site.

Interestingly, there is no other indicator to an outsider that this is a venue for one of the world's leading professional surf events. I'm surprised. I thought there would have been promotional 'signs' everywhere.

There was little and it was 'local' knowledge that got spectators to the Trestles site. There was no commercial megaphone announcing the contest of site. This surprised me. The language and hyperbole from the WSL commentators during the broadcast 'view' of the event said during commentary that the beach was 'packed' and it was the 'greatest show on earth'. So far it resembled the pomp and ceremony attached to a very ordinary, amateur sports event. Low key theming, low key marketing with a big helping of inefficiency led me to conclude the real didn't look like the hyperreal of the WSL app and this 'greatest show on earth' was so well hidden from public view that it wouldn't draw thousands of 'rabid fans.'

On deeper analysis, this low-key positioning and lack of environmental impact could be linked to the fact that Trestles is a habitat reserve with a rich indigenous history (Iatarola, B. M. 2018), and the WSL circus was trampling across this sacred liminal space in the quietest way possible. None of this heritage, history or culture was writ large in any space linked to the WSL event.

I stopped my car outside the entrance to the contest site and am greeted by a heavily moustached guard in the obligatory dark glasses and baseball cap. Another example of control and surveillance.

The pale red Hurley and Swatch flags flap in the background. I start with a "I'm here to...". He must have heard it a thousand times from people much better at blagging than I. Before I got to "see", he politely asked with no expression:

"You got credentials?". I tentatively replied: "Well I'm here to see Dave Prodan and Ian Cairns." Surely name dropping would do it?

"Sorry, contest isn't running today so they won't be around and I can't let you on site today unless you have a credentials band. You will have to come back here tomorrow morning and pay \$20 for the car park and then you can go on site as a member of the public."

I persisted and asked if I could just drive down to the car park to see the site? "No, Sir."

It wasn't going to happen but I'd achieved what I needed to do. The recurring themes of governance and rules and the frustration of unpredictable waves and 'mother nature' being blamed for not producing 'buttery waves' and playing ball with the WSL broadcast production schedules, were clear to see in just this initial phase of the ethnographic journey. What was I going to find when I got to the beach to next day?

September 17

I woke at 4am. Pitch black. Get all my gear and get to the contest site for 5am.

I'm first in the 'queue' and there is no one to be seen. Am in the right place? Have I parked in the right position? By 5.15am I'm joined by one, then two and so on, as a small procession of beaten up cars tuck up behind me in an orderly queue.

6am, the same WSL security guard as yesterday arrives. He tells me he is not sure if the contest will run today as there has been a Tsunami off the coast of Mexico and it may affect the waves coming into the contest site.

By 6.45am we are being let into the car park as fears subside. "Have a great day, sir." As I pay and pick up my car park ticket and head to the painted bays at the top of Trestles beach. This was my first glimpse of the reality of the WSL integrated spectacle.

I get my first evidence of this as an event site with distinct theming and control. I drive down a tarmacked road and slowly pass through reserved parking labelled for 'VIPs' such as sponsors and other WSL invited guests. Then there was another section for the performance labour (surfers) taking part in the contest whose names adorned WSL colour coded giant name badges attached to temporary railings indicating that this was 'their' parking spot. I drive further and move into the 'public' parking further away from the contest site. Already, the mind was programmed to accept that the WSL integrated spectacle was in play, highlighting who was the most and least important part of their event.

I noted most of the surfer parking bays were empty save for a few black pick-up trucks belonging to those who were here for their 'dawn patrol' seeking out the waves before the contest began.

There are two ways of getting to the contest site. The public are advised to wait for the shuttle bus down to the beach as pedestrians who choose to take the well-trodden 'surf route' have to cross railway lines before touching foot on the sand.

It was still dark with dawn giving glimpses of the contest site which seemed miniscule against the foreground of the beach and the background of the sea, but I wanted to feel what it was like to tread this iconic path which forms part of surf folklore.

I headed along a dusty route weaving through undulating topography and smelling sage in the air until I came to a railway crossing.

As dawn shed first light on the rail tracks, I saw the signs and brands of the surf industry stickered on anything that could be used as a backdrop. The railway tracks, rubbish bins, public order signs, rocks, pieces of driftwood. These signs indicated a crossing point and pathway to a watery world and the surf destination of Trestles Beach just 400 metres away. It was conspicuous that there was not one WSL notice, brand reference or logo in this area.

The WSL positioned and branded the Trestles event as the 'skatepark' in pre-contest content marketing via the WSL app. Yet this, stickered up site, using industrial backdrops as a canvas, was messy, ripped, anarchic, dirty and jaded and clashed with the hyperreality of the professional surfing world as seen through the WSL app and indeed what I had had begun to see forming just at the top of the beach.

I quickly walked over the tracks and through a lower reed bed of bull rushes and wondered if there were any snakes about to pounce. Distracted, I was late to hear the faint whistles behind me of approaching surfers heading for their dawn patrol session. These were not the performance labour-type surfers but locals looking for a wave before work.

One mountain bike, clad with wide beach tyres, shot by with a short skinny board in a rack attached as the fat tyres ate up the terrain. The surfer, wearing an orange wetsuit and riding a white bike, said thanks as he feverishly peddled to the ocean.

Another following shouted 'to the right'. Meaning I'm coming through to your right. I thought this meant move to the right. We nearly collided. He cursed and peddled on. I'm not 'a local'. There were no signs to let you know that this was a local path for surfers to the beach. No signs to say beware of the bikes. This was local knowledge and you'd only gain that experience from trial and error.

I took the last steps up a bank to a sandy path and there, unfolding before me, was the first light of the day on the Pacific Ocean. I looked to my right and there was an American flag on top of a bamboo pole thrust into the sand and kept upright with pebbles and stones.

Further to my right was the contest site – just 300 meters wide and 100 metres deep – hugging the shoreline and bound by pale red, sponsor branded tents, production suits and hospitality areas. It was a form of Disney's Main Street from this initial view, but more, big-top carnival due to its mobile and temporary nature than the static and stable hyperreal world of Disneyland.

In front of the contest site was the famous Trestles surf 'break' with twenty little black dots in the sea, around 150 metres off shore. It was still a little dark yet there were twenty surfers already in the water. This made me realise how these finite natural resources are fought over by surfers. I hadn't appreciated the human demand on, and consumption of, such natural special places.

I look to my left and the beach just goes on and on so there is a wide vista of beach culture on show and the only element that marks Trestles from the other beach landscape is a protruding boulder point created over millions of years by natural erosion and outfall of a nearby river finding its way to the sea. When naturally occurring wave swells push against this boulder mass, the sea jacks up to form a pitching wave which, if there is enough power to the swell, unfold along this point creating standing walls of water which roll for two hundred metres before exhaling and dying on the pebbled beach.

This completely natural phenomenon is now the centrepiece to the WSL's self-branded 'skate park' professional surf event with a marketing process at the heart of reimagining this

space by using the urban and landlocked activity of skateboarding as the bedrock of its integrated spectacle theming.

For now, this space wasn't a 'skate park' with a select few in the water enjoying empty Trestles waves in contest mode. This was the real and territorial local surfing populations trying to negotiate a wave before the 'business of work' as opposed to the professionals at the centre of the integrated spectacle of the WSL's 'business of play'.

I could see moving small black dots in the water and they looked like tadpoles in a pond. Time moved and Trestles lit up with the rising sun. It was revealing. The tadpoles were around thirty surfers and this was 6.15am at a wave with only two real take off points and these were around a metre wide. So, two metres with thirty plus surfers scrabbling and jostling to get in position. Waves would come in sets of four or five and there would be a lull of around four to five minutes between the sets. It created an environment and atmosphere of clique and muted hostility. On the beach, I could hear men shouting at one another for 'dropping in' on them or 'taking' a wave when it wasn't their 'priority'. The resource was so scarce, normal rules and etiquette of surfing just didn't apply. This also related to the style of surfing.

I watched the wave rear as it hit the boulder point and four or five surfers paddled to catch it. These were local Southern Californian based surfers but the standard was of an international level. As soon as one was up and riding, the others usually pulled off and I saw spectacular movements but not of 'dance' as so described by Booth in the literature reading for this work, but stamps of anger and aggression, like a Punk 'pogo'. The movements were predictable, powerful, polished and to be honest, monotonous.

Air drop take offs, were followed by raking, fast bottom turns as the surfer compressed their legs and bodies pushing the board into the wave base to gain as much power and speed to turn and go up the wave of the peeling wave and then pivot at the top to obliterate the breaking 'face' sending sea spray ten feet in the air like shards of glass. This wasn't an act of love or an affectionate 'dance', this was more like an insult, the slapping of the face before a duel is called. Violent.

The surfer descends down the face and the process happens all over again in what seems like a ringing of the neck of this marching natural form as it gasps its last breath before breaking and dying where the liminal space where land meets the sea. The speed is like I've never witnessed. The surfers don't fall and seem glued to their boards. Their wetsuits carry colour and it seems to blur as they surf down the point to the beach. I sit on the sand and watch for 30 minutes transfixed by the arena before me. The patterns and style were very

similar. The difference came where older surfers riding longer and thicker surfboards tended to surf the left and their movements were less chaotic and fast. More casual, slow and drifting. The style seemed to blend with the wave a little better but it was less dramatic and aggressive than the short board style of the younger surfers on the right... but maybe it was a little more respectful.

This is clear data related to 'surfer as athlete' from the emerging themes of the research. The speed, power, balance and balletic qualities of these 'local' surfers were indeed an example of the surfer as an athlete where equipment and different styles and lengths of surfboards were used and experimented with to allow the surfer to express their athleticism as they raced along the wave face.

After the initial awe and wonder of the natural form punctuated by human displays of domination and ownership, my attention waned due to the repetitive nature of the form before me. Same wave, same aesthetics, repeat. Again, this repetition of movement and the efficiency in which each surfer dissected a Trestles wave is evidence of the McDonaldising rationalisation of competitive surfing where styles of surfing are adopted to suit the needs of a judging and marking criteria. There was little difference between each surfing style. There was a predictable, rational pattern to every move on every wave.

I wandered over to look at the contest site and start the process of unpacking and understanding how the WSL produced and organised a professional surf event on a beach and then transmitted these images to the hyperreal world for the 'rabid fans' connecting to the WSL integrated spectacle via the WSL app.

The contest site is like no other arena in elite professional sport I've seen. To start, it looks like a travelling circus or fairground with temporary tents, commercial franchises, media sections and judging towers. Then there is open access and free entry. There are no turnstiles or security demanding to see tickets but you are greeted with a WSL legal notice outlining the legality or not of filming and taking pictures in the contest site and distributing these images for commercial gain.

Without the express permission of the WSL, (according to the notice), you were prohibited. The notice was a foot square and the typeface was small. I wouldn't think the majority of the public coming to the event would read it let alone understand the context of 'commercial use'. It is also quite an odd request given the strategic goal of the WSL is to engage with fans via social media and Samsung Galaxy is a main sponsor.

I'm presuming there is a desire to get people talking about the event and spreading images and content via their own social media but they draw the line at any members of the public

using any images for commercial gain. So, at this stage, while there is not the static Disneyization experience, there are clear examples of theming via colour coded and WSL branded flags, advertising hoardings, judging towers and television studios. There is WSL merchandising with a franchise selling WSL branded t-shirts, vests, trucker caps and beach towels. There is control and surveillance with the many notices around the site telling visitors what it can and can't film, where they can and can't go. A contest site, structured like a shopping mall, with one main street and one way in and one way out.

I walk in through 'main street' and the contest site is bordered by hospitality tents, a surfer's area and media 'pens' to the beachside and branded eight-foot-high temporary 'walls' to the land side featuring the professional surfers and hiding power generators, satellite equipment and production vehicles. Further along is the two-tier tent housing the judges upstairs in little open fronted booths looking like greyhound racing pods.

Downstairs from the judge's area was a media space for journalists, photographers and broadcast crews. It was all open plan so conversations were easily heard. I wondered how the judges would be influenced by the excitement of the fans on the beach sitting just ten metres away when the contest started. Or how connected the judges were to any of the media personnel.

That said, it was a relaxed place to be. People were friendly with an easy-going attitude and while there clearly examples and date indicating a Disneyfied and McDonaldized space and practice, there was, in comparison to traditional, mainstream sports held in stadia, little commercial influence other than a Hurley and Swatch store and a beer tent. To that end, if I was the marketing director of Samsung or Jeep, two of the WSL's title sponsors, I wouldn't be that happy. At this site and at ground level, I could not see either brand front and centre of this spectacle.

The dawn patrol surfers started coming out of the line-up, changing into suits on the beach, lassoing boards to their fat wheeled bikes and headed to the business of work.

The contestants, who specialised in the 'business of play' finished pre-event warm ups with some salt water therapy and getting used to the swell size and shape. On land, there was a growing noise of 'human song' as friends greeted each other, photographers set up in their patches of choice so they could ensure the best opportunity of cover pictures. The mediators of the spectacle were jostling for position.

The smell of the sunshine was punctuated with the wafting aroma of fresh ground coffee. The production team, or theoretically WSL performative labourers, moved slowly around the second tier, twenty-foot-high makeshift studio looking directly into the breaking right of the

Trestles point. The spotlights, in the mobile and temporary filming studio, lights up the faces of the presenters against the rising sun as they prepared for the WSL Dawn Patrol show.

I drift around the site and nod politely to passing presenters and former surfers. I feel different. I thought about it and that difference is caused by being *not* known. It is clear, from observing the interaction and relationships, that the production team, media, surfers, brand owners and security, all know each other and my arrival makes me feel like I'm a speck of oil in the WSL ocean.

Martin Potter, a former World Champion surfer and presenter for the WSL production passes me. All in black with the obligatory dress code 'uniform' of skate shoes, white sports socks, board shorts, T-shirt and hoodie combination, all topped off with a trucker cap. Pottz, as he is known, was short, but wide. Like an inverted pyramid. His shoulders shaped by a lifetime of paddling. He smiles as he wanders passed and sips his coffee.

I wander a little deeper into the site and see more evidence of media production as the TV crews set up the camera booms on mini towers overlooking the contest site. This technological mode of production clashes with a cluster of fat wheeled mountain bikes nearby, signifying the spot on the beach where the local surfers change into wetsuits before moving out into the water to paddle to the peak.

It is the same movement. Drop bikes, skateboards, rucksacks. Chat to friends. Watch some waves. Suit up, wax the board and head into the water to the right of the point and paddle out and around to the left into the take-off zone. This signifies surfing knowledge. It would look 'different' to head into the water from the left and paddle out onto the point.

I'm dazzled by the colours. The colours of the natural environment. The perfect soft sand against an azure blue sky. The colours of the surf boards and wetsuits, the clothes and tattoos and tans. The aesthetics of this Trestles beach culture is unlike anything in the UK where the colour tends to be binary black and white. Black wetsuits and white boards. You don't feel or sense this natural and real phenomenon via the WSL app.

While the contest area is prepared with giant branded Hurley buoys placed by jet skis to demarcate the watery contest arena, the WSL star presenters and the production team get stuck into breakfast in open tents in the full view of the public.

All glow with health and smiles. They sit, eat and chat perched up on bar stools in a make-shift hospitality tent. It is understated as surf 'celebrities' intermingle and chat with industry and media 'types' as the waves of Trestles push down the point in front of this temporary unreal amphitheatre.

Wave after wave is hammered by surfers as they tear the moving structure apart, spitting spray along every perfect walling face. The aesthetic never changes and it is like a full screen television is playing in the background with surfing on an endless loop. It is an intoxicating mix of natural phenomenon meeting the commodified perfection of the 'business of play' as the beach kisses the sea on this bend in the beach in Southern California, an hour south of Los Angeles.

The escalator movement in and out of the water continues apace and younger surfers appear. Clones with bleached blonde hair, orange and luminous yellow wetsuits, tanned white skin and blazing white teeth are dotted around the changing 'space' at the top of the point.

They all hold white, clean surfboards, all 'stickered up' and paying homage to their sponsor benefactors. These are aspiring performative labourers waiting for their opportunity to join the WSL integrated spectacle.

Not a spot of dirt or sand in the wax on the board and all are held in a ceremonial way each board tucked under an arm with the curve of the board going in toward the body and the fins at the back and the nose pointing forward, slightly down, toward the ground. It is an adopted pose and every surfer I see signifies their belonging to the Trestles tribe with it.

This is play as 'serious business' unfolding before my eyes.

The efficient production and broadcasting process gets under way with the Dawn Patrol presenters interviewing WSL 'commissioner' Kieran Perrow to see if 'it's on'. It is not.

By 9.30am the priority buoys are being ceremoniously bought back in to the beach on the back of jet skis. The local surfers celebrate and head back into the sea while the public give a collective sigh and tuck back into their beach picnic. I'm frustrated but then I'm new to this.

You base an event around a phenomenon that may or may not appear and happen at a specific time. You base an event in a space which is hard to get to and navigate. It seems like organised pot luck. It is frustrating from an audience perspective but the beach doesn't seem to care that much. Neither do the small number of fans and the army of WSL workers. They are on a beautiful beach with beautiful people. This 200-metre by 100-metre amphitheatre on the edge of the world is, for some, a paradise they don't mind hanging out on.

For me, I have a meeting with one of my interviewees in a San Clemente, the nearest town to the beach. Ian Cairns, former Head of the ASP and I talk for hours and when it is time to leave he reaches out to show his gold, VIP, all access areas 'credentials' band. He opens

his first and drops a green, WSL guest, credential band on the coffee table. It was a spare he had and kindly gave it to me to use to get better event access for the remaining days of the competition.

This public observer was now a temporary WSL guest and event 'insider'. The only areas I could not access were the VIP sponsor tents and the athlete/surfer area. I would arrive the next day with a different research 'head' and a new space in the surfing amphitheatre of Trestles.

September 18

Finals Day and I'm up at 5am and put my board in the car. On the freeway skirting the coast I look down and see my green credentials 'sign' hanging loosely from my wrist. Smiling, I tune in the radio and a seemingly endless playlist of the Eagles and Steely Dan accompany me for the journey.

I pull into the contest site car park feeling like an old pro, pay my car parking fee. It's 6am and the sun is rising. I now feel a part of the show rather than an observer. I feel I can roam into spaces and places cut off from the public, the other to try and get a greater insight into this WSL integrated spectacle.

But credentials band or not, here I am with members of the public, surf fans, professional surfers and presenters, all treading the rugged Trestles path to the beach.

I pass current World Champion, Gabriel Medina, and his stepfather trying to drag a wheeled suitcase down the sandy route. It is a great leveller. Then I see another professional surfer, Adriano De Souza. He was small, slight and wearing glasses, looking quite bookish. It looked normal, unlike the imagery we usually see of him close up, slicing the top off a wave and looking big against the average size of the wave. The performance athlete is different to the off-duty athlete. You don't get to see this via the WSL app. The real and lived at this contest is a world apart from the packaged highlights of the WSL broadcasts.

I head for the breakfast tent to mingle with the 'insiders'... security on the entrance call me through and I'm on the other side of the Trestles tracks looking out at the public. Plasma screens with rolling WSL content temporarily take your view from the breakfast canteen in full flow. Production team, some surfers and media tuck into a variety of omelette's, coffee and juices. I don't hold back and eat as if I won't see another bit of food that day. Take my place overlooking the sea and take in the scene around me. I feel legitimate. I'm not. Just this green bangle on my wrist, to me, signifies to others I do belong within the WSL integrated spectacle. There is even a range of notices outlining the colour of the credentials

bands and what they mean and where you can access. All the credentialed are also being controlled and are under a form of surveillance.

The human song of the day builds as the sun opens for business and the chitter chatter of American, Brazilian, South African and Australians accents clash over the smell of coffee, sunlight and salt. I like this view. You see the reality of the behind the scenes of the contest.

You see the presenters talk to each other sharing anxieties about their look and what they will say and how they will say it. You see the close relationships they have with the professional surfers. You see the managers of surf teams and individuals running around making sure their charges have everything in place and stopping to talk to the presenters. This is a good example of the total ownership of the WSL of its performative labour. All having a distinct role in producing the integrated spectacle.

Further, you don't see any of these roles and relationships in the formation of the spectacle in the packaged production of the WSL app coverage. The app gives a tight, up close to the action, perspective and then slices and dices the best bits for 'rabid' fans to consume using mobile technology via the WSL app. You see the action and mediatised movement but none of the reality or the colour or the landscape. You could argue, borrowing the WSL's branded positioning as the 'home of surfing', that the WSL app is the home of hyperreal surfing.

While the visitor numbers on finals day are increasing, it seems that business is a little slow in the Hurley store. As I wander through WSL's 'Main Street' with a few boutique-like surf apparel stores with boutique prices, I spot WSL branded vests, t-shirts and caps alongside the latest Hurley board shorts and wetsuits. This is the first glimpse I see of WSL as a brand producing clothing for the surf spectator market – clear evidence of hybrid consumption and the WSL expanding and stretching its brand into surf related industries. It is also more evidence of the theming strategy of the WSL.

One passer by asks a retailer folding stock how is business? "We need another shark attack," responds the worker, smiling given the interest in surfing since the global media coverage of the Mick Fanning shark incident at J-Bay.

I move out of 'main street' and move up the beach to the point. The place where fans, friends and family are to be found crammed together along the cobble fore shore waiting for the heats and jostling for the best viewing position.

Surfboard noses dug deep into the sand to hold up the boards as if invisible – nature's own surf rack. The black Hurley umbrellas are stuck into the sand and resemble a mushroom field. Above the umbrellas are Brazilian flags fluttering in the wind as it blows out to sea.

I'm happier here. I've traded a comfy seat and a food bar with a direct view of the break with a small number of people for a piece of log driftwood nestled in to the packed amphitheatre with the noise of humansong echoing around me in the blazing Californian sun.

I look around and there isn't an ounce of body fat to be seen. People who are overweight (like me) stick out. They are not the norm. Tattoos of every shape and form adorn these bodies, young and old alike. Smoking is banned on the beach but a few smokers huddle around the back of the toilet block looking sheepish. Some of the contestants run past the growing crowd to get their last surf session in before show time.

I notice their boards are different. Smaller, thinner, narrower, cleaner and logo-laden. Perhaps these are the boards needed to perform best at the 'skate park' wave? The wetsuits are more out of a catwalk show, bright colours, different lengths, different panels of colour stretched over athletic bodies. It was attention grabbing for both the performer and their sponsors logos emblazoned on the top and bottom of each surfboard.

In the contest area, there is a constant ebb and flow of those involved in creating the integrated WSL spectacle. Photographers and videographers don flippers and crash helmets to get shots for the wider surf media and to broadcast live pictures for the WSL production.

Noisy fossil fuel filled jet skis drag priority buoys out to define the contest area and the buzz of a drone above the break whines and whines. This is man versus nature not acting in harmony with it. This is the harnessing of the bucking bronco; the breaking in. I hear the buzz of a huge generator, hidden from view by advertising hoarding, being used to power the computers and satellite equipment beaming the spectacle to the WSL app.

In this 'free for all' moment we see the natural reality played out in this over-crowded and contested line-up.

As opposed to the artificial two or three person heats in competition time where there is no one in the water and the WSL app makes the water look serene, calm and empty, the reality all along this coastline is man fights over scarce surf commodities. Beautiful commodities (waves) such as Trestles, even more so. And here, at Trestles men are fighting. Every wave that rears sees ten surfers trying to catch it. Most have tunnel vision until the very last moment when they either take off or kick out of the back of the wave.

There are written rules of conduct when surfing. Mostly understood, but with these crowds fighting for this scarce resource, they are ignored. What you are left with is a tense line up with a sort of pecking order but usually I see surfers trying to get their fill as quickly as they can. It was described to me neatly by a local surfer as the scene resembled someone who

heads into McDonald's and sees an ice-cold milkshake on a table on a hot day. Nobody around and the cleaner says nobody had claimed it.

The milkshake drinker then sucks the straw as fast as they can and take as much as they can before anyone else claims it. I found this analogy both amusing and alarming. But it was true. Here I was watching everyone in the water sucking on the straw as much as they could. The issues of overcrowding, violence and surf rage were playing out right in front of my eyes.

And as the water scene played out, the beach announcer played background music to waft along the beach as the WSL version of surfing cranked into life. It was different to the real I'd just witnessed.

Camera crews wrestled booms onto five foot platforms and the branding was erected around the media pen. One of the presenters, who will later broadcast live from the water, is helped putting on a battery pack and microphone under his WSL branded rash vest. The technology being used by the WSL to create this integrated spectacle is extraordinary and expensive. A clear indicator of the healthy financial backing of a billionaire supporting ZMH and its WSL global sporting paradigm.

This media pen is fascinating and is at the heart of the WSL's event marketing strategy. It is also central, theoretically, to the formation of the WSL's integrated spectacle.

The pen, is a space, around five metres by five metres, where every post heat interview is competed by surfers exiting the water. It is attached, here, to the surfers changing tent and area and a small pathway runs past it down to the beach. A small, white picket fence, surrounds half of it, while on the other two sides are showers, a water dispenser with a WSL competitor jersey over it and a mobile, transparent advertising 'wall' fronting the surf. Each surfer who won their heat would be interviewed in front of this transparent wall of advertising and commercial logos. It was the time and space to project the names of sponsors and give a narrative meaning to each surfing battle.

My attention moves back to deep American-voiced contest announcer: "We are on" He booms. "Commissioner Kieran Perrow has said it will finish today."

He goes on to catalogue, in great detail, the running order of the day and expected time of completion. It is clear there is tension and resistance by the local surf community to the event. Any surfer is allowed to surf the line up right up to a ten-minute count down to the first heat. I was told this is the 'negotiation' with and respect for, the local surfing and beach community.

This is like a local football club having a kick around at Old Trafford in Manchester just before a Premier League match. It is a quite unparalleled in professional sport but the WSL doesn't own any of the beaches at which it competes. It must negotiate with local councils and surfing clubs to use each venue to run their contests.

The announcer is letting everyone know when they will be able to surf around the contest as the waves are really good and the locals feel, begrudgingly, they are missing out in their waves.

The announcer comes on again. "We have ten minutes to clear the water. When all the surfers are out of the line-up, there should only be two *sanctioned* photographers left in the water. You know who you are, so please help us out."

He goes on to thank the local surf community for the use of their waves and reiterates that the contest will be complete by 2.30pm. The surfers slowly take waves and come into the beach as wave after perfect wave hits the boulder point and peels into the beach with not one surfer on them.

Five minutes to go and two younger surfers or 'groms' aren't playing by the WSL rules.

"If you don't come out *NOW* you will get a ticket and you will go to court with your parents. You are committing a felony," screamed the beach announcer. A bit harsh, but rules are different here. It is evidence of the ultimate control of the WSL to 'own' the contest arena for specific periods of time to suit their commercial needs and also the culturally different attitude to rules and regulations in different parts of the surfing world. In most places I have surfed (not including the USA), there is a tension between surfers and 'authority' groups like lifeguards, police and beach marshals. It is clear here, at this Californian beach, it is illegal to ignore the direction of 'authority'.

Then I have an epiphany. I finally 'get' professional surfing and understand some core reasons as to why and how it exists and goes back to the example of my local beach surfers who gave me the milkshake analogy earlier in the day.

All was now clear. The playing field had been swept clean of all before it and two, just two, male surfers in coloured singlets sat patiently on their boards waiting for the next perfect wave to come through.

The first surfer to catch the first wave would have priority and from then on it was a 30-minute polite, 'no, after you', trading of waves until a loud horn signalled the end of the rarest of phenomena – two people in the water on perfect waves at Trestles.

Felipe Toledo takes off and all I can describe the movement as is balletic annihilation. The movement is so fast and so aggressive yet so precise and specific. This is clearly a style to suit a judging or marking criteria laid down by the WSL and outlined during the 'show' by the beach announcer.

The surfers have to perform within a framework of WSL 'rules' and judging criteria. This developed style is to meet those criteria and 'win' a contest. Of course, you could develop another style and surf a wave in a multitude of ways to express yourself, to create art, to play... but these surfers are here to compete and win substantial amounts of money and represent their sponsors. These performative labourers were also part owners of the spectacle they were creating and both their employers (WSL) and their sponsors reward them well for their efforts. To this end, why would they adopt any other style than the one with which they can stand a chance of winning a competitive surf contest and extending both celebrity and surfing status?

The contest is in full flow with beach commentator and co-commentator continue to talk at hyper speed seemingly trying to 'keep up' with another professional as they flash down the point.

It is at this point you take in the emerging marketing themes introduced by the WSL to support their packaging of surfing as a mainstream sport. The lead commentator talks about the Jeep leader yellow jersey resembling the Yellow Jersey in the Tour de France. Each surfer now has a number, 'their' number on contest singlets to identify and market the surfer as a commodity akin to numbers in other sports such as football and Formula One.

I speak with Dave Prodan, an ASP media expert and now the Vice President of Communications at the WSL. He sheds some light on the changing commercial nature of the WSL in relation to the ASP. He told me in the ASP days the marketing staff was small and the commercial brands ran the events they sponsored.

Mr Prodan indicated there was no control or measurement of the brand value of each event so the brands didn't know what value they were getting.

He went on to explain that with WSL he had a bigger team and all were together and the WSL could manage events properly with a big core media team and create value for sponsors unlike before. This was an interesting insight into the growing importance of and increased staffing of the marketing and communications teams under WSL ownership.

Going into the restricted section I speak to a security guard manning a staircase to the second level. I ask him what's up there? "That's the VIP section. You know, the important people," he replies. I see Rob Machado, a former professional surfer, standing at the top of

the stairs chatting and then in walks Bob Hurley, the former surfer, turned shaper, turned businessman who owns the Hurley brand and sponsors this event.

All blonde hair, tanned, lined skin and energy, he greets all before him before bounding up the stairs. 'you know, the important people' echoed in my mind as I helped myself to the coffee from a giant urn and remembered the words of the beach commentator who indicated this was the centre of the surf world right now and all the 'key' people were here.

It now seemed, under the ownership of a US-based venture capital company, the business of surfing and play had relocated from Australia to California and right here, right now, the 'important' people were 'upstairs' in the luxury of VIP lounges deciding the future direction of the industry as their sponsored stars were throwing down their handkerchiefs and duelling on the water in front of them.

While the WSL integrated spectacle was being re-imagined in the VIP meeting sections, the labourers were hard at it on the beach and in the water.

A US surfer gets an interference call, effectively ending his heat and progress to the finals. He smashes his board with his fist and punches the water and storms into the beach after the heat and goes straight up to the surfer's area away from the madding crowd.

I hear a WSL presenter in the pen ask a question to their microphone, presumably to the programme director, "shall I ask him about it?". When the time comes for the interview, the issue isn't raised. The interview is light, non-controversial and relatively brief. This gives me an indication of the conflicts of interest at play in the WSL's self-styled 'home of surfing'. With so much dominance brought about by its monopoly position, ownership of production, labourers, global contests, broadcast and image rights and its OTT media strategy, how do you know what is real or not? How does a presenter become critical? How do 'other' voices get heard in this mainstreamed version of professional surfing? As I ponder these questions, I get drawn back into the event.

The finals are in full swing but the crowds are more interesting than the surfing.

Each time I look, the movements are very similar. Some a little faster and more powerful but it really is the wave choice giving heat wins. Better waves = better moves = better scores. It is so predictably, unpredictable and must be so frustrating for the surfers and the WSL as the controlling power trying to deliver an event consistently and on time to a global audience who are distracted by a range of competing media forms. I question the validity, as a sport, of professional surfing with its core proposition so flawed and unpredictable. It is in this guise, that surfing is de-Disneyised and de-McDonalised. Surfing as a mainstream sport is irrational.

But the irrational is the draw here. The beach is now a sea of bodies packed tightly into the contest site and moving up to the point to watch the surf and see the surfers perform as WSL cast members and come into the media pen after their heats to perform their commercial obligations. I watch from a metre away as each winning surfer quickly showers and is then handed sunglasses and a cap to wear for the post heat interview which happens in front of a branded see through backdrop of the Trestles set up.

Each surfer, being filmed and interviewed, holds their board tip close to their face with one hand and hold a branded sports drink with the other. The broadcast view crops tightly in on this visual promotional overload of a talking head surrounded by brand names and logo identities signifying meaning to spectators watching on the other side of a picket fence around the media pen.

In reality, in this pen, there are five or six different media interviewers but the WSL controls access and is always the first to conduct live interviews. WSL, CBS, then radio and then surf media plus a number of other cameras and staff wait their turn. All surfers start with the WSL interviewer and then move in an orchestrated way guided by a public relations practitioner or manager checking questions before they are asked by the journalists.

There isn't any autograph signing. Plenty of smiles but a quick exit by the surfers to their invisible space one storey up and a world away from the busy beach scene below.

The men's final is underway. Mick Fanning, the most talked about surfer in the world against Brazilian, Adriano De Souza. The surfing is jaw dropping but again, after 15 minutes of the final, I switched off. De Souza won. Still in the WSL Yellow Jersey. The presentation ceremony was loud and the winner received a cheque for \$50,000 and a trophy resembling the Trestles railway tracks.

During the fieldwork at Trestles, two further themes emerged to build into the themes from previous WSL events and contribute to the integrated spectacle of professional surfing as it moves rapidly forward. They were, the positioning of female surfing within the hitherto male dominated professional surfing events and the rise of the WSL-branded, 'Brazilian Storm'. This referred to the increasing number of male surfers from Brazil at the top of the CT Tour.

WSL and Female Professional Surfing

While the female winner of the Swatch Pro, which ran concurrently with the Hurley Pro, was paid half of the winner of the men's contest, the positioning of women at the event saw a substantial change in the way women were rewarded for their work and how women's surfing was marketed and promoted. This interesting and important gender shift in the elite,

male dominated, professional surfing world developed to a degree during the timeframe of this research and it must be a specific area for future forms of research.

At Trestles, Bethany Hamilton, was given a wild card invitation by the WSL to take part in the contest. Hamilton, a Hawaiian professional surfer, lost her left arm in a shark attack while surfing and had taken a number of years to rehabilitate and was now surfing to a very high standard.

Much of the marketing and media production time is spent discussing Hamilton and explaining how she surfs with one arm. The story telling narrative highlights her rehabilitation, the birth of her first child just three months before the contest, the surfboard design and the need to use adapted equipment with a is handle on the deck of the board so she could pull herself up to stand on the board.

It truly is an incredible story and lends authenticity and storytelling to the WSL production. While an incredible story, we must remember Hamilton is wildcard entry. A wildcard entry is any surfer invited to take part in the event by the WSL. On pure event wins grounds, Hamilton would not be your first choice. But for spectacle, social media sharing and fan engagement, Hamilton's story is undeniable and is used front and centre to publicise and promote the Swatch event. More evidence of the marketing and promotional expertise at the heart of the WSL spectacle.

The Brazilian Storm

One of the issues debated is the emerging WSL mediated language of the 'Brazilian Storm'. This is used to signify the growing presence of Brazilian surfers 'on Tour' and a discussion centres on the scarcity of US surfers on the Championship Tour, other than an ageing Kelly Slater.

One of the commentators cite different social conditions affecting the hunger of professional surfers. Ross Williams says in the US professional surfers can make a good living by shooting surf videos and going on surf trips with sponsors but in Brazil it is the Tour and through competitive results where the money is. There is a sense that US pro surfers don't have to compete in contests to have a decent living and the inference is that this makes them a little lazy. Whereas in Brazil contest results and CT wins are the routes out of a form of poverty.

At Trestles, there is a clear culture difference between the Brazilian surfers and their fans and 'others'. They are loud and vocal on the beach, waving flags, shouting out the name of the surfers, cheering and screaming every time a Brazilian surfer takes off on a wave. Each of the Brazilian surfers stop and pray before going into each heat to surf. Visibly raising

hands to the sky and crossing their chests to the points of the Christian cross. You can see the World Champion, Gabriel Medina, pray with his step father before going into a heat. They all hug each other before and after heats. I notice the Brazilian surfers are very tactile, unlike the other surfers, who do hug but in a generic greeting way rather than a prolonged bear hug like the Brazilian surfers and their supporters. The expression of inner emotion is in stark contrast to the friendly, but cool, personas of the US surfers and the playful personas of the Australian surfers.

“Where are the Americans?” asks Strider questioning the absence of US surfers on the CT Tour. Ross Williams offers a view that the Brazilian surfers may work harder and compete more effectively as they are providing for families ‘back home’. The WSL marketing machine brands this movement as ‘the Brazilian storm’, pitting this ‘storm’ against the rest of the CT competitors, deliberately putting fan against fan and culture against culture. This is another sign of the WSL homing in on the power of the partisan in sport and its tribal nature to be at the core of its integrated spectacle.

Now, the work moves on in an important way, building on the previous lived experience of a beach ethnography. Taking the central sign of surfing, the surfboard, so often the storied centre of WSL event content, this researcher set out to build one. Why? Again, it was the motivation to explore the WSL spectacle. Ask what is real and what is an illusion? How does Debord’s theory allow me to understand or make sense of the reasons why the surfboard is so central to WSL content, discussion and debate? This next section attempts to answer these questions with a week-long course, making two surfboards in Helston, Cornwall.

3.6 The Lived: Authenticity and the hyperreal sign: Building a surfboard

The surfboard and surf equipment was one of the key recurring themes emerging from the data in relation to each CT event during 2015. Along with the waves and the athletes, the surfboard is a central sign in the surfing cultural landscape and State of Modern Surfing and in Debordian terms, forms an important role on the formation of the WSL’s integrated spectacle.

Further, the professional surfboard is central to the WSL’s webcasts. The surfboard conveys meaning and significance through age, material, shape, length, width, colour, fin placement, logos and the ‘tag’ of the shaper like an artist on a canvas.

The centrality of this wave riding tool to the experience of surfing and the style of the surfer defined my thinking in researching the process and craft of making a surfboard.

The surfboard or ‘equipment’ as described in each WSL broadcast was both a consistent and recurring theme so it seemed relevant to understand the process and the changes in the

form of equipment used by professional surfers in the hyperreal world presented by the WSL, as opposed to the ordinary, day to day, local surfer, to analyse and understand the changes to central surfing signs such as style, aesthetics, commerciality and body by the professionalization and privatisation of the surfing lifestyle as a sport.

The data was collected at Jaxon Surfboard and Building Workshops in Helston, Cornwall over a five-day period in March 2016. Jaxon or to give his full name, Jackson Fearn, was selected based on the lack of other board building courses in the UK, his expertise as a surfer/shaper and knowledge having taught surfboard, boat and kayak design at Falmouth College over a number of years.

All the WSL events analysed in this research featured extensive discussions of the surfboards used by each surfer.

To my knowledge there are no specific requirements laid out by the WSL regarding the shape, size, length of board ridden or the material used for boards used in the Championship Tour events.

That said, the use of equipment is heavily influenced by the type of wave at each contest. A little like an F1 team tweaking car settings for each circuit. The research indicates that, generally, boards seen in contests are white and range in length between five feet to seven feet and in width from 16 to 20 inches with two to two and a half inches in thickness.

Most boards had sharp, pointed noses, a wider mid-section and a variety of rear or tail sections and a variety of fin placement set ups. Every board in each contest analysed was predominantly white with a wide range of 'decals' or sponsor logos toward the tip of the board.

Each surfer carried many surfboards to each event to cater for changing conditions and the inevitability of snapping or creasing surfboards mid contest. The majority of professional surfers at the WSL events analysed rode boards carved out of blocks of polyurethane foam from measurements inputted to a machine by a 'star' shaper (or surfboard designer).

These boards were then hand finished and glassed using very light materials to keep weight down.

These boards didn't look much like the boards produced for the masses I'd seen across twenty odd years of surfing and the comparisons of difference intrigued me between professional equipment and non-professional. I had some research questions and they were only going to be answered if I rolled my sleeves up, put my dust mask on and learned what it takes to design, build and then ride your own surfboard.

Dave Parmenter, shaper and surfer. In the 90's he penned a manifesto, "Thoroughly Modern Silly," for Surfer magazine in which he questioned the trend toward light, thin and narrow short boards.

"For the first time in surfing history, the boards being ridden by the pros or elite cannot be ridden by the average surfer. From Phil Edwards to Tom Curren, the best surfer in the world rode boards that the typical surfer should have had under his feet as well. But the past decade of pro surfing has, thanks to the Slop Factor, pared down the average size and weight of the top surfers with a ruthless evolutionary purge. Once, thunderlizards like Simon Anderson and Ian Cairns strode through the pageantry, and average weights were up to around 170 pounds. Today, with a climactic shift from Sunset to Sao Paulo, the scene is fraught with compact little Saurian roosters, 125 to 130 pounds, riding short, ultra-thin, hyper-rockered miniaturized surfboards." (Parmenter in Marcus, 2007 p205-6)

Ben Marcus added:

"The best surfers in the world had shrunk from the big blokes who pioneered pro surfing, twin fins, deeper tube riding, and thrusters - Mark Richards, Shaun Tomson, Ian Cairns, Simon Anderson - to a new era where pro surfers were... the size of small gymnasts. The pro surfers of the 1990's were uniformly small, light, strong, and very fast, and the surfboards designed for them were almost impossible thin and narrow. And almost impossible for the average surfer to ride."

This change in the central piece of personal technology for the performative labourer to cater for a totally different shape of surfer and style of surfing and would seem to indicate and reflect the rationalising of professional surfing as it became rule bound and tightly governed from the 1960's onwards.

On the long journey from Porthcawl to Helston, research questions rattled around my head. They included the following:

- Surfboards in the WSL productions are positioned as pieces of functional art but there seems no discussion about the toxic nature of the component parts, yet this is a central theme running through modern surf culture and the use of new bio resins and alternative products to make environmentally friendly surfboards. Why is this?
- Why are WSL/contest surfboards white when outside of the contest arena surfboards are multi-coloured and colour is used to differentiate?
- Why are professional surfboards so small?
- How long does it take to make a WSL surfboard and has mechanisation driven out

the guru shaper?

The research, presented in a diarised format, now moves on to highlight answers to these questions and relate, where possible, the key themes and critical theories running through this study.

Day one

A barking dog greets me and a smiling Jaxon offers his hand and a strong cup of black coffee. We move into the showroom which is a sea of surfboard blanks, shaped boards, art pieces and plywood worktops. It is a working and playing space in honour of the sea. A stickered laptop sits on its own surrounded by different grades of fibre used to strengthen surfboards. After the introductions and strong coffee, Jaxon takes me through the course structure and we start with materials...

Materials are endless. I quickly see that this is both a science and an art. Different grades of 'glass' and materials used to bind the shaped core of the board. This core is typically made out of polyurethane (PU) and environmentally friendly it (or any of the other materials used) is not.

Jaxon points to two blocks of white foam: "Those two are yours." I looked at the faintly shaped 'blanks' and wondered how these were going to resemble something I could ride in the water a couple of weeks after making them. One blank was 9 foot 4 inches and the other was 7.4 inches. I was making a longboard and a shorter board in one week to get the chance to understand the process of designing, shaping and glassing as used by the 'guru' shapers of WSL professionals.

The first thing I learn is most surfboards today are shaped by machine and not by the hands of a human. The basic dimensions based on the weight and standard of the surfer are fed into a computer and this speaks to an AKU machine. The PU blank is then fed into the machine and it starts the shaping process and produces surfboards with millimetre tolerances and shapers can guarantee uniform products. The surfboard is clearly a commodity with much of the design and materials adopted from the boat building industry. Very cheap and very toxic.

You have two ways of shaping a board by hand. Use an existing board you like and trace the outline on a blank with a pencil to give you a 'plan' shape. Or you can use an on-line system like Blended Curves which creates the outline shape for a board once you input the appropriate dimensions such as length, width, thickness and it translates these dimensions into a board shape. Interestingly, you can even input the 'volume' of the board in relation to the number of 'beers' it would hold. It is an Australian system used by many shapers around

the world.

We move to a makeshift ply board table littered (neatly) with an array of single pieces of fabric. All these are used to 'wrap' around the core of the surfboard to make the structure strong and become stuck to the blank when resin is applied later in the process. There are many, many combinations of different cloth with different strengths and different weights. The majority are not bio-degradable but a growing number of environmentally friendly clothes are coming to market and also less toxic resins are being produced.

Once we've been through the materials, we move to the laptop to go through the design templates. We tap length, width, thickness ratios against a template and then the programme prints out the board shape in A4 sheets on a printer. You stick them together and this forms the surfboard template. You then stick this onto thin board and cut the outline shape with a jig saw. This acts as a template to place over your foam blank and then you cut with a saw around the marked-out edges. You need to cut as straight as you can to create a 90-degree edge angle.

Another way is to use a surfboard and draw around this with pencil onto the think board. And you repeat the above process. I did both processes. The computer model for the shorter board and I followed the shape of a longboard made by one of the UK's finest shapers, the late Mark Neville, adapting the nose template for a slightly different sort of board.

So now we are off and soon get into the 'dirty' processes of 'cutting back' and 'planning'. Mask over nose and mouth, goggles over eyes. This is dusty; dandruff dusty and you can feel the dust seeping into your lungs. It isn't a nice experience. The process also takes a long time and if you make errors at this stage it will affect each part of the process and follow through to the finished board. So, patience and skills with basic carpentry equipment is needed as are strong wrists and back. It also helps if you have surfed so you can visualise the type of waves you will surf with the shape.

While I get used to the dust, I get a little lost in the romance of the 'shaping room'. A defined surfing space. There is specific lighting and blue walls to ensure you can see the areas of the blank needing attention or smoothing out. It is a small space, suitable for one person at a time. In the centre is a shaping workbench. It resembles two tuning forks around six feet apart with adjustable heights. The blank sits flat on the top of the structure to plane both sides and then is turned on its side and sits in the saddle of the two 'tuning forks' so the shaper can work on the rails and edges. BBC Radio 6 plays in the background as the work continues making a longboard out of a square piece of white toxic foam. The walls are neatly adorned with shaping specific gizmos and 'surfer's squares' and four shaped blanks in a surf

rack. Above the central workbench is an air compressor to suck away the fine dust from the board and blow it off your hands and clothes.

In between crafting I ask the ever present and patient Jaxon a little bit about his business.

Visitors are referred to as 'clients' and he says tend to be people who want to get their hands dirty and away from the sterile corporate life. Many have a personal and emotional reason for shaping their won board and this is seen in the designs and colours they use to identify and signify their creation. The clients tend to be from the UK and mainland Europe and while most are male, and increasing number are female.

Jaxon says the female clients tend to be really good shapers as they have patience and that patience leads to consistency in shaping.

Here I learn a lesson about my own personality. I concentrate hard sanding a lump on the rail and take it too far so it drops beneath the rest of the rail... Jaxon steps in: "Look at the whole rail. Long, rhythmic strokes. Feel the way the whole rail blends. You go too hard on specific areas when you should look at the who rail and sand all of it together."

A clear case of my lack of patience and tendency to focus too heavily on one thing at a time. Shaping is seeing the bigger picture, stepping back and taking your time. At the same time, I get a mail from one of my interviewees, Derek Hynd. He is a master shaper and I asked him for any tips before I started the process. "Don't take too much off (the blank) at any one time. If it looks right, it usually is." The words of shaper wisdom from both Jaxon and Derek have affected both my approach to board making but more importantly to life and I've seen quite dramatic and positive changes in the way I approach both work and family life.

It sinks in quite quickly that hand shaping surfboards is a beautiful but dirty, messy and labour-intensive process. Consistency is the main problem. This time drives down the profitability of the shaper and the lack of consistency leads to frustration when ridden by experienced surfers. So, I ask Jaxon what the world's leading shapers do to design and shape surfboards.

The answer, while obvious, is also startling in its scale.

He outlines the mechanised process of producing surfboards today. Clear evidence of the McDonaldising process in creating these central tools in the SMS.

He said: "You have the foam, punch in the dimensions, feed the foam into a machine and a finished, with millimetre accuracy, blank pops out at the other end. "

These shaped blanks still need to be glassed and strengthened but there is consistency,

speed and humans don't have to put up with the dust and hard graft of cutting, planning and shaping a foam blank. Also, the productivity dramatically increases to meet the demands of a rising global surfing population.

That said, there is something inherently satisfying about cutting, shaping and feeling your own board and I can't imagine you'd get the same satisfaction from punching in some dimensions and waiting for a board to pop out the other end of a machine.

Indeed, many tap in these dimensions from their clean offices in California or the Gold Coast in Australia into machines operating in factories in Indonesia and China and there is no touching, feeling or seeing their own products. The surfboard is one of the surf world's greatest commodities, the shaper has distance from the process and is more likely to focus on branding and creating marketing signs and surfboard 'models' than getting out a planner and cutting into chunks of toxic foam. The scale and mechanisation is also evidence to support Laderman's notion of surfing empire where he outlined the globalising effects on the surf industry.

I learn the mythology of the 'guru' shaper and the romance of hand shaped and crafted surfboard are just that; myth. But I understand the mechanisation of the process on an industrial scale. It is back breaking, labour intensive, standing, dirty, messy, noisy (theme here of surfing as a commodity changed with technology from board design?). I don't hear any of these discussions during the WSL discussions and debates about professional surfer surfboard preferences but I do hear and see discussions and examples of the product and brand names of every professional surfer's board 'quiver' for each event. Close ups of the brand logos and debates on the 'guru' shaper abound.

Day two

I wake and feel as stiff as the foam block I broke into yesterday.... back aching and cuts on hands and dust in nose and on clothes. It's a messy business.

I get to Jaxon's workshop and he thankfully provides the strong morning coffee and we go over the plan for the day. I complain about the aching body and he laughs. Today is the deeper art of surfboard shaping where the processes become more refined and laborious. The two blocks of foam are now roughly shaped. Now we use sanding blocks and different bits of equipment to refine the outlines and take out any bumps. Each element of the board shape needs to link. It helps to visualise the water wrapping around the board as you move in the dance across the surface of the up drafting wave face. The lines of the board need to blend together and flow and the edges need to feel smooth and connected so Jaxon says take time to stand back, feel around the board, take it off the shapers block and examine the

lines in the shaping room light against the blue walls. It is here I feel challenged. It is the detail, the detail and more detail. You need to slow everything down and take time – patience is a gift of which I am not overly blessed.

Still, these next steps are important so I need to find some patience, concentrate and craft.

Jaxon shows me how to cut in edges of the complex rail shape in three stages to create a blended rail. We are changing a square into a refined curve. Jaxon explains why this process is so important as it defines the character of the surfboard. ‘The character’? Yes, these pieces of individual craft each have their own character and personality. Each one is unique and different. They are not meant to be consistent (unlike professional boards where consistency is king). This falls into the quirky nature of shaping and the artefacts used to complete the artwork. An example is the shaping base on which you rest the board to shape. Two homemade structures resembling two tuning forks cemented into plastic buckets stand five feet apart. At the top you have a turned out section of the tuning fork and this is covered with foam and this is where the blank rest while you shape the top and bottom of the board. When you need to shape the rails, the board is turned on its side and then rests in the centre of the tuning fork on its side so you can work on the rails. This implement is not something you would see anywhere else in carpentry or trade. It is a direct result of a unique structure built to shape handmade surfboards. It’s simple but ingenious.

Of course, I’m making things difficult for myself. I’m shaping two very different boards for very different conditions. A longboard and a short board. In ethnographic terms this would give me the best insights into understanding the different processes to make two completely different shapes. Indeed, these shapes have significant meaning and are important signs in the culture and praxis of surfing. The longboard signifies the roots of surf play and a relaxed, less competitive approach to *how* you surf. Style is important in both the longboard shape and in the way you ride the board on a wave. The short board signifies modernity and the rise of competition and global travel. The style of wave riding and type of waves ridden are in total opposites to the longboard. The surf seeks to surf as close to the breaking wave face as they can and the manoeuvres developed to allow them to do this create what Dave Parmenter describes as ‘NCS’ or nervous, chaotic surfing. It is also this style of surfing embraced by competition judges where more points are awarded for both the commitment and power shown in the surfing manoeuvres as close to the ‘pocket’ of the wave as they can. This competitive need has created a style of surfing where the surfer tries to beat up the wave as they ‘dance’ across its face. Longboard, short board; polar opposites.

For the longboard we copy an existing template of a board owned by Jaxon. The shaper was the late Mark Neville. One of the country’s leading shapers who signed each stringer

with his name, board dimensions and a Christian fish to emphasise his religious beliefs. The Christian fish sign seems to be a narrative with some of the leading shapers. For the shortboard we use a computer aided programme to create an outline shape based on a surfboard shaped by another late leading shaper, Peter 'chops' Lascelles. He specialised in what he called 'free-form' architecture to describe the art of surfboard shaping. My thinking being, you can't better classic designs coupled with my own experience and way of surfing, so this was the basis for the two completely different shapes.

While the boards are totally different, the equipment used to sculpt the foam is the same. All purpose built for shaping boards with a few borrowed from the craft of carpentry.

You need a saw, electric planner, electric sander, electric drill/router as your power tools to move large pieces of foam and then you have surf specific equipment like a 'freddie' (used to take shavings off the wooden stringer of the board as you plane away foam from the deck and base. A shapers square (a lined piece of acetate used to locate and place fins on the board and measure the accuracy of the board widths so each side of the board around the stringer mirrors each other).

Shaping is part art, part science. Very personal and creative process. The personal side of it comes in the 'signing' and design. It is here that self-expression is welcomed and encouraged. It is here the science becomes art.

"you've got to sign it now," said Jaxon as he handed me a blunt pencil. He flipped the shaped board over so the bottom was facing up. This was a rite of passage. Your individual branding of a possession to signify ownership. Shapers have left their 'tags' on the stringer or foam of a hand shaped board to identify themselves. There is a formality to this process. The shaper first writes the dimensions of the board indicated in measurements of feet and inches. You start with the length, then the width and then the thickness. Other measurements can be included to indicate different dimensions of the 'rocker' or the under curve from tail to tip of the surfboard. This has quite a dramatic effect on performance.

I take the pencil and Jaxon leaves the room. It is clearly a time when his clients want time to think and add their own meaning to the experience. My first thought is how am I going to write the board dimensions on a stringer with a 5-millimetre width? My writing is quite rounded and large and as I air write there is no way I'm going to fit it on the stringer. So, I opt for the foam. You must be careful doing this as you could penetrate the foam so I adopt the persona of my school nickname 'Pilly' and gently trace the pencil on the foam toward the rear of the board and to one side of the stringer. I include the initials of family members in a makeshift 'crest'. It is now 'mine'. My creation, my effort.

Onto the design. I was clear on this for both boards. I wanted something classic for the longboard and for this I was going to use simple red pin lines around the rail of the top of the board and bastardise the striking 'illy' coffee log adding the P of my boyhood nickname and keep the same colourway and design type – to spell Pilly. I thought it would look cool and be quite funny and would storify the surfboard around my love of strong coffee.

For the short board, I wanted to create an orange resin tint on the base of the board and leave it plain and de-logo'd on the top to create something a little purer as a counter to the stickered and hyper logo'd short boards of the professional realm. They were also more real in as much as professional boards I'd seen at the WSL contest at Trestles were wafer thin compared to my thick and wide versions of the same vehicle. Indeed, I'd never seen such tiny boards in any other surf landscape other than at professional contests or specific wave destinations in Hawaii, Indonesia and Australia.

The next phase of the process was making the boards tough and strong while still retaining their buoyancy and relative lightness. We move to the glassing room. Shaping rooms, while dusty, are relatively neat and clutter free. Glassing rooms look like a Jackson Pollack painting. Colour and blobs of fibreglass and resin litter every inch of floor under the resting arms on which you place the board to go through the toughening process. In surfing this is the wrapping of fibreglass around the blank and sticking it to the foam with application of resin.

The toxic resin mixture is then poured over the deck and the 'glasser' works a plastic paddle across the board driving the quickly setting resin into the fibreglass cloth so it all sticks to the blank but all excess just drops away from the sides and onto the floor. The key here is to make sure there are no air bubbles created during the process as it weakens the board but it is a complicated process.

Unique design and finishing terms such as 'cutlap' and 'freelap', 'hot coat', 'wet coat' and 'top-coat' are all considerations for the final product. The chemicals give you an alarmingly unnatural high, even with a respirator mask on, so it is time to finish for the day and get fresh air.

That evening I get a mail from Derek Hynd. I'd asked him what was the most important thing in surfboard shaping. Graciously he responds. "Don't overdo it. If it looks ok, it probably is."

With glue, resin and dust still on my face and body after a shower, I drift into a deep sleep.

Day three

So tired. Lower back and wrists are aching like never before from bending over the board and sanding the foam. Caffeine helps and a few stretches but it takes some time to loosen up.

The day is spent shaping the smaller board. I'm more confident with the process and the tools and the learning allows me to get the square foam blank into a decent rough shape quite quickly. But my initial excitement is already starting to wane when you realise how much sanding needs to be done to the blank in order to get it to the level of detail ready to glass. It is here I learn one of the most important lessons. In my new-found confidence but also due to a lack of patience, I plane off too much foam from a rail. Jaxon stops me before it gets any worse. I didn't understand the issue but any further and that shape would have to be redone all the way around and potentially I may need to buy another blank. "Try and use gentle, sweeping movements to take away a little foam at a time and cover as much of the rail as you can so you touch the whole surface." Said Jaxon. I've tried to use this analogy to other areas of my life where I tend to become too fixated or intense. It has helped me see the bigger picture and stand back from issues rather than being so close I can't see changes in other areas of my life. The effect has been quite profound.

Day four

The day was spent learning about graphics and colour and how they are applied to a board and placing and fixing removable fin systems and a long board fin box. The skills are significant. All quite straightforward but they are both scientific and artistic all underpinned with dirty, hard manual labour.

The sanding process exemplifies this. The sanding process is an important finishing part in the board making cycle. I make a note to myself "hate sanding." I can't control the thing on the foam and you need to sand out the entire resin residue. I just couldn't get the hang of it and Jaxon could see I was losing patience. He stepped in the help and that helped me visualise what I needed to do. With both a dust suit on and a respirator, the sweat soon builds up and draws on your energy. I get the job done but it tests me.

I move onto an enjoyable job – putting in a fin box for the long board. The harder part is putting in 'side bites' into the short board. There are so many design and performance considerations with fin placement to consider. I keep it simple. A 'thruster' combination (three fin traditional set up for a performance short board).

It is at this stage I realise how and why surfboard making became mechanised during the 1990's. I'm aching from head to toe. My head pounds from chemical inhalation, my chest is

tight from foam dust, I can't grip anything and I haven't interacted with more than one person in four days of making a board. It is a lonely, dirty and time-consuming obsession and while utterly intoxicating and beautiful as a craft and an art, handcrafting boards from start to finish was clearly doomed as the global surfing populations boomed from the 1980's. Today, most guru shapers design their boards on a computer and send that design to a machine. A piece of foam is put in one end and a finished blank with millimetre tolerances comes out of the other in quick time. It is then sent to a 'glasser' and 'finisher'. Not one speck of dust hits the modern shaper.

Day five

Both boards are made and just require some finishing touches. I have enjoyed every aspect of their creation. The thinking, the craft, the creativity, but still hate the sanding process! While I let the boards cure a little more, Jaxon tells me they will be giving off heat for a week or so as the materials are very toxic and not to take them in the water to surf during that time. So much for the storified and imagined meaning of surfing as being pure and environmentally friendly. There is such an irony in the fact that the vehicle on which all surfers express themselves is a toxic hotch-potch of materials which may never decompose.

Day six

The final morning is spent outside in the sun listening to BBC Radio 6 and wet finishing the boards. You use different grades of wet sand paper to take out any nicks or scratches.

This is a miraculous process as the more you rub, the better the finish and you become once again connected to the board. You can start to see any blemishes or mistakes made in the initial design and shaping process. The more I rub, the more refined the boards become. A little like life.

Section Summary

In relation to both the research questions, the theoretical underpinning of this work, shaping surfboards was a useful and illuminating ethnographic process. The difference between the WSL production narrative, where the surfboard is used as both a work tool and a white canvass to project meanings via logos, brands and artwork, and the real-life toxicity of creating a surfboard could not have been greater. The illusionary techniques used by the WSL to present the surfboard and surfboard shapers as mythical and guru-like hidden figures were useful when comparing them to the realities of the craft making process I encountered and provided further data to support the spectacularisation of surfing thesis.

The research will now move forward to present and discuss data gathered via the qualitative

technique of interviewing. A range of expert voices were sought to give an element of triangulation and objectivity to the research questions and notions of spectacle.

3.7 The Interviews

The research now moves on to examine and critically assess data from a range of key figure interviews carried out during the course of the first year of the WSL. The interviews seek to triangulate the research process giving deeper and expert insight into the research questions and some of the specific themes identified during the analysis of the WSL webcast events in this study.

As a reminder, the three central research questions were:

- What does ZMH mean when it says it wants to 'professionalise' surfing?
- What does this professionalisation look like?
- What are the initial effects of this rationalisation process?

While these interviews focused on the central research questions and provide specialist insights; unexpected but illuminating data, extending the understanding of the central issues, was also included to explain and provide background for this dramatic change in professional surfing. Further, the interviews explored notions of McDonaldization, Disneyization and the hyperreal within the WSL integrated spectacle.

The writing style, to reflect the conversational and less formal nature of the interview process and the academic register of other ethnographic work in the field of critical surf studies, deliberately embraces journalistic and creative writing styles as opposed to strict academic conventions. This was done in a bid to try and capture the illuminating, funny, controversial, caustic and thoughtful words of an interesting group of interviewees. Many were strong characters who had strong opinions having either been, or who are still involved at the highest levels within surfing administration, media, sport, entrepreneurship, marketing and board making.

The interview section opens with data related to the reasons and the process involved in the change of governance of professional surfing in a bid to highlight the way in which ZMH created its WSL integrated spectacle. The work then moves to discuss the dichotomy of surfing as a mainstream professional sport before discussing, and critically assessing, opinions of and the tensions created by the way ZHM has re-imagined professional surfing. Finally, data related to the interviewees own re-imagined form of professional surfing is discussed. Throughout this analysis, critical theories will be applied to specific examples of data, and further, evidence is highlighted as to the way ZMH created its WSL integrated spectacle.

In opening, the interview data would seem to indicate that debt, recession, a willing workforce (surfers) and capitalist opportunism, were the three driving forces behind the demise of the ASP and the opening of a very rare business and marketing opportunity in world sport for ZMH and its investors. The interview data reveals a rapid process of acquisition, investment and rebranding by ZMH to create its initial re-imagined 'home of global surfing'.

Ian Cairns, the founder of the ASP, outlined some of the hidden background to the change in governance. He outlined that the original premise of the ASP was putting the ownership of surfing into the hands of surfers and event owners. Cairns, at the time, saw this as a natural democratising process of the sport in terms of governance when the forerunner to the ASP, the IPS, was wholly owned by administrators:

"I just saw this ownership structure (IPS) as being unfair to us (surfers) and when the IPS failed to deliver and I had a chance, I formed the ASP in a most altruistic way, with the money from OP (Ocean Pacific, a surf brand)."

Fast forward thirty years and the ASP model of governance was failing. Crippled in financial debt the ASP could no longer rely on being saved by brand owners as the surf brand owners as they were also caught in the financial crisis of the global recession and needed to cut promotional costs. The event sponsorship for these firms was the first to go. Now the ASP had reduced income and could not service the debt it had. It needed saving or there would be no professional world tour:

"The whole suggestion that ZoSea bought the ASP is ludicrous. They performed a massive coup d'état without even a whimper of complaint. History will tell us whether it was a good idea... Now we are full circle, with the WSL being wholly owned by an investment group and all the power to make decisions resting with this group. Of course, all the funding is being poured into the WSL by this same investment group, but so too, will all the profits be pulled out in the future if they make any."

He added:

"That no-one has raised the issue of the massive sell out of the future of pro surfing to an investment group, who paid nothing for the 30 years of equity, is pretty outrageous in my mind and a real testament to the way Paul Speaker was able to insinuate himself in to the system and pull the strings. This could not have happened without significant influence by key surfers and, more importantly, massive apathy, or cluelessness by the rest of the surfers."

Cairns deliberately describes ZHM business manoeuvres as a 'coup d'état' and a ruthless one at that after a period of politicking by one of the co-owners of ZMH's, Paul Speaker. You could also argue, that ZMH saved professional surfing. In return for that saving grace, it negotiated terms acceptable to a capitalist enterprise and acted, according to theory, in the way capitalist do. The business strategy is to control all production and workers, eradicate competitors, so it retains a monopoly position so it can control production and therefore profits and loss.

ZMH identified a business opportunity. It saw a very cost-effective way of securing its ownership and domination of surfing as a global sport when the media landscape rapidly changing allowing OTT strategies to be created for sporting brands to by-pass traditional media relationships and create their own broadcast platforms and fan relationships. You could argue \$30m to effectively buy the 'business of play' was one of the best sports marketing coups in recent business history if you look at the way Dana White built and then sold Ultimate Fight Club (UFC).

But Cairns isn't convinced by the financial argument or the opportunity:

"It appears to be running smoothly right now and everyone is happy and nice, but there has to be massive losses, far exceeding the original business proposal and there will be a reckoning. What that looks like and when it occurs no-one knows... But maybe WSL pulls it off, gets to break even and starts to make a profit and the sport continues to grow by leaps and bounds across the globe and we all sing Kumbaya. I think that is Wizard of Oz stuff."

While the business conditions were favourable for ZMH, you would need to question how and why there was little resistance to the new ownership structure and its re-imagined version of professional surfing. Interestingly the data from the interviews suggest five reasons: the egotistical nature of professional surfers; the lure of increased prize money for both male and female competitors; a lack of formal education of the performance labourers; An emerging new generation of young, technological savvy millennial surfers; Those at the centre of the SMS who wanted to perpetuate 'the scam' of the 'business of play' to feed a nomadic, surf-centred lifestyle with significant financial reward.

Evidence for the self-centred nature of professional surfers and how the WSL appealed to that motivation to ensure conformity to their strategic vision comes from David Carson:

"The majority of surfers crave attention and acknowledgement. Many anyway. So here is a group (ZMH) saying, hey, we're gonna get you much press, worldwide, give

you your name on jerseys, your own lockers, more money! You're going to be legitimate. Just follow our rules please."

Carson argues that ZMH were clever in targeting the perception of surfers as bums and how it would make them legitimate, wealthy and looked after. He added that the surfers as a professional group were not well educated and could not critically unpack the significance of the change of ownership and meaning for professional surfing:

"It relates to a 50-year history of surfers being "yeah bums" yeah dude, etc.... in the press, rarely recognized in the main media, and someone comes along and says we are gonna make you important, world known, AND pay you even to lose heats! The ones who are disgusted, and might fight back, are not on tour, or interested, or asked to participate... its kinda be quiet, don't say anything and we will take care of you and you'll be more famous and more rich... or leave and go back to being non educated, broke and..."

Carson describes the changing surfing landscape as also adding to acceptance by a younger generation of surfers to the ZMH plan. He says surfing has become normalised and 'gentrified' across the last twenty years and is a long way away from its 'original rebel spirit':

"... Everyone does surf! Kids in Zurich regularly fly to the Maldives. Wave pools in Wales. Kelly Slater surfboards based in Thailand. But more relevant, the era of long boards being cool again. This has allowed all those who use to surf guys and those who never did, surf. Major brands worldwide with regular use of surf images from cars to apple screens, casual weekend surfers, Hollister ranch clothing is everywhere, Quiksilver is in bankruptcy while Volcom is bought by Gucci. Spots in, for example, Del Mar, California, that were never surfed the 20 years I lived there, are now crowded every day, with older, mostly longboarders after work... I suspect this is worldwide...Sooooo none of this group is going to complain about watching the surf contest on their huge flat screen in expensive cul-de-sac cookie cutter homes."

Carson's points of a rapidly changing demographic and the normalisation of surfing in everyday life is echoed by Derek Reilly. In outlining why there was little resistance from a wider surfing population to the ZMH plans, Reilly said:

"Because it doesn't make a lick of difference to the average surfer. We still pull on our trunks, pull a board out of the back of our cars and go surfing. Pro surfing has always been a commodity."

And this commodity positioning and 'couldn't care less' attitude toward the concept of professional surfing coupled with the emerging new, millennial generation, is supported by Jamie Brisick who likens the general increase in global commercialisation to the acceptance by new audiences to the commercialisation of surfing. He says surfing is being passed along to a new generation of surfers who know and expect nothing else other than the increasing commercial pressure on the commodity of surfing.

While Brisick mourns the passing of different surfing times he pragmatically adds:

“The world is getting more commercialized, and so is surfing. It’s only vulgar if you got to experience it in a more innocent, pure form.”

These points are extended by Ted Endo and give further reasons why there was little resistance to the ZMH proposals. Endo refers to ‘the scam’ within the surf industry where significant revenue is created so a small group of people can live a certain lifestyle.

Endo is referring to the business, media and surfing elites at the centre of the modern surfing spectacle who seek to control and maintain their vested interests in the ‘business of play’ and professional surfing and persuade the wider surfing world as to the legitimacy of their vision. It is down to this subliminal elite persuasion that Endo says the average surfer, can’t imagine a surf culture that isn’t privatised and commercially driven.

He supports this with the view that the idea of what it is to be a successful surfer is to be a sponsored surfer and this sponsored, branded, commercialised form of surfing is also broadly recognised as the modern culture of surfing.

Endo adds:

“So, there has never been any critical thought of ‘do we want to be an industry?’. I think people feel the commoditisation and the capitalisation but few view it critically.”

Clear evidence has therefore emerged of a professional surfing world in financial crisis and a clear rationale as to the reasons for such little resistance to ZMH’s plan to privatise and professionalise the ASP and re-imagine professional surfing.

The research will now move on to discuss the impact of this privatisation and the way ZMH stamped their authority over the governance and direction of professional surfing during the research period. To some, the marketing positioning of the WSL was misleading and incorrect.

In this research, this view was voiced by Derek Hynd.

He said:

“Fuck Me. You’ve hit a great subject. These guys are either committing naked fraud or arguable fraud but I’d strongly suggest the former in claiming itself as The Global Home of Surfing. It smells very very bad. Global Home of Pro Surfing, yes. But to assume ownership of Surfing is patent deception worthy of a class action. It’s Dora’s worst nightmare.”

Hynd was referring to Mickey Dora, one of the original Californian counter culture surfers who raged against the commercialisation of surfing.

Hynd went on:

“Whilst ‘the home of global surfing’ is likely fraud, it is the tag that sits well with the majority, bringing them into Slater’s (Kelly Slater) life. I would prefer this not to be the case. I sidestepped surf culture 10 years ago with a solo protest. To get back to pre-Tom Blake and re-evolve the way it once was put to me in a sub cult unlikely to attract hordes. Thus I can at least breathe whilst watching the broad sludge... the WSL model is... ‘predictable. Conformist.”

At the heart of Hynd’s concern is the relentless march toward a rationalised and commodified sport under WSL ownership and, by implication, the governing organisations who came before the WSL. Hynd made his own protest and, once at the heart of surfing popular culture, he retreated away from the media spotlight. Theoretically Hynd’s position resonates with Debord’s response to the spectacle. He said that the only way to stop the power of the spectacle was through protest, anarchy and constant re-invention of culture. If something became normalised, break it up and start again.

Others who were interviewed even questioned the very nature of surfing as a competitive sport. This is an interesting viewpoint as marketing and myth making and creative commercial storytelling would all need to be heavily employed to motivate audiences to watch a professional surfing contest like an NFL or football match – something to which the WSL aspires.

Ted Endo, Steve Barilotti and Derek Rielly questioned the very nature of the what ZMH has bought as a sport is fit to attract new audiences and new commercial partners. They questioned the notion of surfing as a sport.

While Endo said he thought the WSL had done a very good job with the source material it owned. He said:

“It’s more watchable now than it ever was. But it is inherently flawed as a competitive sport and it’s terrible (laughs)... I don’t think, as a spectator sport, surfing will be

anything but niche. There is little to no sense of drama on the beach. I've sat in the beach at Pipe and even then, its entertaining for half an hour or so, like golf, then you just want to move on and enjoy the beach. It can only work as spectacle as it can't generate drama by the actual event."

Endo adds surfing lacks all elements of drama:

"It's really closer to ballet or performance art."

Endo's critique of surfing as a competitive sport and its inherent flawed nature is echoed by Steve Barilotti:

"Beach contests, unless they are at Pipe, can be incredibly dull. They have been compared to watching paint dry or grass grow."

He went on to explain the cultural rationale for the business model adopted by the WSL in its attempt to appeal to mass audiences.

Barilotti says that the, as he described, 'butts on beach' model of the surf contest originated from the Australian, mad about sports, approach to watching and consuming events but the fundamental flaws in surfing as a televisual event were all too obvious.

He said:

"There is a fundamental disconnect of marketing a complex, ever-changing, multi-layered ocean activity as a sport. Because the second you call it that you are left with dead stickered-up fish on the dock. Dead boring and it stinks. Like sex as a competitive sport sounds titillating but once you've watched it once you see that it is devoid of intimacy, passion and connection authentic lovemaking can achieve, you would naturally switch over to the chess finals."

Derek Rielly goes even further by asking if there is a more boring sport?

He said:

"Bottom line. The WSL appeals to surf fans and no one else. Is there a more boring sport in the world? Test cricket, maybe? No matter what the WSL does, unless, of course they were to follow my advice and strip it down to 12 surfers and fly 'em around on a sexy jet chasing waves, it'll always be a fans-only sport."

So, this interesting position as the 'source' material being described as inherently flawed and the suggestion professional surfing is ultimately 'dull' and 'boring', would seem to indicate

there is a great need for powerful marketing and new ways of re-imagining surfing as a competitive, global sport to connect with audiences.

With this in mind, the research now moves on to assess the interviewees view of the WSL's re-imagined version of competitive, professional surfing to date and ask if it is sustainable. The data shows a widely held appreciation of ZMH's re-imagined form of professional surfing but the data also shows concern for the sustainability with the current business model for the WSL.

Jamie Brisick was impressed with the way the WSL was expanding surfing but questioned its rationalising, normalising and mass market targeting processes. He also mourned the lack of character and colour in the WSL web cast productions. He thought surfing would suffer in the long term:

He said:

“If the goal is to grow surfing and expand it to the masses, I think the WSL is doing a good job. Of course, the heart or essence of surfing suffers along the way – bigger dollars means more homogenization among the pros. They have a lot to lose. In the early days of pro surfing it was more like a scam, a way to travel the world, ride great waves, and meet a lot of people on someone else's dime. Now there are coaches, managers, trainers, dieticians, filters, etc. Personality once came with the territory of being a great surfer – I think Muhammad Ali was a big influence there. Now it's all about performance. I personally am more interested in the great characters, and I miss them.”

Further evidence of the dumbing down of the content to broaden appeal and surfing's MCDonalidisation came from David Carson who was perplexed by the stated strategy and the one he saw playing out in webcasts. He suggested there was a huge disconnect with the general surfing world and the surfing world as constructed by through the lens of the WSL and gave expert insight into how ZMH briefed design teams to create the WSL brand, logo and look unveiling tensions between the way ZMH wanted the new surf commodity to look and those who suggested surfing's imagery should not be associated with mainstream sports:

He said:

“The presentation of the brand and broadcasts are very safe and US centric. Yet the WSL mission is to globalise surfing. yet at each venue of a world tour event there is no debate, discussion about local issues, food, art, culture, language etc.... it just

seems like a big spectacular cirque du clique stopping at these amazing places, running a generic process and moving on to the next spot.”

“There is a huge disconnect with surfing and how the WSL present it. I know they went to the same design company that did Super Bowls and NBA finals and asked for a similar look. My friend, who works for the firm, said they tried to fight back saying they didn’t think surfing was like football or basketball, but Paul and co. fought back and insisted. Their look was set by non-surfers in Canada and now Yucatan in Mexico.”

Carson’s point on safety, uniformity and appealing to mainstream audiences is further supported by Endo who compares the WSL business model to other mainstream sports models.

Endo said:

“They (the WSL) have shifted toward a model that mirrors very mainstream pro sport like an NFL model, or the, ah, tennis model. Just like the (ATP) tennis tour. Having said that I think that this is exactly where the surfers want to go with it... and I think that is where many fans wanted to go with it. If you look at the biggest fan base for pro surfing, its Australia. Australian’s want nothing more than to watch pro surfing as if it were cricket, Aussie Rules or soccer. There are the Americans and Brazilians in there too and, as media consumers, Brazilians are similar to the Australians.”

Steve Barilotti, while not a supporter of the WSL version of surfing, understood the draw of ZMH’s strategy:

He said:

“The WSL has developed an NFL approach to repackaging pro surfing so it is accessible to the masses. To me as an insider, I don’t care. I’m too insider, too old and too jaded. But if I was outside I can see how you’d get excited... they should make it a betting sport.”

This appealing to the mass market was supported and embraced by Brad Hockridge and Sarah Hall. Mr Hockridge described the WSL production of contests as ‘addictive’ and ‘unbelievable.’ However, he did warn that the dominance and ownership was exploitative and warned about the outcomes of such a powerful and addictive re-imagining of professional surfing and what impact this would have on surf spaces.

Mr Hockridge said:

“As a surfer it (the WSL app contest coverage) is fantastic. Drones, water shots, top quality production and I’m in my armchair in Wales watching this perfection on the other side of the world. It’s free and it’s unbelievable. I’m addicted. As a surfer it’s also crap. As a surfer, I like to be in the water with a few mates sharing waves. This (WSL) isn’t going to allow that. There were 190 people in the water at Rest Bay last week. So from a soul perspective, it’s not good but from an exploitation perspective... they (the WSL) are doing a really good job.”

Sarah Hall was also supportive of ZMH’s strategy and thinks the WSL traditional and more conservative model could work and cites her work with skateboarding great, Tony Hawk, as an example of how to democratise a hard core, underground pastime and shape it into a legitimate, global sport. Hall, cites three necessary elements:

“Traditional sports, for better or worse, have long reigned supreme in the sports world, especially here in the States. I believe the current legitimacy and respect that action/extreme sports and skateboarding in particular now has is due to three elements.”

“Firstly, Tony Hawk is an incredibly talented skater whose performances are (and always were) consistently jaw dropping. Secondly, he participated in the late 1990’s in a (then) newly created X Games competition for extreme sports and its athletes. This was the first competitive event outside of the hard-core skate work. It aired once a year on a then tiny cable channel, ESPN. Thirdly, Tony hired a publicist. As his star rose, he bought the skate world with him and created a new level of legitimacy, respect and credibility for the sport and its athletes that had not existed prior in mainstream press. These three factors came together to create a perfect storm of opportunity. It created a skate legend in Tony Hawk and Tony bought legitimacy to a sport that had never been taken seriously before.” Said, Hall.

Hall is confident the WSL is on the right business track given the growing mainstream legitimacy of action sports in the US and worldwide:

“They stand a very good chance of meeting their objectives. From personal experience, I think you have to do a little bit of traditional but then be nimble enough

to also get really creative. If you have to abandon traditional formulas for the sake of success, that works, because it will be a success.

“I also feel that if you are really on point with your press, you are branding by default. For me, I didn’t represent skateboarding, I represented Tony Hawk and that worked to bring attention to the world of skateboarding. As Tony got more famous, he elevated the world of skate and took it with him, bringing it more validity and credibility.

“Perhaps if the WSL would like to meet its objectives, they should consider hiring personal publicists to promote some of their best surf stars. I happen to know that is a really successful formula.”

This democratising of an ‘underground’ activity such as skateboarding, a city, land bound version of surfing painted by Ms Hall is a good example of how the WSL may market its assets such as performance labourers to normalise surfing as a mainstream sport. At the heart of Hall’s recommendations was authenticity and expertise of surfers as performers or athletes; a media vehicle to broadcast, publicise and distribute specific events and a marketing strategy to re-represent a niche sport as accessible. It was clear, from the data in this research that the ZMH had control of all three of those elements and indeed, through its OTT digital media strategy, could communicate directly with existing fans and use the power of social media to connect with a new, broader fan base.

And echoing Ms Hall’s guide to taking a niche sport to the masses, Brad Hockridge highlighted the way ZMH was playing a long game given its monopoly power and financial support. He said ZMH was exploiting the opportunity but any business person would do the same and he gave a view as to where he felt the sport was moving in order to attract mass audiences:

He said:

“Exploitation is a word that can be used. It is hard to exploit something if you don’t have it on demand and in three to five years that doubt will be taken away... “I’m sure they can see the wave park opportunity and potential. I’m sure they can see this go inland. Imagine this in places like Dubai in the years ahead? We’ve seen the wave in North Wales and now we have Kelly’s wave. It is getting better all the time. What is to say that in Dubai they won’t develop 15 foot waves travelling for a 1000 metres? There would be a stack of money to be made with something like that as a centre piece and retail and hotels all around. They can then clone these anywhere in the world”

Mr Hockridge gives an expert insight into a potential future direction of and a bigger game plan for ZMH and the WSL and Derek Rielly gives an interesting account of the power of the WSL to control the SMS:

He said:

“Oh, the WSL have such a heavy hand. I ran a few clips of their jetski fails in Instagram and Facebook and they contacted FB and IG to have them pulled down. My legal advice was we could have fought it but who’s got the kind of cash to fight someone like the WSL’s Dirk Ziff? We have as little to do with them as possible. The irony is we’d love to have a positive working relationship with the WSL but instead of embracing colour, they recoil – to their detriment, I believe.”

This gives a clear insight into the iron cage of control being developed by ZMH as it seeks to control professional surfing on a global scale and how it rejects the ‘other’ of colour, controversy, debate, critique and argument.

Mr Barilotti believes this reframing of surfing by ZMH as a ‘wholesome’ sport is to appeal to ‘mummies who let their kiddies’ participate in ordered, uniformed and safe activities. This, said Barilotti was more attractive to the mainstream, “As opposed to the underground counter culture style (of surfing) of smoking dope and shagging in the back of a Kombi.”

Further evidence for the ZMH’s mainstreaming strategy and appropriation of ideas from surf culture to try and give brand authenticity and meaning comes from David Carson.

Here he is referring to the appropriation of his seminal design in the early 90’s into the WSL’s 2015/16 global marketing campaign – “You can’t script this”.

He said:

“I don’t feel they are learning much, but are pursuing a direction they feel, wrongly, will appeal to the masses of currently non surf fans... the you can’t script seems a direct rip off of my work, too little too late, but I suspect we will see more on big title things like that... funny, it would feel dated hip though, not current or progressive.”

Mr Carson was also sceptical of the revenue earning potential of the current ZMH’s model.

He said:

“I don’t believe the financial model works as is. Samsung and Jeep could get better ROI from sponsoring other sports and an ad’ slot every 15 minutes won’t raise much and you have the WSL turning surfing into a normal, traditional sport – the opposite of what any brand wants if they link with surfing.

He continued:

“They want authenticity, soul and difference. So it seems like the presentation aimed at bringing in non- endemic brands into surfing will actually repel them. And that is why they went to the same post production house that did American Football Super Bowl and Basketball finals.”

The data suggest that while many traditionalists may not like the re-imagined professional surf world and current media owners question professional surfing as a sport, there is clearly an appreciation of the work to date in updating, re-invigorating and re-shaping professional surfing as a mainstream, global sport. However, there is deep concern, particularly from Mr Carson and Mr Hynd as to the direction and meaning of ZMH’s ownership of professional surfing.

The work will now turn to analysing what this re-imagined surfing world should look like and ask is it sustainable? The question seemed pertinent as the ZMH’s positioning of pro surfing as a mainstream sport seems exactly the opposite of why non-endemic sponsors would want to be associated with surfing.

The data from the interviews suggest a scepticism for the long-term future of professional surfing based on how it was being re-imagined at the time of this research. The interviewees suggested the model was quite a traditional, title sponsorship from Jeep, Samsung and Tag Heuer and then individual sponsorship for each CT event and each broadcast split by small adverts.

This is not considered a great revenue earner and this was the commercial model used by the ASP. That said, there was clearly significant investment supporting ZMH and it also had all the elements in place to create new revenue streams.

It had a monopoly position in global professional surfing and could legitimately call itself the ‘Home of professional surfing’. It had created a new brand identity and introduced a League structure and marketed it as the first global sporting league. It had created and opened WSL studios, similar to NFL Studios, where it could create its own production and content for each event. ZMH then launched WSL Store where the logo of WSL was packaged and presented as a brand on WSL merchandise. It then introduced surfer numbers and even a yellow jersey was introduced to identify the current CT Tour leader.

Further, there was rumour of WSL buying Kelly Slater Wave Company and taking and owning the sport of surfing inland. And the final seismic shift being the introduction of surfing to the Olympics programme in Japan in 2020.

These are significant developments in the commercialising and privatising of professional surfing and ZMH now has total control of production to give it the best possible chance of meeting its business objectives.

That said, there seemed to be one worrying theme threading its way through the opinions of the interviewees – contest surfing was as dull as ditch water to watch.

Derek Rielly opens with a witty and perhaps apocryphal view on the sustainability of the WSL:

“It ain’t sustainable, no. But, that’s me telling a billionaire how to make money. A crazy thought. Maybe sponsorship will hit the hundreds of mill one day? I don’t think so, but like I said, what would I know?”

Derek Hynd is equally as wise and guarded in dismissing the sustainability of the WSL.

He said:

“The point is surely whether or not the (WSL) conservative plan will attract major mainstream sponsorship or not. Perhaps pro surfing is destined to be fed by the benevolence of a rich man looking for distraction.”

Interestingly this ‘distraction’ point was one touched upon by Brad Hockridge and Ian Cairns. Mr Hockridge cited a trend amongst the wealthy in California to buy ‘cool’ brands. Mr Hockridge asked how cool it would be to turn up to a party of wealthy friends to say you’ve just bought world surfing for \$30m. For a billionaire, that isn’t much, suggested Mr Hockridge.

Ian Cairns said the same. While he dismissed the ability of ZMH to make profits using the traditional media models adopted by the ASP, he was open minded as to its future success based on the enormous funding provided by venture capital company. Mr Cairns added a note of caution when suggesting if the WSL didn’t meet financial projections, there would be change but again, echoed Mr Hockridge’s view that \$30m to buy surfing was not a substantial amount for the new owners. Indeed, Mr Hockridge suggested it could, in hindsight, be seen as the sports marketing deal of the century.

Veronica Grey wanted to see change or surfer action to keep the world tour and professional surfing relevant and sustainable. She felt there was too much hidden control by the WSL in the way it ran competitions and, in her opinion, they were being reconfigured to meet commercial interests. She believes there will be change and the WSL spectacle will become more authentic.

She said:

“I want pro surfing to be authentic 100%. Now it isn't. You've also got to ask yourself why Kelly Slater is so often in the first heat of the day? It's not random or authentic. Put all the names in a hat and randomly allocate heats. It is all done behind closed doors.”

Ms Grey calls for a form of Situationist-style revolt or detournement to change the integrated spectacle.

“The only way to change it is a strike by the workers. It has to come from the surfers. I've said this to John John (Florence) and Kelly (Slater) and John John has promised me that they will do something about it and I believe him. I definitely think it will become more authentic.”

Roger Mansfield echoes Grey's call for authenticity.

He said:

“If I could re-imagine pro-surfing I would put the real world and honest personality back in it. It's become too slick in my opinion. I don't like listening to interviewed surf stars that sound like football players, the sports are poles apart! I want charismatic surfers who can talk from the heart about what surfing has done to their lives, how they are affected by the place they are in now on the tour. Why can't the sponsors see they could tap into the authenticity that originated the surfer lifestyle and vicariously rub that authenticity all over their marketed products?”

David Carson was more specific in the way design and marketing was used to move away from his perception of the WSL as having a safe and dull brand identity.

Carson said of his re-imagined surf tour:

He said:

“It would not be so generic and safe, so pedestrian. It would have some of the uniqueness, the spirit, the attitude that is surfing and what attracts the masses, and hard-core surfers, to surfing... it would be a leader in digital art director and motion graphics, not an average level, forgettable follower... it would be referenced and copied... it would have a more exclusive look and feel... what that is would come after much exploration, and a little common sense.”

Jamie Brisick couldn't extend this commercial vision for the sport he was drawn to because it was an escape from mainstream sports. He echoes the views many during the reading for this work who said surfing was too special to them to think of further commodification.

Mr Brisick said:

"That's a tough one. I don't know if surfing was ever meant to be professionalized. The love I felt for it when I found it in my youth was antithetical to finish lines, balls in goals, all of the cut and dry stuff that makes for surf. I loved that there were no rules, that it was free-form, like dance. It was my way of escaping team sports and organized, sanctioned sports. It felt rebellious in that way. So, I'm a purist in that way. If I were to re-imagining it I'd take it away from competition/professionalism and bring it back to what it originally was for me: a place to dream, a place to let my inner voice loose."

Sentiments supported by Steve Barilotti but a call for the reduction in the calculability of the WSL model of more is better and a view that questioned if there was anything else to market in surfing?

Mr Barilotti said:

"God! What can it look like? Five stellar events to truly get excited by."

But Barilotti isn't convinced there is anything left to market. He asks what's left as he colourfully suggests the privatisation of surfing resembles the invasion of the body snatchers, with the WSL picking at the carcass of surfing life:

He adds:

"If surfing is not cool anymore, will it ever be cool again? Surfing has become so mainstream it has become un-hip, no-hip. The minute you try to sell counter culture, it stops becoming a counter culture."

Derek Rielly was very specific. He had a radical plan for professional surfing's sustainability and he's published it on his media platforms.

"Twelve surfers, two day events, don't combine the men and the women and have a little fun." Rielly outlines his thoughts from the article he wrote for Beachgrit in June 2015.

He gave five ways to improve the WSL's CT. First, reduce the tour from 34 to 12 surfers; Finish the event in two days; Don't combine male and female events; Drop the Portugal

event; Loosen up and live a little.

Expanding on the above points, Rielly suggest 34 surfers on Tour guarantees a career but doesn't work in as a competitive contest for spectators and these two week waiting periods should be jammed into two or three days when the waves and conditions are at their peak. Rielly also suggests currently male and female tour events are run side by side to save money. This, he maintains leads to a weak and diluted event. And these weak events need to be dropped for more consistent places as they don't provide a sporting contest. Finally, Rielly suggests the commodified and regulated form of WSL surfing needs to loosen up a little to encourage its performance labourers to connect with fans on different levels rather than just surfing. He suggests the WSL will never get a slice of the 'football' market if they focus solely on surfing as it was too subjective and hard to understand as a competitive sport.

Bringing the argument back to the commercial opportunity to the wider surf industry created by the ZMH's mass market strategy, a beachside conversation with a surf company salesman who wanted to be anonymous was illuminating.

He said:

"Everybody surfs now. When I started back in the day, people would say, hey, that is cool. Now it's normal and people say ah, OK, you surf. No big deal. It's funny you mention the Disneyisation process as there is now someone from Disney who heads up Quiksilver!

"For me the WSL link is good for business and the rise in water user numbers is also good for business. We couldn't sell new FCS clip in fins. Surfers thought they would just fall out and they are expensive. Once they saw Slater clicking in his fins in a WSL webcast and then surfing they understood the benefits and sales have soared since.

"Also, Tesco making cheap wetsuits have done us a favour. The kids complain that the Tesco wetsuits rub and scratch the skin as the lining and taping is really poor. Then they try on a premium wetsuit and suddenly they don't scratch anymore and you have a new customer base from a young age."

So, while clearly there are a range of opinions and ideas as to how professional surfing should be re-imagined, at the heart of ZMH drive is profitable business and this affects the wider surf industry in a very direct way and this is evidence of the way the WSL contest productions educate and explain the complexities of surfing to broader, mass audiences.

We close this section with Derek Hynd and, in true Debordian style, he outlines the bringing down of the WSL surfing spectacle with the masses creating something new and catering for the 'other' and alternative voices in the surfing world. I don't think it is something the WSL and ZMH will be considering, given their investment, but perhaps it is something Guy Debord would have supported.

Mr Hynd, said:

“What would I do? Tear it all down and start again. Only this time it would be one part performance and one part art form from surfers whose techniques were abnormal. What would Dora do? (referring to the late controversial Californian surfer, Mickey Dora) Dora in the 60's? He'd have found a media outlet and launched a cheap satire. Dora had the ability to infect the organism. Underground dissent would have been widespread. There is no underground left in surfing.”

In concluding, these interviews provided valuable and colourful insights related to both the central research questions and a range of other issues to be, perhaps, the focus of attention in future research. They also provided previously unknown data related to the marketing and positioning of the WSL as a mainstream sports league.

While the interviewees, commenting at this formative stage of the WSL, had opinions on the ZMH spectacle, they did not know if this model would be successful or not. They were quick to note to economic power of Dirk Ziff and ZMH and suggested only time would tell if the model would be successful. Some didn't see it as being successful largely because it was an extension of the ASP's model. A central surfing world tour, sponsored events, live broadcasts all paid for by event and in broadcast sponsorship and advertising.

The marketers and entrepreneurs in the interview schedule, while, as surfers, they did not like the further commercialisation of professional surfing, they were appreciative and impressed with the WSL version of professional surfing. One saying, ZMH was playing a long game and the financial backing and business expertise of the central management team indicates a belief in the future of data driven, re-imagined sports for a millennial generation.

And while many of the interviewees lamented the lack of authenticity and creativity in the WSL broadcasts, the underlying view was this spectacle was so much better than the ASP. Some interviewees also gave an opinion as to what their re-imagined professional surfing landscape would look like and others also gave their notion of what their detournement would be to challenge the power of the WSL integrated spectacle.

Derek Hynd would have us start all over again, rejecting the WSL's claim to be the home of global surfing and describing ZMH's appropriation of surfing as 'Dora's worst nightmare'. While his position was extreme and is something that did not look like happening during the course of this research, it demonstrated the importance of authenticity in the cultural production of surfing.

Interestingly, some of the key interviewees questioned the very notion of surfing as a televisual sport. Mocking contests as boring and dull. One media expert said the only sport more boring than surfing to watch is test cricket. It will be interesting to see how ZMH use spectacular strategies to shift 'the most boring sport' into a compelling and addictive form of sports entertainment.

Findings Chapter Summary

The findings chapter was presented in sections to reflect the methodological approach adopted in the formation of this thesis. The research questions were highlighted before outlining the data gathering processes in relation to these questions.

The data was gathered through a largely ethnographic process, comprising watched and lived experiences and supported by a range of diverse, expert, key figure interviews.

That watched methods identified a range of recurring and illusionary themes – ten in total - related to the mediation of WSL CT events by the WSL via its own media channel – the WSL app. Each CT event webcast live via this app during the 2015 season tour was analysed as part of this process. These themes were then explored more fully and applied specifically to the staging, management and mediation of the J-Bay Pro in South Africa – one of the most controversial events in professional surfing contest history.

The next phase of the research process was to gain data and insight in relation to the research questions through lived experiences. The first lived experience being a beach micro ethnography of a CT contest at Trestles beach in Southern California. The recurring themes from the watched, or hyperreal, events were used to analyse the live event and additional themes were identified and explored. This proved a natural segue into the second lived ethnography – the making of a surfboard. This was used as a way to provide evidence and data to contest the notion of the central surf culture sign, the surfboard, as a pure, white and innocent promotional canvas used by both surfer and WSL to amplify brand messages to global audiences.

These watched and lived approaches were finally supported with illuminating praxis insights from a range of key figure interviewees with.

The data suggests a clear space where this thesis sits in identifying a knowledge gap related to the developing thesis of an emerging State of Modern Surfing (Hough-Snee, D.Z and Eastman, A.S. 2017) and posits a contribution to, and an extension of, Scott Laderman's hegemonic work, *Empire in Waves*.

Taking Laderman's work first, he says the activity of surfing was firstly appropriated and commodified by American entrepreneurs to act as a visual marketing illusion to attract largely white travellers to the Hawaiian Islands in the early 1900's. Surfing, he says, was then reimagined in California in the 1950's as a 'lifestyle' sport and then exported to global surfing centres in Australia, South Africa, Indonesia, Europe and Japan. His work critically examines the influence of surfing's capitalists and administrators (often one and the same group of people) on pristine Indonesian seascapes, initial non-engagement with the issue of apartheid in South Africa in order to surf world class point break waves. He also charts the commodification of the surfing experience, where the authentic imagery of surfing has been used and abused by non-endemic clothing brands and describes it as 'industrial surfing'.

He uses the example of US clothing brand, Hollister. It created a fictional past and marketing narrative for the company and its products by developing a 'marketable difference' position of a company born out of the pioneering, early 20th century roots of Californian surfing:

"Cultural capital, the company understood, need not be earned; it can be single-handedly contrived. Surfing, in other words, was just another brand. Welcome to industrial surf culture." (Laderman, S, 2014, p.153)

This notion of surfing as 'industrial' is further extended by Dexter Hough-Snee and Alexander Eastman (2017) who take Yago Colas's thesis of power and domination in basketball and apply it to surfing. Colas (2016) highlighted the way a sporting system or state of power had been created in professional basketball by public and private capital interests. These interests sought to work together to maximise profits from sporting labour by creating stable systems of governance and control and then shaping a narrative that this form of dominance and management is both desirable and inevitable. This power system is then legitimised through mythmaking practices carried out by cultural intermediaries employed by the central 'state'.

Hough-Snee and Eastman apply Colas' thinking to surfing and theorise the State of Modern Surfing (SMS) as comprising a range of groups who seek to institutionalise and profit from

the sport of surfing. These include governing bodies such as the ASP and WSL; specialist surf media; brand owners and sponsors; wave pool entrepreneurs; travel and tourism organisations; photographers and filmmakers; bloggers and vloggers and, of course, the surfers themselves.

These institutions, and the political push and pull between them, says Hough-Snee and Eastman, define (to those who surf and those who do not) what surfing should look like; what you should look like while you surf; what surfboard you should ride when you are flowing across a wave; How you should carry a surfboard; what wetsuit you need to wear when you are surfing and what clothes you put on after you surf. These are just a few of the areas where Hough-Snee and Eastman maintain the SMS has control over individual agency and control over the way surfing is perceived by audiences who do not surf.

The invention of the WSL as a new sporting league by ZMH and its use of new systems of power to legitimise itself as 'the global home of surfing' by creating a spectacular surfing system would seem to evidence this work and findings as a contribution to, and an extension of, both *Empire in Waves* and *The State of Modern Surfing* thesis.

Each research method of analysis identified specific examples related to the creation of a WSL spectacular surfing system using forms of McDonaldisation, Disneyfication and hyperreality and legitimised by consistent, complex and compelling content marketing strategies created by WSL's cultural intermediaries.

Examples of McDonaldisation in relation to efficiency can be seen in the development of the WSL app. A new media platform allowing live, exclusive and wholly owned content to be distributed to interested audiences across the world. There are examples of predictability in the way WSL broadcasts are scheduled and presented. Also, a predictability in the way surfers will surf against a set of codified rules and style guides. And clear examples of control. Control access to WSL event site spaces; accredit and limit media access to control who says what about the WSL spectacle. Control content output through the creation of WSL Studios. A studio copying other sporting industries, such as the NFL, in developing all broadcasts and media content in-house.

There are clear examples of Disneyization in this research. Strong examples of the theory's notion of theming, merchandising and performative labour. For theming, the data demonstrates the creation of a new surfing brand in the WSL and the introduction of a league format. This was created to appeal to non-endemic sponsors – one of the key groups in the SMS. A good example of merchandising can be seen with the development and

launch of the WSL store where consumers of surfing can buy 'fan' shirts with the surfer's selected WSL competition number on the back.

The hyperreal within the WSL spectacle is evidenced through the board making workshop method where the realities of making a surfboard are far, far removed from the illusionary, themed, branded canvas you see paraded and discussed constantly and consistently during every WSL CT event. WSL commentators pour over the professional surfer board dimensions, fin placement and fin types. Ironically, many of the boards and fins are themed or branded as commodities marketed by star surfers. Meaning, there are a range of specific models of boards and fins promoted by the performative labourers in order to increase sales of those products and, in turn, increase their own income. Clear conflicts of interest, arguments and debate of which are muted by the power of the WSL spectacle and the averting of the critical gaze.

The aim was to also provide an insight into a new paradigm in competitive, elite surfing building on the academic work related to both governance and competition in surfing and lifestyle sports by authors such as Douglas Booth (2001, 2005, 2017), Kirsty Comer (2010), Nick Ford and David Brown (2006), Robin Canningford (2017), Clifton Evers (2004,2009, 2010, 2014, 2016, 2017), Dexter Hough-Snee (2016, 2017), Scott Laderman (2014), Kristin Lawler (2017) Rebecca Olive (2015), Kent Pearson (1979), Jess Ponting and Greg Borne (2015), Mark Stranger (2011), Holly Thorpe (2014) and Belinda Wheaton (2016, 2013, 2011, 2010, 2004).

The data highlighted a range of important issues in relation to the research questions and theory. The interview data identified why there was little resistance to the formation of the WSL, how ZMH built systems of power and its integrated spectacle to divert the gaze by creating 'addictive' media events. The data further identified the ways in which ZMH made 'the most boring sport in the world' into a series of powerful, visual events. In short, all the interviewees thought the discussion and research was important and necessary given the totalising power of ZMH to position its WSL as the home of global surfing without critical analysis or objection.

The next logical progression of this work is a discussion of these findings and their relation to the research questions. The discussion will further be extended by considering the way in which Debord's Society of the Spectacle can be used and applied to illuminate and connect this data in a modest attempt to fill a knowledge gap in the field of critical surf studies.

4. DISCUSSION

This discussion will be presented to address the main research evidence in each section in the findings chapter. The first step will outline the purpose of this research and re-introduce the research questions and initial expectations and rationale for the work. Secondly, a summary of the main points of the work and data gathered will be given and then discussed in relation to other researcher's work in the field to see if there are similarities or points of difference. Further, links and connections will be made back to the theories and literature discussed in this work to provide explicit examples, among others, of alienation, false consciousness, recuperation, aura, use value, detournement, McDonaldisation and Disneyization as it relates to ZMH and the WSL. Thirdly, possible explanations for the research findings and data gathered will be debated. Fourthly, the implications of the work will also be highlighted.

Before being reminded of the aims of this study, it is important to reintroduce and consider Tomlinson's critiques of Debord's theory. Tomlinson, as highlighted in the literature review suggests Debord's theory trivialises individual agency and social life is too complex to be neatly packed in a spectacle and, finally, it was pessimistic. While these points are valid and debatable, the data from this work would suggest the point of individual agency is the central ground of opposition. The sophistication of the marketing communications processes, used by ZMH to create false consciousness and eradicate any form of detournement in relation to its appropriation of the ASP and the invention of a new surfing brand, the WSL, were so powerful, coupled with gatekeeper data outlining the poor education levels of professional surfers, that agency was restricted.

The aim of the study was to critically analyse the new ownership structure, systems of power and governance within professional surfing as re-imagined by ZoSea Media Holdings with its invention and creation of a new competitive, professional surfing brand – the World Surf League. The study applied critical theory in general, and the Marxist-inspired work of Guy Debord in particular, to frame, analyse and deconstruct this paradigm shift in the sport of professional surfing.

As brief background, ZoSea Media Holdings, a company backed by billionaire venture capitalist, Dirk Ziff, and led by the former head of marketing at the NFL, Paul Speaker and Terry Hardy, the agent of eleven-time world surfing champion, Kelly Slater, took ownership of the ASP in 2013. They paid nothing for the ownership but took on the multi-million-dollar debt of the ASP. In media reports announcing the new ownership, Mr Speaker described the sport of surfing as 'a diamond in the rough' with a 'rabid fan base' and it (ZMH) intended to

use digital technology to professionalise the sport and make it into a mainstream entertainment offering. The focus of this study was this transformation.

Three research questions drove both the research agenda and defined the design of the selected research methods and the approach to data collection. These questions were:

- ***What does ZMH mean when it says it wants to ‘professionalise’ surfing***
- ***What does this professionalisation look like?***
- ***What are the initial effects of this rationalisation process?***

Guy Debord’s notion of a Society of the Spectacle was then used as both a theoretical framework and a lens through which to critically analyse the transformation of the ASP into the World Surf League in trying to establish the techniques used by ZMH in achieving its economic, political and cultural objectives. While a number of theoretical approaches were considered, a Marxist approach was used given the positioning and marketing of professional surfing as a counter culture lifestyle sport (Endo, 2015, Evers, 2013, Thorpe, 2014, Wheaton, 2004, 2005).

To scaffold the central theory of Debord, the related and underpinning base concepts of alienation, false consciousness, recuperation, use value, aura and detournement were also introduced and explicit examples of these in relation to the WSL spectacle will be given later in this chapter.

The research also intended to explore how and why this paradigm change in professional surfing was able to take place and investigate why there was little resistance to ZMH’s power in creating a spectacular surfing society with global ‘tentacles’ producing surfing events as ‘mega-spectacles’ in various tropical locations around the world.

The research builds upon Evers’ (2013) application of the Society of the Spectacle to the forerunner to the WSL, the ASP, and identifies a fundamental shift in the tectonic plates within the State of Modern Surfing (Hough-Snee, D and Eastman, A, 2017).

The work contributes to the understanding of a new phase in elite, professional surfing, as venture capitalists, seeking to expand investment portfolios, look to commodify and rationalise both traditional and emerging sports forms. Examples can be found in the drive to ‘indoorise’ sport (Bottenburg, M, and Salome, L, 2010) and the work of Ponting (2018) exploring notions of the hyperreal and authenticity in an age of the ‘surf park’ where spectacular surfing contests are performed far away from surfing’s liminal heartlands of remote beaches, reefs and points.

Inherent in this rationalising process by ZMH as the owners of the WSL production is the notion of alienation. Alienation of the surfer as worker and alienation of the surfer as spectator. An explicit example of the alienation of surfer as worker is the insistence by the WSL that all CT professional surfers behave in a monitored, polite and positive way evidenced in post heat interviews and the constant and consistent worker messages of great events in great waves when, in fact, conditions were poor at a variety of events during the course of this research. This could be an example of the work being unable to fully express themselves about the frustrations of 'working' and surfing in such conditions and then having to shape their post heat responses in a way expected by the WSL who now provided pensions, sources of increased income and media exposure for each surfer on the CT tours. Any demonstrations of frustration were met with sanctions and WSL event bans.

The work also highlights the role storytelling, marketing and cultural intermediaries play in building forms of false consciousness by creating, mediating and distributing new meanings in the formation of this spectacular surfing society and shaping the recuperation strategies used by the WSL. If we take the notion of false consciousness, an explicit example of creating an untrue set of beliefs in surfers, spectators and the media, is the development of ZMH and its vision to privatise professional surfing as the only viable option available to those who ran, participated, mediated and took part on the sport. Therefore, all those with a vested interest needed to accept the vision powerfully presented by ZMH to the ASP or face the end of professional surfing. There could have been alternatives but the rhetoric developed by ZMH was a powerful promise to financially reward professional surfers like never before, look after their futures with pensions, provide a platform to make them stars. In return all the workers had to do was buy into the ZMH vision.

And this leads us to the recuperation strategies used by the WSL. Recuperation, in this context, means the way the WSL maintains power by shaping authenticity, you can see that the use of marketing straplines such as 'the global home of surfing'; constant in event discussions of 'the best surfers on the planet'; WSL media representation describing 'millions of rabid fans' are all part of a larger narrative positioning the WSL as the benevolent owners of the only space and place to debate, discuss and consume surfing.

In opposition to these WSL recuperation strategies, there was little detournement from audiences with interest, vested or not, in surfing. If we take detournement, in this context to mean the pushing back or resisting the spectacle in specific ways, such as defacing or changing and adapting and (re) presenting WSL marketing and branding signs in different ways or the surfer boycotting of events, or the fan protesting on the beaches of events to

voice anger, frustration and opposition to this new vision for surfing, then very little was encountered at any point in the undertaking of this research, save for a small number of voices in 'comments' sections at the end of media stories in specialised surfing portals and the odd annoyance from professional surfers at the marks awarded for their contest heats. Any detournement was quickly countered with recuperation strategies from the WSL. These included sanctions against surfers who voiced anger at heat grades; legal threats against media owners who criticised or mocked WSL events, such as Beach Grit; halting content co-operation with media sites, such as Swellnet, thought to be critical of the WSL. Controversy was never seen in any of the events watched or physically witnessed during the course of this work and neither were any dissenting voices of differences given any attention or space as part of the WSL spectacle. While one of the gatekeepers in this work, Derek Hynd, cites the WSL model as 'Dora's worst nightmare', it could be argued that Dora is the recuperated sign of surfing capital's counter culture positioning. It could also be argued that the WSL, in this research journey, deliberately denied any counter culture or subversive figure (s) such as Hynd or Dora any space in the spectacle. The WSL would seem to do this by recuperation strategies focusing, not on repackaging and re-presenting difference, but presenting a sanitised 'surfer as athlete'.

Therefore, the research may contribute to extending Laderman's (2014) work analysing the global migration of surfing hegemony and is another view to Evers' (2013) original analysis using Marxist critique of the forerunner to the WSL, the ASP. Further, it may add to and extend the work by Kristin Lawler where elite surfers, in the WSL spectacle, are now positioned as athletes and not surfers, with managed personas, possessing the ability to earn significant income from their stardom in the attention economy.

To support these claims, the main evidence emerging from the research demonstrates clear examples of spectacular forms of power, new systems of governance and, in particular, the sophisticated development of new media platforms and the use of audience research, marketing, branding and logo formation to create new cultural signs within this integrated spectacular surfing society curated by ZoSea Media Holdings and given meaning through the invention of the World Surf League.

In addition, further evidence in this thesis, investigating the processes undertaken by ZMH in creating new systems of power and control of professional surfing, links with and is similar to, the central elements of three important critical theories as already highlighted in the previous chapter. As a reminder, these are McDonaldization (Ritzer, 2010), Disneyization (Bryman, 2004, Andrews, 2006) and the notion of hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1983).

Explicit examples of McDonaldisation from this data include, among other previously mentioned, processes linked to control and the legal notices at the Trestles CT event defining what can and cannot be filmed and recorded within the parameters of the contest venue. Other examples include efficiency where very little content is created or produced related to anything outside of the event venue, no matter where the event is in the world. Further, in developing its own content creation studios, its own broadcast application, creating a new WSL brand and associated marketing communication capital, ZMH demonstrate efficiencies of communicating to global audiences at the heart of its business model. Other examples of rationalisation linked the theory include the creation of the WSL app to stream live events, cutting relationships with previous media partners, You Tube, where viewing figures for WSL events could be easily viewed as outlined by Stu Nettle's work. The way surf prediction models were also embedded into the WSL spectacle is another example of this rationalisation process and professional surfing's new uniformity and predictability being linked to certainty and controllability as forecast partners to the WSL can accurately predict when the WSL contest should start and the WSL app can easily let its audience now instantly when to move from distraction to the contemplation of the WSL spectacle.

In relation to the theory of Disneyization, there are clear and explicit examples from the data. Examples include the theoretical notion of theming where each CT event is themed to create marketable difference between each event. This is usually based around the type of wave at the centre of the event. In a sense, each event is a spectacle in itself with associated media storytelling and the celebrification of both waves and surfers. Other examples of theming include 'wildcard' invites for surfers to specific events. A further example of themes in this research would be 'legends' heats between former professional surfers from previous generations. These seem to be used in a bid to add authenticity to the WSL spectacle as part of a recuperation strategy and in creating false consciousness as it adds narrative value to the spectacle and allows ZMH's marketing and media department collateral in creating stories to promote each event and silence any detournement.

The aspects of Baudrillard's hyperreality theory and the Marxist concepts of aura and use value can also be highlighted with explicit examples from the WSL. As a reminder, hyperreality is the blurring of the real and original within the WSL spectacle is explicitly evidenced through a range of examples. Aura is the magic associated with an original product or work of art and the associated loss of it through copying and reproduction. The further away from the original, the more the aura of the original diminishes.

The board making workshop ethnography highlighted how the realities of making a surfboard are far, far removed from the illusionary, themed, branded canvas you see paraded and discussed constantly and consistently during every WSL CT event. Another example linked to aura would be the 'signature' model surfboards poured over by commentators are part of each WSL event. These boards, signed and created as originals for each professional surfer they sponsor can equally be scaled up and a copy be made available for any fan of the surfer. Interestingly, here you also see the powerful working of Marx's concept of use value. The four-stage process of adding value and meaning to a commodity. What the commodity conveys to others about you is an important part in defining the use value of a commodity. What board you ride, what colour (or not) is on the deck, what fins you use, what logos are displayed, all form important elements of the way surf capital constructs commodity use value.

Further, and as part of building this use value, WSL commentators pour over the professional surfer board dimensions, fin placement and fin types. Ironically, many of the boards and fins are themed or branded as commodities marketed by star surfers. Meaning, there are a range of specific models of boards and fins promoted by the performative labourers in order to increase sales of those products and, in turn, increase their own income. Again, examples of creating use value. Clear conflicts of interest, arguments and debate of which are muted by the recuperative power of the WSL spectacle and the averting of any critical gaze.

Further aspects inherent in the theory of hyperreality can be identified with the investment of ZMH in Kelly Slater Waves Pools. A company dedicated to creating hyperreal inland, indoor waves replicating the real waves of the beach and ocean. When 'Kelly's Wave' was introduced to the world via an exclusive video broadcast by the WSL, slightly after this research period ended, it was described as 'the perfect wave'. The irony.

In investing in wave pool technology, the WSL is part of the movement toward mechanically reproducing wave after wave after wave, in uniform procession and in complete predictability. Each one a copy of the previous one and its use value described as 'perfect' again and again. Indeed, feedback and opinion from surfers and spectators related to wave pool contests organised by the WSL cite large gaps between the marketing rhetoric of surfing a man-made, mechanically reproduced, 'perfect wave' and the experiences of surfing in the ocean. This gap, you could argue, resembles the difference between contemplation and distraction.

In creating a global professional surfing commodity, the WSL, has produced the opposite of a counter culture, lifestyle sport. Professional surfing is now privatised and owned by a small

number of people. It is rule-bound, regulated, packaged and produced by ZMH employees with no independent body able to 'reverse the gaze' and power of the WSL in order to challenge and question its claims and processes. There is no body able to question if the WSL is the 'home of global surfing' or question and debate whose interests that 'home' represents. This poses serious questions, ripe for academic interrogation, in relation to future surfing debates, related to representation, race, gender, class and access.

Further, systems of power created by ZMH include wholly owned media platforms, in-house production studios, ensuring the leading CT surfers becoming shareowners of the new WSL. This has allowed a dominant, monopoly position to have been achieved in a very short period of time and, surprisingly, with little resistance from surfers, surfing media, other governing bodies, or any other groups with vested interests. The silence has been palpable and the creation of this new surfing society and the meeting of ZMH's initial business objectives has been total. Further, complicit in the recuperation of this WSL integrated spectacle, are a number of tourism boards acting as single event title sponsors of the WSL world tour and marketing the myths of surf capital to meet economic objectives of host governments.

The speed taken and the capital invested to create a sport business out of professional surfing is significant. In just two years, ZMH has created a hyperreal new 'Home of Global Surfing' and achieved total domination of surfing as a professional, competitive sport. This appropriation follows the academic pointers given in the work of David Lanagan (2010) and the notion of surfing capital, Yago Colas (2016) examining basketball as a sporting state and Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017) applying the state adjective to describe systems of power in the surfing industry. It also extends Laderman's (2014) industrial surf concept. The research demonstrates that professional surfing is now privatised and controlled by American owners who use clear systems of power to create a monopoly and an unchallengeable position.

Whilst these findings are in line with previous studies analysing the transformation of surfing as both a sport and a competitive practice (Booth, 1995, 2001, 2004; Brown and Ford, 2006; Laderman, 2014; Pearson, 1979; Wheaton, 2004) and in line with the way sports are currently shaped by late capital with marketing at the heart of commodifying the sporting practice and field, data developed in this work extends, in a small way, the understanding of the way commercial organisations acquire, re-shape and re-present lifestyle sports as entertainment commodities, altering both the inherent and accepted cultural practices associated with the central activity.

The work also contributes to academic debates and discussions related to bigger societal, political, economic and cultural changes currently raging. The central theme of these changes being the rise of neoliberal business agendas moving into and expanding and rationalizing sports franchise portfolios and creating new forms of sporting capital. The theories of Debord, Baudrillard, Ritzer and Bryman, highlighted in this work, have assisted in pointing to the ways in which surfing capital would behave when creating a new global surfing brand. The development of a false consciousness among professional surfers that the WSL is the saviour of not just professional surfing, but global surfing and therefore be lucky your futures have been saved. The invention of the WSL as a brand to create marketable difference from other competing sports franchises such as the NFL and the NBA in a bid to normalise surfing as an armchair, watchable sport. The creation of corporate social responsibility projects, otherwise known as corporate greenwashing exercises, to remind audiences that the WSL is investing in environmental issues linked to coral bleaching while at the same time ensuring WSL events are sponsored by tourism boards and develop a business partnership link with Air BnB to ensure surfing's new audiences travel as much as possible, thereby increasing pollution rates and contributing to the rise in greenhouse gases. The WSL's sophisticated marketing presence ensures a range of recuperation strategies, some of which have already been outlined, are delivered, while at the same time creating a spectacular surfing society where any form of detournement is quashed.

The research exposes and explains how and why ZMH used capital and business expertise to rapidly mobilise change within professional, elite surfing by commissioning research and using datafication techniques to understand existing and potential audiences for a new surfing product. This data is then used, as part of a recuperation strategy, as a basis for developing power systems in the form digital technologies to create, connect and distribute new surfing media forms under a new sign, the WSL, and signifying brand positioning identity as the 'Home of Global Surfing'. At the centre of this new 'home' is sports league format copying many other mainstream global sports such as American Football, basketball, baseball, football, motor racing and ice hockey. These findings contribute to, and extend academic work, identifying broader societal changes in a neoliberal agenda driving rapid commercialisation within the sport of surfing but, unlike other work, this thesis highlights the alarming speed and scale at which these irreversible changes have been implemented by ZMH.

The research also provides data related to the visual nature of this transformative effect by combining beach ethnography at a CT event in California and analysis of CT webcast events streamed live on the WSL owned application platform. This affords the opportunity of analysing the rationalisation processes in play at both WSL events and on screen. The WSL,

you could argue, has so much cultural and surfing capital power that it seems to be defining what surfing is now and how it should be in the future. The theories used in the work to problematize the issues would tend to support this defining, re-working and reification of professional surfing in the broader context of changing socio-economic and political changes in relation to the field of sport and physical culture.

This statement can be supported with further data and analysis from the research identifying processes of 'brand extension' and 'brand stretching'. This process involves the spreading of the main brand sign across a range of commercial platforms. For example, the WSL launched a WSL store during this research timeframe creating a range of WSL-branded apparel from beach towels, to tee shirts and hoodies to caps. The store also sold 'fan' vests with the names and numbers of star surfers emblazoned across the back of the garment, akin to a basketball shirt.

While much change was being created around the brand, both on the beach at events and in digital virtual commerce sites, more investment was taking place outside these spaces. The WSL invested in Kelly Slater Wave Pools (KSWP) (and subsequently bought the whole company) to own, what it saw as, the 'indoorisation' of surfing. KSWP had been developing wave making technology for a number of years and finally opened its first facility more than 100 miles inland in Southern California. This was seen as the next commercial drive in surfing. Perfect waves away from the beaches, reefs and points and transported to urban spaces to give professional surfing, once and for all, predictability. Waves and WSL events taking place at a defined time and in a defined and controlled place, anywhere in the world.

Taking further the effects of this 'indoorisation', and as this work is completed as the first WSL events have taken place in its wholly owned wave pool in Lemoore, Southern California, media opinion and those who compete in these events has been muted. Beach Grit, is particularly critical. It suggests that while the WSL now tries to re-position itself as an environmental brand, having a 'product' in the portfolio consuming gallons of water and vast amounts of electricity becomes an 'unsellable story'. Beach Grit suggests the wave pool story will not play a large future story in the WSL spectacle.

Couple these seismic changes with increasing prize money for professional surfers; equality in pay between genders and the appropriation of another branded, commodified surfing product - the Big Wave Tour - and you could comfortably argue that never has there been so much change in such a short period of time in the governance and sport of professional surfing.

Having highlighted the purpose of the research and the questions posed before moving onto the main findings and explaining those findings in relation to other academic work in the field, I will now discuss the limitations of the work before moving on to debating the implications of this thesis.

This research has been restricted by both time and space and access. The field work and analysis has been restricted to the appropriation of the ASP by ZMH in 2014 and the first year of operation of the WSL in 2015.

This work does not include changes made to professional surfing governance by WSL from January 2016 onwards or any additional systems of power created from January 2016 onwards.

Therefore, the adoption of surfing as an Olympic sport, the development of a WSL owned 'surf ranch' wave pool in Southern California; the resignation of WSL Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Paul Speaker; the loss of Samsung as the WSL's global sponsor and the succession of Speaker by an English female marketing and sponsorship expert with experience of working with the Rugby World Cup, Adidas, the Lawn Tennis Association in England, will be the subject of later work.

The research was also limited by geographical space, time and access. ZoSea and the WSL are based in Southern California and while in initial stages of developing this work, the organisation was happy to help and offer interviews, later attempts at my gaining 'access' and interviews and ZMH insights were ignored. This, I felt was a problem, as I wanted to offer an opportunity for ZMH and WSL to air their views related to the research questions. However, on reflection, I see it as a strength of the research and to some extent, arguably, a wall of silence could be seen to support the claims made in this work related to systems of power and control.

Another limitation could be the lens through which I have chosen to study the surfing field. My rationale for taking a Marxist approach to this study and adopting Guy Debord's, *Society of the Spectacle*, has been explained in previous sections of this work. I also unpack why I have used this theory and rejected a range of others. So, in that sense, Debord's work, I suggest, has provided both a unique and contemporary approach in the study of professional surfing, given Debord's notions of drift, detournement and how central the manipulation of images and situations are in relation to his theory. However, there are critiques of Debord and *Spectacle* in relation to sport by Tomlinson (2002) and I have tried to reflect those concerns in the literature review while embracing the findings in this work as mere explorative and initial attempts to paint a current picture of this moving of the tectonic

plates of global professional surfing. It does not attempt to make absolute, rigid observations as to its meaning and findings.

One of the main reasons for this position is the academic analysis of professional, elite surfing is at a very formative stage. While a wide range of academic work has been developed in relation to lifestyle sports and aspects of surf culture, the first Critical Surf Studies Reader was only published during the course of this research.

Further, due to the experimental nature of this work, there is lack of specific academic literature to the WSL. There are narrative histories of the development of professional surfing, much of which is agreed and circulated across a range of literature and academic work on the subject but little academic work in relation to the governance of professional surfing.

Ford and Brown's (2006) *Surfing and Social Theory* seminal work provided an academic bedrock on which this work sits and a variety of academic work related to the culture and history of surfing and lifestyle sports was used to support the formation of the research questions for this work. However, it is only Evers (2013) who has analysed surfing governance using the lens of Debord and the Theory of Spectacle. So, again it is important to re-iterate this research is formative and the results both modest and tentative.

That said the study does highlight important problems requiring further investigation and analysis. There is clear data evidence to suggest ZMH has carried out a systematic rationalisation of the governance of professional surfing; created a new league structure with a new identity, brand logo and associated meanings by putting marketing at the heart of the organisation; acquired all emotional labour competing on the CT with promised ownership of the new enterprise with dramatically increased prize money and pension schemes; owned all editorial control for all media platforms; reconfigured events to give greater prominence to female professional surfing; increased prize money for women; created a monopoly position of the ownership of global professional surfing in order to attract a wider range of sponsors and advertisers and invested in artificial wave park development to extend the appeal of surfing to those who do not live by the beach.

The findings suggest there was surprisingly little resistance to this rapid change of governance and ownership. There were contributing factors, such as the effects of the global financial crisis in 2007 on lifestyle sport companies; the relatively low education levels of professional surfers and the multi-million-pound debt of the ASP. The ASP couldn't service the debt, the surf brands who ran the professional events did not have the money to run them anymore. So ZMH, identified a business opportunity. It saw an opportunity to acquire

the global rights; everything of a visually sublime activity in an age where visualisation was central to brand marketing. An activity of appeal to a younger demographic with a global reach and finally, the most attractive proposition, the sport had scale and the potential to harness new technology to create a new global sporting franchise.

But there are clear problems with this monopoly position. Firstly, the WSL's version of surfing has now every chance of being the accepted form of surfing as it is the pre-eminent, most powerful entity in professional surfing. It is both governor, regulator, event director, media director and media distributor and all rights holder. There is no other organisation in world surfing having such total power to shape public perception of what surfing is and what surfing culture should be. And while many surfers (and some academics) care little about the professional, elite form of surfing, my argument is we should care as it dictates the global narrative on what surfing is to people who know little about surfing. There is no counter to the systems of power created by ZMH.

The data highlights little room for the other in the WSL's re-imagined world of professional surfing. The data demonstrates a WSL's one size fits all approach to a global league hyped with biased sensational media content creating a hyperreal circus, travelling from one exotic locale to another with one set format, duplicated wherever that event was in the world.

In effect, what you are left with (except for the contest waves) are events, no matter where held, looking the same. There is no differentiation in the core commodified product wherever it is found and transported. This approach is problematic given the global nature of the sport and the cultural and aesthetic differences in local surfing geographies and the importance of style and aesthetics and self-expression to those who surf.

Discussion Chapter Summary

The aim of the study was to critically analyse the new ownership structure, systems of power and governance within professional surfing as re-imagined by ZoSea Media Holdings with its invention and creation of a new competitive, professional surfing brand – the World Surf League. The study applied critical theory in general and the Marxist-inspired work of Guy Debord in particular to frame, analyse and deconstruct this paradigm shift in the sport of professional surfing.

Three research questions drove both the research agenda and defined the design of the selected research methods and the approach to data collection. These questions were: What does ZMH mean when it says it wants to 'professionalise' surfing. What does this professionalisation look like? What are the initial effects of this rationalisation process?

The research builds upon Evers' (2013) application of the Society of the Spectacle to the forerunner to the WSL, the ASP, and identifies a fundamental shift in the tectonic plates within the State of Modern Surfing (Hough-Snee and Eastman, 2017).

The work contributes to the understanding of a new phase in elite, professional surfing, as venture capitalists, seeking to expand investment portfolios, look to commodify and rationalise both traditional and emerging sports forms. Examples can be found in the drive to 'indoorise' sport (Bottenburg and Salome, 2010) and the work of Ponting (2018) exploring notions of the hyperreal and authenticity in an age of the 'surf park' where spectacular surfing contests are performed far away from surfing's liminal heartlands of remote beaches, reefs and points.

The work also highlights the role storytelling, marketing and cultural intermediaries play in creating, mediating and distributing new meanings in the formation of this spectacular surfing society. Therefore, the research may contribute in extending Laderman's (2014) work analysing the global migration of surfing hegemony and is another view to Evers' (2013) original analysis using Marxist critique of the forerunner to the WSL, the ASP.

This new phenomenon, the WSL, is one element of what Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017) identify as the State of Modern Surfing (SMS). This is important because, to audiences not familiar with surfing, the WSL version of surfing, *is* surfing. Further, its political and economic power within the SMS is substantial as it has monopoly ownership and total control of elite, professional surfing on a global basis. Hence Derek Hynd's concern that the WSL can lay claim to be the home of professional surfing but cannot lay claim to being the home of global surfing.

The discussion explains how and why ZMH used capital and business expertise to rapidly mobilise change within professional, elite surfing by commissioning research and using datafication techniques to understand existing and potential audiences for a new surfing product. This data is then used as a basis for developing power systems in the form of digital technologies to create, connect and distribute new surfing media forms under a new sign, the WSL, and signifying brand positioning identity as the 'Home of Global Surfing'. At the centre of this new 'home' is sports league format copying many other mainstream global sports such as American Football, basketball, baseball, football, motor racing and ice hockey.

A number of examples, from the methods used and the data gathered, were highlighted in the discussion evidencing McDonaldization, Disneyization and the hyperreal at play within the WSL integrated spectacle.

These findings extend academic work identifying the drive towards commercialisation within the sport of surfing but, unlike other work, this thesis highlights the alarming speed and scale at which these irreversible changes have been implemented by ZMH.

The research will now be concluded with an overview of the key findings of this process and the highlighting of the ways in which both the research questions were explored and the theoretical approaches were applied, to the study of the first year of the WSL.

5. Conclusions

The following chapter will seek to summarise the main arguments within, and findings of, this thesis. It will also recap the main results before moving on to provide a reflexive account of the quality of these findings, the problems encountered during its development and how the specific pathways taken have affected or influenced the results.

It is important, also, to highlight the research limitations and provide some insight into the researcher's personal learnings. This will naturally lead into the final section of recommendations of study and exploration in this rich, liminal and complex research field.

This work did not set out with a specific hypothesis as the research is experimental and the phenomenon, at the time of data gathering, was new and under theorised with little academic literature available to form a specific hypothesis to explanation what this work may find or uncover.

The research, however, did set out with a specific set of research questions which enabled the investigation of a significant, paradigm shift in the history of professional, elite surfing.

The central research questions were developed after reading literature associated with the processes of commodifying and codifying competitive surfing by Douglas Booth (1995, 2001); Clifton Evers (2013); Nick Ford and David Brown (2006); Kent Pearson (1979) and Matt Warshaw (2010).

Guy Debord's, *The Society of the Spectacle*, was used as a theoretical lens to examine this paradigm shift in professional surfing to provoke a dialectical argument in order to establish certain truths in the appropriation of the ASP by ZMH and its subsequent development of systems of power to make significant changes in the way professional surfing is practised, governed and represented. These truths can be defined in the specific findings and results as follows.

The data stemming from this research inform and underpin the key findings. These are:

- A new society of surfing spectacle created to enact significant change within the sport to meet the economic objectives of ZMH.
- A new system of power created using an array of illusionary spectacular processes and wholly owned media platforms, diverting critical gaze away from the commercial, cultural and political objectives of ZMH.
- Evidence of professional surfing sophisticatedly commodified and re-represented as a new brand (WSL) to compete with other traditional US League based sports, such as the National Football League (NFL), National Basketball Association (NBA), and

the National Hockey League (NHL). Aspects of McDonaldisation and Disneyization inherent in the production of this new brand. Surfers become 'athletes'.

- New media technologies and platforms created to mediate this new surfing spectacle and control all broadcast imagery.
- Capital investment and rapid transformation undertaken to monetise professional surfing through a WSL media application, sponsorships, an online WSL sports retail store, a partnership with air B&B and investment in a wave park business – Kelly Slater Wave Pools (KSWP).

The arc of this process has been personally illuminating. I set out to examine a new phenomenon, captivated in the way new technology and capital was being harnessed to reify a lifestyle sport to re-shape it into a mainstream sport. My positionality in relation to the work was both critical and cynical, questioning how this change could occur at such speed and in such a way without question, discussion, debate or resistance.

To this end, the process of analysis, objective, reflexive analysis, was difficult. Emotionally, culturally, physically. I am a surfer. I am also a Gen Xer who bought into surfing as a lifestyle choice. It was something to get away from the mundane, the modern amphitheatres of sport and immerse myself in the goodness of saltwater in some cove, on some beach, near some point or above some reef any time there was swell. The same reasons that drove and inspired one of my interviewees, Jamie Brisick.

And like Brisick, Derek Hynd and David Carson, ZMH's vision for surfing horrified me. The objectives were to take surfing in the opposite direction of all that was inherently good in the activity. The plan was to take an 'other' sport and make it part of everyday life. To look like mainstream sport, make it appeal to wider, more diverse audiences and monetise everything that was a part of it and many things that were not.

This journey of understanding mattered to me because my surfing world was changing and ZMH was only going to quicken that change. More surfers in the water, more beginners dropping in on waves, apple I-watch phone conversations taking place in the line-up, drones collecting footage whirring above my head. All me, me, and mine, mine, mine.

This research journey has allowed me to understand the we, we, we and ours, ours, ours of our liminal, coastal spaces. They are special sites of cultural reproduction and ZMH saw their commercial value and the opportunity of creating a sporting global league for comparatively little investment.

The work is both flawed and limited. There is no ZMH/WSL voice other than the words in orchestrated press release and media interviews. There could be more from tech-savvy

millennials, who are bought into the WSL brand and associated meanings. But that is not what this research tried to analyse. It was studying the processes of this change and how it happened. My position is that the WSL was so good at creating an integrated surfing spectacle while also introducing a range of recuperation strategies and forms of false consciousness, that individual agency was stripped away and eroded to such a degree that objective, critical observations would be moot and detournement futile.

The data in this work further suggests difference is either controlled or ignored in the WSL spectacle. If there is a dissenting surfer voice, that voice is silenced by sanctions. If there is a different political, cultural and geographical landscape, they too are ignored, save for the liminal spaces in and around the WSL sites of spectacular surfing. If there are different ways of surfing, they are ignored; suffocated by the rule bound, conformist competition format of WSL heats and events. If there is a dissenting media voice, it too, seems to be muzzled by the WSL spectacle.

Debord, in this surfing context, was right when, in thesis 13, he said:

“Spectacle is the sun that never sets over the empire of modern passivity.”

(Debord, G. 1994)

It is ironic to reflect that in marking the beginning of the WSL in 2015, the strapline of its global marketing campaign was: “You can’t script this”. A reference to the chaotic and unpredictable nature of surfing as presented by ZMH and the WSL.

This is spectacle at its dominating, suffocating best. Everything in the WSL spectacle, this data suggests, was scripted. Everything was predictable and conformist. Nothing left to chance. Not even the waves. And no one complained, resisted, protested. The domination of surfing by spectacle was absolute.

6. Recommendations for Future Research

There is a rich vein of research potential in tracking the development of the WSL and surfing as the sport moves toward inclusion in the 2020 Olympiad in Japan. This work only covers the first year of implementation of the WSL as a brand and a number of changes have occurred in professional surfing since the writing of this research.

Most pressing, I would suggest, is the changing gender balance and politics within the sport; the use of marketing communications and new technology to make surfing fan-centric

instead of industry-centric and the paradigm shift in the emergence of wave pools as sites of professional surf contests.

Indeed, a British female business leader who is sponsorship expert (at the time of writing), now heads the WSL and is one of the few women CEO's running a global sports franchise. You could argue that this is due to an understanding of the lucrative market for lifestyle apparel aimed at the female audience. What is clear is a re-imagining of professional surfing with women at the centre of this new surfing form. The commercial rationale for the elevation of women's surfing is one aspect and direction of research. Another would be extending Krista Comer's work analysing surf feminisms in the era of Trump and broaden that research agenda to other countries, climates, faiths and cultures.

The use of data, supporting Clifton Evers' view of current professional surfers as products, is another avenue of investigation needing some attention and consideration as is the techniques used to celebrify both surfers, contest venues and 'perfect' waves.

In these datafied times, information is used by brand marketers to mine and define new avenues of commercial opportunity. Marketing communications, so central to the WSL integrated spectacle, uses sophisticated harvesting techniques to collect data on its surf fan base to create a wave of products and services to increase the economic power of ZMH and the WSL. These are further fields of study to add to the body of knowledge in critical surf studies.

The wave pool and its global development, is clearly an emerging central part of this 'indoorisation' or inlandisation of surfing. ZMH has invested in the development of wave pool technology and with the Kelly Slater Wave Pool Company. Indeed, the WSL has firmly put the mediation of this paradigm shift in surfing at the centre of its integrated spectacle, heavily promoting fantastical imagery of elite surfers surfing a 'perfect' wave, deep in Southern California, miles and miles away from the coast. We have to ask; whose perfection does this represent? Jess Ponting's academic and historical research of the wave pool phenomenon would seem to provide a central space around which to explore new themes.

And what about detournement? I asked my interviewees what theirs would be. To Derek Hynd it was: 'Do what Dora would have done. Tear it down and start again'. While this will not happen and there are many impressive things about the WSL integrated spectacle, there could be a useful research journey exploring alternatives to competitive surfing and researching surfing and sports audiences to see how the commodified, McDonaldized, integrated spectacle of the WSL affects their understanding of what it is to be a surfer in these datafied and digital times.

7. Epilogue

This research set out to critically analyse the appropriation, rationalisation and re-branding of elite, professional surfing. It utilised a provocative Marxist theoretical approach, and the work of Guy Debord and his theory of spectacle, as the academic thread running through the thesis.

The approach was experimental, providing what would hopefully be seen as addition to the body of knowledge in the expanding field of critical surf studies. It is appropriate, therefore, to provide an epilogue to this research journey.

If we take an epilogue as a section of speech that serves as a form of comment or even a conclusion to what has happened during the arc of this academic investigation, then the following serves as the prose of praxis neatly summing the beginning and the end of this work and, it could be argued, signifies a substantial change in the tectonic plates of global surf culture and its histories.

The epilogue uses two significant 'voices' involved in this transformation and research process – Paul Speaker and Ian Cairns.

The initial verbatim voice, from Mr Speaker in a 2014 media interview with Forbes television, highlights the business strategy and opportunism of ZMH as it embarked on its rationalisation process culminating in the formation of the WSL. It is interesting to note the style of language so synonymous with the marketing communications and promotional culture created by ZMH's and its cultural intermediaries during this research timeline.

The epilogue ends with the resignation announcement of Mr Speaker in 2017 and a primary research quote related to this event by Mr Ian Cairns, a key figure interviewee for this work and one of the architects of the ASP, the forerunner to the WSL.

Forbes Television Headline (Aston):

Paul Speaker Reinvents the Surfing Business

Mr Speaker: "I think it (professional surfing) is certainly a diamond in the rough and we are working hard to see if we can polish it up... What has happened over the last thirty years is technology has caught up to be able to deliver live broadcast to the experience and we started to see a rabid fan base that could finally come and have a home... This opportunity in sports business does not exist anywhere else...I also find that there are not many business opportunities where you can take a fragmented sport, then bring them all together and also have a rabid fan base that is really digitally savvy and coming together in one home

for the first time. It just doesn't exist. So, this opportunity in sports business does not exist anywhere else."

Mr Speaker added: "You don't have a place where there is truly a global sport. You don't have an ownership team that owns not only production but events, a relationship with the athletes and full archive rights of the entire tour. And you don't have, um, the absolute ownership of all your distribution infrastructure, uh, so it doesn't exist anywhere else. You'd have to shop at five different places to have the same realisation with the NFL or MLB."

Fast forward two years and four months

Press Release (verbatim) reported on surf portal, Magicseaweed, 11 Jan 2017

Paul Speaker announced his resignation as CEO of the World Surf League today, promoting a flurry of speculation about the future direction of the WSL. Owner of the WSL Dirk Ziff will take over as interim CEO until a replacement is found.

Mr Speaker's statement is below (verbatim).

"I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday with family and friends, and is looking forward to 2017. For many of us, the turning of the calendar is a time for reflection, and sometimes, a time for decisions.

Holding co-ownership and CEO positions at the World Surf League over the last five years has been an incredible honor for me. It has also been an awesome task that has required long hours, heavy travel and family sacrifice. It has always been my intention to pass the baton to someone at the right time to lead the next phase of what we have all created. I believe that time is now. With the acquisition of the Kelly Slater Wave Company, we are at a remarkable inflection point in the League's history and we are ready for a new leader who can guide the organization to even greater accomplishments.

It is with this in mind that I have decided to step down as the CEO of the WSL at the end of January. I will continue to be a co-owner of the League and will work with the ownership group and Board of Directors to ensure a smooth transition until a new CEO is in place. As many of you are aware, Dirk Ziff has been a deeply committed and passionate co-owner of our League and he has agreed to bring that commitment to the role of interim CEO until a new chief executive is brought on board. Dirk and I have a close and collaborative partnership and will work together on a seamless transition.

Nearly five years ago, I journeyed to Australia to meet with the Board of Directors of what was then called the Association of Surfing Professionals to raise the audacious idea of an acquisition. Since the transaction was completed some months later, I have done my best to

build an organization with a best-in-class product and culture. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to oversee the transformation of professional surfing into the globally-recognized sport it is today. I have been privileged to share this journey with a great and committed group of people, and I owe so much to all of you who have worked tirelessly to elevate this sport to new heights. Your passion and dedication brought us to where we are today, and will be the driving force of our future success.

Among our many accomplishments together are: the remarkable increase in fan engagement; the highly professional quality of the broadcast; our stellar event production; the various athlete development programs, and the introduction of the sport to a new group of non-endemic corporate partners.

The commitment to our athletes in and out of the water has led us to many firsts for surfing, including: a pension plan for our athletes; the creation of the commissioner's office to secure the integrity of the sport; prize-purse parity between the men and the women of our championship tour, and the first multi-year surfers' agreement.

The WSL has pioneered new technologies and digital strategies that have been ahead of the curve, and have led to recognition throughout the sports industry as a first-mover in many areas. With a focus on the fan, surfing is now enjoyed on multiple media platforms around the globe, through traditional broadcast, but most frequently on our mobile app, website, and social media channels. We have also acknowledged the global nature of our sport by delivering our live event broadcast in English, French, Portuguese and Japanese.

I am incredibly excited for our future. The Kelly Slater Wave Company offers a tremendous and unprecedented opportunity for the League to dramatically shift the landscape of high-performance surfing around the world with guaranteed conditions, total fairness for the competitors, greatly enhanced live viewing, and major television coverage at a scheduled time. Our sport's inclusion in the 2020 Olympics is a testament to the continuing rise of surfing as a global participatory and spectator sport, and will allow WSL athletes to represent and compete for their countries for the first time ever on arguably the greatest sporting stage in the world.

I have enjoyed working with all of you more than you could ever imagine and now I am going to enjoy being a co-owner and a fan and spending time with my family who have been incredibly supportive over the last five years. I will miss you all dearly. You are a dynamic, committed and fun group that in many ways have become an extended family. Please keep up the incredible work.

See you at the beach. Paul"

Ian Cairns, Direct Message (DM) Tweet to me, 30 January 2017

“Yes, it’s the start of a new phase. Catastrophe or sensational? Who knows. All I know is Paul put lipstick on my 35-year-old model. He did not re-envision the WSL as a 21st century entity.”

Ends

8. Appendices

Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) and World Surf League (WSL)

SELECTED KEY DATES

The following selected key dates gives a timeline demonstrating significant change in a short period of time in the development of professional surfing. It is included to aid an overview of the type of change and speed of change as highlighted by the data and narrative analysis in this thesis. The dates, in chronological order, act as merely a guide and are selected as significant by the researcher in relation to the specifics of this study when considering the theoretical and methodological approaches used and the data gathered.

October 2012

ZoSea Media agrees to take over the running of the Association of Surf Professionals (ASP) following a board meeting of the ASP in Hossegor, France. ZoSea is a private company backed by American billionaire, Dirk Ziff, and founded by Paul Speaker, former president of Time Inc. Studios, Head of Marketing & Ideas at the National Football League (NFL) and a board member of Quiksilver and Terry Hardy, Kelly Slater's manager and agent.

February 2013

Paul Speaker becomes the new CEO of the ASP.

March 2013

First press conference where Speaker publicly outlines ZoSea's plans for the ASP.

July 2013

Surf fan riot in Huntington Beach following Alejo Muniz's win at the U.S. Open of Surfing. 10 people arrested after police fired rubber bullets and tear gas until crowds scattered.

October 2013

ASP announces a new media plan to partner with ESPN, Facebook and YouTube across television, social and digital platforms. A new logo is launched for the 2014 season. 26 contests unveiled for men and women plus a Big Wave Tour. All events will be accessible under one URL, ASP.com. Facebook would be 'pushing' notifications when an event goes live.

May 2014

Swellnet questions the publicly available viewing figures of ASP events broadcast on YouTube

July 2014

Jeremy Flores suspended for a month for confronting ASP officials and event staff after a judging call went against him at the J-Bay Open in South Africa. He was fined \$6,000.

July 2014

ASP opens New York City office

September 2014

ASP announces that it will rebrand as the World Surf League (WSL) in 2015

December 2014

21-year-old, Gabriel Medina, becomes the first Brazilian to win the men's world championship.

February 2015

WSL reveals YouTube viewing data for the final event of the 2014 season – The Billabong Pipe Masters. Alleging 6.2 million people watched the event's live stream via YouTube and of these 6.2million, up to 40% streamed the event on mobile devices.

February 2015

Gamblers Palace, an online sports betting portal. allows players to bet on the outcome of WSL events and place bets on who would be the World Champion with Kelly Slater cited as the odds-on favourite to win the 2015 men's championship.

March 2015

WSL introduces surfer numbers for both men and women's championship tour participants. Unlike other team league sports, Surfers can choose what number they want. WSL also introduces its own 'yellow jersey', copying the Tour de France marketing technique, to signify the championship leader in each event.

March 2015

WSL extends the 'waiting period' for the Quiksilver and Roxy Pro at Snapper Rocks in Australia to wait for the best surfing conditions. The extension is estimated to have cost the WSL \$100,000.

March 2015,

Pacific Broadcast appointed as WSL broadcast technical partner

March 2015

WSL launches its own, free to download, Mobile Application (App). The App is compatible on both Android and iOS, connecting users to live event broadcasts, schedules, rankings and Fantasy Surfer.

April 2015

NeuLion, a New York based digital media company, announced as WSL's Over-the-Top (OTT) provider allowing WSL to broadcast live events on their own media platforms.

May 2015

WSL announces Jeep as its global automotive partner.

WSL announces Samsung is to extend its sponsorship by naming both the men's and women's events as the Samsung Galaxy WSL World Championships.

May 2015

Kelly Slater launches PBTeen 'Eco-Conscious Collection' at WSL's headquarters in Santa Monica, California. The collection includes furniture, rugs and bean bags aimed at the teen consumer market.

June 2015

International Surf Association (ISF) submits an application to the International Olympic Commission (IOC) for surfing to be a sanctioned event at the Tokyo Olympics in 2020.

June 2015

Paul Speaker interviewed on Fox Business to discuss WSL webcast figures.

July 2015

Paul Speaker announces partnerships with Samsung, Jeep, Tag Heuer, Oi and GoPro and the launch of WSL Studios (modelled on NFL Studios) to create its own media and production company.

July 2015

Australian surfer and three-time World Champion, Mick Fanning, attacked by a shark during the final of the J-Bay Pro at Jeffrey's Bay in South Africa. The event was streamed live and exclusively via the WSL App. Fanning had his leg robe bitten off but managed to get to the safety of WSL boat carrying the in-water broadcast team. The event was cancelled and the finalists shared the championship tour points.

September 2015

Quiksilver, founded in Australia but now based in California, files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in the United States after losing 79% of its market value in the year.

September 2015

WSL's Chief Marketing Officer, Scott Hargrove, announces more than half a million downloads of the WSL App.

November 2015

WSL and Samsung produce the first surfing Virtual Reality (VR) transmission at the Moche Rip Curl Pro.

December 2015

Global Industry Analysts, Inc. announce in an industry-wide report, the world surfing market is forecast to reach \$13.24 billion by 2017.

December 2015

WSL launches its global marketing campaign – 'You can't script this'.

December 2015

Brazilian, Adriana de Souza, wins WSL men's championship. Hawaiian, Carissa Moore, wins the women's world championships.

December 2015

Kelly Slater reveals a secret WSL-backed wave pool in California developed by Kelly Slater Wave Pools.

Additional key dates**June 2016**

IOC votes to introduce surfing as an Olympic sport at the Tokyo Olympics in 2020.

January 2017

Paul Speaker steps down as CEO of the WSL.

March 2017

Samsung pulls out of WSL global sponsorship.

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