

IDENTITY, LIFESTYLES, AND BRAND MARKETING IN
CANADIAN WOMEN'S SURFING: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

by

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H.B.K., Lakehead University, 2000

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Human Kinetics)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

December 2006

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, women's surfing has become increasingly popularized in the media and in advertising as a desirable recreational activity and competitive sport, and more and more Canadian women are now participating in surfing than ever before (Nickson, 2000). Over the same period, women's surf wear has also emerged as a popular fashion trend for Canadian girls and young women (Ostrowski, 1999) with the result that surfing apparel is now a growth industry in Canada (Hamilton et al., 2002). Despite these developments, however, there remains an acute lack of research on these trends in women's surfing. There are very few studies on the development of women's surfing and no studies could be found that have looked at surfing as a form of consumption in a consumer society influenced by brand marketing.

In an effort to help fill this gap, this study drew on prior work in consumer research by Schouten and McAlexander (1995) and in sports subcultures by Wheaton (2000), and analyzed the relationship between women's surf culture in Western Canada and the marketing activities of the Canadian surf wear industry. Schouten and McAlexander (1995) examined the interplay of subcultures and marketing among Harley-Davidson motorcycle owners, and Wheaton (2000) studied the link between identity and sport and leisure lifestyles in a windsurfing community. My thesis research combined their two frameworks using an ethnographic approach and examined the impact of retailing and marketing on the growth of women's surfing, on surf culture, and surf products consumption.

Fifteen individuals were interviewed from three different populations in western Canada: women surfers, surf wear retailers, and Canadian surf brand representatives. Through these conversations, eight factors were identified as contributing to the growth of women's surfing in British Columbia: (i) changes in wetsuit technology, (ii) crossover appeal from skateboarding and snowboarding, (iii) cultural and style influences from California, (iv) increased demand for women's surf wear and surf fashions, (v) the growth of competitive surfing in BC, (vi) increased media exposure of Canadian women's surfing, (vii) development of Canadian surf businesses, and (viii) women's increased comfort with the identity of 'being a surfer'.

The interviews confirmed that the surf scene in Canada is less intimidating and more accepting of women surfers than many other locales including California. The women surfers reported a deepening of commitment to the surf lifestyle as they advanced in the sport and it increasingly became a defining component of their self-identity. They also reported that their consumption of surf products contributed to their sense of identity. The study found that surf brands have helped to fuel the diffusion of surf lifestyles and products into the mainstream by expanding product offerings and making them more accessible to the general public. The thesis concludes that Canadian women's surfing demonstrates features of a subculture of consumption and may best be thought of as a 'commodity-orientated subculture' (Wheaton, 2000, p. 261) that is driven both by a developing women's surfing subculture (the hard-cores) and by the market activities (product development, women's wear branding, women's-specific retailing) of the major surf brands.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my gratitude to those who took the time to enjoy this journey with me. I would like to acknowledge the support of the surfers, retailers, and surf brand representatives with whom I interacted throughout the course of this research and without whom I could not have conducted this research. I am forever grateful to my thesis committee consisting of Dr. Robert Sparks, Dr. Patricia Vertinsky, and Dr. Brian Wilson, for being open-minded to my research interests and helping me prepare for this research. My advisor Bob has remained enthusiastic throughout this process, and has continuously supported and encouraged me during the hurdles I encountered along the way. His guidance was instrumental to the successful completion of this project. For all those who believed in me and who supported me I am most grateful. I am truly blessed to have a loving and understanding family, and a close network of dear friends. Lastly, I would like to extend my thanks to my colleagues for exposing me to the surf wear industry and giving me the opportunity to grow professionally alongside them. Furthermore, I am most grateful to those who lead me to surf and ignited that same passion within me.

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes the relationship between women's surf culture in Western Canada and the marketing activities of the Canadian surf wear industry. Its objectives are twofold: i) to critically examine how the marketing of surf products affects surfing lifestyles and product consumption, and ii) to describe how surf lifestyles and products, in turn, become diffused to a larger population of young women and girls. The study is intended to enhance our knowledge of the factors affecting the development of women's surfing in Western Canada and to add to our understanding of the interplay of subcultures and marketing in consumer culture, by illustrating the link between lifestyles, identity, and consumption. With the rise in popular media portrayals of women's surfing as an empowering activity (e.g., the film 'Blue Crush') and the growth of women's surfing over the last several years, it is important to be able to document the social, cultural, and market conditions and trends driving these changes. In particular, research is needed that takes account of the experience of surfing from the standpoint of women and gives voice to their points of view in addition to the points of view of the surfing industry and of men. Very few studies to date have analyzed women's surfing lifestyles generally, and none that I could find have looked at surfing as an activity of consumption in a consumer society which is influenced by brand marketing. In addition to providing a multi-dimensional research perspective, this study is also intended to provide a Canadian perspective on what is a growing global phenomenon, women's surfing. This study will provide an improved understanding of women's surfing subcultures in Western Canada, the emergence of Canadian women surfers, and the factors that are fueling the growth of the surfing apparel industry.

The thesis represents one of the few studies that have focused on the impact of retailing and brand marketing on the growth of Canadian sports, and has the potential to provide insight into the role of retailing and brand marketing in the expansion of women's sports more generally. The rise in women's surfing is part of a larger phenomenon of women's increased involvement in sports as participants and consumers. It is widely documented that women are emerging as a distinct and powerful segment in the sport marketplace (Bradish, Lathrop, & Sedgwick, 2001; Branch, 1995; Lough, 1996; Shoham, Rose, Kropp, & Kahle, 1997; Sparks & Westgate, 2002; Sutton & Watlington, 1994). Young women, in particular, have become an important sub-segment for sport, sport-related products, and sport marketers (Shoham et al., 1997). Within the women's sports context, women's surfing has itself become increasingly visible and accepted as a legitimate recreational and competitive sport. Canada emerged on the women's surf scene with the development of the nation's first all-girls surf school in 1999 (Nickson, 2000). Women's surf wear has emerged as mainstream fashion (Ostrowski, 1999), and surf apparel has become a booming industry in Canada (Hamilton et al., 2002). Canadian women's surfing comprises a niche market within the overall sport of surfing as well as within women's recreation and sports more broadly.

The aim of the research reported in this thesis was to document the interplay of retailing and marketing within women's surfing, surfing culture, and surfing products consumption, focusing on the ways that popular culture and commercial culture interrelate with one another. A focused review of recent work on subcultures, sports subcultures and consumer culture was undertaken to assess the ability of existing frameworks to account for these interactions. The thesis ends up building on selected

research on sports subcultures and consumer research drawing on Wheaton's (2000) notion of identity formation through sport and leisure lifestyles and Schouten & McAlexander's (1995) conceptualization of identity expression through sport consumption. The rationale for this approach is contained in part in the holistic framework that these two perspective help to achieve. This has both practical and critical theoretical implications. As Kates (1998) notes in his discussion of the potential benefits of combining frameworks from social theory, consumer research and sport marketing to study sport, "By bringing the discourses of consumer behavior, sport sociology [subcultural theory], and sport marketing together, new research agenda and new marketing insights [can] result" (p. 29). The research expands on the idea of identity formation through sport subcultural socialization (Donnelly and Young, 1988; Wheaton, 1998, 2000), and the expression of identity through sport consumption (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), and highlights the link between identity, lifestyles, and consumption among women surfers. As Wheaton (2000) notes, "The possibilities of different sources of identification have expanded, in particular the increased significance of consumption practices such as sport and leisure lifestyles in the communication and maintenance of self-identity for growing segments of the population" (p. 255). Schouten and McAlexander (1995) similarly state, "In our consumer culture people do not define themselves according to sociological constructs. They do so in terms of the activities, objects, and relationships that give their lives meaning" (p. 59). In their terms, the relationships formed as a result of "a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand or consumption activity" comprise a 'subculture of consumption' (p.43). They continue that "The concept of the subculture of consumption is robust enough to

encompass virtually any group of people united by common consumption values and behaviors” (p. 59).

In this context, the following research questions were proposed: How does the marketing of surfing products impact surf-culture and its diffusion into consumer culture? How is surf wear consumption linked to identity formation in female consumers? Four working hypotheses were also developed: a) Surf wear consumption is an integral part of a surfer’s lifestyle and identity, b) Surf brands have expanded their lines to reach surfers, but also to reach female teens and pre-teens, c) Female teens and pre-teens use surf wear to help construct their identities, and d) The net effect of these two trends is an increase in consumer interest in surf wear and in the surf brands market.

The majority of research on sport subcultures has recognized the importance of using ethnographic methods to the study of sport subcultures (Butts, 2001; Klein, 1986; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Wheaton, 1998, 2000). As Wheaton and Tomlinson (1998) suggest “It is only ethnographic study that can provide a cultural analysis that does not just focus on public discourses or texts, but explores the ‘meaning and pleasure of these practices to those who participate in them’” (p. 270, c.f., Hall, 1996, p.59). The studies that facilitated in shaping this research use interviews as their primary method of data collection and found this method to be quite effective in gaining entry into the subculture and/or furthering an understanding of the culture (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Wheaton, 2000). In Schouten and McAlexander’s (1995) analysis of the Harley Davidson subculture of consumption, the researchers interviewed three a priori groups: riders, dealers, and corporate marketing decision makers. Similarly, for the context of

this study three groups were interviewed: surfers, retailers, and Canadian surf brand representatives.

CHAPTER II - LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I review recent work on subcultures, sport subcultures, and consumer culture. This chapter is divided into eight sections that comprise the literature that is generally or specifically linked to the thesis topic. The sections are as follows: (1) History of Surfing; (2) History of Surfing in British Columbia; (3) The British Columbia Surf Scene; (4) The Expansion of Women's Surfing and the Surf Wear Industry; (5) The Concept of Subculture; (6) Consumer Research; (7) Sport Lifestyles, Identity, and Consumption; and (8) Market Trends: Women in the Sport Marketplace. The first section in the literature review traces back the origin of surfing, its cultural traditions, and the emergence of women surfers. The second category chronicles the development of surfing in British Columbia and follows the influence of Canadian surfing pioneers. This leads into a description of the uniqueness of Canada's surf scene. The fourth section focuses on the growth of women's surfing and the expansion of the women's surf wear industry. Section five analyzes the term 'subculture' and the vast amount of literature surrounding this concept. The next portion highlights some of the work done in consumer research and draws on research done by Schouten and McAlexander (1995) and Wheaton (2000) to situate the framework for this study. The seventh section analyzes the relationship between identity and sport and leisure lifestyles, and the influence of consumption on one's sense of identity. Finally, the last area examines trends in the women's sport marketplace and reports on the influence of specific consumer groups in the sports product market.

2.1 History of Surfing

Surfing has received little attention from social science scholars (Farmer, 1992), and the limited academic research there is has focused mainly on the history of the sport (Booth, 1995, 2001; Irwin, 1973; Pearson, 1979) and its role in subcultural socialization (Butts, 2001). Most of the information that is available has come from articles in popular press magazines, newspapers and trade journals. Booth (2001) recently published an article on the history and growth of women's surfing internationally which documented the setbacks and gains along the path to increased acceptance of women's surfing.

The origins of the sport are thought to be in the Pacific Islands. Hawaiians and Polynesians were observed enjoying surfing in the late 1700s (Gabbard, 2000). The first written account of surfing was made by Captain James Cook on a February day in 1778:

As his ship pulled into Kealahou Bay in the Hawaiian Islands, Cook was amazed to see men and women riding long wooden planks across the face of the immense waves. Shortly after, with the arrival of missionaries, surfing was nearly eradicated in the Hawaiian Islands until a revitalization movement was started by Hawaiians in the early twentieth century. The missionaries had associated the practice of surfing with promiscuity and gambling. (Butts, 2001, p. 2)

Surfing was introduced to Southern California by Hawaiian George Freeth in 1907, and to Australia by Duke Kahanamoku in 1915 (Gabbard, 2000). During this time, surfers in California and Hawaii experienced extensive freedom. By comparison, surfing in Australia and New Zealand from 1910 to the late 1950s was sanctioned by the Surf Life Saving Association, and was restricted to surf lifesaving members on designated beaches (Pearson, 1979). California was a centre for surfboard experimentation from 1920

onwards while very few technological innovations took place in the first part of the twentieth century in Australia and New Zealand (Pearson, 1979). Also, noteworthy during the 1930s and 1940s was the lack of reference to women board riders. Pictures taken at the time confirmed that women were part of the beach culture but rarely would a photograph show a woman riding a surf board (Booth, 2001).

By the outbreak of World War II, surfing had become a recognized leisure activity on the Pacific Rim, particularly in the areas of Southern California, Australia, New Zealand, Peru, and South Africa. In the war years Waikiki (Hawaii) was the symbol of new hedonism with beach boys and wahines (beach girls). Unlike Australia and California, Hawaii preserved the pleasure-seeking culture and no restrictions were imposed on bathing costumes (Booth, 1995). Surfing became an organized sport following the Second World War (Booth, 1995), and “began its trek through popular American culture in the 1950s...[and] through time a particular demeanor, language, and look...developed which denote[d] membership of the surfing subculture” (Butts, 2001, p.2). Malibu, California became a popular surfing spot in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Gabbard, 2000). In the 1950s and early 1960s surfing women reappeared with the emergence of the lighter, more maneuverable Malibu surf board developed by Joe Quigg in 1950 for women surfers in Malibu (Gabbard, 2000). In 1956, “Gidget” (Kathy Kohner) went to Malibu and the following year the book written by her father Frederick Kohner, *Gidget*, was published (Gabbard, 2000). “At the culture’s apogee in the 1960s, women were landlocked bikini babes or, at best, Hollywood ‘Gidgets’ who left the heavy surfing to the guys” (Marsh, 1997, p. 44).

In 1954, the first international surf championship was organized by the Waikiki surf club in Makaha, Hawaii (Booth, 1995). Women participated in this competition until organizers subsequently created separate competitions for women and men surfers (Booth, 2001). Oahu's North Shore became a surfing Mecca once the waves were finally ridden (Gabbard, 2000). Surfing styles also diversified in the late 1950s recognizing regional differences. As Booth (1995) explains, "two riding styles emerged in the mid-1960s. Hawaiian surfers danced with waves, flowing in smooth rhythm with their natural direction; Australian surfers danced on waves, 'conquering', 'attacking', and reducing them to stages on which to perform" (p. 194). Hawaiian styles combined with other post-war social changes, such as the rise of youth culture and car culture in the 1950s, transformed California surfing.

The surfing population in California grew rapidly in the middle of the 1950s rising from 5,000 participants in 1956 to 100,000 surfers in 1962. Californian surfing was popularized in Hollywood surf movies and women surfers were seen in *Gidget* (1959) and *The Endless Summer* (1964), as well as in magazines, and surfing demonstrations. The 1960s brought about the development of regional and national surf associations starting in California and New South Wales, Australia. In 1964, various representatives of national surf associations together formed the International Surfing Federation (ISF) and the first world surfing championship was held that year in Manly, Australia (Booth, 1995). Surfers recognized the importance of organized competition as being essential for public acceptance. The ISF separated men and women into different competitions, however, the rules that were eventually set up in 1976 did not exclude women from participating in men's events or vice versa (Booth, 2001). In the late 1960s,

competitive surfing suffered a relapse as a new generation of surfers shunned competition and took to the waves as 'soul-surfers' (Booth, 1995).

During the second half of the twentieth century, it became increasingly evident that females were being marginalized in the sport and that a fraternal structure prevailed which limited their social acceptance and access. In the 1970s, females were depicted in photographs in non-stereotypical, athletic poses that challenged the gaze of the male viewer. However, a radical shift became evident in the 1980s as women began to be represented as sexual objects and photographic techniques changed to embrace the sexualized look, pose, and gaze of fashion models. Women further struggled in the 1970s and 1980s to organize their own competitions which signaled the denial of the legitimacy of women surfers (Booth, 2001).

In 1974, women surfers motivated by Jericho Poppler formed the Women's International Surfing Association (WISA) to spearhead the development of a professional women's circuit. These events were largely California based and were the first to offer women prize money (Booth, 2001). In 1976, Women's Professional Surfing (WPS) was formed in Hawaii to secure increased prize money and more events for women. The WPS set out to smooth relations between surfers, contest directors, and the media (Booth, 2001). In 1977 women competed in five professional surfing events in Australia, Brazil, California, Hawaii, and South Africa. These five events crowned Margo Oberg, who was fifteen at the time, the first official professional female champion of surfing. In the same year, Margo opened her surf school on Kauai. In 1983, the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) took over the International Professional Surfing (IPS) and Women's Pro Surfing (WPS) circuits (Gabbard, 2000). Another significant watershed in women's

surfing occurred in 1986 when Lisa Anderson, at the age of 17, turned pro and joined the ASP (Gabbard, 2000).

Women surfing competitions did not develop evenly around the world. Californian and Hawaiian surfers benefited but Australian organizers often cancelled women's events and there was a lack of interested sponsors and limited prize money for Australian women. The distance to other competitions globally and the cost of travel hindered the ability of Australian women to compete internationally. Well into the 1990s women's professional surfing remained a poor match to the men's circuit (Booth, 2001).

2.2 History of Surfing in British Columbia

The practice of surfing in British Columbia (BC) dates back 40 years, and has been transformed over time into a uniquely BC experience. BC has many distinct surfing communities including Tofino, Ucluelet, Jordan River, and Sombrio Beach. Jordan River and Sombrio Beach are more readily accessible from Victoria (Shilling, 2003) whereas Tofino and Ucluelet are further north on Vancouver Island and are less accessible.

As Shilling reports,

Before 1956 Tofino and Ucluelet were their own islands on Vancouver Island because there was no road through the saw-tooth Mackenzie Range mountains and across Sutton Pass...After 1956 there was a dusty, dirty and dangerous logging road, and in 1964 MacMillan-Bloedel Ltd. and fellow forest-company giant, BC Forest Products Ltd., built Highway 4 in exchange for logging concessions from the provincial government. The environmentalists and the surfers among the million or so visitors to Tofino and Ucluelet every year owe it

to those logging companies for getting them out of the woods and into the water.

(p. 11)

During this time, Tofino and Ucluelet were mainly fishing and logging villages and had not yet become tourist destinations (p.30).

Early BC surfers were a determined, inventive group and had to improvise materials in order to fabricate boards to surf on as Shilling (2003) affirms:

One thing that characterized most surfers in BC in the early days was their willingness to surf practically anything, from plywood to glass-over foam boards. With the nearest surf shops in [the state of] Oregon, BC surfers had to scrounge boards any way they could. Some early surfers tried to make and shape their own boards. (p. 60)

Prior to 1995, surf businesses in Tofino were not commonplace. The economy at the time was not capable of sustaining them. A pioneer in Tofino's surf industry, Live to Surf, the first surf board rental business in Tofino opened its doors in 1984 and still remains in operation today.

The first International Surf Contest in BC was held on Long Beach, south of Tofino in 1966. The development of the Wickaninnish Inn on Long Beach in 1964 and the arrival of surfing pioneers lead to the improbable development of the Tofino and Ucluelet surf scenes. The original pioneers who lived in cedar shacks and cabins along the Pacific coastline off of Vancouver Island introduced their children to the sport thereby securing the future of Canadian surfing. Ralph Devries who helped construct the Wickaninnish Inn was first introduced to the sport of surfing by some vacationing Californians in 1964, and he competed in BC's first surf competition in 1966 (Shilling,

2003). The family lineage and passing down of technical aspects of surfing can be seen in Ralph's son, Peter Devries who took to the water at a very young age and became a sponsored surfer, competing in international surfing competitions. Peter eventually won the Quiksilver/Roxy Summer Surf Jam 2000 in Tofino, BC. In May 2003, Surfer Magazine ranked him 94th in the highly regarded global ranking of the "Hot 100" surfers under the age of 21 in the World (www.BCSA.ca c.f., Surfer Magazine, May 2003).

Tofino has changed dramatically over the years and particularly in the last decade. "Tofino watched its fishing industry die and its forests embraced by mostly urban environmentalists. Land values began to skyrocket. Cedar shacks were replaced by houses straight out of any suburb. Whales became a tourist attraction" (Shilling, 2003, p. 66). A pristine coast is an incredible resource for the pure pleasure of locals and for the economic injection that tourists and transient surfers provide. The town of Tofino has a year round population of 1000 inhabitants but is now attracting over a million visitors each year.

In the early 1990s there were a handful of people surfing in Tofino's waters. As Shilling notes, the start of the surfing boom in BC began in the mid 1990's and the late 1990s marked a significant change with more and more women trying the sport. The children of BC's original surfers have helped support the development of the sport with the creation of surf schools and surf businesses. Jenny Stewart (nee Hudnall) who owns and operates Surf Sister Surf School is the daughter of Jim Hudnall, one of Tofino's original surfers. Surf tourism is becoming an important economic contributor to local coastal communities (Shilling, 2003). "The many surfers around provide the service industries with a cheap labour force. Also, there is more tourist money floating around,

more surf schools, more leisure activity, and more non-extractive uses of wilderness” (p. 14).

Since its inception in 1993, the British Columbia Surfing Association (BCSA) has been recognized by the Canadian Surfing Association and the International Surfing Association as the governing body for surfing in Western Canada and for representing west coast surfers. The BCSA aims to develop surfers within BC and to provide them with the opportunity to build their skills internationally (www.BCSA.ca).

The Summer Surf Jam is a sponsored two-day judged contest that allows local surfers to compete against an international field in the comfort of their home break. The first Surf Jam took place in 1988 when the retail outlet Westbeach organized a small surf contest on Long Beach. The location changed the following year to Cox Bay and this event continues to get bigger and attract more sponsors, and subsequently; more prize money, more competitors and spectators. This annual event showcases BC’s top surfers and enables them to compete in professional competition with pros from the US. This event has seven divisions to accommodate all the different levels and forms of surfing.

The BCSA hopes to further develop its athletes through local competition specifically the Summer Surf Jam and by sending its top surfers to more regional contests such as the Westport Cleanwater Classic in Washington and a few pro events in California.

In the past, the BCSA focused on creating a Canadian National Surf Team that would travel to compete in the world surfing games. The world surfing games are held every two years and can be dubbed the ‘Olympics’ of surfing with teams from all over the world meeting in various locations for the ten day event. BCSA successfully entered

its first full Canadian Team at the games in Brazil in 1994. The team traveled to Huntington Beach, California in 1996, to Portugal in 1998, and then back to Brazil in 2000. More recently, a key focus of the BCSA is developing BC talent at both the professional and amateur levels locally. The BCSA have proved successful in their efforts and the increased popularity of the Summer Surf Jam is evidence of the increased support in developing local talent and encouraging the younger generation to compete and secure the future of Canadian surfing (www.BCSA.ca).

Following a growing trend worldwide in the commercialization of surfing, surf schools became common place around the area of Tofino. In order to establish a code of conduct, surf school guidelines, and surf instructor qualifications for surf schools operating within the Pacific Rim National Park boundary, the British Columbia Association of Surf Instructors (BCASI) was developed in 2002. This association is dedicated to training and certifying surfing instructors and coaches and ensuring that a standard of safe and efficient surf instruction is maintained. A group of dedicated surfers formed the BCASI as surf schools flourished in British Columbia, and until 2002 did not have to operate under specific rules and regulations with regard to liability insurance, surf instructor qualifications, equipment standards or maximum instructor to student ratios. BCASI upholds the highest standards for the industry so that increased commercialization does not lead to negligence and quality issues. The BCASI seeks to make the industry safer and more effective by standardizing instructor training and surf school operations (www.BCASI.com).

2.3 The British Columbia Surf Scene

The surf is unique in BC, and thick wetsuits are required for the icy Pacific waters (Nickson, 2002), that crash onto spectacular beaches backed up against old-growth rain forest. The surf scene in BC tends to exhibit localized group norms that are distinct from other geographical locations, and even though west coast riders are part of global surfing culture, they share traditions that are unique to their situation (Pearson, 1982).

Surfing in Canada is a year-round pursuit and the climate and temperature of the water makes for a truly Canadian experience. "You need a wetsuit to surf here. Clayoquot Sound, where surf town Tofino is located, can get four metres of rain a year, and the waves here are best in the wintertime" (Shilling, 2003, p. 11). Tofino and Ucluelet have an average water temperature of 8-11 degrees Celsius; whereas, Jordan River and Sombrio Beach have an average water temperature of 5-6 degrees Celsius (Shilling, 2003). As Elizabeth Nickson (2002) describes her experience along the shores of Pacific Rim National Park, "the ocean out here is immensely powerful, grey, and thick with salt...on this section of coast" (p. AL8).

The best surfing conditions result from winter storms. As Shilling notes, Wintertime is really the only time you can reliably surf Sombrio or the Jordan River, both of which depend on winter storms for suitable waves...A huge wave in Tofino...would be ten feet...with an average wave about three-to-five feet high. Most waves at Sombrio or Jordan River are in the three-to-five feet range. Both Sombrio and the Jordan River provide consistent waves. The surf at Tofino is a 'beach surf' – ever changing. The waves at Jordan River are formed by a point break – waves that form in reaction to a landform and are, therefore,

consistent. The waves at Sombrio are formed by a reef break, which also produces consistent waves. (Shilling, 2003, p. 16-17)

Jordan River and Sombrio Beach are less accepting of beginner surfers. These locations are mostly male-dominated and exhibit a localism that makes it difficult for outsiders. "Jordan River still has a well-earned reputation for a locals-only attitude...Because so few people surfed Jordan River in the early 1970s, a heightened sense of entitlement and ownership developed among the clubbies" (Shilling, 2003, p. 37). "Localism is not unique to Jordan River. It is encountered in many surf spots around the world. What is hard to understand is why it exists in BC, where there are few surfers" (p.39).

Unlike Jordan River, localism and a negative vibe have never been part of the surf scene in Tofino. It might be due to the wide expanse of the beach or perhaps because Tofino is an actual town. Jordan River was a company town, sparsely populated, where little sense of community was able to develop. It is, in a sense, unclaimed territory that a bunch of outsiders made their own. In Tofino, on the other hand, there is a sense of belonging to a community without the localism.

(Shilling, 2003, p. 43)

As a result, Tofino has become a popular surf destination for female surfers and is a year-round home for a substantial number of surfers. Most women first experience the sport in the more accepting waters that surround the area of Tofino.

2.4 The Expansion of Women's Surfing and the Surf Wear Industry

Even though, women have been surfing professionally for decades, only recently has surfing gained increased visibility in the media and in the sports product marketplace (Hamilton, Locke, Perry, Ressnier, Smith, and Williams, 2002). A decade ago a woman who wanted to learn to surf would not have felt welcome. The existing surf stores didn't carry wetsuits, board shorts, rash guards, or other products designed for women surfers. If any women-specific products existed during this time, there were not many. The first women-only surf shop 'Water Girl' opened in 1995 in Encinitas, California and the owner Ilona Wood started a mini-revolution in the surf wear industry (Gabbard, 2000). Female surfers wanting to find women's products would not have a problem in the late 1990s onwards as women's surf gear began to appear everywhere. This may have been an indication that surfing like other extreme sports was becoming more gender neutral (Ostrowski, 1999). In the second half of the 1990s women's surfing experienced a rapid growth in popularity. As Booth (2001) affirms,

The industry is enjoying unprecedented economic prosperity on rising consumption of high-fashion clothing and accessories with surfing monikers. One indicator of the booming industry is the purchase of leading surf wear manufacturers by multinational companies – Lightning Bolt and Hang Ten by Pacific Dunlop, and Mambo by Gazal Corporation [and Hurley International by Nike] – and the public listing of other major clothing and equipment companies, including Quiksilver and Billabong. (p.3)

This time around the women were the ones helping to bring the sport back (Marsh, 1997). Changes in technology, such as lighter boards and the comeback of long

boards helped open the sport to women. It is estimated that currently one-third of Australia's two million surfers are female (Booth, 2001). Board-Trac, a California research firm that specializes in action sports recently reported that 16% to 22% of the 2.4 million surfers in the U.S are female, and the percentage of women surfing every day has more than doubled in the past three years" (Gonzalez, 2002, p. 63). Since the 1970s women have penetrated many sporting spheres (Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). In many different realms of sport, women are being recognized as a distinct and powerful target market. As Rob Cummings (1997) points out:

A similar scene is being played out from Montauk to Malibu as more and more women drop into that exclusive men's club, the fraternity of surfing...the real groundswell in the sports popularity is being generated by ordinary women – women who are doing things with surfboards that Gidget never dreamed of. (p.19)

According to Cummings (1997) with the influx of women, the sport is changing in innovative and unpredictable ways, and is attracting the attention of marketers, retailers, and non-surfers globally.

A number of conditions throughout the 1990s contributed to a new surfing culture that is more accepting of women. Booth (2001) identified the following conditions as main contributors to the growth of women's surfing: the revival of long boards, the emergence of new role models, resolution of women's surfing style, a shift in attitude regarding the marketing of female sexuality, a revitalized professional women's tour, and new products dedicated to female surfers. Although long boards have been criticized for being heavy to transport, they are more buoyant and stable making it easier for women to stand up and catch waves. In 1997 and 1998 Kahlua sponsored the women's pro tour and

increased the prize money available to women surfers. In 1995 *Surfing* magazine added *Surfing Girl* as an annual insert and in 2000 six editions were produced. Similarly Australia's *Surfer Life* began a two page supplement called *Chick* and in 1998 an independent magazine was launched. Lisa Anderson became recognized as a role model for women surfers and was credited with giving women authority in a male-dominated subculture. As a professional surfer, Lisa Anderson won four consecutive Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) world titles between 1994 and 1997 (Booth, 2001).

The number of women participating in surfing has continued to rise (Ostrowski, 1999) and it is apparent that a small but persisting market now exists for women desiring to learn to surf as evidenced by the opening of girls-only surf schools (Gonzalez, 2002). In 1996, Izzy Tihanyi opened *Surf Diva* the first all-women's surf school in La Jolla, California (Gabbard, 2000), and the first girls-only surf school opened in 1999 on the west coast of British Columbia (Nickson, 2002). Surfing competitions for women were also on Canada's beaches and waters. Key brand manufacturers in the surf industry have sponsored these events on Canada's west coast.

According to Hamilton et al. (2002), surf wear is now a \$2.4 billion industry and growing. The two biggest companies, Billabong and Quiksilver, in 2002 were already expecting "their lines of girls' board shorts, T shirts and other apparel to soon meet or beat earnings from boy's lines" (Hamilton et al., 2002, p. 54). This is an indication that the market growth of surfing apparel has been driven in part through the expansion of female lines. Established surf wear manufacturers and new independent labels have been designing brands specifically for women. Ostrowski (1999) indicates more than one quarter of Quiksilver's sales come from its girls Roxy division. Roxy which produces

surf and snowboard clothes for women started in 1994, and sales, escalated from \$1 million the first year to an estimated \$128 million in 1999. In targeting the untapped market of female surfers, Quiksilver was at the beginning of an upsurge in the surf industry (Ostrowski, 1999).

During this period, surf wear also shifted into mainstream fashion, especially among Generation Y girls (Ostrowski, 1999). Heidi Bartholomew, director of marketing and design for Billabong Australia has commented on the link between surf apparel, surf lifestyles, and self-identity for the Gen Y market. She states that "Girls are embracing the lifestyle, the whole surfing experience...Even girls who have never caught a wave like wearing the floppy, casual clothes" (Hamilton et al., 2002, p. 53). The widespread popularization of surf style has even made its impact in the prairie, land-locked town of Calgary. A Calgary store owner attributes the appeal of surfing with the "fascination with all things California (n)...we wanted to epitomize everything about California, but in Calgary" (Klaffke, 2002, p. B5). The pattern of consumption that results, of mixing surf wear fashion with other elements of teen and pre-teen fashion fits with Lury's (1996) description of the adoption of lifestyle trends. She writes, "... while only a small minority of young people may have adopted the complete ensemble of subcultural style, large numbers are seen to have drawn on selective elements, creating their own meanings and uses from them" (Lury, 1996, p. 194).

Recent films have also contributed to the rise in popularity of surfing lifestyles and surf fashion. Gonzalez (2002) comments on this noting that, "Hollywood has picked up on the trend; Disney's *Lilo & Stitch* and Universal's *Blue Crush*, both of which celebrate female surfing, may make riding the waves even more popular" (p. 63). As

Izzy Tihanyi, founder of the Surf Diva surf school for girls states “Every little girl who sees [Blue Crush] is going to want to surf” (Hamilton et al., 2002, p. 52). The increased popularity of girls surfing, in turn, has influenced brand marketers to target this demographic segment in their marketing campaigns which contributes to the popularity of surf wear with this group. As Ostrowski (1999) has observed, many teens are more fascinated by extreme sports (skateboarding, surfing, and snowboarding) than by jock sports (football, basketball and baseball). These teens may participate in the activities or share in the lifestyle associations and identity of the sports by purchasing branded apparel. As Schouten and McAlexander (1995) indicate, “Subculturally created styles may be shared or imitated by a much larger audience or market peripheral to the core subculture and may even become imitated and commercialized for mass consumption” (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p. 43). Booth (2001) has cautioned, however, that “commercialization also threatens to undermine the cultural tenets of surfing...while women consumers of surf products promise the industry unprecedented economic prosperity, they also pose a threat to the very cultural authenticity on which the industry depends” (p. 16).

2.5 The Concept of Subculture

The term ‘subculture’ has been used in increasingly contradictory ways by sport social theorists and requires a brief explanation in context. As Crosset and Beal (1997) state, “Within sport ethnography, the term subculture has been employed so broadly that the term has lost much of its explanatory power” (p. 73). Ethnographies of sport subcultures have often exaggerated cultural resistance and positioned sport subcultures as

oppositional to the parent culture (Crosset & Beal, 1997). The term subculture is often construed as synonymous with deviants and their activities, and the prefix 'sub' is sometimes interpreted as being inferior to mainstream values. For the purposes of my research, I shift away from wholly oppositional elements and examine the link between consumption, identities, and subcultural theory in the emergence and growth of the women's surfing industry in Canada. As Pearson (1979) suggests "A subcultural norm may be different from the 'norm' of the parent culture or of another subculture and yet be within a tolerable range of behavior [and therefore not 'deviant']" (p. 20). Donnelly's (1981a) definition of subculture most adequately captures the women's surfing community for my purposes. Donnelly (1981a) defines a subculture as "A collectivity of groups and individuals who possess common cultural characteristics and who interact with each other, or who have the potential to interact with each other either directly or symbolically (i.e., through such media as magazines and newsletters)" (p. 570). Similar to other subcultures, sport subcultures may be distinguished as subsystems within the dominant culture, and characterized by a different set of norms, values, beliefs, and symbols (Leonard II, 1991).

a. Youth Subcultures

Scholars influenced by the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies have focused on the analysis of youth subcultures. A notable cultural studies analysis of post-war youth subcultures in Britain is Hebdige's (1979) *Subculture: The meaning of style* (Crosset & Beal, 1997). Since the 1950s new youth groups have

emerged in which consumption played an integral role in their existence (Bocock, 1993).

As Lury (1996) notes:

There is now a long and well-known history of youth subcultural styles, from the teddy boys and the mods, to the skins and punks, to hip hop and rave, which has occupied the attention of sociologists, journalists, and music and fashion commentators alike. (p. 193)

Hebdige (1979) based his analysis based on the punk and reggae subcultures present in Britain during the mid 1950s to mid 1970s. Hebdige examined the link between the predominantly working class youth subcultural styles and the styles of the sizeable black immigrant community. He suggests that we should be “interested in subculture- in the expressive forms and rituals of those subordinate groups –who are alternatively dismissed, denounced, and canonized; treated at different times as threats to public order and as harmless buffoons” (Hebdige, 1979, p. 2).

Lury (1996) proposes four main conditions that have contributed to the emergence of post-war youth styles in Britain: i) the traditional period from dependent childhood to independent adulthood has been greatly lengthened in modern industrial societies, ii) youth became a significant consumer market, iii) social and political changes such as the breakup of traditional housing patterns and the increasing employment of women and iv) Americanization (popular culture) of British cultures.

Hall and Jefferson (1976) in their analysis of British post-war youth cultures point out that “One of the main functions of subcultural style is to define the boundaries of group membership as against other groups” (p. 180). The meanings that subcultures create often stand in opposition to the accepted meanings of the majority – to the

“dominant social-cultural order” (p. 12). Similarly Hebdige (1979) suggests that the construction of a style that deviates from the interests of the dominant groups in society signals a refusal against the prevailing ideologies. Through the expression of style subcultures challenge hegemony, which Hebdige, drawing on Hall (1977), defines as:

A situation in which a provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert total social authority over other subordinate groups, not simply by coercion or by the direct imposition of ruling ideas, but by winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural. (p. 16, c.f., Hall, 1977)

Hebdige (1979) adds that “The tensions between dominant and subordinate groups can be found in the surfaces of subculture – in the styles made up of mundane objects which have a double meaning” (p. 3). Through their appearance subordinate groups appropriate certain objects (e.g. safety pins, tubes of Vaseline, scooters, tampons, plastic clothes-pegs), and these objects signify the presence of difference from dominant groups and are a sign of forbidden identity, or may be a source of value to those who hold them as markers of identity (Hebdige, 1979). Lury suggests that “The homologous coherence of youth subcultures is created through the process of bricolage – the process in which objects acquire new meaning through recontextualization (1996, p. 197). Bocock (1993) adds that although youth groups use “...specific consumption patterns as a way of marking a boundary between peer group membership and outsiders...group boundaries are much more fluid than under conditions of modernity; people do not feel that they belong necessarily to the same social status group, or even the same ethnic group, into which they were born” (p. 80).

Hebdige's (1979) essential point is that these 'deviants' (p. 19) violate the social order, and are detached from the norm through their defining characteristics of music and style. Hebdige further reveals that each subculture in Britain is a normal response to a particular set of social circumstances during that time period. The deviant behavior of youth subcultures is understood as a collective reaction of youth themselves to structural changes that took place in British post-war society (Hebdige, 1979).

A key finding in this work is that style and patterns of consumption can serve as means for constructing an identity. In Britain, the first male youth group who emerged with a distinctive sense of identity was the teddy boys. As Bocock (1993) acknowledges "This identity was constructed, in large part, around a distinctive pattern of consumption, that of Edwardian-style clothing, a special hairstyle, and a taste for rock'n'roll music" (p. 100). Similarly, Hebdige (1979) claims that the mod style attempted to compensate for the mundane predictability of the working week "by exercising complete domination over his private estate – his appearance and choice of leisure pursuits" (p. 91). Through style, youth in Britain have created an alternative identity for themselves: a sense of otherness (Hebdige, 1979).

Hebdige (1979) acknowledges that it is only a matter of time before subcultural signs (dress, music, etc.) become mass-produced objects for mainstream fashion. "In every successive subculture there is a cycle leading from opposition to defusion, from resistance to incorporation" (p. 100), and both the market and the media play a role in the continuation of this cycle. Lury (1996) argues that the last authentic youth culture was punk which emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. "Youth subcultures," she writes, "can no longer exist in today's commercially predatory environment... they no sooner

emerge than they are swallowed whole by contemporary consumer culture” (Lury, 1996, p. 198).

This work provides a useful bridge to sports subcultures, many of which are also youth-driven. In this context, sports subcultures can be conceptualized as groups who demonstrate common identities and affiliations with each other based on the lifestyle conditions of their activity and its cultural symbolism which are both rooted in the consumption of consumer products in a consumer market economy. In such an environment, product and brand symbolism matters, as do the sport and group’s identities.

b. Sports subcultures

Kates (1998) has proposed that “One of the most interesting branches of both the sport marketing and consumer research disciplines – from both theoretical and managerial perspectives – is the study of subcultures whose social organization revolve around various brands or activities” (p. 26). In the literature on sports subcultures, the process of subcultural socialization has been linked to identity formation (Donnelly and Young, 1988; Wheaton, 1998, 2000), and the expression of identity through sport consumption (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). Wheaton (1998, 2000) examined the role of identity in the case of windsurfing subcultures, and her research outlined the array of gender relations in the sport. Beal (1996) discusses the alternative definitions of masculinity and its effects on gender relations that are manifest in the subculture of skateboarding. In her observations of the skateboarding subculture, she acknowledges the lack of female participation in the sport. The predominantly male participants

identified the lack of a strict formal structure, freedom of self-expression, emphasis on participation and co-operation, and the ability to challenge their own physical limits as motives for their involvement in the sport. The male skaters also identified the physical nature of the sport, lack of female participants, and the lack of peer support as barriers for females in the sport (Beal, 1996). Beal (1996) reported that “Both the males and females have internalized the dominant ideology of sport as a male social role...And as long as females are judged by a standard of masculinity in a patriarchal society they will always be marginalized” (Beal, 1996, p. 219)

However, Anderson (1999) in her analysis of the construction of gender in the emerging sport of snowboarding suggested that “Unlike most organized sports [football, baseball, basketball], snowboarding is emerging in a context of women’s sport participation and is not automatically considered a masculine practice” (p. 59). Heino (2000) analyzed the life cycle of snowboarding as a new sport, and found that there is a lifestyle specific to snowboarding that is resistant to the dominant sport of skiing and the social values that skiing represents. Heino (2000) suggests that the “media have appropriated the image of youthful rebellion in snowboarding and commodified it” (p. 176), resulting in a similar diffusion of snowboarding culture to non-snowboarders as noted in the case of surfing mentioned previously.

A growing body of research on sport subcultures has focused on gender relations and socialization and acceptance within sport subcultures (Anderson, 1999; Beal, 1996; Klein, 1986; Leonard II, 1991). The importance of commitment and demonstrating proficiency in the sport has also been analyzed with respect to negotiating, renegotiating, and sometimes subverting the contemporary gender order (Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998).

Youth sport subcultures also demonstrate a unique style that contributes to identity formation among the youth involved. At the beginning of snowboarding, snowboarders found their cultural roots in surfing, skateboarding, and the “gansta” (Anderson, 1999). “The popularity of the hip-hop look, and its appropriation by suburban youth from its urban origins allowed for an easy jump from skateboard and surfing style to snowboard style” (Heino, 2000, p. 178). ‘Style’ becomes mobilized as a means to demonstrate group membership and to distinguish authentic members from the ‘posers’, e.g. a non-surfer playing the role of a surfer (see Anderson, 1999). A poser often adopts the “mannerisms, attitudes, language, and styles of dress, speech, and behavior that he or she perceives to be characteristic of [core] established members of the subculture” (Donnelly & Young, 1988, p. 223), but is distinguishable from a neophyte who shapes an identity through the consumption of goods to assist in his or her socialization into the subculture.

Marketers follow the changing styles of youth culture and adjust their brands according to current market trends. In essence, brand marketers, advertisers, and promoters can learn a great deal from the ‘authentic’ hard-core members of the group. All styles that take form in the mainstream arise from the subculture itself. “The creation and diffusion of new styles is inextricably bound up with the process of production, publicity, and packaging which must inevitably lead to the diffusion of the subculture’s subversive power...[They feed] back into high fashion and mainstream fashion” (Hebdige, 1979, p. 95). According to Wheaton (2000), this ultimately means that the subculture is a subculture of consumption. As she writes:

The surfing subculture...is a 'commodity-oriented subculture' in which consumer capitalism is essential to its inception and growth...Surfing supports 'two fundamentals of American capitalism, consumerism and individualism'...This expansion of capital is particularly evident in the commodities linked to these activities such as equipment and clothing. (p. 261)

Surfing style has fed directly into mainstream fashion. Boardies, hoodies, Reefs, bikinis, and surf branded merchandise adorn store shelves. Meanwhile, youth are fueling the industry, attempting to fashion an identity out of their purchases.

2.6 Consumer Research

In order to more clearly specify the importance of consumption in contemporary sport subcultures it is useful to draw on some of the work that has been done in consumer research. For example, Bennett (1999) drawing on Maffesoli's concept of *tribus* (tribes) applied the framework of neo-tribes to an empirical study of the contemporary dance music scene in Britain. According to Maffesoli the tribe is "without the rigidity of the forms of organization with which we are familiar, it refers more to a certain ambience, a state of mind, and is preferably to be expressed through lifestyles that favor appearance and form' (Bennett, p. 605; c.f., Maffesoli, 1996). Bennett criticizes the subcultural theories developed by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), and argues that "The concept of 'subculture' is unworkable as an objective analytical tool in sociological work on youth, music and style" (p. 599). Bennett indicates that "The term 'subculture' is also deeply problematic in that it imposes rigid lines of division" (p. 603), and implies that subcultures "exist outside of the mainstream"

(p. 604), or in essence that they are inherently deviant. He writes that the term 'subculture' becomes "a convenient 'catch-all' term used to describe a range of disparate collective practices whose only obvious relation is that they all involve young people" (p. 605). Accordingly, the concept of neo-tribes was introduced as an alternative theoretical model for the study of youth. These groupings are characterized by fluid boundaries and floating memberships and "allows for the shifting nature of youth's musical and stylistic preferences and the essential fluidity of youth cultural groups" (p. 614). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) in their review of neo-tribalism further emphasize this fluid nature of these groups and mention that "they form, they disperse, [and] they re-form as something else, reflecting the constant shifting identities of postmodern consumers" (p. 414). This research is identified as a possible means to describe youth groups differently than using subcultural theory. The concept of neo-tribes is effective for analyzing the youth dance music scene; however, for the purposes of my study, it does not capture the semi-permanent nature of the social group of women surfers I wanted to study. Bennett's analysis of lifestyles is important to my study therefore mainly because of its connection between identity, lifestyles, and consumption.

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) from their own part introduced the concept of brand community as a framework for understanding consumer behavior. A brand community is defined as "a specialized, non-geographically bound community based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand" (p. 412). Unlike marginalized subcultures, brand communities embrace aspects of the surrounding culture's ideology. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) used ethnographic and computer-mediated environment data to explore the brand communities of Ford Bronco, Macintosh, and Saab. It is important

to draw attention to the core components of community which essentially are the defining characteristics of a brand community as identified by Muniz and O'Guinn. The first element and most important component of community is a 'consciousness of kind' defined as "the intrinsic connection that members feel toward one another, and the collective sense of difference from others not in the community" (p. 413). The other two components of community are shared rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility. It is suggested that brand communities are in fact largely imagined communities. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) postulate that "These communities may form around any brand, but are probably more likely to form around brands with a strong image, a rich and lengthy history, and threatening competition" (p. 415). Brand communities can be beneficial to marketers in that they can positively affect brand equity and actualize the relationship value of a brand (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

The concept of brand community is an important addition to the study of consumer culture, however, its formal characteristics, as defined by Muniz and O'Guinn impose several limitations. It is suggested that members of a brand community typically are intensely devoted to a brand, oppose competing brands, and possess a shared consciousness. These brands often have a rich history and tend to preserve the traditional meaning of the brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). The brands studied by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) may have been carefully selected as ideal markers of community in order to better fit the notion of brand community. In regards to women's surf brands, many of these brands have been recently added to the market and do not have an established history. Furthermore, it is anticipated that consumers of surf brands do not focus entirely on one brand with such intensity during each purchase decision. It is

improbable that consumers of one specific surf brand would form a community bound by their passionate devotion to the brand. Indisputably, some brands may be preferable to both the mainstream consumer and the subculture member, but with regard to the construction of their identities it would seem product category is more important to these individuals. For the purpose of my research the focus of concern is not on a particular brand or consumers of one brand solely. Therefore, an alternative framework is needed that better suits the objectives of my study.

Shoham and Kahle (1996) applied the concept of consumption communities to the marketing of sport services. They define a consumption community as a “group of people having common consumption interests” (p. 12). They identified two types of communities: consumption and communication in their research. Shoham and Kahle (1996) believed that sport marketers could benefit from understanding the media habits of different consumption communities. Membership in a communication community can take the form of spectator, viewer, or reader. In their framework, consumption communities are based on three types of sporting activities a) competitive sport, b) fitness sport and c) nature-related sport (Shoham & Kahle, 1996). The researchers believed that “Individuals who belong to each of the three communication communities should differ in sport consumption” (p. 12). Their results determined that sport marketers would more likely benefit from targeting all three groups of consumption communities in their marketing strategies (Shoham & Kahle, 1996). For the purposes of my study the consumption communities identified are too broad to adequately situate the sport of surfing in the framework. Consumption communities would be advantageous for the

brand marketing component of my study, but would ignore the important characteristics of the subculture being studied.

Schouten and McAlexander (1995), in their ethnographic work on Harley-Davidson motorcycle owners examined the phenomenon of subculture from a consumer behavior perspective. Their study introduced the concept of a subculture of consumption in order,

To better understand consumers and the manner in which they organize their lives and identities. Recognizing that consumption activities, product categories, or even brands may serve as the basis for interaction and social cohesion, the concept...solves many problems inherent in the use of ascribed social categories as devices for understanding consumer behavior. (p. 43)

This research is transferable to other 'consumption-oriented subcultures' (p. 43). Schouten and McAlexander (1995) define a 'subculture of consumption', as "A distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity" (p. 43). Other characteristics include an identifiable, hierarchical social structure; a unique ethos, or set of shared beliefs and values; and unique jargons, rituals, and modes of symbolic expression (p. 43).

These groups are of interest to consumer researchers and brand marketers who want to understand the structure and ethos of a subculture of consumption with the intention of recognizing their consumption choices and consumer behavior, thereby potentially creating a relationship with them. Schouten and McAlexander (1995) propose that,

A subculture of consumption comes into existence as people identify with certain objects or consumption activities and, through those objects or activities, identify with other people...The structure of the subculture, which governs social interactions within it...is a direct reflection of the commitment of individuals to the ethos. (p. 48)

Subcultures of consumption gain even more interest for marketers as subcultural styles are diffused to a broader group of consumers.

Hard-core or high-status members of achieved subcultures function as opinion leaders. Subculturally created styles may be shared or imitated by a much larger audience or market peripheral to the core subculture and may even become imitated and commercialized for mass consumption. (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p. 43)

In recognition of this research, I anticipate that Canadian female surfers represent a distinct subculture of consumption. This population is committed to consuming surf-themed products. These women have a shared commitment to these products, certain brands, and overall consumption activities. In essence, core female surfers may make significant purchase decisions in other product categories (e.g. homes, cars, travel, etc.) based on their commitment to the surfing subculture. An understanding of the surfing subculture of consumption will allow researchers and brand marketers to gain an understanding of how surfers organize their lives and identities.

In order to practice the sport of surfing one must consume products, as surfing is a 'commodity-orientated subculture' (Wheaton, 2000, p. 261). The primary product essential to practice the sport of surfing is a surf board, although it can be argued that on

the west coast of Canada, a wet suit is equally as important. With regard to the female sport consumer, certain brands may be better than others at recognizing the product needs and preferences of female surfers. As women identify themselves with these surf-themed products they will begin to identify with others who share their commitment to this subculture of consumption. This thesis recognizes the process of diffusion as subcultural style is diffused to a broader group of female consumers. The women's surf wear industry has capitalized on the circulation of surf style to the mainstream market and consequently, surf wear has gone through a period of commercialization for mass consumption.

Schouten and McAlexander (1995) suggest that another characteristic of a subculture of consumption is an identifiable, hierarchical social structure. In their ethnographic work with Harley-Davidson motorcycle owners it was acknowledged that "Subcultures of consumption display complex social structures that reflect the status differences of individual members" (p. 50). Status is based on an individual's commitment to the ideology of the subculture ranging from the most committed (hard core) to the less committed (soft core). It is expected that a similar structure will be identifiable in the surfing subculture of consumption. The status of a surfer is most likely based on their commitment to the sport, various products, and their level of experience.

Wheaton (1998, 2000) in her analysis of the subculture of windsurfing indicates that a women's status is based on her commitment to the sport and on windsurfing prowess and "not the conspicuous display of equipment or subcultural style" (2000, p. 254). It can be argued though that the most committed, higher status windsurfers would also be committed to the windsurfers' ideology of consumption in that "The consumption

of objects –specifically the equipment or kit – is central to windsurfing” (Wheaton, 2000, p. 261). Furthermore, Wheaton (2000) noted the homogeneity in windsurfers’ visual appearance and she indicated that windsurfers demonstrated ‘style denial’ which is described as “symbolic resistance to the incorporation of surf style into mainstream fashion and its subsequent commercialization” (p. 266). As such, windsurfers wore and purchased branded merchandise but didn’t want to be seen as “buying into an image” (p. 266). However, purchasing the best equipment and clothing does not automatically make you an insider in the subculture of windsurfing, as proficiency, knowledge, and commitment to the sport are fundamentally important status symbols (Wheaton, 2000). It is anticipated that there will be visible symbols to identify the female surfer’s position in the subculture. The display of equipment is not unequivocal and further analysis accessing the degree of proficiency and level of commitment in the sport will determine the surfer’s actual position in the subculture. A less core surfer cannot buy their way into the core of the subculture; consequently, the display of equipment is not an accurate measure of subcultural status. Further analysis will identify the amount of structure within the surfing subculture of consumption.

Schouten and McAlexander (1995) identify several dominant values prevalent in the Harley ethos. The dominant value in the Harley-Davidson subculture of consumption (HDSC) is personal freedom and the Harley-Davidson motorcycle stands for ‘liberation from confinement’ (p.52). The women’s surf subculture of consumption will yield a unique set of core values and members will find means of expressing them through the consumption of certain brands and their usages. As Schouten and McAlexander (1995) suggest that,

Underlying the behaviors of a subculture of consumption is an identifiable ethos, that is, a set of core values that are accepted to varying degrees by all its adherents. Those values find expression in certain products or brands and their usages...commitment to key brands and product usage behavior may be held with religious intensity, even to the point of elevating certain brands to the status of icons. (p. 55)

Wheaton (2000) reveals that "Windsurfing, like many other new sport subcultures such as skateboarding, snowboarding, and surfing, has an anti-mainstream competition ethos (p. 260).

Another characteristic of a subculture of consumption is the transformation of self. Schouten and McAlexander (1995) emphasize that the,

Individual's movement into and through the commitment-based status hierarchy of the HDSC constitutes a gradual transformation of the self. Like members of other groups that rightly can be called subcultures of consumption, such as skydivers and surfers, bikers undergo an evolution of motives and a deepening of commitment as they become more involved in the subculture. (p. 55)

As Wheaton (2000) relates, "Sporting subcultural identity is not fixed; it is a dynamic process undergoing constant transformation" (p. 258, c.f. Donnelly & Young, 1988). In the surfing subculture of consumption, surfers and the media will act as models for appropriate consumption behavior (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). As Schouten and McAlexander (1995) recognize, "By understanding the process of self-transformation undergone by individuals within a subculture of consumption, a marketer can take an active role in socializing new members and cultivating the commitment of current ones"

(p. 57). These researchers indicate that the commercialization of certain subcultural products is not uncommon and use the example of surf styles repeatedly being copied into popular swimwear to illustrate this point. Subcultural meanings undergo co-optation into the larger fashion system (Hebdige, 1979), so that the resulting products are acceptable to larger segments of mainstream consumers (Kates, 1998).

Schouten and McAlexander (1995) caution that,

Efforts to capitalize on the marketability of a subculture of consumption also entail risks commensurate with the benefits. Attempts to exploit the subculture by broadening its appeal may have a deadly corrupting influence on the subculture itself. Part of the psychic benefit of being a biker [surfer] is the distinction of being part of a marginal group. (p. 58)

As a result,

The marketing consequence of this danger is that brand management is faced with a veritable tightrope walk between the conflicting needs of two disparate but equally important groups of consumers: those who give the product its mystique and those who give the company its profitability. (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p. 59)

It is advantageous for marketers to understand the structure and ethos of a subculture of consumption. This knowledge may assist in the socialization of new members, may accrue increased customer loyalty, and may make a marginal subculture more accessible to mainstream consumers (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). My thesis was designed to help explain the surfing subculture of consumption and the values specific to members of the women's surfing subculture of consumption in Western Canada. Schouten and

McAlexander (1995) suggest that "As an analytic category the subculture of consumption solves nagging problems inherent in the use of other, a priori categorizations for the understanding of consumption patterns" (p. 59). Although, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) use a primarily male-dominated group of motorcycle owners to situate their theory, these findings are equally transferable to different demographic groups and consumption activities. For the purposes of my research it is anticipated that this overall framework best supports the objectives of my study.

2.7 Sport Lifestyles, Identity, and Consumption

"Debates about changing contemporary Western societies have emphasized the increasingly fluid and fragmented nature of identities, suggesting that people draw their sense of identity from increasingly diverse sources, including sport and leisure lifestyles" (Wheaton, 2000, p. 254). Wheaton and Tomlinson (1998) denote in their study on windsurfing subcultures that "new sports such as windsurfing have been perceived as the product of a post-modern society and culture in which sporting and physical activity offer a basis for the generation of new and multiple identities (p. 252). Wheaton and Tomlinson (1998) suggest that "The windsurfing culture is an important site of identity creation for committed women windsurfers, an environment in which female participants negotiate status and construct feminine identities as active sport participants" (p. 259), "detached from their role as mothers and from their male partners" (p. 263), and "norms of female embodiment" (p. 269). Donnelly and Young (1988) in their research into the process of identity formation in sport subcultures, indicate that socialization into sport subcultures is viewed as,

A far more deliberate act of identity construction. [Identity is created] through a variety of means, the most significant of which is modeling, in which, the neophyte member begins to deliberately adopt mannerisms, attitudes, and styles of dress, speech, and behavior that he or she perceives to be characteristic of established members of the subculture. (p. 223)

Donnelly (1981) states that "The principal psychic reward of subcultures is that they provide their members with an identity [e.g. I am a surfer]" (p. 575).

Consumption, lifestyles, and self-identity are profoundly linked (Wheaton, 2000, p. 255). Meanwhile the concept of 'lifestyle' is used to "describe the sensibilities employed by the individual in choosing certain commodities and patterns of consumption and in articulating these cultural resources as modes of personal expression" (Bennett, 1999, p. 607, c.f. Chaney 1994, 1996). This differentiation could essentially be construed as how "individual identities are constructed and lived out... [The concept of lifestyle regards] individuals as active consumers whose choice reflects a self-constructed notion of identity" (Bennett, 1999, p. 607). Furthermore, Chaney (1996) states that "Lifestyles therefore help to make sense of what people do, and why they do it, and what doing it means to them and others" (p. 4). In post-modernity, the relationship between lifestyles, self-identity, and consumption is more pronounced. Bocock (1993) reveals that in post-modernity, goods began to get recognized as having symbolic value, and women as consumers gained "some control over the meanings to be associated with consumption" (p. 96). As Bocock (1993) relates:

The conscious chosen meaning in most people's lives come much more from what they consume than what they produce. Consumer goods have become a

crucial area for the construction of meanings, identities, gender roles, in post-modern capitalism. Commodities are not just objects of economic exchange; they are goods to think with, goods to speak with. (p. 96)

Increasingly, people are choosing certain types of work over others in order to be consistent with lifestyle values, and this is creating a shift away from seeing productive status as a basis for social identity (Chaney, 1996, p. 15). As illustrated by Wheaton and Tomlinson (1998) in their ethnographic work on the subculture of windsurfing, they suggest that to the core members “windsurfing was a ‘culture of commitment’.

Windsurfing was central in their lives: It organized their leisure time, their work time, their choice of career, and where they lived” (p. 261). Furthermore, in post-modernity work roles are of less significance in providing individuals with a sense of identity than their activity as consumers (Bocock, 1993). In post-modernity, “people...increasingly tend to (re)present themselves through what they consume. Who one is, is more and more communicated to others, as well as to oneself, by what one wears, drives, does during periods of leisure, and so on” (Firat, 1994, p. 217). As Warde (1994) outlines, a central feature of the social theories of late modernity and post modernity is the notion that,

People define themselves through the messages they transmit to others through the goods and practices that they possess and display. They manipulate or manage appearances, and thereby create and sustain a “self-identity”. In a world where there [are] an increasing number of commodities to act as props in this process, identity becomes more than ever a matter of the personal selection of

self-image. Increasingly, individuals are obliged to choose their identities. (p. 878)

As such, consumption has come to play a significant role in the process of active identity construction (Bocock, 1993), and for the communication and maintenance of self-identity (Wheaton, 2000). Baudrillard (1988) conceptualized consumption “as a process in which a purchaser of an item is actively engaged in trying to create and maintain a sense of identity through the display of purchased goods” (Bocock, 1993, p. 67.) In essence, “Consumption is now an active endeavor. It is the production and signification of one’s self-image [identity]. It is how one constructs and (re)presents (one) self to obtain position(s) in society and maintain livelihood” (Firat, 1994, p. 217). “Consumption, then, offers a sense of control over communal meanings of oneself and social relations, it offers a means of controlling to some extent the context of everyday life” (Fiske, 1989, p. 25).

Youth consume specific products in the sports marketplace in order to produce their self-image; and thereby, create a self-identity. Through manipulation and management of appearances, youth represent themselves in a unique manner. The mode in which youth are perceived by others is central to this identity construction. Brands utilize logos to differentiate themselves from other products, and youth use branded goods to distinguish themselves from other youth. The consumption of ensembles of activities and/or products essentially creates an identity which gets transmitted to others, and identities are malleable and varied and can change. “When consumers become conscious of the necessity to cultivate varied self-images, they begin to perceive

themselves as marketable items and their consumption becomes a productive means for (re)production of selves (self-images)” (Firat, 1994, p. 221).

2.8 Market Trends: Women in the Sport Marketplace

It is widely documented that one of the most significant trends in sport and within the sport marketplace is the dramatic rise and influence of women as sport consumers (Bradish, Lathrop, & Sedgwick, 2001; Branch, 1995; Lough, 1996; Shoham, Rose, Kropp, & Kahle, 1997; Sparks & Westgate, 2002; Sutton & Watlington, 1994). This increased prevalence of female consumers in the sport marketplace and of women’s sports in general has been attributed to a number of factors including: increased opportunities for females as sport participants at all levels of sport, an increase in the number of female sport spectators, a gradual shift toward cultural acceptance of females in sport settings, enhanced media interest in women’s sport, the introduction of quality sport products designed specifically for women, and increased decision-making and purchasing power of women. In addition, there is a perception that many male-dominated sport markets are now saturated and stagnant while women have increased their consumption of sport and sport-related products and account for an increasing share of the sport consumption dollar (Bradish et al., 2001; Branch, 1995; Sutton & Watlington, 1994). In many different realms of sport, women are being recognized as a distinct and powerful market segment. Women have been sport participants and spectators for quite some time however, the manner in which women are viewed by sport marketers and advertisers as a desirable target market is changing (Branch, 1995). “Women are now being viewed as a unique and growing target market segment, a group

to be recognized and duly considered when sport property-rights holders and marketers begin deliberating their product's position and concept" (Branch, p. 9).

In the midst of these recent market trends, young women have emerged as an important sub-segment for sport, sport-related products, and sport marketers, and may provide growth for traditionally male-oriented companies and industries (Shoham et al., 1997). The demographic segment identified as Generation Y and understood as children of the baby boomers and born after 1978 comprises today's pre-teen and teens. This generation is regarded as the fastest growing demographic group on the continent (Bradish et al., 2001), and is racially diverse (Neuborne, 1992). In Canada alone, Generation Y has been identified as a group that represents almost \$1.4 billion worth of "real spending power" both in terms of disposable income and in terms of eventual inherited wealth (Bradish et al., 2001, p. 20; c.f., Steinberg, 1998). Within this segment it is important to note that female pre-teens and teens have emerged as distinct consumers. Sporting good manufacturers are beginning to recognize the market potential of this previously unexplored demographic. This generation has an impact on major purchase decisions within their household, in addition to deciding how to spend their own money (Bradish et al., 2001). Those companies who choose to ignore the buying power of this generation will threaten the very future of their brands. Unlike, Generation X that wasn't large enough to threaten boomer brands, Generation Y, born between 1979 and 1994, is substantial enough to launch rival brands that can jeopardize the success and/or existence of boomer brand names. This generation grew up in a media-saturated, brand conscious world, and respond to ads differently than their parents (Neuborne, 1999). This generation will be increasingly brand loyal to those companies that craft products and

pitches that are more realistic and more representative of their values. In a matter of a few years, this generation will be buying their first cars, homes, and mutual funds. The buying habits they display today will lead them into their first key purchases of young adulthood (Neuborne, 1999). The youth demographic has tremendous consumer impact and buying power, and forward-thinking companies will tend to form relationships with these consumers now, in order to remain competitive in the future.

While much research has examined the baby-boom and Generation X niche markets, relatively few studies have examined the Generation Y female sport consumer (Bradish et al., 2001). As Steinberg (1998) acknowledges, "For all the money and effort being poured into the market, there remains an awful symmetry...as a generation [they are] skeptical, media-savvy and almost preposterously well-informed about the world around them, yet we know very little about them" (p. 61). These recent changes in the sport marketplace illustrates the need for further research with this demographic.

Accordingly, Bradish, Lathrop and Sedgwick (2001) published a study that examines the female pre-teen and teen as a distinct segment of the sport marketplace. This study drew its sample from a group of female participants who attended an elite sport camp that primarily offered elite-level basketball and volleyball. "Subjects were surveyed to examine consumer and psychosocial characteristics relative to social and cultural influences, psychological and personal-trait behaviors, and consumer behavior and marketing preferences specific to the sport marketplace in general and the sporting good marketplace in particular" (Bradish et al., p. 19). This sample reported its most frequent sport purchases to be clothing (55.4%), followed by shoes (34.9%) and equipment (4.8%). These individuals also viewed themselves as highly engaged in their

own sport participation and consumer decisions. With regard to choice of name brand and style of sport product, self was the greatest influence (53.5%), followed by mother (8.2%) and female friends (6.1%). This analysis “demonstrates the strength and growth of female sport consumers as sport-product decision makers and spenders, and signals their identification as a key niche or target market segment within the sport marketplace” (Bradish et al., p. 19).

These findings may not be transferable to other consumer groups; however, this research is beneficial to sport marketers by providing insight into this virtually untapped market segment. Sport marketers will benefit with an improved understanding of generational differences in the women’s sport market. Furthermore, this study demonstrates the need for future research focusing on the female sport consumer in other realms of sport and within the context of sport subcultures to form a broader understanding of this consumer group. “Sporting good manufacturers understanding these consumer preferences is crucial to making more informed decisions about their sport consumers to sustain further long-term organization success” (p. 20). Bradish, Lathrop, and Sedgwick (2001) suggest that,

The Generation Y female sport consumer is elite and informed, possessing a clear articulation of needs and consumer preferences. When one considers the synergistic effect of the rising phenomenon of women’s sports and the echo-boom generation, the pre-teen/teen female may well be one of the most influential markets of the future. (p. 23)

Combining these two trends of women as sport consumers and the buying power of Generation Y has created a manifold of sport marketing opportunities. Women are no

longer treated as an afterthought in the minds of sport marketers, promoters, and corporate advertisers as marketers begin to recognize the potential financial influence of this sector (Bradish et al., 2001). "As a consumer group, women now possess the marketing potential to make a significant impact upon the bottom line of consumer and spectator sport organizations that are willing to consider these obvious trends in the sport marketplace" (Branch, 1995, p. 10). This demographic shift in the sport marketplace is causing sport marketers to adjust their strategies in hopes of obtaining the support of this segment. It is suggested that in order to gain the support of this generation, marketers must make their pitches more realistic, and make their campaigns more local and subtle (Neuborne, 1999). In order to secure brand loyalty with the female sport consumer who has a heightened sensitivity to social issues and corporate responsibility, it is also cautioned that marketers must change the tone in which they speak to women (Sutton & Watlington, 1994).

Brand loyalty is an important concept for brand marketers to consider when introducing or expanding their brands into the women's sport marketplace. Brand loyalty defined by Aaker (1991) is the ability to attract and retain customers. Brand loyalty is one of four measures of brand equity defined by Keller (1998) as "marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand" (p. 42), and is one component used to "[evaluate] the relative strength of consumer brands" (Gladden, Milne, and Sutton, 1998, p. 1). The emphasis in establishing brand equity is on customer satisfaction. Customer loyalty is critical to brand marketers and "to maintaining profitability because a loyal customer base provides a profit stream" (p. 3). Although all four components: perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty contribute to brand equity, the

concept of brand loyalty will be identified as a critical element of marketing strategies targeting the female sport consumer. A brand itself can be defined as “A name, term, sign, symbol, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Kotler, 1991, p. 442). Brand representatives of surf brands are an a priori group in my interviews to document the growth of women’s surfing and to gain an understanding of the women’s surf wear industry from the perspective of the brand creators.

One of the most effective strategies in marketing sport and sport products to women is likely to be lifestyle marketing (Sutton & Watlington, 1994). Lifestyle marketing is a “strategy for seizing the concept of a market according to its most meaningful recurrent patterns of attitudes and activities, and subsequently tailoring products and their promotional strategies to fit these patterns” (p. 12). In order for a company to gain the long-term commitment of the women’s sport market, it is essential for marketers to research female consumers and their lifestyles in order “to create products that fill a niche for that [particular] market” (p. 13). As such,

Companies and sponsors seeking to target and reach the female consumer must demonstrate the ability to not only understand the lifestyles and interests of women, but to effectively communicate the image and direction of the company as compatible with that lifestyle and image. (Sutton & Watlington, p. 11; c.f., Howell, 1993)

In essence, the key for sport organizations and sport-related businesses is in the “design of strategies that appeal to a woman’s sensitivities toward quality, price value(s), feelings, and emotional well-being” (Branch, 1995, p. 12).

The growth of the surfing industry has been impacted by the support and expansion of women's surf brands. A concept that is important to the growth of the women's surf industry is 'niche marketing'. According to Shani (1997), niche marketing "is a bottom up approach...The marketer starts by identifying the needs of few customers (niche in the market) and gradually builds up a customer base large enough to create a market niche (a niche in the market that has a sufficient size to pursue)" (p. 10).

A niche can start with a core group of customers who are involved in a unique sport activity...A niche strategy requires the organization to focus on its core (best) customers...With such a relatively small customer base, companies must build long-term relationships to create a very loyal group of customers. (p. 11)

The methodology chosen for this study identifies these marketing issues and should result in an improved understanding of how important the core women surfers are to the brand manufacturer's customer base. Other marketing strategies will likely be implemented by brand manufacturers now that a recognizable niche has spread to a larger segment of female consumers of surf wear. These different marketing strategies will be identified and described in further detail later pending their importance to the interviewees in this research. Women's surfing in effect comprises a niche market within the sport of surfing and within the overall framework of women's consumer markets.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

Rationale

This thesis builds on the ethnographic research conducted by Schouten and McAlexander (1995) and Wheaton (2000), and followed a similar ethnographic design for collecting information using participant observation and interviews. The study design encompassed three different populations: women surfers, retailers, and Canadian representatives of surf brand manufacturers. In each case the impetus was on gaining an understanding of the women's surf scene and the surf wear industry from the perspective of each respective group. In this way, it was anticipated that a multi-dimensional view would be obtained and the main objectives of the study would be met: i) to critically examine how the marketing of surf products affects surfing lifestyles and product consumption, and ii) to assess how surf lifestyles and products, in turn, become diffused to a larger population of young women and girls.

A data collection strategy was developed that encompassed multiple sources of information including tape-recorded interviews, photographs, field notes, interview notes and document analysis. One-to-one, semi-structured interviews were planned to be conducted in person or via the telephone. This approach "combine(s) uniformity of questioning with openness to new information" (Sparks and Westgate, 2002, p. 65), and was considered optimal for the kinds of information that were anticipated. In particular, since only limited research had been done on women's surfing, "openness to new information" was seen as a critical condition for the interviews. In addition to tape-recording, data collection included taking photographs, field notes and interview notes. Field notes were intended to record any information that would enable a better understanding of the women's surfing subculture and the surf wear industry, including

information about surfing locales, retail store lay-out and product display space, and social relational features such as people's interactions, dress codes, speech and mannerisms. A description of who was present, what was happening, and where the observation took place was included in the note-taking protocol (Neutens and Robinson, 1997).

Three interview guides were developed (see Appendix IV) to accommodate the three populations. The questions were common across the guides, and were designed to elicit discussions about surfing identities, the surfing lifestyle, and the construction of identity through brand consumption, as well as perceptions of the surf wear industry, branding, and marketing. In this way, the interviews were expected to provide data appropriate to the research questions of the study. The length of the interviews was set at 30 to 90 minutes. The interviews were intended to be informal and interviewees would be encouraged to be spontaneous and interactive, focusing on their individual perceptions, an approach that has been termed a "conversation with a purpose" (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). For this reason, use of an audio-recorder was planned in order to facilitate this process.

A data analysis strategy was also developed. This involved first transcribing the field notes and audio-recordings of interviews, then reviewing the transcripts for major themes and sub-themes within the context of the research questions for the study following an inductive approach. The idea was to group data together and look for similarities and differences across the responses, and thereby build the key themes from the bottom up (Palys, 1997).

Sample

The sampling method used for the study was purposive sampling. As Palys (1997) explain, purposive sampling is used when “people or locations are intentionally sought because they meet some criteria for inclusion in the study” (p. 137). For the purposes of this study, I recognized three a priori groups: surfers, surf wear retailers, and Canadian surf brand representatives. Fifteen individuals from these three target populations were interviewed 1) women surfers (n=5), 2) surf wear retailers (n=5), and 3) Canadian surf brand representatives (n=5). I sent each potential participant a recruitment letter (see Appendix II) and a consent form (see Appendix III) inviting their participation in this study.

Two female surfers were recruited from a West Coast surfing community through a local surf school for women-only. The owner of the surf school was one of the interview participants. The surf school was identified from the World Wide Web. Three additional surfers were recruited through conversations with other surfers and through recommendations from surf industry professionals. These surfers were selected on the basis of their positioning in the surfing subculture, that is, their age, and level/type of subcultural involvement. Five surf wear retailers were selected from company web sites and through word of mouth. I recruited retailers in the Vancouver Lower Mainland who sell surf merchandise and have a girls’ designated area at their store. Furthermore, I recruited Canadian surf brand representatives who represent large market surf brands for females. These representatives were recruited in the same manner the retailers were and they had the authority to speak on the behalf of the brand manufacturers.

All participants were over the British Columbia age of majority and were able to give consent for themselves. Individuals who consented to participate were interviewed by Lisa Mercer at the location of their home, office, or an agreed upon location. In the event that a face-to-face interview was not feasible, a telephone interview was arranged.

Ethical Considerations

For this research, I received ethics approval on March 27, 2003 from the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board (see Appendix I). This research posed minimal potential risks to the participants of this study. Subjects may have felt uncomfortable being interviewed or talking in the presence of a tape-recorder. The interviews took place in a comfortable environment chosen at the interviewee's discretion to minimize any discomfort. Furthermore, no proprietary or revealing 'inside' information was requested that could threaten their job or business. Additionally, participants were given the option to refuse to answer any particular questions during the interview process, and were able to withdraw from the interview and or study at any time without question. Strict confidentiality was maintained and findings were summarized anonymously. Access to the data was restricted to the Principal Investigator, Dr. Robert Sparks, and the Co-investigator, Lisa Mercer, who reviewed their responsibilities for confidentiality and identified a locking file cabinet, computer system and laboratory procedures for insuring confidentiality.

CHAPTER IV - RESULTS

This chapter focuses on the main findings of my ethnographic inquiry into the women's surf culture in Western Canada, and the marketing activities of the Canadian surf wear industry. The research was undertaken to identify key factors that have affected the development of women's surfing in Western Canada and to add to our understanding of the interplay of subcultures and marketing in Canadian consumer culture. Three inter-related and unique groups were studied: women surfers, retailers, Canadian surf brand representatives.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 women surfers, 5 surf wear retailers, and 5 Canadian surf brand representatives. Of the surf wear retailers interviewed, four were male and one was female. Two of the retail spaces were located in North Vancouver and three were located in Vancouver. Three of the stores had an adjacent women's store with a separate store entrance. Two of the stores divided their space between women's and men's product offerings. Three of the stores were suppliers of other board sports equipment, and two stores carried strictly beach wear and surf fashions. All of the retailers had women making the buying decisions for the women's products in the store. Three of the surf brand representatives who were interviewed were female and two were male. Two of the representatives were based in Whistler; two resided in Vancouver, and one in the Lower Mainland. Four of the brands were surf brands and one was a lifestyle brand. As can be expected, all the surfers interviewed

were female. Two of the surfers lived in Tofino, and three resided in the Greater Vancouver area. All five of the participants had been surfing for a minimum of 5 years. In all cases, pseudonyms are used throughout the thesis to protect the identities of the study participants. Tables 1, 2, and 3 describe the interview participants and the context of the interviews.

These interviews were conducted between June 11th, 2003 and September 5th, 2003 and ranged in duration from 30 to 90 minutes. All three groups were interviewed according to their availability and as a result it was not uncommon to meet with a retailer and a surf brand representative on the same day. Ten of the interviews were conducted face-to-face in the greater Vancouver area. These interviews took place at the participant's office or place of business (six) or at a neutral location such as a coffee shop or outdoors (four). Five interviews were conducted via telephone because of the geographic location of the participants or their conflicting work commitments. Two of the telephone interviews were conducted with surf instructors in Tofino and three of them were with Canadian surf brand representatives, two were based out of Whistler, and one in Vancouver.

Table 1 Surf Brand Retailers

Identifiers	Gender	Interview Format	Store Location	Store Layout
Retailer #1 (R-1, Dan)	Male	Person to Person	North Vancouver	Women's and men's specific stores *
Retailer #2 (R-2, Phil)	Male	Person to Person	Vancouver	Women's specific store with some men's product
Retailer #3 (R-3, Colin)	Male	Person to Person	North Vancouver	Women's and men's specific stores
Retailer #4 (R-4, Scott)	Male	Person to Person	Vancouver	Women's and men's specific stores *
Retailer #5 (R-5, Suzy)	Female	Person to Person	Vancouver	Women's and men's shared store

*Note: These stores were joined but had different store names and entrances.

Table 2 Canadian Surf Brand Representatives

Identifiers	Gender	Interview Format	Representatives Location	Brands Identity	Target Market
Brand Representative #1 (B-1, Liam)	Male	Person to Person	Vancouver – Fashion Exchange	Roots in Surfing	All ages
Brand Representative #2 (B-2, Jason)	Male	Telephone Interview	Whistler	Roots in Surfing	13-18 year olds
Brand Representative #3 (B-3, Jacky)	Female	Person to Person	Lower Mainland	Lifestyle Brand	10-22 year olds
Brand Representative #4 (B-4, Trish)	Female	Telephone Interview	Vancouver	Roots in Surfing	14-25 year olds
Brand Representative #5 (B-5, Leanne)	Female	Telephone Interview	Whistler	Roots in Surfing	16-28 year olds

Table 3 Women Surfers

Identifiers	Home Location	Interview Format	Years Surfing
Surfer #1 (S-1, Kendra)	Tofino	Telephone Interview	16 years
Surfer #2 (S-2, Marley)	Vancouver	Person to Person	5 years
Surfer #3 (S-3, Brooke)	Vancouver	Person to Person	8.5 years
Surfer #4 (S-4, Ann)	Tofino	Telephone Interview	5.5 years
Surfer #5 (S-5, Stephanie)	Vancouver	Person to Person	7 years

Note: The number of years surfing reflects the amount recorded at the time of the interview.

The interview questions had 9 to 12 main probes that helped guide the interviews (see Appendix IV). The main questions often generated further discussion. Some of the responses overlapped with other questions in the interview guide while, other responses were short and required considerable probing. The participants responded quite differently and the flow and tone of the interviews can be seen in their comments which I

have provided to help illustrate the findings. All interviews, both face-to-face and by telephone, were audio taped and then transcribed into a Microsoft Word™ computer file. Data analysis software was not used. Due to the fragmented nature of the responses, the interviews were later re-transcribed to ensure their accuracy. The data analysis entailed reviewing the transcripts for major themes and sub-themes within the context of the major research questions for the study. The transcripts were reviewed many times and similar responses were organized into potential categories. These categories were thoroughly reviewed and cross-compared and were further organized into nine key areas. The interview responses were arranged into these nine areas and passages were selected that were representative of the kind of statements that were made. The quotes and comments made during the course of the interviews are representative of the grammar and word choice utilized in context in the conversations and discussions that took place.

Participant/Non-Participant Observation

The participant/non-participant observation component of the study involved three separate trips to Tofino during the period of my data collection. These trips were organized in order to grasp a clear understanding of the women's surf scene in Western Canada and to gain access to women surfers. The first trip to Tofino took place on June 13th-15th, 2003 during which I was a spectator at the Roxy/Quiksilver Summer Surf Jam. This event enabled me to observe the presence of media, sponsors, spectators, and the competitive surf scene in Canada. This trip also involved observations at surf breaks, surf stores, and at surf schools in order to gain an understanding of the local surf culture. The next trip took place from August 7th-12th, 2003 and involved visiting Ucluelet, Long

Beach, and numerous surf businesses. I had several informal conversations with women surfers and made contact with surf instructors and surf school participants for future conversations and interviews. The last trip followed my last formal interview and took place from September 12-14th, 2003 during which I was an active participant at the Roxy Surf Sister Surf Camp. Several informal conversations occurred with camp participants and instructors and I recorded numerous field notes.

Photographs and Field Notes

Photographs were utilized to capture the lived experience and enable me to reflect on the scene, the styles, who was there, and what was happening. Field notes were used to record observations of the surf scene, and the surf wear industry. Demographic information about the participants was recorded in addition to what occurred, the mood and tone of the event and the time and location of the observation. The field notes often followed visits to retail stores and depicted the store lay-out and product display space. Social relational features were recorded such as people's interactions, dress codes, speech and mannerisms. The demographics of the consumers and the employees that were present in the store were included in the notes. The field notes were later transcribed into a Microsoft WordTM computer file for analysis.

Surf Media

During the period of my data collection I took it upon myself to become familiar with publications targeting surfers as well as, action sport participants. This enabled me to develop an appreciation of the coverage of women surfers and the placement of

women surfers in advertisements and the manner in which they were displayed. Furthermore, my continued review of surfing media also enabled me to stay up to date on trends in the surf wear industry and better prepare myself for my conversations and interviews with surfers and surf industry representatives. Early on, it was evident that Surf Snow Skate Girl (SG) was the voice for North American women involved in board sports. Aside from reviewing publications, I viewed surf movies and documentaries in order to visualize the trends that were occurring in surfing globally and to gain an understanding of the increased representation of women in surf media. Through the analysis of surfing websites, I was also able to document some of the changes that were occurring in Canadian surfing and gain a means of contacting potential participants for my study.

Organization of the Chapter

The chapter is organized in nine sections that reflect the nine key conditions that were found during the analysis: (1) the surf scene in British Columbia; (2) factors fueling the growth of Canadian women's surfing; (3) the appeal of the surf culture; (4) evidence of consumption; (5) evidence of subcultural features and conditions; (6) surfing is a 'commodity-orientated subculture'; (7) link between identity, lifestyles, and consumption; (8) diffusion of surf lifestyles and products into the mainstream; and (9) role of media in the diffusion of surf lifestyles.

4.1 The Surf Scene in British Columbia

During data collection, I used photographs and field notes to document the Canadian surf scene as I personally encountered it. The following excerpt from my field notes at the Tofino Summer Surf Jam (2003), help to illustrate the subject of the study, and provide a useful point of departure for summarizing my findings.

Even in the presence of competition and stormy conditions the scene at the 2003 Roxy/Quiksilver Surf Jam is mellow and relaxed. The warm summer temperatures that the Coast experienced all week prior to the contest dissipated quickly enough to produce a winter size swell the first day of competition. Equally impressive is the number of spectators who braved wind squalls and rain to watch local surfers battle it out in the water. Not to mention the determination of the women surfers who carried their long boards over their heads for nearly a mile down the gravel, tree-lined path that was the main access point to Cox Bay. A quick glance down the beach at Cox Bay showcases the uniqueness of our local surf culture. Although there are several hundred spectators present the vast beach remains sparsely populated. The spectators are predominantly pre-teen to late 30s and the ratio of guys: girls are roughly 3: 2. The spectators adorn their winter fleeces and toques with flip flops. Surrounded by spectacular West Coast wilderness people find comfort against stumps, in camp chairs, seated on blankets, or on the dampened sand. Some spectators arrive in groups, others come as couples, a few arrive alone on bikes, or with their children and/or their dogs. Numerous sponsorship tents lined the beach and were one of the only visible signs that a commercialized event was to be taking place. The final day

brought about clear skies, light offshore winds and consistent 4-5 foot waves and exciting competition. The sunshine brought out sunglasses and capris and the attention of reporters. Competitors had to listen carefully as the judges' horn and voices were weakened by the wind and the music. It was apparent that there were some local favorites and an ongoing rivalry between the Bruhwiler boys (Sepp and Raph) and Peter Devries for the men's Pro title and \$2000 in prize money, more importantly re-affirming one's position in Canadian surfing. This event drew over 120 contestants from as far as Australia, Mexico and Brazil, California, and around BC and allowed Canadian surfers to showcase their skills against an international field. The men's pro title was won by Tofino local Sepp Bruhwiler and the women's pro title was given to Roxy pro rider Tori Alexander of California over local favorite Catherine Bruhwiler-Temple.

The uniqueness of these conditions during surfing competition enabled me as a researcher to fully appreciate the sentiments that were expressed in the interviews. Several characteristics will be expanded upon in order to effectively illustrate the surf scene in Canada.

Although the surf wear industry draws a following of pre-teens and teens, the actual surf scene in Canada is a bit older with most of the women in their 20s and 30s. There are factors that contribute to this as identified by the following surf retailer's comments, "You have to have a job. You have to work to pay for the stuff and go over there [Tofino]....So the demographic is still pretty much really 18 to early 20s to early 30s and older" (R-1, Dan). My own observations supported this although the population

of those actually surfing ranged considerably and varied depending on such factors as tourism and in the number of families visiting the area, and thereby, learning to surf.

Throughout the interviews it was widely suggested that women are more accepted in Canada's waters. For example, a local retailer suggested, "I think its probably friendlier...We're just more accepting as Canadians" (R-2, Phil). Although women surfers were thought to be making advances globally, a surf retailer's comments documented perceived pressures at other surfing locations:

In California there is definite barriers given the population pressure on the surf breaks. A girl is going to feel more intimidated, there is a lot of jostling and a lot of machismo flying around out in the line up just to catch waves. It is a limited resource [for] the number of waves that come in. You know you [have] to kind of fight for them sort of speak. (R-4, Scott)

In contrast, the surf scene in British Columbia is more relaxed and is more accessible for women as suggested by the following:

Tofino in particular is very user friendly....The whole localism thing...I think it's overblown actually. The thing about Tofino that's great [is that] it's just so wide open...The new guys have no business being on the good peak. They can go take the crummy waves....as long as they [have] their wits about them. (R-2, Phil)

These comments do suggest that there is a pecking order in the water that will be further expanded upon. Similarly, it supports a hierarchy based on ability in the water, "on the bigger days...not just girls but [having] new people in the water does get

dangerous, and it does sort of clog things up and waste waves when they are sort of a finite resource” (R-2, Phil).

If any territorialism occurred on Vancouver Island, it would be more evident in the surf areas of Sombrio and Jordan River. Although there is a vast coastline on British Columbia’s west coast, a lot of it is not accessible. One surfer attests that, “Sombrio is mostly male dominated and Sombrio would be closer to the kind of California scenes that you would read about where people get into fights and they are very protective over waves, [and are] very territorial” (S-3, Brooke). Brooke remembered back to her first experience surfing Sombrio and recalled the sentiments expressed by one of the clubbies (regular male surfers) out in the water:

He said something to the effect of ‘just so you know the rules here’. It was an intimidation factor. I understood it as ‘stay out of my way. I don’t really care what you do out here but stay out of my way. If you get on my wave I will not be happy’. (S-3, Brooke)

The scene in Canada is unique on many levels as the following surfer explained: Canada is very different because of temperature. The wetsuit really separates people who really want to surf to people who are just hanging out in the water...The surf culture in Canada I think is different in that its more hard core, more dirty, more grungy. People with not a lot of money that are living in trailers or riding their bikes to the beach with their surfboard attached to their bikes but doing it in really cold, dark, wet weather. (S-2, Marley)

Another surfer commented on the diversity of Canada’s surf culture:

If you pull up in the parking lot [at Long Beach] and see the people who are out there actually surfing. You will see a lot of people with bikes, people with old Volkswagen vans with the pool noodles with the nylon straps holding the surfboards down; but then you will see people who have new Volkswagens and their Thule roof rack or their Yakima surf racks. I think the sport has something to offer all types and you do see all types. (S-5, Stephanie)

Another surfer commented that: “conditions are pretty grueling in winter. The weather and water conditions add to the experience. This scene is so new to Canada...The surf scene in Canada is more mellow and accepting than other parts of the world” (S-1, Kendra).

With regards to women’s representation in the water, a surf brand representative had several conversations with key shops in Tofino to determine the number of women actually surfing. The following highlights his findings:

The percentage of women surfers is higher than before compared to men. There [are] a higher percentage of women surfing in Tofino relative to other parts of the world. More Canadian women who want to get active. Last few years growth of surfing in the world has increased. There [are] more women surfing. (B-1, Liam)

Another brand representative acknowledged that there are more men surfing as well, “There is definitely a growth in everyone’s interest in surfing not just from women but definitely a growth in general. Surfing has become a very popular sport” (B-2, Jason). However, there is increased representation of women in the water and a local surfer said that she felt that “the more even mix between males and females will stick around” (S-3, Brooke).

4.2 Factors Fueling the Growth of Canadian Women's Surfing

The number of women surfing is reported to be increasing in Canada and there has been a noticeable increase globally. All the interviewees in this study commented on this growth. For example, one interviewee who started surfing in 1987, well before Tofino was known as a surfing destination, remarked:

When I started surfing there were like maybe two women that surfed in Tofino.

Now there are a group of girls who live and work here for the last 5 to 10 years and stay to surf. On any given day there could be more women than men in the water at Tofino. (S-1, Kendra)

Tofino is not only a surfing destination but it is also home to a growing number of women surfers, and with the rise in popularity of women's surfing, Tofino has seen continued growth in the number of women who surf. Also, more women appear to be attracted to Tofino compared to other worldwide surfing destinations and there is a perception the area could still see more growth because, as one put it, there is "a lot more room for growth here" (S-4, Ann).

Several factors can be credited for the growth of women's surfing in Canada as reported in the interviews. In no particular order, they were: (i) changes in wetsuit technology; (ii) crossover appeal from skateboarding and snowboarding; (iii) cultural and style influences from California; (iv) increased demand for women's surf wear and surf fashions; (v) the growth of competitive surfing in BC; (vi) increased media exposure of Canadian women's surfing; (vii) development of Canadian surf businesses; and (viii) women's increased comfort with the identity of 'being a surfer'. I explore each of these in turn.

i. Changes in wetsuit technology

In warm water environments, it has been suggested that, “one item of clothing, more than any other... [had a] positive influence on women’s surfing - the female boardshort” (Booth, 2001, p. 13). As might be expected, however, a recurring theme in the interviews I conducted was that advancements in wetsuit technology and design were more critical in opening up the sport to cold water surfers and to Canadian women. It was the wetsuit that truly “allowed surfing to spread North” (S-1, Kendra). This is confirmed by Shilling (2003) who states, “The improvement over the years in wetsuit technology has been a real boon to surfing in BC’s cold waters” (p. 53).

Prior to the invention of the neoprene wetsuit a variety of different products were used to keep surfers warm such as: grease, wool sweaters, fires on the beach, and plastic laminated clothing. These attempts proved unsuccessful at keeping the core body temperature warm long enough to allow surfers to remain in the water for extended periods of time (B-1, Liam). Liam suggested it was the brand manufacturers themselves that have fueled a growth in surfing:

The wetsuit created the market. [The wetsuit] allowed people to get into the water and remain warm. Before only the hardest of souls would go out there and brave the chilly waters... [The] neoprene wetsuit allows people in cooler water to surf. (B-1, Liam)

The pioneer surfers in Tofino were willing to surf without this technology, however, the interviewees unanimously agreed that these advancements helped to open up the sport to more Canadian men and women, and contributed to the growth in the number of people surfing in Canadian waters. A surf retailer affirmed,

In Canada, one of the things that [is] really happening for us is better wetsuits.

They get better every year and that just makes it that much more accessible and pleasant because the wetsuits are fantastic. You can go in and spend three hours in the water. (R-2, Phil)

With the recent growth in women's surfing and an increased demand for women-specific products, companies that are progressive and innovative in their product offerings to women are gaining recognition in the women's surf market. As one surf retailer explained, "For a long time there weren't great quality women's wetsuits" (R-4, Scott). Improved technologies in wetsuit design and a women-specific fit have helped make surfing more accessible to Canadian women. Jenny Stewart, one of the few Canadian female surfers who surfed through the changed technology states that:

When I learned to surf, I wore a huge bulky wetsuit that didn't fit right in the parts where I needed it to fit right and that made my learning curve pretty steep...Nowadays, it fits right...There are booties that fit small women's feet, small surfing gloves, boards with foam on the deck that's softer and more comfortable to lie on. (quoted in Lee, 2003)

Women surfers identified wetsuit fit as a key variable in whether a beginner surfer will commit to surfing. It was suggested that a good first experience for learners in regards to being comfortable in the water is central to their level of confidence. In regards to these market changes, a female surfer stated, "they are clueing into the needs of women. [They are] realizing that women's surfing is serious" (S-2, Marley). As brand manufacturers develop products exclusively for the female consumer, female surfers are

feeling more comfortable in the water and with their identities as surfers. As a retailer exclaims of his contentment for the recent development in the women's sport market:

Not only is the fit like ten times better...they actually put [some] thought into this now that there is a big women's market out there...O'Neill now will have the O'Neill wave for all the guy suits and they will have an O'Neill wave with a little flower on it for all women's suits. That's big, really big. People really think that is the thought, women-specific. (R-3, Colin)

According to the interviewees and the other evidence I reviewed the advancements made in wetsuit technology and design helped to stimulate surfing activity and the surf products market. As demand increased so did style options for female surfers, thus enabling them to find the best fit and design to suit their needs both as consumers and as surfers. This expansion in the wetsuit market is in parallel with the gains women are making in the sport product marketplace generally, and has contributed to an identifiable growth in the number of Canadian women surfing.

ii. Crossover appeal from skateboarding and snowboarding

A common theme in the interviews was that the widespread appeal of skateboarding and snowboarding has also contributed to the growth of Canadian women's surfing. This trend was seen as contributing to the number of people wanting to get involved in board sports more generally. For example, a surf lesson participant explained, "I tried wakeboarding, snowboarding, and wanted to give surfing a try"! Board sports have become part of our culture. A few interviewees termed this '*board*

culture' and indicated that there is increased crossover from Canada's massive snowboarding culture.

A surf brand representative suggested that surfing is appealing to snowboarders when the snowboard season ends. As he put it, "[It is] something to do in the summertime!" (B-1, Liam). Similarly, a surf, skate, and snow retailer suggested that there is a correlation between the number of female surfers and the number of female snowboarders in British Columbia, "In BC...we have far more surfers in our waters that are female because we have so many girls that are snowboarding crossing over" (R-4, Scott).

These sports have similar appeal according to a retailer of surf, skate, and snow sports equipment, "It's the same type of person that wants to do these things. They like the sense of adventure and everything else and those sports definitely crossover everything from wakeboarding, skateboarding, all of it, all crosses over" (R-2, Phil).

A surf brand representative acknowledged the deeper connection that participants have with board sports:

It is the same emotional connection... [Board sports are] quite artistic and you push yourself as far as you want to go. Especially with snowboarding and surfing: there is always a bigger mountain, there is always deeper snow, [and] there is always a bigger wave. With skateboarding there is always a harder trick and it is only you who chooses how far you want to go and kids are always pushing themselves. There is no adult there saying to them 'this is the way it needs to be done'. That is a big thing when you are a teenager. That element of

danger can be quite appealing, and girls [are attracted to surfing because] it is an individual accomplishment. (B-3, Jacky)

Another board sport retailer emphasized the common origin of these sports from surfing, "That is always engrained in the subculture of windsurfing and kiteboarding and snowboarding and skateboarding...they are fathered of surfing...from the lineage" (R-4, Scott).

Of the retailers interviewed, 3 stores out of the 5 created their business based on the crossover appeal of surf, skate, and snow sports. As Scott suggested, "The crossover appeal definitely makes a store like this possible. We couldn't survive on summer dollars [alone]...And a lot of people do them all...It is the trilogy of sports...and they all complement each other" (R-4, Scott).

The crossover between the board sports appears to be something the brand marketers themselves have helped strengthen. The pioneer surf brands offer snowboard clothing in their lines and sponsor snowboarders, skateboarders, and surfers in an effort to penetrate this broader market. As one brand representative stated, "[We] only sponsor snowboarding, skateboarding, wakeboarding, and surfing. [We] have nothing to do with anything else so that is [our] target market" (B-2, Jason). This crossover between skateboarding and snowboarding and other board sports has contributed to the growth in the number of Canadian women surfing.

iii. Cultural and style influences from California

A common theme in the interviews was that surfing in California has been a major influence on Canada's surf industry and culture. As one interviewee put it:

[Surfing] originate[d] from California and...it's Huntington Beach and really Orange County, [that] is the 'hot bed of surfing' in the United States. That's the epicenter of cool as far as trends and where everything comes from. (B-2, Jason)

He further suggested that surfing is deeply embedded in California's culture and traditions:

Women's surfing is going to be a sport that will be around for a long time. It is a sport that has been around for a long time just maybe not to our culture. [When] you go down to California, it is like somebody asking us about playing hockey up here. (B-2, Jason)

A recent CBC documentary, *Making Waves*, attributes the rise in the number of Canadian female surfers partly to the influence of Izzy Tihanyi's surf school in La Jolla, California called Surf Diva. This is generally recognized as the first women's surf school in the world, and its graduates became known as 'Surf Divas'.

The influence of these Californian women surfers was acknowledged in several interviews. A local retailer suggested that more women are surfing and the Surf Divas generated a lot of hype here locally, "I know a lot of these girls like Surf Diva are coming up from California and coming up the coast and spreading the good word about surfing and people are starting to see it" (R-3, Colin).

Supported by a local retailer, the Surf Diva School organized a highly successful surf camp on Long Beach, BC in 1998. "Their clinics were sold out. The idea caught on with Jenny Hudnall" (Shilling, 2003, p. 69) who grew up in California and thought this same all-girls theme could work in Canada and shortly thereafter in 1999, she started Surf Sister Surf School representing Canada's first and for many years only all-girls surf

school. Surf Sister has opened the sport to more Canadian girls and women building on the California idea and giving it a Canadian twist.

A common theme in the interviews was that Tofino itself has exerted a unique influence on Canadian women's surfing. While, it is undeniable that California surf culture has influenced surfing in BC, the Vancouver Island surfing experience was seen as offering a contrast. For example, a surf retailer pointed out that "it is a different experience [than in] California... [Tofino is] far more rustic, you're not pounding through a gross city to get out to a surf break" (R-4, Scott).

Nevertheless, the surf brand representatives interviewed in this study all acknowledged California's influence. California is home to several North American headquarters of surf brands. In addition, representatives acknowledged that surf fashion and equipment trends all originate in California and trickle their way north. Trish, a surf brand representative stated this as follows:

In terms of what part of the world it comes from. I think California for us. Our line is all about the beach girl...She is from California and that is where it really originates...Even worldwide people look up to what is out there in the media and it is really California. All the teen idols, all the pop stars really originate from California. (B-4, Trish)

As seen in the interviews, the fascination with beach culture is repeatedly linked to California and can be attributed in part to exposure to media as well as to direct experience and to the proliferation of surf fashions and styles. What separates BC is that surfing locally has its own rustic context and ironically this experience is what seems to be drawing vacationing Californians up North.

iv. Increased demand for women's surf wear and surf fashions

One major theme in the interviews was that the increased coverage of surf culture in the local media, in particular following the release of *Blue Crush*, had an explosive effect on the appeal of surf wear and beach wear. Vancouver newspapers and local television became increasingly interested in Lower Mainland retailers and in documenting what was 'hot' in surf wear. The interviewees noted that surf fashions began turning up everywhere, appearing on designer runways, billboards, commercials, department stores, and at large chain retail outlets. One surfer acknowledged the proliferation of surf fashions recognizing that "even American Eagle has beach-themed clothes" (S-5, Stephanie). Businesses that had nothing to do with surfing itself began capitalizing on this growing trend. A surf brand representative noted that, "a lot of clothing companies aren't surf brands but say they sell surf wear because people like that; they can relate to the ocean. When people think of the ocean, they think of surfing" (B-1, Liam).

Surf wear has mainstream appeal for two reasons: the surf craze is an international phenomenon and women became an increasingly important target in the surf industry globally. One female surfer felt that the growth of women's surfing globally could be attributed to the brand manufacturers themselves, "My theory is that women's surfing has been propelled by the surf clothing by Quiksilver who decided to put their logos together and form the Roxy brand...Surfing introduced to the world through surf clothing" (S-1, Kendra). This statement posits a process of identity through which the act of wearing surf fashions links the wearer to the meanings of surf culture, and raises the possibility that surf brand monikers are partly responsible for the incorporation of surf

culture into people's lifestyles as well as into the surf wear consumer market. The following remarks by a retailer support this conclusion and demonstrate the symbolic power that a pioneer surf brand, like Roxy has in the market:

We really could sell anything if we just took off whatever brand name was on there and stamp Roxy on it. It would sell and it would sell before it would without Roxy's name on it. That is another real cult following, that we're finding that people will buy it. (R-3, Colin)

However, a surf brand representative conceded that trends seen in women's surf culture have fueled the brands growth, "With the rise of not only women's surfing, but the whole women's surf culture, the women's side...has absolutely skyrocketed the brand" (B-5, Leanne).

Some of the market trends that are happening are also beneficial to the sport of surfing itself as a surfer indicates:

Surf wear [is] looking better. Companies are clueing in to what girls want.

Bikinis are more functional that you can actually surf in. Surf companies are taking on a more realistic angle. [Leading to the] development of cool functional clothing [and] women-specific wetsuits. (S-2, Marley)

The interviewees acknowledged quality, comfort, and fit as being three fundamental variables that influence clothing purchase decisions. It was widely suggested that surf fashions, in addition to looking cool and fitting well, are extremely comfortable, and have longevity. Although a difference was noted with two local Tofino surfers versus the fashion influences of their Lower Mainland counterparts is that surf clothing does not impact them so much. One of the surfers suggested the following as

rationale, “if you live in Tofino there are not a lot of shops so it is not so important to wear surf clothing outside of the surf” (S-4, Ann). The purchase decisions of these surfers might be more linked to environmental barriers (e.g., availability) than their personal consumption behaviors.

It was widely acknowledged by the interviewees that retailers, and surf brand creators have responded to the increased demand for surf wear and surf fashions. The question that remains is how does this trend result in more women actually surfing? Interviewees believed that the penetration of the surf industry has led more women to first experience the sport via surf brands and fashions thru promotion. This increased appeal consequently has led to an increase in the number of women taking surf lessons and renting equipment. A surf brand representative suggested that “more dealers are purchasing suits for rentals... [The] rental market getting bigger is a good sign that the market is growing” (B-1, Liam). Surf brand manufacturers have created a platform for the surf industry to grow and its widespread appeal has been monumental in the increased demand for surf wear and has contributed to an increase in the number of Canadian women surfing.

v. The growth of competitive surfing in BC

During data collection, the Roxy/Quiksilver Surf Jam in Tofino was regarded as Canada’s largest surfing competition. During my initial conversations with surf wear retailers, two retailers advised me of the event and one of them acted as a judge during the competition. It was acknowledged by the interviewees that this event gives BC surfers an opportunity to compete against international competitors whilst remaining in

the comfort of their home break. The media further generated local interest in the 2003 Summer Surf Jam. Dom Domic, president of the British Columbia Surf Association (BCSA) and Peter Devries, a highly respected Tofino surfer, appeared on City TV's morning segment, Breakfast Television (BT) on June 9th, 2003 to promote the BCSA and the 2003 Summer Surf Jam. During this BT talk, it was revealed that women were involved in the competition as well. The BCSA wanted to encourage local support of "the premiere event in Canadian surfing" (BCSA, 2003). The increased prominence of the Summer Surf Jam has also positively contributed to the growth of women's surfing in BC.

The event was widely advertised at participating surf shops. Nevertheless, my analysis of the entry form for 2003 revealed differences in funding for the men's and women's divisions. There were seven divisions overall and the men's and women's professional divisions competed for prize money. The men's professional division was open to 48 surfers competing for \$3,250 in prize money divided amongst the 1st to 7th place finisher; while, the women's professional division had 24 competitors competing for \$1,000 in prize money divided amongst the 1st to 4th place (BCSA, 2003). This demonstrates an apparent inequity in the disbursement of prize money for the male and female surfers. A Canadian brand representative acknowledged that women are not treated equally at surfing competitions:

I think there is discrimination in every asset of life. You can find fault with any sport...and I think it is true with surfing too. If you go to a contest there is never as much prize money for the women but there is never as many women competing at the event too...They probably don't get as much support as the men do but I

think it is all relative to how many people are doing it.... [There are currently no] Canadian girls that get sponsorship... We don't have a lot of women surfers competing worldwide so that is a problem. We don't have any like Canadian surfers on the pro tour. So I mean if there was a girl out there we would be the first ones to sign something up but the problem is there isn't anyone there. (B-4, Trish)

This statement provides insight into the level of women's professional surfing in British Columbia. It remains a poor mismatch to the men's which has resulted in few sponsorship deals and opportunities to compete worldwide. The suggestion that there are no women in BC who are proficient enough to compete on a world stage may be true but this overlooks the conditions which are at least partly responsible for this shortfall. A female surfer acknowledged that there are virtually no opportunities for women in Canada and felt that this affects the number of women entering Canadian surfing competitions and the level of competition:

I have been competing for eleven years. I won the Roxy/Quiksilver Surf Jam two years in a row and [I have] never placed below second and [I] have had no opportunities...Sponsors need to change their attitudes! Sponsor someone in Canada. It would be beneficial. Young girls identify with sponsored athletes. [It would] help the industry and add some authenticity to the sport. (S-1, Kendra)

Similarly, another surfer felt that Canadian women should be recognized by brand manufacturers, "Companies should jump on to Canadian surfers. [They need to] get on the program [and] start sponsoring Canadians. We need better Canadian representation" (S-4, Ann). There definitely is some animosity amongst female surfers who aspire to

pursue surfing professionally yet discover that opportunities for aspiring Canadian male surfers remain greater than for promising women. These conditions are not dissimilar from the early period of female Canadian surfing. Perhaps aspiring junior girls will be the ones to draw attention to Canadian women worldwide.

These attitudes reflect the views of two local Tofino surfers. Interestingly, an avid Vancouver surfer did not uphold the same opinion of sponsorship:

Most people surf for recreational purposes. Unless you are born and raised in Tofino and were really around that kind of circuit when you are young and sort of [grew] up with it. It is not an industry that is well known around here. (S-3, Brooke)

One surf brand representative suggested that sponsorship is not a priority for its marketing strategy:

In Canada at this time we have made a conscious decision not to sponsor athletes. We are trying to get as much growth to catch up to the other licensees because we are one of the newest licensees in the world. The potential for us to grow really quickly is there so we have tried to spend our marketing dollars more on the people that are selling the product than on our athletes at this time. (B-5, Leanne)

The future of competitive surfing in BC is uncertain and as yet it is not clear what opportunities may become available to promising female athletes in the future. However, the rise in competitive surfing in BC and the marketing effort behind it are generating more interest in surfing and increasing spectatorship at surfing competitions. More and more women are entering these competitions and the increased attention is contributing to a growth in the number of Canadian women surfing.

vi. Increased media exposure of Canadian women's surfing

As surf shops and surf schools began opening in the mid 1990s and word spread that women were encouraged in BC's waters, tourism in the Tofino area increased. At the same time local and national media became increasingly interested in Canadian surfing. A local surfer suggested that the reason for the coverage was that the sport has widespread appeal, "Surfing is the news that you want to hear about; girls out in Tofino and they're surfing, the media comes over and wants to interview us" (S-1, Kendra).

A retailer reported that, "there is a percentage growth in actual number. It is probably misrepresented in the media because it is a more interesting story" (R-4, Scott). However, a surfer confirms that there are "absolutely" more women in the water stating, "When I first started [surfing the mentality] was 'oh cool there is a girl'. [Girls] definitely stood out [in the water] and now you look around in the water and there [are] just so many women [surfers]" (S-3, Brooke).

A local retailer attributed some of the growth seen in Canadian women's surfing to "the whole popularity of Long Beach [BC] area and...all the exposure it's getting in the Province, the Sun, [and on] the radio" (R-3, Colin). The local media generated a lot of hype when the Surf Divas of California came up to Tofino. The opening of Surf Sister reached newspapers nationwide and female journalists traveled to Tofino and enrolled in surf lessons and documented their women's only surf experience. A Tofino surf instructor commented on the increased media interest in women's surfing as follows, "We receive calls from television saying 'we are going to do a story on this and want to talk to you. [We are] getting calls constantly from the news and media production

companies [who are] interested in Surf Sister” (S-4, Ann). The release of Blue Crush further stimulated local media interest in the BC surf scene.

One condition that I found particularly interesting during my data collection and trips to Tofino was the manner in which the local media portrayed the scene. As a spectator at the 2003 Summer Surf Jam, I observed both days of competition and recorded my observations. The second day of competition garnered more media interest and several reporters, including an MTV reporter, were present for the final, deciding day of competition. The media seemed to be particularly interested in anything eccentric, or that appeared to be hip and cool. Reporters seemed to be targeting anything that appeared to be different such as a group of guys wearing wigs and driving around on scooters, a spectator with a fluorescent cowboy hat, or a take of a girl wearing board shorts with Emu suede winter boots. I overheard a young group of males repeatedly using generic and stereotypical surf lingo for reporters. Upon completion of the interview, the group laughed and made fun of the surf lingo. It seemed they gave the media what they wanted to hear; which was in essence a stereotypic representation of surfing. While the media are generating a lot of publicity for Canadian women’s surfing, the accuracy of their coverage therefore remains questionable. Invariably, media exposure was widespread during my data collection period and it has potentially contributed to an increased growth in the number of Canadian women surfing.

vii. Development of Canadian surf businesses

As tourism steadily builds around Tofino, the economy is capable of sustaining numerous surf businesses. As one interviewee, a long term resident of Tofino and avid

female surfer, acknowledged, "Since 1995, Tofino started to become a popular surf destination and surf shops started opening. Before 1995 shops would open and then soon close" (S-1, Kendra). Live to Surf was established in 1984 and is somewhat of an icon in the history of surf retailers because of its longevity.

The development of surf businesses also has led to the opening of several surf schools around Tofino. Jenny Stewart, Tofino native and the top female surfer on the Canadian surf scene can be credited with fueling awareness and appeal of Canadian women's surfing. As the founder of the first female surf school in Canada and the epitome of every surfer girl Jenny has stimulated women's involvement in surfing. A Tofino surf instructor recently was quoted saying that, "Since Surf Sisters operation, surfing in Tofino has gone nuts...Lessons are filling up due to high demand. We are not able to meet the demand" (S-1, Kendra). Kendra documented the growth experienced at Surf Sister as follows:

This year there are three times as many surfers as last year and last year there were five times as many surfers as the years before. Last year Surf Sister employed six instructors. This year Surf Sister has twelve instructors and still is short-staffed. (S-1, Kendra)

It was revealed that women-specific learning environments have gained momentum and have been especially predominant in the board sport industry. A retailer suggested that women are often interested in these sports but have felt intimidated to go out and try them:

[Women-specific is] a good thing... [Women] have trouble integrating. They're shy. They're embarrassed. They don't want to look goofy but when they are with

other girls they can go in and be at the same level and they don't have to feel that the guys are watching them. It is having guys watch that is the main thing...The girl wants to go off and do it [independently]. (R-5, Suzy)

This claim was widely documented by female surfers who discovered that women's-supportive environments can alleviate some of the pressure to perform and enables women to progress at their own rate.

The development of surf businesses is a trend nationwide as retailers capitalize on the fascination people seem to have with beach culture in general, and with the increased media exposure of women's surfing. As one retailer postulates, "I think it is a craze right across the country because there [are] stores like in Calgary popping up...and they are all specific girl-only stores that just do surf-oriented stuff...It really is growing right across North America" (R-3, Colin). Having a fascination with surf culture and surf fashions appears to positively influence one's likeliness to surf in the future, as seen in the following comments by two sisters from Calgary at a Tofino surf camp: "We always wanted to try it [surfing]. It was our Christmas present". This further substantiates the appeal of surfing, even in geographical regions where there is no surf.

The expansion of surf brand lines has contributed to an increased demand for women's surf wear and surf fashions, and the strength of the surf industry has lead to the development of numerous Canadian surf businesses. These businesses have garnered media and consumer interest, and have had an impact on the number of women surfing in BC.

viii. Women's increased comfort with the identity of 'being a surfer'

A common assertion in the interviews was that women are becoming more comfortable with their identity of 'being a surfer'. The feeling was that women are responding positively to girls-only learning environments, acceptance in Canadian waters, increased recognition in the sport products marketplace and equipment, apparel, and a girls-specific fit which means they are more comfortable and relaxed in the water.

As a retailer postulated:

Women thought they couldn't do it [surf] before...but now they are slowly integrating into it...They definitely have integrated into the surf way faster than they ever will in skateboarding because skateboarding is more hard core...You do have to be more of a tomboy to be a skateboarder whereas it's not like that in surfing. You can be as girly as you want and still get out there and be a good surfer. (R-5, Suzy)

This narrative highlights how women are integrating into surfing and finding that they can still be themselves, in comparison to skateboarding that is often viewed as more hard core and intimidating for women.

One brand representative credited the younger generation of girls as contributing to the growth seen in typically male-dominated sporting practices:

I think that girls are no longer being intimidated by what is perceived as men's-only sports. The younger generation has decided that they can do anything that the boys can do. Surfing is quite an individual sport so I think that appeals to girls who don't want to participate in traditional girls' sports or girly activities. (B-3, Jacky)

Women have credited girls-only learning environments as being superior. An interviewee for example stated that, “women tend to be more nurturing. [A women’s specific learning] environment is more supportive and understanding. The instructors are right there encouraging [the participants]” (S-4, Ann). A positive first experience increases the likeliness that she will surf again, thus, creating an avenue to develop as a surfer.

As more women have ventured into Canada’s cool waters, surfing has gathered a substantial female following. One female surfer’s statements illuminate the attraction of surfing, “It gives girls a sense of power, girls can actually do it and be good at it too” (S-5, Stephanie). Another surfer similarly states that “women are realizing that you don’t have to be muscular and powerful to surf; that with the right technique they can do it too” (S-1, Kendra). As women become more proficient in the water, they are becoming more confident with their identity of ‘being a surfer’. These women are encouraging other women to participate as one surfer put it, “girls always seem to be recruiting other girls” (S-3, Brooke) and this is leading to an increase in the number of Canadian women surfing.

4.3 The Appeal of the Surf Culture

A common finding in the interviews was the informants’ impression of an emerging global fascination with surfing and surf culture. A surfer illustrated the strength of her relationship with the ocean, “I have always been completely mesmerized by the ocean. The first time I ever caught a wave [surfing] I was instantly addicted for

life” (S-2, Marley). Similarly, another surfer stated, “I love that feeling. I can’t explain it, but catching a wave is euphoria” (S-3, Brooke).

The surf lifestyle is different from any other sport, the appeal is almost spiritual. This is epitomized by a surfer’s narrative, “Surfing relieves stress. It is a spiritual, mellow experience” (S-1, Kendra). The surf lifestyle unites different groups of people around one common medium, the ocean. A surfer illustrated the diversity of surfers and acknowledged that perceptions of surfing are changing, “The rest of the world used to look at surfers as bums. That mentality is changing. Surfers are getting representation world-wide. You can’t really tell who is a surfer; it can be the lawyer in a suit” (S-5, Stephanie). The perfect wave is something different to each person; however, the experience gained is quite similar.

The interviewees tended to change their tone when speaking about the appeal of the sport. The responses became more fragmented and the interviewees appeared to tap into an emotional bond with the sport. This is exemplified by a surf brand representatives’ narrative:

The exhilaration of catching a wave, the feeling is incredible and hard to describe but you just know it when you get it. [It is an] enlivening feeling, being in touch with the ocean. [Surfing is a] hard sport to learn to do. [It is a] natural force; paddling out there, getting tossed around by waves and amazing feeling when you actually catch a wave and are surfing it. [You] go through a lot to get that feeling. [Surfing is] good for your health, keep[s you] in shape, [and is] motivation to get into shape. [Surfing] gets you in touch with nature. (B-1, Liam)

Similarly, Shilling (2003) noticed this changed reaction in his interviews.

When I ask her what is it about surfing that causes her to brave freezing cold waters, she pauses for some time. Her answer is almost Zen-like and reflects the crazy calm that surfing induces: 'You get fresh air, some wind on your face, it forces you to take deep breaths and it makes you look at the elements different'.

(p. 23)

Similarly, a local Tofino surfer outlines the lifestyle aspect of being a surfer is part of its appeal, "I love the beach. Living on the beach is so healthy and so amazing and just so peaceful...Everything surrounds yoga and surfing and healthy food" (S-4, Ann). The thrill seeking aspect of surfing is part of its appeal as illustrated by a retailers' narrative:

There is a sense where you are totally out of control in the surf...In a beginner setting you can go to a very safe environment but at the higher end it is definitely (pause) you can push yourself well beyond and so finding your new boundaries, exploring new limits...would definitely be an appeal for men and women and...people who are risk takers. It just fuels that. (R-4, Scott)

Our own unique scene in Canada is part of the appeal according to one surfer:

The weather and water conditions add to the experience... [You] can still surf everyday in Tofino by yourself by traveling to a beach that has a longer hike in or sometimes you can have these days at the most populated spots. (S-5, Stephanie)

The interviews identified several key aspects of the appeal of surfing including: thrill seeking, love of ocean, freedom – no rules, no regulations, lifestyle, and vertigo (rush), self-expression, and hedonism. One commonality irregardless of what surfing affords them, was that the passion carried over into their daily lives.

4.4 Evidence of Consumption

Female Surfers are Committed to Consuming Surf-Themed Products

In order to participate in the sport of surfing one must consume surf products. Schouten & McAlexander (1995) recognize “that consumption activities, product categories, or even brands may serve as the basis for social cohesion” (p. 43). In the narratives of the female surfers it was commonly stated that they were committed to consuming surf-themed products.

A female surfer conveys her passion for consuming surf brands in the following quote:

I love surf clothes/surf brands. I’m all about the brands. Girls totally love brands...I love Roxy clothes; pretty much everything I wear has the Roxy theme going on. It’s everywhere...The clothes look nice, are stylish, comfortable and are cool...Whether I get them for free through Roxy or I have to pay \$100 for them I love surf brands. (S-1, Kendra)

These statements indicate that this surfer is committed to consuming surf brands and also show that she is willing to invest in these fashions. In combination they suggest an impression of camaraderie in that she says “girls totally love brands”. This statement was not specific to surfers. If she were to say ‘Surfers totally love brands’ she would be demonstrating that as a group, surfers have similar consumption habits. Instead, the focus is on the penetration of brands to the masses and she supports its mainstream appeal.

Another surfer also admitted that she consumed surf fashions. However, unlike the previous example, she wanted it to be clear that she was fully committed to consuming surf fashions irregardless of their staying power.

It's cool. I like the look of it. I do surf...I don't like the look of it just because I do surf. I honestly like surf fashions...I have been attracted to that sort of clothing style before it was extremely popular and probably will continue to wear it after its popular. I guess I am influenced by trying to stay somewhat modern.
(S-3, Brooke)

Essentially, this surfer was exhibiting tendencies of 'style denial' in which she wears and purchases branded merchandise but did not want to be seen as "buying into an image" (Wheaton, 2000, p. 266). Similarly, another surfer suggested that her purchase decisions were all practical and exhibited further tendencies of 'style denial':

Pretty much any brand surf attire or paraphernalia that I have has been given to me as gifts. I don't buy name brands like Roxy or surf fashions. The clothes that I wear for surfing like my wetsuit and my rash guard and all that; that is all functional. I don't normally buy the name brands but having said that I do like the surf style. So I would say that I would dress like a surfer but I refuse to spend the amount of money on the clothes that I would love to wear. (S-4, Ann)

This surfer wore surf attire but did not purchase surf fashions. She wanted to emphasize her commitment to consuming surf-themed products that were practical but did not want to be seen as supporting the surf wear industry. Even so, her last statement suggests that the financial commitment essentially is what prevents her from acquiring surf branded merchandise.

Core female surfers base other consumption decisions on their commitment to the surfing culture. As one surfer commented:

It affects everything. I got married in Fiji on a surf island. The clothes I buy have to be easy to put on after I get out of the water...Where I travel [is] based on how good the surf is. I have only been to Arizona once. (S-1, Kendra)

This supports the claim that as one's commitment extends into surfing, significant purchase decisions are influenced by one's devotion to the sport.

4.5 Evidence of Subcultural Features and Conditions

I have divided my summary in this section into four subsections based on themes that were identified in my analysis: (i) hierarchical social structuring; (ii) core values and localized differences; (iii) self transformation; and (iv) rituals.

i. Hierarchical social structuring: From hard core surfers to posers

My analysis of the surfing subculture found evidence of stratification and markers of social status and within group positioning. The "conspicuous display of equipment or subcultural style" (Wheaton, 2000, p. 254) did not impact/affect a person's status in the subculture. Rather the person's commitment to the sport and surfing ability were evaluated and seen as key indicators of positioning. The following surfer's comment supports this condition.

There are outsiders and insiders...you prove yourself in the water. See people differently by seeing how they surf...Lose respect if people drop in on people...If you're really good you become respected. Style and equipment has nothing to do

with it except maybe for posers!! Not what kind of boards do you ride...that is kooky! (S-1, Kendra)

Similarly, another surfer confirmed that people's ability is revealed in the water.

The only way I would consider myself an insider is when I see other people pretending to be something they are not. You can tell in the water. Once you start being able to understand what is going on. You can tell when you watch people; who can do what and who can't. So it is very clear that way who can surf or not. (S-3, Brooke)

A surf brand representative acknowledged that hard core surfers serve as conveyors of product information in the surfing community.

Word of mouth in the community spreads fast, almost overnight. The latest products become very well received by the community if you get a person that surfs a lot and has purchased that product [talking about it then] it spreads. (B-1, Liam)

One surfer affirmed that the display of equipment does not give a surfer any credibility whatsoever.

It's called being a poser. But it doesn't really work because as soon as they get in the water their identity is revealed. 'Kook!!!' You can only pose while you are on land right. Wearing your rash guard out to the bar is pretty easy to figure out that you don't surf...I would encourage them to get out and try it. (S-1, Kendra)

Liam, a surf brand representative said that in order to become accepted and respected in the surf culture, you have to "pay your dues, be patient, be respectful of people that are good, be respectful of their territory, and work on your skills". He

suggested that there is a familiarity amongst the surfers who are higher up the hierarchy. “The hard core surfers know one another in the water, they know the good spots, and there seems to be a pecking order if you are respected” (B-1, Liam). A surf brand representative declared that, “There is always a pecking order [in surfing] depending on the politics of the wave you surf or the beach you are at” (B-5, Leanne).

One surfer thought that Tofino was more accepting whereas other Vancouver Island surfing communities have more of a hierarchy:

Sombrio and Jordan River is a little bit more local. It is a little bit harder to get accepted there. You have to make sure that if you are learning that you don’t get in their way. You have to know what you are doing out there. (S-4, Ann)

In order to be accepted in the Tofino surf scene one must demonstrate his/her level of commitment in the water. Surfing ability and knowledge are indicators of one’s status in the subculture.

ii. Core values and localized differences

One commonality expressed throughout the interviews was that, “The surf scene in Canada [Tofino] is mellower and more accepting than other parts of the world” (S-5, Stephanie). A Tofino surfer who has traveled to numerous global surf breaks noted that, “You don’t see this number of girls surfing at other breaks” (S-1, Kendra). She further revealed that, “Even some of the Pro girls from California now come up to surf in Tofino as well” (S-1, Kendra). These statements suggest that the surf scene in Tofino appears to be attracting an increasing number of female surfers.

A surf brand representative affirmed that the surf scene generally is more welcoming of women.

I think there is a lot of acceptance out there in surfing. If you go out as a girl to any break I don't think you are treated as badly as you would be if you were a guy...Guys love to see girls out there learning to surf and they encourage it. (B-4, Trish)

Another representative illustrated the unanimity of surfers:

[Surfers] embrace surfing as a lifestyle...You meet like-minded people that are surfing as well. It is something that you can strive to do and that you can do on your own. Each wave is about you as a person...You don't have to be a part of something to be a part of the surf culture as long as you want to surf you can go out there and do it and become a part of it. (B-5, Leanne)

The interviewees unanimously agreed that the relaxed nature of the sport and its participants is part of the allure of surfing. Similarly, a surfer commented that there are virtually no entry barriers into the surf culture, as she simply put it, "I think if you feel like you are a surfer, you are a surfer" (S-3, Brooke). The interviewees often situated their experiences of surfing in Tofino within the global surfing culture. The responses suggest that the surf scene in Tofino is unique in that more women are drawn to its waters and are welcomed once they are there. This is supported by the following surfer's comments, "In Tofino, women are accepted. [Tofino is the] exception to the rule. Guys are cheering them on and are very supportive and helpful, giving equipment advice or other tips" (S-1, Kendra).

iii. Self transformation (deepening of commitment)

In order to be an avid surfer in Canada it requires a great degree of commitment. Throughout my own personal experiences collecting data for this study and my discussion with the interviewees it was evident that the level of commitment was representative of a '*culture of commitment*' (Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998) in which several variables such as leisure time, work time, career choice, and place of residence influence one's willingness or ability to participate regularly in the activity of surfing.

A local retailer who was an enthusiastic surfer stated his commitment as follows: "The surf lifestyle is simple. You work to surf and work is second, surfing is first!" (R-1, Dan). Perhaps his commitment was fundamental to his decision to go into small business. The commitment to the surf lifestyle took precedence over everything else.

Another retailer explained that "A lot of people try [surfing and even] do it for a little while. [But] unless the commitment level is really there they won't stay, but they really have a great time when they are doing it" (R-4, Scott).

This suggests that there is a baseline commitment that is required. Financially, it is inevitable, that even though the ocean is a free resource there are other initiation fees once one decides surfing is something worth pursuing. These include start-up costs such as the price of renting and ultimately purchasing equipment including a wetsuit, gloves, booties, and, depending on the level of commitment, a thicker suit for winter, and a hood. Furthermore, a surfboard is required and there are costs associated with travel including transportation, food and lodging. Beyond the financial commitment there is also the issue of time, both for traveling and time needed to master the sport. As one's level of commitment deepens, his/her lifestyle becomes shaped by the requirements of surfing. A

surf brand representative effectively summarized the amount of commitment involved as follows:

It is also a very difficult sport and you have to be pretty committed to doing it even living on the west coast you still have to drive 4-6 hours to get there. There may or may not be waves to ride when you get there and if there are you have to know how to get them. You have to rent a wetsuit and a surfboard and know how to paddle out there. (B-2, Jason)

A passage from the surf film *Step into Liquid* reinforces the transformation process that occurs in surfing as a participants level of commitment deepens, "There comes a time in every surfer's life when he realizes he is always going to be a surfer, forever. It's no longer what he does, it's who he is. It's part of his inner compass".

The level of commitment varies in each surfer; however, one surfer's comments illustrate nicely the attractive force of the sport once an individual identifies with it. "Surfing is addictive...Surfing is a change of life [or] 'lifestyle'. [It's] your whole job; where you live, and where you travel [revolves] around the fact that you surf" (S-1, Kendra). Another surf retailer made a similar comment.

More women [are] moving out to places like to Tofino, moving to places like Sooke to be closer to the surf. The fact that there is a whole tourist infrastructure building up quite significantly in Tofino so it can support you vocationally...a lot of the women...are entrenching themselves in the society out there as opposed to just tripping out on the weekend. (R-4, Scott)

This was nicely summarized by a surfer as follows, "Tofino residents have made a commitment to commit their lives to surfing" (S-3, Brooke). The level of commitment

required is unique to each surfer and is dependent on how embedded surfing is in their self-identity. The scene in Tofino resembles a 'culture of commitment' (Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998) and due to its relative isolation requires more of an invested commitment than many other global surf locations.

iv. Rituals

The subculture of surfing presents a unique set of rituals that are linked to the sport. Shilling (2003), identifies a common practice seen in surfing:

Describing waves is an essential aspect of surfing. It's part Zen and part physics. These surfers are looking for 'mackers,' aka 'ground swells' – well formed over great distances, perhaps from as far away as the Bering Sea. For surfers and fisherman alike, the day starts with the marine broadcast. Some gale up in the Queen Charlotte Islands may become a mysterious force that works its way down the coast. All day, surfer kids drive up and down the coast to check the surf, and time becomes a giant wave of building energy. It's a crazy multiplying energy – the bigger the wave the greater the 'stoke'...and the need to get to the beach, to climb into the surf, to leave the land behind. (p. 16)

A retailer in the study described a ritual for surfers who do not have direct access to the sea, where they check web sites for web cams. "The internet is very important for surfers because all of the forecasts...I'm online checking surf all over the world every day. All the live cams...If you like surfing you love waves. You like looking at waves" (R-1, Dan). The repeated practice of analyzing the formation of storms and the pattern of

waves enables a Lower Mainland surfer to plan his trips to Tofino based on the presence of waves.

An observed practice amongst surfers is analyzing waves and sharing this information within the community. Surfers congregate around parking lots to beaches and look at the waves to see what waves are present, and what waves are forming in the distance. If no sizeable waves are present surfers will communicate with other surfers to find out what location is generating the best waves. Similarly, upon arriving in Tofino, surfers check the tide board at the entrance to Pacific Rim National Park and do the customary check at Long Beach for waves. Whether or not there are consistent sizeable waves will influence the decision to check elsewhere or to stay and go surfing at Long Beach.

One's level of commitment will also influence what rituals they exhibit. Some surfers add a stop at one of the board rental shops to their routine. The employees of these surf shops often have already been out surfing and know where the best surf is or have heard what break is generating the best waves. Each surfer has set routines in order to be able to surf and these may or may not be individually embellished. These include paying the parking fee at Pacific Rim National Park, going through various procedures of dressing and undressing, waxing boards, rinsing off equipment, and surfing at sunrise or sunset. These rituals were repeatedly observed throughout the participant observation component of my study and suggested that people tend to ascribe to a certain routine. Not all rituals are universal amongst surfers but the surfers I observed exhibited commonalities in their routines based on local requirements and customs.

4.6 Surfing is a 'Commodity-Orientated Subculture' (Wheaton, 2000, p. 261)

Wheaton (2000) argued that surfing is a 'commodity-orientated subculture', in that surfers need to consume products such as equipment and clothing to participate in the sport. Subcultural identity is often signified by the presence of surfing equipment but the key is that the equipment is necessary. A retailer suggested that, "It's a pretty low tech sport. Have board will surf" (R-2, Phil). This confirms that the purchase or rental of surf equipment is a requirement of surf participants. Outside the initial investment it is a relatively affordable sport, if the surf is nearby, however, these initial costs are considerable as supported by the subsequent figures, "To buy a long board is \$1000 plus tax, \$1100 plus tax, wetsuit \$500, and that's an average cost" (R-1, Dan).

The shared need for equipment and apparel is a point of commonality for women surfers and they often congregate around surf stores.

In certain times a year we always have surfers coming through...And they are not just buying stuff but saying 'hey, how's it going?' or 'surf this surf that'. The passion carries over....they all kind of relate to each other. Look at it from a sociological point of view they just have a medium they are in common with. (R-1, Dan)

As a local surfer states, "Surfers have something in common. Get two surfers together who never spoke before and they are always talking". The purchase of surf commodities is a facet of surf culture, however, one common issue that influences their purchasing decisions is purchasing from core shops that are familiar with the sport of surfing and its commodities. This is represented by a local surf retailer who revealed that independent surf stores gain credibility amongst surf participants:

The smaller stores get a little bit more of a hard core following. For the amount we sell I would say that 30% would actually be surfing and currently doing it and getting on boards and going to the beach. (R-3, Colin)

A commonality expressed in the interviews was the issue of authenticity. A concern for authenticity was expressed by all interviewees irregardless of their personal affiliation with surfing or their status in the surf products industry. This is supported by the following comments made said by a surfer, "Everyone has their reason for it. I don't want to wear that company because it is made there" (S-1, Kendra). Similarly, another surfer revealed that she is committed to supporting local retailers, "I will go to anyone local any day and give them money. I would prefer to spend money locally in smaller stores or go to local board makers than buy stuff at bigger shops" (S-3, Brooke).

A related aspect of authenticity was the condition of being 'soulful'. This meant that surfing was part of one's moral fiber and in order to effectively represent the culture one had to exhibit a degree of knowledge and passion for the sport. This idea of '*authenticity*' is shared amongst retail store owners, retail employees, surf brand representatives, and is important to surfers who consume surf products. This is illustrated by the following surf retailers' comments:

We've never been a store to hire eye candy or you know the person who doesn't do. It is always about the passion for riding and that we find makes better sales people, a more fun staff, [and a] better place to work. (R-4, Scott)

This idea of authenticity is further expanded upon in relation to the hostility shown to those companies who lack 'soul' and hard core representation. The independent retailers showed little regard for companies that try to buy authenticity and are more concerned

with the bottom line. This is reflected by the following surf retailer's comments, "I think in terms of Vancouver stores we are the only legitimate surf shop" (R-1, Dan).

A common theme in the interviews was that surfers want to purchase surf products from someone who is passionate about the sport and actively practices it, as illustrated by the following retailers' statement:

I think it is a key element too that people have to be able to come in and see the board up on the ceiling...People don't want to go into a department store to buy their surf wear. They want it to be known that people selling it to them are kind of actively involved as well. (R-3, Colin)

Similarly, a surf brand representative acknowledged the importance of distributing to core shops, "It is good to have your product in the right stores. That is the most successful marketing that you can have when you have your target market wearing your product" (B-5, Leanne).

In order to effectively appeal to the authentic group of surfers, in addition to targeting the masses, it is important for a retailer to supply surf hard goods. Surf hard goods are surf-themed products that are considered essential requirements to practice the sport of surfing including: surf boards, wetsuits, rash guards, surf booties, gloves, hoods, and surf wax. The following quote illustrates the profound strength of the core surfer to the retailer, "You have to sell the Sex Wax behind the counter with the combs to comb the wax on, even though 10% of our customers might buy it" (R-3, Colin). A retailer defines a core surfer by his/her commitment to the sport as follows, "A real core surfer is someone who is surfing at least every weekend if not more, and probably living on the Island, or moving somewhere to do it" (R-2, Phil). Colin relayed the importance of

securing consumer loyalty of core surfers as follows: "It is definitely about appealing to the authentic surf group. It is a spin off from there. It seems that if it gets accepted there, it seems to go to the masses" (R-3, Colin).

Four out of five owners of surf businesses interviewed carried surf hard goods or a selection of surf rentals. This illustrates the importance of targeting those who actually surf, in addition to, those who would like to surf, and those who are committed to consuming surf-themed products and thereby, providing the consumer with an authentic retail environment.

There is a risk of losing one's authenticity while expanding surf clothing to the mass market. A retailer commented on the alienation male consumers felt following a store's transformation:

We're actually scaring our male clientele now. They are coming in going 'I thought you guys used to be a surf store and now you're all clothing' and we're going 'No! No! Downstairs is all hard goods!'...I think that side of the business people are actually thinking now that we're not such an authentic surf store anymore. (R-3, Colin)

There is a fine line between marketing authenticity and selling out to the masses. It seems equally important to represent the growing women's market in surfing wear whilst providing the surfers with an authentic retail environment. This was acknowledged by a surf brand that wanted to change its market position without compromising its image:

[The brands owners] want to see it expand more globally. [They want to] encompass the globe more [and] they don't want to be known just as a surf brand, and yet they don't want to lose their roots as a core surf brand. (B-5, Leanne)

4.7 Link between Identity, Lifestyles, and Consumption

One of the recurrent themes I found in the interview responses to questions about surfing lifestyles was focused around the concept of youthfulness. Surfing and the consumption of surfing products are not age specific, instead they are linked to an image of youthfulness which is more about one's mentality and attitude, being a participant and leading an active lifestyle. The concept of youthfulness was understood to allow women of all ages to identify with the surf lifestyle. Liam, a surf brand representative stated this by saying, "[You] don't have to be young to be youthful" (B-1, Liam). Sometimes the category "junior" is misconstrued as synonymous with youth. The idea is to market to a "youthful audience" (R-2, Phil) and the image of retaining a carefree lifestyle.

The surfing culture creates a new site for identity formation for female participants. As one surfer affirmed, "I think about surfing all the time. It's not the only thing that is important in my life but it is very important and I guess it would help define who I am and what I do" (S-5, Stephanie). Her commitment to the surf lifestyle was an organizing principle in the maintenance and expression of her self-identity. As a surfer conceded, "surfing is not something you do one day and then stop doing...it is more of a lifestyle thing than anything else" (S-1, Kendra).

In the quest for a sense of identity, a surf retailer acknowledged the sensibilities employed in consumption patterns and lifestyle practices:

To a certain extent you will have people who hook into any trend...people who like to perceive themselves that way and sometimes the cart can come before the horse. Sometimes the search for identity will drive them into being a risk taker and sometimes it is the other way around. The kid is naturally the risk taker and

they tend to be the style and influence leaders. People who naturally gravitate towards the style just because it's who they are [and] what they like. And the other kids who see that team rider and want to look like him, act like him, be like him and they'll buy the products that sponsor him. (R-4, Scott)

Scott illustrated the difference between men and women when using surf style as a means of adopting surfing identity. The preceding quotation gives attention to those who emulate team riders through their consumption activities. The search for an identity involves the consumption of products that are linked to a surf icon and by adopting these elements one develops an increased sense of self-identity. While role models are a part of women's surfing, women are more connected to the lifestyle than the current icon representing it as Scott indicated:

The women haven't necessarily had those same super strong role models...Roxy wanted the generic Roxy girl to be that person....Women are a little more interested with the experience than with I want to be exactly like her....They would market a lifestyle and a quality of life. (R-4, Scott)

According to the interviewees, the image behind surfing advocates a particular lifestyle: healthy, living on the ocean, being on the water. This image is what keeps the industry so strong. The marketing of this lifestyle captures the imagination of females and enables them to draw on selective elements of surf style in their expression of self-identity.

A surf brand representative acknowledged the adoption of surfing identity through consumption:

I would say that is very prevalent...especially in a place like Canada. The best way to explain it is that we're a snowboard nation or a ski nation that does a little bit of surf that wants to act like we're surfers...I would say 90% of the people in Canada that wear any surf brand are non-surfers...[We are] a brand name that identifies with surfing and that is why people want to buy it to be a part of it so they can pretend like they are a part of it....It is for sure 100% based on people. What they wear is their uniform or their identity to who they want to be or what they want to be a part of and right now I think that uniform, the lifestyle uniform is a very popular one. (B-2, Jason)

In this quote Jason acknowledges the appeal of the lifestyle ensemble or 'uniform' in the creation of one's self-identity. This supports a process of diffusion as surf wear is commercialized for mass consumption and enables consumers to identify with the act of surfing without actually being surfers themselves. One of the brands in the study is often identified as a surf brand; however, its mission as defined by the manufacturer is to be a global teenage lifestyle brand. Jacky acknowledged the importance of brand identities in the expression of people's self-identities.

One of the brand's mottos is freedom of choice which means that you don't have to be a part of any one group. You can choose who you want to be. You can choose what you want to wear. We would like you to choose [our brand] but we don't believe in the uniform, [being a] top to bottom brand. (B-3, Jacky)

Unlike the other surf brands in the study that prided themselves on dressing the consumer head to toe in branded gear, this brand was positioned to capitalize on people assembling their own ensembles from a variety of brands. Jacky also acknowledged that

young girls create a sense of personal and group identity through their purchases and lifestyle choices.

When you are a young person you first start to realize that you are an independent individual in the universe. In order to form who you are you connect with a group. Surfing now has become a group. It is a very loosely affiliated group but by virtue of these brands creating clothing, they basically say 'come join us, buy our clothing, be part of what we stand for'. Especially for young women who are searching very early for what group they want to identity with. (B-3, Jacky)

4.8 Diffusion of Surf Lifestyles and Products into the Mainstream

With the growing number of women surfing, the surf industry appears to be undergoing a revitalization as a result of the increased consumption of surf products by surfers and mainstream consumers. The appeal of the surf industry to mainstream consumers was mentioned by Jacky, who noted that "[The surf lifestyle appeals to] the majority of youth who never get near a beach. It has captured the imagination of youth" (B-3, Jacky). Leanne, another surf brand representative, suggested that women are changing the appearance of the surf products market, "There is huge growth in the retail market of girls who want to surf...Girls now make more money. They are not as restricted so they definitely want to spend more of their income as well" (B-5, Leanne). In the midst of these market changes, young women have emerged as an increasingly important sub segment. Leanne suggested that it was the teenage population that drove the surf trend forwards:

The whole mainstream aspect of it is teen-generated in retail, in marketing, [and] in fashion. It was time for [teens] to make [a] statement that was new and fresh... [The surf trend] was there and ready and had not been exploited yet. The teens own that look and that is what has become more mainstream about it. (B-5, Leanne)

Certain trends emerged throughout this study that appear to be contributing to the diffusion of surf lifestyles and products into the mainstream. It was widely suggested that surf wear is popular nationwide and that anyone can wear it. Jason, a surf brand representative acknowledged that the Canadian surf wear industry is relatively small scale but has created quite a following here in Canada:

Canada's surf industry in comparison to the United States [pause] it's hard because you can't go on numbers because our per capita basis. We are the size of California right, 30 million people roughly...Considering our climate and considering our accessibility to surfing and our population I would say that the penetration of surfing and lifestyle is huge! (B-2, Jason)

Leanne acknowledged the uniqueness of Canada's surf industry:

There is more of a mall presence in Canada in particular. You are not going to see that so much in California [where] people tend to still shop in surf stores. The idea of surf culture in Canada is more about fashion and is more mainstream because we don't really have a huge surf area aside from Halifax and Tofino. There is a huge surf lifestyle fashion-generated movement in between those two shores that has nothing to do with whether you surf or not. (B-5, Leanne)

Several factors were mentioned by the surf brand representatives as contributing to the diffusion of surfing identities and I briefly discuss four of them: (i) the coolness factor; (ii) the industry; (iii) women-specific marketing and sales; and (iv) marketing to junior consumers.

i. The 'Coolness' Factor

The interviewees generally felt that the surf lifestyle exhibits an element of 'coolness', and a surfer proclaimed that this image of cool is what attracts girls to the surfing lifestyles:

Right now in this kind of surf craze it would definitely be the clothing or the image of the idea of cool, and surfing is definitely marketed as very appealing right now. I would say that would initially attract women or young women. (S-4, Ann)

A surf brand representative acknowledged that the surf lifestyle is appealing to non-surfers as well, "People get a good feeling about it whether they surf or not. Surf wear is all part of that feeling of escaping everyday stress and being in touch with the ocean, the beach, [and] nature" (B-1, Liam). A retailer suggested that the fascination with the surf culture is unique in that people still identify with the lifestyle, "Even if they never surfed [before] they know that they would like it... There is something about it, it's really a different deal and for some reason or another it just always has a cool feel to it"(R-2, Phil). As illustrated, this enthrallment with surf culture has triggered the diffusion of surf lifestyles and products into the mainstream.

A surf retailer explained that the consumption of surf products enables the consumer to identify with the surf lifestyle.

I think because it makes them feel like they can be a part of that [lifestyle] even though they are not, they actually can feel like they could be. Even wearing the clothes and seeing the advertisements makes them feel a little closer to it even though they don't actually get to do it. (R-5, Suzy)

A commonality expressed in the interviews was that the consumption of surf products eventually draws consumers to the water. This fascination with the surf culture has become a part of their identity and it is only a matter of time before they crossover from consumers to actual surfers. A local surfer acknowledged the 'coolness' factor as a reason why teens and pre-teens surf.

It's cool, that is why teens and pre-teens surf... [They] got to have the nicest, coolest hard-core surf clothing... This demographic is extremely important.

[They] may very well be tomorrow's surfers. These women may keep surfing.

It's a cycle – [if they] start young may become a lifestyle. (S-1, Kendra)

According to one surfer, "the female professional surfer has increased the awareness for women's surfing" and has been important in maintaining "the cool image" (S-3, Brooke). The female professional surfer gives girls something to aspire to and has helped diffuse the surf lifestyle to the mainstream.

ii. The industry

An emerging theme in the interviews was that surf fashion is entering into the fashion industry, and the interviewees acknowledged the interactive and cross-

promotional effects of music, movies, art, and fashion. A retailer suggested that this trend is apparent in marketing promotional campaigns combining the movement of brands with that of music and art.

It is becoming, we call it the industry. It is all starting to get rolled into one...music, movie, film, television...They are all starting to pull into there too...high fashion. There are companies that know if you get something on movie...you have created a trend. (R-4, Scott)

The interviews revealed that this combined approach to art, music, lifestyle, and culture has demonstrated the crossover effect of '*board culture*'. The industry is a platform for the surf skate snow lifestyle and where fashion, art, and music intersect; consequently, the surf lifestyle has diffused to the masses at an accelerated rate.

One brand representative attributed their success to this relationship. "The success of [our brand] blowing up so quickly is because [we] went thru the music channels and that appeals to every kid'. (B-3, Jacky)

The *coolness factor* and the *industry* were interlinked in the sense that the surf lifestyle and all things California are marketed as cool. It was suggested that one can be '*cooler*' by consuming surf themed products and surf media. This image has increased the diffusion of surf lifestyles and products into the mainstream as demonstrated in the following brand representative's comments.

There is a large influence from the music industry because that is in itself cool and kids watch MTV, and they listen to the music and look at what they are doing, and what they are wearing so that would be a very good example of cross-marketing. (B-2, Jason)

iii. Women-Specific Marketing and Sales

a. The development of women's surf stores and/or expansion of women's lines at existing retail stores.

The retail interviewees conceded that increased consumer interest in women's surf wear and in the surf brands market has lead to the development of women's specific surf stores and/or expansion of women's lines at existing stores. Many of these expansions were occurring during my data collection period. It seemed that women were driving these changes, and that women were the 'must have' consumer. As a retail store owner suggested: "We realized we are totally focusing on the wrong market" (R-3, Colin). This retailer was in the process of opening a women's specific store.

Similarly, Griffin (2003) has noted that the strength of women as consumers and as decision-makers in their family's purchasing decisions has influenced retailers to change their store environments to better suit their buying needs.

The trend towards women will continue because women buy significantly more clothing and other items than men...Girls are now coming into core surf shops and spending money. So from a space standpoint, expanding the women's offerings is just smart business. Looking at retail, you see that stores now have a better understanding of how to merchandise products and better capitalize on this dynamic....Retailers are paying attention to how girls shop and are now creating an environment for them that is helping the juniors business to flourish. (p. 28)

The interviews and the observations I made of retail spaces support the conclusion that retailers are re-orienting their retail spaces to support the increased demand for women's surf wear and surf fashions. The retail spaces demonstrated numerous changes

including opening separate stores or sections that specifically cater to the female consumer, the introduction of women's-specific product lines, and increased representation of main women's brands. A surf retailer acknowledged these market changes:

A previous buyer...helped to grow the female side of the market to the point where in soft goods it was equal to the men's in our store...It is always thought [of as] a guys sporting goods store that girls can come to. Well we reached a point...where we were carrying easily as much women's [product] as men's in the summer lines. (R-4, Scott)

Similarly, the following surf retailer's comments highlight some of the related changes geared to the female consumer:

We split our store in half this summer [2003] to make it a more comfortable shopping environment for women...We have female buyers instead of male buyers buying female products. (R-4, Scott)

These surf stores were predominantly owned by men and they acknowledged one common variable in expanding their business, "Guy's can't start up a girl's store. You need girls to make the decisions" (R-1, Dan). These retail changes have been fueled by the introduction of new labels or expansions of existing lines at the brand level. A commonality amongst interviewees is the importance of having young women making buying decisions. Interviewees stated that women tend to have superior trend knowledge as revealed by a surf retailer, "We do put it all in the hands of the girls that are working here too. They tend to have their fingers on the pulse too" (R-3, Colin). He also suggested that employing women in retail creates a comfortable shopping experience.

“We are realizing that when women come in to look at women’s fashions they are much more comfortable talking to other women” (R-3, Colin). These retail changes have encouraged the diffusion of surfing lifestyles and products into the mainstream.

b. Increased growth in women and girls surf wear businesses.

The interviewees felt that trends in consumption patterns among women and young girls in the sport marketplace have triggered brand expansions in the lifestyle sport marketplace. A surf brand representative suggested that women have contributed to the bottom line of surf wear businesses, “just as far as contributing to extra dollars that weren’t otherwise there”. He commented on the growth of this market and its effect on the popularity of women’s surf wear:

The women’s sport market...in general in sport whether it be golf, hockey, skiing, its general appeal, tennis, running, yoga, its definitely a huge growth market. I think companies are starting to understand...everything women’s specific...that type of consumer wants to be identified with and they want to have something that is technically better for them...So women fit into it in the sense that it is a huge growth market right now and they are demanding to be marketed towards and they are proving that they should be marketed towards because they are spending the money. (B-2, Jason)

Some of the pioneer surf brands are now developing junior (female) lines to satisfy a growing demand in this market. It seems to be a natural progression for these brands to offer a quality product to the female consumer as Trish relayed:

I just think there was nothing out there. [We were] really the first company to focus on women's board sport clothing like women's board shorts. Up until then there was nothing out there and I think they just felt it was just a natural progression for them to offer the same kind of quality product to the women. (B-4, Trish)

The interviewees suggested that surf wear manufacturers are seeing increased economic prosperity with their female lines as surf lifestyles and products are diffused into the mainstream. Surf wear has mainstream appeal for several reasons as highlighted by a surf brand representative, "[You] don't have to be a surfer to wear the clothing. [You] don't have to be a physical surfer to feel you want to be part of the surf scene" (B-1, Liam). This increased growth in women and girls surf wear businesses appeared to be contributing to the diffusion of surfing lifestyles into the mainstream.

One retailer contradicted the influence of surf businesses and suggested that the increased number of women surfing is what propelled the marketing of surf products.

I would say one was really driven by the other and...that the marketing came afterwards. The marketing kind of went 'hey wait a minute, there is this cool trend going on. Let's jump on it'...They just hopped on the bandwagon...more than they have driven it. In the Roxy case which is an anomaly because they...built it with just the Roxy girl, the generic image of this young, vibrant alive person who is out doing things. I would say that they are not pushing it bigger. So if you were to look at the market lifecycle you would say that the market naturally drove itself to a certain point or the popularity of the sport and the market was behind it if you were to overlay the two lifecycles the market

was behind it. But now it's not plateau but it is increasing at a decreasing rate.

So now I think the Roxy's and the Billabong's and all these are going to drive it into another growth sport. So now they would be responsible for a lot more of the growth and the saturation, not just growth. (R-4, Scott)

These comments challenge the view that marketers were responsible for the changes and support the preeminent role of surfers themselves in the explosion of surf lifestyles and products to the mainstream. Yet, the influence of the surf wear businesses was well supported throughout my analysis and constitutes a likely contributor to the diffusion of surf lifestyles.

c. Development of women's specific products (surf boards, wet suits, rash guards) and/or changed technologies.

The pattern of diffusion of women's surf products appears to be cyclical. Increases in the number of women's and girl's surf wear manufacturers and marketers appear to have contributed to the development of women's specific surf products which in turn, has encouraged more women to surf resulting in a larger market which attracts more manufacturers. A surfer suggested that "surfing was really marketed to females" (S-5, Stephanie), and another surfer identified these changes as opening up the sport to more women:

I would just say it makes surfing more accessible to women. In the board size alone, it is very hard to carry if you can't fit the board under your arm. And it is very awkward...if you have to carry it on your head or in some peoples' cases if you have to get your guy friend to carry it for you. It is very frustrating to learn

when you don't have equipment that is not fitted to your body. I guess it would help create an identity because you would keep surfing. (S-3, Brooke)

One surfer revealed that some women may not appreciate the technological advancements in women's surf hard goods if they did not surf through the change, "I think if you are already a surfer, you will be more comfortable in the water because we used to wear guys wetsuits. People who don't surf they wouldn't really know the difference" (S-1, Kendra).

This quote provides evidence of some changes focusing on enhancing the experience for the actual surfers while other developments concentrate on the mainstream consumer. A surf brand representative believed that improvements in technology have made surfing more accessible to women.

Technology changes have impacted the number of women surfing by doing Research and Development and by having products that are women's-specific it would certainly encourage more women to get involved and utilize equipment that would help them do the sport better. (B-2, Jason)

A surf brand representative demonstrated the importance of female professional surfers in product development:

Lisa Anderson is a world champion. [She is a] very accomplished surfer and has been integral in helping to design a lot of the pieces in our line so that the result is products that are both functional and also fashionable. (B-4, Trish)

Trish acknowledged the strength and penetration of a pioneer surf brand.

[We focus on] being as proactive as possible in growing the line by practicing a progressive style of dressing active girls for all facets of life...I think they really

pride themselves on the connection with the Junior customer...they are progressive but they try to embrace all the elements of life with their clothing...So there is a lot of product...It is almost like you can't think of almost anything that a young girl would want that we don't produce. (B-4, Trish)

She reveals that pioneer surf brands have targeted both the masses and the actual surfers in their product developments. These changed technologies have made surfing more accessible to women, in addition to making the surf lifestyle more available to the masses. The result of this diffusion of surf lifestyles and products is that more girls and women are embracing the whole surf experience.

d. Marketing to junior consumers

Lastly, the interviewees also documented the importance of securing the interest of the junior consumer. A retailer revealed that the junior consumer is appealing to marketers for the purposes of securing brand loyalty. "They definitely market early to try and get brand loyalty...and they market directly to the younger consumer hoping that the brand loyalty will carry over"(R-4, Scott). Furthermore, Jason acknowledged the importance of gaining the support of the junior consumer in order to secure its brands mission, "to be the #1 surf brand; as far as its penetration in the market as far as people's brand awareness" (B-2, Jason)

A retailer also commented on the brand loyalty that some brands generate:

There is some serious brand loyalty out there and you can call it loyalty, brain washing, whatever you like. [The marketers] have done their job well and hooked it in hard and most of the time they have to do it through a look. They

can't totally cheat. There are some companies that just pick out a team even before they have any products because they go 'these four guys are super cool, if they wear it, we can sell it'...So you are going to see possibly the growth of that in the ladies industry where it hasn't been that before. You will see some new companies that will probably try and do exactly what the guys have done...and attach more icons to see if that works. (R-4, Scott)

The brand-related interviews showed that the tactics used to secure the attention of the young girl consumer are dependent on the brand and often reflect the surf lifestyle. A retailer noted that the appeal of the surf lifestyle is often the focal point of a brand's marketing campaign. "The whole fun beach kind of attitude that they are marketing so well in all their literature [and] even all the hang tags that come on their clothing [are] all about young kids having fun at the beach" (R-3, Colin).

It was commonly cited that the younger generation will wear a certain brand based on their identity. As a surf brand representative suggested:

I think that in Canada and again it would come from the younger kids because they are much more educated consumers. They are more specific. I mean if you are a hard-core skateboard guy, you would probably wear Volcom clothing.

Volcom is a pretty edgy core brand. Quiksilver and Billabong I wouldn't say are core brands. I mean they are and they aren't. In the general perspective of that educated consumer they aren't cool enough. (B-2, Jason)

Similarly, another retailer illustrated the same theme but focused on the female consumer:

They will come in and want all Roxy. I love Roxy. I hear them all walking around the store 'I love Roxy' and 'I just love Roxy' and they are wearing Roxy and...then you will have other people that come in and say 'well I don't wear Roxy. I only wear Billabong because Roxy is very girly'. So then you get the one step back from that the ones who refuse to go quite that girly and they like the Billabong and the O'Neill and that is more the sport girl, [they] are actually more the real surfer girls. (R-5, Suzy)

A surf brand representative believed that a brands' popularity is also typically affected by its basic design.

A lot has to do with color, fit, and design. If someone sees a design they like and a brand they recognize, they will buy it. [In] certain times when certain brands are more popular than others, [it] has to do with the designs the company has, the value the company offers, [and] marketing that they are doing. (B-1, Liam)

A retailer suggested that as surf lifestyles and products are diffused into the mainstream and young women and girls are increasingly targeted by brand marketers, one must be exceedingly cautious when approaching this younger demographic.

Marketing towards the young customer you can make huge mistakes. You can shoot yourself in the foot just like that. I would rather do nothing and have them slowly start to build [up and] have them come in, have a good experience and then next time they come in do a little better. (R-2, Phil)

The interviews revealed that surf brands are more proactive in their marketing campaigns; however, they often change their tone to capture the female pre-teen and teen consumer. This is exemplified by the following surf brand representative's comments:

[Pre-teens and teens] are very educated in how they want to buy and what they want so we are certainly adapting and trying to always be one step ahead...I would say that the marketing strategy is always changing...In order to be successful you always have to be adaptable in figuring out ways to reach them better. (B-2, Jason)

Another brand representative revealed that social groups often influence youths purchase decisions and that these groups are constantly evolving.

In elementary school the group you hook up with really dictates what you are going to buy. Suddenly your group decides, it is like a collective unconsciousness, that this is cool and this is what we are going to buy and it just filters down... [Style] changes just like that and with girls it changes more quickly than it does with boys. (B-3, Jacky)

4.9 Role of Media in the Diffusion of Surf Lifestyles

As a final condition, the media were perceived by the interviewees as contributing to the growth in interest about surfing and to the diffusion of surfing lifestyles.

Depictions of surfing were widespread in the media during my data collection period. As Grffin (2003b) wrote at the time:

It is unlikely consumers could have missed all of the surfing in the mainstream media this summer [2003]. In addition to 'Boarding House: North Shore' and MTV's 'Surf Girls', there was Fox television garnering a hit with 'The O.C'...which is heavily influenced by the current fascination with the surf lifestyle. (p. 24)

Other examples of the growing presence of surfing was the release of women's only surf videos, the addition of surfing to the Summer X Games [in 2003], the presence of surfing in pop culture (in music videos and Hollywood movies), and the emergence of surf trends on runways and with non-surf companies (Griffin, 2003b). It was increasingly evident that surfing intersected with fashion and music at an augmented rate throughout this time period. Further evidence of this connection was evident at the MTV Teen Choice Awards in which award recipients received a surf board as their trophy for winning their respective award category.

Trish, a brand representative of a globally acclaimed surf brand credited the media with a lot of the growth in the surf products industry.

I think it has to do with a lot of the media and the way that the surf brands have become so popular and girls are wearing the stuff, and then they want to actually be part of the lifestyle, and then Blue Crush that came out last year, and there is more surfer videos and TV shows and it is sort of infiltrating into the mainstream now. (B-4, Trish)

Another brand representative credited the media with changing the lifestyles of women:

It is really a market generated world... The ad campaigns that you see are all targeted [and] these campaigns have been so successful. Women are becoming much more outgoing and adventurous, confident and independent because that is the image that is being portrayed [by the media that it is] what women in this era are like. (B-5, Leanne)

i. Print media

With the rise in popular media portrayals of women's surfing as an empowering activity (e.g., the film "Blue Crush"), it is not surprising that print media are following this same trend. An examination of surfing publications demonstrated that women are being targeted by new surfing magazines that send empowering messages to women. This makes sense, because, as Booth (2001) indicates "Silence is a form of discouragement, and the limited coverage of women in traditional male-dominated surfing magazines effectively denied them access to 'the symbolic resources needed to identify as surfers'" (p. 13). In order to maintain circulation these magazines need to gain readership and reach the female consumer in a meaningful way. Surf Snow Skate Girl magazine (SG) previously known as Surfing Girl magazine is a successful example of this approach and is quickly becoming the girls' source for the surf/snow/skate/lifestyle industry.

A regular reading of SG during this time period reflected some of the themes that were prevalent in my study. I routinely reviewed SG magazine from its initiation in October of 2002 and throughout my data analysis. The placement of advertisements revealed a consistent order over time. The esteemed brands would place their advertisements near the covers and in the first few pages of the publication. These brands generally appeared in the same order from month to month and they would be in one of three forms: an action shot, a product placement ad, or a lifestyle image. By switching from an action shot to a lifestyle image, it was apparent that these brands were equally targeting both the surfers and non-surfers in their advertisements. This could be a part of the brand's marketing strategy as a surf brand representative suggested that, "Lifestyle shots as opposed to core girls surfing are going to sell more products" (B-5, Leanne).

Furthermore, these advertisements almost always included web links that enabled the reader to gain immediate access to the brand's web site. As Leanne revealed, "I don't think any company that wants to get their product out there globally can do without the internet" (B-5, Leanne).

Another noticeable trend was the relationship between surfing, surf fashions and music. Furthermore, the crossover between board sports was supported in that the crossover lifestyle was illustrated throughout the pages. This publication particularly appealed to young girls and demonstrated editorial strategies utilized in other girl-oriented magazines (e.g. CosmoGIRL, Seventeen, and Teen Vogue) including fashion trends, beauty tips, boys, and horoscopes. This magazine targets consumers who are fascinated with the casual, beach lifestyle who may not subscribe to any core print publication. As a retailer suggested, "All these companies like Roxy, Quiksilver even through the surf magazines and all that, they are really targeting that younger crowd" (R-3, Colin). A surf brand representative suggested that marketing strategies are specific to the demographic being targeted:

Our ad strategy [is to] appeal to Youth. Create some reaction, a response...Three elements [in our print ad campaigns]: recognizable team rider, classic surf shot, and something totally out there...With ads you have to take your step apart from other companies...the kids are the ones buying the surf magazines. (B-1, Liam)

He suggested the following as characteristics of print ads that are more geared to women, "The ads for women are more for the clothing [and] advertised in Surfing Girl [name of SG until September 2002]. [There are] no specific wetsuit ads" (B-1, Liam). A

competing brand revealed, “I think the tone is more feminine. It is still the same lifestyle. You know still sort of the same image just more feminine” (B-4, Trish).

Jacky acknowledged product placement as being more effective in girls’ magazines:

We are doing a lot of product placement with the magazines. If you read the articles they talk about what’s hot, what’s not, what’s cool in clothing and so [our brand] is getting placement in addition to putting ads in the magazines. Product placement seems to be more effective as girls can search in stores for that particular product. The readership of Teen People is 1.6 million so we have great exposure. More exposure means more girls buying our product. (B-3, Jacky)

Several Vancouver Sun articles published after the release of Blue Crush indicated that Lower Mainland retailers were benefiting from the increased appeal of the surf culture and suggested that the film’s release had an explosive effect on the popularity of beach wear in general (Klaffe, 2002; Leeming, 2002). Furthermore, these articles gave attention to women surfers and the local BC surf scene. A surf retailer noted the high visibility of surfing in the local print media at the time.

Every time you pick up either a Georgia Straight or a BCIT ad it has a surfer on it. Look at an ad for the Plenty store, it has a girl duck-diving, that has nothing to do with Plenty. Every image out there is copying the surf lifestyle. (R-2, Phil)

ii. Electronic Media

Improved technologies have helped photographers capture vivid in-water shots of surfing that enable the audience to share the experience of the surfer. This realism

coupled with the rise in popular media portrayals of women's surfing as an empowering activity have had an incredibly positive effect on the image of the sport and as a result, have further increased its popularity. Universal's *Blue Crush* was positively received by the mainstream press in their reviews and made respectable returns at the box offices.

Surfer magazine suggested that *Blue Crush* had effectively captured women's surfing.

Blue Crush – the story of a young girl surfer struggling to prove herself on the North Shore while finding love in the process – is, in actuality, merely a series of scenes lifted almost directly from other Hollywood surf movies...But despite its complete lack of originality, *Blue Crush* does capture something that all these previous surf pictures failed to: an inspirational vitality, embodied by today's liberated female surfers. How appropriate that after 40 years of thinly-veiled misogyny and male-dominated portrayals of the sport, it took a film about girl surfers to provide this (George, 2002).

Many of the surfers I interviewed acknowledged the movie as being representative of what it feels like to surf. "Very realistic...girls held back by fear. [I] liked the fact that the girls were doing the teaching" (S-4, Ann). Another surfer liked the surfing but disliked the plot.

I want to hate it but I love it. I liked the surf footage. They did an excellent job of capturing what it felt like to be on a wave to capturing what it felt like to be under a wave and just the water...the sound of the water. You could feel it. I hated the Hollywood story...poor portrayal of surfing culture by adding the romance aspect. (S-3, Brooke)

A common theme expressed in the interviews was that Blue Crush had increased the popularity of surf fashions and had drawn more young girls to surf. A surfer stated that, "Blue Crush has opened up girls surfing, increased the likeliness for female pre-teens to try surfing and has increased attendance at surf camps" (S-1, Kendra).

The release of Blue Crush strengthened the media hype surrounding women's surfing and itself potentially contributed to the growth of the industry. Tofino, once a quiet fishing town became a popular destination for reporters and journalists who were fascinated by Canadian surf culture and the increase in number of females taking to the sport and its attendant lifestyle.

An interesting point that questions the influence of surfing media and promotes further discussion in regards to the role of media in the diffusion of surf lifestyles was made by Scott, a retailer.

To see...Blue Crush being a great media marketing tool that was used to drive forward so many young girls into the surf and that was kind of an after event like the girls were already going into it...Seldom is a movie so ground breaking or media so ground breaking that it drives a trend forward. It usually follows the trend. (R-4, Scott)

The influence of the media in the diffusion of surf lifestyles was a common theme in the interviews. Product placements in movies can generate a great deal of attention for brands and Blue Crush was no exception. As one retailer explained, "Blue Crush was huge. We sold those Billabong rash guards from the production. Everyone had to have one" (R-3, Colin). All the retailers conceded that Blue Crush contributed to increased sales for the Billabong rash guards that were shown in the movie.

The internet was also repeatedly acknowledged for its importance in a brands marketing strategy. The interviewees cited the internet as a key tool in providing consumers with product knowledge and brand awareness. A surf brand representative summarized the importance of the internet as follows:

I think international web sites should be frequently updated...it lets people know about the different competitions around the world and how people do at them, and what [the brands] new technology is and you can view products online which is really important. (B-5, Leanne)

CHAPTER V - DISCUSSION

By analyzing a series of conversations with three diverse groups that represent the Canadian surf scene and surf wear industry, this study has attempted to gain greater insight into the women's surf culture in Western Canada, and the marketing activities of the Canadian surf wear industry. From this exploration, there were nine key areas that emerged. Several theories and trends in the sport marketing, sport sociology, and consumer research disciplines shaped this thesis. This chapter will reflect on those areas exhibited throughout this study and evaluate them in accordance with trends that are occurring worldwide.

This thesis has provided evidence of the extent to which surfers, consumers, retailers, and surf brands intersect. Several inter-penetrating themes emerged in the analysis of the results that have created several opportunities for reflection and discussion. This chapter will examine these factors whilst returning to the main objectives of this study: (i) to critically examine how the marketing of surf products affects surfing lifestyles and product consumption; and (ii) to describe how surf lifestyles and products, in turn, become diffused to a larger population of young women and girls. The four main hypotheses of this research will be analyzed and the viability of surfing as a subculture of consumption will be determined.

This chapter highlights: (a) reflecting on trends in the women's sport marketplace; (b) reflecting on trends in Canadian women's surfing; (c) reflecting on surf brand marketing; and (d) reflecting on subcultural theory.

Meanwhile, following the discussion portion of this thesis an epilogue is included to summarize what I learned as an active participant in this industry. This epilogue

alongside the discussion portion of this thesis shall provide insights into the role of retailing and brand marketing in the expansion of women's surfing and document trends that are occurring in the women's sports product marketplace. By providing a window of knowledge as an insider in the surf industry, I will reflect on my interactions with surfers, surf brand representatives, and consumers; in addition to, providing other information that can further support this research.

5.1 Reflecting on Trends in the Women's Sport Marketplace

Although there is evidence of women surfing since the 1700s (Gabbard, 2000), "only recently has the sport gained much visibility" (Hamilton et al., 2002, p. 53). Women played a minor role in the early development of BC surfing. The late 1990s marked a significant change with more and more women trying the sport (Shilling, 2003). In recent years, surfing has permeated virtually every aspect of youth sport and culture, from the clothes to the music. The surf industry has exploded globally and along with it so has the media with all girls surf videos and magazines. More women are attending girls-only surfing camps and participating in competitions. The changes in women's surfing are encouraging and several can be attributed to marketing. "As a consumer group, women now possess the marketing potential to make a significant impact upon the bottom line of consumer and spectator sport organizations that are willing to consider these obvious trends in the sport marketplace" (Branch, 1995, p.10).

Women are no longer an afterthought in the sports product marketplace. They are increasingly becoming a focus of brands and are being targeted in their marketing campaigns. Women are proving that they should receive recognition as a distinct and

powerful segment in the sport marketplace (Bradish, Lathrop, & Sedgwick, 2001; Branch, 1995; Lough, 1996; Shoham, Rose, Kropp, & Kahle, 1997; Sparks & Westgate, 2002; Sutton & Watlington, 1994). Essentially, women are demanding to be marketed towards and brand marketers are responding. The women's market in general has tremendous growth opportunities and women prove to be loyal consumers if they are identified with by women's specific products. With the recent growth of women's surfing and demand for women's surf wear, surf wear manufacturers are expanding their product offerings to women. Pioneer surf brands have responded to this growing demand by developing junior lines as young women have emerged as an important sub segment for sport, sport-related products, and sport marketers (Shoham et al., 1997).

5.2 Reflecting on Trends in Canadian Women's Surfing

The significant trends that were occurring in women's surfing and the sports products market helped form the basis for this study. A goal of this research was to contribute to an increased understanding of the factors affecting the development of women's surfing in Western Canada. It was apparent in my data analysis that several variables have contributed to this growth seen in Canadian women's surfing. These factors should contribute to an increased awareness of the appeal of surfing, and to the uniqueness of the Canadian scene in comparison to other global surfing destinations. There were numerous other intricacies that emerged in this analysis, and further review of them shall provide an increased understanding of the interplay of subcultures and marketing in Canadian consumer culture, by examining the link between lifestyles, identity, and consumption.

Prior to the mid-1990s, the sport of surfing in British Columbia attracted relatively few participants and only a small percentage of females were actively involved in the sport. Shilling (2003) identified the following factors as main contributors to the rebirth of surfing in Tofino: the improvements in wetsuit technology, the presence of parents in the water, a snowboarding and skateboarding crossover, and the presence of surf clothing and accessories and the advertising that went with them.

Some of the identifiable changes over time in the sport of surfing in BC are clear as identified by Shilling (2003):

the disappearance of surf squat communities; the emergence of elders in the sport; increased participation by women; the transformation of Tofino from a remote resource-based town to one that is visited by a million people each year and with an economy capable of supporting several surf shops, surf schools and the annual surf competitions; and the growth of competitive surfing in BC. (p. 54)

Shilling (2003) documented the increased participation by women as an identifiable change in the sport of surfing in BC. This study identified eight factors as contributors to the growth of women's surfing, specifically in BC. These factors include: changes in wetsuit technology, crossover appeal from skateboarding and snowboarding, California's influence, increased demand for women's surf wear and surf fashions, the growth of competitive surfing in BC, increased media exposure of Canadian women's surfing, development of Canadian surf businesses, and women's increased comfort with the identity of 'being a surfer'. Booth (2001) identified the following as conditions that have contributed to a new surfing culture that is more accepting of women: the revival of long boards, the emergence of new role models, resolution of women's surfing style, a

shift in attitude regarding the marketing of female sexuality, a revitalized women's tour, and new products dedicated to female surfers. This study identified variables that exhibit commonalities with other surfing literatures, but also demonstrates that these conditions are not universal and that the Canadian scene has its own unique influences and tendencies.

5.3 Reflecting on Surf Brand Marketing

Previous research has recognized some of the key trends that have been occurring in women's surfing such as: increased global recognition and acceptance of women's surfing (Hamilton et al., 2002), increased importance of BC and Canada in global women's surf scene (Nickson, 2000), and an increased media portrayal of women's surfing as an empowering activity (Gonzalez, 2002; Hamilton et al., 2002). This appears to make the rise of women's surfing an organic, surfer-led phenomenon; although, the research also suggests that: there is increased growth in women and girls surf wear businesses (Gabbard, 2000; Hamilton et al., 2002; Klaffke, 2002; Ostrowski, 1999) and increased economic prosperity among surf wear manufacturers incorporating female lines (Booth, 2001, Hamilton et al., 2002, Ostrowski, 1999). One of the prevalent message systems around women's surfing is surf brand marketing. It is here that empowering messages are especially visible.

These predominant trends invite the question – what is the role of surf brand marketing itself in the development of women's surfing culture? Is this a case of co-optation as seen in skateboard culture, are the brands and surfers sharing meanings, values and identities?

This lead to the development of two primary research objectives; 1) to examine how the marketing of surf products affects surf lifestyles and product consumption, and 2) to describe how surf lifestyles and products in turn become diffused to a larger population of young women and girls.

The Role of Consumption in Relation to One's Identity

It has been documented that sport and leisure lifestyles are sites of identity formation (Wheaton, 2000) and that sport consumption enables one to express that identity (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). This research supports the assumption that, "The possibilities of different sources of identification have expanded, in particular the increased significance of consumption practices such as sport and leisure lifestyles in the communication and maintenance of self-identity for growing segments of the population" (Wheaton, 2000. p. 255). These theories invite the question - how is surf wear consumption linked to identity formation in female consumers?

Throughout my research, it was evident that surf wear consumption is linked to identity formation in different ways for surfers, and non-surfers who are active surf wear consumers. In the past, women surfers found it increasingly difficult to find women-specific surf gear. Surf boards, wetsuits, and other surf hard goods were not being designed with the female surfer in mind. These women faced numerous obstacles in the water, and being comfortable with their gear was one of them. This study demonstrated that innovations in wetsuit design have contributed to the growth in the number of people surfing in Canadian waters. The advancements made in wetsuit design are enabling women to get a proper fitting suit and feel more comfortable in the water. This comfort

has been linked to one's eventual commitment and identity as a surfer. Consequently, surf gear consumption is enabling women to gain access to better products to suit their needs as surfers.

A predominant theme amongst surf brand representatives that emerged in this study was the importance of being innovative. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, authentic surf wear companies that remain committed to the surf lifestyle are keen on creating technological improvement in their product offerings to women. Wheaton and Beal (2003) suggested that "part of the rationale for participants to accept products as legitimate was the brand's attitude of commitment to the activity and community" (p. 169). They reveal that,

'Being real' came from understanding the surfing aesthetic, which could only evolve from having been *involved* with the sport – 'doing it'. Thus, although all surf brands had become big corporations, their favoured surfing brands had a 'hard core' image that came from 'being real'. (p. 170)

This provides evidence that although surfers recognize innovations in the surf products market; they also want to consume legitimate brands. Brands that stay true to their core roots while developing new product offerings will enhance brand awareness by keeping their brand at the forefront of the industry.

However, there is an apparent difference between surf wear consumption and identity formation amongst surfers and non-surfers. In my research, surfers highlighted conflicting viewpoints regarding consumption of surf products. It was suggested that women's surfing was propelled by the brand manufacturers themselves. Women surfers tended to appreciate the functional developments taking place in the surf products

market. They also expressed interest in consuming surf clothing; however, they did not link their clothing consumption to their subcultural identity. Another common theme is that surfers want to purchase their surf gear and clothing from authentic surf retailers. By restricting their consumption habits to core shops, women surfers are strengthening their identity as surfers. Similarly, Wheaton (2000) acknowledges, "Only the 'neophyte' windsurfers would make the faux pas of wearing 'imitation' surf clothing...sold in high street stores or pseudo surf brands" (p. 266).

Meanwhile, brand marketers and retailers acknowledged that young girls and women, who are non-surfers, utilize surf themed products as a means of adopting surf style. The image that is marketed along with these products is what an increasing number of consumers aspire to. There were several identifiable themes that appeal women to the surf lifestyle, such as, the fascination with California surf culture, the concept of youthfulness, the element of coolness, and an escape from the everyday. This supports the notion that in post-modernity work roles are of less significance in providing individuals with a sense of identity than their activity as consumers (Bocock, 1993). These relayed images enable the surf lifestyle to be diffused to a larger population of young women and girls. The consumption of surf products enables the consumer to identify with the surf lifestyle. The overall penetration of the surf lifestyle in Canada is significant considering our climate, accessibility to surfing, and population as identified in this study.

The Diffusion of Surf Lifestyles in the Mainstream

An interesting point that came forward in this study upon discussing the diffusion of surf lifestyles was that a retailer credited women surfers as propelling the marketing of surf products. In many different realms of sport, women are gaining recognition as valuable consumers in the sports product marketplace. Surfing seems to be another avenue for marketing to women. Women surfers comprise a niche market in the sports product marketplace. The eventual proliferation of surf lifestyle is fueled by the media and surf brand marketers. Once these trends catch on to the masses, surf style is diffused at an astonishing rate and, consequently; surf brands respond to these market changes. This would support evidence of the popularity of the sport fueling the market. However, women have becoming increasingly comfortable as surfers with the development of women-specific products by brand marketers. These women are encouraging other women to get into the water, as more women want to learn to surf more surf schools are opening to fulfill this demand. So it seems that there is an apparent rise out of the subculture itself; however, the overall permeation is being fueled by the brand creators.

The presence of media in the diffusion of surfing lifestyles was widespread during my data collection period. Media was widespread in pop culture, reality television introduced 'Boarding House: North Shore' and MTV's 'Surf Girls'. 'The O.C' on Fox television gained a loyal fan base amongst pre-teen and teens who are fascinated with the surf lifestyle (Griffin, 2003b). Meanwhile, surf media continues to infiltrate us with MTV's 'Laguna Beach' and the 'Teen Choice Awards'; that utilize surf boards as trophies for its award recipients. Wheaton (2000) suggests that the images portrayed by the media of lifestyles sports:

Affirm that if you want to transform your identity...you need to focus on image, style, and fashion: 'Media culture thus provides resources for identity and new roles for identity in which look, style, and image replaces such things as action and commitment as constitutive of identity, of who one is'. (p. 269)

Wheaton and Beal (2003) in the comparison of windsurfing and skateboarding cultures suggest that "specialist niche media play a central role in the creation and evolution of these cultures" (p. 157). Furthermore, they reveal that "academics have tended to critically 'position media as *incorporating or co-opting* rather than aiding in the formation of subcultures'" (p. 157). They discern that "subculturalists are not simply 'victims' of commercialization, but shape and 're-shape' the image and meanings circulated b the media" (p. 158). Therefore, it can be reasoned that women surfers are part of the commercialization process. This research documented that women surfers garnered the attention of local media, the messages they transmit to the media; in essence, provide knowledge of the subcultural meaning.

However, it can be reasoned that subcultural meanings undergo co-optation into the larger fashion system (Hebdige, 1979), so that the resulting products are acceptable to larger segments of mainstream consumers (Kates, 1998). Schouten and McAlexander (1995) caution that,

The marketing consequence of this danger is that brand management is faced with a veritable tightrope walk between the conflicting needs of two disparate but equally important groups of consumers: those who give the product its mystique and those who give the company its profitability. (p. 59)

It was suggested widely in this study that the hard goods business is a lost leader. There is no real profit gain in surf hard goods; however, the gain is in representation and appealing to that authentic group of consumers. Retailers and brand marketers are responding to the recent market changes and the proliferation of the surf lifestyle. However, those that will retain a diverse customer base are those that stay true to the core of the surf lifestyle; whilst, capitalizing on the masses.

Through consideration of my main research questions and the objectives of this study, four hypotheses were formed for this research. Each hypothesis will be identified and its viability in accordance with the view points of my study will be discussed: (a) Surf wear consumption is an integral part of a surfer's lifestyle and identity; (b) Surf brands have expanded their lines to reach surfers, but also to reach female teens and pre-teens; (c) Female teens and pre-teens use surf wear to help construct their identities; and (d) The net effect of these two trends is an increase in consumer interest in surf wear and in the surf brands market.

The detailed analysis of my results demonstrated that women surfers were gaining recognition in the surf products market and this in turn has had a positive influence on their identity as surfers. A positive first experience in the water was directly linked to one's likeliness to continue surfing. Furthermore, in order to participate in the sport of surfing one must consume products. These findings and numerous other variables documented in this study prove that surf wear consumption is an integral part of a surfer's lifestyle and identity.

With the increased representation of women in the water, brand marketers are expanding their lines to women surfers. As women become recognized as an important

market segment and evidence supports their influence as consumers in the sports-product marketplace, brands are reacting to these demands by creating or expanding women's lines. Meanwhile, a growing trend is the emerging influence of young women and girls in the sports product marketplace. Young women have become increasingly attracted to the surf lifestyle and surf wear industry. As a result, surf brands have expanded their lines to reach surfers, but also to reach female teens and pre-teens.

The link between consumption, lifestyles, and identity has been analyzed and it is supported that people consume products in order to create a sense of self-identity. Young girls create and express their identities through consumption and lifestyle choices. This supports the notion that female teens and pre-teens use surf wear to help construct their identities.

Numerous expansions are occurring in the surf products market such as the development of women's surf stores, the expansion of surf lines to increase their product offerings to women, and the creation of new lines. Meanwhile, globally teens are becoming fascinated with the surf lifestyle and are consuming surf fashions to become a part of it. The net result of these two trends is an increase in consumer interest in the surf brands market. All four hypotheses for my research are accepted and have been substantiated by the evidence shown in this study.

5.4 Reflecting on Subcultural Theory

How to theorize this? Usual way to understand rise of a non-traditional sport is in term of sporting subculture, (e.g.) work done on skateboarding and snowboarding. However, in the sociological research the term subculture has been used in increasingly

contradictory ways resulting in conceptual ambiguity (Leonard II, 1991). Sport ethnographies on subcultures have exaggerated cultural resistance and have placed sport subcultures as oppositional to parent culture. Furthermore the term subculture is often construed as synonymous with deviance (Crosset & Beal, 1997).

A goal of this research was to theorize this since it was unclear as to how well the term subculture itself describes the surf scene where product consumption is a major part of the activity and lifestyle identity. As a result, I chose Schouten and McAlexander's (1995) ethnographic work on Harley-Davidson motorcycle owners as a potential concept to see if it could be applied or could help explain the cultural production and consumption tensions I was seeing in women's surfing.

According to Schouten and McAlexander (1995) a 'subculture of consumption' is, "A distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity" (p. 43). Other characteristics include an identifiable, hierarchical social structure; a unique ethos, or set of shared beliefs and values; and unique jargons, rituals, and modes of symbolic expression (p. 43).

Under a subculture of consumption; "people identify with certain objects or consumption activities and, through those objects or activities, identify with other people" (p. 48). Through conversations with female surfers it was suggested that they identify with other surfers through their commitment to the sport of surfing. Surfers are active consumers; however, their consumption activities do not contribute to group cohesion. Similarly, Wheaton (2000) in her analysis of the windsurfing subculture documented that, "Despite the centrality of windsurfing equipment to the activity, and the

expenditure required to get involved in the sport, members couldn't buy their way into the core of the subculture" (p. 263). Furthermore, surfers consume brands but appear to be less loyal to specific brand names than to the product category alone. The surfing lifestyle does influence one's consumption habits in other product categories for core female surfers as documented in this study.

An identifiable, hierarchical social structure is apparent to some degree in the sport of surfing. However, one's status is based on their commitment to the sport and their surfing ability as opposed to one's surfboard or wetsuit. Similarly, Wheaton (2000) suggests that, "Windsurfing prowess was an essential element of subcultural status. Status in the windsurfing culture was achieved primarily by being a good windsurfer – the better the windsurfer, the higher the subcultural status" (p. 259). She further states that, "In addition to skill and attitude, commitment to the activity was central to attaining subcultural status" (p. 260). Every board has such a unique feel to it, depending on the style a surfer has, his/her physical dimensions, and depending on the surf conditions; will influence which board he/she may ride. One specific board or brand is not suited for all surfers. The water is the best indicator of one's surfing ability and that is essentially where one's identity can be revealed as highlighted in the interviews.

Certain tendencies or rituals are common in the surf culture; however, they are not uniform across groups. Several factors would influence which rituals one may subscribe to such as: preferred surf break, time, equipment, and whether one was surfing alone or in a group setting. One can have several consistencies in their personal routine but that routine can be off set by the presence of other surfers. Therefore, rituals are a part of the surf culture but are not important in designating a women's place in that culture. An

ethos that is shared by the surf culture in Tofino is that it is more welcoming of women and surfers in general. Beach break enables many surfers to get waves; depending on their level of ability will determine where they go to get those waves. A blend of surfing levels is common in the waters surrounding Tofino. It is not uncommon to see groups of beginners in lessons and then to look further out and see distant figures in the line up. These more accomplished surfers rarely cross with inexperienced surfers as ones ability separates them. However, experienced surfers often encourage newcomers in the water providing the rules are known to all. The relaxed nature of Canadians and non-competitive attitude with surfing is all part of our unique experience. The surf culture appeals to individuals in highly unique ways; consequently, a dominant value system was not evident throughout this study. Surfing provides its participants with a unique sense of gratification, thrill, or experience. There may be commonalities between surfers but there is not one common value that is supported over another. They are united in that their passion for surfing is the same.

A similar characteristic that evolved in this study is the transformation of self (deepening of commitment). Schouten and McAlexander (1995) emphasize that surfers "undergo an evolution of motives and a deepening of commitment as they become more involved in the subculture" (p. 55). This study supported this deepening of commitment that extends as surfing becomes part of ones lifestyle. However, the level of commitment is varied across surfers and is dependent on other lifestyle influences. A standard level of commitment cannot be determined as each surfer has conflicting life roles and levels of attachment for the sport. However, to some degree a certain level of commitment is required in order to be actively involved in the sport. This can involve surfing daily,

weekly, bi-monthly, monthly, or semi-annually depending on the importance of the surfing lifestyle in accordance with everything else. Those who integrate surfing into their whole lifestyle, by moving out to places like Tofino are at the highest end of the commitment spectrum.

Recognizing the diffusion process, this study provided further evidence of “subculturally created styles may be shared or imitated by a much larger audience or market peripheral to the core subculture and may even become imitated and commercialized for mass consumption” (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p. 43). However, their research also suggests that “hard-core or high-status members of achieved subcultures function as opinion leaders” (p. 43) as subcultural styles are diffused to a broader group of consumers. Our surf culture is unique in Canada in that our surf uniform is a wetsuit. This item is something functional and will not be commercialized for mainstream consumers. So in Canada, it appears that these subcultural styles arise out of the media, and by marketers, and not so much by this relatively small isolated group of surfers. The diffusion of surf styles is profoundly linked to California as supported by this thesis. However, Booth (2001) does illustrate a point that is worthy of mentioning, “Just as many non-running women wear sport bras, so boardshorts are popular items of fashionable street-wear among girls and young women who don’t identify with surfing culture or aspire to surf” (p. 15). This study supports this notion; however, there is also increasing evidence of the diffusion of surf lifestyle into the mainstream.

The net result, presently women’s surfing combines features of a subculture of consumption and subcultural development and may best be thought of as a ‘commodity-orientated subculture’ (Wheaton, 2000, p. 261) that is driven both by a developing

organic women's surfing subculture (the hard-cores) and by the market activities (product development, women's wear branding, women's-specific retailing) of the major surf brands. Surfing is a 'commodity-orientated subculture' (Wheaton, 2000) in that surfers need to consume products to participate in the sport. These consumption patterns are a means for women surfers to identify with other surfers. It is not uncommon for surfers to congregate together and discuss equipment and surf wear. Sometimes it is for informational purposes, other times for conversational purposes between two surfers who have something in common, the fact that they surf. In wetsuit design alone, certain brands have better fits and designs in their offerings to women. Women surfers are aware of the products that are superior to their needs as they have tried these various technologies. They are also aware of which brands are advanced in their product offerings of women's surf wear through their consumption habits. These products may contribute to a better experience in the water but are no way indicative of one's level of prowess in the surf culture.

The issue of authenticity is often documented in subcultural research of lifestyle sport participants. Wheaton and Beal (2003) reveal that "Authenticity, then is an accumulated social achievement", seen as what constitutes 'real' or genuine membership" (p. 159). In this study authenticity was identified by ones inner connection to surfing and ones level of knowledge and passion for the sport. Authenticity was important irregardless of ones personal affiliation with surfing or position in the surf products industry. This concept defied positioning and seemed to be an understood variable in the surf products/retail industry. Furthermore, the consumption of the right products by core participants is not a means of gaining recognition as an authentic participant.

The consumption of surf products does contribute to their inner sense of identity but does not influence one's status in the subculture. The expansion of product offerings to women and proper wetsuit fit is contributing to more positive experiences in the water. These consumption practices enable one to surf; however, one's commitment to the sport is what differentiates one's placement in the subculture. This commitment to the surf lifestyle extends to be an organizing principle in the maintenance and expression of self-identity.

Surfing in Canada is unique in the sense that crossing over into the subculture involves getting into the water. If you feel like a surfer you are a surfer. The hierarchy isn't so defined. As one progresses as a surfer, one will demonstrate more skill and more ocean knowledge and perhaps will maintain some level of status in her own group of surfers. Outside of that central group that you associate with, there are no pre-defined barriers or boundaries. As one becomes more of a proficient surfer, he or she may become respected across groups of surfers. She may become known and be acknowledged as an amazing surfer. However, while she progresses she still is an authentic participant as long as she surfs. The consumption of surf products is not going to move her any quicker through the subculture itself.

A New Gender Order in Surfing and the Surf Products Marketplace

New lifestyle practices that are outside the norm of traditional educational sporting activities have gained the attention of women who seek involvement in high-risk individualized activity. Rinehart (2005) acknowledges that lifestyle or extreme sports are more appealing to women in that:

Opportunities and access for women may be greater in extreme sports because the sports are mostly individual, because they are relatively new and thus more liable to self-definition, and because the fundamental source of comparison between participants is willingness to risk. (p. 240)

Women have become increasingly involved in lifestyle sports and have especially been a dominant force in snowboarding. More recently, women are increasingly being drawn to surfing. Booth (2001) states "selected evidence suggests the possibility of a new gender order in surfing" (p. 17). It is suggested that in Canada females are more accepted in the water and there is less of a fraternal structure. Further developments that provide further evidence that surfing is becoming more general neutral are changes in media representation of female surfers, women's specific media (print and electronic), and women's-oriented brands and products. This study identified that the changes made in wetsuit technology have contributed to the growth seen in Canadian women's surfing. Canadian women were depicted differently and not in a sexual manner throughout this study. The wetsuit may also be contributing to a new gender order in that the focus remains on surfing ability. Media depictions of our local culture often highlight the uniqueness of our surf scene in Canada, acknowledging how cold the water is and the heartiness of our local surfers. These depictions are predominantly free of gender bias and introduce a new era in women's surfing in which women will gain credibility in the water and are welcomed in the water.

As females are increasingly recognized in the sport marketplace, more opportunities are available to women as buyers, marketers, retailers, brand representatives, and team managers. Women are breaking the mold in the sport

marketplace, challenging stereotypical roles, and are changing the face of this traditionally male-dominated field. Women are persevering in the pro scene and many have made inroads and gained respect in the big wave scene, which have been deemed 'a testosterone pit' by many professional women surfers. Meanwhile, female surfers are turning into savvy entrepreneurs worldwide with the development of surf schools and surf businesses. The sacrifices of female surfers who first experienced the sport when it wasn't as accepting to women are paving the way for the next generation. It is apparent that not only in surfing is there a changed gender order, but other developments indicate increased acceptance of women as professionals and entrepreneurs.

CHAPTER VI – INSIDER ROLE

The methodology for this study included interviewing women surfers, surf brand retailers, and Canadian surf brand representatives. By interacting with these three groups I was able to gain an understanding of the women's surf scene and the surf wear industry from three interrelated yet unique perspectives. Upon completion of my interviews, two personal experiences enabled me to gain a further understanding of women's surfing and the surf brand industry through my experiences in retail and as an active participant. Serendipitously, a retailer that I had interviewed for my study approached me regarding potential employment at the retail level in a core skate snow surf store that catered to both male and female customers. Following my first exposure to Canadian surfing at a women's specific surf camp I began my employment in retail. These combined experiences gave me increased exposure to the culture, the participants, and the mainstream consumers. Since I had already completed my interviews these developments helped enhance my study without hindering its original design.

Throughout the course of my employment I gained insider knowledge in the surf industry and eventually this led to buying product for the women's section of the store. As a women's soft goods buyer, I oversaw the purchases for the women's store. This gave me another window into the surf products market and this experience further highlighted the cyclic nature of the industry where consumer feedback and consumer brand awareness are at the forefront of the design process. This industry is highly interdependent and there is an apparent cycle of communication between consumers, retailers, surf brand representatives, and surfers themselves. The surf brand representatives, in effect, utilize the buyers for consumer feedback. The buyers are not

only responsible for the purchase and display of the product, but they essentially are the ones selling the product in the store and keeping track of demographics, demand, and profitability of brands. A relationship between the surf brand representatives and buyers is mutually beneficial to the brand and to the store. The Canadian surf brand representatives, in turn, report their findings to the surf brand manufacturers and these considerations are often reflected in the design process.

As identified in my research, the idea of authenticity seems to be a growing concern in the surf industry. How can one capitalize on the explosion of surf culture and target the masses without alienating those that are core to the sport? A few predominant trends were visible in my experiences that support the desire of companies to maintain an authentic image. Brands often utilize real surfers in their ad campaigns, and stay true to their surf roots and the brands image. Although, each brand is influenced by current fashion trends, their image remains intact. Meanwhile, retailers carry authentic surf brands and hire employees that are avid lifestyle sport enthusiasts. It seems that in order to maintain authenticity, it has to be developed at each level. Surfers seemed more critical of brands that are not core surf brands. The mainstream consumer who isn't as educated is content wearing any surf brand. However, there is also evidence of brand loyalty amongst the more educated consumers, and this extends to those who are not active participants in the sport but who support the brand's image. This loyalty is increasingly common amongst pre-teens and teens and often fluctuates seasonally for female consumers based on the current designs and trends. The mature surf participant is more interested in supporting local brands or brands that have a deep connection to surfing. Core women surfers repeatedly purchased their surf products and surf fashions

from my place of employment. It was important to them that we had a large selection of women's wetsuits, surf accessories, and surf boards. Furthermore, core stores usually have a fleet of wetsuit rentals that enable the retailer to promote the sport of surfing to consumers in an inexpensive manner. By developing a relationship with a potential surfer, a retailer is securing a sale with that consumer, once he/she gets the surf stoke and eventually invests in surf products.

In an increasingly saturated marketplace it has become more important for retailers to answer the question, 'What is going to make us stand out'? You have to consciously make an effort to have an image for your store and whether it is through variety, product, or customer service you have to be able to answer what is going to make you different from somebody else. The store's identity and image must relate to the consumer base they desire to attract.

My experience as an active participant in the industry has lead to an increased understanding of the female consumer and knowledge of market trends. These experiences support the increased representation of women in surfing and in the surf industry. The surf brands representatives that I came in contact with in my position were all predominantly female. Interestingly, the two male surf brand representatives interviewed for my study have since been replaced by females. This supports the importance of having females interact with females in regards to buying decisions. Furthermore, a growth in the number of female employees was evident as was their importance in dealing with female customers. The importance of employing active participants was further supported by my own experiences as a surf participant. I can attest that women-specific wetsuits are highly linked to one's experience in the water.

Being warm and comfortable in the water has enabled me to focus on my surfing and to stay in the water for extended periods of time. Core retailers educate their employees on proper wetsuit fit and available products so that the consumer will be supplied with available information in order to make a well-informed purchase decision.

The crossover of the board sport industry was important to my place of employment. One poor winter season meant the sale of more surf boards and winter wetsuits than snowboards. However, the appearance of snow caused some surfers to gravitate towards the mountains. Meanwhile, many changes are occurring in regards to product offerings in the surf skate snow industry. Women are demanding more technical outerwear in the snow industry. Consumers are becoming more educated and are demanding more waterproofing, lighter fabrics, and more features. The surf skate snow market is becoming more fashion-oriented with less visible logos, and more color, embellishments, and patterns. Fits are becoming more tailored. The board sport industry is borrowing from high fashion trends and adding their own unique twist to them. The board sports market is no longer exclusive to board sport enthusiasts, and many snowboarders are moving away from loose fits and the gangster image to more of an overall stream-lined look. These looks are just as popular in urban areas as they are on the mountains. Meanwhile, surf brands are staying connected to the beach lifestyle while staying on top of market changes. Skate brands are exploding their product offerings to women. They are really changing the look and image of skateboarding. Skate brands are becoming more popular amongst females and skateboarding is increasing its visibility amongst females.

In order to maintain market share in an increasingly cluttered marketplace, surf brands are creating a clear and defined image unique among their competitors. The brands marketers interviewed in this study were all aware of their own and their competitors strengths and weaknesses and their standing in the sport marketplace. Through the creation of a brand image, brands gain credibility in a product category and this image is further strengthened by marketing, the retail environment, the consumer, and through media. A common theme in the interviews was the importance of creating an image consistent with the identity of the brand. The importance of being youth driven, a leader in product research and development, and having a world class team to support and promote the brand were identified as key factors in maintaining a consistent brand image.

Brand awareness is further achieved by surf brands that sponsor surf camps, organize surfing competitions, and become involved in grass roots level programs thereby strengthening the image of the brand. Quiksilver became actively involved in our local surf scene by sponsoring the summer surf jam in Tofino. More recently, other brands have started to organize surf, skate, and snow competitions locally. Quiksilver is no longer the sole supporter of local surf competitions. As one can expect, other brands have organized events here locally in the past few years.

Although this thesis illustrated that there are few opportunities for Canadian women surfers, globally women are making some advances. At the brand level, surf brands have positively influenced the growth of women's surfing by providing sponsorships and increased opportunities for female surfers. Brand marketers are committed to fostering female involvement in action sports as exemplified in their

marketing techniques and product offerings. By providing female athletes with free product, contest entrance money, supporting travel costs, and/or organizing women's contests the needs of female surfers are increasingly being met and allowing women to progress in the sport.

The interaction between team riders and brand marketers has been integral to the design of clothing and accessories. Innovations in product development have enabled women surfers to be more comfortable in the water by having functional, fashionable, quality apparel to wear while practicing the sport. Other brands have utilized an athlete's name as the model name for increased brand strength in the product category. This practice is common in skate shoe lines and within the snowboard industry. Pro models are particularly popular amongst male youth who identify the product as being superior, to others based on the athlete's representation.

Another common occurrence in the surf industry is utilizing sponsored athletes as models in advertising campaigns, e.g. print ads. The surf industry demands authenticity and an athlete can generate more hype in a product category in comparison to a fashion model. Female surfers are increasingly portrayed in print ads in magazines and on hang tags attached to surf clothing. More female surfers are being portrayed in action shots. Many brands are also utilizing surfing media to expose their sponsored athletes and promote the brand. More women's-only surf movies are being released and women are gaining more exposure in skate and snow videos that predominantly feature male athletes.

CHAPTER VII - CONCLUSIONS

This new era of surfing has changed the perception of women surfers worldwide. Women are making advances globally and more recently, women have persevered on the pro scene and have made in-roads on the big wave scene challenging the gender order in surfing. Canadian women have emerged onto the scene and Tofino, British Columbia shows evidence of being a thriving surf community. Even though Canadian surfers endure harsh conditions, females are increasingly drawn to our local waters and are gaining acceptance as surfers.

By utilizing ethnographic methods this study has provided an improved understanding of the women's surfing subculture in Western Canada, and the factors that fueled the growth of the industry. This study identified eight factors as contributors to the growth of women's surfing, specifically in BC. These factors include: changes in wetsuit technology, crossover appeal from skateboarding and snowboarding, California's influence, increased demand for women's surf wear and surf fashions, the growth of competitive surfing in BC, increased media exposure of Canadian women's surfing, development of Canadian surf businesses, and women's increased comfort with the identity of 'being a surfer'.

Few studies have analyzed women's surfing lifestyles generally, and there is no evidence of any investigations that have looked at surfing as an activity of consumption in a consumer society which is influenced by brand marketing. As such, this thesis has expanded the ways that we can study sport subcultures. Canadian women's surfing combines features of a subculture of consumption and may best be thought of as a 'commodity-orientated subculture' (Wheaton, 2000, p. 261) that is driven both by a

developing organic women's surfing subculture (the hard-cores) and by the market activities (product development, women's wear branding, women's-specific retailing) of the major surf brands.

In addition to providing a new research perspective, this study provides a Canadian perspective on what is a growing global phenomenon, women's surfing. The method of interviewing three populations proved to be a useful way to gain insights into how each contributes to the overall development of surfing as a popular cultural form and set of practices.

7.1 Opportunities for Future Research

The future of the sport of surfing in Canada and globally is relatively unknown. This opens the question, what is the next step in surfing evolution? Improved technologies in board and watercraft design and in weather forecasting have pushed surfing to new levels, where tow-ins are commonplace and the search is for the biggest wave. Will Canada gain credibility worldwide as a surfing destination? Will the town of Tofino suffer the same loss when fishing industries were on the wane or will surfing continue to be the main economic contributor for this coastal community?

There is evidence that surfing is becoming more gender neutral, however, future research with both Canadian male and female surfers at different surfing locations on the West Coast of Canada, could help to create a better understanding of our own social structure of gender relationships.

The focus of this study was to analyze the relationship between women's surf culture in Western Canada and the marketing activities of the Canadian surf wear

industry. The research design did not focus on integration into the surf culture. The interviews helped identify factors that have contributed to a growth of women's surfing. Through my own personal experiences and those conversations, our surf culture does exhibit a level of acceptance that seems to be unique to our own culture. All the interviewees were committed participants, however, two participants lived in Tofino, and the other three lived in the Vancouver area. Perhaps conversations with more women who reside in Tofino would provide an increased understanding of our local surf community. However, this research would focus on the lifestyles of a small portion of women surfers in total. It would be specific to Tofino women surfers, and would not represent the women's surf population in Western Canada. Therefore, I would recommend a comparative study with other surf populations to gain a better understanding of the range of experiences and groups.

Furthermore, the age of female surfers on Canada's west coast seems to be older than other surfing destinations. However, recent Canadian surfing competitions had more young girls participate. An in-depth examination of BC surf culture would provide an increased understanding of these trends. Interviews with younger surfers in particular could yield interesting results, in regards to their consumption habits and their use of surf style as a means of demonstrating their surfing identity.

This past summer (2006) the East Coast of Canada opened its first women-owned and operated surf school called "One Life Surf" illustrating that the increased presence of women in the water has infiltrated both coastlines. A comparative study between these two surf locales would provide an increased understanding of Canadian surf culture, and the penetration of the surf products industry nationwide.

Although, the interviewees had an understanding of the female teen and pre-teen consumer and several themes were identified in the analysis, a further examination of this target group would prove beneficial to surf brand marketers and retailers. The Canadian surf brand representatives interviewed in this study demonstrated a high level of knowledge in regards to their brand marketing strategies. However, each core brand employs a marketing team that works on the brand's image and strategy, and interviews with these representatives at the brands headquarters would provide a more thorough understanding of their strategies in gaining and retaining the younger female consumer.

Additionally, further research in the form of focus groups with female consumers of surf wear could potentially provide a better understanding of their consumption habits and purchase motivations. It could also help identify the surf media they are drawn to, what marketing techniques they can relate to, and what brands they are increasingly loyal to. Wheaton and Beal (2003) utilized audience research in their analysis of UK windsurfers and US skateboarders, and focused on "examining the meanings that the niche magazines have for the participants of those alternative sports in the construction of their identities" (p.155). Their research suggests that "magazines played an important role in providing and circulating cultural knowledges [sic], but also were an avenue for the participants to display their subcultural capital" (p. 155). There are numerous opportunities for future research with female participants and/or female consumers of surf media. This research would be beneficial to advertisers who craft their pitches specifically to reach this demographic, and to see the effectiveness of the current messages and images.

As surfing becomes more open to women and females become more involved in the professional circuit the future of women's professional surfing still remains uncertain. Will women's professional surfing become an equal match to men's? Will the sport of surfing and its identity be continually strengthened and will women's surfing continue to grow outside of the box that it is conditionally kept in? The answers to these questions as yet remain unclear.

The surf industry seems to be entering a nostalgic phase in which surfing pioneers are being acknowledged for developing the sport. The surf videos being released are also addressing this trend through the release of biographic features and memoirs of surfing greats. A further trend is that surfers are actively supporting local Surfrider Foundation chapters. Most recently, west coast chapters in Canada have organized events to clean up local surfing environments. People are starting to acknowledge the environmental impact and are trying to be proactive in their efforts to keep the waters clean and safe. Meanwhile, surf brand marketers are releasing products that donate a percentage of the sale of the product to Surfrider Foundation. What has fueled this nostalgic phase in surfing, and is this a result of trends seen in the consumer market generally where products are increasingly being developed that raise awareness and offer support to social causes?

7.2 Study Limitations

At the time of recruitment I had no inside knowledge of the industry and its participants. I was not an active member of the Tofino surf scene. I was aware of a women's-specific surf school but had no other contact information. The group that

proved to be most difficult to reach was the surfers as I was not one myself and had to gain access to this group. I incorporated participant observation and several trips to Vancouver Island in order to make connections with this group. As an outsider, these interactions proved more trying to form.

The recruitment of retailers proved to be the easiest group to coordinate interviews with as they had a fixed address and they were easier to locate. All in all, the response rate was extremely positive and the desired sample was interviewed for my study. A few interviewees were quite helpful in pointing out other areas that may be interesting. With persistence I was able to develop relations with three unique groups that gave voice to the surf scene and surf wear industry in Canada.

A goal of this research was to gain an understanding of the women's surfing subculture in Western Canada in addition to the marketing activities of the Canadian surf wear industry. Therefore, this study represents a profile of Western Canadian women surfers but does not reflect the opinions of all core members. As suggested, further research with this population would provide an in-depth understanding of the structure of the Canadian surfing subculture. Furthermore, all the surfers interviewed in the study were in their mid 20s to late 20s, perhaps conversations with other generations would have yielded different responses. Younger girls were seen in the water however, this sample was not represented in this research.

Interestingly, female surfers expressed how important it is for me to try surfing. They insisted that "you don't want to be a kook or a poser". Prior to acquiring an interview with a core surfer she enlisted me in surf lessons at her surf school. This demonstrated the importance of being a surfer and not just a researcher. Once she knew I

was interested in learning to surf, she introduced me to other surf instructors and accepted my role as a researcher. This demonstrated some of the unique tendencies in the surfing subculture. A lack of a defined participant role was an early limitation in the recruitment of surfers. Acceptance into the surf culture required just getting into the water. Many of the brand representatives and retailers did not share the same opinion as not all were core members of the surfing subculture. However, they all shared the same passion for surfing and the surf lifestyle.

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Appendix I

Appendix II

Appendix III

Appendix IV

Interview Questions: Surf School Owner

1) History/Background Information:

- a) How long have you been involved in the sport of surfing?
- b) How long has (surf school name) been in operation?
- c) Where did the idea to open an all women's surf school originate?
- d) Why an all women surf school? Was there a demand for a women's specific surf school at the time of (surf school name)'s inception?
- e) What is (surf school name)'s mission? How successful has (surf school name) been at maintaining or reaching this goal?

2) Target Market:

- a) What is your primary target market?
- b) Who attends (surf school name)'s lessons? Where do your clients come from?
- c) Do you think that surfing is appealing to teens and pre-teens? How important is the so-called Generation Y to the success of your business?

3) Marketing:

- a) What marketing techniques does (surf school name) utilize to promote its school? (word of mouth, advertising, promotions, events)
- b) Is the Internet an important tool used in the promotion of (surf school name)? Explain.

4) Participation:

- a) There is a perception that more women are surfing these days. Since the inception of (surf school name) have you noticed a growth in the support and number of women surfing?
- b) What do you think propelled the surf industry to where it is today? What is causing this increased attraction to the sport?
- c) How has the increased popularity of women's surfing affected the number of participants enrolled in lessons with (surf school name)?
- d) Do you think women's surfing is here to stay? How do we know? What are the signs?
- e) Do you think the recent popularity of women's surfing is due to marketing and/or media coverage or a result of an increased number of females trying out the sport and getting in the water?

5) Appeal:

- a) Do you think a girls-only environment is important to your clientele? Do participants feel more comfortable being taught by females and learning to surf with women in the group only? Why? Explain.
- b) What initially attracted you to the surf lifestyle? (E.g. environment, freedom, risk, lifestyle, intensity)
- c) What do you think attracts young girls and women to surfing? Why? Explain.

- d) Do you think the surf scene in Canada is different from other geographical locations? What attracts females to surfing in Canada?
- e) Do you believe there is crossover between surfing and the other board sports (E.g. snowboarding, skateboarding and wakeboarding)? Have these sports helped stimulate the surf industry?

6) Identity:

- a) Do you think being a surfer is part of your identity? How? Does it influence your purchase decisions? (E.g. music, clothes, cars) Does it affect what activities you do? Does being a surfer play a role in the formation of your attitude?
- b) Do you wear surf branded clothes to identify yourself as a surfer?
- c) Do you think non-surfers use surf style as a means of adopting surfing identity? How? Explain.
- d) Do you think particular people use/wear different brands based on their identity? To what effect? Explain.

7) Surf Culture:

- a) Do you think that surfers are a distinct group? Are surfers different in some way? How are surfers different?
- b) Where do women fit into this picture?
- c) Do you consider yourself to be an insider in the local surf scene?
- d) How do you become accepted as a member of this culture?
 - o E.g. commitment, beach credibility, equipment, style

8) Surfing in Canada:

- a) Are there many opportunities for female surfers to advance or get recognized in Canada?
 - o E.g. competitions, sponsorships, promotions

9) Blue Crush:

- a) Do you think Blue Crush accurately portrayed the sport of women's surfing?
- b) What do you think the release of Blue Crush last August did to women's surfing? Increased participation? Increased appeal? Increased support? Who benefited?
- c) Do you think the release of Blue Crush increased the demand for surf wear and surf-themed products among young girls and women in general?

10) Surf Wear Industry:

- a) The surf wear industry has grown in the past few years. What do you believe contributed to the increased popularity of women's surf wear?
- b) Do you think this growth will continue in the years to come? Is this a short-term trend or a long-term change in the surf wear industry?
- c) The surf wear industry has expanded their development of women-oriented products. Do you think these products make women more

comfortable with the identity of “being a surfer”? How? What has been the impact of these products on women’s surfing?

- d) What do ‘real’ surfers think about the emergence of surf brands and surf wear into the mainstream?

11) Surf Brands:

- a) Are you loyal to any specific surf wear brands? Which ones? Why? What do these brands mean to you?
- b) Do you think certain surf brands have a particular personality?
- c) What surf brands have gained popularity as a whole?
- d) Do you think the surf wear market is becoming too saturated?

12) Brand Marketing:

- a) How are these surf brands being marketed? Promoted? What kind of marketing techniques do you support in order to raise surf brand awareness?
- b) Who do you think surf brand marketers are mainly trying to target?
- c) Has your perception of a surf brand changed due to its marketing efforts? Any examples?

Interview Questions: Surfers

1) History/Background Information:

- a) How long have you been involved in the sport of surfing?
- b) Where did you first experience the sport? Have you been an avid surfer since that first experience on the board?
- c) Do you surf year round? How important is being able to surf to your lifestyle? Does being able to surf impact the decisions you make with regard to work, travel, living and activities you partake in socially?

2) Participation:

- a) There is a perception that more women are surfing these days. Since you began surfing have you noticed a growth in the support and number of women surfing?
- b) What do you think propelled the surf industry to where it is today? What is causing this increased attraction to the sport?
- c) Do you think women’s surfing is here to stay? How do we know? What are the signs?
- d) Do you think the recent popularity of women’s surfing is due to marketing and/or media coverage or a result of an increased number of females trying out the sport and getting in the water?

3) Appeal:

- a)** What initially attracted you to the surf lifestyle? (E.g. environment, freedom, risk, lifestyle, intensity)
- b)** What do you think attracts young girls and women to surfing?
- c)** Do you think the surf scene in Canada is different from other geographical locations? What attracts females to surfing in Canada?
- d)** Do you believe there is crossover between surfing and the other board sports (E.g. snowboarding, skateboarding and wakeboarding)? Have these sports helped stimulate the surf industry?

4) Identity:

- a)** Do you think being a surfer is part of your identity? How? Does it influence your purchase decisions? (E.g. music, clothes, cars) Does it affect what activities you do? Does being a surfer play a role in the formation of your attitude?
- b)** Do you wear surf branded clothes to identify yourself as a surfer?
- c)** Do you think non-surfers use surf style as a means of adopting surfing identity? How? Explain.
- d)** Do you think particular people use/wear different brands based on their identity? To what effect? Explain.

5) Surf Culture:

- a)** Do you think that surfers are a distinct group? Are surfers different in some way? How are surfers different?
- b)** Where do women fit into this picture?
- c)** Do you consider yourself to be an insider in the local surf scene?
- d)** How do you become accepted as a member of this culture?
 - E.g. commitment, beach credibility, equipment, style

6) Surfing in Canada:

- a)** Are there many opportunities for female surfers to advance or get recognized in Canada?
 - E.g. competitions, sponsorships, promotions

7) Blue Crush:

- a)** Do you think Blue Crush accurately portrayed the sport of women's surfing?
- b)** What do you think the release of Blue Crush last August did to women's surfing? Increased participation? Increased appeal? Increased support? Who benefited?
- c)** Do you think the release of Blue Crush increased the demand for surf wear and surf-themed products among young girls and women in general?

8) Surf Wear Industry:

- a) The surf wear industry has grown in the past few years. What do you think contributed to the increased popularity of women's surf wear?
- b) Do you think this growth will continue in the years to come? Is this a short-term trend or a long-term change in the surf wear industry?
- c) The surf wear industry has expanded their development of women-oriented products. Do you think these products make women more comfortable with the identity of "being a surfer"? How? What has been the impact of these products on women's surfing?
- d) What do 'real' surfers think about the emergence of surf brands and surf wear into the mainstream?

9) Surf Brands:

- a) Are you loyal to any specific surf wear brands? Which ones? Why? What do these brands mean to you?
- b) Do you think certain surf brands have a particular personality?
- c) What surf brands have gained popularity as a whole?
- d) Do you think the surf wear market is becoming too saturated?

10) Brand Marketing

- a) How are these surf brands being marketed? Promoted? What kind of marketing techniques do you support in order to raise brand awareness?
- b) Who do you think surf brand marketers are mainly trying to target?
- c) Has your perception of a surf brand changed due to its marketing efforts? Any examples?

Interview Questions: Retailers**1) History/Background Information:**

- a) How long has (store name) been in operation?
- b) Have you always carried surf merchandise at your store? If not, when did you decide to start carrying surf merchandise? What motivated you to explore the surf products market?
- c) Have you expanded the lines your store carries over the years to reach the female consumer? What motivated you to further explore this market?
- d) How do you decide what to order and what brands your store will carry?

2) Target Market:

- a) Who is your primary consumer of surf-related merchandise?
- b) Do you think the surf wear industry targets teens and pre-teens? How important is the so-called Generation Y to (store name) in particular?
- c) How important is the female consumer to the overall success of (store name)?

- d) Since (store name) has been in operation have you noticed a change in the demographics (age, gender) of your main consumers? What can be attributed to this varied clientele?

3) Participation:

- a) There is a perception that more women are surfing these days. Since you have been in the retail industry have you noticed a growth in the support and number of women surfing?
- b) What do you think propelled the surf industry to where it is today? What is causing this increased attraction to the sport?
- c) Do you think women's surfing is here to stay? How do we know? What are the signs?
- d) How much of an influence has marketing had on the increased popularity of women's surfing and the demand for surf-related products?
- e) In general terms, how has the increased popularity of women's surfing affected your sales at (store name)?

4) Appeal:

- a) What do you believe attracts young girls and women to surfing?
- b) What appeals non-surfers to the surf lifestyle and hence surf style?
- c) Where does this fascination with the surf lifestyle originate?
- d) Do you believe that the surf lifestyle has crossed over to the mainstream? Why does surfing have such a strong mainstream presence?
- e) Do you believe there is crossover between surfing and the other board sports (E.g. snowboarding, skateboarding and wakeboarding)? Have these sports helped stimulate the surf industry?

5) Identity

- a) Do you think non-surfers use surf style as a means of adopting surfing identity? How? Explain.
- b) Do you think particular people use/wear different brands based on their identity? To what effect? Explain.

6) Surf Wear Industry:

- a) Do you believe the surf lifestyle has spawned a fashion trend?
- b) The surf wear industry has seen dramatic growth in the past few years. What do you think contributed to the increased popularity of women's surf wear?
- c) Do surf fashions have staying power in the long run? Do you see the surf wear industry gaining momentum in the years to come? Is this a short-term trend or a long-term change in the surf wear industry?
- d) The surf wear industry has expanded their development of women-oriented products. Do you think these products make women more comfortable with the identity of "being a surfer"? How? What has been the impact of these products on women's surfing and the surf wear industry?

- e) What percentage of your customer base would you classify as actual surfers? How important are the core surfers to the success of (store name)?

7) Surfing in Canada:

- a) Do you think the surf scene in Canada is different from other geographical locations? What attracts females to surfing in Canada?
- b) How does the surf wear industry differ in Canada compared to other parts of the world?
- c) What is the biggest influence on the Canadian surf wear industry?
- d) Do you know of any women's only surf schools in Canada? How did you hear about this surf school?

8) Surf Brand:

- a) Do you believe that branding has driven the fashions?
- b) Which surf brands are the most popular among young girls and women?
- c) Why do you think (brand name) has captured the female teen and pre-teen market so well?

9) Marketing:

- a) Does your company do market research? How do you decide which items your store will carry each season?
- b) Where do surf trends originate? Who are the trend setters?
- c) What marketing techniques do you consider to be most effective by marketers in raising brand awareness in the surf industry?

10) Blue Crush:

- a) Several articles published in the Vancouver Sun following the release of Blue Crush indicated that retailers in the Lower Mainland were cashing in on the magnetism of the surf culture and its explosive effect on beachwear in general? Is this accurate? Did you notice increased sales as a result of this film's release?
- b) In the film Blue Crush, the surf brand Billabong was the film's surf wear promotional partner? Did you notice an increased demand for this brand following the film's release?

Canadian Brand Manufacturing Representatives: Interview Questions

1) History/Background Information:

- a) How long has (brand name) been around? When was it founded? What is the brand's history?
- b) Is (brand name) a global brand? How many countries have dealers selling your brand?
- c) Has your brand expanded as a result of the increased support and popularity of women's surfing?
- d) What is (brand name)'s mission as a brand in the surf wear industry?

2) Target Market:

- a) Who is the main target for your brand?
- b) Do you think the surf wear industry targets teens and pre-teens? How important is the so-called Generation Y to (brand name) in particular?
- c) How important is the female consumer to the overall success of your brand?

3) Participation:

- a) There is a perception that more women are surfing these days. Since you have been in the surf wear industry have you noticed a growth in the support and number of women surfing?
- b) What do you think propelled the surf industry to where it is today? What is causing this increased attraction to the sport?
- c) Do you think women's surfing is here to stay? How do we know? What are the signs?
- d) How much of an influence has marketing been on the increased popularity of surfing and the demand for surf-related products?

4) Appeal:

- a) What do you believe attracts young girls and women to surfing?
- b) What appeals consumers to the surf wear industry?
- c) Where does this fascination with the surf lifestyle originate?
- d) Do you believe that the surf lifestyle has crossed over to the mainstream? Why does surfing have such a strong mainstream presence?
- e) Do you believe there is crossover between surfing and the other board sports (E.g. snowboarding, skateboarding and wakeboarding)? Have these sports helped stimulate the surf industry?

5) Identity:

- a) Do you think non-surfers use surf style as a means of adopting surfing identity? How? Explain.
- b) Do you think particular people use/wear different brands based on their identity? To what effect? Explain.

6) Surf Culture:

- a) Do you think that surfers are a distinct group? Are surfers different in some way? How are they different?
- b) Where do women fit into this picture?
- c) How do you become accepted as a member of this culture?
 - o E.g. commitment, beach credibility, equipment, style

7) Surf Wear Industry:

- a) Do you believe the surf lifestyle has spawned a fashion trend?
- b) The surf wear industry has seen dramatic growth in the past few years. What do you think contributed to the increased popularity of women's surf wear?

- c) Do you see the surf wear industry gaining momentum in the years to come? Is this a short-term trend or a long-term change in the surf wear industry?
- d) The surf wear industry has expanded their development of women-oriented products. Do you think these products make women more comfortable with the identity of "being a surfer"? How? What has been the impact of these products on women's surfing?
- e) How strong is the surf wear industry in Canada? Is it on the upswing?
- f) How important are the core surfers to the success of your brand?

8) Surf Brand:

- a) How do you distinguish yourself from the competition?
- b) Do you have a specific personality for your brand? What kind of image are you trying to embody?
- c) How have you positioned your brand in the market?

9) Marketing:

- a) What marketing techniques do you utilize to promote your brand?
- b) There is a perception that in order to reach the worldly wise so-called Generation Y, marketers need to craft products and pitches that are more realistic. Have you changed your marketing strategy to capture this generation's attention? How does (brand name) communicate to youth culture?
- c) There is a perception that the Internet is the medium of choice amongst Generation Y for entertainment, communication, and product research? How important is the Internet in your marketing strategy?
- d) Furthermore, there is a perception that women are becoming increasingly important in the sport marketplace. It is suggested that companies seeking to target and reach the female consumer must change the way they communicate to them. How do you communicate to women?
 - o E.g. change the tone in which you speak to women
- e) How important are celebrity athletes to your marketing strategy? Do you sponsor athletes? How many of them are female?
- f) Do you do market research? What are the main considerations you put into product development?
- g) Where do the surf wear trends originate? Who are the trend setters?

10) Blue Crush:

- a) Do you think Blue Crush accurately portrayed the sport of women's surfing?
- b) What did the release of Blue Crush last August do to women's surfing? Increased participation? Increased appeal? Increased support? Who benefited?
- c) Do you think the release of Blue Crush increased the demand for surf wear and surf themed products among young girls and women in general?