

SURFING'S GRAND IRONY:
THE LACK OF AWARENESS SURROUNDING
ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION CAUSED BY THE
SURF INDUSTRY

THESIS

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis hereby submitted by me for the degree Bachelor of Honours in Brand Leadership at the Vega School of Brand Leadership is my own independent work and has not previously been submitted by me at another university/faculty. I further cede copyright of the thesis proposal in the favour of the Vega School of Brand Leadership.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine whether surfers are aware of the impacts that the surf industry has on the environment as well as to uncover the reasons for the disconnect between surfers who as a community self-identify as being ecologically aware, and their increased consumption of environmentally unfriendly surf gear. The research will look into the power that surf media and advertisements have on consumers and the effects that this is having on the environment through promoting increased surf tourism and surfboard production. This will lead to a deeper understanding of why surfers, who are regarded by themselves and by others as custodians of the sea, do not exude the environmental actions associated with this title within their regular lifestyles.

A qualitative study was used investigating surfers' environmental knowledge of the surf industry and their environmental actions. The research tool used for the study was an online questionnaire distributed to 50 surfers within Cape Town with each question being thoroughly analysed thereafter. The findings show that surfers within Cape Town are largely unaware of the impact that the surf industry has on the environment which has been predominantly due to the lack of information about the subject on mainstream surf media. It was also found that surf advertisements reinforce the surf 'paradise' discourses discussed within the study therefore promoting the surfer's quest to find the perfect wave through long-distance traveling and investing into lighter and faster boards therefore increasing surf tourism and consumption to which have both detrimental social and environmental effects. The findings have also shown that there is a clear disconnect between surfers, who regard themselves as environmentalists and the environmental actions taken within their regular lifestyle.

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study describes the research that was undertaken to determine if surfers are aware of the impacts that commercial surf tourism and surfboard production have on the environment, and whether their depictions of 'surf paradise' replicate the discourses promoted within surf advertisements. With over 20 million people occupying the surf within the 21st century, the production of surfing apparel has inevitably had to keep up at the same pace at which the sport is developing. This translates into increased traveling in order to search for the 'perfect wave' and investing into better, warmer and more flexible wetsuits as well as lighter, faster boards leading to large amounts of pollution being emitted as well as using a surplus of natural resources (Hill & Abbott, 2009a). The research is therefore necessary due to the low levels of environmental awareness that surfers have toward the surf industry, therefore this research will help to educate others about these effects in the hopes of encouraging a more environmentally active community.

The research conducted within this study is relevant because it follows up on research done by Holland-Smith, Love & Lorimer (2013) who evaluated British surfer's attitudes and values towards their environment. Their findings show that although surfers were largely aware of the environmental impacts of surfing, they were unwilling to give up aspects of the sport even if the environment was being harmed. The research suggests that for many outdoor enthusiasts, personal benefits of sport outweigh the environmental responsibilities associated with being immersed in nature. In a similar study conducted by Hill & Abbott (2009a), they conducted their research on the topic of representation, identity and environmental action amongst surfers in Florida with the findings being similar to those within the first study. Surfers identified themselves to be ecologically aware and environmentally active, however when analysing the results the respondents lifestyles were incongruent with being environmentally progressive and active.

The rest of this chapter will outline the research problem, the aims and objectives of the study as well as a brief overview of research methodology, limitations that this study has encountered and lastly the contributions that make this research valuable to others.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to determine whether surfers are aware of the impacts that the surf industry has on the environment, and to provide a greater understanding as to why surfers, as a community consider themselves to be environmentalists, practice little environmentally friendly surf behaviour and consumption. This study will also determine whether surfer's depictions of what their own 'surf paradise' looks like replicates that of surf advertisements which would result in increased surf tourism and surfboard consumption.

From the findings of the literature mentioned above, it is clear that surfers in the United Kingdom and the United States represent themselves as an environmentally active and ecologically aware community, yet through this research it appears as though their environmental actions do not match this representation. This research presents an opportunity to explore an area in which no study of this kind has been conducted before, and this would be whether surfers within Cape Town match the findings found within previous studies and whether there is a lack of awareness of the impacts that the surf industry has on the environment.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to determine whether the average surfer within Cape Town is aware of the environmental impacts that increased surf tourism and the production of surfboards is having on the environment, as well as to determine whether surf advertisements depicting discourses of 'paradise' reflect the average surfer's version of surf 'paradise'.

1.4 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION

Are surfers aware of the impacts that commercial surf tourism and surfboard production have on the environment, and do their depictions of 'surf paradise' replicate that within surf advertisements?

1.5 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the impact of increased surf tourism in places that are considered as 'surf paradise' through surfing advertisements?
- What is the impact that surfboard production is having on the environment?
- Are surfers environmental concerns only invested within their surfing environment, such as the ocean and beaches?

1.6 SECONDARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To determine the impact of increased surf tourism in places that are considered as a 'surfing paradise' through surfing advertisements.
- To determine the impact that surfboard production is having on the environment.
- To find out whether surfer's environmental concerns are only invested within their surfing environment, such as ocean and beaches.

1.7 OVERVIEW

Surfing is a sport whereby humans are completely immersed within and dependent upon Mother Nature, creating this romantic notion of surfers having a deeper connection to their natural surroundings. Deep ecologists have indicated that surfers are more likely to display inherent environmentalism with the sport having been considered to be a tool for the development of an 'ecologically mature self' (Hill & Abbott, 2009b). The term 'environmentalism' has become slippery due to there being many different levels of intensity in attitudes and behaviour, particularly as it has gained momentum within the past few years (Hill & Abbott, 2009a). For the purpose of this study environmentalism is defined as 'advocacy for or work toward protecting the natural environment from destruction or pollution (American Heritage Dictionary, 2011).

Due to the technological developments of surfing products as well as surfing's rapidly increasing popularity, it has been heavily commoditised and fallen victim to the capitalistic consumer culture demonstrated by the annual net worth of \$8 billion (Davies, 2009). This has meant that the roots of surfing, namely being at one with nature through the traditional 'soul surfer' surfing culture, has become a sport whereby large surfing corporations such as Billabong, Quiksilver/Roxy and Ripcurl as well as large surfboard companies are churning out immense volumes of products in the cheapest, easiest and least environmentally friendly way possible. Through the use of advertisements these large corporations are promoting the

surfer's quest to find the perfect wave however through this process, third world surf destinations and the environment are bearing the brunt of overcrowding, resource depletion and increased toxic emissions.

Surfers are therefore losing touch with nature and their environment, yet cling onto being represented as an ecologically mature and active community as concluded by studies done by both Holland-Smith et al. (2013) & Hill & Abbott (2009a) mentioned above. Although research has indicated that surfers are misrepresented themselves, studies have not been directed at finding out whether a lack of awareness, particularly within the surf industry, is the primary reason for this behaviour, or lack thereof. This study will therefore be used to identify whether this is the case amongst Cape Townian surfers, and the following chapter will highlight how this will be done.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative study was used in order to gain deeper insight into the motivations and actions that underlie the choices that consumers make. Maxwell (2013) explains that qualitative research helps the researcher to better understand the meanings and perspectives of the subjects studied, whereby despite what the hypothesis or the researcher's views of the study are, qualitative research helps the researcher to view the world from the subject's point of view as opposed to their own. Furthermore, qualitative research helps the researcher to understand how these perspectives are shaped through the social, physical, and cultural contexts experienced by the subject, as well as the processes and reinforcements involved in maintaining these perspectives (Maxwell, 2013).

The instrument used was a questionnaire consisting largely of open-ended questions and a few close-ended questions enabling statistics to be drawn. These two approaches will be used to complement each other as it will allow for surfers to give their views on the surf industry and will be able to provide the researcher with more insight into the reasons for the lack of awareness around the surf industry as well as what surfers consider environmentally important.

The sample will be administered with an online questionnaire, intended to reach 50 participants, over the age of 18. For the questionnaires that will be conducted, non-probability sampling will be used, more precisely haphazard or convenience sampling which is inexpensive, efficient and convenient however can introduce bias into the sample as the results may not generalise to the extended population (Cozby, 2009). The data will be

recorded and then analysed qualitatively by looking at every question individually and drawing conclusions thereafter.

1.9 LIMITATIONS

It is important to first take into consideration the delimitations included within this study, as no conclusions can therefore be drawn on the topics that the design of the study did not cater for. The first is that it is purely the perspectives of the average surfer that was taken into consideration, this excludes professional surfers or those within the shaping industry's point of view. Another delimitation is that only surfboard production was closely examined, excluding the areas of wetsuit, wax and other surf gear.

With this in mind the practical limitations that may have hindered the study included the following:

- The research sample size could be too small in comparison with the total surfing population.
- It can only be generalised to surfers within Cape Town.
- Access to existing literature locally did not exist.
- Responses may have been difficult to analyse due it being extremely opinion-based.

1.10 BENEFITS AND VALUES:

- Research has been added to a field that was lacking, particularly within a South African context.
- Many people have been made aware of the environmental impacts of the surf industry through sharing aspects of this research online.
- Sustainable surf companies within Cape Town have insight into the surfers opinions as well as where it would be best to market their products.

1.11 PROPOSED LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Research Proposal

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusion

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Power

“I think I was chasing these perfect waves more than anything. You hear so much about Indonesia and see so much, so many photos in magazines, and when you surf and to see that stuff and not be able to experience it; it could drive a man insane.”
(Ponting, 2000 as cited in Ponting, MacDonald & Wearing, 2013)

2.1.1 THE COMMODIFICATION OF SURFING

The power of surfing media advertisements and the ideological discourses that they hold is evident in the above extract. These surfing advertisements that appear within double page spreads of surfing magazines advertising new surfing gear such as wetsuits, board shorts and other surf-related clothing are done so predominantly in the nature of the three large surfing companies, Billabong, Quiksilver whose women counterpart is Roxy, as well as Rip Curl. These print advertisements almost always feature professional sponsored surfers in remote destinations surfing the perfect wave, leaving surfers in the city drooling over just imagining themselves in that position.

The change in the image of surfing during the 1960's and 1970's meant that outside business interests began taking interest in commodifying the surfing lifestyle and shifting the position of surfing brands and surf-related companies to growing from instead of just the wider-fringe of the surf community, to beyond the surfing community (Lanagan, 2002). This has been enabled due to the fun and adventurous spirit that the sport, and lifestyle, of surfing successfully encapsulates within advertisements and surf apparel that present an idealised notion of surfing to those who do not, or are not capable, of surfing, which companies such as Quiksilver, Billabong and Rip Curl neatly advertise.

The first surfing magazine, *The Surfer*, was released in 1961 in newsletter, as a marketing tool for promoting film maker, John Severson's latest surf film, *Surf Happy*. 10,000 copies were made and within three months 5000 copies had been sold in Northern California alone (Ormrod, 2005). The success of the newsletter translated into publishing *The Surfer*, as a quarterly magazine which until today, remains one of the most popular surfing magazines globally. It promoted an American romantic notion of surf lifestyle captured through psychedelic front covers with surf travel articles and high quality photographs of surfers in remote destinations (Ormrod, 2005).

The Surfer soon became known as the ‘Surfer’s Bible’ and provided a romantic escape for surfers from reality as they paged through colourful pictures of the tropics with uncrowded waves, windless days and pristine beaches. Severson (as cited in Ormrod, 2005, p.43-44) described the magazine as, “*a dream magazine. I saw that right away. The perfect surf, the faraway places...we all dream about the same things.*”

2.1.2 THE EMERGENCE OF THE BIG THREE

The market share within surfing is dominated by three surfing companies, Billabong, Quiksilver and Rip Curl. These three companies were all born out of Australia by surfers, for surfers, during a time when functional items that surfers needed were not met by any mainstream culture commodities (Stranger, 2011). Starting out as cottage industries within their hometowns, the 1980’s saw that all of the Big Three had gone international and soon all branched into the wider realm of board sports, such as skateboarding and snowboarding (Johnson, 2013). Whilst first producing functional surf wear such as board shorts, wetsuits and surf clothing targeted towards surfers, they all branched out in order to cater for non-surfers through premium fashion and accessories that encompass the symbols of a surf-lifestyle (Stranger, 2011).

The three main brands discussed above all pride themselves on authenticity with their roots deeply connected with surfing and according to Boullon (as cited in Franklin, 2012) “the concept and perception of being ‘core’ and authentic was seen as an important element in the marketing and growth of the surf wear industry.” Although these brands could be considered as authentic due to their historical backgrounds in promoting the surf industry and being responsible for a large amount of progress and evolution within the sport, their messages that are carried across do not appear to be true to the roots of surfing and seem to value the exotic other, surf commodification, the non-surfer and sexualising women through the use of imagery within their advertisements (Franklin, 2012).

The notion of authenticity amongst the Big Three is a contentious issue as they have seemingly moved away from their core market, the surfers, to catering for expensive fashion needs of non-surfers. According to (Lanagan, 2003, p.179), authenticity refers to “the area in which the product was born, and by whom the product has been worn and promoted, that determines genuine surf wear.” When companies move away from this, authenticity begins to be questioned as in the case of Billabong and Quiksilver, and although they argue that their distribution is restricted to places along the fringes of surfing coastlines and popular surfing destinations, they have retail stores far removed from any coastline or any rideable wave such as inland Australia, which happens to be surrounded by desert (Lanagan, 2003).

2.1.3 SURFING SPONSORSHIPS

As the notion of competitive surfing began to overthrow that of the 'Soul Surfer', it began to breed a competitive, conformist approach to surfing as a product of surfing consumerism and commodification. When the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) body was formed during the 1970's, now known as the World Surf League (WSL), it bred a culture that idolised the beach culture regardless of whether they surfed or not. The WSL comprises of the top 44 competitive surfers in the world, both men and women, and involves a series of stops at the world's best waves during the course of the year. The majority of WSL athletes are all sponsored by one of the three surfing companies mentioned above and due to the popularity of these athletes becoming global surfing icons, these brands have gained a lot of attention and publicity.

The sponsorship of these athletes is an effective marketing tool, particularly when it reaches its target audience and has the ability to convince them in purchasing products advertised Buckley (2003) argues that this is done by high exposure of advertisements across media platforms as well as targeted towards more lifestyle based components, which in surfing's case is still in surfing magazines and surf shops. Within the past, surfing magazines that were targeted towards the recreational surfer were few and far between when in fact, these surfers make up majority of the surfing population worldwide. As mentioned previously, surfing companies began to target their advertisements towards this 'recreational weekend surfer' sector in the promotion of surf tourism to exotic locations, surf accessories and surf clothing by encompassing more lifestyle photos that captured the sense of fun and adventure whether you surf or not (Franklin, 2012).

According to Buckley (2003) there are three main components present through specialised surfing magazines. The first component lies in the trade information released about new sponsorship deals, competition information as well as personality profiles about sponsored surfers. The second component consists of advertisements for surfing equipment such as surfboards, accessories and clothing however the third and main component which encompasses both of the above components, is that of heavily illustrated articles. These articles usually consist of sponsored surfers in remote uncrowded locations wearing their sponsored gear often with a lone boat in the background highlighting that these waves can only be accessed via boat or surf charters (Buckley, 2003).

2.1.4 THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON SURF LIFESTYLE CONSTRUCTION

The shift of surfing companies has been steered away from one of a simple lifestyle that caters for the needs of only surfers, to rather a total market share capital of billions of dollars. This is done through the commodification of the picturesque surfing lifestyle in order to attract a non-surfer market to buy the fashion clothing produced by the companies and thus appeared to have lost a lot of their authenticity due to moving away from catering to the 'core' (Franklin, 2012). This is seen through the women's advertisement such as in figure 2.2 below which features a Roxy sponsored 'surfer' underwater kissing a dolphin. This image provokes symbols of nature and sustainability however when looking deeper into the manufacturing of Roxy's apparel, and majority of other surf companies, they are exploiting workers in sweatshops in Thailand and China where their apparel is made as well as contributing to pollution.



Figure 2.1: A Roxy 'Surfer' kissing a dolphin underwater (Roxy, 2015).

From looking at figures 2.3 and 2.4 below, advertisements by Roxy and the other by Billabong respectively, they both visually provide symbols of paradise, remote locations, tropical destinations, adventure, the exotic other and a hint of mystery that encapsulate the essence of the quest for the 'perfect wave'. It is these advertisements that sell surf wear, surf accessories and surf travel packages so that an escape from our normal daily routines is provided (Ponting, MacDonald & Wearing, 2013). As companies continue to run images in billboard size in stores and double spread advertisements continue to slap us in the face in every surfing magazine that we open, the continuing transformation of what once were remote, uncrowded and pristine surf destinations to over-crowded, social and environmental

degraded crumpled posters thrown in the bin, replaced with the newer, better and more recent photographs of paradise.



Figure 2.2: A Roxy advertisement (Roxy, 2015)



Figure 2.3: A Billabong Board short advertisement (Billabong, 2015)

2.1.5 A CASE STUDY: RIPCURL 'THE SEARCH' CAMPAIGN



Figure 2.4: RipCurl 'Welcome to the Jungle' print advertisement, as part of The Search Campaign (Ryan, 2014).

All of the Big Three have launched campaigns set in tropical, uncrowded locations in the search for the perfect wave. Rip Curl launched 'The Search' campaign which has remained one of the longest and well-known surfing campaigns, which encompasses 'going back to surfing's roots', started by a surf film in the form of a documentary whereby a few Rip Curl sponsored athletes embarked on a journey to find the perfect wave in places such as the Mentawai's.

In figure 2.4 above, the scenery surrounding the surfers is extremely lush, with agricultural fields and palm trees growing from the fertile soils of the fields. The text reads 'Welcome to the Jungle' highlighting the 'exoticness' of this tropical scenery and allowing the reader to almost feel as though they are there, walking alongside the surfers in the warm and humid atmosphere so different from many readers environment.

The image creates wanderlust and a desire to explore the globe in search of new and unfound empty waves, such as these two surfers are doing. For majority of recreational surfers, these powerful images elicit emotions of wanderlust and a craving for adventure, conjuring up images in their mind of their surf trip similar to that of the image in front of them; new surfboards, new surf gear and remote locations only accessible by surf charters. The downside effect is often overlooked and draws on points mentioned in the Mentawai Case Study in the previous chapter, thus resulting in increased effects of overcrowding, pollution both through waste from the trip itself as well as pollution through living up to 'the dream' by getting new surfboards and surf gear, without which, the trip would not be the same.

2.2 The Paradise

“It blew my mind. I didn’t know that waves like that existed, let alone with no one surfing them,” he tells me. He raced around the few charter boats in the area trying to find someone to surf with but there were no takers, so he surfed it alone for hours.”

“For most of us, the Mentawais is a fleeting excursion into an exotic alternative reality, where we briefly encounter third world extremes, might lie awake worrying about the prospects of earthquakes, tsunamis, malaria, close encounters with reef. We come and go for a two-week holiday with our travel insurance and face only remote odds of getting caught up in any of the seismic calamities that have rocked the area in recent years. For those who call the Mentawai’s home, though, those odds start to stack up.” (Baker, 2012:Online).

2.2.1 CONSTRUCTING A HISTORY OF SURF TOURISM

2.2.1.1. In the beginning

Surfing first became constructed as a tourist discourse during the early twentieth century within Hawaii and the French Polynesian islands (Ormrod, 2005). Although Hawaii is deemed as the birthplace and ‘Holy Grail’ of surfing, there are reports of wave riding from many different places within the world dating as far back as 3000 B.C. in pre-Inca Chan Chan, now known as Peru, whereby the locals would their ride reed canoes, called *cabillito’s*, upon the crest of the wave (Warshaw, 2004). It is known to be a pastime along the Atlantic Coast of Africa whereby wooden hand boards were used, as well as within Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Polynesia.

It was mainly in Hawaii however that surfing was a part of their rich cultural identity and ancient traditions. According to Ponting (2008), Hawaiian authorities enforced a system of rights that allowed some the exclusivity to surf better waves above others, and as a result, Hawaiians who weren’t granted these rights, started to explore nearby islands in search of new waves. On the arrival of Captain Cook and his crew on board ‘*The Resolution*’, the dissemination of surfing within Hawaii had already begun, and when more European missionaries arrived, surfing started to decline rapidly (Ormrod, 2005).

At the end of the nineteenth century, Hawaiians started to market their country, particularly towards nearby Americans, of a place of unspoiled beauty and being Earth’s Paradise. Tourism marketing and media played a large role in saving surfing within Hawaii, and soon Americans were flocking to the country in the search for the ‘exotic other’, whilst Hawaii’s famous Olympic swimming champion, Duke Kahanamoku and Irish Hawaiian surfer, George Freeth demonstrated surfing to the newcomers. Eventually the two were hired to promote a

new railway near the beaches by giving demonstrations along the coastlines that the railway ran along (Ormrod, 2005; Ponting, 2008).

Travel soon become central to surfing and became an integral part of what it meant to be a 'true surfer'. Surf travel was the be all and end all for American surfers as they would make pilgrimages to 'The Islands' in search of waves and in an attempt to 'spiritually' experience the home of surfing (Hill & Abbott, 2009). The notion of surf tourism within America was translated into the popular television programme, *Gidget*, explored through the character of Kahuna, a Hawaiian chief who travelled the islands to surf.

The epitome of surf consumerism and surf exploitation was best exemplified by Bruce Brown's famous surfing film, *The Endless Summer*, whereby young Americans set off on a global quest in order to find 'the perfect other' in 'exotic' locations such as Africa (Ormrod, 2005). One of the major elements in *The Endless Summer*, highlighted by Hill & Abbott (2009) is the naming of surf breaks such as Bruce's Beauties, a popular wave in St. Francis Bay, which illuminates as one example, overriding any indigenous names given these local surfing breaks by the people who live there. Ormrod (2005) further elaborates on this ownership as a colonial enterprise and thus, the search for the perfect wave is not much more than "an underpinning value of American culture, an aim to extend the frontier of "civilization" and explore the wilderness". According to Kampioen (2003, p.98), it was through *The Endless Summer* that put the quest for the perfect wave on the global map, "it was the epiphany of Cape Saint Francis – that perfect, peeling wave... - that ignited the explosion of surf travel that would shape the sport for the rest of the millennium."

2.2.1.2 21st Century Surf Travel

Today there are over 10 million surfers worldwide growing at 12-16% every year which has propelled it into a multi-billion dollar industry, of which over \$10 billion are spent on travel costs every year (Buckley, 2002). There are two predominant types of surf tourism that exist, the first being recreational surf travel, and the second being commercial surf tourism. The category of recreational surf travel encompasses a much more traditional method of exploring new surf breaks and is categorised by traveling using one's own transport with a self-made itinerary as well as staying in local accommodation or camping. The second category involves the process whereby surf operating companies organise one's whole trip, itinerary and provide accommodation and food for whilst sometimes including private access to selected surf breaks (Buckley, 2002).

The most recent and rapidly growing sector of the surf tourism industry is an accurate example of commercial surf tourism industry, and involves the use of boat charter companies and luxury surf resorts, particularly in the Indo-Pacific Islands such as the

Mentawai's. The marketing of these luxury surf charters are done so through surfing magazine advertisements, surf travel agents, online and through social media as well as through surf movies and documentaries, professional surfing World Tour stops, and through large surfing corporations who sponsor their athlete's trips in search of the 'Perfect Wave' (Buckley, 2002). The influence of the surfing corporations on surfers to embark on a quest in search of the 'perfect wave' through their advertisements and sponsorships will be discussed in chapter two of this literature review.

Although 21st century surf tourism to third world countries has boosted their economies and provided many local islanders with an employment opportunity, it appears that with the increasing amounts of surf charter companies operating in what once were remote locations, the detrimental effects are beginning to be uncovered. If we look at this through the lens of neo-colonialism, surfers on their quest for the perfect waves are contributing to colonialism in exotic locations whilst venturing out into the wilderness, or rather beyond their home break. Surf travel has led to homogenisation of culture within the locations as well as pollution, prostitution, resource depletion and reef degradation which will be unpacked later in this chapter in a case study of Mentawai Islands.

2.2.2 SURF TOURISM: A CRITICAL THEORY APPROACH

2.2.2.1 Critical Tourism Theory

Tourism is now one of the largest contributing economic sectors within smaller surf yielding third-world countries such as Sumatra, Fiji and Indonesia (Buckley, 2002). The large regions have made sure that infrastructure such as airports, accommodation and transport such as ferries and cars are readily available in order to host the increasing numbers of surf tourists flocking to these regions every year. The negative social, environmental and cultural impacts that this is having upon these regions will be addressed using critical tourism theory as well how surf tourism is a socially constructed space through the discourses of surf media.

Critical theory in tourism holds the notion of power as being a key aspect in analysing the critical approach. By analysing the discourses of power within critical theory, allows for the identification of whose interests are being served in the context of tourism. The action and direction of power implies that a system of beliefs are being executed, whether consciously or unconsciously, often by the tourists and this system is adhered to and implemented within the foreign culture (Tribe, 2007).

The system of beliefs and exercised power within the tourism sphere opens another important aspect of critical tourism theory, and that is ideological discourses through the power of influence. In identifying whose interests are being served, it is important to look at it

from the perspective of ideological influences and their overwhelming nature, whereby it makes it hard to think and behave outside of these all-encompassing influences (Tribe, 2007). This leads to Westerners coming into foreign countries and exercising their ideological influences of power, often unintentionally and rather through Western influence such as money, accommodation and services in the belief that they are contributing positively, thus controlling and diluting cultures to which they are visitors, without any resistance.

This has led to a contemporary culture whereby Westerners and those coming from first-world countries are acculturated to feeling comfortable with exercising power and domination, something not much different to colonisation, instead of exercising equality in the form of independence and power (Kincheloe & MacLaren, n.d., as cited in Tribe, 2007). According to one of the four features of power relations described by Foucault, when put into a tourism context further explains the reasons why these ideological influences become so prominent. The challenge remains that tourists are often free to wander around any spaces and become what is termed as a Foucauldian target, and is seen just as a prisoner is seen which Foucault describes as being a positioned out of their institutional systems, i.e. they operate from outside their comfort zones (Cheong & Miller, 2000).

Tourists are by definition seen as people outside of their cultural and institutional comfort zones and are often at a linguistic disadvantage whilst being exposed to new beliefs and expectations that may not align with their own. This leads to insecurities within tourists whilst marvelling at the unexpected, and therefore they then revisit their political status in order to adjust to the unfamiliar situation with behaviour and justifications. Tourists therefore exercise ideological influences of power due to their trip, their journey (Cheong & Miller, 2000).

2.2.3 SURF MEDIA DISCOURSES

“Names like Waikiki, Nice, Majorca, Acapulco, Bali and Marrakech roll across the page evoking images of sun, pleasure and escape. In a world dominated by bureaucracies and machines, we are offered these destinations as retreats to a childlike world in which the sun always shines, and we can gratify all our desires.” (Ormrod, 2005).

The above extract neatly identifies several discourses associated with searching for the perfect wave. It is a form of escapism from reality, an alternative reality and a place, wherever it may be, that has been advertised time and time again as an exotic paradise. It encompasses the childish excitement attached with this search and escape, however it also notions towards the childlike idea that a place where suddenly all of life's problems vanishes,

an ideology imprinted in our minds due to the constant believing of this image sold to us by surfing media.

The idea of 'Surf Paradise' represents the pinnacle of surfing, and this has been socially constructed for us and has symbols attached to it such as 'freedom', 'youthfulness', 'playfulness' and 'escapism' to name a few (Ponting, 2008).

This highlights the role that the surf media have on encouraging surf tourism to exotic locations through imagery of pre-departure in anticipation of the unknown, arrival upon the destination and the experience whilst at the destination, therefore contributing to 'Surf Paradise' as being a socially constructed tourist space (Ponting, 2008). It is because of this widely advertised ideology of paradise that has led to the colonising of the smaller islands, a form of inequality and power being exercised as well as familiarising potential tourists to these regions, to the unfamiliar through imagery and stories, that make foreigners to the land feel in control.

2.2.4 A CASE STUDY: MENTAWAI ARCHIPELAGO

The Mentawai Islands are situated off of the coast of central west Sumatra and have been considered as the most wave rich stretch of coastline in the world as open ocean swells hit the shallow coral reefs, forming what surfers would most probably classify as the 'perfect wave' (Ponting, 2008). The ongoing quest for the perfect wave in the late twentieth century led to the remote discovery of the Mentawai and within six years, the Mentawai's became the most photographed and videoed wave on Earth. Its infrastructure transformed into catering for the needs of locals to the hospitality needs of tourists and 36 on-board surfing charters occupied the waters whilst on land the real estate market has exploded (Hill & Abbott, 2009).

For a typical ten day charter inclusive of air fares, it can roughly cost up \$2750 per person, of which almost nothing filters down to the locals who often own the reefs and beaches that the surfing charters are near, and that the surfers visit. As much as surf tourism contributes to the growth of the economic sector, it equally matches this with environmental degradation and depletion of resources. The transportation of tourists, materials, packaged goods and other commodities to keep guests satisfied all contribute to air and water pollution through increased fumes, leaked diesel into the ocean as well as the disposal of rubbish overboard (Hill & Abbott, 2009).

Increased surf tourism within the Mentawai's has led to water complications due to the increased consumption, increased rubbish dumps and landfill sites which has leached into the soil and water, affecting and polluting the quality for the locals who cannot afford

purification processes. The lack of a proper sewerage treatment system has led to the eutrophication of the shallow waters offshore resulting in the degradation of the once pristine coral reefs and the sea life that relies upon this richness for survival (Buckley, 2002).

Traditionally, locals who inhabit these islands lived in an organic and natural way whereby there was little inorganic waste, however with increased tourism levels and resorts upon these islands, there has been an increase in the toxic compounds found in the waste such as batteries, plastics and detergents to name a few.

Equally as concerning, the social impacts that surf tourism has had on the Mentawai Islands as a result of the introduction of money being the be-all and end-all has led to increased crime, prostitution, drugs and violence. As outsiders infiltrate the economy and property market, luxury resorts are being built which require the locals to work as the staff in a place that they could never afford to stay in, making them feel like second class citizens within their own homes (Buckley, 2002).

The effects of surf tourism within third-world countries is not only limited to the Mentawai's and surroundings, but rather it is another destination that has been damaged due to the commodification of surf tourism: "trash, roads, erosion, water pollution, development, environmental degradation, resource depletion – inevitably follow. . . the list of soiled Third-World surf paradises . . . is long and growing" (Bartoletti, as cited in Hill & Abbott, 2008, p.289).

2.3 The Pollution

“As I paddle out into the surf on a crystal clear California morning, brown pelicans swoop low over the ocean, and a flock of seagulls of Hitchcockian proportions soar above a deserted beach where a harbor seal lolls in the sunshine. With surfers carving the face of a wave breaking off this reef just north of Santa Cruz, it’s the kind of nature-boy scene that sells billions of dollars of surf apparel and gear to coastal dwellers and landlocked wannabes. There’s nothing pristine about what’s under our feet, though. The typical surfboard is a slab of petroleum-spawned polyurethane slathered in layers of toxic polyester resin. Gnarly, and not in a good way.” (Woody, 2012:Online)

2.3.1 THE RISE OF ENVIRONMENTALISM IN SURFING

The sport of surfing is intrinsically linked and aligned to the health of Mother Nature and has been celebrated as a sport that connects the people with the environment, often being concerned with romantic notions of being a ‘pure’ sport whereby nature and humans come together. Within the last century we have observed that this romantic notion is nothing more than an ideology, except in rare cases through companies such as Patagonia & foundations such as The Surfrider Foundation.

The Soul Surfer is defined by Warshaw (2003, as cited in Heywood & Montgomery, 2008 p.157) as “the durable if overused expression of generally used to describe the type of riding by non-commercial, non-competitive surfers; the soul surfer is often thought of as the ‘pure’ surfer”. Kampion (2003; as cited in Heywood & Montgomery, 2008) argues that the traditional soul surfer has an intrinsic relationship to the theory of the value of nature, whereby the natural world is seen as being invaluable beyond that of its usefulness to humans. The traditional approach has been de-romanticised and realigned with reality and thus the term ‘pragmatic soul surfer’ was born, which considers pro-environmental stances that traditional soul surfers exude but more importantly take into consideration the realities of everyday life conveniences such as modern surfboards, warmer wetsuits and other surfing apparel whereby the environmental background of large companies that are producing these goods is not taken into account (Heywood & Montgomery, 2008).

A new era of surfing was born in the 20’s in places such as California whereby discourses such as surf consumerism and the search of the ‘exotic other’ was seen through the exploitation of surf films such as ‘Endless Summer’, surf music from bands like The Beach Boys and the quest for searching for ‘the perfect wave’ in exotic locations (Ormrod, 2005). In the 1960’s and 70’s, the image of surfing began to shift from the ‘golden beach boy’ to reflect

more contemporary discourses relevant to the times such as political and environmental activism during which many environmental activist organisations were born. The early organisations, such as the Hawaiian 'Save Our Sea', as well as the world renowned 'The Surfrider Foundation', all started due to surfer's home breaks coming under threat due to construction and oil spills and thus environmentalism in surfing was reborn (Hill & Abbott, 2009a).

2.3.2 THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH SURFBOARD CONSTRUCTION

The manufacturing of modern surfboards remains one of surfing's greatest contradictions through the high levels of toxic petrochemicals, which has massive implications on those working with the toxic chemicals such as surfboard shapers as well as having harmful effects on the environment during the production and destruction of surfboards. The construction of surfboards dates back to the Polynesian forefathers of surfing in Hawaii who treated the process as a sacred act using the Wili Wili, Koa & Ula trees, as well as natural oils (Davies, 2009).

With the end of WWII came technological advances which resulted in the jump from using heavy wood to using lightweight polystyrene foam, resin and fibreglass all of which aided the surfboard's buoyancy resulting in the boards being shorter and easier to manoeuvre on a wave leading to a new era of revolutionary competitive surfing (Power, 2010). This shift in technology saw a range of different surfboard shapes and sizes which we see today which has resulted in boards being designed for only certain conditions encouraging many surfers to own what is termed as a 'quiver', defined by Geography Compass (2008, as cited in Hill & Abbott, 2009b pp.283-284) as "a multitude of surfboards in order to be prepared for any type of surfing condition." The irony stands that the art of creating surfboards began as a natural act connecting nature with humans, however the more that surfing has progressed and evolved in conjunction with 21st century technological advancements, surfers are currently riding toxic chunks of plastic and foam (Power, 2010).

There are three main elements that have to be taken into consideration when constructing a surfboard. The first element is the blanks often comprising of PU, the second element being the fibreglass rolls and the third being resin (Power, 2010). PU is essentially made up of refined petroleum, which is made up of corrosive and sometimes poisonous crude oil. Power (2010) has described that PU blanks contain three chemicals, one of which is Toluene Diisocyanate (TDI), a life threatening toxic chemical known to have side-effects such as jaundice, lung and liver corrosion as well as increased asthmatic vulnerability. TDI is

released when shapers cut into their new blanks as well as when blowing out the blanks before distribution.

The next phase of shaping process is to apply and sand down the fibreglass on the foam blank releasing fine fibreglass particles which have been the cause for several cases of emphysema as well as other respiratory illnesses (Power, 2010). Due to surfboards requiring A-grade fibreglass, it requires a high energy intensive chemical plant in order to produce the amount needed within the surf industry. Dick van Straalen, a seasoned shaper within the 1980's, recalled two events whereby he was witness to shapers who became addicted to fibreglass chemicals and as a result lost their teeth (Power, 2010).

The third and final phase is applying the polyester resin to the fibreglass in order to make it harden. The main ingredient in resin is Styrene Monomer which has been classed as a carcinogen as it causes 'drowsiness, liver damage and dizziness' (Carroll, 1989 p.83, as cited in Power, 2010). Styrene releases Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's) which contributes to the formation of smog, as well having side effects of contributing to respiratory damages and bronchitis (Power, 2010).

2.3.3. ECO-FRIENDLY SURFBOARDS

Clark Foam, the world's largest surfboard foam-blank suppliers, was shut down in 2005 by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) due to copious amounts of TDI being injected into the atmosphere and therefore breaching EPA standards (Hill & Abbott, 2009a). Although this was seen as the right decision to make as it breached EPA's standards, it posed a counter-problem due to the decrease of durability within the foam which has led to increased surfboard production (Hill & Abbott, 2009a). This however began the slow transformation of developing more environmentally friendly surfboards whereby alternatives were needed to replace PU foam.

It was found during numerous life cycle analysis (LCA) done on the production of surfboards, the CO₂ footprint of a typical modern surfboard is very large, and equals that to the production of laptops and cell phones. For a standard size surfboard which is typically 6'0 (feet), the LCA revealed that during the production process, 600lbs of CO₂ was emitted for a board that only weighs around 5.5lbs (Sustainable Surf, 2015). The materials currently used in the foam, resin & fibreglass do not break down when they are disposed of like other composite manufactured products and therefore alternative materials are needed in order to overcome this (Ngo, Hall, Kohl & Perry, 2011). The challenge lies in finding alternatives that are durable, lightweight, have flexibility and function equally as well as original performance boards.

Some shapers today have switched over to using expanded polystyrene foam (EPS), which was actually in use before PU dominated the surfboard industry. Surfers have noted that using EPS as a foam core has led to the boards being a lot lighter, quicker and softer due to the expanded particles allowing more air between the foam, and the greatest benefit is that it is TDI free, however still produces a large amount of carbon dioxide emissions during the production process (Power, 2010). Firewire, a large alternative surfboard shaping company, as well as SurfTech, have incorporated these materials into their shaping methods. The problem that consumers have with these boards is that they are shaped by machines instead of custom made for the individual (Power, 2010).

Another type of foam which has been utilised by very few shapers is BioFoam. This foam essentially substitutes PU foam which is based on petroleum oils with foam that is based on natural agricultural oils, obviously causing less harmful effects on the environment and on human health (Sullivan, 2007). According to Macmahon (2007, as cited in Sullivan, 2007) the using BioFoam and other TDI free foam, this will result in “36% less global warming emissions, a 61% reduction in non-renewable energy use, and a 23% reduction in total energy demand.”

2.3.4 BRAND SUSTAINABILITY IN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY SURFBOARDS

In previous studies done whereby research was conducted in order to establish environmental action within the surf culture, it was found that a large percentage of surfers considered themselves to be ‘environmentalists’ and ocean advocates. According to Warshaw (2003), it was found that surfers tend to be ‘dormant environmentalists’ and blindly perpetuate the role of ‘creative destruction’ of surfboards through consumerism and capitalism whereby there is demand for a newer, more durable and specialised product (Hill & Abbott, 2009a).

Unfortunately many eco-friendly surf companies have only established themselves within the past year and are in competition with companies such as Quiksilver & Billabong that have who have successfully positioned themselves as fashionable whilst encompassing the essence of what it means to be a surfer within their clothing, wetsuits and the boards that they stock. Many of these large companies hide behind the ‘green curtain effect’, whereby companies hide behind a couple of eco-products such as one wetsuit or a line of clothing, however their method of exploiting the environment and cheap labour has not changed (Davies, 2009).

The lack of transparency between themselves and the consumer often gives the consumers of sense of distrust giving them little to no insight into the way that their company works. This is where eco-friendly surfboard companies need to take charge and offer full transparency to

their consumers allowing the consumers to not only buy their boards, but into the brand allowing them to feel the connection between nature and humans, capturing the elements of a soul surfer whilst allowing them to be part of the transformation of surfing starting with the most important tool, the surfboard.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology:

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

A qualitative approach will be used for the sake of this study in order to further one's understanding of the attitudes within the surf community towards the unfriendly environmental actions carried out by the surf tourism sector, large surfing corporations such as Rip Curl, Billabong & Quiksilver who play a predominant role in promoting the surf tourism industry, as well as the toxic ingredients found within surfing equipment, namely surfboards.

In particular, a phenomenological qualitative approach will be undertaken as this will allow the researcher to understand the lived experiences and the meaning and value that those mentioned above add to the subject's life. According to Lester (1999), phenomenological approaches are used to gain a deeper understanding into personal experiences and subjectivity, within the realm of one's own knowledge subjective interpretations and perspectives. By using this approach, the researcher will be able to gain deeper insight into the motivations and actions that underlie the choices that consumers make with regard to surfing holidays, buying from large surfing brands as well as what motivates their choice behind buying traditional, yet toxic surfing equipment.

3.2 RESEARCH TOOL

The research tool utilised will be online questionnaires sent out to the surf community in order to further one's understanding of if and why surfers are unaware of the environmental impacts of the surf industry and to what extent large surfing corporations, namely Quiksilver/Roxy, Billabong and Ripcurl, motivate and influence consumers choices with regard to surf holidays and surf gear through brand communication in the form of advertisements.

The questionnaire will be made up of largely open-ended questions with a few close-ended questions enabling statistics to be drawn. The data will then be recorded and analysed qualitatively. This type of questionnaire will aid the researcher in gaining a deeper understanding as to whether surfers are aware of the impacts that the surf industry has on the environment.

3.2.1 Population & Sampling

There are three components that make up a target population. The first is refers to the total population in which the entire population is referred to for research. The second component

is the target population which is the sample that is selected out of the total population which is predetermined and should be of a sample size that can be generalised to the total population. The third and final component of the population is that of return population of the intended target population, therefore the amount of respondents of the research which is used for the research analysis (Ferreira, 2008). In this case, the target population will comprise of both male and female surfers within Cape Town with a requirement being that they must own their own surfboard.

According to Cozby (2009) a sample is constituted from the population that is of interest to the researcher, in this case it would be surfers within Cape Town. The sample will be administered with an online questionnaire, intended to reach 50 participants over the age of 19. For the questionnaires that will be conducted, non-probability sampling will be used, more precisely convenience sampling which is inexpensive and efficient however can introduce bias into the sample as the results may not generalise to the total population (Cozby, 2009). Due to there being a lot less female surfers in general, with Cape Town being no exception, at least 20 respondents will be female in order to avoid gender-biased trends, especially as this has been noted before in previous surf and environmental studies surfing.

3.3 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability and validity are considered to be the most important aspects of any study. Reliability is defined by Joppe (2000, as cited in Golafshani, 2003) as 'the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population...if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology.'

Validity is described by Joppe (2000, as cited in Golafshani, 2003) as 'determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure.' With these two definitions in mind it can be concluded that this study is both reliable and valid.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is imperative that ethical considerations are taken into account in order to make sure that no one was harmed or misrepresented during the study. For this study, all respondents remained anonymous to both the researchers as well the reader in order to protect their views and opinions.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

All data that was interpreted within this section was done so in a professional manner in order to maintain validity, reliability and an unbiased analysis.

Despite sampling and population being covered within the previous chapter, a brief summary will be provided in order to help create context for the results uncovered. 50 surfers over the age of 19, both male and female who resided within Cape Town were asked to complete an online questionnaire. The requirement was that they had to own a surfboard.

This chapter will unpack the findings from the questionnaires by going through each question individually, followed by a descriptive analysis of the data found as well as a possible graph complementing the analysis.

4.2 QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was asked in such a way in order to cover three different topics relevant to my study. Apart from measuring independent variables such as age and gender, the first section, comprising of questions 3-7 aimed to uncover whether surfers considered themselves as environmentalists and whether their actions in their daily life matched their answer. Questions 8-11 aimed to gather surfers opinions of the surf industry and the impact that it has on the environment, and whether this impacted support sustainable surf gear or not. The final questions 12-14 uncover whether surfer's previous and ideal future surf holidays, match that of the discourses advertised by the surf industry through their advertisements.

4.2.1 Questions 1-2

Question 1: *'What is your gender?'* and question 2: *'What is your age?'* are measuring independent variables of the questionnaire participants. The reason why gender was asked was to ensure that at least 40% of respondents were female. The reason why age was needed was to make sure that the responses captured were from surfers over the age of 19 as this would help to ensure that all decisions involved in purchasing a surfboard or surf gear were that of their own choice and not of their parents or guardians.

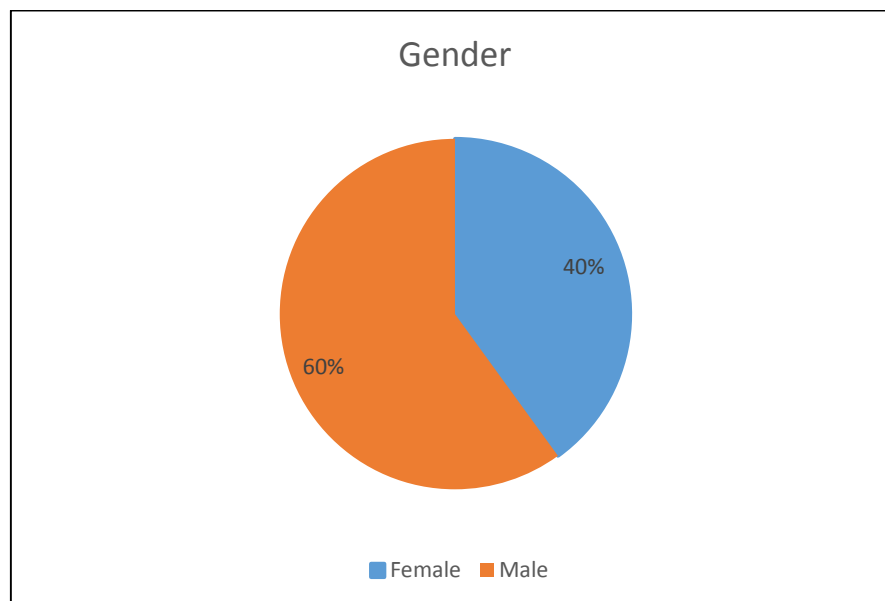


Figure 4.1: Pie chart to show gender represented in the study

The participants ranged from ages 19-65, with the mean age being 23.5. The two outliers were 56 and 65, however the wide scope of ages helped to gage a general understanding of the topic at hand from surfers across all age groups.

4.2.2 Questions 3-7

The following five questions were directed at gaging whether surfers environmental actions within their daily life matched that of their answer as to whether they considered themselves an environmentalist. Lastly it was used to determine what environmental issues surfers are predominantly concerned with.

Question 3 asked the respondents, '*Do you consider yourself an environmentalist?*' with an overwhelming 94% of respondents answering 'yes'. The definition of an environmentalist according to this study was provided in the question for the respondents to refer to.

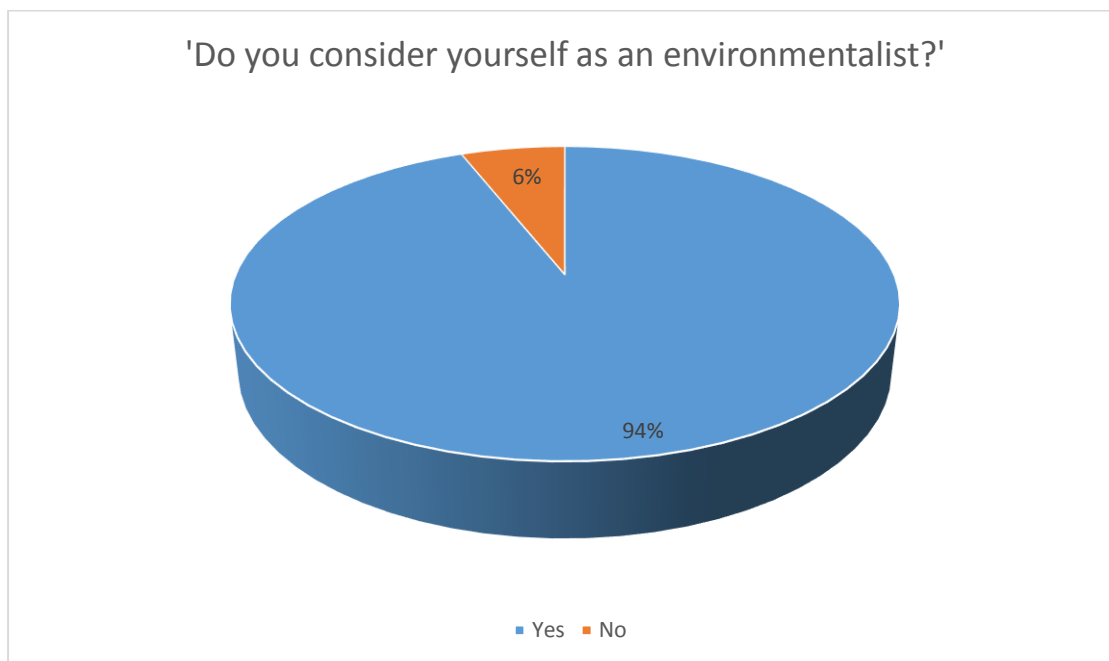


Figure 4.2: Pie chart to show whether surfers considered themselves as environmentalists.

Question 4, which included a series of Likert-scale questions, was asked in order to determine whether environmentally friendly behaviour was conducted within the surfers daily lives and whether their opinion of whether they considered themselves as environmentalist or not in question 3, correlated with their actions. The Likert-scale was not presented as below in the questionnaire, however the presentation has been modified for ease of understanding in the results section, shown below.

Table 4.1: The Likert-Scale Questionnaire

How often do you:	1 (Never)	2 (Not often)	3 (Sometimes)	4 (Most of the time)	5 (Always)
Recycle					
Reduce water consumption					
Eat organic or sustainable food					
Reduce energy consumption					
Use Environmentally-friendly products					
Get involved with environmentally-friendly organisations					
Support companies with environmentally-friendly practices above those who do not					

The overall finding was that despite majority of surfers claiming to be environmentalists in question 3, their actions do not portray those of an environmentally conscious individual, therefore having a high tendency to portray themselves as environmentally progressive however having a low degree of environmental commitment within their daily lifestyle.

Question 4.1 asked surfers '*How often do you: Recycle?*'. Recycling is considered as one of the most basic environmentally friendly behaviours, however despite claiming to be environmentalists, only 26% of participants indicated that they always recycled with majority of surfers (50%) indicating that they only recycle 'sometimes'.

Question 4.2. asked surfers '*How often do you: Reduce water consumption?*'. Conscious water consumption was once again dominated by the 'sometimes' category with 56%. Only 6% made an effort to 'always' reduce water consumption and 30% attempting to reduce water consumption 'most of the time'.

Questions 4.3, '*How often do you: Eat organic or sustainably sourced food?*' yielded results of an overwhelming 60% of respondents eating organic or sustainably very seldom and only 20% of respondents falling into the categories of 4 and 5. Question 4.4 asked, '*How often do you: Reduce Energy Consumption?*' with 56% of respondents mostly attempting to reduce their energy consumption with 0% falling into categories of 1 and 2.

The two questions results that came as a shock due to the alarmingly high percentages of respondents falling into the seldom column was both question 4.5 and question 4.6. Question 4.5 asked the respondents '*How often do you: Use Environmentally-Friendly Products?*' and question 4.6 asked '*How often do you: Get involved with environmentally motivate organisations?*'. Question 4.5 results came back that 46% seldom used environmentally-friendly products, with 36% being sometimes and a mere 18% falling into the two higher categories. Question 4.6 results came back that 50% of respondents never or seldom get involved with environmentally-friendly motivated organisations with 40% sometimes getting involved and only 10% getting involved most of the time.

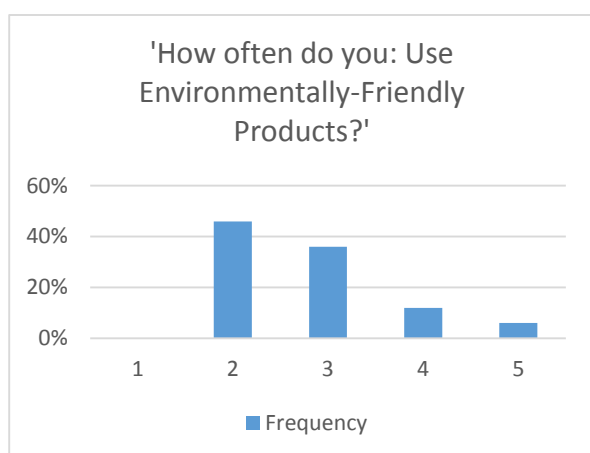


Figure 4.3: Bar graph indicating how often respondents use environmentally-friendly products.

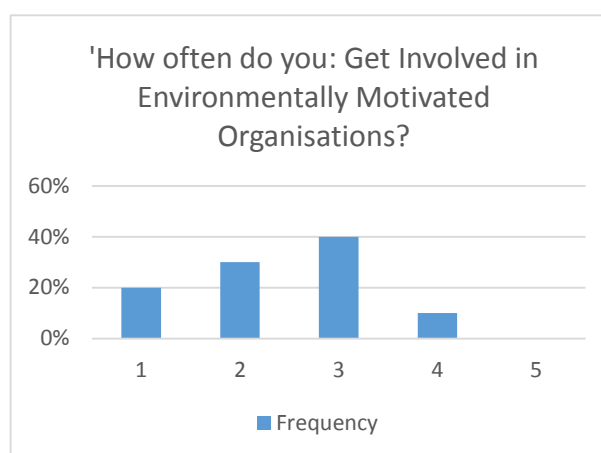


Figure 4.4: Bar graph indicating how often respondents are involved in environmentally motivated organisations.

Although the reasons underlying these answers were not asked, one can assume that the reasons that using environmentally-friendly products are not more of a priority could be due to the products often being more expensive and less accessible as they are not always sold at the most popular shops. Although time has become more difficult to find in this fast-paced world, it does not come as a shock that so few respondents get involved with environmentally-friendly organisations.

The final Likert-scale question from question 4 is '*How often do you: Support companies with environmentally-friendly practices above those who do not?*'. 16% of respondents said that they always supported these companies above others, with the remaining 84% falling into the often and sometimes category.

In conclusion to question 4, four out of seven question yielded results that were predominantly in the 'sometimes' category, with two being dominant in the 'seldom' category and only one result being dominant in the 'mostly' category. This concludes that despite the high percentage of surfers claiming to be environmentalists, their environmental activities are not considered as a priority within surfer's regular routines.

Questions 5-7

Due to a hypothesis within the study being that surfers environmental concerns are largely focused within their immediate environment being the ocean and beaches, questions 5-7 concentrate on testing whether this hypothesis is true or not.

Question 5 asked '*Have you ever taken part in a beach or ocean-related clean up?*' with 76% of surfers responding yes. With only 50% of surfers 'sometimes' or 'most of the time' getting involved in environmentally-friendly organisations (refer to question 4.6), one can assume that these clean-ups are not a regular event within the surfer's lives, and rather an odd occurrence than common.

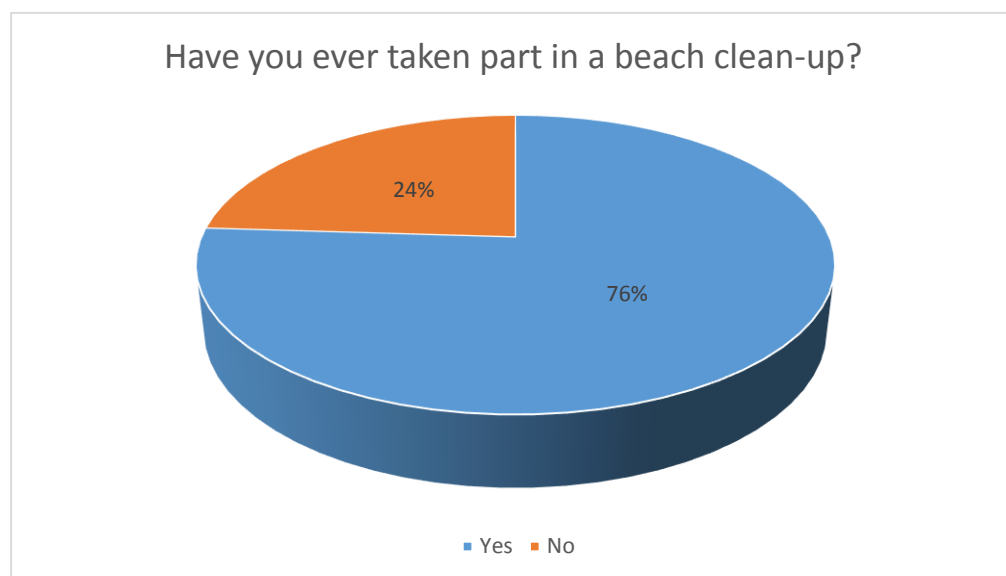


Figure 4.5: Pie chart showing the amount of respondents who have taken part in a beach clean-up.

Question 6 asked '*What is the most important environmental concern to you at the moment?*', and the results were not surprising when 78% of the respondent's most important environmental concerns were directly related to the ocean. Some of the responses that weren't directly associated with the ocean included:

Table 4.2: Environmental Concerns not Directly Associated with the Ocean

<i>'What is the most important environmental concern to you at the moment?'</i>
Plastic pollution.
The negative impact of the meat industry.
Environmental sustainability - of the earth, for instance animal agriculture and reducing waste.
Extinction of species.

As mentioned previously, majority of environmental concerns are directly related to the ocean, with ocean pollution and over-fishing being two of the most prominent themes throughout this question. The table below highlights a few answers that were given by surfers which is directed towards ocean environmental concerns:

Table 4.3: Surfer's Current Environmental Concerns

<i>Surfer's Current Environmental Concerns</i>
Ocean Conservation, raping of the oceans & coastal pollution.
Ocean pollution
Raw sewage outlets in the ocean
Ocean Sewerage & a lack of concern for rubbish in the ocean leading to marine life dying.
Quality of our natural water systems and immediate effect on availability and sustainability of our drinking water and underground water quality and mis-use of our sea water systems, specifically the pollution of seas and the relative impact on sea life in all forms.

The final question in this group was question 7, which asked the surfers *'In your opinion, what makes a surfer environmentally friendly?'* Only two out of 50 respondents responded to this question by raising issues of surf product and board awareness. These answers were: *'Being conscious with which surf products you use that could directly have an impact on the immediate aquatic environment while you surf'* as well as *'Supporting local and environmentally conscious board shapers and surfing brands. Buying second hand boards/board swaps. Handing down your wetsuits.'*

Majority of the responses included that surfers must be aware of their impacts on the environment and 'have a connection to nature'. One respondent replied that *'And this natural discipline, if it can be called that, defines that a good and responsible surfer must, by default, must be environmentally aware.'* This one sentence eloquently sums up the self-identity that surfers have given themselves through their connection with nature. It appears from the results that surfers equate themselves to the romantic notion of being custodians of the sea,

yet their actions say otherwise. Despite surfers raising points as to what makes a surfer environmentally-friendly, there appears that little action is being taken to live up to their own ideal of being connected to nature and the ocean, therefore acknowledging what is right, yet enforcing little.

4.2.3 Questions 8-11

Questions 8-12 attempted to understand how surfers perceived the surf industry, and the findings proved that surfers are not aware of the impacts that the surf industry has on the environment. These questions set out to determine what their views on the surf industry as it stands exactly was.

Question 8 asked ‘*Do you feel that the surfing industry has to make changes to become more environmentally friendly or is it fine the way that it is? Please provide a reason for your answer.*’ Although there were a couple of responses that recognised how environmentally destructive the surf industry is, majority of respondents recognised the industry as environmentally friendly or at least neutral to the environment. Many of the answers admitted that they weren’t sure as they did not have any knowledge as to whether the industry is environmentally-friendly or not. This table below captures a few answers that are unaware of the current impact and/or believe that the surf industry is not environmentally harmful.

Table 4.4: The lack of awareness by surfers regarding the surf industry

<i>Table to show the lack of awareness by surfers regarding the surf industry</i>
I am not aware of the current impact it was having
I think every industry can make more changes. I'm not aware or educated about the consumption & harmful practices of the industry, so it's hard to say.
Not sure, I feel like it might be environmentally friendly.
No, surely the effect of me merely having my surfboard in the water is negligible in comparison to everything else that gets pumped and dumped into our oceans?
I would say the industry is more environmentally friendly than others as surfers are generally have a bigger passion for the ocean and environment as we are aware of its beauty.
The most natural product on my board is the layer of wax on the deck.
The surf industry is eco-friendly, especially with the connection that it has with nature. It's a lot cleaner than other sports, that's for sure.

A surprising 70% of surfers were unaware of the impacts of the surf industry or were under the impression that it is environmentally friendly due to what many people related to surfing’s connection with nature. This seemingly old-fashioned perception by surfers of surfers and the industry is where one of the greatest problems lie, the surf industry is being fuelled by

attitudes like these which continue remain uncorrected, and the longer surfers remain uneducated about their industry, the numbers of surfers grow and the surf industry continues to make its mark, in a very literal sense. Surfers are not researching the impacts of their own industry and therefore few questions and challenges to the industry are being made, thus neglecting their environmental duties that majority of surfers felt that they have.

The results of the above question correlate directly with the next question 9, '*What is the board that you're currently riding?*' 94% respondents ride environmentally-unfriendly surfboards with 6% riding a board brand called Firewire which is considered to be a much safer option for the environment due to their longevity, hollow insides therefore reducing PU foam as well as lasting for longer. Despite the surfers who claimed to be aware of the impact so surfboard production in the previous question, there is no indication of acting upon this knowledge due to 94% of surfboards listed being made up of standard PU foam, thus drawing on the term 'pragmatic soul-surfer', discusses within the literature review.

Question 10 provides a lot of insight into my study as a whole as it is a very direct way of determining whether surfers are aware of the toxicity in their surfboards or not; '*Are you aware of the high levels of toxicity that standard PU foam surfboards emit? If yes, where did you hear about it?*' 78% of surfers are unaware of the high levels of toxicity that their surfboards emit during production, another worrying issue as it is typical of a consumerism culture.

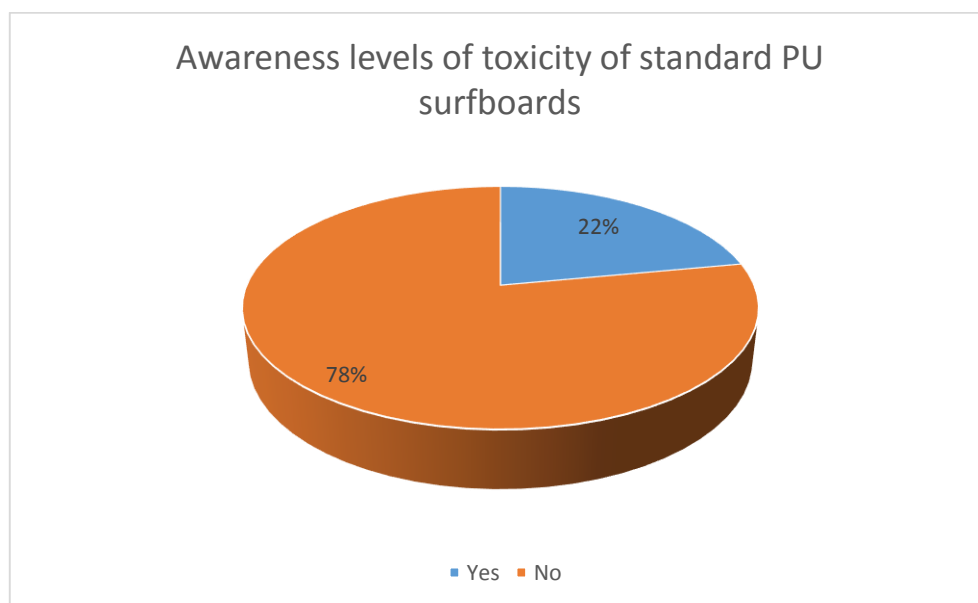


Figure 4.6: Pie chart to show the levels of awareness amongst respondents regarding the toxicity in surfboards.

As surfers who claim to be environmentalists and whose concerns are invested within the ocean, there is little being done to research where boards come from and their effects. This therefore translates to why surfers perception of the surfing industry are that they are not contributing negatively to the environment, as they are unaware and ill- informed of the effects of the main surfing component, the surfboard. The few 22% that were aware of the impacts, heard of this predominantly through magazines and online sources such as websites.

Question 11 asked *'Are you aware that environmentally friendly surfboards & surfing goods exist? If yes, have you bought any sustainable surf gear?'* in order to gain a direct understanding as to whether surfers are in fact aware that sustainable alternatives are available which one would assume would correlate with whether surfers are aware of the environmental impacts in the first place, as without this, there is no demand and no need to purchase sustainable surf gear. 56% of surfers were aware that sustainable surf gear is available with 44% being unaware of these products.

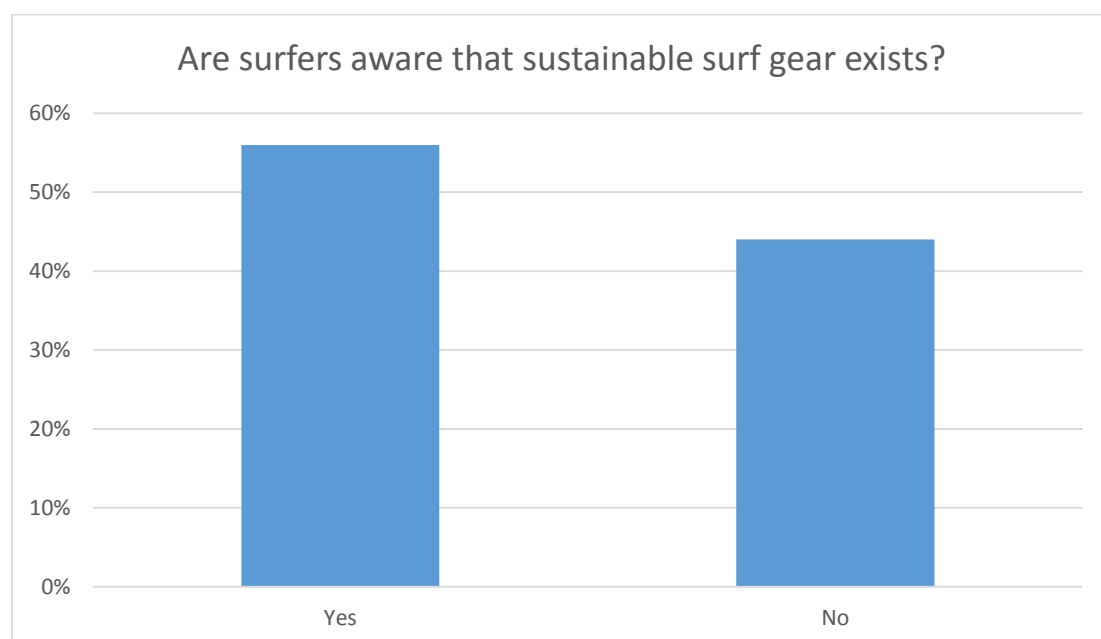


Figure 4.7: Bar graph showing the % of respondents aware that sustainable surf products exist.

The second part of question 11 aimed to gather if the surfers who indicated that they were aware that sustainable surf gear exists, has ever bought any, and if not, the reasons as to why it is. Of the 56% of respondents who indicated that they were aware that environmentally friendly surf gear exists, only 18% had bought sustainable surf gear, with majority of this being second hand boards. Some of the most common reasons as to why this might be was tabulated below:

Table 4.5 Why surfers purchase few sustainable surf products

<i>Table to show common reasons as to why so few surfers purchase sustainable surf products</i>
'I didn't think that my one surfboard or wetsuit would make a difference'
'It's too expensive'
'I'm too lazy to look around for these products, it's just so much easier going into my local surf shop and getting everything that I need there.'
'I'm not sure where to get these products from in Cape Town.'

These four reasons highlight the three major problems that sustainable surfing companies need to look at. The first is educating consumers on why buying their product will in fact make a difference to the environment, the second being that the prices have to be competitive with the already surf brands in order to survive. The third major concern is availability of these products & the need to increase its presence across both major and smaller surf shops.

4.2.4 Questions 12-15

The following three questions aim to test whether surfer's previous and ideal future surf holidays, match that of the discourses advertised by the surf industry through their advertisements. Question 12, '*How do you mainly keep up to date with surfing news?*' is asked to just determine what the main sources of surf news is distributed from in today's time. This will also determine on what platforms majority of these surf advertisements are seen, thus could be used as insight for sustainable surf companies to utilise as marketing.

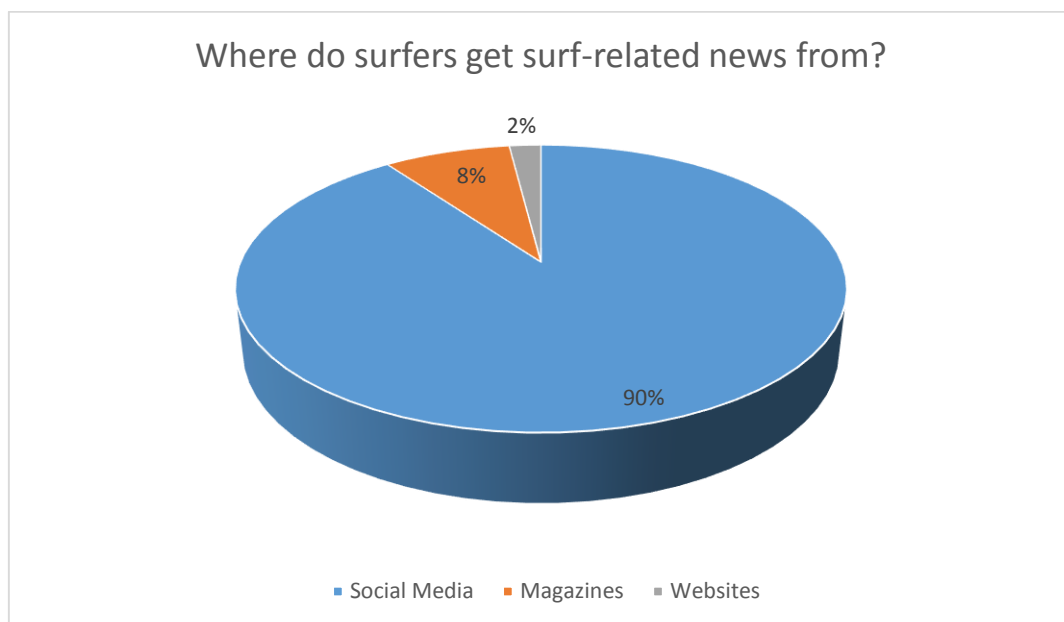


Figure 4.8: Pie chart to show where respondents get surfing news from.

90% of surfers gather their surf news via social media, with the remaining 10% getting it from magazines and websites. This is significant because surfing was largely distributed via traditional forms of media such as print magazines and has rapidly changed within the last five years.

Question 13, 'Have you been anywhere overseas to surf? If yes, where?' was asked in order to determine whether majority of Cape Town's surfers have travelled purely for surfing purposes and to what degree these destinations had resembled the surf 'paradise' discourses travelled overseas.. The response indicated that 70% of surfers had travelled overseas with the purpose of the holiday being purely to surf, with 94% of destinations listed being warm water. Some of these responses included:

Table 4.6: Previous Overseas Surfing Holidays

<i>Table showing previous surf holiday destinations</i>
Morocco
Indonesia. SO great.
Yes, Commores.
Yes, Indo
Bali
Indonesia, Portugal, Turkey
Mentawai
Australia
Maldives, Costa Rica, Australia.
Mentawai Islands. The Dream.

Although this could be pin-pointed for the reason of traveling to warmer water destinations being a change of scenery from Cape Town's chilly waters, it however proves that surf travel is almost always targeted towards warm-water countries, particularly to destinations that are regularly promoted within surfing advertisements and professional surfer's social media account such as Indonesia, the Maldives and the Mentawai islands.

The final question of the questionnaire, question 14, was designed to directly determine if there is a correlation between what a surfer's ideal surfing trip looked like and whether this was true to the surf paradise discourses discussed in chapter 2. The question asked the surfers to, 'Briefly describe your dream surfing trip?'

Some prominent themes that arose was empty waves, warm water and tropical destinations. 83% of surfers replied that their ideal trip consisted of an empty line-up with no crowds in remote locations, best illustrated by the following two responses:

“Remote unknown place, warm water, bikinis, no crowds, only friendly locals, peeling rights and lefts (point breaks or reefs), happiness.”

“A bunch of my mates, empty reef break with warm water and perfect peeling waves. Preferably on a yacht.”

41% of surfers within the questionnaire specifically stated that their trip needed to be in ‘warm water’ whilst 83% of respondents indicated that their ideal surf destination would be warm water. The most prominent destinations included Mentawai Islands & Madagascar, with the Philippines being another that was mentioned.

Two responses did however include the destination of ‘Ireland’, a country that is best known for its empty line-ups and icy, thick waves often breaking on thick slabs of rock; *“Ireland, solitude, loneliness.”*

Chapter 5

Concluding Remarks & Recommendations

5.1. KEY FINDINGS HIGHLIGHTS

This chapter will highlight key findings within the research and how it relates to the primary and secondary questions & objectives. A short section will be included relating to recommendations to future studies on the topic.

The first key finding answers the main primary research question: *‘Are surfers in Cape Town aware of the impacts that commercial surf tourism and surfboard production have on the environment, and do their depictions of ‘surf paradise’ replicate that within surf advertisements?’*

With 70% of the sample indicating that they do not think that the surf industry has to make changes either due to not knowing enough about the subject or that it must be neutral, as well as only 22% being aware of the toxicity that standard PU foam boards, the results are conclusive that surfers within Cape Town are largely unaware of the impacts that the surf industry, in particular surfboard production and surf tourism, has on the environment.

The following key finding answers the first of the three secondary questions being, *‘Are surfers environmental concerns only invested within their surfing environment, such as the ocean and beaches?’*. Although general pro-environmental behaviour was elicited in regular life such as recycling, supporting environmentally-friendly companies above others and attempting to reduce water consumption, in general not enough pro-environmental behaviour was elicited to consider this group of people as environmentalists.

According to Ford (2000 p.76, as cited in Hill & Abbott, 2009a), “maybe unlikely that . . . surfers are any more or less environmentally committed than any other group of the population,” indicating that surfers do not have a structured environmental ethic amongst themselves, therefore the meaning of being an environmentalist is highly variable. This finding may be used to indicate that the term ‘environmentalism’ may vary on an individual’s interests and environment that they are most surrounded in.

The most crucial finding was that surfers in fact are largely unaware of the impact that the surf industry is having on the environment. There is a lack of transparency that exists within this industry and as a result sustainable companies are largely unknown. One of the reasons which could possibly explain the low demand for sustainable surfboards is the very reason that surf environmentalism was born, and that is the theory explained by Hansla, Gamble, Juliasson & Garling (2008, as cited in Holland-Smith, Love & Lorimer, 2013), as it is only

when environmental problems and issues pose a serious threat to something that a person values that pro-environmental behaviour is elicited.

Looking at Karl Marx's philosophies within the realm of political ecology, particularly focusing on capitalism and consumerism within the 21st century, the fundamental flaw of capitalism is that humans have put themselves above nature on the hierarchy scale, and as a result in order for capitalistic production to take place, nature and labour are extracted beyond need and as a result environmental degradation follows (Hill & Abbott, 2009b).

The last finding determined that majority of surfer's ideal surf holiday destinations matched that of the discourses discussed within surfing advertisements. In an interview conducted on surfers in Indonesia and Sumatra by Ponting (2008), it was found that many of the surfers had had pictures of exotic surfing destinations similar to the ones that they were at, and admitted that it planted the seed for finding the 'perfect wave.' She also observed that many of these surfers would sit in groups and compare themselves to the professional surfers in clips online or magazine articles based on the same wave, or similar.

As a part of the preparation for the surf holiday, many surfers would have already have conjured up images such as that in advertisements whereby they are thoroughly prepared, usually buying new surf gear such as reef booties, new second skins or wetsuits, new boardshorts and bikinis, an abundance of wax and sun-cream as well as surfboards. Majority of these surfers will be blissfully unaware of the impacts that each and every surfing item packed with them contributed to environmental degradation.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

5.2.1 Recommendation 1:

My first recommendation for a future study conducted on the same or similar topic would be to increase the sample size and expand the sample to coastlines across South Africa, as opposed to just Cape Town. Obviously the larger the sample size, the more results which can be more accurately generalised about a larger population.

5.2.2 Recommendation 2:

It would be beneficial for the researcher to understand perspectives from the surfboard shapers themselves through interviews. This could provide insight into reasons why they have not moved over to using more sustainable materials within the production process and aim to see things from their perspective. It would also be beneficial interviewing sustainable shapers in South Africa asking how they market their products, whether it is effective, as well

as health benefits and environmental benefits that they have seen first-hand from changing to environmentally-friendly materials.

The researcher could go as far as interviewing professional South African surfers in order to gain perspectives from every angle within the surf industry and ask whether they were aware of the impacts of their sponsored equipment as well as whether they would change sponsorships to more eco-friendly companies. This could help sustainable surf-companies to understand from a surfer's point of view as to what matters most in a sponsorship and it would be beneficial to those companies to invest in surfers with large social media platforms in order to help spread the awareness and increase the support behind these companies that are often masked by the larger surfing corporations.

5.3 CONCLUSION

Though it would be false to make a conclusion that surfers do not practice environmentally-friendly practices just as much as it would be false to conclude that surfers are environmentalists in terms of their activism and lifestyle, the environmental ethic is present amongst all surfers as it appears to be central to the identity of the surfer. This is a positive as surfers would be willing to make environmental changes if it affects their immediate surfing environment such as the ocean and beaches, and therefore the awareness and education of the surf industries environmental impact needs to be correctly channelled to the average everyday surfer.

The goal of the study was to determine if and why there is a lack of awareness towards the surf industry, particularly looking at surfboard production and the effects of surf tourism. The sport of surfing which is undeniably intrinsically linked to nature and the way that it has changed within the 21st century, presents a valuable opportunity for both surfers as a community as well as outsider to reassess our place and duty when being immersed within and dependent upon the environment.

It appears as though as long as both outside and inside perceptions of surfers remain as environmentally-active citizens, surfers will rely on this enough to claim to be environmentalists. This perception is incongruent with the reality of surfer's lifestyles within Cape Town and it seems as though these perceptions are only slowing the progress down towards surfers becoming a more environmentally-friendly community. As the Dalai Lama once said, *'I feel that it is extremely important that each individual realize their responsibility for preserving the environment, to make it a part of daily life, create the same attitude in their families, and spread it to the community.'* (n.d., online), it is now our job of being the

informed to educate others within the community and become a more environmentally-active self, encouraging others to do the same.

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APPENDIX A

Thesis - Surf Environmentalism

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this survey. Your questionnaire will remain anonymous and will be used purely for thesis purposes :)

* Required

What is your gender? *

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

What is your age?

Do you consider yourself as an 'environmentalist'

Environmentalism = 'advocacy for or work toward protecting the natural environment from destruction or pollution'

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

How often do you: Recycle

Please rate the following on a scale of 1-5.(1=Never & 5=Always)

1 2 3 4 5

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How often do you:

Attempt to reduce water consumption

1 2 3 4 5

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How often do you:

Eat organic or sustainably sourced food?

1 2 3 4 5

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How often do you:

Attempt to reduce energy consumption?

1 2 3 4 5

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How often do you:

Use environmentally-friendly products?

1 2 3 4 5

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How often do you:

Get involved with environmentally motivated organisations?

1 2 3 4 5

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How often do you:

Support companies with environmentally friendly practices above those who do not?

1 2 3 4 5



Have you ever taken part in a beach or ocean related clean-up?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

What is the most important environmental concern to you at the moment?

In your opinion, what makes a surfer environmentally friendly?

Do you feel that the surfing industry has to make changes to become more environmentally friendly or is it fine the way that it is? Please provide a reason for your answer.

What is the board that you're currently riding?

Shaper/Brand

Are you aware of the high levels of toxicity that standard PU foam surfboards emit? If yes, where did you hear about it?

Are you aware that environmentally friendly surfboards & surfing goods exist?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Have you ever bought any environmentally friendly surf gear? If yes, what? If no, why not?

How do you mainly keep up to date with surfing news?

Social Media, Websites, Social Media etc.

Have you been anywhere overseas to surf? If yes, where?

Briefly describe your dream surfing trip?

Please include rough location.

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.



100%: You made it.