

Surfing the wave of live streaming:

A study of New Zealand surfing viewership

By

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Abstract

Through a study of surfing as a second-tier sport in New Zealand which only sporadically enjoys mainstream broadcast coverage, this thesis examines how New Zealand surfing fans are increasingly adopting live streaming as a favourable mode of viewing live surfing content. The World Surf League has enabled this to occur via the live streaming of off-shore surfing events which are freely available on Facebook Live, the World Surf League website and the World Surf League mobile application. The study provides an analysis into the increasing popularity of live streamed surfing content, especially among New Zealand's younger surfing demographic. While the live streaming of surfing has been expanding surfing's social and sports spaces in New Zealand, an element of resistance and territorial attitudes are still evident, especially amongst older, recreational surfers. Despite the alternate nature of this delivery system aligning with ideals traditionally held within the sport of a rejection of the mainstream, there is a lingering reluctance to embrace all that comes with this mediated sport content. By drawing on the findings collated from an online questionnaire with surfing fans throughout New Zealand and personal interviews I conducted with key sports media professionals, the dynamic nature of changes within New Zealand surfing's mediated sport space is examined.

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Chapter One - Introduction

Introduction to this thesis

This thesis examines how New Zealand surfing fans view surfing content via live streaming and draws on spatial theory to examine the way this form of mediation interacts with this culturally unique and dynamic sports space. This use of spatial theory which includes sports space, social space and mediated sports space theory provides a theoretical framework from which to analyse how surfing operates within its own unique sports spaces. I have addressed how the mediation of surfing as a second-tier sport in New Zealand engages with a sometimes disparate community, many of whom take pride in the alternative nature of their sport and relish their absence from New Zealand's mainstream sports space. A case study approach is employed to explore how a self-styled alternative sport, which in New Zealand, is only sporadically mediated in the mainstream, targets and engages its fan base. Increasingly this is achieved through the live streaming of surf events viewed through the World Surf League website and social media platform Facebook Live. The viewership of surfing through Facebook Live has been utilised particularly by younger generations in New Zealand's surfing community who are increasing both their participation in and viewership of the sport. To substantiate this study, I created an anonymous online thesis questionnaire via the platform Qualtrics, to gather data from New Zealand's surfing fan base.

My interest in this topic

My personal interest with surfing dates back to my first ever surf lesson, received as a Christmas gift from my grandfather who is a proud Whangamata local. Whangamata is a well-known surfing beach on the eastern side of the Coromandel Peninsula in New Zealand's North Island and is famed for its left-hand beach break. I spent a considerable amount of my youth at Whangamata and would frequently battle the Whangamata surf with my brother, a fellow surfer. We would often compete against each other trying to ride the perfect wave,

which further enriched our passion for the sport. For me, surfing has become part of who I am and provides a great way to seek enjoyment and escape from everyday life. It will continue to inspire me in the future.

My interest in surfing extends beyond the simple physical enjoyment of the sport however. Whangamata is a town with a significant surfing culture, aided in recent years by the accomplishments of local surfer and former World Junior Champion Ella Williams. Growing up in this culturally specific sport space has given me the ability to understand the dynamics of a sport which is often torn between wanting more recognition but also jealously protecting its territory from 'outsiders'. This tendency to territorialise specific beaches, and even sections of beaches, is something I have personally witnessed while surfing the Whangamata Bar. The Whangamata Bar is a dynamic sports space where there are unspoken rules and a protective mentality which can sometimes be confrontational. Many other surf beaches around New Zealand, such as Taranaki's 'surf highway' are the same and are 'protected' by the hardy locals who surf those beaches all year round. Unlike mainstream sports codes with specialised playing facilities, surfing's stadia are beaches and rocky coastline where the best surf breaks, or perfect wave formations can be jealously guarded secrets.

Living in a country where the sport I love is infrequently promoted and broadcast via mainstream sports media, I have a strong interest in the increasing amount of local and international surfing content available by way of live streaming. Having personally live streamed productions from the World Surf League (W.S.L.), I have gained a first-hand understanding on how live streaming is influencing surfing's sports space as well as its engagement with its extensive global fanbase. Another point of interest for me was the scheduled World Surf League's Corona Piha Pro, which was set to be a significant breakthrough event for New Zealand surfing. While this event was postponed due to COVID-19, its implications and wider significance for the sport domestically, makes this event worthy of further study. The Corona Piha Pro and my initial intention to focus on this event, is covered in further detail later in this thesis.

The sports space that has evolved at Whangamata, particularly at the Whangamata Bar, is for me of high interest, as through this observation I have been able to witness the uniqueness and the culturally specific nature of surfing in New Zealand. Here, the most dedicated surfers can be seen in action with this surfing spot representing a prime example of the regionalised surf culture that exists in New Zealand. Socialisation among local surfers is apparent and is often accompanied by territorialism. I personally find it interesting how a surfing location such as the Whangamata Bar can be a sports space which is recreational and social and yet at the same time, exhibits a culturally specific protection mentality.

When learning to surf in Whangamata and having since become part of this unique surf culture and sports space, I have learnt a range of valuable insights. One of the most significant of these has been an understanding of surf etiquette, specifically the physical and unspoken rules which are an essential part of the sport. As I matured I learned to respect and understand these rules during my time surfing at Whangamata and came to understand how surf etiquette has played a critical role in the manner in which people surf and how they interact within surfing's sports space. This is most definitely the case in Whangamata where I have observed first-hand surfing's hierarchical sports space in full force. In addition, surfing at Whangamata has helped me form a deep appreciation of nature. Through this, I have learnt how to engage with the natural surfing environment on a deeper level, aiming to interact within, rather than trying to conquer the ocean.

New Zealand surfing's geographic and historical context

New Zealand's unique coastline has shaped the history and cultural context of surfing.

Surfing's environment is shaped by “ ... complex volcanic and reef-lined coastline ...” (Morse & Brunskill, 2004, p. 5). The special oceanic geography which New Zealand enjoys, and the fact that it is made up of two main islands, has created a surfing environment which is challenging and yet exceptionally rewarding. This surfing landscape has developed a sports space which is culturally unique. Throughout the history of the sport, surfers have been continually searching for new and challenging surf locations. Interestingly, many of these

locations remain unexplored primarily due to their isolated geographical position. This demonstrates the alternate nature of the sport and how surfers have appetite to search for new surfing challengers which are far away from the over populated main surf beaches located close to main centres. According to Morse and Brunskill (2004) “New Zealand is one [of] the last few remaining surf destinations able to offer large, uncrowded water to surfer’s” (p. 5).

Atkin (2019) notes that “... New Zealand’s coastline has a wave climate conducive to surfing ...” (p. 7). The diverse array of breaks on offer has meant there are an abundance of wave styles available for first-timers as well as the most experienced surfers. It offers a safe location for beginners to experience the sport while at the same time appealing to the more experienced surfers who frequently challenge themselves in more aggressive surf. The growth of the sport domestically has become more and more prominent. According to Sport New Zealand’s Active Survey 2019, during the year of 2019, a 14% increase in surfing participation among 18-24 and 35-49 year olds was evident.

Participation levels were also up 11% for those in the 25-34 age range (Brocklesby, 2019). Overtime, as portrayed by the statistics above, surfing’s sports space in New Zealand has grown considerably, both recreationally and as a sport.

The surf lifesaving history of New Zealand is also closely linked to the progression of surfing as a sport and its development as a unique sports space. The rugged coastline and unique nature of some surfing locations in New Zealand often stems from the brutal Antarctic storms and swells originating from the famous latitudes known as ‘The Roaring Forties’. These metrological blasts, and other hazards such as tidal rips, saw the establishment of surf lifesaving clubs at popular swimming beaches in New Zealand. The Piha Surf Lifesaving Club founded at one of Auckland’s rugged west coast beaches, Piha Beach, is one of the most famous and influential beaches in New Zealand’s surfing history. In general, going to the beach in New Zealand has historically been the predominant holiday and recreational destination. New Zealand cultural historian Sandra Coney (2009) has described how Piha “... established a club culture of ruggedness and courage...” (p. 1). Testament to this point is surf lifesavers at locations such as Piha, particularly during the

early stages of surf lifesaving, often had to carry out perilous rescues aiding surfers and swimmers in trouble. In turn, surfers and swimmers feel a greater sense of safety when lifeguards are present.

The close historical relationship between surfing and surf lifesaving was reinforced by the visit of two California lifeguards to New Zealand in 1958. As Levers and Courtney (2017) describe, New Zealand's developing "... surfing craze got a huge shot in the arm when Californian's Bing Copeland and Rick Stoner came to Piha for the summer " (p. 11). Stoner and Copeland stayed at Piha's Surf Lifesaving Club for four months and "... demonstrated surf lifesaving skills as well as modern surfing techniques" (Swarbrick, 2006). Until their arrival, New Zealand surfers and surf lifesavers rode breaking waves into the beach in a straight line. It was uncommon for people to ride across a breaking wave, something Copeland and Stoner demonstrated and encouraged. Copeland and Stoner also provided the local surf scene with a host of other techniques which improved surfing expertise around the country.

The rugged nature of New Zealand's surfing geography has reinforced the alternative and individualistic aspect of the sport. Some of New Zealand's best surfing environments can be found at the most geographically challenging locations where the optimum waves are situated in remote areas. These locations, away from the more established and popular surfing beaches, provide a sense of isolation and challenge that attracts people to the sport and has become embodied in its image. The isolated nature of these waves often means only a small and close-knit surfing group know about the waves existence (Baxter, 2018). The few who have the skill to surf at New Zealand's more isolated beaches are predominantly recreational surfers and they maintain a sustained effort to protect and preserve their favourite surfing location. These surfing areas are usually a tightly guarded secret by some in the surfing community.

New Zealand's more recent surfing history has shared a close relationship with environmental conservation. Many New Zealand surfer's believe that local "... surf breaks

should be protected not only for their value to surfers, but also for the ecosystem services they provide and other benefits for marine conservation” (Scheske et al., 2019, p. 195). As evidenced in chapter six, increasing attention is being paid toward various environmental initiatives, especially those which have been promoted by the World Surf League during the last five years. This is something which the younger generations in New Zealand’s surfing subculture have actively engaged with, sourcing inspiration from the environmental initiatives which are incorporated by the World Surf League during event live streams. The link between surfing and conservation is focused upon in-depth during chapter six.

Mediation of surfing in New Zealand

New Zealand surfing magazines

As with many other adventure sports, internationally surfing receives minimal and sporadic coverage via mainstream media. Despite this, Huybers-Withers and Livingston (2010) describe how a niche-market for alternative sport magazines exists and has in fact seen substantial growth over the past 10 years. The major magazine central to local print media coverage of surfing has been the New Zealand Surfing Magazine, which began publication in 1985 and still publishes today. The objective of this magazine is to provide coverage of regional surfing events, promote local athletes and to profile local surf stories and unique surf locations around the country. These are all accompanied by high quality action photography which has become a hallmark of the magazine. Newton (1975) explained that early adventure surfing magazines made it possible for surfers to see real “... pictures of guys hanging ten which they didn’t know was something you could do on a surf board” (Newton, 1975 as cited in Wheaton and Ormrod, 2009). Nature photography has also become a key feature among the wider genre of adventure sport magazines, including the New Zealand Surfing Magazine. Photographs of nature are regularly included in adventure sports magazines to strengthen the appeal of the magazines issue (Ohara, Yamanaka and

Trencher, 2019). The high quality photography found in these adventure sport magazines in New Zealand offers another reason why people subscribe to these type of publications.

It is relevant to this thesis to understand the demographic who read adventure sport magazines. As Wheaton and Thorpe (2011) describe, those individuals who are interested in adventure sports and its mediated content typically align with a global and youth demographic. With the adventure sports magazine genre often showcasing alternate New Zealand sports such as kayaking, surfing, mountain biking and climbing, a niche audience makes up the core of these magazine's readership. Intriguingly, there are also a number of subscribers to these magazines who do not necessarily participate in the sport that the magazine is aligned to. Instead, readers are often interested in the photography contained in the adventure sport magazine. Bailey (2015) expands on this, describing how it is the outdoor sports action which is captured that makes the adventure photography in these magazines so captivating for readers. While readership of these adventure sports magazines is partially isolated from the mainstream echelon, the audience are exceedingly loyal and supportive of the product. With this in mind, publishers ensure that a high level of photographic content is included to meet the needs of this discerning group of readers.

New Zealand surfing films

The mediation of surfing in New Zealand has also been developed through the small number of local surfing films produced. With New Zealand surfing films or documentaries not typically gaining exposure in mainstream cinemas, these are targeted toward a far more niche audience, being the New Zealand's surfing community. These local surfing films represent New Zealand's surfing subcultural values and lifestyle, which has contributed to the enjoyment and engagement of these media texts by New Zealand surfers. An iconic cult New Zealand surfing film is 'Children of the Sun' which was directed by Andrew McAlpine and released in 1971. Characteristic of New Zealand's subcultural values, especially those held by the founding members of New Zealand's surfing sports space, the film promoted a laid-back era which featured uncomplicated, relaxing sunny days with no crowds (TheSurfNetwork, 2017). This resonated with the recreationalist attitudes held by many New

Zealand surfers during this era and contributed to the films enduring influence and enjoyment by New Zealand surfers.

Since its establishment in 2012, the O'Neill Aotearoa Surf Film Festival has been largely responsible for the production of contemporary New Zealand surfing films. The creation of the O'Neill Aotearoa Surf Film Festival in itself has expanded New Zealand's surfing sports space, offering New Zealand surf fans a new space where they can enjoy the mediation of their sport. As outlined by Grunwell and Ha (2007) local film festivals are "seen as a meeting place between filmmakers, distributors, and viewers, film festivals can be an important factor in enlivening local cultural life ..." (p. 1), which in the case of New Zealand surfing, has invigorated the local surfing subculture's engagement with its sports mediation.

'INTHEOPENAIR' directed by Sam Curtin and New Zealand videographer company Sink or Surface, released in 2020, has been a particularly influential contemporary surfing film. This film "... is an appreciation and celebration of the everyday surfer doing it for the pure enjoyment of the craft" (Sink or Surface, 2020, para. 1) which re-engages with the themes conveyed by the much earlier 'Children of the Sun'. With both films appealing to the individualistic nature of New Zealand's surfing community, this local mediated sports space is intrinsically associated with a recreational orientation. Discussion surrounding surf films and their influence is expanded upon further in chapter five.

Surfing as an adventure sport in New Zealand

For many New Zealanders, surfing is a thrilling adventure sport. The surfing environment provided by New Zealand's unique oceanic geography has created an exciting correlation of surf breaks and exploration opportunities. Belinda Wheaton and Paul Gilchrist (2016) outline how "adventure sports tend to be nature-based and correspond with action sport, the term used by the sports industry ... to describe board sports such as skateboarding, snowboarding and surfing" (p. 4). Adventure sports in New Zealand such as surfing, have crafted individual identities and are uniquely separated from New Zealand's more mainstream sports such as rugby union. The identities of those "sports which have been

labelled as 'extreme' or 'adventure' embody sporting values ... which embody high risk and personal freedom" (Wheaton, 2004, p. 2). While characteristics such as danger or risk might deter some from associating with adventure sports, for others, the very nature of these characteristics stimulates their desire for participation and enjoyment.

Currently, participation in adventure sports like surfing in countries such as Australia and New Zealand, is actually rising with "participation in extreme sports enjoying incredible growth while more traditional recreational activities such as golf are struggling to maintain numbers" (Pain & Pain, 2005 as cited in Brymer, 2010). Not only have adventure sports maintained the core feature of a thrilling experience, they have also increased their appeal to new generations. As a result of this, the mediation of adventure sports such as surfing in New Zealand has also increased. Wheaton and Ormrod (2009) express how adventure sports have seen a further mediation of their overall identities. This mediation can be observed through the increased marketing of adventure sports for instance which have now become featured in tourism campaigns in New Zealand. An example includes the '5X1NZ' adventure sports tourism campaign. In relation to this, adventure sports such as surfing are becoming increasingly multidimensional, reflecting the current climate of New Zealand's progressive sporting landscape. Buckley (2002) supports this articulating how adventure sports have become a significant part of the general international adventure tourism sector.

Surfing within a New Zealand sports broadcasting context

Surfing has always been positioned as a second-tier sport in New Zealand which has been strongly reflected by its minimal coverage in mainstream sports broadcasting. The introduction of pay television has had a substantial impact on sports as a bargaining property for a competitive broadcasting market. Margaret Henley (2004) explains how "During the 1980s the state-owned Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand (BCNZ) consolidated its hold over the major sports in New Zealand, by contractually creating what amounted to a privileged club known as the 'Big Four': rugby union, rugby league, cricket, and netball" (p. 169). This created an uneven playing field and actually consolidated the

second-tier status of minor sport in New Zealand and stifled their ability to reach a more general audience outside of their own fan base. The privileged positions of these four sports was consolidated by the fact that they were "... secured with long-term, renewable contracts that ensured national coverage and, for some, an ongoing income from rights payments" (Henley, 2004 as cited in Horrocks and Perry, 2004).

The 'Big Four' did not have to pay facilities charges, which was part of the sponsorship from the broadcaster and they also received royalty payments. "The royalties that broadcasters earn ... enables them to invest in the costly organisational and technical undertakings involved in broadcasting sports events to its fans" (Kariyawasam and Tsai, 2017). This is in stark contrast to second-tier sports like surfing however which as Gallagher and Gilmore (2012) describe, have to raise their own sponsorship through methods such as strategic fundraising. Understandably, this was difficult for many of these minor sports and they became victim to the 'Big Four's' monopolisation. Today, it still remains a struggle for many second-tier sports to broadcast their respective sport on a mainstream channel. However, the unbundling of rights packages has seen the inclusion of digital delivery which has resulted in live streamed sports companies such as Spark Sport entering into New Zealand's contemporary sports space. This has also allowed social media companies such as Facebook Live to stream minor sports such as surfing to a global audience.

The appeal to a broadcaster is that the Big Four, have historically been able to provide regular weekly competition, as well as specialised national and international tournaments. The powerful influence manifested by these big four sports represents how national and "... premium sports have become such an important commercial asset and not having them can adversely impact a broadcaster or media organization's bottom line ..." (Nicholson et al., 2015, p. 69). Importantly, the Big Four sports offer a predictable season schedule which is vital for television broadcasters, as they are able to provide viewers with continuous sports content which translates to high viewership ratings. Minor sports struggle to deliver the required level of regular competitions or deliver a large enough viewing audience for the economics of sports broadcasting. This results in minor sports expressing lower consumption capital in contrast to the higher potential consumption capital which can be

secured by major sports (Horky, 2020). In addition to this, due to logistical reasons, many minor or adventure sports are expensive and difficult to cover. Farley (2011) explains how surfing competitions for instance, such as the Qualifying Series, feature 42 heats which can be filmed over a seven-day duration with the potential of lay days (where no competition takes place due to poor conditions). These unfavourable characteristics denote minor sports such as surfing and can contain intermittent coverage which is not suited to the economic model typical of mainstream sports broadcasting.

Another significant part of New Zealand's sports broadcasting history was the introduction of Sky Sport during the 1990s. The establishment of Sky TV proved to be hugely instrumental for the progression of New Zealand sports viewership and quickly became the face of sports broadcasting, wresting control away from the free to air broadcaster, Television New Zealand (TVNZ). Sky started to forcibly construct their enterprise during the 1990's built around Rupert Murdoch's strategies in creating BSkyB in Europe as a template. On his launch of BSkyB (which later became Sky UK) Murdoch famously stated that "We intend to ... use sports as a 'battering ram' and a lead offering in all our pay-television operations" (Tiffen, 2014, p. 59). Sky television New Zealand used a similar approach, albeit on a smaller scale and for the most part was very successful.

Although Sky has built its strength on acquiring New Zealand's top four sports and in effect dominating this mainstream sports space, it also had to provide dedicated sports channels with content. As a consequence, minor and adventure sports were able to gain limited (and irregular) coverage by the broadcaster. However, this was strictly broadcast in accordance with Sky NZ's own specific preferences and doing it 'their' way. An example of this is the first ever domestic surfing event in New Zealand (The Rip Curl Pro, Raglan) which was broadcast in 2016 (Surfing NZ, 2016). Since then, very sporadic coverage of the Health 2000 National Surf Champs has been covered by Sky NZ.

Interestingly, during the past three years however, Sky NZ has been featuring World Surf League Championship Tour events on a 'Pop Up' channel or on Sky NZ's lower tier channels. An alignment with international surfing content has therefore been established and seems

to be forming a promising trend. While commercial sensitivity had to be prioritised, during my interview with Matt Barrett (2020) (a senior Outside Broadcast sport producer and director) with Sky Television New Zealand, he explained how a new domestic surfing competition is in the wings and will hopefully provide a great boost for surfing in New Zealand.

Live streaming of sports content on Facebook Live

The delivery of sports content which is live streamed via social media platforms like Facebook Live, has become significantly advantageous for a second-tier sport such as surfing. Since 2015, Facebook Live have started to live stream events and competitions on their network. In relation to the live streaming of surfing, Facebook Live first streamed a World Surf League Championship Tour event on July 2-13, 2018 (the Corona Open J-Bay in South Africa). As a result of this development, New Zealand surfing fans have been provided with an alternative delivery mode to view surfing. This mode of viewing has been taken up especially by the younger generations within New Zealand's surfing community who enjoy the interactive capabilities provided by this platform as well as its ease of access. Fans can still watch the World Surf Leagues live streaming of events on the World Surf League website however if they do not have access to Facebook. A detailed examination of Facebook Live is included in chapter four and references to this platform are made throughout this thesis.

Facebook Live has enabled local surfers to regularly live stream high level international content. This has raised the profile of the sport on a globalised scale which has increased its recognisability. Hastings et al., (2005) illustrate how the globalisation of minor sports has been increasing and is no longer dominated only by the major money makers such as football. In conjunction with this thesis, an online questionnaire was produced to gather data from New Zealand's surfing fanbase on how they view surfing content. The thesis questionnaire will be discussed in more detail during the methodology chapter and chapter four. The responses provided through the questionnaire, are relevant to the points detailed

above, demonstrating how Facebook Live has influenced New Zealand surfing viewers' relationship with the World Surf League and its live streaming of surfing events. Importantly, the responses gained from the questionnaire also provided examples of the "... socialization of sports fans in niche sport markets" (Mastromartino et al., 2020, p. 1) occurs.

Significance of this thesis

This thesis provides an insight into how live streaming is valued by New Zealand surfing fans and the local surfing community. While the thesis was originally designed to be based around the Corona Piha Pro (which was cancelled as a result of COVID-19) I was still able to implement favourable research methods to extract primary data through the thesis questionnaire and various interviews. The timing of this thesis also conveys significance as second-tier sport in New Zealand is becoming firmly involved with the practices of contemporary live streaming. Unfortunately, little research exists on the impact live streaming has had on surfing viewership in New Zealand and consequently, minimal academic literature has been published in this area. Using the research data gathered for this thesis, I am contributing to an underresearched area of how surfing as a fringe, but traditional sport, is effectively targeting its audience through alternative methods of mediation. My desire is that this thesis can present valuable insights into the role live streaming has in the viewership of surfing by New Zealand surfing fans.

Structure of this thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Following on from the introductory chapter above, chapter two is a literature review which centres around surfing, live streaming, second-tier sports, and the spatial theories which are included throughout this thesis. During chapter two, in-depth analysis is provided, focusing on the key academic works in the field. Most of this academia is internationally based due to the limited surfing publications specific to New

Zealand. Chapter two also presents research from key leading academic figures which has been analysed and contextualised with a 'compare and contrast' process adopted. The three spatial theories used by this thesis 'Sports Space', 'Social Space' and 'Mediated Sports Space' are also outlined in chapter two. Discussion on how each of these theories will be of benefit to my respective chapters and the thesis as a whole, is provided.

The third chapter in this thesis is the methodology, which discusses the methodological approaches used during this thesis. In this chapter, I have discussed how I sourced my primary data through the questionnaire and the interviews which I conducted and how I collate, present and analyse data. The fourth chapter of this thesis, focuses on the live streaming of surfing and its relationship with New Zealand surfing fans. Discussion will be incorporated on the live streaming of second-tier sports and a direct focus on the live streams produced by the World Surf League will be analysed.

Chapter five addresses New Zealand's surfing subculture, analysing how this subculture is an example of a resistant sports space, relating this to the live streamed viewership of surfing by members within New Zealand's surfing community. This chapter uses a cultural analysis focus when formulating its various discussion points. Analysis centering around the recreational versus the growing professional side of the sport are also integrated along with information about the Corona Piha Pro.

Chapter six focuses on the future of New Zealand's live streamed surfing viewership and its subculture. This chapter prioritises a focus on the patterns which are likely to become evident in the future viewership of the sport in New Zealand. Analysis will also be included on the developments and suggestions for future research. Discussion surrounding the impact of COVID-19 is featured along with an economic perspective focusing on attributes such as advertising and sponsorship. The final chapter of this thesis is a conclusion chapter which addresses the major findings uncovered during this thesis and discusses the future developments of surfing in New Zealand. During this section, the 2021 Corona Piha Pro is focused on, with discussion focused on the impact this event is set to have on New Zealand's future surfing sports space.

Chapter Two – Theory and Literature Review

This chapter introduces the spatial theory which encompasses social space, sports space and mediated sport space which shape the analytical framework for this thesis. This theory section is then followed by the literature review. The literature review summarises and critically examines the body of academic literature in the fields relevant to this study. It is broken down into subsections which represent the key areas of focus, these being primarily the live streaming of surfing sports content; social media and broadcasting delivery systems; and the latter section focused on the New Zealand surfing community and surfing subculture. As there is a comparatively low level of academic literature focused on aspects of New Zealand surfing, the literature in this chapter also includes global academic sources.

Spatial Theory

The rationale behind selecting spatial theory for this thesis is due to the nature of surfing's unique sports space. Surfing occupies its own spatiality which is distinct from mainstream sports space as well as mainstream societal space. By harnessing a spatial theory lens when examining surfing, it allows me to analyse the sport's sociality and mediation. The sports and social space explored during this thesis enables me to critically evaluate the significance of mediated surfing through live streams provided by the World Surf League. Henri Lefebvre is a key theorist in the spatiality field and drew substantial focus on social space, especially during his famous book titled *The Production of Space*, published in 1974. Another theorist who has had a significant impact in the spatial theory field is Edward Soja (1989). Soja closely followed Lefebvre's work and expanded on his notion of social space which underpins my use of spatial theory within this study.

Sports Space

Cathy van Ingen (2003) describes in relation to sports space, how modern sporting landscapes encompass a changing nature within which the practice of that sport takes place. Van Ingen expresses how spatial practices are part of perceived spaces (van Ingen, 2020) which frequently perpetrate a location in which an individual can participate in a sport, by playing or spectating. She states how, “perceived space is bounded space that includes, for example, a specific site or location such as a stadium, gymnasium, playing field or region” (van Ingen, 2003, p. 203). Surfing has a unique perceived sports space as it takes place in the ocean and has a direct relationship with nature. Recently, surfing has also extended its perceived sports space through developing an artificial environment using wave pools. The opening of USA professional surfer Kelly Slater’s wave pool (Surf Ranch) in 2017 is an example of the increasingly complex interface between natural sports space and the commercialisation of mediated sports space in a mature and highly competitive global sports industry.



**Figure 1: Kelly Slater’s Wave Pool (Surf Ranch) which opened in 2017. WavePoolMag
18/3/19.**

With sports space, social space and mediated sports space all playing a critical role in contemporary sport spatiality, this theory will be used to analyse how live streamed surfing viewership can be applied to the theoretical framework included in this thesis. It is clear that this space is one which is dynamic, active and individually constituted and includes a physical component. In fact, the most prevalent way people produce sports space is through their bodily movements and how they interact within the physical place that they are situated in (van Ingen, 2003). One of these cannot take place without the other, which necessitates a mutually dependent partnership. Alongside the physical space of a sport such as surfing, a defined social space is also created. This results in the activity initiating a very specific culture which often acquires a niche status. This is especially prevalent with those sports positioned as second-tier such as surfing in New Zealand. The physically demanding nature of surfing and its technical attributes play a key role in the dynamic physical space that surfing embodies. Wheaton and Gilchrist (2006) offer their own example via the adventure sport freeskiing. They articulate how the body can actually be used in a variety of ways to produce movement and bodily contact, including in non-aggressive ways, yet participants can still adapt these movements if required creating a perfect balance as is achieved by freeskiing athletes.

Sports cultural theorists Andrei Markovits and Steven Hellerman (2001) provide further literature on the practices of sports space which is useful for understanding how sports space often creates an uneven playing field. The following quote conveys how lesser sports are not able to purchase a consistent hold in a higher competitive and crowded sports space which is dominated by mainstream sports. "Hegemonic sports which ... are referred to colloquially as mainstream tend to have been established in sport space for some time. As a result, less mainstream sports in countries with dense markets can find themselves crowded out" of this space" (Vann, 2018, as cited in Markovits and Hellerman, 2001). Relating Markovits and Hellerman's quotation to a New Zealand context, the mediated sports space is dominated by "... a privileged club known as the 'Big Four': rugby union, rugby league, cricket, and netball" (Henley, 2004 as cited in Horrocks and Perry, 2004). This then plays a role in second-tier sports like surfing being crowded out of a mainstream sports space.

Resistance, particularly resistance to mainstream sports space, is also an important component to consider. Edward Soja (1989), points to how social agents produce and can actively resist sports space and wider social relations. Space can therefore be a site of sport, social and mediated spatial resistance, often directed against mainstream spatiality. This certainly applies to surfing, where resistance to mainstream sports space and mediated sports space has become a feature intertwined in New Zealand's surfing subculture. In turn, this has had a major impact on the sport's spatial identity and illustrates how "... perceived spaces can be engaged in a deadlock of opposition ..." (Zhang, 2006, p. 220).

Social Space

The concept of social space is at the core of sports space and therefore the concept of social space can be "... used to investigate the social production of sport spaces" (Marfell, 2019, p. 580). Not only is social space an important site for academic study but it is a major contributor to our understanding of sports space and mediated sports space. Therefore, sport space is a social space and the attributes within that particular space are often social (Puig and Ingham, 1993). Like social space, sports space is dynamic and negotiable and relies on social interactions in the space in which they are positioned. The interaction and sociability within that space is constantly changing over time but it also strives to maintain physical characteristics, values and an identity that appeal to and meet the needs of its diverse range of participants.

For Lefebvre, social space is comprised of spatialities. Understanding that space is both the medium and outcome of social relations is essential for a Lefebvrian understanding of space (van Ingen, 2003, p. 204).

The unique nature of social space in the context of sport has meant it has become an area which is "simultaneously objective and subjective..." (Soja, 1996, p. 45). With surfing as an example, social space is based on an individual or groups involvement but at the same time is factually objective through the physical practices needed to take part in the sport itself. Edward Soja goes onto to illustrate how social space is also "material and metaphorical, a

medium and outcome of social life; actively both an immediate milieu and an originating presupposition" (Soja, 1996, p. 45). Surfing through a multiplicity of mechanisms, helps generate a subjective and objective identity among members in the community. Lefebvre (1991) determines that "... subjective identity and space exist in a mutually constitutive relationship ... which sport, and sport landscapes can be understood as central to the production and maintenance of identities" (p. 210). With this in mind, surfing promotes a distinct subjective identity which is often characterised by a resistance against mainstream sports space. The ways in which this characteristic of resistance is expressed in mediated surfing sport space will be discussed in more detail during chapter six.

American theorist Kristen Ross (1988) explains in her book called *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* that space itself is a social structure that we help create. This idea put forward by Ross reinforces Lefebvre's (1991) argument that social space "is a social product" (p. 26). Another link can be drawn here to surfing, especially in New Zealand. Surfers in the local community are themselves the ones who produce the sports social space. Each surfer in New Zealand's surfing subculture contributes to the wider social space of the sport. This has formulated a dynamic sports space which is in a constant state of change. Wainwright and Ansell (2008) describe how sports space itself is dynamic and is in a constant process of making as well as giving meaning. Expanding further, (Massey, 2005 as cited in Wainwright and Ansell, 2008) depicts how "this conceptualisation is essential in thinking through sports development, not just as a temporal process but as a thoroughly spatial one as well".

Another area connected to social space theory is the natural environment. The sports natural environment is actually the environment itself, particularly the ocean. Theorists and sports geographers have published literature premised upon the "... landscapes of sport, focusing on the ... nature of the places within which the practice of sport takes place" (van Ingen, 2003, p. 203). One of the most influential cultural theorists in this area is John Bale. In his critically acclaimed book *Sport, Space And the City* he describes how "... gratification from the sports experience is enhanced if the sport landscape within which the action takes place possesses a number of varied elements, contributing to an overall landscape

ensemble” (Bale, 1993, as cited in Raitz, 1987). Expanding on Bale’s theory, the natural environment of the ocean facilitates a social interaction between individual surfers. With surfing, both the environmental and the social space are intrinsically linked and are engaged in a continual state of change.

Mediated Sports Space

Although the concept of mediated sport space is not yet being used extensively, it is rapidly gaining traction to differentiate sports space from mediated construction and representation of that sports space across a range of mediated platforms and delivery systems. Crucially, mediated sports space is directly constructed through media representation (Rowe et al., 2004). Media representation typically plays a critical role in how people relate and interact with a sport and its space. Lefebvre’s concept of space can also be utilised to interpret how mediated sports space representation can be an abstract and strongly conceptualised area. Television, radio, newspapers, social media and magazines are the most common media forms, which influence a sports mediated space. Surfing’s mediated sports space in New Zealand is strongly regionalised and still includes a focus on print media. An example of this is the New Zealand Surf Magazine whose first issue dates back to 1985. This mediated sports space encapsulates a highly photographic orientation. New Zealand’s mediated surfing space shares parallels with contemporary surf landscape photography (Hughes, 2011). A visual mediated sports space is closely intertwined with the way surfing is represented and portrayed in New Zealand.

Mediated sports spaces, especially those which align with a second-tier sport such as surfing, can include mediated representations which are influenced by commercialisation. Commercialisation can be evident in forms such as fashion, sponsorship and advertising. Authors Raymond Boyle and Richard Haynes (2009) have published material on this topic. They state how “due to the commercial interests at the heart of contesting media sports space, niche sports struggle to overcome the stranglehold that hegemonic sports maintain over resources, as they cannot guarantee similar monetary returns” (Vann, 2018, as cited in

Boyle and Haynes, 2000). As Boyle and Haynes (2009) argue, some niche sports belong to the same mediated sports spaces as other more recognised sports do. This is the case with second-tier sports in New Zealand such as surfing. Access to mediated sport space is therefore a very tiered system where major sports grab the majority of mediated sport space. This is supported by Nicolson et al., (2015) who describes how elite sports and those which are stationed as major players in the sports media spectrum, control the greater portion of mediated sports coverage. The literature included by Boyle, Haynes and Nicolson is incorporated in more detail during chapters four, five and six.

Surfing's modern mediated sports space has aided theorists and researchers in exploring how and why this mediated sport is contested. One of these theorists, Nathan Edge (2013) believes that live streaming has continued to grow both in its size and general domestic popularity which he states has bolstered the competition of mediated local sports spaces. The greater competition which has emerged here has been of great benefit to the consumer. The youth demographic have been particularly instrumental in the growth of live streamed mediated sports space due to their interest and acceptance of live streaming. "... in the new digital environment where young adults are used to flexibility and choice ..." (Abramson, 2014, p. 3) they are preferring live streamed content as opposed to mainstream broadcasting content. In fact, "younger viewers (e.g., teens) even consider live streaming part of their everyday practices to hang out with others online or spend time with small groups of friends" (Lottridge et al., 2017 as cited in Wohn & Freeman, 2019). The youth demographic will most likely have a significant role in the future live streamed viewership of surfing and the progression of this mediated sports space. This will be focused on in more detail during chapter six.

Review of Literature

The growth of live streaming

As this thesis focuses on the live streaming of surfing, it is therefore important to provide background and context for the growth of this alternative delivery system. Live streaming is a form of real-time viewing which distributes a live video feed to an individual or collective audience via the internet. Author Bryan Kramer (2016) expands on this, describing that live streaming is "... content sent online, in compressed format and in real time to the end viewer. The user doesn't have to wait for the entire file to download, but rather view the content in a continuous stream" (para. 3). Kramer (2016) describes live streaming as a source media that captures the content and is then responsible for distributing the relevant content to viewers. This content is captured through cameras or various recording technology which are situated at the event or location of the live stream. Users log into the platform that the stream is published via the internet and are able to watch the stream for the duration. A benefit of live streaming is that it is available to anyone who has the capability to stream digital content.

Theorist Franc Kozamernik provides information on the benefits of live streaming and why it has been so successful with its integration into the contemporary media landscape. He describes that one of the advantages live streaming offers, is "it is the only technology that is capable of transmitting video and audio events across the internet in real time, while they are happening" (Kozamernik, 2002, p. 3). The constant improvement with live stream quality has allowed it to develop a cost effective presence within the coverage of mediated sport. An increasing number of second-tier sports bodies are now looking to live streaming to help promote their respective sport, allowing it to become an integral part of the mediated sports space. This enables second-tier sports entities, such as the World Surf League, to manage and control the live streaming of surfing themselves, rather than outsourcing this to another party.

The rapid growth of live streaming has been statistically supported by numerous reports. One of these reports is titled 'The future of the TV and video landscape by 2030' published by Klaus Boehm et al., (2018) from the multinational network company 'Deloitte'. He explains that "The Deloitte Digital Media Trends Survey 2018, states that almost 48% of all United States consumers stream content every day or week..." (p. 4). Another report, 'Live Video Streaming – A Global Perspective' by Kristina Sruoginis, the research director of America's 'Interactive Advertising Bureau', agrees with the statistics mentioned above. Sruoginis created a research project which was published in June 2018, involving twenty countries. Sruoginis asked participants from each of these countries questions surrounding their interaction with live streaming. Similarly, to what the report from 'Deloitte' identified, Sruoginis found live streaming to be increasingly popular and explained how she believes global usage is vastly increasing. She described how "67% of her participants had live streamed video on any platform or device with 47% saying they have increased their live streaming since last year" (Sruoginis, 2018, p.6). As both reports suggest, the future of live streaming appears to be one linked with commercial rewards.

The live streaming of sport in New Zealand has also been growing steadily. Due to New Zealand's extensive sporting appetite, consumers are more open-minded regarding the live streaming of sport. New Zealand's first real live streaming company was Slipstream Media. Slipstream Media pioneered live sports streaming from 2002 with tennis as its first content. (Slipstream Media, 2020). They were the original live streaming company who introduced streamed sport content to the mediated sports space. In recent time, New Zealand company Spark Sport have started to dominate New Zealand's live streaming sports space. "Newshub reporter Vita Molyneux explains how the CEO of Spark Sport, Jeff Latch, wants Spark Sport to become New Zealand's main streaming service ...'" (Molyneux, 2019, para. 1). During a report published in 2019 concerning the launch of Spark Sport, media company MENA (2019) found that "Spark Sport is available as an app on selected iPads, iPhones, Android devices, AirPlay to Apple TV, Chromecast and all popular web browsers" (p. 1).

With hundreds of hours of live streamed sports content available (MENA, 2019), Spark Sport has become the face of live streaming in New Zealand. Spark Sport has received the rights to stream higher profile sports such as rugby and cricket. An example of this was when Spark Sport were awarded the broadcasting rights to live stream All Black rugby games for the 2019 Rugby World Cup (NZ Herald, 2019) on its platform. Spark Sport is in the unique position of maintaining a key role in live streaming of both mainstream and second-tier sports space. Spark Sport have been facing growing competition however from other sports providers for the live streaming of New Zealand's most watched sports. One of these rivals is Sky Television New Zealand, who have entered into the commercialised live streamed sports space. While Sky have dominated the broadcasting of New Zealand sport, they have been slow to move into the alternative delivery style of live streaming. A significant reason for this, as Thompson (2017) describes is due to Sky's historical monopoly over sports content in New Zealand. However, the launch of 'Sky Next' has shown Sky NZ's desire to join this live streamed sports space and is discussed in more depth during chapter four.

For all of the benefits of live streaming, it is not exempt from some issues such as the unauthorised retransmission of live content. This is also compounded by the fact that live streaming is available with minimal obligation from the viewer who need only to create a free account. This is supported by Kanchana Kariyawasam and Matthew Tsai (2017) who are two authors with backgrounds in law and technology. In a recent journal publication, they described how:

The unauthorised retransmission of live sports telecasts over the Internet has become one of the main concerns in sports media. Legislative reforms are required in order to balance the public's ever-increasing desire for convenient ways to view digital materials against the legal rights of the owners of the material ... (p. 265).

This issue has existed for some time. Henry Bushnell, one of the writers from Yahoo! Sports has expanded on this. He describes "piracy is not a new problem, nor solely a sports one. But as the world gradually learns to corral some forms of it, illegal streamers are still flourishing. According to piracy data company MUSO, humans made 362.7 million visits to sports piracy websites in January 2019 alone" (Bushnell, 2019, para. 9). It is difficult to track

and terminate these streams. A high percentage of those illegal live streams are created in the United States. Bushnell (2019) goes on to describe that "... an estimated 1.9 million U.S. viewers [illegally watched] free live streams of a Tyson Fury vs. Deontay Wilder heavyweight title bout, one whose \$75 pay-per-view broadcast enticed approximately 325,000" (para. 6). In New Zealand, and indeed other countries, illegal live streaming still exists but is not such a significant problem. From a positive perspective, the live streaming of surfing, which this thesis focuses on, is offered for free by the World Surf League and therefore the issues of unauthorised retransmission do not exist.

Growth and popularity of live streaming

As live streaming is not pre-recorded, it offers an uncensored and unedited product. This provides a sense of authenticity which resonates with audiences. John Tang et al., (2016) describes how it is the unedited, and somewhat unpredictable view that ultimately provides live streaming with its authentic feel which positions it as an authentic medium. This authenticity contributes to live streaming's popularity with the younger generation. This has been supported by recent academia. A leading academic journal article published in 2016 by live streaming authors Tom Van Goethem et al., (2016) titled 'It's Free for a Reason: Exploring the Ecosystem of Free Live Streaming Services' describes how the past five years "... have seen extensive growth of services enabling live streams on the Web [with] free live streaming services attracting millions of viewers" (p. 1). This growth continues in many countries, such as New Zealand, with live streaming regarded as a key feature of the contemporary sports media space. A clear illustration of this is the free live streaming of surfing in New Zealand in conjunction with the World Surf League.

Live streaming has become popular with the video gaming community, especially those who belong to the younger demographic. These viewers as Haimson et al., (2017) describes are young and particularly tech-savvy when it comes to viewing and using live streamed technology such as video games. The viewing numbers of young people watching live streamed video game play or activity has continued to skyrocket, especially during the last five years. Teo Ottelin (2015) from Jamk University of Applied Sciences has described how

“live streaming makes it possible to publish gameplay in real-time for everyone to see and comment on” (p. 2). Perhaps the most significant development in this area is that video gamers who live stream content can now generate considerable revenue. He indicates that live streaming “... is a new trend in the world of video gaming that can make the dream of many video gamers become a reality, making money by playing [video] games” (Ottelin, 2015, p. 2).

Various authors in the field have also published scholarship regarding video games and live streaming focusing on live streaming platforms. The live streaming platform which has arguably become the most popular is Twitch. Mark Johnson and Jamie Woodcock (2018) describe how “twitch is a live streaming platform with a strong focus on the ... viewing of video game content. In the last five years its visibility and impact have rapidly grown to a point where it has become a major force in the games industry...” (p. 2). Twitch’s swift surge to prominence shows the degree by which live streaming viewership has grown and how it has enveloped a surprising endurance, which was “... signalled by Twitch’s recent purchase for almost a billion dollars by Amazon” (Johnson and Woodcock, 2018, p.2). Johnson and Woodcock (2018) have also produced research which concluded that “in 2016 there were 292 billion total minutes watched and 2.2 million unique streamers who [transmitted] their activities on the platform...” (p. 2).

Interestingly, Twitch also recently announced that sports content will be available to be live streamed on their platform in the near future. This presents an intriguing development, with Twitch perhaps set to become a major competitor in the future of sports live streaming. If Twitch do become involved with sports live streaming, they will most certainly shake up this mediated sports space. Twitch have partnered with esports to provide sport for the digital generation (Gerber, 2017). esports has become a major player in the sports space. Authors Juho Hamari and Max Sjöblom (2017) define esports (electronic sports) as “a form of sports where the primary aspects of the sport are facilitated by electronic systems [facilitated by] the input of players and teams as well as the output of the esports system ...” (p. 211). With the existence of Twitch and the popularity of esports, an exciting new form of sport is evolving. As is apparent in Figure 2, esports tournaments are attracting huge crowds, becoming a popular live sporting spectacle.



Figure 2: Fans watching Superliga, an esports competition staged in Orange Stadium, located in Kula Lumpur. KoreaGameDesk 26/2/2021.

The rise of esports has been facilitated through live streaming and without platforms such as Twitch, would not be able to reach its global fan base. This fan base is comprised predominately of younger viewers who play or have sufficient knowledge on the content they are spectating. Christopher Ingraham (2018) from The Washington Post, outlined in a recent article that “While it remains to be seen whether competitive gaming [esports] will ever be bigger than the NFL in revenue, the two are running neck-and-neck on a potentially even more important metric: popularity among younger fans” (p. 2). The millions of global fans that esports have cultivated, sees a new trend in the modern sports space market, with young adults becoming more in tune with alternate sports content which they may not have previously viewed. University Wire (2019) provide statistics which support this, describing that esports “... fanbase has already grown exponentially, with roughly 25.7 million Esports viewers in the US alone last year. That number is also expected to skyrocket in coming years, up to 300 million frequent viewers worldwide by 2022” (p. 1). With esports predominantly made up of second-tier sports, surfing as a second-tier sport, could benefit from this in the future sporting landscape.

Live streaming of second-tier sports

Second-tier sport has developed higher levels of global popularity, during the last ten years. One of the reasons for this is due to people's desire to watch alternate forms of sport which are not part of the mainstream sports space. In a market which has become saturated with first-tier sport, people have been looking elsewhere to get their sporting fix. With more people watching second-tier sports, live streaming viewership rates have increased with many second-tier sports using live streaming as their main form of viewership. Ross Biddiscombe (2016), a leading researcher in this area, described how the growing choice enjoyed by second-tier sports, from triathlon to taekwondo, means this area of sports transmission is a whole new ball game. Author Sam Bradley has expanded on the idea of a 'growing choice' put forward by Biddiscombe, providing a different interpretation. He states "second-tier sports have been around as long as the majors but have never garnered the same respect. Many have been viewed as gimmicky offshoots to their major league counterparts" (Bradley, 1996, p. 38). He believes a shift in people's attitudes is why second-tier sports are growing in popularity which is achieving higher live streaming viewership numbers.

The increased live streaming of second-tier sports has seen a growth in the general marketisation of these minor sports. This has increased exposure and has provided opportunities for investors and sponsors alike. Author Bartley Morrisroe (2003) described in a recent journal article titled 'Second-tier sponsorships gets personal' that an "... obvious advantage to going with a second-tier [sport] is that you are still able to get to your customer without paying the hefty price" (p. 4). The attractiveness offered by second-tier sports in regard to marketing, is that they offer a specific niche orientated investment. Morrisroe (2003) describes that "the great thing about sponsorship opportunities of this size and cost is that they allow companies to get into grassroots marketing, where companies can more closely zero in on their target markets..." (p. 4).

This creates a win-win situation whereby marketers gain vital exposure for the investors and second-tier sports receive funding. A positive outcome of this is the improved quality of the live streams which are then provided. This has further developed surfing's mediated sports space. As surfing sponsorship developed so too did commercialisation. However, due to the prominence of network television in the United States, America's surfing market was commercialised far quicker than New Zealand's, which did not evolve within such a highly privatised and commercialised broadcasting structure.

Live streaming devices

The platforms and devices which are stereotypically used to receive live streaming are computers and mobile phones. With live streaming, surfing viewers often live stream content on their computer through the World Surf League website or on their phones through the World Surf League App. Live streaming via a mobile device has become increasingly popular, accelerated by live streaming on Apps such as Periscope, StreamNow, Facebook Live and Instagram Live. The journal article 'What Makes Live Events Engaging on Facebook Live, Periscope, and Snapchat' by Oliver Haimson et al., (2017) is an especially good reference for this. The text focuses on the app Periscope, explaining how:

Periscope, owned by Twitter, is a live streaming platform launched in March 2015. Periscope live streams allow text comments ... which overlay the video starting at the bottom of the screen before floating up and disappearing. Event live streams are discoverable by browsing hashtags on Twitter or within the Periscope app's interface (p. 49).

Live streaming Apps such as Periscope have been surging in popularity due to their userfriendly platform interactive capabilities and easy navigational features. These applications have completely changed the live streaming landscape. This is evident through the App's live streaming technological enhancements as well as their modern interfaces. The World Surf League App is a good example of this as it has harnessed both of these components effectively as can be seen in Figure 3 below.

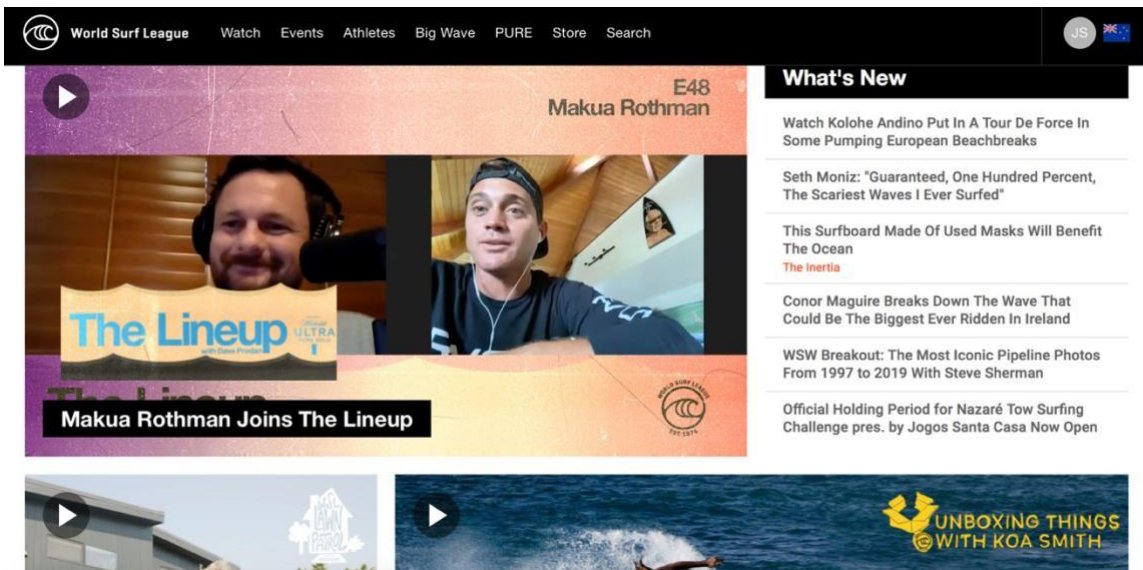


Figure 3: A screenshot depicting what a viewer would currently see when accessing the World Surf League website via a computer. World Surf League website 4/11/2020.

The escalation in contemporary live streaming devices, has conjointly created a growing ease of access for users. Rather than only being able to access sports content through a television, one now has the option to access sports content through numerous internet orientated platforms. The user can access this content remotely. The popularity of live streaming, especially through a mobile device, is having an impact on traditional broadcast methods. Australian academic David Rowe has published several journal articles in this area. In one of these articles, Rowe (2019) describes how “the rise of live streaming services is part of a wider ‘platformisation’ of television ... in which the Internet functions as a ‘worldwide distribution infrastructure’ for audio-visual content” (p. 978). The distribution prowess of the internet has therefore revolutionised how people watch sports content. David Rowe et al., (2019) support this, indicating that “the outcome is widespread ‘cord-cutting’ by viewers and subscribers in favour of cheaper Internet-based services...” (p. 978).

Narrowcasting

Narrowcasting is a concept which will be referred to during this thesis when discussing marketisation and viewership demographics. Essentially, “narrowcasting refers to the targeted segmentation of media dissemination and has been proposed as a counterpart to broadcasting” (Jorge Goncalves et al., 2013, p. 502). Therefore, narrowcasting narrows down a wide audience into a sports space which is far more niche and conveys characteristics which would not be labelled as ‘mainstream’. Examples may include such things as viewers who watch a certain type of sport, who are from a specific geographic location and represent a certain ethnicity or age. Narrowcasting is often intrinsically linked to the audiences of second-tier sports. Goncalves et al., (2013) also depicts how “narrowcasting is based on the postmodern idea that mass audiences do not exist and such an approach is focused on a specific (narrow) topic ...” (p. 503). Surfing is a good example of this narrowcasting concept and is referred to in more depth in chapters four, five and six.

Live streaming on Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat

One of the reasons that social media live streaming on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat are so popular is due to the extensive reach and economic backing these platforms exhibit. The technological abilities of these platforms have pioneered a popular digital social space which has been well utilised by live stream viewers. In reference to Facebook Live streams, Oliver Haimson et al., (2017) describes how they:

Can be broadcast publicly, or people typically come across streams ... [through] people they follow, either via notification or when a stream appears in their newsfeed. Facebook Live streams offer different types of interaction: comments, which are persistent and appear to the right of the video for viewers and emoji orientated reactions ... (p. 49).

Another social media platform which has become popular with live streaming is Snapchat. Live streaming through Snapchat is enabled through Snapchat Live Stories. “The feature allows event attendees to contribute to a live collective story that can then be viewed by remote Snapchat users. After a user records a “Snap” (a video or photo) users are given the option of sharing to the live event story” (Haimson et al., 2017, p. 49). Social media live streaming services contain strong forms of interactivity, immersion, sociality and immediacy. These elements are key features of a social space and allow these social media companies to emerge as successful live streaming platforms. Unlike Instagram or Facebook, Snapchat’s live streaming feature has a greater focus on uploading rather than viewing live streams. Snapchat is considered by some as providing more autonomy in relation to streaming. Like its counterparts, Snapchat is experiencing a high level of success with live streaming and this feature will remain in the future.

Social media awareness, especially through Instagram, has also been significant, stemming from Instagram’s profound ability to create a successful ‘brand’. Anagnostopoulos et al., (2018) explains “... how professional ... sport organisations use Instagram for branding purposes ...”. This is one of the strategies employed by the World Surf League, which, through the use of Instagram, has become one of the most popular sport brands in the world. Instagram provides a variety of mechanisms to create social media brand awareness. With this in mind, the World Surf League’s Instagram page often posts clips which feature surfing content that is abstract and exclusively divergent from mainstream surfing posts or streams. Sky NZ sport producer Matt Barrett described how some “person might be surfing a massive wave somewhere else in the world which has nothing to do with ... a current [live streamed] competition” (Barrett, 2020, personal communication). This is an example of a strategical Instagram marketing technique used by Instagram pages like the World Surf League to generate further interest and awareness. In the case of surfing, this is accomplished by the page exposing new and exciting forms of surfing, resulting in the follower being introduced to different areas of the sport which they may not have otherwise been aware of. A good example of this were recent posts on the World Surf League Instagram page from the ‘Onda do Bem’ surfing event in Brazil. This event is a night-surfing

competition with competitors surfing in the dark on bright neon lit surf boards as can be seen in Figure 4 below.

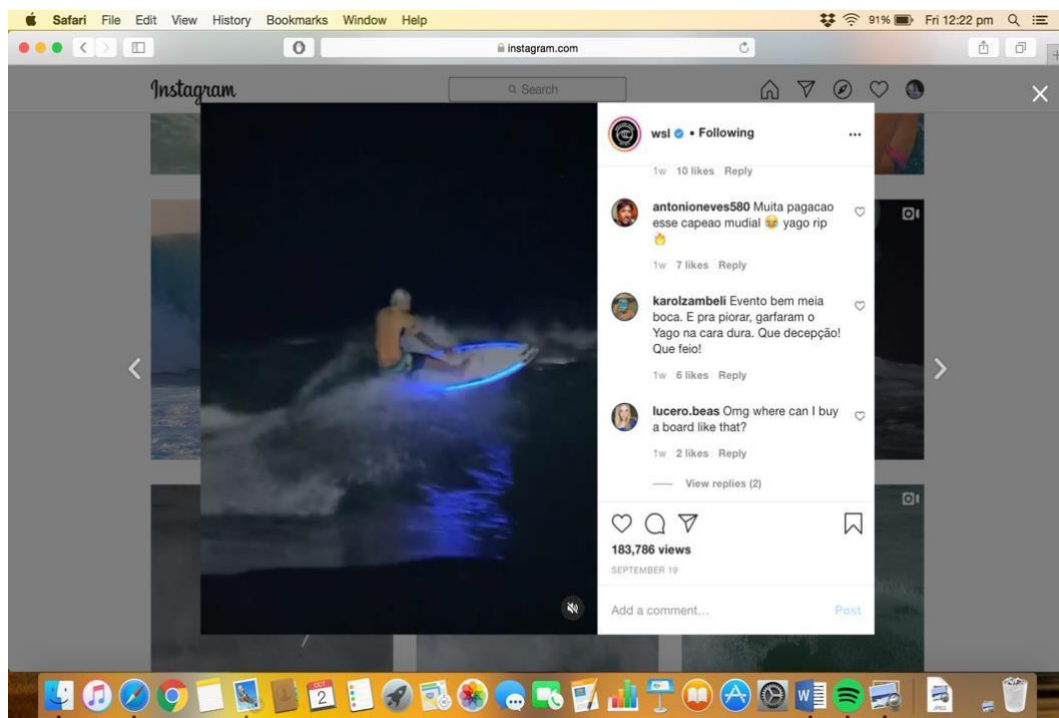


Figure 4: ‘Onda do Bem’ – A night surfing event in Brazil. World Surf League Instagram post 2/10/2020.

The live streaming of surfing on social media, has been dominated by the platform Facebook. In 2015, Facebook joined the sports live streaming arena, with a range of sports now being covered through their ‘Facebook Live’ platform. Troy Drier (2018) from SVG News described “on January 24, 2018 the World Surf League announced a deal with Facebook that makes the social network its exclusive live-streaming [social media] home for the next two years” (p. 1). Today’s live sports streaming market has become heavily saturated, with consumers being inundated with bothersome ‘pop up’ deals and monthly plans. The fact social media live streams provide sports content such as surfing events for free has been hugely influential. Due to this popularity, live streaming sports on social media appears and is positioned to be as a successful future avenue for sports viewership in New Zealand. Clear

evidence of this was found in the findings from my thesis questionnaire which will be focused on in more depth during the chapters which follow.

Surfing as an alternative sport

It is important to examine the literature which exists on the nature of surfing itself and its position as a sport which embodies its own subculture and levels of resistance. This will be explained in greater detail during chapter five. One of the intriguing elements of surfing is its resistance to mainstream society and mainstream sports space. Hawaiian surfing professor, Isaiah Helekunihi Walker has written scholarship explicitly relating to early surfing resistance and colonialism which he discussed in his book 'Waves of Resistance: Surfing and History in Twentieth-Century Hawai'i'. He describes how:

... the history of Hawaiian resistance against foreign colonial conquest in the surf zone [relates to] the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom ... with native Hawaiian surfers becoming engaged with waves of resistance to protect their identity, culture and space from further conquest (Walker, 2011, p. 127).

This early example of surfing resistance has since transcended to countries all over the world. While surfing resistance in the modern era is not as focused on colonial conquest, the same principals of protecting surfing culture which defines itself as separate from the mainstream, still apply. The preservation of this culture has appropriately become a key part of surfing's overall identity. The nature of surfing has historically reflected a unique identity that has been produced through a variety of contributing factors.

One of the most significant of these has been the evolution of an international surfing subculture. One of the most influential pieces of literature published on surfing subculture, is a PhD thesis written by Emily Beaumont from the University of Exeter. She refers to two sporting subcultural authors, Gordon and Donnelly. She indicates how Gordon defined "sub-culture as a concept used to refer to a sub-division of a national culture, composed of a combination of factorable social situations and a functioning unity which has an integrated

impact on the participating individual” (Beaumont, 2011, p. 16). However, Donnelly believes Gordon’s definition of subculture, especially in a sporting context is too broad. Donnelly instead stated how subculture is “any system of beliefs, values, norms...shared and actively participated in by an appreciable minority of people within a particular culture” (Beaumont, 2011, p. 17). While varying opinions about subculture are held, it is clear that surfing fits within the definitions provided.

Surfing community and place

Community and a sense of place are also vital features of many sports. Surfing is particularly renowned for expressing a strong sense of communal identity, represented through shared ‘places’. While this will be demonstrated in greater detail during chapter five, it is necessary to gain an understanding of this dynamic. New Zealand’s surfing legacy has developed overtime across a disparate surfing community and in the process has fostered a uniquely ‘kiwi’ connectivity. The development of New Zealand’s national surfing community attributes its rise to prominence through the establishment of communal surf clubs. Perhaps the most well-known of these is located at Piha Beach in the North Island of New Zealand. Expanding on this, New Zealand historian Sandra Coney (2009) has described how Piha “... established a club culture of ruggedness and courage...” (p. 1). The communal culture promoted by clubs such as Piha, has created an important sense of place and belonging for many surfers in New Zealand. This has helped surfing in New Zealand construct an enduring legacy and culture closely associated with a physical space which will be examined in greater detail during chapter five of this thesis.



Figure 5: Piha lifeguards who are part of one of the most iconic surf lifesaving clubs in New Zealand. iSport Foundation 10/11/2020.

Surfing participation in New Zealand

Participation in the sport of surfing in New Zealand portrays an extensive and enduring history. New Zealand's surfing participation is made up of professional surfing athletes and recreational surfers. The clubs which contribute most to surfing participation in New Zealand are boardrider clubs. These clubs consist of surfers and surfing personnel and form a key part of surfing as a sport in New Zealand. These clubs also represent a large portion of those who watch mediated surfing content in New Zealand. There are currently thirty national boardrider clubs. These clubs are located at New Zealand's most popular and recognisable surfing regions such as Northland, Auckland, Gisborne, Taranaki, Waikato, Coromandel and Canterbury. An article published by Surfing NZ in 2008 describes how "being associated with a [boardrider] club is a great way to get involved in

the sport, meet new people and become part of the ever-growing surfing community” (Surfing NZ). As Surfing NZ directly outline above, an emphasis is placed on enticing people to join these clubs and potentially generate further surfing viewership.

A recent journal article by Christal Scheske et al., provides a representation of surfing’s international participation levels. This article deals with both recreational surfing and professional surfing, but emphasis is placed most prominently on the former. While it is difficult to pinpoint an exact figure on the levels of surfing participation, Scheske et al., (2019) describes how “millions of people surf worldwide, with estimates ranging from 18 to 50 million participants globally” (p. 196). These participation rates are largely made up of the power house regions of surfing being America, Europe, Asia and Oceania. In regard to America, Miller et al., (2008) outlines that “in the US it is estimated [from studies dating back from 2008] that over 3.5 million people participate in surfing each year” (p. 146). It is important to note that these numbers would have grown substantially in the years following these initial estimates. As surfing participation rates continue to climb, surfing fans have become more interested in watching the mediated content of the sport. One of the key differences between surfing’s international participation and New Zealand’s surfing participation, has to do with the age of participants. Surfing in New Zealand has seen growing participation particularly from younger surfers which is focused on during the next paragraph.

According to Sport New Zealand’s Active Survey 2019, during the year of 2019, a 14% increase in surfing participation among 18-24 and 35-49 year olds was evident. Participation levels were also up 11% for those in the 25-34 age range (Brocklesby, 2019). One of the ways that Surfing NZ have been aiming to increase surfing participation further is by creating the national professional-amateur ‘New Zealand Surf Series’, held in various regions across the country. A report from Surfing NZ describes how “the series has seen a 17% increase in participation in 2019. The increase has been mainly in male participation and can be attributed to a new region (Bay of Plenty) being added to the series allowing more surfers to compete at a national level” (Surfing NZ, 2019, p. 16).

Gaps in New Zealand's surfing literature

There is an evident lack of academia published on New Zealand surfing.

What literature that is available is mainly focused on surfing viewership and prioritises this on more of a globalised scale. A reason for this, is that New Zealand does not command a high surfing status as in some other countries. New Zealand adventure sport and surfing authors such as Kenton Baxter, Belinda Wheaton, Ed Atkin and Holly Thorpe have published valuable literature which has been of great benefit to this thesis. However, due to the limited resources which exist in New Zealand's surfing field, these authors have had to source content from more plentiful international academic research focused on the main powerhouses of surfing such as America and Hawaii, France, Brazil, Portugal and Australia. In addition, the surfing literature which does exist in Oceania, is heavily dominated by Australia and Tahiti, who in their own rights are major forces in the world surfing landscape. This is strongly evident with both countries hosting events for the World Surf League's Championship Tour and boasting a range of professional athletes who compete in World Surf League competitions. As a result, less academic attention is extended to other countries within the Oceania region.

One way to reduce this gap would be for New Zealand to host a leg of the World Surf Leagues Championship Tour and if greater funding was provided to the governing bodies who control the sport in New Zealand. This includes the broader organisation Surfing New Zealand, as well as the grass roots surfing clubs which exist across the country. Greater funding in this area would allow surfing in New Zealand to prosper both on a localised and international scale. Another way this gap could be plugged would be to increase academic study on the mediation of surfing and therefore add to the body of literature focusing on surfing as a sport and leisure activity. This would encourage the publication of more diverse literature, growing the recognition and locality of New Zealand's surfing field. This would also ensure that the sport would gain a wider scope of academic validity within this specific sports space that New Zealand surfing occupies.

Summary

This literature review has provided the scholarly context for my thesis. The papers and various studies which have been included in the review reflect a diversification of scholarship which contains numerous approaches and levels of academic reasoning. This literature has provided a historical and contemporary analysis which has been carried out on a globalised and localised scale. The literature has also indicated that a lack of specifically New Zealand focused research in the mediation of New Zealand surfing exists. The theoretical concepts which will be incorporated in this thesis have also been individually examined with discussion focusing on sports space, social space and mediated sports space. The next chapter is the methodology which will utilise a more data centralised focus. The methodology will outline the various research methods which have been used during this thesis. The research methods examined in the methodology have been used to examine the topics that have been outlined in this literature review, including scholarship on the growth and popularity of live streaming, its use via social media, the devices used to live stream surfing content the nature of the sport and its participation.

Chapter Three - Methodology

In order to understand how and why surfing in New Zealand increasingly utilises live streaming to provide surfing content for its target audience, I needed to gather data from key professionals in surfing, sports television broadcasting as well as survey surfers and surf fans. This was designed to give me a range of perspectives from those who produce and disseminate live streaming surfing content through to New Zealand surf fans who access and engage with this content. I used a qualitative research method for the material gained through personal interviews and quantitative analysis to collate and summarise the data from the online questionnaire. In addition, I used textual analysis to provide me with another method to collate and analyse my primary source material. The project design and methodology received approval from the The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on the 24th of April 2020.

The use of textual analysis and how it will benefit this thesis

I used textual analysis to select, collate and analyse content relating to the live streaming of surfing. Textual analysis is a method of study utilized by researchers to examine messages as they appear through a variety of mediums” (Smith, 2017, p. 1). One of the ways I gathered data for textual analysis, was through gathering screenshots of online material. This content included screenshots of surfing merchandise, promotional surfing figures, sponsorship and surfing locations. These particular screenshots were used during chapters four and six. The screenshots of online material also helped my personal understanding of these topics by offering a visual perspective which I was able to contextualise and place within my discussion. Importantly, these particular screenshots proved to be as Meng (2019) indicates “...an effective means to guide the visual attention of [readers] ...” (p. 369) and to substantiate my analysis.

I also collated screenshots of live streamed surfing footage from World Surf League live streams via the World Surf League website and Facebook Live. The screenshots which featured live streamed surfing footage were sampled as they provided me with examples of the comments left by surfing fans watching the stream on these platforms. I sampled these viewer comments from three World Surf League events; the Corona Open J-Bay (July 2-13, 2018); Billabong Pipe Master's (8-20 December 2020) and the MEO Portugal Cup of Surfing (September 28 – October 2, 2020). The rationale behind choosing to screenshot viewer comments from these particular surfing events; was because they offered a considerable sample size and were of a diverse nature, providing me with a rich data set. The viewers leaving these comments were utilising the interactive features provided by the World Surf League and Facebook Live which is an important element of my discussion which is developed in further detail during chapter four. Along with this, the screenshots of viewer comments helped me illustrate how surfing fans engage with surfing's sports space, social space and mediated sports space, which is a key focus of this thesis.

I also attempted to find viewership figures for World Surf League live streams, specifically the number of surfing fans who live stream this content. Unfortunately, the World Surf League do not publicly disclose their viewership figures however. Despite this I was able to uncover some viewership data from those who watch surfing through Facebook Live. While a specific region was unable to be sourced I was still able to extract relevant material surrounding the role of Facebook Live's streamed coverage of World Surf League events and its interaction with surfing fans. This is discussed in further detail during chapter four and chapter six.

The use of the quantitative research method and the thesis questionnaire

I used a quantitative analytical method to collate, summarise and analyse the findings from the online thesis questionnaire which was distributed to surfing fans throughout the country. This quantitative approach enabled me to produce research which was extremely valuable to my overall discussion and assisted me in "... assessing cause-and-effect

relationships between constructs” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004 as cited in Connell, 2016). Quantitative analysis is a major component of my data gathering as it provided me with the ability to efficiently collate the data which I had sourced from the questionnaire. This quantitative research method “... deals with quantifying and analysing variables in order to get results” (Apuke, 2017, p. 40) which in this case were presented in numerical form. The quantitative method added a statistical component to the thesis which expanded its research potential. This was also used to provide empirical evidence which helped substantiate the analysis of my findings from the questionnaire.

The online questionnaire is a vital feature of the thesis and provided valuable responses from participants. Roopa and Satya (2012) describe how a questionnaire is an effective way of collecting vital quantitative primary data. The type of questionnaire featured in this thesis, was an anonymous online survey, created through the online platform Qualtrics. The questionnaire was designed in such a way that ethnographic oriented questions were featured at the start, with multiple choice questions provided in the middle and text entry boxes at the end. This created a logical flow of questioning and adhered to a traditional Qualtrics questionnaire format. The text entry boxes provided valuable raw data which consisted of first-hand responses which dealt with the topics mentioned in the questionnaire. Twelve of the sixteen questions were multiple choice with the remaining four in the form of text entry boxes whereby participants could answer the question by typing a response. With one of the objects of the thesis being to represent the opinions of New Zealand’s surfing community, the responses collected through the text entry boxes were critical. I limited the total questions to sixteen because as Taheri et al., (2014) explains, for the successful completion of a questionnaire, it is all about keeping your audience engaged. I believe any additional questions may have impacted on the participant response and completing all of the sections in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was designed to target New Zealand surfing fans, whom were made up of casual and regular surfing viewers in addition to one professional surfer who choose to participate. The questionnaire was deliberately structured in this way to provide me with responses from several different generations to gather what they thought about the live

streaming of surfing and New Zealand’s surfing viewership. I was then able to conduct a generational comparison to gather a broad spectrum of views. Questions 10, 14, 15 and 16 were in the format of a text entry box. In contrast to the other text entry box questions however, Q. 16 was designed to encourage participants to leave more generalised comments. These were associated with the questionnaire topics as well as providing an opportunity for the participants to provide feedback from their perspectives on surfing and its viewership in New Zealand. The qualitative responses sourced through this questionnaire, provided essential information which I could use to support my discussion.

Qualtrics provided me with the ability to observe various trends and patterns becoming evident in the incoming data and determine how long to keep the questionnaire live. Qualtrics was also chosen to evaluate the questionnaire data as it offers more refined data analysis tools in contrast to other service providers such as Survey Monkey. These tools also enable me to efficiently select the specific data which I want to include, allowing me to accurately support my discussion. I found these tools to be user-friendly which helped my understanding of the data which was collated. The key tools I used with Qualtrics to analyse this raw data included Stats iQ, Crosstabs Tool and Reports Tab. These are included below with an explanation of their function and usefulness for the project.

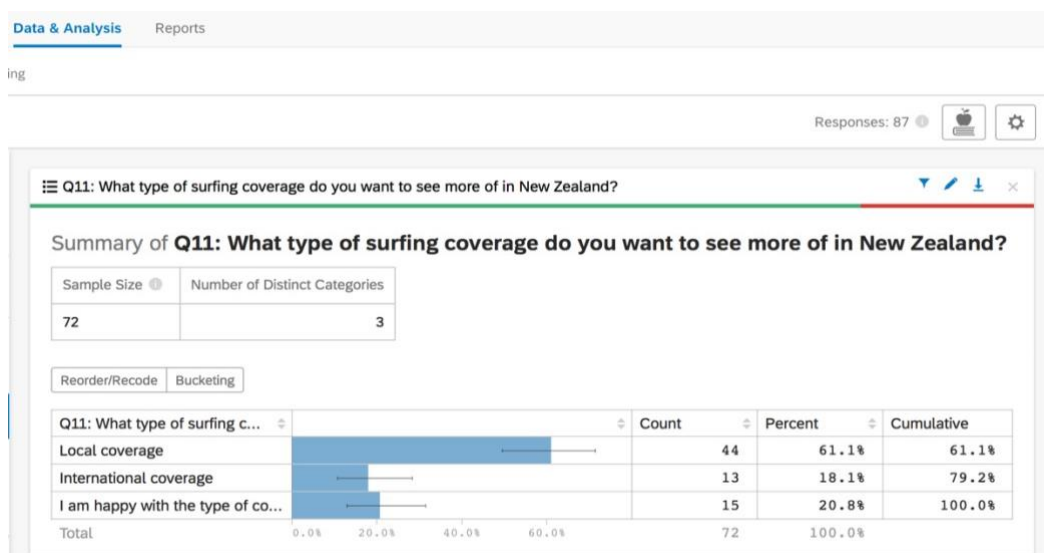


Figure 6: The Stats iQ tool, which enabled the collation of data into spreadsheets and graphs.

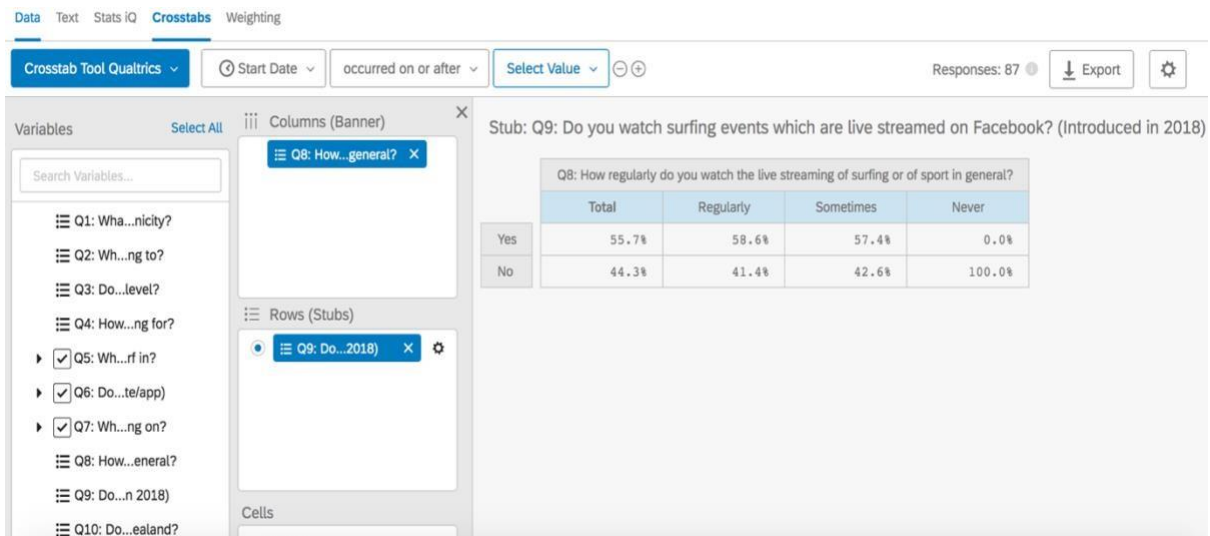


Figure 7: The Crosstabs Tool which facilitated the ability to compare and contrast the data.

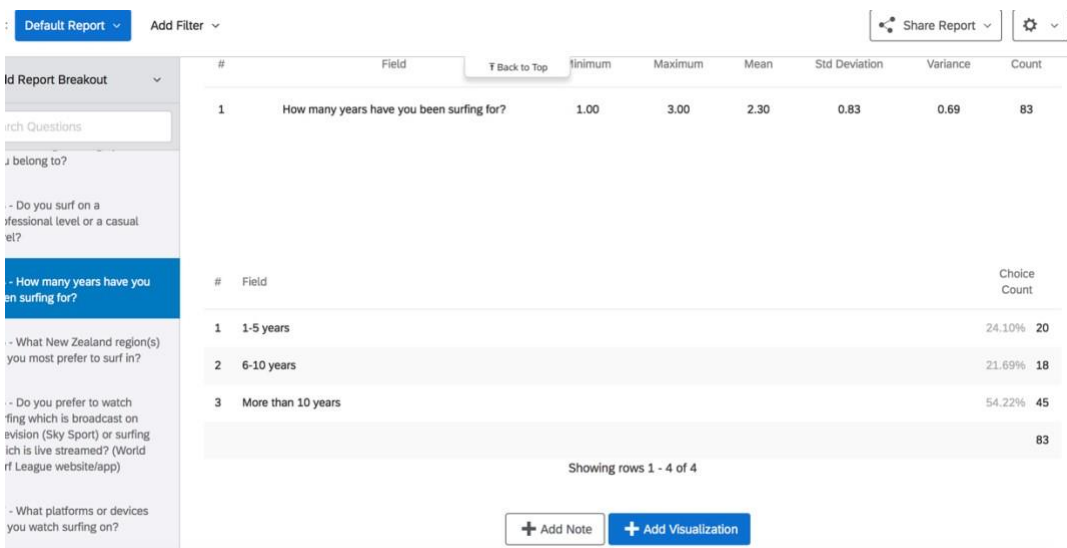


Figure 8: Showcases the Reports Tab, a useful summary tool.

Figure 8, the Reports Tab, provided me with a particularly vital form of data analysis. This is because the Reports Tab presents percentage indicators and allows the transfer of

data into a report format via PDF or Microsoft Word. Using the Qualtrics Reports Tab, I was able to produce an efficient summary of the data extracted from the questionnaire. This summary provided concise and specific insights into the trends which became evident in the data. Other attributes of the Reports Tab include table and charts which were aided by a visual presentation. The report operated as a key mechanism for unbundling the data contained within my analysis and helped me organise my findings into a structural pattern. I could then use this to substantiate the various discussion points being made in my chapters, particularly chapters four, five and six.

Approval to publish the questionnaire online was granted by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee and was endorsed by the General Manager of Surfing NZ, Ben Kennings. After approval was gained, the distribution of the questionnaire and the recruitment of participants was conducted through email correspondence and Facebook. The questionnaire was disseminated to the various boardrider (surfing clubs) throughout New Zealand. These clubs then promoted the research and distributed the questionnaire link to their club members. The highest percentage of responses were sourced via this distribution channel. Distribution via Facebook also operated as a wider net in an endeavour to reach a younger demographic. Over a six-month time period between April and October (2020), the questionnaire achieved a total of 87 responses as indicated in Table 1 below. The timing of New Zealand’s first lockdown (which commenced on 25 March 2020) and the distribution of this questionnaire shortly after, meant that I was able to capture a captive audience who spent considerable time on providing quality feedback.

#	Answer	%	Count
1	I am aged 16 years or older	100.00%	87
	Total	100%	87

Table 1: Displays the total number of responses which were generated from 16 year old + participants who completed the questionnaire.

The use of the qualitative research method and personal interviews

The professional participants who were interviewed included Christopher Reive, Alex Chappy and Matt Barrett. Christopher Reive is a sports and surfing journalist affiliated with the NZ Herald, tasked with writing weekly sports articles for this media platform. Reive is also responsible for providing mobile updates on live sport featuring New Zealand athletes or teams. I choose to interview Christopher Reive due to his extensive knowledge on New Zealand's sporting landscape, especially New Zealand's second-tier sports like surfing. Alex Chappy is also a sports and surfing journalist with the NZ Herald and until 2020 was a regular guest on Radio Sport NZ. On Radio Sport NZ Chappy featured in a regular segment which discussed New Zealand surfing. I decided to generate information from Alex Chappy as he possesses extensive knowledge on surfing, including information on New Zealand surfing athletes and the World Surf League. Matt Barrett is a senior Outside Broadcast sport producer with Sky Television New Zealand and has directed a range of second-tier sports events such as the New Zealand National Surfing Championship. A significant reason for my decision to interview Barrett was due to his expertise in the broadcasting of sport and his involvement with the creation of the platform 'Sky Next' - a live streaming platform for New Zealand's second-tier sports. Sky Next is covered in depth during chapter four.

Initially, primary source material was planned to be gathered for this thesis through interviews in the field and face to face interviews with media and broadcasting professionals. However, in order to combat the Coronavirus pandemic, two lockdowns were imposed by the New Zealand Government, (March 25 - April 27 and Auckland's Level 3 lockdown from August 12 – August 30) along with the establishment of Alert Levels and social distancing requirements. This resulted in the interviews being conducted via Zoom. While this presented some challenges, face-to-face dialogue and interaction was still able to occur via the video capabilities of Zoom. Three interviews were conducted with surfing personnel along with phone correspondence with Surfing NZ General Manager Ben Kennings. The phone dialogue with Kennings primarily dealt with full discussion over the scope and content of the thesis and engaging his support for the promotion and online distribution of the questionnaire to surf clubs throughout NZ.

To add depth and context to the study, I used a qualitative research method to collect and analyse data from personal interviews. This research method complemented the data which I gathered through the online questionnaire particularly well and is part of the rationale as to why I also included a qualitative approach. By incorporating this research method, I was able to provide valuable insights from broadcasters such as Sky NZ and from organisations like Surfing NZ. I was then able to offset these with the information expressed by the responses provided by New Zealand surfing fans in the questionnaire. With this in mind, I used this research method to provide my thesis with valuable primary research. This is supported by Palmer and Bolderston (2006) who outline how one of the biggest strengths of the qualitative research method, is that it can capture the personal experience of the participant. By using a qualitative method, I was able to further diversify the approaches which were used to source research. This enabled me to gather a wide range of perspectives, data and opinions on the topics relevant to this thesis.

Research Questions

I included four central research questions to help provide shape and direction to this study. “Put simply, a research question is a question that a research project sets out to answer ... generating new insights ...” (Mattick et al., 2018, p. 104). Again, as Mattick et al., (2018) allude to, effective research questions directly focus around a projects topic and are usually quite narrow or specified. I have attempted to do this through the four research questions which are included in this project. As well as shaping the content of the thesis as a whole, these four research questions helped determine what questions to incorporate in the questionnaire. The theoretical framework for this thesis is also guided by these research questions which allow various perspectives to be considered, governing the ways in which the live streaming of surfing interacts within the broader surfing sports space in New Zealand. The rationale behind selecting these particular questions were based on the descriptive, explanatory and evaluation research categories. These categories produced a

range of qualitative data which I was able to use to support my thesis inquiry. The four research questions are:

- 1) Despite surfing receiving high broadcast coverage internationally, why is it still considered as a second-tier sport in New Zealand's mediated sport space?
- 2) Do New Zealand surfing fans prefer to view live surfing through live streaming or broadcasting?
- 3) How do New Zealand surfing fans perceive the value of live streamed New Zealand surfing in contrast to the coverage of international surfing content?
- 4) Is the relatively low percentage of local surfing content streamed in New Zealand able to represent aspects of local surfing subculture?

Limitations faced when writing this thesis

The most significant limitation imposed on the design and research methods chosen for this thesis were the periods of lockdown enforced by the New Zealand Government after the emergence of the COVID-19 in the community. New Zealand's first lockdown was established "on Monday March 23, Ardern and her colleagues decided on an immediate move to Level 3 and thence onwards to Level 4 two days later, triggering a full nationwide lockdown for all but essential services" (Wilson, 2020, p. 281). Strict measures were implemented during these lockdowns such as limiting the size of gatherings, preventing people visiting public services and necessitating social distancing.

In turn I was limited in where I could source research from, such as the University of Auckland Library (and other public libraries), research archives and museums. In addition, I

was unable to conduct any face to face research in the community which I had previously planned.

The most significant limitation that resulted from the national lockdown, was the last minute cancellation of the Corona Piha Pro surfing competition. The Corona Piha Pro was a live surfing competition which was to be held at Piha Beach, west of Auckland, from 16th to the 22nd of March 2020. The event was part of the World Surf League's inaugural 'Challenger Series' and had attracted a wide range of professional male and female athletes from around the world. This was the first time a major international surfing competition was to be held in New Zealand. When discussing the cancellation of this event with SKY Sport producer Matt Barrett, he stated "... from a broadcasting perspective it was massive ... as this event would have absolutely smashed the glass ceiling of surfing in New Zealand" (personal communication, September 23, 2020). If this event had not been cancelled, it would have created invaluable exposure for surfing in New Zealand, likely attracting new fans and sponsors to the sport. Other factors such as participation levels would have also increased due to the interest this event would have created in New Zealand. All hope is not lost however, as the World Surf League have rescheduled the Corona Piha Pro for November 2021.

The cancellation of this event greatly impacted my research as this was designed to be my thesis case study. This case study was set to include live interviews at the event with surfing fans, surfing administrators, live streaming technicians, broadcasters, sports journalists and professional surfers. The cancellation resulted in a substantial loss of primary data which would have been of significance to the thesis. Luckily, I was still able to conduct my qualitative research interviews by Zoom. Whilst this precluded the opportunity of interviewing various respondents in person and at the live event, the questions incorporated in the Zoom meetings were shaped in such a way that I was still able to derive valuable first-hand responses from highly credible respondents. Unfortunately, another by-product of the Piha Pro being cancelled was the research time lost and the repercussions of this on my research planning.

Chapter Four – Live Streaming of Surfing

Live streaming through the World Surf League, is the most recognised way that surfing's sports space is mediated, and is discussed in detail throughout this chapter. The World Surf League live stream World Junior Championships, Qualifying series, Big Wave Tour and the Championship tour. The World Surf League distribute the live stream on the official World Surf League website and mobile application as well as of late on Facebook Live. However, it is also necessary to briefly draw attention to how surfing's sports space is mediated in ways which are not as obvious. Surf cams are one such example which demonstrate how the sport can be mediated in a variety of ways. Surf cams offer a simple form of live streaming that surfers of all demographics in New Zealand are used to accessing. Andriolo et al., (2016) explains how, "Surf cams (or beach webcams) are usually dedicated to provide visual information of beach and wave conditions" (p. 377). Surf cams provide a low-cost practical mediation and as seen in Figure 9, enable surfers to view conditions through a surf cam and are in effect 'live streaming' content in realtime. This portrays how surfing is a sports space which is multi-layered in its mediation, showcasing how niche sports such as surfing have become readily capable of using live streamed technology also within their recreational sports space.



Figure 9: Surf cam at Fitzroy Beach, Taranaki, New Zealand. Photo Margaret Henley.

Internationally, live streaming has rapidly grown in its popularity, becoming one of the most common delivery systems to view live sports content (Arnett et al., 2019). Live streaming relies on the internet to complete its functionality and has bypassed international borders to create a multinational viewership. This chapter discusses how live streaming has positioned itself as an integral part of second-tier sports space and will specifically focus on live streaming's relationship with surfing. This will include the engagement of New Zealand surfing fans with live streamed surf content, supported by findings from the thesis questionnaire and interviews with surfing and sport journalists and broadcasting producers. Live streaming has created a new contemporary viewing dynamic within mediated sports space which will be focused on during this chapter.

The live streaming of global sport

The inclusion of live streaming is a significant addition to the mediated sports space of second-tier sports. It offers sports fans a unique style of viewership and in the case of surfing, this high-quality sports content is provided for free. The live streaming of sport, more specifically minor or niche sport, has reaped the benefits of this new medium and has been well accepted by fans of second-tier sports (Vann et al., 2019). This is due in part to the low-cost structure, accessibility and the substantial range of sports content which is available. The popularity of live sports streaming also extends to include mainstream sports such as those in the Olympics. Battaglio (2016) explains how the NBC reported that during the Rio 2016 Olympics, NBC users streamed over 1.86 billion minutes of live coverage. Many mainstream sports broadcasters such as NBC use live streaming extensively, but they are also well represented by traditional broadcasting systems. This thesis focuses on the importance of live streaming for second-tier sports that do not have the luxury of being able to also broadcast sports content. Another example of live streaming's global presence was during the 2018 Football World Cup held in Russia. Rowe et al. (2019) described how:

... the growing prominence and value of live-streamed sport was strongly confirmed during the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia. For instance, in the United Kingdom, a group stage match between England and Tunisia attracted more than 3 million viewers on the streaming platform, BBC iPlayer... (p. 977).

The Media Statistical agency IAB published a study just prior to the commencement of the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia in which “21 countries participated in the research and 4200 ‘live video streamers’ were recruited, 200 in each country” (IAB, 2018, p. 5).

IAB (2018) found that “nearly two-thirds of viewers surveyed planned to live stream the 2018 World Cup globally” (p. 6). Live streaming platforms now feature mainstream sporting events such as the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cups and in so doing are positioning themselves as a key delivery option in the sports broadcasting market (Rowe et al., 2019). Global live streaming companies are now actively purchasing the rights to distribute sports content to viewers. The level of investment from these companies has been significant, supported by the fact that “in the United States in 2017, Amazon paid a reported US\$50 million for digital live streaming rights to the National Football League’s (NFL) ‘Thursday Night Football’” (Rowe et al., 2019, p. 977). This resides as one of the most expensive media partnerships in the history of the NFL. Due to the popularity of live streaming services like Amazon, the return on investment has been significant. In April 2018, ESPN launched its new, USD 5 streaming service ESPN+, which attracted more than 1 million subscribers in just under five months (Deutsch et al., 2019).

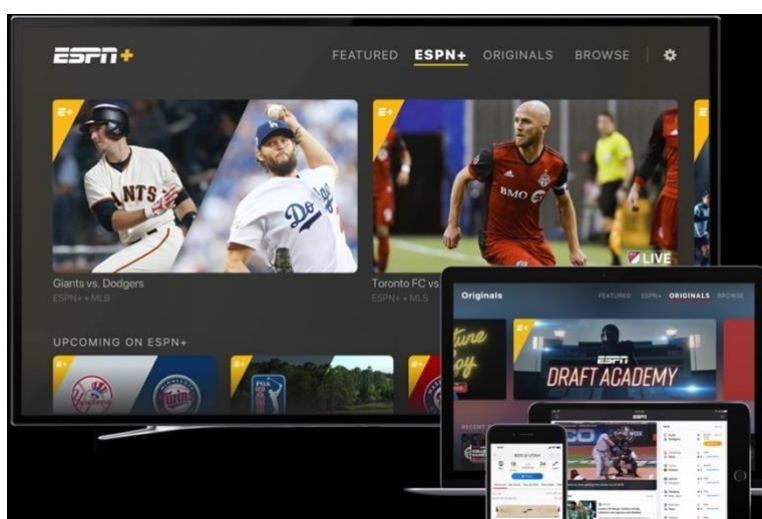


Figure 10: ESPN’s sports streaming service ESPN+ and its home interface. ESPN+

website 10/11/20.

The sports content provided by live streaming sports companies, also extends to the coverage of various domestic sports leagues and second-tier sports such as surfing, swimming, karate, badminton and wrestling. Sports fans can live stream this content on either a localised or globalised basis. John Gleasure, chief commercial officer of DAZN (a British live streaming service) was quoted as stating DAZN "... offers live coverage of the English Premier League, Germany's Bundesliga and Spain's La Liga plus more than 10,000 other live sporting events. These range from handball to darts" (para. 24). This has then provided the impetus for the growth of the live streaming industry in general as well as extending the mediated reach of second-tier sports.

New Zealand live streaming sports providers

The growth of live sports streaming in New Zealand has been slower to progress in comparison to the global trend. Philippa Smith et al., (2016) note that by international standards the general growth of live streaming and broadband use in New Zealand has been surprisingly slow. During the past five years however, "the availability of new hardware and wireless devices has seen steady growth in live streaming ..." (Smith et al., 2016, p. 2). In New Zealand this new delivery option has established itself as a viable platform for the viewing of sports content. New Zealand has previously relied upon global live streaming companies such as Amazon, Twitch, Periscope and Facebook Live. However, since its launch on March 16 2019, New Zealand live streaming sports company, Spark Sport has succeeded in establishing itself as one of the leading providers for sports streaming services in New Zealand. Spark Sport carry out their own live streaming and have publicly announced that they have the goal to become New Zealand's leading sports streaming service and hold the ambition to stream all of New Zealand's most loved sports (Molyneux, 2019). Their success to achieve this however, was somewhat thwarted with the issues arising from their live streaming of the 2019 Rugby World Cup, with customers complaining they could not view the games (Molyneux, 2019).

These issues stemmed from poor picture quality, the lagging nature of the stream and connectivity problems. These challenges are commonly faced by live streaming providers and if they are not dealt with appropriately, can make the platform unattractive for subscribers. Dobrian et al., (2011) indicates that a live stream feed which has a poor video quality, can significantly reduce a user's interaction with that live streaming platform. To avoid this predicament, "... it is crucial for content providers to understand if and how video quality affects user engagement and how to best invest their resources to optimize video quality" (Dobrian et al., 2011, p. 1). Another reason that this is so significant is because live streaming companies such as Spark Sport, need to offer a high-quality product in order to bring subscribers across from more established platforms such as mainstream broadcast television. By doing this, they would also take them away from subscriber satellite's monopoly of sports content held by companies such as Sky NZ.

In response to the competition injected into New Zealand's mediated sports space market by Spark Sport, Sky Television New Zealand began to rapidly increase its own live streamed sports content. They achieved this through the creation of 'Sky Next', managed by Sky NZ outside broadcast director Matt Barrett. Barrett and his team launched Sky Next in 2019, in order to directly engage with local competition for live sports content. Barrett expressed how "Sky Next is a relatively new initiative to support the lower tier sports which don't get a lot of love and perhaps making them mainstream. It is used to help showcase the lower tiers sports to help push them and help grow them so that they can become mainstream" (personal communication, September 23, 2020). Sky Next, live streams their content through their own YouTube channel, which currently has just under 12,000 subscribers. While Sky NZ are predominately involved in the broadcasting of sport, live streaming has been an area of rapid growth.

With Sky Next having launched as recently as 2019, it is clear that Sky NZ have been late to the live streaming game when developing sports content. According to Thompson (2017) this is due to Sky's historical monopoly over sports content in New Zealand. When the royalties and digital delivery for broadcast sports content became separated in New Zealand, Sky would purchase the exclusive broadcast and digital rights but would not share

this content. Sky NZ used this as a commercial strategy to shut down any competition which they might have faced and in doing so further monopolized their control over sports broadcasting in New Zealand.

However, it appears that Sky NZ might have carried this out for too long. Now, contemporary advancements in sports broadcasting technology has seen the commencement of what Yu (2020) calls the “fragmentization” era of live streaming, which has left Sky NZ scrambling to maintain its dominance. Sky NZ’s control over this mediated sports space has therefore been impacted particularly heavily and they have rebranded and rapidly provided alternate delivery options inaugurated through Sky Next. In comparison to other countries, Sky NZ has been slow to adjust to the modern live streaming sports space. This is supported by a report published by NEP (2020) which found that Sky NZ currently cannot match the live streaming abilities and technology exhibited by international live streaming providers. As a result, Sky NZ’s monopolisation of sports content is for the first time being challenged, with the main challenge coming from Spark Sport.

Live streaming of second-tier sports

Fans of second-tier sports are exceptionally loyal (Neal & Funk, 2005). Live streaming is a perfect viewership option for those niche sports, such as surfing, where the sport is contested globally and where limited local broadcasting exists. Live streaming presents “...the opportunity for these niche sports to be exposed” (Hanas, 2007, p. 1). Without a live streaming service, many niche sports would not have the opportunity to be viewed, which would deprive sports fans of being introduced to a new sport and would prevent second-tier sports from growing their audience. Second-tier sports are also attracting increased sponsorship. This is supported by Bartley Morrisroe (2003) who describes that “the great thing about sponsorship opportunities of this size and cost is that they allow companies to get into grassroots marketing, where companies can more closely zero in on their target markets...” (p. 4). This has been significant for the development of second-tier sports, particularly in relation to their popularity. A further benefit provided by second-tier sports is

that they have enabled sports fans to discover new sports which they may not have considered viewing previously. As a result, many second-tier sports are increasingly using social media live streaming platforms such as Facebook Live, because it allows the discovery of their sport or event, ultimately attracting new fans (Biddiscombe, 2016).

The viewership of World Surf League live streams by New Zealand surfing fans

Globally, the broadcasting of surfing via television has been inferior to the live streaming of surfing. This is primarily due to the World Surf League, who control all aspects of surfing coverage and have adopted live streaming as their preferred method of delivery, which it then distributes to surfing's fanbase via the World Surf League website and recently Facebook Live. While the World Surf League do enable some broadcasters to provide irregular surfing content on their networks, including Sky NZ, live streamed surfing has been rapidly increasing its popularity within the international surfing community. As discussed in chapter two, New Zealand has been slow to become part of the live streaming trend. However, this is starting to change and was reflected in the findings from the questionnaire. As a way of determining New Zealand surf fans preferred method of viewing content through either live streaming or broadcasting, I included the following question in my thesis questionnaire. *'Do you prefer to watch surfing which is broadcast on television (Sky Sport) or surfing which is live streamed? (World Surf League website/App)'*. As can be seen in Table 2 below, my findings indicated that there were 79 responses to question six. Out of these responses, 41 (52%) advised that their preferred viewing option is 'Live Streamed'.

#	Answer	%	Count
	Broadcast on television	20.25%	16
	Live streamed	51.90%	41
	I watch whatever is available	43.04%	34
	I do not watch any coverage of surfing	7.59%	6

Table 2: shows the delivery preferences for surfing content. 30/4/2020.

These findings were reinforced by comments left by participants in Q. 15's text entry box. One of the responses stated that they prefer to watch live streamed surfing as they enjoy "the immediacy of live streaming and the fact it is 'live'. It helps you feel like you are in the moment ... and is a unique way to watch surfing and sport in general". Similarly, another respondent expressed that "It's free and easy to access [and] there is a wide range of events [such as] the Big Wave Tour, Long Boarding Competition and the Championship Tour". As these two respondents imply, it is clear that the immediacy and ease of access that World Surf League live streams provide, are the features which are valued most by New Zealand surfing fans. Another reason for this is because this ease of access suits New Zealand surf fans active lifestyle and their enjoyment of 'being in the moment' when viewing action sports such as surfing. My findings from question six also demonstrate that only 20.25% of respondents selected the option that they watch 'surfing broadcast on television through Sky Sport'. This presents an obvious example of how the World Surf League have monopolised the viewership of surfing content consumed by New Zealand surfing fans.

New Zealand surfing fans can access the World Surf League's live streaming of events for free via the official World Surf League website or mobile application and since 2018, Facebook Live. Due to the limited broadcasting partnerships which the World Surf League shares with broadcasting companies, they have been able to effectively control surfing's live streamed mediated sports space. In turn, this has expanded the World Surf League's branding presence and reach. Alex Chappy (2020), a NZ Herald reporter and former radio

sport commentator, believes that the “[World Surf League] audience is growing through the roof and is one of the highest growing brands in the world of sport” (personal communication, May 22, 2020). This is set to extend even further in the future with the growing audience preference for more flexible delivery systems.

Improved access to the internet has resulted in an increasing number of people being able to view surfing content via the World Surf League’s live streaming service. As a result of this, the World Surf League have increased their control over surfing’s mediated sports space, while at the same time have enriched surfing’s global community by appealing to fans who live in countries where surfing is not recognised as a first-tier sport such as New Zealand. One of the ways that the World Surf League have increased recognition and interest in the sport of surfing, has been reflected in the diverse array of new surf locations which have been incorporated on the Qualifying Series and Championship Tour. Some of these recent additions include events taking place at the Canary Islands, Israel, Sri Lanka, Chile, Senegal and Auckland. The World Surf League had extended its contemporary reach to New Zealand, by featuring the Corona Piha Pro, March 16-22, 2020, marking “... the WSL's return to New Zealand for the first time in more than five years ...” (Reive, 2020, para. 4). The Corona Piha Pro and its cancellation due to COVID-19, is discussed in more detail in chapter five.

World Surf League’s use of live streamed production techniques

A contributing factor to the World Surf Leagues success as a live streamed sports production, especially in New Zealand, has been due to its production style and its coverage of events. Due to the lack of high-quality live sports streams for surfing created within New Zealand, a greater appreciation exists for the surfing content provided by the World Surf League. World Surf League live streams attract viewers to this mediated sports space through both the quality of the streaming as well as the event itself. The production values and technology used by the World Surf League, allow their live stream to capture live surfing action from a variety of angles and perspectives, creating a pleasurable viewing experience.

Troy Drier (2018) from Sports Video Group (SVG) expands on the way the World Surf League use this technology, describing in a recent article how:

The WSL live-stream events on its own, a complex operation using a dozen or more cameras. The setup includes eight action cameras, with one in the water, a drone overhead, and one just for slo-mo footage. It also includes three on-set cameras, one roving camera, and between three and five point-of-view cameras capturing establishing shots, locker rooms, and local color (para. 6).

The content captured by these cameras is distributed in 1920 x 1080 HD live streams.

These streams are uploaded to the World Surf League website, their mobile app and Facebook Live. Users can view this content instantly and for free through creating an online account with the World Surf League. “Fans see different streams depending on where they’re located. The WSL create geo-targeted streams featuring different branded and targeted elements within each ... feed” (Drier, 2018, para. 9). The majority of New Zealand surf fans are fortunate that they have access to adequate internet connectivity to access World Surf League live streams. New Zealand surf fans can enjoy the World Surf League’s production in the highest picture resolution available. A questionnaire respondent specifically noted the appeal of these high production values, describing how “The World Surf League provide a high level and quality of production” and include a “variety of camera angles and high-quality filming”. This experience makes it more likely that first time viewers will return and view future events via this platform.

Many of the camera shots used by the World Surf League during event productions, feature picturesque scenery showcasing beautiful beaches such as Piha Beach and the coastline and marine life. This was also supported by Sky NZ sports producer Matt Barrett, who stated “what is not to love about looking at a frame which is filled with beautiful water at a beach location where you see people relaxing by the water” (M. Barrett, personal communication, September 23, 2020). When watching World Surf League live streams, viewers are treated to a therapeutic live experience which stimulates positive emotions. From a well-being perspective there is evidence that watching surfing also helps your mental health by providing a meditative experience which contributes to an enhancement of your mental

well-being (Taylor and McClure, 2017). In addition, as New Zealand is a country which is blessed with beautiful scenery, many New Zealand surfing fans are already ‘nature lovers’ which contributes further to their enjoyment and engagement with these live streams. An example of a relaxing surfing spot can be seen through the scenic landscape of Piha Beach in Figure 11.



Figure 11: Piha Beach, West of Auckland, featuring the iconic Lion Rock in the foreground. NZ Herald 10/09/19.

Another reason for New Zealand’s high viewership of World Surf League live streams is due to the limited local surfing coverage screened in New Zealand. A respondent in the questionnaire expanded on this indicating that “In New Zealand we don't host many WSL or ISA [International Surfing Association] sanctioned competitions, more challenger, qualifying and grom [junior] series”. The World Surf League is therefore the only streaming service provided for New Zealand surf fans to view surfing events. Outside of the live streaming provided by the World Surf League, it is rare for a traditional broadcaster such as Sky NZ to provide broadcasting content of surfing within New

Zealand, aside from the National Surfing Championships. The broadcasting of New Zealand's National Surfing Championships on television only occurs once a year and often the event receives minimal promotion.

New Zealand surfing fans desire for local surfing content

The thesis questionnaire respondents expressed a strong desire to have access to more local surfing content. This was supported by my findings - particularly in Question 11 which asked respondents, *'What type of surfing coverage would you like to see more of in New Zealand?' Of the 72 responses, 44 (61%) preferred 'Local Coverage'*. This sentiment was also supported by responses provided in the text entry boxes.

Respondents expressed that "It would be nice to see the increased live streaming of New Zealand competitions however" and "While [international] live streaming is nice to watch it would be beneficial to see more coverage of New Zealand surf live streaming". There is an indication from these responses that New Zealand surfing fans believe an increase in the live streaming of local content will greatly benefit the sport in New Zealand. As they expressed, these benefits will produce "... benefits for Surfing NZ from broadcasting rights & sponsorship etc". If more local surfing content was produced in New Zealand, then as these findings signal, viewership of these contests would be high. The desire for more localised surfing content in New Zealand was also supported by Matt Barret (2020) who described how:

There is always a desire to get more local content out there ... Local content is key, because you can relate to it as you are from the region or you know somebody, or you have heard of somebody competing in the sport and instantly you have a buy-in (personal communication, September 23, 2020).

According to Barrett, Sky NZ aim to provide an increased amount of localised surfing content in order to broaden the recognisability of the sport. However, increased levels of recognisability for second-tier sports like surfing can only achieve this through a consistent and reliable flow of content. The live streaming platform 'Sky Sport Next', has been created

by Barrett and his team in order to change this. Barrett (2020) described how “Sky Next is a relatively new initiative to support the lower tier sports which don’t get a lot of love and perhaps making them mainstream. It is used to help showcase the lower tiers sports to help push them and help grow them so that they can become mainstream” (personal communication, September 23, 2020). Barrett’s statement demonstrates how broadcasters can have a significant role in boosting the recognition of second-tier sports. Along with this, it is also an indication of how increasingly flexible mainstream broadcasters have had to become with the rapid uptake in delivering sport content via live streaming.

The platforms and devices used by surfing fans when viewing World Surf League Live streams

The World Surf League has made it possible to access a live stream on nearly any device which has internet connectivity. This accessibility has expanded the World Surf League’s global mediation. The World Surf League do however suggest watching their live stream via their website or mobile App. The World Surf League App is a recently provided ‘on-the-move’ mobile viewing option. This was supported by a respondent in the questionnaire who stated, “The live streaming of surfing makes it so accessible for anyone with a phone [mobile device]”. Mobile viewing has enabled New Zealand surfing fans to watch live surfing content remotely. Sports and surfing journalist Christopher Revie described how “being able to tune into any comp when they are on through my phone or from my laptop is great” (C. Revie, personal communication, May 22, 2020) and New Zealand surfing fans agree with Revie, as indicated by the responses to the thesis questionnaire.

One of the questions provided in the questionnaire, was ‘*What platforms or devices do you watch surfing on?*’. As can be seen in Table 3 below the computer proved to be the most popular device and was selected by 56 participants. These findings also indicated that viewership of live surfing content via a mobile phone amounted to 58.23%. This conveys how mobile phone viewership is becoming an increasingly popular way to view surfing

content but still has a way to go if it is to rival the computer as the preferred device used by New Zealand’s surfing community to view live surfing content.

#	Answer	%	Count
	Computer	70.89%	56
	Mobile phone	58.23%	46
	Television	58.23%	46
	Other	5.06%	4
	Total	100%	79

Table 3: Indication of preferred delivery systems by thesis questionnaire participants.

Thesis questionnaire 30/4/2020.

In general, most New Zealanders are fortunate to have in most cases a computer or mobile phone. Stephenson et al., (2014) illustrates that “more than half of mobile devices in New Zealand are now smart phones” (p. 2) whose video capabilities and other similar functions greatly appeal to consumers. This is particularly popular with the younger demographic who “... use their phones longer and usage is directed towards entertainment and specialized apps” (Andone, et al., 2016, p. 9). As Maggie Buxton (2015) has illustrated, “the worldwide uptake of smartphones is exponential. Statistics NZ has reported that more than half of New Zealanders are now accessing the Internet via a mobile phone ...” (p. 30). This provides further evidence as to why live streaming surfing viewership via mobile devices is growing in popularity in New Zealand.

The influence New Zealand professional surfers have on the live streaming viewership preferences of New Zealand surf fans

During recent years, New Zealand surfers have increasingly been representing their country on the international stage. In 2001, Gisborne’s Maz Quinn was the first Kiwi surfer to

successfully qualify for a position on the World Surf Leagues Championship Tour (NZ Herald, 2018) the top-tier of international surfing. Quinn was on the tour for one year before being relegated back to the Qualifying Series. Taranaki local Paige Hareb occupied a spot on the former ASP Women's World Tour (since renamed the World Surf League Championship Tour) between 2009 and 2014. It wasn't until 2019 however that a reinvigorated Paige Hareb and Ricardo Christie both returned to the Championship Tour. Reporter Duncan Johnston (2019) described how it was an exciting time for New Zealand surfing as Hareb and Christie created a New Zealand double act by qualifying for the surfing's top tour at the same time in 2019.

By virtue of Hareb and Christie qualifying for the male and female Championship Tour, viewership of World Surf League live streams by New Zealand surf fans, especially the most passionate surfing fans, increased when Hareb and Christie were competing live in WSL competitions (Heyden, 2018). This high engagement rate would often persist as long as Hareb or Christie remained in the event. Hareb and Christie actively promoted the World Surf League to New Zealand surfing fans. They utilised social media platforms such as Instagram to achieve this as well as interacting with New Zealand's local surfing community, encouraging fans to live stream the Championship Tour events that they were competing in. Figure 12 below shows Ricardo Christie informing his fans of what upcoming events he will be competing in via a post on his official Instagram account which received over 500 likes. Christie's Instagram page as of the 24th of April 2021 has nearly 50,000 followers.

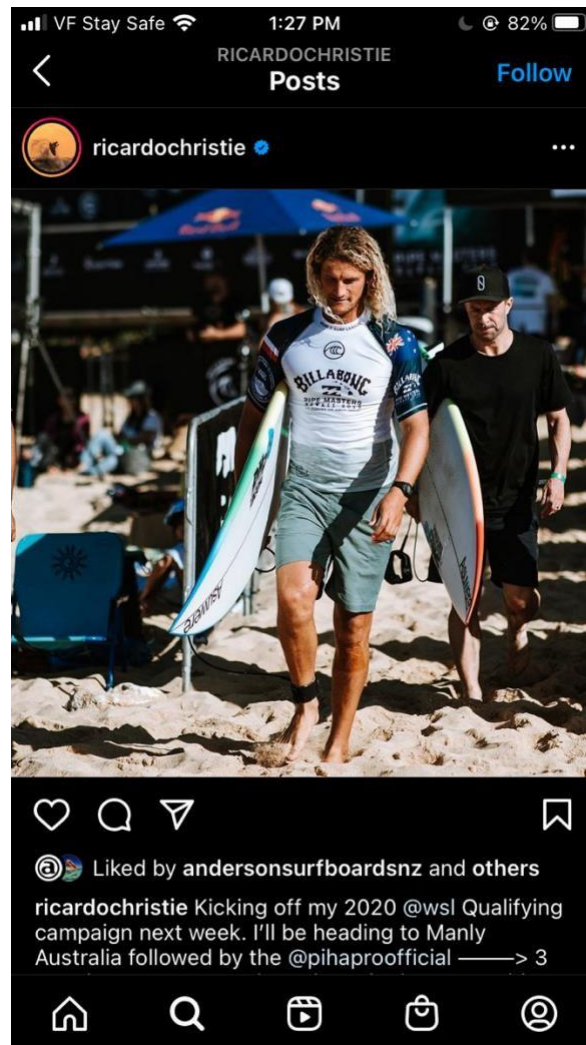


Figure 12: Instagram post by New Zealand surfer Ricardo Christie 17/3/2021.

Ella Williams, a “... former women’s world junior champion and now Olympic hopeful ...” (Umbers, 2018, para 4) has also had a significant role in promoting the World Surf League and its live streaming of events. These include the Qualifying Series events which she is currently competing in. At the age of twenty-five, Williams has connected well with younger New Zealand surf fans, resulting in an increasing engagement with a younger demographic. A questionnaire participant describes that they “would like to see more [World Surf League] content as I follow Ella Williams ...”. It is clear that New Zealand surf fans have been inspired by the success of local grown talent. This has a knock-on effect which encourages live streamed surfing viewership. This is as a result of the influence constituted by athletes such

as Ella Williams, with young New Zealand surfers having an increased desire to watch live streamed surfing competitions which feature their favourite local athletes.

Being able to watch their favourite local heroes compete on the international stage has been inspirational for young New Zealand surfers and has seen an increase in the number of young athletes looking to pursue professional surfing. This link has been examined by Keith (2019) who describes that live streaming has helped this to occur, playing a role in encouraging the next generation of New Zealand surfers to get out there and give competitive surfing a go. Belinda Wheaton expanded on this during her presentation to the Surfing Social Conference at the University of Waikato in February 2016. This conference was partly sponsored by The Wilf Malcom Institute of Educational Research (2016). Wheaton stated how a pronounced increase can be seen in the number of young athletes transitioning to competitive surfing, assisted by the World Surf Leagues live streaming of surfing competitions. Taking this into consideration, the live streaming of surfing through the World Surf League, can be regarded as being extremely beneficial for the development of surfing at the grass roots level in New Zealand.

The interactivity between surfing fans and the World Surf League during live streams

Another unique feature of live streaming is its interactive capability. In a technological age where viewer retention and sustainability are critical, live streaming providers are harnessing interactivity to engage directly with viewers. Mayra Gomes (2019) explains how “Live streaming audience engagement is the antidote to our short attention span. When live streaming is interactive and exciting, it will be harder for the audience to look away” (para. 6). People who access live streamed content, such as World Surf League fans, typically hold a communal desire to connect with other fans who are live streaming the same event. Through digital interactivity this communication is able to occur and is a contributing factor to live streaming’s popularity. The interactivity incorporated by the World Surf League in their live streams, has also cultivated financial benefits. With more surf fans engaging with

the interactivity in these live streams, they watch the event for a longer time period. Heywood (2007) supports this, indicating that surf companies actively seek sponsorship opportunities which provide their brand with extensive uninterrupted exposure.

The World Surf League have enhanced their interactive features with their live streams, especially for the last two Championship Tour seasons. Prior to the start of 2019, the World Surf League described how fans will now have access to additional features to enhance their experience. These include things like interactivity with commentators, mobile-friendly graphics packages, heat predictions and optional live chat ... (World Surf League, 2018).

The inclusion of live 'Heat Picks' allows viewers to vote on the World Surf League website who they think will win an upcoming heat and what scores the athletes will achieve. The surf fan can interact with this feature via a computer or their mobile device and simply select the athletes from the interactive box below the live stream. A percentage rating is provided, showing the viewer if other surf fans agree with them and how their own selection correlates with others. This provides fans the opportunity to actively engage with surfing's globally mediated sports space. This new feature has been favoured by New Zealand surf fans, with a respondent in the questionnaire describing "I enjoy the interaction levels that the live streaming of surfing provides. For instance you can pick who you think will win the heat by voting for the surfer when watching on your computer and mobile. This is a cool innovation for the sport". These two World Surf League interactive features are evident in Figure 13 and Figure 14 below.

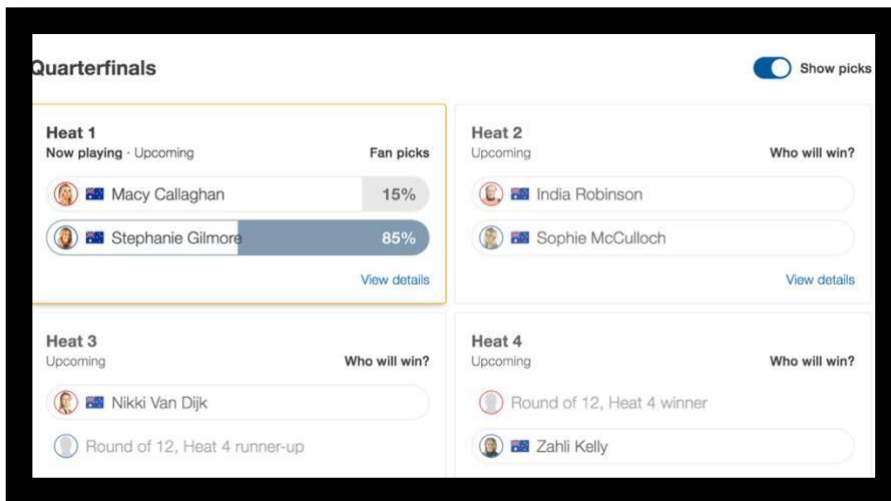


Figure 13: The interface viewers use when interacting with a World Surf League live stream via 'Heat Picks'. Boost Mobile Pro, South Stradbroke Island, Australia 6/10/2020.

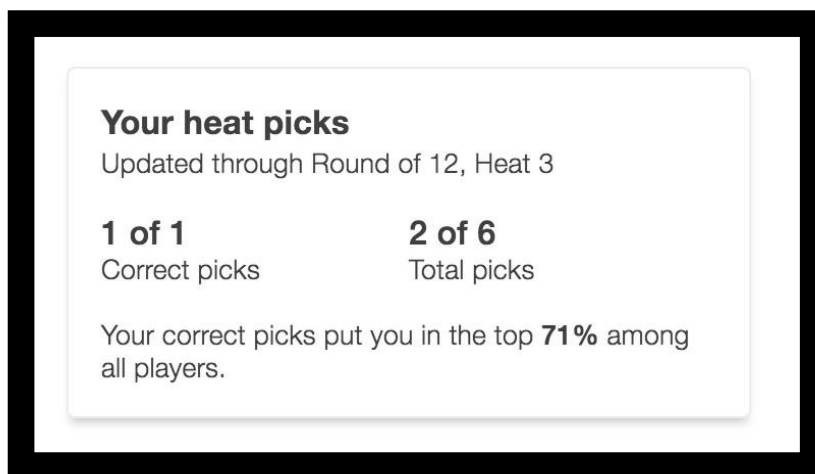


Figure 14: Viewers can compare how well they do in 'Heat Picks' in comparison to other World Surf League fans. Boost Mobile Pro, South Stradbroke Island, Australia 6/10/2020.

Interactivity between World Surf League live streams and surfing fans has also been initiated through notifications. This has encouraged an increased interactivity and personalised invitation to engage with the content. Surfing fans have been provided with a notification alert from the World Surf League App on their phone, when an athlete they follow, (ie Ricardo Christie or Paige Hareb) are about to commence their surf heat. This forms an interactive relationship between the live stream and the surfing fan as this platform offers

the fan a place where they can 'follow' and interact with their favourite surfer (Santos, 2018). This was supported by a participant in the questionnaire who stated that "I follow Ella Williams and Ricardo Christie". In doing so, it constructs greater personalisation for the viewer when watching the live stream. This increases their enjoyment of the content and means that they are more likely to engage with World Surf League live streams and its interactive features in the future. As the World Surf League own and manage their own streaming service, the surfing fan is however totally reliant on whatever content the W.S.L wish to provide. The fact that a surf fan can follow one of their favourite surfers via the World Surf League service increases the likelihood of a higher level of engagement.

Fantasy surfing

Fantasy Surfing has also been implemented to increase the interactivity options for surf fans. As is common with many other sports and its fantasy sports component, fantasy teams have athletes participating in real-life (Varma et al., 2019). Fantasy Surfing is directly linked to live streamed surfing content. Athletes receive points in 'real-time' when surfing heats, with viewers being able to watch their athletes receive points for their fantasy team 'live'. Fantasy Surfing has been popular with viewers and there are currently just under 100 New Zealand Fantasy Surfing teams and just under 90,000 global players competing in the 2021 Championship Tour season. One of the highlights for many Fantasy Surfing managers, are 'Fantasy Surfing Leagues' which often consist of teams from local surfing communities such as New Zealand. The World Surf League (2019) has provided the following explanation on how the fantasy surfing league works:

Your men's and women's teams are automatically entered in the overall leaderboard for each event, but private leagues are a great way to play against friends only. You can invite anyone via email, private link or social media by clicking Create a League (para. 15).

On a personal note, fantasy surfing has positively enhanced my viewership experience of World Surf League live streams, increasing my engagement with the live content. As seen in Figure 15 below, I was able to select a range of surfers who I enjoy watching compete. For

many, fantasy sport is one of the most common reasons why fans of all ages watch sports content, especially content which is live streamed. Sports fans often “... increase their time watching games as a result of their fantasy sport participation, showing a tendency to watch games strictly for the purposes of following relevant fantasy players regardless of the involvement of their favourite team” (Karg and McDonald, 2011, p. 331). The World Surf Leagues fantasy surfing feature has become an important part of surfing’s live streamed mediated sports space. As Karg and McDonald (2011) articulate, participation in fantasy sports games, has progressed to become a vital component of fan engagement with a variety of sports.

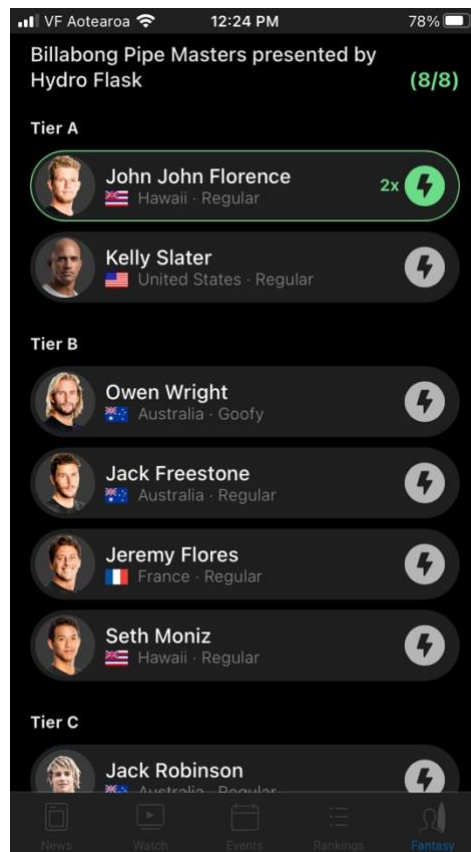


Figure 15: My fantasy surfing team for the World Surf League Billabong Pipe Masters in Oahu, Hawaii 8-20 December 2020.

The live streaming of World Surf League content through Facebook Live and the influence of Instagram

Social media has driven the significant rise in the World Surf League's global popularity. The three forms of social media which have contributed to this are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. These platforms also cater for the live streaming of surfing content from the World Surf League and offer fans options through which to engage with surfing's sports, social and mediated spaces. This can be seen particularly with Facebook Live. In the contemporary mediated sports space, where the impact of social media sheds an immense influence (Gadiraju, 2016), the World Surf League have harnessed this extremely effectively. This is evidenced through the 'likes' and 'follower' numbers. As of June 2020, the World Surf League Facebook page had 6.8 million Facebook likes. Furthermore, on the official World Surf League Instagram page, 3.7 million people currently follow the page as is shown in Figure 16 below and on Twitter the World Surf League page consists of 1.9 million followers. These numbers demonstrate how the World Surf League, through social media, entails significant influence on the engagement surfing fans have with their sport.

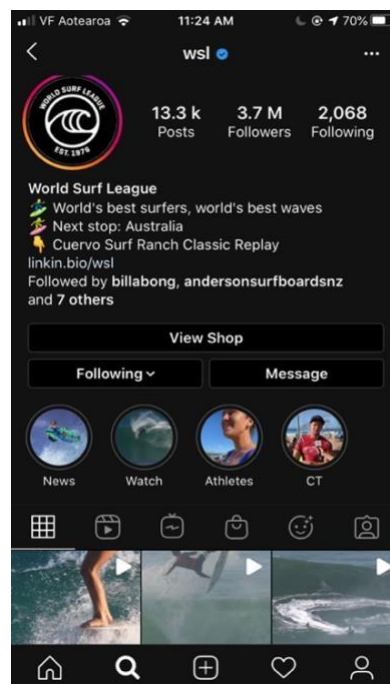


Figure 16: The World Surf League's official Instagram account as of 31/10/2020.

Facebook Live, has enabled New Zealand surfing fans to watch surfing live streamed via social media. Facebook Live commenced in 2016 and has quickly emerged as one of the most influential live streaming platforms to date. Facebook Live has become an especially popular platform for second-tier sports who "... want to reach new audiences and boost engagement with existing ones ..." (Wowza, 2017, p. 3). Facebook Live often increases awareness for second-tier sports and as "Facebook Live Streaming will continue to grow in popularity" (Wowza, 2017, p. 12) it presents a viable platform for second-tier sports such as surfing to utilise. As can be seen at the top left of Figure 17 below, a small box is included indicating that 909 viewers are currently watching the live stream.

Interactive features such as this are deliberately placed to encourage new viewers to join the stream and enhances their visual engagement. Interactivity can also be seen in this example through the text at the bottom stating "Watch together with friends or with a group" encouraging communal viewing. The option to read comments as well as provide a comment are also enabled and the share button located toward the bottom right of the live stream (just above the messenger symbol) encourages the user to 'share' the event on their personal Facebook page. All of these features are deliberately included to promote an interactive experience for the viewer with the hope that they will socially share the live stream or at least encourage their peers to watch the stream.

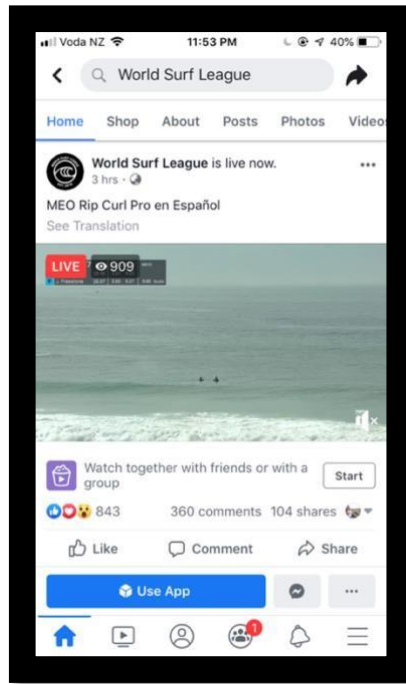


Figure 17: An example of a Facebook Live stream, from the MEO Rip Curl Pro, held in Peniche, Portugal in 2019. Facebook Live 2/10/2020.

Exclusive media partnership between Facebook Live and the World Surf League

The World Surf League and Facebook Live recently announced they would commence a partnership whereby they would simulcast live streamed World Surf League events on their platform. Senior Forbes magazine editor Kurt Badenhausen (2018) describes how the World Surf League and Facebook inked a ground breaking agreement which made the social media platform the digital social media home for WSL's live events for the 2018 and 2019 seasons. This exists as the largest media deal in the history of the W.S.L. Viewership of World Surf League events has been greatly enhanced as a result of this conjunction with Facebook Live, with all tiers of the sport showing considerable growth. This is supported by World Surf League CEO Sophie Goldschmidt, who stated that "in 2019 the number of viewers tuning into the live streams of the WSL's professional surfing competitions online ... has increased

by more than 25% compared to last year...” (Peterson, 2019, para. 2). With regard to the logistics of the deal, it provides a win-win for both parties:

Although neither side is discussing the financial terms of the deal, the WSL is provided with an live-streaming outlet, while retaining broadcast rights and the right to host on-demand videos on its own platform. Facebook gains a young and affluent global audience ... 20%-25% of the WSL’s viewers are in the U.S. Facebook have [also] generated revenue through various advertisements (Dreier, 2018, para. 2).

Additional findings

While many New Zealanders still watch surfing live streams via the World Surf League website or mobile application, Facebook Live has also become a popular alternate viewing space for surfing fans. It is predicted internationally that the number of surf fans looking for surfing content via Facebook Live will increase in the future, especially as the youth demographic grows. Chris McMullan (2018), expects that the millions of fans who streamed surfing on Facebook Live will continue to do so in the future and the platform will grow in popularity, especially with those fans who are competent with live streaming technology. This international trend is reflected in the findings from my thesis questionnaire. Question 9 asked participants *‘Do you watch surfing events which are live streamed on Facebook?’*. Out of the 81 responses for question 9, 55.56% advised that they do watch live surfing via Facebook Live. As can be seen through this evidence, New Zealand surf fans viewership of surfing via Facebook Live does equate to the viewership habits of surf fans in other countries.

#	Answer	%	Count
	Yes	55.56%	45
	No	44.44%	36
	Total	100%	81

Table 4: Highlights the total number of participants who watch surfing via Facebook Live.

Thesis questionnaire 30/4/2020.

The evidence relating to surfing viewership via Facebook Live was further reinforced by participant responses in my questionnaire. One participant described that “I think Facebook and Instagram are great platforms that should be utilized more and would be helped by potentially more insights from [surfing] professionals”. Another respondent stated that “Good use of Facebook Live means that a live-streamed event can easily be shared with people ... interested in surfing”. These responses indicate how New Zealand surfing fans are becoming increasingly in tune with surfing’s contemporary association with various social media platforms. They convey how New Zealand surfing fans currently hold positive viewpoints toward the role platforms such as Facebook Live have in relation to the viewership of the sport. This will likely increase further as younger New Zealand surfing fans begin to explore and interact with more surfing content through social media options.

These findings also convey how New Zealand surfing fans are moving away from traditional broadcasting and are opting for live streaming. Ultimately, the live streaming of surfing content through the World Surf League’s online platform and mobile app as well as Facebook Live, has exponentially increased surfing’s popularity in New Zealand as well as across the world. The incorporation and inclusion of live streamed surfing content has impacted surfing’s mediated sports space, creating a new dynamic of sports viewership. If the live streaming of surfing continues to rapidly adapt to consumer preferences and the lifestyle of surfing fans, then this mediated sports space will continue to expand in the future. The next chapter will present how the live streaming of surfing engages with New Zealand’s surfing subculture and how this is an example of resistant sports space. The themes present in chapter five will complement the discussion and findings which have been shaped in chapter four: presenting how live streaming has had an influential role in the progression, innovation and viewership of surfing by New Zealand’s surfing subculture.

Chapter Five - New Zealand's Surfing Subculture as a resistant sports space

This chapter focuses on the relationship between live streamed surfing viewership and New Zealand's surfing subculture, in particular the ambivalence of this subculture where there is still an element of resistance to the opening up of this sports space. The discussion points outlined in this chapter are supported by the findings from the thesis questionnaire as well as personal interviews I conducted with Matt Barrett, Alex Chappy and Christopher Reive. Discussion will be focused on surfing's global and local subculture, the Corona Piha Pro and the social media platforms Facebook Live and Instagram, which offer modern live streaming delivery options. These modern delivery options appeal particularly to the youth demographic who enjoy the interactive and flexible capabilities provided by this alternate delivery system. This is in contrast to an older demographic who are often not as comfortable with the increased level of mediation.

The live streaming of surfing and its position in the global surfing subculture

Gordon (1947, as cited in Beaumont, 2011) defines "sub-culture as a concept used to refer to a sub-division of a national culture, composed of a combination of factorable social situations and a functioning unity which has an integrated impact on the participating individuals". When relating the idea proposed by Gordon to sports space and surfing, it is clear that surfing's subculture is represented by the sports participants, who themselves embody an alternate subcultural identity which separates them from mainstream society. This chapter explores this further by demonstrating how surfing actively resists mainstream sports space and deliberately creates its own alternative social sports space, which has been reinforced by the live streaming delivery of surfing content.

The origins of surfing's subculture as an expression of resistance can be traced back to the early 20th century in Hawaii. Surfing academic Isaiah Helekunihi Walker (2011) articulates how "... the history of Hawaiian resistance against foreign colonial conquest in the surf zone [relates to] the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom ... with native Hawaiian surfers becoming engaged with waves of resistance to protect their identity, culture and space from further conquest" (p. 127). The colonists referred to by Walker, refer to America's acquisition of Hawaii from 1898 onward. Due to the localised niche nature of the sport in the early 20th century, surfing was limited to a physical sports space rather than a mediated sports space. A dynamic resistant sports space evolved in Hawaii nurtured by native Hawaiian surfers. This resistant sports space quickly gained traction and spread to other surfing subcultures around the world.

Surfing has developed specific characteristics which has led to its broad recognition as a subculture. These characteristics increasingly positioned surfing as a form of resistance against mainstream conformity and mainstream sports space. English sociologist Stephen Hull in his study of the surfing subculture in Santa Cruz, California, describes how "surfing has established stable, stratified patterns of interaction, a specialized culture in the form of language, material symbols, knowledge, norms and values, specialized media, economic interests, and a homogeneous population segment" (Hull, 1976, p. 8). Hull describes that surfing has constantly demonstrated all of these qualities, which are the qualifying traits of a recognised subculture (Hull, 1976). In New Zealand, these traits are still evident and as substantiated through the findings from my thesis questionnaire, these traits are also evident in surfing's contemporary viewership in New Zealand. This strongly local sentiment was supported by a participant in the questionnaire who described how "New Zealand surf culture is one which does not want to be party to high levels of commercialisation, with Kiwis, I feel, having a desire to keep the sport locally favourable ...".

During the 1950's and 1960's, surfing's subculture increased in popularity globally.

Beaumont (2011) describes how the "... establishment of surfing's subculture was in California from where it globalised around the world" (p. 13). California at this time encompassed its own radical subculture "originating among rebellious individuals in refuge

from wage labour and social convention ..." (Moore, 2012, p. 20) often belonging to alternate groups and identities such as goths, punks and bikers. In relation to the Californian surfing subculture, it reflected a lighter and more holistic tone which shared some parallels with the popular hippie subculture at that time. Surfing's tranquil and pleasurable subculture benefited from its foundation in Los Angeles, focused around a vast array of surf beaches such as Trestles, Huntington Beach, Rincon Point, Malibu, Santa Monica Pier and Steamer Lane in Santa Cruz.

Californians surfing subculture "... was full of people who rejected normal society and chose to follow their passions, living their lives around the ocean, even though surfing provides little in the way of accomplishment or achievement in the traditional societal sense" (Zehr, 2015, p. 14). This ethos grew in popularity with surfers globally. In the decades following surfing's subcultural honeymoon of the 1960's, California is still widely regarded as a key influence in surfing's alternate identity. California has long been promoted as surfing's cultural hub with many of its west coast beaches having retained their famous surfing locations. This has been disseminated through and reinforced by contemporary mediated surfing content "... marketed through specialist surfing magazines and surfing media" (Buckley, 2010, p. 405).

Live streaming and its relationship with New Zealand's surfing subculture

Gusfield (1975, as cited in Beaumont, 2011) suggests "... a homogenous culture [is] a mark of community. Factors such as language, moralities and common histories can produce unique "common ties" between a group of people". New Zealand has developed its own homogenous surfing subculture. One of the iconic characteristics of this subculture is the communal identity which has developed within New Zealand surfing's sport space. Surfers feel proud to be part of this subculture and share common homogenous values, experiences and identities with others in the community. While possessing a relatively small surfing community in comparison to countries such as the USA, per capita New Zealand holds one of the highest national surfing participation rates, due in part to our extensive coastline.

Wilkinson (2017) indicates “Surfing NZ estimate that one in 27 people in New Zealand surf”. These high participation rates have contributed to New Zealand’s surfing sports space becoming intrinsically linked with surfing’s national subculture.

Questionnaire participants were asked ‘*What type of surfing coverage do you want to see more of in New Zealand?*’. 44 respondents (61.11%) confirmed that they would like to view more local live streamed surfing content. Participants described that live streaming “Increases [surfing’s] popularity but I’m not sure whether this benefits the sport in NZ. If there was more live streaming of local events - e.g. National champs, then there would be benefits for Surfing NZ from broadcasting rights & sponsorship etc”. This sentiment was supported by another participant who responded “[Live streaming] is good for surfing’s popularity in New Zealand and provides a higher chance for exposure of the sport. It would be nice to see the increased live streaming of New Zealand competitions however”. These findings convey how some in New Zealand’s surfing community believe that live streaming does provide positive benefits for the sport, however they are concerned by the lack of local content which is available. Based on the findings above, it seems that some within New Zealand’s surfing subculture feel the establishment of more local surfing competitions is an effective way to increase the live streamed viewership of surfing in New Zealand.

The influence ‘The Endless Summer’ and ‘Momentum Generation’ have had on New Zealand’s surfing subculture and its mediated sports space

‘The Endless Summer’ (1964).

One of the first films which has provided New Zealand’s surfing subculture with a point of local reference was ‘The Endless Summer’ released in 1964 and directed, produced and narrated by Bruce Brown. Although ‘The Endless Summer’ is steeped within American surfing subculture, the inclusion of New Zealand in the film was significant for New Zealand’s mediated sports space with New Zealand being one of the locations visited by surfers August and Hynson. Joan Ormrod (2005) explains this in more detail: ‘The Endless

Summer' has a simple premise, the quest for the perfect wave, which is one of the defining myths of surf culture and representations of surfing subculture" (p. Brown follows the travels of two surfers, Robert August and Mike Hynson, around the globe in order to experience an endless summer and catch the perfect wave. To do this they travel to little known destinations such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Tahiti and Ghana in addition to Malibu and Hawaii (p. 39).



Figure 18: Movie poster for Bruce Brown's documentary film 'The Endless Summer' (1964). 'Posters and Prints' Amazon.com 30/10/2020.

During their time in New Zealand, Brown and surfers August and Hynson travelled to Piha, Manu Bay at Raglan and Ahipara (Rinehart, 2015). These locations became the surfing epicentres of New Zealand following their inclusion in the film. 'The Endless Summer' heightened New Zealand's interest in surfing's mediated sports space due to the authentic footage that was included and the adventure style production. This created a heightened awareness of New Zealand's surf space also fuelled by a craving for authentic local surfing footage with a strong regional identification with the ocean, beaches and coastline. Following the release of the film, recreational filming and photography became popular with some in New Zealand's surfing community. 'The Endless Summer' is therefore centred around the rejection of a mainstream lifestyle and values.



Figure 19: Mike Hynson entering the water at Raglan, one of the three iconic New Zealand surf spots featured in 'The Endless Summer'.

'Momentum Generation' (2018).

This modern film documentary also reinforces the ethos of rejecting the mainstream and surfing's alternate identity as a site of resistance. 'Momentum Generation' was released on HBO in 2018 and was directed by Jeff and Michael Zimbalist. The film is premised around a group of teenagers from America who enter the echelon of competitive surfing during the 1990's and follows their rise to stardom. Los Angeles Times television critic Robert Lloyd describes how this group is made up of "Kelly Slater, Rob Machado, Shane Dorian, Taylor Knox, Benji Weatherley, Kalani Robb, Ross Williams, Taylor Steele and Pat O'Connell, all present, remembering their teens and 20s from their fit 40s" (Lloyd, 2018, para. 4). The momentum generation group spent a substantial amount of time at Banzai Pipeline in Oahu, Hawaii, which they eventually adopted as their local surf break. The documentary provides a cultural marker signalling how surfing constructs its mediation away from mainstream media channels.

During the film, archived footage was shown which featured the territorialism attitudes of the Hawaiian locals toward the famous Banzai Pipeline surfing break. Ferry (2016) expands on this explaining how some locals have “... physically fought outsiders for surfing “their wave”” (para. 3). Fierce territorialism can be related to New Zealand’s surfing subculture which also upholds similar values of territorialism. This is especially the case when it comes to specific surf breaks and areas such as New Zealand’s iconic Taranaki Surf Highway.



Figure 20: The surfers featured in ‘Momentum Generation’ (2018). World Surf League website 24/02/21.

The ambivalence towards local live streamed surfing content as a form of resistance in New Zealand’s surfing sports space

Some individuals within New Zealand’s surfing subculture oppose the live streaming of surfing whereby “... some surfers are really into the World Surf League and its coverage and some surfers are almost against it or have little interest in it” (C. Revie, personal communication, May 22, 2020). A primary reason as to why this view is held by some

New Zealand surf fans is they want to protect the identity of their local surfing locations. Some within this subculture believe that modern developments in live streaming and the growing interest in sourcing local content, will over expose their favourite local surf spot. An element of New Zealand's surfing subculture is therefore highly protective of its surfing locations and the socialisation that comes with that identity. Kenton Baxter (2018) has studied this in detail articulating that many New Zealand surfers prefer "... to keep surf breaks secret. This is a concept that has cultural significance for surf-riding communities, as secret spots have been part of the surf culture for many years" (p. 33). Expanding on this, some surfing locals in New Zealand, feel the need to protect their cultural surfing values and roots, believing live streaming will perhaps undermine or threaten their surfing traditions by introducing commercialisation to their sport.

Some of the older generation of surfers in the subculture have rejected live streamed viewership, especially the inclusion of local content. This has been important in terms of surfing's position as a second-tier sport in New Zealand. Those within the subculture who belong to Generation X and Generation Z, are more likely to support surfing as a professional sport whereas the older generation would prefer this to stay as a recreational sport. An individual belonging to the 70+ age demographic in the thesis questionnaire explained that "The down side of this live streaming situation [is that] it exposes local breaks to so many more wannabe's. Normally [these surf spots are] just enjoyed by a few close mates". These older New Zealand surfers such as this questionnaire respondent, formed part of the early foundations of New Zealand's surfing subculture whose attitudes and values toward surfing developed in the 1960's, influenced heavily by Californian surfing subculture with these members formulating strong regional territorial opinions and attitudes. These attitudes have been slowly dying out however with younger New Zealand surfers not as concerned with the protection of their surfing spaces.

Mark Stranger (2011) describes this in more detail indicating that "as the 1960's progressed the emergent surfing subculture became enmeshed in the youth counter culture of that period, which further alienated surfers from mainstream society" (p. 34). Consequently, a separation has emerged between those younger New Zealand surf fans who connect with

live streaming and who do not believe this delivery system is a threat and those older members who have resisted this innovation. In many second-tier sports, such a divergence between younger and older members of a subculture is often prevalent in relation to sports viewership. In New Zealand, surfing's slow advancement with its professional level development has resulted in its second-tier status remaining unchallenged. This has played a significant role as to why the viewership of surfing by New Zealand surf fans is still reliant on live streaming. Overtime, the continued presence of live streamed surfing viewership undertaken particularly by younger New Zealand surf fans, has resulted in the generational attitudes regarding surfing viewership remaining unchanged.

Recreational surfing in New Zealand

Marc Miller (2008) describes how surfing internationally is a major "... recreational activity ... and it can bring a social fabric that helps define communities and people. Surfing as an activity can link generations, bring people together [and] provide an avenue for outdoor-based physical activity" (p. 147). This is very much the case in New Zealand and despite recent ambivalent attitude shifts which are held by some New Zealand surf fans regarding professionalism, surfing in New Zealand remains a predominantly recreational sport. The large appetite for adventure and the laid back lifestyle and Kiwiana identity (Neil, 2018) has seen surfing remain as a popular leisure activity. Therefore, the major influence within surfing is more on a recreational level than a professional one, which continues to shape surfing's overall identity in New Zealand.

Historically, the recreational nature of New Zealand surfing has always been a valued attribute of the subculture. As a result, surfing professionalism has been slow to gain traction in New Zealand. When picturing the stereotypical New Zealand surfer, professionalism does not spring to mind (Dawson, 2018). The recreational nature of New Zealand's surfing subculture plays a significant role in this, with a large majority of New Zealand surfers not desiring to be part of the sports professionalisation. In New Zealand, as Dawson (2018) explains, "surfers surf because they love it, that's all they want to

do". "They've never trained as a high-performance athlete because they've never seen themselves as one" (para. 3). This provides another reason why surfing in New Zealand has remained in a second-tier sporting echelon with many in New Zealand's surfing subculture unconcerned with this status. However, younger members within the subculture are starting to value the professional side of surfing more. They have been more willing to give professional surfing a go which has also increased viewership of World Surf League live streams. It is however unlikely that older generations will share an enjoyment of professional surfing over recreational surfing as most prefer to participate in rather than simply view their sport by way of live streaming.

The interaction between New Zealand surfing fans in conjunction with World Surf League content published on Facebook Live

Surfing fans around the world can interact with each other when viewing live streamed surfing on the platform Facebook Live. An example of this is demonstrated in Figure 21 below, in which surfing fans can be seen interacting with various comments, which they are able to view in the 'comments section' to the right of the live stream.

Communication between fans can also be achieved through private messaging, with users able to identify a person's Facebook profile after they leave a comment. For many, comments can make interactivity exciting and add to an enjoyable viewing experience (Haimson et al., 2017). By interacting with others, surfing fans feel a sense of connection with the global surfing community which dually enhances their viewership experience and increases surfing's virtual space. This development in social space can enhance the sociality present in a surfing subculture, influencing greater connectivity among members. Many New Zealand surf fans who belong to the older demographic do resist this interactivity however as they prefer a more traditionalised style of viewership which does not share the same levels of communality.

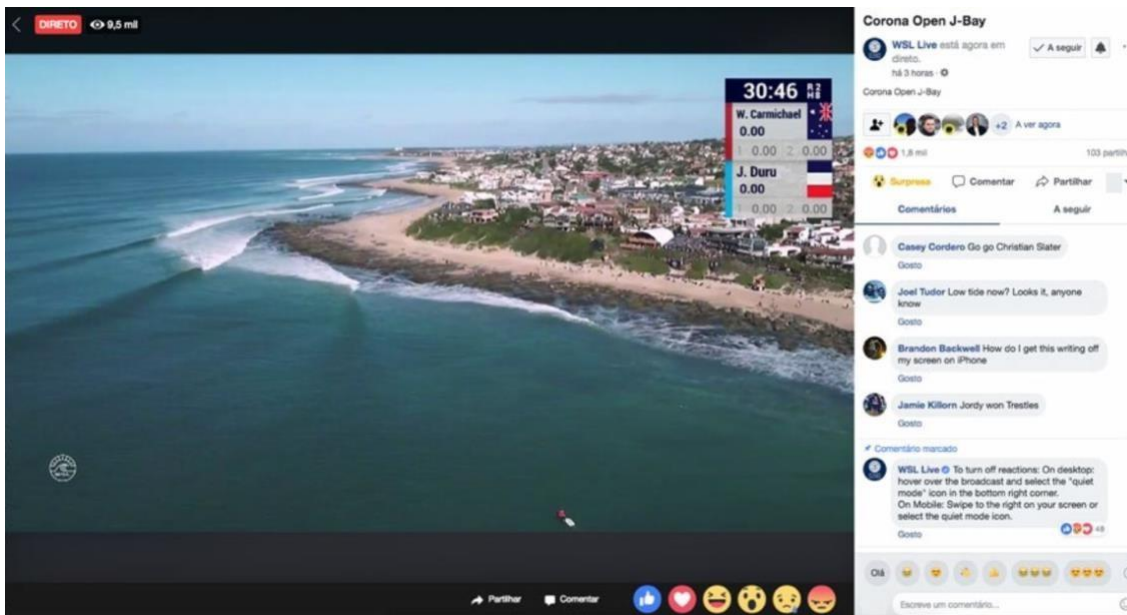


Figure 21: Live streamed footage from the Corona Open J-Bay, 9-19th July 2019, the South African leg of the Championship Tour. Facebook Live 31/10/2020.

A significant part of social media’s involvement with New Zealand’s surfing viewership relates to platform interaction. Mosseri (2018) describes how Facebook Live has long held the ambition to bring sports fans together and construct relationships through live streaming and videos. Mosseri goes onto explain how this is achieved through live videos and streams generating discussion among sports fans on Facebook Live. In New Zealand, surfing fans share their communal sporting identity with others by interacting through the comments section presented under the World Surf League’s Facebook Live streams. Oliver Haimson et al., (2017) explains how “Facebook Live streams offer several types of interactions [such as] comments which are persistent and appear to the right and below the video for viewers...” (p. 49). By liking and commenting on what other New Zealand surf fans are saying, a communal interactivity becomes evident forming a virtual space. This practice is conducted predominately by the younger demographic as they are the ones who use Facebook Live to view surfing the most, as documented in table 5 below.

#	Answer	%	Count
	Total Participants Who Answered Yes	55.56%	45
	16-26 age group	70%	14

Table 5: Demographic breakdown correlating to the number of 16-26-year old’s who watch surfing via Facebook Live. Thesis questionnaire 30/4/2020.

While Facebook Live stream all Championship Tour events, New Zealand surfing fans most often interact with each other during those events that favour New Zealand’s time zone. As evidenced by a questionnaire participant who stated that “I like the SA and European legs as the time zone is good to watch in the evening in NZ [and] on the weekend you can watch aus, indo, fiji during the day”. Accordingly, online engagement and interaction between fans within the same time zone, is stimulated by the World Surf League’s streaming of surfing on Facebook Live. Troy Drier (2018) supports this indicating how the World Surf League is using Facebook Live’s interactive features alongside Facebook Live’s streaming of surfing, to make events more engaging for fans. Watching the event at a preferable time also means New Zealand surfing fans have a greater desire to use the interactive functionality presented by Facebook (they would be more attentive when watching a surfing event during the afternoon as opposed to the early hours in the morning). An example of surf fans interacting with each other is illustrated in Figure 22 below. In this example, fans can be seen interreacting with each other by asking questions, liking or reacting to other user comments through emojis and leaving their opinions on the live surfing heat.

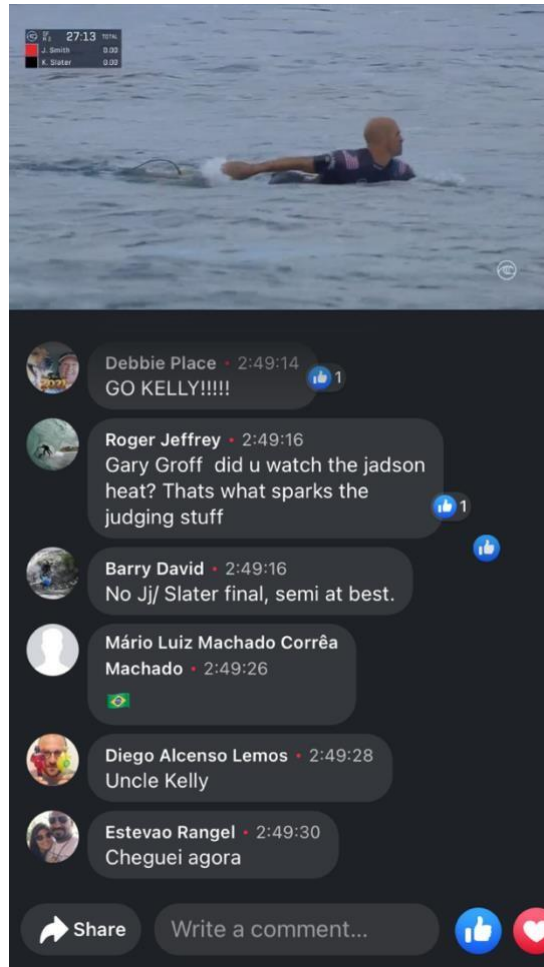


Figure 22: A quarterfinal contested between Kelly Slater and Jordy Smith in the Billabong Pipe Master's (8-20 December 2020) shown on Facebook Live, with fan comments present in the Facebook Live stream. Facebook Live 8/2/2021.

The fan comments above also correlate with the findings from my thesis questionnaire.

One of the respondents from the questionnaire described how Facebook Live streams “brings a sense of excitement more so than what a pre-recorded show would give”.

Another respondent stated how Facebook Live’s interaction “is free and easy to access.

There is a wide range of events (Big Wave, Long Boarding, Championship Tour etc.)”. Upon deeper analysis I found that both of these responses were provided by participants in the 16-26-year-old demographic. This seems to suggest that Facebook

Live is enjoyed most by younger viewers who do not feel jeopardized by this platform. The responses provided by older participants however, especially those who belong to the 60-70 and 70+ demographic do suggest this group are resisting this new delivery system. One of the respondents indicated in the questionnaire that the platform is “Too difficult to rewind and unable to record”. As this response proposes, it seems the contemporary technology used by platforms such as Facebook Live are not being met with the same enthusiasm by older surfing fans in New Zealand. A resistance toward live streaming technology has therefore been developing among this demographic who are not as comfortable with the contemporary technology being used by Facebook Live. It appears that this has contributed to this older demographic’s general resistant attitudes toward the live streaming of surfing.

Chapter six will follow on from the discussion presented during this chapter, focusing on the future outlook of New Zealand’s live streamed surfing viewership as well as its increased commercialisation. This includes consideration of New Zealand’s changing surfing subculture which, as outlined, will continue to develop alongside any future developments initiated by the World Surf League in terms of its live streamed surfing viewership. The discussion on the younger generations engagement with live streaming will also be expanded upon during chapter six, to consider how this dynamic may play out in the future.

Chapter Six - The Future of New Zealand's Live Streamed

Surfing Viewership and its Commercialisation

Chapter six is premised upon the future of New Zealand's live streamed surfing viewership as well as the commercialisation of this live steamed surfing content. The topics which are featured during this chapter are centred on commodification and consumerism, future live streamed technological advancements, sponsorship and the significant impact of COVID-19 on the live streaming of surfing and its viewership. Analysis about elements of surfing's ongoing resistance in New Zealand's surfing sports space will also be included. Findings from the questionnaire and interviews will be used to support this discussion.

The commodification of New Zealand's surfing identity and the contemporary practices of modern surf fashion consumerism

Two factors which will influence New Zealand's future live streamed surfing viewership will be consumerism and commodification. Surfing around the world has become increasingly linked with modern marketing strategies and promotional advertisements (Franklin, 2012). This has stemmed from the Weberian commodification of surfing's culture, lifestyle and identity. In New Zealand the commodification of surfing's identity has been considerably lower than that in America however which has seen commercialisation occur on a more consistent basis from the outset. Today, "almost every aspect of surf culture is commodified, from its functional goods to its symbolic tokens and meanings. The image of surfing is sold ... [through] a process of hypercommodification" (Stranger, 2011, p. 8). Surfing's image is connecting with an increasing number of people, especially those who are from outside the sports space and in turn are associating with the commercialised surfing lifestyle and leisure apparel. This has resulted in the commodification of surfing being expanded and exploited by multi-national corporations (Laderman, 2014). Live streaming has been heavily responsible for the increased levels of commercialisation of surfing that does exist in New Zealand.

Surf companies often built their brands “... based on the sale of surf clothing and other merchandise sold as ‘surfwear’” (Langan, 2002 as cited in Stewart et al., 2008). With “the commodifying practices of business interests ... the symbolic ownership of the sport has shifted from surfers to surfing capital” (Lanagan, 2002, p. 283). Viewers can see this on World Surf League live streams through the branded clothing apparel and fashion accessories worn by athletes who are sponsored by major surf brands such as Rip Curl, Billabong and Quiksilver. Before being interviewed or receiving a trophy, athletes wear clothing apparel such as a sponsored hat or accessories like sunglasses. “For example, when a brand has an exclusive deal with an athlete, and this athlete wins a major competition, the positive image and the interviews the athlete is giving generate brand awareness like athletes sponsored by Red Bull, wearing the brand’s cap on the podiums [and] during interviews ...” (Lesault and Bouvier, 2017, p. 21). With the size and influence of these leading surfing brands set to rise in the future, New Zealand’s streamed mediated sports space will see more commodification via promotional apparel, in the decades to come.



Figure 23: Red Bull sponsored Australian surfer Julian Wilson being interviewed after having just surfed a heat at the Rip Curl Newcastle Cup. World Surf League 8/4/21.



Figure 24: Carissa Moore who is sponsored by Red Bull, celebrating her fourth World title at the Lululemon Maui Pro, Hawaii in 2019. World Surf League 20/03/2021.

With surfing's global commercialisation growing significantly in the past decade, it has rapidly developed an even stronger connection with modern advertising. David Lanagan (2002) describes how "this has been achieved because the image that surfing elicits, of a pleasurable, playful and resistance lifestyle" (p. 286). With this perception to set to remain in the future, the consumer market will rapidly expand as advertisers and sponsors follow demographic preferences. In New Zealand, this will be evident through surfing's future expansion into fashion, something which is welcomed by the youth demographic. Since 2018, Dobson (2019) outlines how in New Zealand there has been a 45% growth in Clothing & Footwear spending, made up significantly of young people and especially females. When purchasing surfing products such as clothing from New Zealand surf brand enterprises (including the likes of Backdoor and North Beach), consumers are not only acquiring the product, they are also investing in the future commodification of New Zealand's surfing sports space. Figure 25 below is an example of a shirt from New Zealand surf wear company North Beach, whose print design features stereotypical New Zealand surf phrases and images.



Figure 25: A modern surfing t-shirt sold by New Zealand company North Beach. North Beach website 16/3/2021.

Despite some of the financial benefits available from sponsorship and surf wear endorsements, the findings from my questionnaire suggest New Zealand surf fans believe the commercialisation of New Zealand's surfing sports space has gone too far. This was evidenced by a participant's response in my questionnaire, who stated that "there has been a steady increase in the amount of advertising that there is and a strong commercialisation presence has become apparent with the [coverage of] the sport". This was supported by another respondent who believes that "there has ... been a steady increase in the amount of annoying and heavily commercialised advertisements". In relation to New Zealand's surf culture, a respondent described how "New Zealand surf culture is one which does not want to be party to high levels of commercialisation, with Kiwis, I feel, having a desire to keep the sport as locally favourable".

These participant responses reinforce that a section of New Zealand surf fans continue to resist surfing's increasingly revenue-generated sports space. If New Zealand's sports space becomes even more commercialised in the future, this could impact the viewership

enjoyment experienced by New Zealand surf fans. This could indeed eventuate as advertisers are increasingly looking to follow the youth demographics migration across different delivery platforms. The protective attitude held by New Zealand surf fans toward their local surfing sports space as is evident with the respondents from the thesis questionnaire, involve these individuals valuing their surfing identity more than the potential revenue able to be sourced via means of commercialisation. In the future these attitudes may change however as the youth demographic in New Zealand are more open to higher levels of commercialisation.

How technological advancements in World Surf League live streams may impact the viewership experience of New Zealand surf fans in the future

The live streaming delivery of surfing content in the future will continue to reflect the modern interests of live streaming companies such as the World Surf League and the technological capabilities of surfing's youth demographic. This is supported by Lottridge et al., (2017) who describes that teens in particular are interested in the use of live streaming platforms which they can watch content on. Sports live streaming companies such as the World Surf League are constantly improving their live streaming performance, distribution proficiency and live stream quality (Kiraly et al., 2010). These advancements will improve surfing's mediated sports space in New Zealand by allowing surfing fans to take advantage of the benefits and innovations provided by, maintained and updated by the World Surf League and its live streamed content. Examples will include improved live streaming quality, enhanced production techniques and the development of new camera angles or perspectives.

A participant in the thesis questionnaire reinforces this quality progression in live streaming, acknowledging "Streaming is likely the future, since fibre optics and 5G will stay around. This major shift in technology will impact distribution rights which will also have economic consequences". This respondent highlights, how the presence of 5G is set to have a significant impact on the entire technological development of delivery systems which will

have a variety of consequences in New Zealand. One of the most significant of these will be, as the respondent alludes, the economic impact. New Zealand companies, particularly those involved in live streaming, will be willing to pay high royalty fees to be able to provide customers with exclusive high-quality streaming content. This is supported by Dunkley (2019) who suggests that “while New Zealand is a small market on a global scale popular sports rights are in massive demand [especially with] local streaming companies like Spark Sport who have entered the fray” (para. 8). As the World Surf League is the sole provider of surfing content, live streaming companies in New Zealand have been prevented from acquiring content rights to distribute surfing events on their platform. This will change in the future if the World Surf League introduce a viewership fee to watch their live streams, providing local New Zealand surfing companies the opportunity to purchase and distribute this content to their own subscribers.

Facebook Live and its coverage of World Surf League events will also see technological advancements in the future. This will include an array of new interactive functions presented during World Surf League live streams on Facebook Live, enhancing New Zealand surf fans viewership of this content. In addition, new mechanisms enabling surf fans to watch these streams in higher definition will also be introduced. With live streaming being an extremely popular way for viewers to interact with each other through shared viewing (Haimson et al., 2017), many New Zealand surfing fans are already familiar with the platform. This will allow an easy transition for New Zealand surfing fans to engage and adapt to any new technological advancements which Facebook Live and the World Surf League add to the platform. If technological advancements via Facebook Live are welcomed by New Zealand surfing fans, then the World Surf League should be able to maintain this current fan base and potentially attract new fans via this platform in the future.

How future resistance through live streamed surfing viewership may play out in New Zealand

It is likely that there will continue to be an element of resistance in New Zealand’s surfing viewership. This resistance will be perpetrated strongly by some within New Zealand’s

surfing subculture, especially local recreational surfers and the older demographic. Many of these members have been driven to resist what they believe is the exploitation of New Zealand's integral surfing identity (Walker, 2011). However, the live streaming of surfing itself actually operates as a form of resistance by being an alternate viewership platform. This is made even more apparent given that New Zealand broadcasting companies such as Sky NZ are starting to increase their live streaming content. New Zealand surfing viewers take pride in the fact that World Surf League live streams have not yet been taken over by major sports televised broadcasters. In the future this could be subject to change however, with Pri Shumate, the World Surf League's chief marketing officer, "confirming that the governing body has begun negotiating its future media deals. We are in the process of figuring out how do we move forward for 2020 and beyond" (McCarthy, 2019, para. 4 and 5).

If indeed the broadcasting rights are sold to major broadcast providers, for instance ESPN, then New Zealand surf fans resistance toward major broadcasters televising live surfing content could be thwarted. This could potentially lead to some New Zealand surfing fans disengaging from viewing live surfing events, with some deciding to solely participate rather than view the sport. This is something already evident among some in the subculture supported by a questionnaire respondent who described that "I can live without it, it's not a significant issue. I would rather do it than watch it". These attitudes are commonly held by recreational surfers and those who are represented by older demographics. This is supported by the fact that this participant was in the 60-70 age bracket. Older generation New Zealand surfers who hold attitudes similar to this respondent, would be unlikely to change their attitudes toward live streaming and any resulting commercialisation in the future. These attitudes result from individuals within New Zealand's surfing community closely identifying with surfing in New Zealand, a sports space which prides itself on its opposition to mainstream commercialisation. This identity is still incredibly important to many New Zealand surfers today.

In the future, those surfing viewers who are part of the younger demographic will soften their resistant approach toward the mainstream broadcasting of surfing as this would be the only way they could view the competitive echelon of their sport. Many younger New Zealand surfers are becoming increasingly interested in professional surfing, especially young women, who as Franklin (2009) describes are inspired by high profile professional surfing athletes, who are viewed as role models by other young women. In the future, these younger female surfers in particular, influenced by the likes of Ella Williams, will want to view professional surfing on whatever platform they can to maintain and grow their future interest in the sport. An important aspect of this is the fact that World Surf League live streams have a significant influence in creating access to role models for young New Zealand surfers who are provided an insight into the professional surfing arena. These young developing surfers, the future of the sport, will become active participants linked with the growth and enhanced platform content.

How has COVID-19 impacted New Zealand's live streamed surfing viewership and what of the future?

COVID-19 has had an immeasurable impact on sports around the world, which has resulted in severe repercussions, especially regarding the live streaming of sport. Dan Jones et al., (2020) outlines how sports “matches and competitions are being cancelled or postponed, disrupting governing bodies, organisers, teams and athletes — as well as the non-stop live sports content we have come to expect” (p. 1). The majority of World Surf League Championship Tour events were forced to be cancelled and from early 2020, there was no live streamed surfing content for surf fans to enjoy. To understand what New Zealand surfing fans thought about the impact of COVID-19 on surfing events in New Zealand and across the world, the following question was included in the questionnaire: *‘In light of the recent Coronavirus pandemic, how significant do you think the impact of COVID-19 will be on the live streaming of surfing in New Zealand?’*

#	Answer	%	Count
	Highly significant	22.97%	17
	Significant	41.89%	31
	Somewhat significant	20.27%	15
	Not significant at all	14.86%	11
	Total		74

Table 6: Depicts how significantly respondents believe COVID-19 will impact the future live streamed surfing viewership in New Zealand. As detailed in my thesis questionnaire 30/4/2020.

As my findings confirm in Table 6, out of a total of 74 responses, 17 (22.97%) selected ‘Highly significant’ and 31 (41%) selected ‘Significant’. This represents almost 65% of all respondents believing the pandemic will have a considerable effect on the live streaming of surfing in the future. Encouragingly, my findings do suggest that the majority of respondents indicated that they would definitely view any future World Surf League live streams once these became available. This reflects how New Zealand surfing fans currently hold a predominantly optimistic viewpoint when it comes to watching their sport in the future. These findings and the attitude held by New Zealand surfing fans toward the future viewership of their sport via live streaming could be subject to change - depending on how long it takes for professional surfing competitions to recommence.

An aspect which is unlikely to change in the future is the attitudes held by some individuals in New Zealand’s surfing community towards their sporting freedom. Despite the restrictions enforced by the New Zealand Government in their efforts to combat COVID-19, some surfers defied these laws and went surfing regardless. As seen in Figure 26 below, this resulted in some of those surfers being spoken to by the police. The individualistic nature and rebellion facet of the sport was apparent here with even the strictest of rules not deterring some New Zealand surfers from venturing into the water. For some New Zealand

surfers, especially those who surf on a recreational level and are part of the older generation, being unable to view surfing via live streaming will not be a significant issue. Many of these individuals would be perfectly happy if they were only able to participate in their sport and not view it in the future.



Figure 26: New Zealand police officers approaching a surfer resisting Governmental lockdown measures. Stuff 21/4/2020.

With the cancellation of the 2020 Championship Tour season due to COVID-19, all aspects of surfing's mediated sports space underwent significant transformation. This is supported by Physician Guilherme Lima et al., (2021) who described how "the pandemic caused by coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has changed the routine of surfers, professionals and all those involved in surfing. This unusual global crisis has caused major organizational, financial and social disruption for surfers, coaches, federations and fans" (p. 11). In response to this, the World Surf League have introduced a new format for the 2021 season, starting with the Rip Curl WSL Finals, which will be held at Lower Trestles in California, America. Hemal Jhaveri (2020) explains that:

... the World Title, usually determined by points earned throughout the season is now being decided in a single-day event, among the CT's top competitors. Per the WSL, the top five men and women in the Championship Tour [selected by end of

season rankings] will battle for their respective titles in a new surf-off format at one of the world's best waves (para. 8).

With the introduction of The WSL Finals event as part of the Championship Tour, this will provide heightened interest and excitement for all surfing fans in relation to this event. Sean Doherty (2020) believes that at first glance the finals seem to be a great deal for surfing fans. This new adjusted format, if successful, may provide a template for the future live streaming of national events, something which has long been desired by New Zealand surfing fans. This would generate further interest in the sport locally, resulting in higher viewership engagement. Importantly, this would then attract more sponsors, providing Surfing NZ with financial benefits. This new viewership dynamic could also entice new fans, especially those who are predominantly associated with first-tier sports, as surfing would be offering them new sports content. As Biddiscombe (2017) describes, a fresh attitude toward the discovery of minor sport has ultimately eventuated in the 21st century, whereby contemporary sports fans are valuing the commencement of new sports formats. With this in mind, if surfing's WSL Finals type format was adopted in New Zealand, it could result in an uptake of new viewers attracted to this faster and more compact mediated surfing viewership format. This is an interesting example of where amendments are being made to a traditional sports viewership format as has been evident in the past with mainstream broadcasting.

Sponsorship of New Zealand surfing by leading surfing brands and their influence on New Zealand's live streamed surfing viewership

Sponsorship and its affiliation with the rapid growth of live streamed content engagement has also created a new mediated advertising space. This advertising space has appealed to sponsors who can see future marketing potential in this area. To explain in further detail, second-tier sports and their involvement in what is termed today as "... niche leagues ... have multiplied sponsorship opportunities. They [can] reach an avid, tightly targeted audience ..." (Hanas, 2007, p. 1) which can create uninterrupted exposure for sponsors while also providing much needed funding for second-tier sports. The World Surf League, Corona

Beer, Billabong, Rip Curl and Health 2000 are all key contributors to New Zealand surfing through sponsorship funding. The global modern surfing industry is a multi-billion dollar a year global business and shares a prosperous relationship with surfing orientated marketing (Franklin, 2012). As interest in New Zealand surfing and viewership via World Surf League live streams continues to expand in the future, companies previously associated purely with first-tier sports will begin to see the attractiveness of attaching themselves to second-tier sports. As Morrisroe (2003) suggests, this is because “the great thing about sponsorship opportunities of this size and cost is that they allow companies to get into grassroots marketing, where companies can more closely zero in on their target markets...” (p. 4)

In relation to surfing’s growth in New Zealand, during 2019, a 14% increase in surfing participation among 18-24 and 35-49 year olds was evident (Brocklesby, 2019). This continued growth will hopefully ensure that there is heightened interest from potential sponsors in the future. Including from well-established global surfing brands “... which generally have enormous financial strength ...” (Xu, 2015, p. 17) and subsequently would be able to inject considerable revenue into New Zealand’s surfing sports space. One of the more enticing components for sponsors looking to associate themselves with second-tier sports like surfing, is that in smaller mediated markets such as New Zealand, sponsors can benefit from longer uninterrupted exposure. Also, they would be exposed to limited competition from rival sponsors when advertising products or carrying out self-promotion. A questionnaire respondent also presents a valuable insight in regard to surfing and sponsorship in New Zealand, articulating that:

With surfing being one of the fastest growing sports in NZ, and team sports like rugby & soccer on the decrease we should be matching this trend with the money being spent from the Government, sky sport, surfing nz, sponsors, etc.... to get surfing events in primary schools, high schools, universities, and then in time having all of these live streamed or broadcast over NZ. This will give younger kids things to aspire to from a young age and will help NZ surfers reaching a higher level of surfing faster, this will help put NZ on the world map of surfing more as well, bringing more surfing tourists to NZ.

As this respondent communicates, an opportunity has presented itself, wherein surfing in New Zealand through live streamed surfing viewership, can attract greater levels of sponsorship if promoted correctly. In doing so, this will result in higher participation levels in the future which plays a key role in the decision major surf brand sponsors undertake as to whether it is beneficial to invest in a second-tier sports space. Keshkar et al., (2019) expands on this illustrating how sponsors, sponsor sport's which have high participation levels made up particularly of young participants (doers) and spectators (followers). As is highlighted by the thesis questionnaire respondent above, the increased sponsorship of New Zealand surfing, could act as the catalyst for the establishment of local surfing competitions in the future which would be a significant addition to both New Zealand's general surfing sports space as well as its mediated sports space. The live streaming of these competitions would also have the potential to reach a much wider viewing audience.

The influence of World Surf League athletes' endorsements on New Zealand surf fans live streamed surfing viewership

Athlete endorsement will play a significant role in the future live streaming of surfing by New Zealand surf fans. This is as a result of surfing athletes according to Desmarais (2016) conveying notions of comradeship, sociability and freedom in their commercial endorsements. In addition to this, (Manta, 2013) believes today's athletes are frequently used as product endorsers and marketing campaign figures for local sporting events which have significant tourism potential (Manta, 2013). With a limited number of New Zealanders appearing consistently in the World Championship Tour, New Zealand surfing fans are lending their support toward Australian surfers, especially when an Australian surfer has won world titles or have acquired legendary status - such as threetime world champion Mick Fanning and one-time world champion Joel Parkinson. Endorsement by leading figures such as Mick Fanning and Joel Parkinson, especially in relation to live streamed viewership of Australian events, has therefore been critical. The personalities of both athletes have been especially influential, as Fanning and

Parkinson are highly relatable individuals and as expanded upon below correlate appropriately with Australia and New Zealand's grounded surfing values (Warren and Gibson, 2017). During World Surf League live streams, athletes such as Fanning and Parkinson, promote the live event and often the surrounding beach, coastline and tourist attractions. Their athlete endorsement and promotion entice surfing fans to keep watching and by doing so help maintain a more personalised engagement with the live stream.

A relevant example of effective athlete endorsement during World Surf League live streams occurred during the 'Australian Grand Slam of Surfing'. This surfing competition was run by the World Surf League and took place during September and October 2020. The competition was made up of three events "... the Boost Mobile Pro Gold Coast at South Stradbroke Island, the Tweed Coast Pro in Northern New South Wales, as well as the Margaret River Pro in Western Australia" (World Surf League, 2020, para. 2).

Australian surfers Mick Fanning and Joel Parkinson promoted this event, particularly the Gold Coast leg of the series (sponsored by Boost Mobile). By using these two athletes, the World Surf League generated a clever marketing strategy which was cost-effective and relatable to the viewer watching the live stream. This marketing tool is termed, 'emotional association' and is commonly used by live streaming platforms such as the World Surf League "... inducing positive emotional responses [which] works as a stable strategy for consumer engagement" (Kujur and Singh, 2018, p. 187). Athlete endorsements will be used more frequently by the World Surf League in the future, which will expand New Zealand's mediated sports space.

While the World Surf League do not disclose viewership figures for individual surfing events which are live streamed, I was still able to source some valuable data via Facebook Live. I discovered that during the 'Australian Grand Slam of Surfing' a large audience would view event recaps as well as athlete highlight packages which the World Surf League extracted from their live streams. On Facebook Live just under 70,000 people viewed Ethan Ewing's road to victory at the Tweed Coast Pro and on the female side just under 76,000 viewed former double World Champion Tyler Wright's victory highlights from the same event. 28,000 people also viewed Boost Mobile Pro Gold Coast winner Isabella Nichols individual

highlight package. When analysing this data further, surfing veteran Tyler Wright attracted well over double the number of views than fellow competitor Nichols who in contrast is a young up and coming surfer. This conveys how an athlete's pedigree and their overall reputation can have a strong influence on surfing fans viewership habits. This provides further reasoning as to why the World Surf League strategically use recognisable and popular athletes such as Fanning and Parkinson, when endorsing surfing events or products.

In figure 27 below, Mick Fanning and Joel Parkinson are pictured having a beer at the Burleigh Pavilion, promoting the Boost Mobile Pro Gold Coast. This was part of an advertisement campaign which took place during the live streaming of the Gold Coast event and would often appear between surfing heats. The down-to-earth and laid-back personalities of both athletes were deliberately utilised by the World Surf League. This was because these personality traits suited the informal style of promotion and the appealing backdrop featured in the advertisement. The personalities of Fanning and Parkinson shared parallels with the personalities of many New Zealand surfing fans, who, along with Australian viewers were the main demographic who would be viewing the live stream. This was a deliberate strategy used by the World Surf League in a bid to heighten the engagement New Zealand surfing fans shared with the live stream. The use of athletes which embody personalities such as Fanning and Parkinson create a more intimate viewership experience for New Zealand surf fans as they feel that they can relate to the content that they are watching. This often improves their enjoyment of World Surf League live streams and means that they will be more inclined to watch these streams in the future.

Athlete endorsement advertisements such as the one featured in figure 27 will become more common in World Surf League live streams in the future. One of the reasons for this is because as Chang et al., (2014) explains, sports marketers across the world consider athlete endorsement an effective promotional technique which they believe will provide a robust framework for successful future advertisements. The World Surf League will explore new ways to boost engagement through this strategy, particularly in the Australasian market. The number of athlete endorsements on live streams will be more prominent during viewer friendly hours. For example, an Australian surfing event would be live streamed only two

hours behind New Zealand local time whereas an event in Europe being streamed in the early hours would attract less New Zealand and Australian viewership and therefore would not feature as many Australian athlete endorsements.



Figure 27: Former surfing world champions Mick Fanning and Joel Parkinson having a beer at the Burleigh Pavilion, promoting the Boost Mobile Pro Gold Coast. World Surf League live stream 6/10/2020.

The environmental initiatives of the World Surf League and environmental awareness among New Zealand surfing fans

Live streaming is an important conduit for the promotion of environmental messages. In fact, the World Surf League even dedicate a segment of their live streaming service to environmental sustainability in the location where the surfing event is being staged. This includes showcasing how locals and other World Surf League personnel are cleaning beaches and protecting their surf breaks as well as demonstrating what they have planned for the future. Three initiatives introduced by the World Surf League include WSL Pure (ocean health), The WSL Carbon Offset Programme and Gen Less 'Say no to short car trips'. These initiatives are designed to inspire and encourage live streamed viewers to protect and maintain their own local marine environment, encouraging future environmental sustainability. These initiatives appeal particularly to the youth demographic who are the

generation most concerned with environmental protection. Falcao and Ricci Uvinha (2019) expand on this describing how:

Sustainability and nature preservation are part of the surfer's lifestyle and could influence the new generations as a way to reverse the actual climate and environmental crisis that the planet is going through. The World Surf League, attentive to the wishes of its community, has been working on communication strategies to spread good intentions and sustainable initiatives as a way of leading a movement in defence of the seas and its desired waves (p. 191).

As is characteristic of human nature, people are curious to see "... how others think, feel, and behave" (Renner, 2006, p. 305). The environmental messages which the World Surf League feature in their live streams resonates well with New Zealand surfers who are environmentally conscious and are proud of the environment that they call their own backyard. This is supported through how "recent developments in New Zealand coastal policy include increased recognition for surf breaks as unique environments characterised by breaking waves" (Perryman and Orchard, 2013, p. 8). In New Zealand, this awareness will encourage the protection of surfing's physical sports space in the future, which will also be assisted through the future environmental initiatives promoted by the World Surf League during their live streams. New Zealand surfing fans and the general surfing community have been participating in a range of World Surf League environmental initiatives and celebrations provided by WSL Pure. One of these which can be especially appreciated by New Zealand surfing fans is the World Surf Leagues focus on "eliminating single-serve plastics by the end of 2019" (World Surf League, 2019, para. 2) which is a policy shared by the New Zealand government. This was outlined by Giacobelli (2018) who describes how New Zealand's:

Ministry of Environment ... engaged with the two largest supermarket chains to encourage them to either charge for, or voluntarily ban, single-use carrier bags. Soon after the meetings, both chains announced the complete phase-out of such bags by the end of 2018 (p. 20).

Those surfing fans who belong to the younger demographic are becoming particularly in tune with environmental awareness, especially when it comes to protecting the ocean. An

appropriate example of this was the creation of the ‘Bye Bye Plastic Bags’ campaign launched in Bali, Indonesia by Isabel and Melati Wijsen (now 17 and 19) who can be seen participating in a ‘Bye Bye Plastic Bag’ beach clean with their team in figure 28 below. As Benattou (2020) describes, the “... two sisters set out to solve the colossal waste problem in Bali” (para. 1). “Their solution was Bye Bye Plastic Bags, a WSL PURE partner, which quickly gained international attention and was responsible for Bali's ban on single-use plastics in 2019” (Benattou, 2020, para. 5). A Bye Bye Plastic Bag team has also recently been set up in New Zealand. With younger surfing fans around the world becoming part of and creating future environmental initiatives which are showcased by the World Surf League during their live streams, a prosperous relationship has transpired. The younger demographic can easily access live streamed surfing content while conjointly learning about or becoming part of new environmental programs - having watched their promotion on World Surf League live streams. This provides the World Surf League with an environmentally aware strategy to resonate with their growing young fanbase.



Figure 28: Bye Bye Plastic Bags team having just finished a beach clean day.

20/03/2021.

The future of live streaming will play a critical role in surfing’s development in New Zealand, particularly the likely growth which will be seen in New Zealand’s live streamed surfing

space. As modern consumerist and commodification practices grow in the future, along with the increased levels of marketisation and sponsorship, surfing in New Zealand will see significant changes in its general mediated surfing sports space. These will be notably evident during World Surf Leagues live streams, especially those close to our shores. As highlighted, the youth demographic in particular will have an integral role in the future avenues that surfing ventures down and they will determine the future viability of live streamed surfing viewership and how this is packaged and presented. The World Surf League's various environmental initiatives will also play an important role in surfing's future viewership. This will appeal particularly to the youth demographic who the World Surf League will focus on, encouraging this group to actively engage with W.S.L event live streams.

Chapter Seven – Conclusion

Despite the sporadic coverage of national competitions, surfing in New Zealand as a second-tier sport has been largely shut-out from domestic mainstream broadcasting. As alternate delivery systems continue to fragment the dissemination of mediated sport content, it is apparent that live streaming will increasingly become the dominant mode of viewership for New Zealand surf fans. As has been evident in the preceding chapters, the research I conducted along with the thesis questionnaire and interviews, uncovered significant findings about the mediation of surfing in New Zealand and how participants and fans of the sport view this type of mediation. New Zealand's surfing sport space and mediated sport space are summarised below. Following this summary is a brief discussion on the possible future developments in the mediation of New Zealand surfing and the potential for future research in this area.

Major findings

One of the key findings which resulted from this study was that New Zealand's surfing community consume live surfing content most frequently through live streaming. I found that New Zealand surfing fans relish the alternate delivery of this viewership platform in spite of its low representation within New Zealand's mainstream sports and mediated sports space. As was evidenced by my questionnaire respondents, live streaming has become favoured strongly by the younger demographic in particular, especially those who belong to the 16-26-year-old age bracket. Some reasons for this include the ease of access which is provided by live streaming, its presence on social media and its interactivity. However, I also found that older generations (recreational surfers) hold far more territorial attitudes when it comes to the live streaming of their sport with some not interested in this modern delivery system. Older generations in the subculture continue to maintain these attitudes of resistance due to their belief that live streaming will detrimentally expose their favourite surfing spaces and will increase surfing's commercialisation. As a result, I discovered that a separation has emerged between those younger New Zealand surf fans who willingly

interact with and connect to live streaming and those older members who have no interest in this innovation.

The younger generations in New Zealand's surfing subculture favour the ease of access as well as the familiarity that Facebook Live provides when they live stream surfing. I found that Facebook Live along with Instagram, are the most common ways in which New Zealand surf fans follow the World Surf League and its athletes. In addition, I found that the interactive capabilities offered by Facebook plays a significant role in how New Zealand surf fans viewed and actively engaged with the content. These interactive features have positively contributed to their overall live streamed viewership experience. During my interviews with media participants Matt Barrett, Christopher Revie and Alex Chappy, they expressed how social media will continue to grow its presence as a live streaming delivery option in the future. With the growth of surfing's offshore mediated sports space set to increase, New Zealand surf fans will continue to be able to live stream surfing via social media in the future. As indicated in the findings from my thesis questionnaire, New Zealand surf fans enjoyment of surfing's live streamed coverage through Facebook Live is considerable. This means that for New Zealand surf fans, social media could potentially become the preferred mode of viewing live surfing content.

Through the findings which eventuated from this thesis, I uncovered that surfing participation in New Zealand, particularly among the youth, is on the rise. This is significant as it conveys how surfing at the grassroots level in New Zealand is in a growth phase which could potentially see the establishment of local surfing competitions in the future. In turn, this has the potential to increase the amount of local content available for local live streamed viewership content. Unsurprisingly, the desire for more local surfing content in New Zealand was one of this thesis' most critical findings. Although there was strong approval of the ability to access off shore surfing content, it was apparent through the responses and the interviews, that New Zealand surf fans express a strong desire for more local surfing content. This would not only expand but add variety to the amount of locally sourced content. The commercialisation of surfing has also seen some growth in New Zealand which has been reflected in the commodification of surf wear for instance. This was

an important topic addressed by questionnaire participants with most holding negative attitudes toward this growing trend. This commercialisation has been far less prevalent than in America however whose entire surfing identity has been the site of high levels of commercialisation. This can be seen in contemporary advertising, surf clothing and products, the promotion of American surfing celebrities and surfing's general style aesthetic.

An additional finding in this thesis was how New Zealand surfing fans are increasingly aware of and committed to the conservation of surfing's environment. This includes the protection of local surf breaks, the preservation of beaches, respecting marine life and general environmental awareness. The majority of my questionnaire respondents shared the same opinions when it came to safeguarding surfing's natural environment within New Zealand. This was one of the few instances where all generations concurred on a topic, outlining the significance of conservation. I also found that New Zealand surfing fans engaged with the various environmental initiatives which are promoted by the World Surf League on their live streams as evidenced in chapter six. It is highly likely that the promotion of environmental awareness and conservation by the World Surf League through their live streams will increase in the future and will align appropriately with New Zealand's attitudes toward the protection of the environment. Surfing's physical sports space will therefore have a higher chance of being protected and this conservation aesthetic will increasingly be reflected within the mediated content.

Future developments

The Corona Piha Pro has been rescheduled to take place in November 2021 at Piha Beach, west of Auckland. While the cancellation of this event in March 2020 had significant implications for this thesis, the staging of this event will provide a rich site of further academic study. The findings of this thesis can provide the context upon which a case study of the upcoming Corona Piha Pro can be expanded on. This can highlight the significance of a New Zealand surfing location becoming included within the World Surf

League live streamed content. In this regard, my thesis offers future researchers' valuable academia and has paved the way for future academic exploration in this area. This will also convey the importance of a second-tier sport such as surfing being able to continue to develop its presence via an alternative delivery system outside of the dominance of New Zealand's traditional broadcasting. A case study of the 2021 Corona Piha Pro has the potential to document major developments for the viewership of surfing in New Zealand. This is also an opportunity for a researcher to understand how the inclusion of a local minor sport within the global delivery of a highly commercial sports product is consumed and regarded by local participants and NZ surfing fans. As a consequence, surfing participation in the future is likely to continue to rise in New Zealand which will enrich the future economic prosperity of the sport by enticing sponsorship. Older generations within New Zealand's surfing community however may see this as a further threat to their sport as well as their surfing environment. As the research in this thesis has highlighted, sponsors are attracted to sports which have growth and increasing levels of participation. If this does indeed eventuate, Surfing NZ will be in the position to provide the grass roots of the sport with vital funding which I found to be something of importance among the responses provided by questionnaire participants.

The 2021 Corona Piha Pro could also see an increase in the number of local surfers seeking to turn professional, especially among the younger generations, many of whom would be inspired by the professional surfing athletes venturing to our shore for the event. On a personal level and as a surfer from the younger demographic, I hope that the Corona Piha Pro will motivate the establishment of more local surfing competitions in New Zealand. This will enrich surfing's status in New Zealand and in turn will provide more local surfing content able to be live streamed for local surf fans. The 2021 Corona Piha Pro will be a game changer for surfing in New Zealand and will define a new direction within the mode of delivery and mediated content.

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Appendices

Appendix One:

Copy of Research Questionnaire

https://auckland.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2rUaMtg85WJeFIV

Appendix Two:

Boardrider Clubs which my research questionnaire was sent to:

- Gisborne Boardriders Club
- Opunake Boardriders Club
- Oakura Boardriders Club
- Waitara Boardriders Club
- Wellington Boardriders Club
- Kaikoura Boardriders Club
- South Coast Boardriders Association
- Southland Boardriders Club
- Bay Boardriders Club
- Hawkes Bay Boardriders Club
- North Wai Boardriders Club
- North Coast Boardriders Club
- Piha Boardriders Club
- Lion Rock Boardriders Club
- Ocean Beach Boardriders Club
- Whangamata Boardriders Club
- Waihi Beach Boardriders Club
- Sumner Longboarders Club
- Canterbury Scholastics Surfing Inc
- Northside Boardriders Club
- Christian Surfers NZ
- Point Boardriders Inc
- Orewa Longboard Club

- New Plymouth Surfriders Club
- Point Surf Team
- Maori Bay Boardriders Club
- Buller Boardriders Club