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"100 percent fun":

A case study of benefits from cold water surfing in Jæren, Norway



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TITLE: "100 percent fun": A case study of benefits from cold water surfing in Jæren, Norway

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my father, Mounir Saad.

I hope I make you proud.

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who helped me throughout the process of writing this thesis.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Åsa Grahn and my co-supervisor, Professor Reidar Mykletun for providing me with excellent supervision throughout the writing of my thesis.

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Abstract

Norway is steadily progressing towards being a popular cold-water surf destination. The long Norwegian coastline is attracting an increasing number of surfers who surf year round in extreme weather conditions. The aim of this research is to identify the benefits acquired by Norwegian surfers surfing in cold water along the Jæren coast, south the city of Stavanger in Norway. This research adopted a phenomenological approach and qualitative research techniques were implemented. The applied qualitative methods were semi-structured in-depth individual interviews and group interviews with thirteen veteran surfers, observations, and secondary data material, which consisted of written material from online surfing blogs and video material. The interpretation and analysis of qualitative materials showed that participants gain a wide range of benefits by surfing actively year round. Surfers reported advanced skills development and experiencing feelings of freedom, playfulness, inclusion and strong social cohesion with other members in the surfing subculture, a deep connection to nature, physical and mental health benefits, and an overall enhanced quality of life.

Keywords: Surfing, benefits, lifestyle sports, extreme sports, serious leisure, Jæren, Norway

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Introduction

Participation in extreme sports is continuing to grow and rise in popularity (Brymer, 2010; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013b; Pain & Pain, 2005; Puchan, 2005; Wheaton, 2004a). Extreme sports have become a global descriptor for a number of non-traditional organized and independent adventure sports (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013a). Terms such as ‘extreme’, ‘alternative’, ‘lifestyle’ and ‘action sports’ have been used to describe a broad range of predominantly individualized sports activities (Brymer, Downey, & Gray, 2009; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013a; Wheaton, 2004a). As part of this trend, surfing has progressively grown in popularity since the 1950s (Booth, 2004; Langseth, 2012; Lazarow, Miller, & Blackwell, 2008).

Surfing is a sport deeply connected with images of sandy beaches, blue sea, bright sun and tanned bodies (Booth, 2004; Langseth, 2012). However, surfing in Norway, a ‘cold water’ surf destination does not induce any of the prominent regular surf images (Langseth, 2012). Cold water surfers in Norway surf year round, they expose themselves to extreme weather conditions; freezing cold water, strong currents and heavy storms. Traditional theoretical viewpoints on extreme sports and extreme sports participants have speculated that participation is about risk-taking and adrenaline seeking, a channel for irresponsible individuals with unhealthy connection to fear (Brymer, 2010; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013a, 2013b). However, these findings were more a matter of the research methods chosen than of the participants’ lived experience (Brymer, 2005, 2010; Brymer & Oades, 2009).

This study aims at exploring and identifying the benefits gained by surfers in the Jæren region, south of the city of Stavanger in Norway. Driver, Brown, and Peterson (1991) defined the concept of “benefit” as “a change that is viewed to be advantageous - an improvement in

condition, or a gain to an individual, a group, to society or an entity” (p. 4). The Jæren coast has been chosen for this study because it is an ideal surf location; it provides consistent surf and is known for having the best surf spots in Norway. The problem statement for this study is: What are the benefits acquired by cold water surfers in Norway? To provide a deeper understanding of these benefits and how the surfers’ experiences unfold, a description of the commencement of surfing in Norway and the inclusion process in the Jæren surfing subculture is provided in the Findings chapter.

This thesis aims to make a contribution to understanding the benefits obtained by surfers. Despite the popularity of surfing, very scarce empirical social research has been conducted on the sport. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge this is the first empirical study investigating the benefits acquired by surfers in the unique setting of Jæren. Therefore, this study contributes to understanding this serious leisure activity (Stebbins, 1992) as a positive and beneficial human experience rather than an unhealthy and deviant practice. Furthermore, the benefits of surfing identified in the study can be utilized by surf destinations attempting to attract more surfers by incorporating these benefits into their travel and tourism promotional campaigns (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013). For instance, a city such as Stavanger in Norway can include the findings of the study to its marketing strategies to market the city as a new, exotic ‘cold water’ surf destination.

A phenomenological approach adopting qualitative research techniques including in-depth interviews and observations was chosen for the study. The chosen research design was found to be the most suitable approach to provide insights and in-depth understanding of the interviewees’ subjective experiences, allowing the researcher to understand and interpret each individual participant’s lived experience (Kvale, 1983).

Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured as follows. A review of the literature related to the study, which starts by presenting a brief review of previous social research on surfing. Afterwards the Literature Review chapter is divided into three main sections: Firstly, a definition and description of lifestyle sports, extreme sports and serious leisure will be discussed. Secondly, an overview of the field of sport tourism with a focus on surf tourism is presented. Thirdly, the theoretical concepts associated with the benefits acquired by participating in a lifestyle and extreme sport such as surfing, which is also identified as a serious leisure activity in this study will be presented. The Literature Review chapter is followed by a Methods chapter which underlines the design of the research and presents the employed research methods. The thesis then continues with a presentation of the findings, a discussion of the findings, a critical analysis of the limitations of the study, research contributions and a number of implications for destination development and ends with a conclusion which briefly summarizes the results of the research and presents suggestions for future research.

Theory Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework for exploring the personal experiences of surfers and to understand the benefits derived from participating in a sport activity such as surfing. Surfing is an extreme sport that has a long history, the act of riding a wave with a wooden plank began in Polynesia thousands of years ago (Booth, 2001; Levinson & Christensen, 1999; Young & McGregor, 1983). Early European travellers and explorers praised and wrote highly of the surfers' skills, especially those of the Hawaiian surfers (Levinson & Christensen, 1999). Missionaries in Hawaii, however, disapproved of surfing and banned it because they thought it was a sinful activity. They believed that "the constant intermingling, without any restraint, of persons of both sexes, and of all ages, at all times of the day and at all hours of the night" was immoral (Booth, 2001, p. 4). By the end of the 19th century surfing suffered a decline in practice in Hawaii. However, it was rediscovered early in the 20th century (Booth, 2001, 2004; Levinson & Christensen, 1999; Young & McGregor, 1983) and became popular once again by mid 1950s (Booth, 2004) mostly due to the role of mass media in exhibiting the image of a surfing culture, the production of lighter surfboards (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013; Butts, 2001) and the introduction of cheap air travel (Booth, 1995). After the sport's resurgence, it flourished in California and quickly diffused to the Pacific Rim (Booth, 1995, 2001, 2004).

Previous Research on Surfing

A number of studies have been conducted on surfing. Some studies focused on investigating the core values in surfing subcultures and surfers' motivations for obtaining membership into these subcultures (Booth, 1995, 2004, 2007; Butts, 2001; Langseth, 2012). Reynolds and Hritz (2012) studied surfers' motivations and lifestyles as adventure travellers.

Other studies focused on identifying surf tourists' demographic characteristics, travel behaviour and destination choices (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013; Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003a, 2003b).

Furthermore, a number of studies focused on surf tourists and sustainable surf tourism (Buckley, 2002a, 2002b; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013). Lazarow et al. (2008) investigated the economic value of recreational surfing, while Taylor (2007) conducted a study on surfing and spirituality through surfers' connection to nature. Partington, Partington, and Olivier (2009) examined big wave surfers' dependence on surfing. Surfers' intrinsic motivations as high risk sport participants was researched as well (Diehm & Armatas, 2004).

Surfing is identified in this study as a lifestyle and an extreme sport. It is also presented as a serious leisure activity. The first section of this chapter provides the background to the study by focusing upon defining and explaining the three fields which surfing belongs to which are lifestyle sports, extreme sports and serious leisure. Surfers constantly travel to different surf destinations all over the world in search for the perfect wave, which makes surfing highly related to sport tourism and specifically surf tourism which has become an important niche within the sport tourism sector. Therefore, the second section of this chapter presents an overview of the field of sports tourism concentrating on surf tourism. The last section explores and discusses the concept of benefits and draws on Driver et al.'s (1991) research on the benefits of leisure.

Lifestyle Sports

The past few decades have seen a tremendous growth in what is known as lifestyle sports and other related labels such as extreme, whiz and new sports (Tomlinson, Ravenscroft, Wheaton, & Gilchrist, 2005; Wheaton, 2004a, 2013). Salome (2010) describes lifestyle sports as activities to which risks, adventure, sensation and freedom are vital. A broad range of mostly individual sport activities are referred to as lifestyle sports, ranging from well-established sports

such as surfing and skateboarding, to new activities such as kite surfing and B.A.S.E jumping (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011; Tomlinson et al., 2005; Wheaton, 2004a, 2013).

Even though each lifestyle sport has its distinct history, identity, specificity and development pattern, yet many share the same ideology that continues to be distinctive from that of the majority of traditional sports (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011). “Despite differences in nomenclature, many commentators are agreed in seeing such activities as having presented an ‘alternative’ and potential challenge to traditional ways of ‘seeing’, ‘doing’ and understanding sport” (Wheaton, 2004a, p. 3). The participatory philosophy of lifestyle sports promotes pleasure, joy, self actualization and ‘flow’ (Tomlinson et al., 2005). Moreover, the ethos of such sports is more participant-driven, anti-competitive, and less rule-bound than most mainstream sports (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011).

It is evident that lifestyle sports are attracting a continuously increasing number of participants, exceeding the growth of many traditional sports in a lot of western countries (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011; Wheaton, 2004a, 2013). Participants are mostly the privileged white and western male middle classes (Salome, 2010; Wheaton, 2004a). The expansion of participation is not limited to the traditional consumer group consisting of young individuals but also includes older men and an increasing number of women and girls (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011; Wheaton, 2013). Research has shown that participants range from the occasional so called ‘weekend warriors’ to the regular ‘hardcore’ practitioners who are very committed and to whom participation in their chosen activities becomes a way of life. For committed participants such activities become a lifestyle that may be maintained from youth to retirement. They spend a lot of energy, time and often money on their chosen sport activity (Salome, 2010; Wheaton, 2004a, 2013).

Wheaton (2004a) justified the adoption of the expression ‘lifestyle sport’ as it is a term used by the cultures’ members themselves. Many participants defined the activity as a lifestyle instead of a sport. Participants pursued a lifestyle that was different, and that provided them with a peculiar and exclusive social identity. Committed participants created sub-cultural communities; where they meet other members with similar values, interests and ways of life and develop strong emotional and social bonds in between them (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011). This is particularly obvious in board sports such as surfing, snowboarding and skating in addition to other new sport activities like adventure racing and climbing.

Many lifestyle sports are often named extreme sports; the ‘extreme’ appellation quickly became accepted, as a comprehensive label, specifically in prominent mainstream media discourse and by marketers rather than by the participants themselves (Wheaton, 2004a).

Extreme Sports

Participation rates in extreme sports are outpacing more traditional sport activities such as golf, basketball and volleyball (Brymer, 2009, 2010; Ko, Park, & Claussen, 2008; Pain & Pain, 2005). Participants range from young individuals to older men and an increasing number of women (Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993). Participation in extreme sports proved:

Not to be just a ‘flash in the pan’ but a sign of the times in which people are looking for a new way to define their lives and to escape from an increasingly regulated and sanitized way of living (Puchan, 2005, p. 177).

The term ‘extreme sport’ has been used to describe activities that are traditionally associated with adrenaline seeking, risk taking (Brymer, 2005, 2010; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013b), pushing boundaries and conquering new frontiers (Kusz, 2004). Surfing, skateboarding, snow

sports and mountain sports have been introduced as examples of such activities (Brymer, 2005). Wave surfers who ride waves exceeding twenty feet in height, skiers who ski off sheer cliffs and mountaineers who advance above the 'dead zone', commonly known to be above 7500 meters where the body hardly adapt and attempt to cope with the low levels of oxygen are examples of the challenges such sports pose (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013a).

Extreme sports also known as adventure, action or risk sports have been defined as “a variety of self-initiated activities that generally occur in natural-environment settings and that, due to their always uncertain and potentially harmful nature, provide the opportunity for intense cognitive and affective involvement” (Robinson, 1992, p. 90). Bennet and Lachowetz (2004) used the term action sport and defined it as “an eclectic collection of risky, individualistic, and alternative sports such as skateboarding, BMX biking, surfing, street luge, wakeboarding, and motocross” (p. 239). Some researchers have argued that in today’s consumerist society where everything is available instantaneously and where risk is mostly removed via insurance, such sports activities present new demands and challenges to their participants (Puchan, 2005).

Extreme sports athletes are portrayed as white male practitioners possessing an insatiable urge for adventure, risk-taking and a desire to be the manifestation of confidence, strength and coolness. Participants are perceived as risk-takers who risk their safety and health by attempting to portray an imagined sense of control over themselves and their surrounding environments (Kusz, 2004). They are often judged as selfish, teenage boys who are enthralled with the individuality and danger of the sport. Furthermore, participation in such sports is frequently regarded as pathological, deviant, negative and socially unacceptable (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013a, 2013b; Pain & Pain, 2005).

A number of analytical frameworks including theories such as sensation seeking (Rossi & Cereatti, 1993; Zuckerman, 2000), psychoanalysis (Hunt, 1996), and masculinity theory (Wheaton, 2003, 2004b) have been employed to provide explanations for participants' motivations to engage in such sports. These theories claim that a combination of previous experiences, socialization processes and personality attributes promote a desire for a participant to endanger their life via extreme sports (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013a).

This approach has been criticized for creating negative stereotypes which might not properly display the actual experiences of the participants (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013a). According to Brymer (2010), extreme sport participants are not searching for risk nor do they have any desire to put themselves in risky situations. Participants do not equate risk to experience. On the contrary, they accept the fact that death or injuries are possible undesirable outcomes which make them learn about their surrounding environment and master the necessary skills to perform the task properly. Participants are aware of their own capabilities and know when to curtail from engaging in their chosen activity to prevent taking any unnecessary risks.

A study conducted by Diehm and Armatas (2004) examined whether the personality attributes of openness to experience, sensation seeking and the motives for participation vary between surfing participants as high-risk sport participants and golf participants as a control group representing low-risk sports. The findings confirmed that surfers demonstrated higher levels of sensation seeking personality traits such as the willingness to participate in adventurous activities which grant unique sensations, and the search for stimulation via the senses and mind. They were found to be more open to experience than golf participants as well. Furthermore, the study showed that surfers considered intrinsic motivation factors such as aesthetics, vertigo and catharsis as more important than factors such as competition or social motives. It was concluded

that these findings are a proof that surfing could be promoted as a beneficial high-risk sport activity.

Additionally, recent studies showed that participation in extreme sports generate many beneficial psychological changes (Brymer, 2009; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013a). For example, Brymer and Oades (2009) found that extreme sports may promote humility and courage. Participation was also found to incite positive psychological relationships with the surrounding natural environment (Brymer et al., 2009; Brymer & Gray, 2009, 2010).

Most people choose to spend their spare time on casual leisure activities that demand little or no special training to enjoy, and provide them with short-lived rewards in return, such as watching television or going on a picnic (Stebbins, 1992, 1997, 2001). On the other hand, extreme sport participants voluntarily choose to engage in such serious leisure activities which release them from their daily obligations such as paid work or childcare responsibilities.

Serious Leisure

In the social sciences, family, work and religion - but not leisure - are usually believed to be the most important aspects that give meaning to people's lives. However, studies on leisure increasingly show that under modernism, participation in leisure activities is at least as important (Gillespie, Leffler, & Lerner, 2002).

Belonging, committing and having an ideology of a defined culture, where participants are involved and showed progression in a specific activity are at the core of the serious leisure theory (Kane & Zink, 2004). Such activities may belong to a various number of fields such as art, entertainment, science or sports (Stebbins, 2001). Serious leisure is defined by Stebbins (1992) as "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that is sufficiently

substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its special skills and knowledge” (p. 3).

Involvement in serious leisure activities provide individuals with a number of rewards due to their unique qualities. However, Stebbins (2007) stated that they have a number of costs as well. The eagerness to join such activities can become very uncontrollable for some people in terms of money or time, if not both. They may have a continuous desire to spend money, for instance on upgrading equipment, in order to own the best and most advanced ones. Most probably the same enthusiast will be eager to spend a lot of time on his chosen activity which can lead to problems with a significant other. A significant other might also start making demands on that money and time, and consequently begin accusing the former of being a selfish partner. Often for the same reasons, marginality in society is also considered as another cost (Stebbins, 2007).

Serious leisure activities are distinguished from casual leisure activities by six unique characteristics: Perseverance; leisure careers; personal effort; durable benefits; identity and unique ethos (Stebbins, 1992, 2007). These qualities were found to be very relevant to recreational sports as serious leisure activities. “Perseverance” is crucial for an athlete to develop and learn new tactical and physical skills. Success makes athletes become more motivated to persevere, for them achievement of personal goals becomes a more important criterion of success than simply winning or losing. Additionally, athletes persevere via their athletic difficulties or defeats and the sacrifices that unavoidably accompany the energy and time required to become competent in a sporting pursuit (Higham & Hinch, 2009).

A “career-like” pattern marked by performance, turning points and stages of achievement (Higham & Hinch, 2009; Kane & Zink, 2004; Stebbins, 2007) is very apparent in sport, where

athletes' skills are often measured and rewarded in terms of assignment to competitive hierarchies within a sport. Furthermore, "career stages such as the four-stage framework of pre-socialization, selection and recruitment, socialization and acceptance" are found in sporting subcultures such as surfing, snowboarding and climbing (Higham & Hinch, 2009, p. 129).

"Personal effort" is a quality that distinguishes recreational sport as serious leisure as well. Serious recreational athletes demonstrate personal effort by showing commitment, willingness to train regularly and to work on acquiring the skills and knowledge required to maintain their serious leisure career (Higham & Hinch, 2009). "Durable benefits" is the fourth characteristic of serious leisure. These benefits include self-expression, self-enrichment, self-actualization, enhanced self-image, renewal of self and social belonging and interactions (Stebbins, 1992, 2007). Examples of the benefits mentioned by Stebbins (1992) were found in sport, for example Wheaton (2007) whose research on sport subcultures has interesting similarities to the literature on serious leisure stated that the intrinsic rewards are the most important rewards in terms of durable benefits, not the extrinsic ones (Higham & Hinch, 2009).

The fifth quality of serious leisure is "Identity"; participants tend to greatly identify with their chosen activities. In sports activities, participants tend to present themselves as subculture members (Higham & Hinch, 2009), consequently, developing a sense of belonging to these sport subcultures. Finally, the "unique ethos" which is the last quality Stebbins (1992) utilized to describe serious leisure. The essence of the communities created by serious leisure participants is what is meant by an ethos (Stebbins, 2007). The ethos is distinguished as subcultures which are identified by a set of values, attitudes, beliefs and norms (Higham & Hinch, 2009; Stebbins, 2007). Examples of sports subcultures are the subcultures of surfing, snowboarding and skateboarding (Green & Jones, 2005; Higham & Hinch, 2009).

Even though surfing has not been yet investigated as a serious leisure activity, the qualities of serious leisure identified by Stebbins (1992) are recognized among surfers in the literature (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013). Concerning “perseverance”, “career” and “effort”, studies affirmed the significance of achieving technical knowledge and skills to master the waves and advance in the surfing hierarchy (Butts, 2001). Such progress is necessary to become a member in the surf subculture and earn other members’ acceptance and identification as a surfer (Butts, 2001; Langseth, 2012; Nourbakhsh, 2008), proving the existence of an “ethos”. An indication of the presence of “benefits” such as fitness attainment and self-confidence is also detected in the literature (Nourbakhsh, 2008). Moreover, Moutinho, Dionísio, and Leal (2007) affirmed that surfers have a “tribal” behaviour defined by a distinct surfing “identity” conveyed by carrying their surfboards every time they go to the beach, which makes them very active travellers, on a local and international level.

The past few decades have witnessed a swift rise in the surf tourism market as a result of a rapid growth of the surfing participants on a global level and the introduction of more affordable travel opportunities (Buckley, 2002a; O’Brien & Ponting, 2013). The following section attempts to present an overview of surf tourism as an important niche segment of the sport tourism sector. Furthermore, a brief presentation of the demographic and psychographic features of surf tourists will be presented.

Sport Tourism

Due to the lack of definitional consensus on the words “sport” and “tourism”, there is no universally accepted definitions for them up to date (Hinch & Higham, 2001; Hudson, 2003; Weed, 2006). However, tourism has a variety of subsets including nature tourism, health tourism, educational tourism and sport tourism (Hudson, 2003). Hinch and Higham (2001) conceptualized

sport tourism in terms of the context of the sport activity, the temporal and spatial dimensions. Sport tourism is defined as “sport-based travel away from the home environment for a limited time, where sport is characterized by unique rule sets, competition related to physical prowess, and a playful nature” (Hinch & Higham, 2001, p. 56).

Two types of sport tourism were identified by researchers; active and passive participation. Active participation, is when sport tourists travel to certain destinations as active sport participants or players. The second type; the passive participation, is all about watching or observing, where the individuals often known as spectators, travel in order to watch sport events without attempting to actively participate in a sport activity themselves (Gibson, 1998; Hall, 1992; Hinch & Higham, 2001; Standeven & Knop, 1998). Hinch and Higham (2001) suggested that there are different patterns of active participation of sport tourists including recreational or competitive and nature-based or indoor.

It is suggested that within the wide classification of sport tourism, the phenomenon of surf tourism prevails (Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003b). Surfers travel the world searching for the perfect wave which makes them very active sport tourists and the main contributors to the surf tourism market.

Surf Tourism

Two behaviours that were found to fit very well together are the sport of surfing and the act of travelling. ‘Searching for the perfect wave’ is a belief shared by many surfers who express their willingness to travel to different surf destinations in search of rideable waves (Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003a). “There are now estimated to be over ten million surfers worldwide, increasing at 12-16 percent per annum, and surfing is now a multi-billion dollar global industry” (Buckley,

2002a, p. 407). Surf tourism is becoming of major importance to the tourism industry; it is growing exponentially and involves surfers travelling both domestically and internationally (Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003b). The following definition of surf tourism was proposed by Fluker (2003):

Surf tourism involves people travelling to either domestic locations for a period of time not exceeding six months, or international locations for a period of time not exceeding twelve months, who stay at least one night, and where the active participation in the sport of surfing, where the surfers relies on the power of the wave for forward momentum, is the primary motivation for destination selection (p. 7).

Surf tourists are not necessarily only active surfing participants, but also non-surfing travel companions and spectators (Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003a). Studies confirm that the elements of the demographic profile of surf tourists have changed from the old stereotypical images of surfers as:

Individualistic, independent, hedonistic, casual, anti-establishment, introverted, opposed to discipline or control over individual freedoms, slim physique - wearing board shorts on the beach and casual clothes away from the beach, have unconventional attitudes towards drugs, gather and surf in small groups and are very mobile in their search for surf (Pearson, 1979, p. 59).

There are about ten million surfers worldwide bringing social, environmental and economic benefits and some costs to the different travel destinations (Buckley, 2002a; Reynolds & Hritz, 2012). Studies showed that the majority of surf tourists are males, many of which were found to have a relatively high income, an average age of thirty years and are very mobile in their search

for surf (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013; Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003a, 2003b), which makes them potential clients for tour operators (Buckley, 2002a).

Dolnicar and Fluker (2003b) identified five unique market segments of the surf tourists, these are the “price-conscious safety seekers”, “price-conscious adventurers”, “radical adventurers”, “ambivalents” and “luxury surfers”. Surfers belonging to these segments rated lack of crowds as the most important feature of a surf destination, followed by the quality of natural environment, personal safety and health concerns. Furthermore, from the tour operators’ view point, the “luxury surfers” and the “price-conscious safety seekers” were found to have the highest incomes and showed a willingness to spend vast amounts of money on their surf trips. Thus, they were recognized as the most lucrative segments of the five identified.

The model presented below is a visual summary of the previous two sections in this chapter. The model demonstrates how surfing as a sport activity is interrelated with a number of fields, including lifestyle sports, extreme sports, serious leisure, sport tourism and surf tourism.

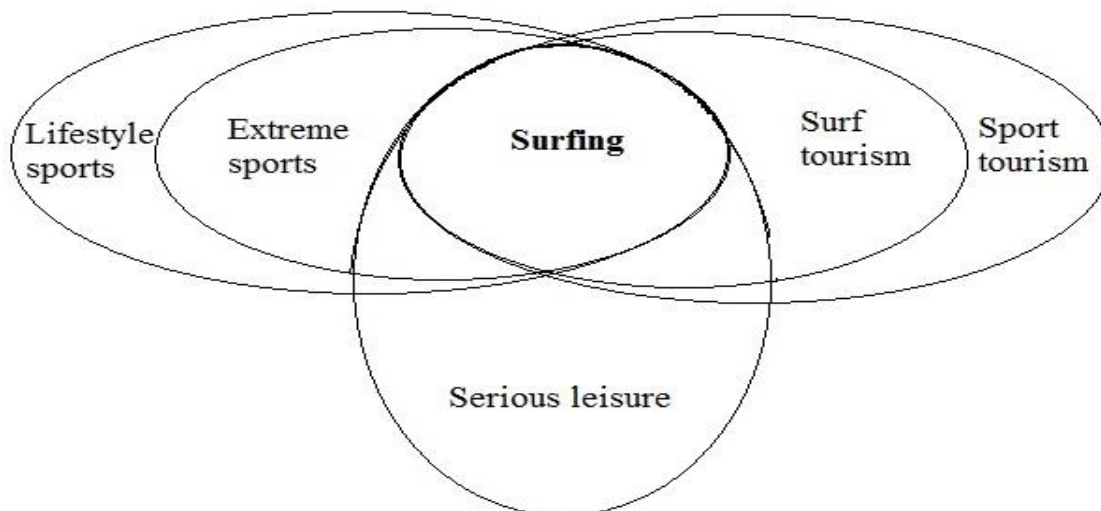


Figure 1. A model showing the connection between surfing and other fields

The following section, which is the last section in this chapter attempts to describe the different benefits that could be attained from participating in a recreational sport activity such as surfing.

Benefits of Recreational Sport Activities

The main objective of this study is to understand the nature of benefits derived from participating in a serious leisure activity such as surfing. This section of the Literature Review chapter presents the literature on benefits from the fields of leisure and recreation and draws mainly on Driver et al.'s (1991) research on the benefits of leisure.

A benefit is a concept with various definitions depending upon the discipline applied in the study (Mereste, Mykletun, & Einarsen, 2015). Driver et al. (1991) defined the benefit concept as “a change that is viewed to be advantageous - an improvement in condition, or a gain to an individual, a group, to society or an entity” (p. 4). Stebbins (2007) presented an alternative definition for the concept of benefit, he defined it as “an agreeable outcome, anticipated or not, of a person’s participation in a leisure activity” (p. 11). Furthermore, Schänzel and McIntosh (2000) defined benefits as the ultimate value that people base on what they presume they have attained from participation in a specific leisure activity. These definitions similarly apprehend what participants in different activities gain from their subjective experiences in the end.

According to Driver et al. (1991) there are two concepts of benefits; the first is a “monetary” measure while the second is a “nonmonetary” measure, also referred to as “economic efficiency and benefit-as-improved-condition” measures. Based on Driver et al.’s work, Grahn (2010) composed a table (Table A1) with multiple benefits which is presented in Appendix A. This section will focus on identifying the non-economic or benefit-as-improved-condition measures or

outcomes of participating in a recreational extreme sport such as surfing. The definition of benefit mentioned earlier by Driver et al. (1991) is the one utilized throughout this section because it is believed that participating in such sport activity provides a wide range of benefits, not only on the personal level, but on a group, societal and an entity level as well.

Even though both benefits and motivations are connected to needs, researchers argue that they are not the same. Motivation is known as a driving force to perform a certain activity while benefits are the outcome or what a participant ‘takes home’, benefits are related more to the individuals’ or groups’ satisfaction and overall experience (Mereste et al., 2015). Figure 2 presents a simplified model of leisure experiences.

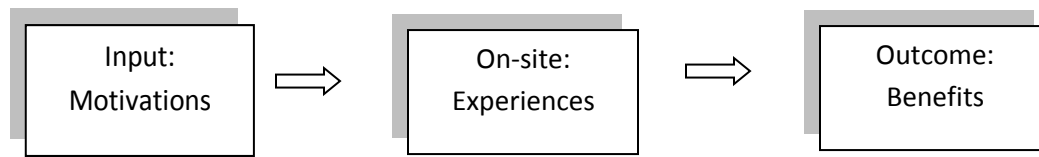


Figure 2. A simplified model of leisure experiences (Adapted from Grahn, 2010)

Driver et al. (1991) identified five classifications of benefits derived from participating in leisure activities. They are economic, environmental, social and personal (which include physical and mental health). Wankel and Berger (1991) departing from Driver et al. (1991) applied the benefits concept to sport activities. The former used Csikszentmihalyi’s (1982) four-component model of sport values as a framework for analyzing the benefits of sports. Four main types of benefits were identified as the most important benefits when evaluating any sport activity; they are personal enjoyment, personal growth, social harmony and social change (Wankel & Berger, 1991). According to Wankel and Berger (1991), an optimal sport activity is one that profoundly contributes to all four types of benefits. A summary of the distinguishing benefits are presented

under each value in Table 1, followed by a description and discussion of the various benefits represented in the table.

Table 1. Types of benefits from sport

I	II	III	IV
Personal Enjoyment	Personal Growth	Social Harmony	Social Change
Enjoyment/Fun Flow	Physical health -cardio respiratory -muscular strength -muscular endurance -flexibility -bone structure -weight management Psychological well-being -anxiety reduction -depression reduction	Socialization Intergroup relations Community Integration	Educational attainment Social status Social mobility

Note. Reprinted from Driver et al. (1991) P.123

Personal Enjoyment

Enjoyment/Fun

The majority of individuals freely choose to get involved in recreational sport activities because of expected intrinsic benefits. Accordingly, it is unquestionable that such sports grant something related to enjoyment for the participants (Biddle & Mutrie, 2007; Wankel & Berger, 1991), or else they would shortly refrain from participating. Studies revealed that enjoyment or fun is a very important reason for engaging in sport activities and described fun as “a positive affective state associated with such feelings as happy, cheerful, and friendly as opposed to sad, irritable, and angry” (Wankel & Berger, 1991, p. 124). Researchers identified a number of intrinsic motivational factors that were found to be of value to fun or enjoyment. These are

personal achievement, excitement of participating in the sport, measuring and testing one's skills against other participants, improving one's sport skills, and the ability to just do the skills (Biddle & Mutrie, 2007; Wankel & Berger, 1991). These factors were found to be more important than extrinsic motivational factors such as winning a game or getting a reward (Wankel & Berger, 1991).

A more recent study conducted by Willig (2008) on extreme sports, confirmed that joining such sport activities provided individuals with a number of positive feelings. These encompassed an 'adrenaline buzz' distinguished by excitement which was described by some as 'feeling high'. Furthermore, participants stated that they get feelings of happiness and described their experience using words such as blissful, magical and fantastic. They also reported feeling alive and energetic which provided them with a sense of pleasure that often outlived the actual sport activity and remained for days afterwards.

Intriguingly, Willig (2008) reported that these pleasurable feelings were not described by participants as a driving force or a motivational factor behind their commitment to extreme sports. Instead, they were acknowledged and appreciated as a beneficial result of the involvement in their chosen sport activity.

The "Flow" Experience

The essence of participating in a sport activity is the quality of experience it provides. Sport can grant its participants a state of being that is very gratifying, sport participation usually involve very enduring experiences and profound feelings (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). This state was described as flow, or optimal experience which can be achieved through participating in a variety of activities. Flow is a state of optimal arousal; it is experienced when

an individual's skills are consistent with the demands posed by the task in hand (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Flow is defined as a state in which:

Action follows upon action according to an internal logic that seems to need no conscious intervention by the actor. He experiences it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which he is in control of actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present, and future (Sato, 1992, p. 95).

During the flow experience, individuals tend to fully concentrate on the task in hand which is usually a challenging activity that requires specific skills. They experience loss of self-consciousness and become one with this activity. Individuals in flow have clear goals and experience a sense of control without vigorously trying to be in control. A merging of action and awareness and an explicit feedback are important characteristics of the flow experience as well. Furthermore, individuals experience a sense of transformation of time, they lose awareness of time and get the feeling that it has passed faster than normal (Chen, 2007; Jackson, 1996; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Flow was described as an "autotelic" experience (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999), the outcome of experiencing its different elements is an intrinsically rewarding experience that grants the participant with a profound sense of enjoyment (Jackson, 1996; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Extreme sports were found to meet the criteria of flow. Sport athletes are freely engaged in their chosen activities, they challenge themselves and test their abilities, and the activities they are engaged in provide them with heightened experiences (Celsi et al., 1993). Athletes who

experienced flow in sports used many terms to describe their experience, they used expressions such as “weightlessness”, “floating”, “flowing” and “peaceful” (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999) to demonstrate their total immersion in the activities they participated in.

However, Csikszentmihalyi (2002) suggested that flow can have addictive attributes. He stated that “the self becomes captive of a certain kind of order, and is then unwilling to cope with the ambiguities of life” (p. 62). A study conducted by Partington et al. (2009) investigated the effects of flow on big wave surfers. The results showed that they experienced flow while surfing and gained a number of benefits associated with this experience. Nevertheless, some of them displayed signs of dependence on surfing. Although exercise dependence may provide participants with physical and psychological benefits, yet it could be argued that it might have negative consequences such as undergoing withdrawal symptoms associated with exercise withholding.

Personal Growth

Physical Health Benefits

Regular involvement in physical activity is known to promote positive health and is connected to a number of physical health benefits. Cardio-respiratory fitness, a better bone structure, flexibility, muscular strength and endurance, and weight management are some examples of the many physical health benefits derived from engaging in a physical activity on a regular basis. A wide range of exercise and sports activities provide individuals with varying types and degrees of intense and effective movement. Sport activities such as swimming and gymnastics which engage participants in several variable movements of many large muscle groups make a greater overall physical health contribution than do more specialized sport activities (Wankel & Berger, 1991).

A study conducted on older surfers who have been practicing the sport for many years showed that it provided them with a number of long-term physiological benefits. “Paddling out in the surf, for instance requires aerobic power, anaerobic power, intermittent endurance and strength and power of the upper body. Riding the waves requires balance, force development, flexibility, reaction time and coordination of the lower body” (Frank, Zhou, Bezerra, & Crowley, 2009, p. 32). Researchers confirm that long-term recreational surfing benefit participants by maintaining or improving their neuromuscular function, which would ultimately lead to an enhanced quality of life (Frank et al., 2009).

It is well documented that regular engagement in physical activities contributes substantially to physical well-being (Wankel & Berger, 1991). Sport activity improves personal fitness, prevent unhealthy weight gain and reduce the risk for disabilities and chronic diseases (Haskell et al., 2007). For these reasons those involved in public health programs were encouraged to urge people to adopt less sedentary lives and become more physically active (Nicholl, Coleman, & Williams, 1995).

Mental Well-being

A wide range of mental health problems are present in western countries regardless of their political and economic stability. Problems can range from severe cases such as depression, alcohol and drug addiction to more general sicknesses associated with low mental well-being such as low self-esteem and a feeling of hopelessness. The latter cases are usually not clinically investigated; therefore, their occurrence is often not properly assessed but has significant implications including excessive drinking and family disruptions (Fox, 1999).

Substantial research evidence confirms the presence of a positive relationship between involvement in physical activity and mental well-being. Therefore, health activity and regular exercise is characterized as a beneficial health behaviour that should be encouraged. Studies confirm that there is a positive connection between exercise and affective states. Physical exercise was found to effectively help in treating depression, anxiety (Biddle & Mutrie, 2007; Fox, 1999; Wankel & Berger, 1991), enhancing physical self-perceptions, giving a boost to self-esteem (Biddle & Mutrie, 2007; Fox, 1999) and improving positive mood states (Fox, 1999).

Depression and anxiety reduction

Depression is “a heterogeneous group of depressive disorders, it is characterized by generalized feelings of pessimism, despair, sadness, self-hate, and hopelessness” (Wankel & Berger, 1991, p. 129). Experimental studies found that physical activity was effective in preventing and treating clinical and non clinical depression (Biddle & Mutrie, 2007; Fox, 1999; Wankel & Berger, 1991). Furthermore, evidence points out that this effect has the same significance as psychotherapeutic approaches (Fox, 1999).

Similar results were found between exercise and anxiety reduction. Physical activity was found to have a moderate effect on reducing state anxiety which has transitory characteristics and trait anxiety which has enduring characteristics, in addition to reducing the tension and worry elements (Biddle & Mutrie, 2007; Fox, 1999; Wankel & Berger, 1991). This effect is known as the anxiolytic effect of exercise, which demonstrates how exercise interventions can be used as a treatment for anxiety disorders (Biddle & Mutrie, 2007).

Wankel and Berger (1991) discussed only anxiety and depression reduction as beneficial mental health outcomes of physical activity. However, more recent studies considered more benefits such as:

Personal well-being, mood and emotion

It is widely reported that physical activity has the ability to provide participants with a more positive mood. Epidemiological evidence shows an obvious connection between physical activity and subjective well-being. Additionally, it was found that these affective benefits were more likely to be experienced if practitioners concentrate on personal improvement objectives (Fox, 1999). Research findings therefore support the well-known statement that “exercise makes you feel good” (Fox, 1999, p. 413).

Self-esteem and self-perception

Two different approaches to self-esteem and exercise were determined. The first one is a ‘motivational approach’ or ‘personal development theory’, by which self-esteem functions as a motivational element of physical activity. In this case, those with high self-esteem or physical self-perceptions are prone to take part in physical activities in order to enhance or maintain self-worth and competence. The second approach is the personal ‘skill development’ theory, which states that self-esteem can be altered via experience; through for example, task mastery and skills development. In this case self-esteem is considered a beneficial outcome of involvement in physical exercise rather than a motivation (Biddle & Mutrie, 2007).

Social Benefits

Sport has the potential to promote social harmony between groups. Furthermore, it has the potential to serve as an agent for social change according to the values emphasized in a particular

sport context. Sport can act as a channel for the transmission of knowledge, values, and norms. The distinct values displayed maybe those of the predominant society or oppositely those of a differing subgroup. Therefore, sport can contribute either to stratification and distinction or to integration and assimilation in the overall society. Consequently, extreme positions are usually not considered acceptable (Wankel & Berger, 1991). According to Booth (2004) surfing is considered an extreme sport for a number of reasons. Surfing does not have an institutional framework in which surfers can conceal their contemptuous or anti-social behaviour. Surfers are perceived as hedonists who differ from dominant athletes, they make no demands about the social usefulness of their sport activity. In their claim of being different, a surfer stated that people should not dread them; they only need to not want to be them and be classified as perverts. In other words, extreme is a cultural context. Social risks are also taken by some surfers when the waves are good, they cancel appointments, find excuses to skip work, call off plans with significant others, family members and friends. Moreover, they may abstain from accepting job opportunities to be able to stay close to the ocean (Butts, 2001).

On the other hand, Celsi (1992) who conducted a study to examine the benefits gained by high risk sport athletes reported that one of the main transcendent benefits acquired by them was social bonding which is a benefit on a collective level and defined as *communitas* by Turner (1970). *Communitas* or social bonding is described as participants' mutual experience and the involvement a group gets from a common experience (Celsi, 1992). *Communitas* is defined as "a social anti-structure that frees participants from their social roles and status and instead engages them in a transcending camaraderie of status equality" (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989, p. 7). Sport participants' shared experiences surpass the routine of everyday life and release them

from social statuses and roles constraints, consequently supplying them with a sense of belonging (Celsi et al., 1993).

Lazarow et al. (2008) believed that the importance of a sport such as surfing expands outside the limits of recreation; it can create a “social fabric” that aid in delineating people and communities. Surfing is capable of bringing people together, connecting generations, and implementing a route for outdoor physical activity. Surfers, convey their individuality via their surfing and general behaviour on the beach. Through their involvement in collective action and expression, surfers form what is known as “scenes”. Therefore, the presence of a well-defined surfing subculture supplies its members with social belonging and a sense of relatedness which is affiliated with constructive interpersonal relationships (Butts, 2001).

Additional Perceived Benefits

Based on the problem statement of the study and by drawing parallels in literature, the following additional themes are believed to add further depth to understanding the phenomenon being studied.

The State of "Play"

Even though play is mostly associated with games of children or detracting, oblivious activities, studies found that play is an intrinsic quality of human existence. Play has been identified as a behavioural disposition that is full of intrinsic pleasure, inspiration, enjoyment and freedom (Ackerman, 1999, 2011; Gordon & Esbjörn-Hagens, 2007; Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2004; Kerr & Apter, 1991).

Ackerman (2011) identified adult play as something exquisite; it is a deep form of play which is comparable to a high state of euphoria and ecstasy that humans greatly appreciate. Play

is described as the times when an individual decides to spend a lot of time, emotion, and energy on a specific task or activity (Rieber, Smith, & Noah, 1998). Play is a state of mind:

Where we create a small and manageable private world which we may, of course, share with others; and this world is one of which, temporarily at least, nothing outside has any significance, and into which the outside world real problems cannot properly impinge (Kerr & Apter, 1991, p. 14).

Kerr and Apter (1991) pointed out that play is identified by a “protective frame”, which is a “psychological safety zone” that individuals form to detach or separate themselves from serious matters of the real world. This playful frame of mind is known as the “paratelic” state, which is different from the “telic” state that governs more serious activities. People tend to shift back and forth between the paratelic and telic states of mind at different times during a normal day, which is known as the reversal theory.

Some activities are prone to trigger deep play such as art, risk-taking and some types of sports, especially the ones that take place in environments that are silent, remote and floaty, such as mountain climbing or scuba diving. High risk activities that are judged by many people as irrational for anyone to engage in were dismissed as “deep play”. Extreme athletes were found to entice and pursue deep play with a sensuous precision bordering on madness (Ackerman, 2011). Ackerman (2011) states that high risk activities which demands challenges and combine risk, adventure, wonder and fun stimulate romance, and deep play thrives on a romance with life.

Environmental Benefits

There is increasing evidence that nature-based recreational activities such as physical activity has a positive effect on human health and provide them with a wide range of benefits

including physiological, psychological, spiritual and emotional health benefits (Brymer, Cuddihy, & Sharma-Brymer, 2010). However, for humans to gain these benefits, they have to maintain, improve and prevent degradation of the natural environment (Rolston III, 1991).

Extreme sports are outdoor sport activities that gained a reputation for being driven by a search for thrills or adrenaline. Research on extreme sports has devalued the importance of athletes' connection to the natural world and portrayed them as individuals who seek to compete against, defeat or conquer nature (Brymer et al., 2009; Brymer & Gray, 2009). However, a number of studies confirm that extreme sports athletes have a healthy and positive connection to nature (Brymer et al., 2009; Brymer & Gray, 2009; Brymer & Oades, 2009; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013a; Taylor, 2007). Participants described the natural environment as a facilitator to a deeper, more positive comprehension of self and its position in the natural world. For some participants, nature was described as pervasive and omnipresent, and a source of personal meaning and inherent power (Brymer & Gray, 2009). Participants described a sense of freedom derived from their total immersion in the natural environment, they felt in peace or being at one with nature (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013b). Moreover, extreme sports were described as leisure activities that connect participants with the most extreme forms of nature. "Being in nature at this level transforms the human tendency for anthropocentricity and replaces it with eccentricity and the realization of true courage and humility" (Brymer & Oades, 2009, p. 124).

Researchers suggest that the deep and intimate connection of outdoor athletes to their surrounding natural environment and the recognition that they are part of nature leads to a better environmental awareness and a desire to care for the environment which contributes to more ecologically sustainable practices (Brymer et al., 2009; Brymer & Gray, 2009). For instance, surfers are sportsmen who progressively adopt a responsible environmental and spiritual identity.

Surfing environmentalist activities can be demonstrated in the non-governmental environmental organizations created by surfer-activists including “Save our Surf” in Hawaii which was initiated to protect the surfing breaks which later developed a wider environmental agenda. Similarly, In Southern California, Surfrider foundation was also formed to preserve surf breaks, advance the positive qualities of the surfing culture, and which afterwards developed an explicit environmental identity to the extent of including as a main fundament an interest for biodiversity. The Surfers’ Environmental Alliance is another organization that aims at preserving the grace, safety and balance of the biotic community. Therefore, it could be analyzed that surfers’ adopt a culture that has an ecologically friendly and nature-spiritual characteristics (Taylor, 2007).

Benefits of Travel

Sport-based travel is a rapidly growing market segment in the tourism industry (Hinch & Higham, 2001; Hritz & Ross, 2010; Standeven & Knop, 1998; Weed, 2006) and is getting a lot of attention for its beneficial effects upon both sport tourists and host destinations (Hritz & Ross, 2010). Sport tourists gain a number of benefits from travelling to different destinations. Many tourists are keen to find value and significance through their travels, sports as an attraction help tourists in realizing their needs for authentic experiences, by promoting awareness of the various cultures or ways of life, tourists grasp a sense of the authenticity they were pursuing. Furthermore, sport tourism act as a channel for socialization between tourists and hosts. Tourists in general and sport tourists in particular are consciously and unconsciously developing their personal narrations based on their travel experiences (Hinch & Higham, 2001).

Travelling for the purpose of surfing is perceived by some researchers as a niche within sport tourism. However, other researchers categorized surf tourism as a niche within adventure

tourism. Surfers as adventure travellers pursue unique and cultural experiences (Reynolds & Hritz, 2012). It is not the quest for risk but knowledge and awareness that govern adventure tourism and links it to exploration. Experiencing a new and different host culture and being deeply involved into it by embracing the host's way of life is a crucial feature of the experience of an adventure traveller (Weber, 2008).

Adventure travellers separate themselves both symbolically and physically from their regular and well-structured worlds and their social circle by travelling to locations away from their home countries. After this separation phase travellers enter into a state of anti-structure where “communitas” may be experienced (Weber, 2008). A study examining surfers' travel motivation reported that the individuals travel to create new relationships and retain the old ones. They are excited to utilize their talents and skills and be with other surfers who enjoy the same type of activity they enjoy (Reynolds & Hritz, 2012).

The creation of “communitas” and shared experience during travel allow people to be in direct contact with exceptional cultures, which can challenge the travellers' abilities in a psychological more than a physical sense. Furthermore, individuals' formerly held view of themselves and their world may be reviewed, adjusted or challenged. It is an experience that could be described as a “discovery” – “a sense of excitement and wonder when experiencing something that will make the world seem much wider. Such “discoveries can vary in intensity, even resulting in profound changes in perception” (Weber, 2008, p. 66).

Summary of Benefits

The previous section presented the findings of a number of studies which all revealed that participation in sports in general and extreme sports in particular provided participants with a

variety of benefits. Participants experienced a number of pleasurable feelings. They felt happy, joyful and had a positive experience which was described by words such as blissful, extraordinary and marvelous. Sport participants were found to experience a state of flow, where they become fully immersed in the activity they are participating in to the extent of losing self-consciousness and the awareness of time. Yet, they were found to have clear objectives and were in control without trying hard to be in control. Sport participation is associated with physical and mental well being as well. Participants stayed fit and in shape through their regular involvement in physical activities which aid in reducing the risk for diseases and any possible disabilities. As for mental well-being, studies revealed that sport participation is capable of reducing depression and anxiety, in addition to improving mood, self esteem and self perception of practitioners.

Sport was found to have social benefits. It can act as a mean for the transmission of values and norms. Moreover, it can supply individuals with a sense of social belonging and harmony. Studies also showed that individuals who engaged in sport activities experienced a state of mind that is full of intrinsic gratification, freedom and inspiration known as the state of play. Nature-based sport activities such as extreme sports gained a reputation for being driven by a quest for thrills and risk and a desire for conquering nature. However, a number of studies revealed that extreme sports athletes have a positive connection to nature. Participants felt that they were being at one with nature. They acquired qualities such as courage and humility and became more environmentally friendly as a result of their intimate connection to their surrounding natural environment. Many sport participants are sport tourists as well. Sport related travel allowed sport tourists to gain benefits such as the creation of *communitas* during travel. Participants got an opportunity to experience new and different cultures which sometimes allowed them to alter

their previously held view of themselves and their world and provided them with a sense of discovery.

The model presented below is a visual summary of the literature review chapter. The model displays the interrelation between surfing as a sport activity and the different fields discussed in this chapter. Furthermore, it demonstrates the perceived benefits that may be gained from participation in a sport activity such as surfing.

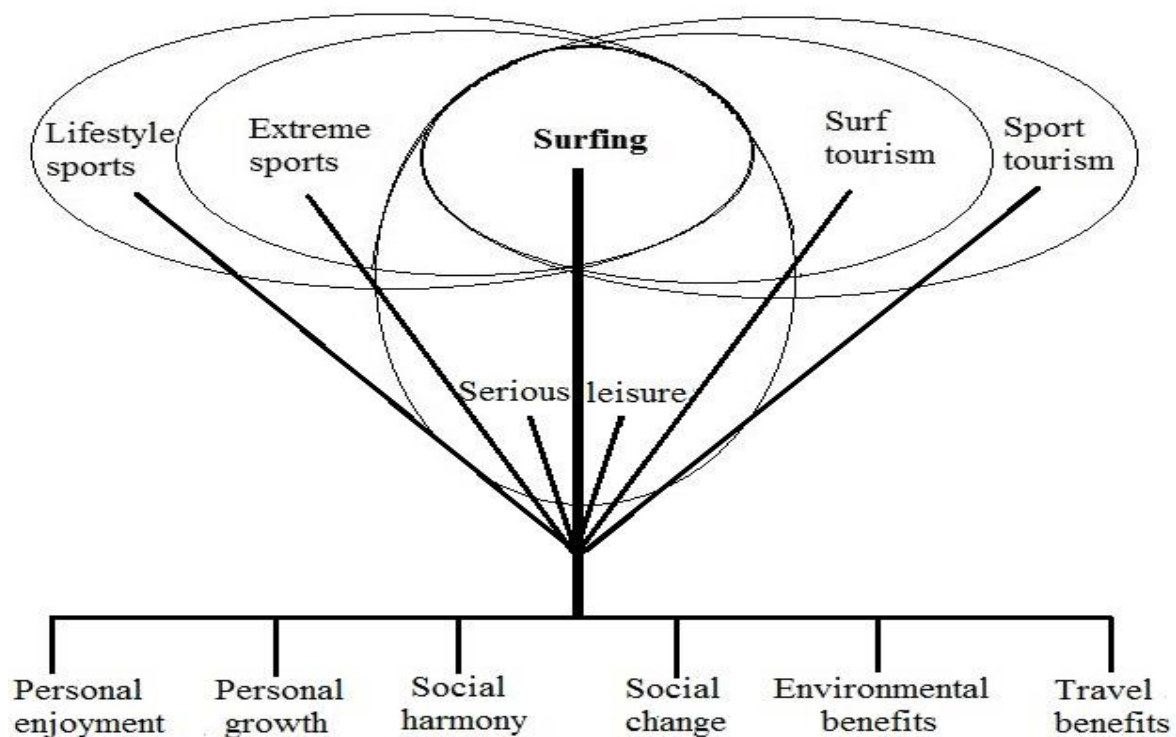


Figure 3. A model summarizing the central aspects and perceived benefits that are connected to surfing as a sport activity

Methods

The main aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of surfers' experiences and the benefits they acquire from surfing in cold water in Jæren, Norway. Based on that, the research design was approached from a purely qualitative perspective as it was viewed to be the most appropriate, given the exploratory nature of the study. Qualitative methodologies are able to provide paths that can lead to the uncovering of profound levels of meanings (Gilbert, 1993). The phenomenological approach which adopted qualitative research techniques was found to provide insights and in-depth understanding of the interviewees' subjective experiences, allowing the researcher to understand and interpret each individual participant's lived experience (Kvale, 1983). Even though the majority of the literature related to this study was read before the data was collected, yet, theory was constructed from the data collected as well. Hoare, Mills, and Francis (2012) described such process as dancing with data, in which the "theory can be constructed from the data as opposed to theory providing a hypothesis to be tested through the process of data collection and analysis" (p. 240).

Research Design

The research has a case study design and employed both primary data which consisted of interviews and observations, and secondary data which consisted of written and video material from online surfing blogs and websites. The phenomenon was studied in its natural setting and quotes, anecdotes, and narratives that apply to the participants were employed. A case study is defined as "an in-depth examination of an extensive amount of information about very few units or cases for one period or across multiple periods of time" (Neuman, 2011, p. 42). Case studies provide in-depth details of specific cases, which allow researchers to create or build new theories as well as reshape current theories to complex cases or new situations. Furthermore, through

analyzing specific cases, the cause and effect relations and complex details of social processes become more apparent, this clarity give researchers the chance to establish far-reaching descriptions and justifications that can apprehend the intricacy of social life (Neuman, 2011).

Primary Data Collection

The data of qualitative studies most often depend on subjects' words and actions. Therefore, demands data collection methods that give the researcher the chance to apprehend both language and behaviour (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Primary data consisted of face-to face individual and group interviews and observations. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994) the most useful qualitative data collection methods are in-depth interviews, group interviews and observations which are the primary data collection methods utilized in this study. The researcher attempted to conduct as many as possible of the interviews on separate days and times from the observations, to have the interviewees' full concentration and for the interviewees not to be affected by any time restraints or physical exhaustion after their surfing sessions.

Personal Individual and Group Interviews

For the purpose of this study, interviews were regarded as one of the main methods to gain qualitative insights from the participants involved in this research. Semi-structured personal in-depth interviews were conducted as they were seen as most appropriate to understand the participants' subjective experiences. It allowed the respondents to talk at length about a set of topics and to share as much information as possible in an unconstrained environment (Seidman, 1991). Questionnaires was another possible method that could have been used in this study, however, it was difficult to define the population, as there was no list of surfers with names and addresses. Hence, it would have been difficult to identify the surfers and would have taken longer time to use questionnaires.

An interview guide in the form of a printed list of questions and topics to cover was used by the researcher to guide the conversation and to make sure that all the necessary topics were covered. The semi-structured interview questions were mainly built on Wankel and Berger's (1991) study on the benefits from sport which departed from Driver et al.'s (1991) research on the benefits of leisure. Participants were mainly asked to start the interview by describing when they started surfing and what made them choose this particular sport activity. They were asked to describe their thoughts and feelings before they surfed, while surfing and after surfing. Participants were also asked to describe how surfing affected them personally, how have they benefited from surfing, what kind of relationship did they have with their surrounding natural environment and how were their relationships with other surfers in the Jæren surfing subculture (See Appendix B for complete list of questions). All the questions asked by the researcher were easily comprehended by the participants. The study utilized responsive interviewing techniques, where the researcher adapted to new information and altered directions whenever it was found necessary to get a more profound understanding on unanticipated insights (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The researcher mainly aimed at recruiting the in-group members of the Jæren surfing subculture. She believed that recruiting experienced surfers in the study would provide her with in-depth descriptions and explanations of the participants' long experiences and involvement in the sport of surfing in the Jæren region. Furthermore, they were perceived as better qualified candidates who would provide the researcher with a better understanding of all aspects of the sport. Nevertheless, later on, the researcher decided to recruit few novice surfers as participants in the study as well to check if they had any additional inputs or different experiences that would

benefit the study. However, due to time constraints recruiting new surfers for the study was not feasible.

For this study, purposive sampling proved to be most appropriate in recruiting particular cases that are especially informative and to select members of a specialized population (Neuman, 2011), which are the surfers in the Jæren region in Norway. Purposive sampling was judged as an advantageous sampling method because it “increases the likelihood that variability common in any social phenomenon will be represented in the data, in contrast to random sampling which tries to achieve variation through the use of random selection and large sample size” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 45).

The researcher was introduced to the first interviewee through a common friend. Afterwards, a snowball sampling technique was employed, where interviewees recommended other surfers who are members of the Jæren surfing subculture as well. Snowball which is a subset of purposive sampling is a “nonrandom sample in which the researcher begins with one case and then, based on information about interrelationships from that case, identifies other cases and repeats the process again and again” (Neuman, 2011, p. 267). Snowball sampling also known as network chain referral is utilized when a researcher is interested in studying an interconnected network of individuals or organizations (Neuman, 2011). In this study, the researcher aimed at studying the members of the network of surfers in the Jæren region. Therefore, snowball sampling was perceived as the most suitable sampling method.

A total of 13 interviews which included nine males and four females were conducted during the months of February, March and April 2015. All participants were Norwegians except for one participant who was a German residing in Norway for over 15 years. Participants' age range was

between 25 and 53 years with an average age of 35 years. Even though saturation was reached after the eighth interview, still the researcher had to continue recruiting more participants in order to have a more gender balanced sample.

The researcher conducted the interviews which lasted between 40 to 120 minutes in locations of the interviewees' choice to allow the respondents to feel comfortable and at ease during the interviews. A total of nine interviews took place either in respondents' homes, workplaces or in quiet coffee shops of their choice. The four remaining interviews which comprised of one group interview consisting of three respondents and one individual interview were all conducted during the Nordic Surf Games 2015 that took place from 13th till 15th of March, 2015 in Jæren, Norway. All interviews were audio recorded using a professional audio recorder device with a microphone connected to it to improve the sound quality of the recordings. Some notes were taken by the researcher during the interviews as well. The majority of the interviews were transcribed right after each interview. The researcher listened to each interview a minimum of two times to ensure that she did not miss any part of the interviewees' responses.

In order to protect the privacy of the surfers who participated in this study, all interviewees' remained anonymous. Interviewees' remained nameless and were identified by the letter P in addition to a number from 1 to 13. The age of each participant was removed as well as it is easy to identify the participants by their age in the Jæren surfing subculture. Furthermore, the researcher obtained a verbal consent; the researcher explained verbally the study and its purposes to each participant, she answered any additional questions asked by the participants and obtained a verbal agreement from each one of them to participate in the study.

Observations

Observations were another data collection method which was utilized by the researcher. Observations took place during the months of March and April 2015 and were organized with three participants who allowed the researcher to join and observe them surf in a number of surf spots along the Jæren coast. Moreover, observations took place during the Nordic Surf Games 2015 in Jæren as well. Observing the participants in the natural setting enabled the researcher to learn more about surfing and surfers in Jæren.

Observations allowed the researcher to observe in real life all the stories and information provided by the respondents during the interviews. For example, a typical onsite observation day would start by meeting with a couple of surfers in a specific meeting point and going together to one of the surf spots which enabled the researcher to see how excited they were during their drive towards the beach. Another observation note was taken on how surfers changed into their wetsuits in parking lots on rainy days or how they applied surf-wax on their surfboards to keep them from slipping off their boards while surfing. It was also noticed that they surfed happily for hours in rainy and windy weather and when their surf sessions would come to an end, they would again take off their wetsuits and attempt to put on dry clothes in the same parking lot without any complaining. On their way home, surfers demonstrated feelings of joy and relaxation. During observations the researcher took direct observation field notes in addition to a number of photographs which were utilized during the data analysis phase of the study.

Secondary Data Collection

Written and Video Material

Secondary data material consisted of written material from online surfing blogs and video material which were supplied by some of the interviewees and collected via online sources.

Secondary data material was important in enhancing the researcher's understanding of the different aspects of surfing as a sport activity.

Data Analysis

In this study the data analysis process was divided into four different steps as recommended by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010). These steps are: 1) data preparation phase, 2) data exploration phase, 3) data reduction phase, and 4) interpretation.

In accordance with Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010), the data preparation phase in this study consisted of the transcription of all the interviews. All transcribed data were printed out and read carefully to be used for the exploration of the participants' benefits from surfing. In the data exploration phase, the researcher worked on reading all the transcriptions and field notes that were taken from observations simultaneously with watching all surfing-related videos collected earlier. All themes that were perceived as benefits from surfing were highlighted and utilized in the data reduction phase afterwards.

The data reduction phase consisted of coding and looking for patterns in the data. There are two forms of coding, inductive and deductive. Inductive coding "refers to approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher" (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). The second form of coding is Deductive coding which "refers to data analyses that set out to test whether data are consistent with prior assumptions, theories, or hypotheses identified or constructed by an investigator" (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). In the coding process, the two forms of coding were utilized in this study.

Data analysis and interpretation were not two unconnected phases (Hesse-Biber & Leavy,

2010) in this study. The researcher engaged simultaneously in the interpretation phase and the other three phases of data analysis described above.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are two principles that are applied differently in qualitative studies. In qualitative research reliability is mainly connected to the dependability or consistency of observations. Techniques such as interviews, participation and photographs are utilized to document these observations consistently in qualitative studies (Neuman, 2011). In this study, the researcher used a range of data sources to record observations in a consistent manner. The researcher conducted extensive interviews with the participants, which were all audio-recorded and transcribed which is the best way to secure the data. She re-listened to recordings several times which was perceived as a beneficial way to ensure that the information transcribed is an accurate representation of the participants' words. Field notes and photographs were taken during observations as well to improve reliability. Furthermore, the researcher checked across the different data sources and results were found to be consistent.

Validity in qualitative studies is realized when authenticity is achieved. Authenticity means offering a balanced and honest version of social life from the point of view of the people being studied by "capturing an inside view and providing a detailed account of how the people we study understand events" (Neuman, 2011, p. 214). In this study, the researcher attempted to elicit authenticity by building a good rapport with the interviewees; this was done by spending enough amounts of time with the participants either during observations or during the interviews which took place in their homes, workplaces and other suitable locations. The researcher believed that she succeeded in creating a good rapport with the interviewees which lead to successful interviewing and observations and consequently lead to obtaining authentic data.

The study utilized different data sources which were all described throughout this chapter. Using several types of data in a study is a method known as triangulation. Triangulation helps improve the reliability and validity of qualitative research because it strengthens the study by combining different methods (Golafshani, 2003) which helps the researcher validate the data by verifying it through different sources. In this study, the researcher compared different data sources and results were found to be consistent which indicates that data is reliable and valid. She also compared her own data with findings of other researchers in related fields; once more the consistent findings supported the validity and reliability of the present study.

Reflexivity

It is noteworthy to mention that the researcher was aware of how she may be influenced by the subjects of her research which is a common issue in qualitative research and how this might affect the process of the research and the outcomes. In this study, in order to not to get involved with the participants and their lifestyles and avoid any biases, the researcher discussed this issue with external experts on adventure tourism and extreme sports. Hence, she managed to disentangle herself from such a probable problem and created the required distance to the research materials in order to achieve and maintain a high level of neutrality.

Findings

This chapter presents a detailed description of the benefits acquired by surfers in the Jæren region near the city of Stavanger in Norway. The coastline along Jæren offers various surf spots that accommodate the needs of beginners, intermediates and more experienced or advanced surfers, which makes it an ideal location for surfing in Norway.

The chapter is divided into three sections: The first section provides a brief description of the commencement of surfing in Norway in the early eighties. The second section is divided into three parts: (1) a presentation of how a new surfer can start learning how to surf and what it takes for a novice to be accepted and included as an in-group member of the Jæren surf subculture. (2) A brief demonstration of the difficulties faced by female surfers in a male dominated sport such as surfing and how they manage to overcome these difficulties, integrate and become active in-group members. (3) A description of the in-group members of the Jæren surfing subculture.

Based on the problem statement of the study and based on the knowledge gained by the researcher, the first two sections in the findings chapter were found to be of high importance and relevance to the discussion of the benefits in the third section as they provide a backdrop for this discussion. The last and main section attempts to provide a detailed description of the various benefits acquired by surfers in Jæren, Norway.

The Eighties: The Onset of Surfing in Norway

Norway is an increasingly popular cold-water surf destination. Regular swell, pristine waters and marvelous scenery allow Norway to attract more and more surfers. However, this was not the case in the early eighties when less than a handful of beginner surfers started surfing by accident and discovered that it was possible to surf in the cold North Sea:

In 1979 when I tried it, there were a couple of Dutch guys and I was just sunbathing and then they came by and I looked at them, and he asked if I wanted to stand, try to stand on the board with him. Of course I didn't know where to stand and he was on the board and I was maybe on the board for ten seconds and we both fell in... (P-2, Male)

The surfer who is one of the first to start surfing in Norway explains that it all started unintentionally; surfers standing on surfboards and surfing in the Norwegian beaches was not a common scene at that time. Similarly, another Norwegian surfing pioneer who has been surfing for over thirty three years describes how he accidently started surfing:

I started back in 1982; I started by accident really (laughs). I was on a motor bike trip in England. I was a biker when I was younger. A friend and I drove around in the South of England and we came down to a place called St. Ives which is a really nice town in the south. We drove into town and drove by a surf shop "hmm, wow, there's surf here!" (Laughs) and just having seen surfing on TV and movies and commercials, it looks cool. "We got lots of beaches at home, we can probably do that". So I went into the shop and asked for the cheapest second hand board they had (laughs) and bought it (...). (P-8, Male)

Meeting another surfer along the road was an extremely rare incident; "If you saw another surfer driving you could maybe stop, turn the car and chase him and stop him and talk to him (laughs). It was crazy" (P-2, Male). P-8 affirms that it was an uncommon yet exciting occurrence to meet other surfers back then:

I drove round in Sandnes and suddenly I saw this car parked and “something strange with that car!” I turned around and went back and “wow, it’s got surfboards on the roof” (Laughs). The car was just parked next to the shop, so I went to the shop and “Who owns that car outside?” (Laughs) and that’s how I met the first other two surfers in Norway... (P-8, Male)

The surfer was eager to find and meet others who share the same passion, which was to learn and start surfing in Norway. At that time, the only possible way for getting to know how to surf was through learning by trial and error:

We started trying and trying to learn it together. We didn’t know anything; it took us like six months to find out obvious things, that you can’t ride the white water. You have to find a non broken wave to surf the crest of the wave and things like that took us ages to find out, not having anyone to teach us. We just thought it looked cool and we want to do it. (P-8, Male)

The surfer describes how hard it was for him to learn how to surf at the beginning, with no one to teach him and his new friends even the basic rules of surfing. Yet, they had a sense of discovery, learnt by doing and succeeded in gaining the skills required for surfing.

Want to Surf? Not as Hard as it Used to Be

Nowadays, if someone wants to start surfing in Norway, it is much easier to do so: “It’s different now, when you can get on a surf camp and surf trips. You have people who are willing to teach you everything. Different from when I started” (P-11, Female). A new surfer can easily enroll in a surf school and take a beginners’ surf course. The surf shop in Stavanger offer beginners lessons as well; a four hour, one-day surf lesson on a weekday costs four hundred

kroners, while a weekend, two-day surf lesson consisting of four hours per day, costs eight hundred kroners. The course fee includes loans of a surfboard, a costume, shoes, hood and gloves. New surfers can also rent or buy surf equipment via the local surf shop in Stavanger; where a new surfboard costs approximately five thousand kroners and a winter wetsuit, boots, and gloves would all cost about five thousand kroners too, making a total of approximately ten thousand kroners for the purchase of the equipment as estimated by one of the participants.

Even though nowadays it is easy to get hold of equipment and enroll in a surf course, if new surfers are under eighteen years old or have no driving license and a car, then it becomes very difficult for them to surf on a regular basis because they will always need someone to drive them to the beach and then pick them up again after a surf session. A participant explains, “I started surfing like the age of fifteen. It’s really hard in Norway to surf. I don’t know if you’ve been out to where the beaches, there’s no public transportation, no anything like that so you’re really dependent on other people...” (P-11, Female). Surfers start surfing at an old age in Norway in comparison to other countries where young and old surfers have easy access to the beaches “everyone starts late coz it’s not like California or anywhere like that where you can start at the age of six or seven...”(P-11, Female).

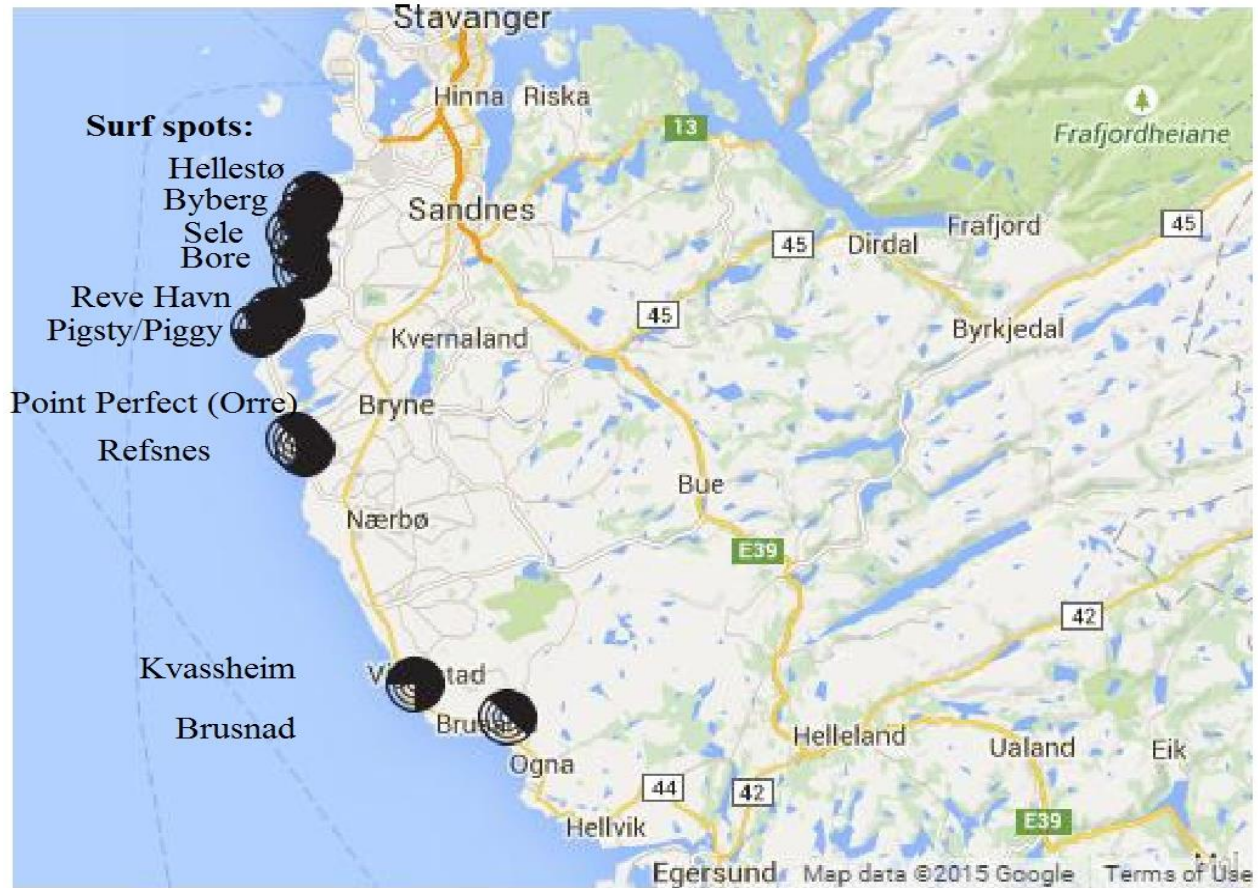


Figure 4. A map showing the different surf spots along the Jæren coast (Magicseaweed, 2015).

Becoming an Active Surfer

Novices

Novices face various difficulties in order to be acknowledged and accepted as serious and competent surfers in the Jæren surf community. It is not an easy task for a new surfer to become an active surfer and be included in the group forming the Jæren surf subculture, as one of the surfers states, “I think it’s probably quite hard to be new...” (P-11, Female). A new surfer needs to work hard to be part of the surf subculture; as another surfer says “(...) you need to earn it, It’s terrible” (P-13, Female). This surfer explains that it is an unpleasant phase, the transitional phase from being a novice to becoming an accepted active surfer by other older and experienced ones. A novice would ask so how do I earn it? :

You earn it by showing that you respect the ocean and the rules in the ocean. Meaning, as a new you should surf the new place, the basic beaches. As a new you should surf Sola strand, Bore strand, maybe Orre strand. You don't show up in Sele, no, no, no, no, you're new, that's not the place for you. (P-13, Female)

This surfer explains that novices should never attempt to show up in the surf spots where the experienced surfers go, except when they learn the basics first and practice enough and this should always take place in a beach. A novice might ask why can't I go surfing in the surf spots where the all-year experienced surfers go? An experienced surfer would reply:

The places where we usually sit if you are new, you're not really keen on going out there because it looks hazardous. It looks dangerous. Of course I meet always people that wanna pick up, start surfing. I take them out, I give them lessons but as I said, we go to Bore beach coz this is a safe place; sandy bottom, you don't hurt yourself, you can see the ground. It makes you feel more comfortable. You know lots of people have the fright of the dark bury waters. So you start on a safe spot and build up confidence, and then when you wanna come out to us, when you're ready. (P-1, Male)

This surfer explains that it is dangerous for a novice to attempt to surf in specific surf spots. These are the spots where the experienced ones surf. Novices can hurt themselves and hurt others too, they are considered as "hazards in the water" as described by another surfer. They should only start going to the advanced surf spots when they have practiced enough and are totally aware of the strict surf rules:

What I look for when I see new people is that are they able to maneuver themselves? Do they paddle? Can they escape the wave coming in their face? What do they do? If they keep on falling and disappearing meaning that maybe it's not time here. And also you need to know the rules... (P-13, Female)

The surfer explains that experienced surfers can easily spot and evaluate beginners by the way they paddle, how they successfully maneuver themselves in the water and the way they surf in general. And of course they check if a beginner is aware of the informal rules of surfing:

Surfing is a very dangerous sport, can be very dangerous if you don't apply to the rules. The problem is usually a wave breaks at the same spot, that's what they call the 'lineup'. So people are sitting in a lineup, waves come from a direction, they hit the ground and then they break, so first one to the closest to where the wave breaks is the first one to surf. So when he surfs that wave next one in line goes. It's a conveyor belt. And then you have people who don't realize this one sitting deeper who should be first, so that what is called 'drop in'; he drops in on your wave. And then it becomes dangerous because the fins are razor sharp, the boards are bullets, you know they are pointy. So when I come surfing and then suddenly you come dropping in into my head, accidents happen. That's why people are very strict on the rules. (P-1, Male)

Experienced surfers have strict rules in regard to who has the right to catch a wave according to the line up or the surfer's position in the water as explained by the informant. Failing to abide by this rule is known as 'dropping in'. The new surfer attempts to surf the same wave when it is not his turn and then collides with the surfer who has the right to catch the wave. Then accidents

happen as a result because the latter surfer can get hit by the surfboard on his head and get injured because the board has pointy edges and sharp fins. Following the rules is very important because as mentioned before surfing in Norway is becoming increasingly popular and the number of surfers in Jæren is rising day after day. The different surf spots are getting crowded and only one surfer can ride one wave, and there are not that many waves; so surfers can wait in between waves for up to thirty minutes. Therefore, when a new set of waves arrives, all surfers are competing for them. When the rules are violated, a bad vibe is created in the water and many times the beginners are treated in an aggressive manner by the experienced surfers; they are yelled at and are told to get out of the water and to go surf somewhere else.

The novice learned his/her lessons, practiced a lot in the easy and intermediate surf spots and is now fully aware of all the rules. The novice believes s/he is ready and decides to show up in the more advanced surf spots. S/he wants to be accepted and included in the group and start wondering what should I do now? “You have to prove yourself to get into the group” (P-8, Male), a group member replies and continues demonstrating how this could be done:

You climb up the hierarchy, like you can do that by being very good. So if you live around here and you surf here a lot and people see you all the time and they can see that you prove yourself. You're a good surfer and you get better and better, and the better you are the more you will be let into the group. Also if you're not quite that good but if you're a good friend with someone in there it's of course much easier to get in there. Like if I have a friend or someone that comes from somewhere else that moves here and he starts surfing with me and we become friends, he will easier climb the ladder than if he just doesn't know anyone, because he will just have to surf a lot and then let people see that

he's a good surfer and then of course you'll get more and more friends by time.

And if you're really good, of course it won't take long before you're in there.

(P-8, Male)

The surfer explains that there is a hierarchy in surfing. The older and more experienced surfers that are always seen out surfing in the ocean are on top of the hierarchy. A newcomer will be accepted, let in the group and allowed to start climbing up the hierarchy if he succeeds in demonstrating competence, progression and commitment. In this manner, a novice passes through different stages and acquires a number of benefits at the same time, he acquires the surfing skills, gain few friends, get accepted into the group and consequently gain more friends as he become a member in the surf subculture. On the other hand, if the group members express their disapproval of a newcomer and he becomes unpopular, He does not get a chance to surf the same spots with them. A surfer affirms, "If there's someone we don't accept at all, he won't get to catch any waves because he will just be blocked" (P-8, Male).

Female Surfers in Jæren

Surfing is identified as a male dominated sport in Norway and elsewhere. As stated by one of the female informants, the number of Norwegian all-year female surfers is about only ten surfers who are out surfing in the ocean on a regular basis. They do not look any different than their male counterparts, that is, female surfers are not seen surfing in bikinis like in other parts of the world. All the surfers in Jæren wear wetsuits that cover all their bodies apart from their faces to protect themselves from the harsh weather conditions and the cold temperature of the ocean.



Figure 5. Two female surfers in Hellestø beach. Photograph taken by researcher.

These female surfers admit that they face some difficulties as being a minority in the Jæren surfing subculture. Female surfers stated that they are initially not taken seriously by the male surfers. They are prejudged as incompetent surfers and are often dropped in on by male surfers; male surfers often steal the waves from them because they assume that they do not have the skills to catch the wave anyway:

In my opinion, speaking on behalf of myself, I don't think it's a big problem. But like anywhere in life when you're a female, men tend to maybe you know just feel that they have a right of way. So sometimes I've been dropped in on by guys just because they assume that I can't take the wave. They assume that

I'm no good. They assume that I'm gonna fall over and they just drop in or maybe snake queue and things like that. But it's not a big problem, you just let them know. (P-11, Female)

Similarly, another female surfer demonstrates a similar experience; how male surfers sometimes steal the waves from the females and how she as a female surfer in the water has to fight for her right for the wave not by shouting or fighting but by demonstrating her skills in front of other male surfers in the water:

I understood why they were stealing my wave, because they thought that I could not surf. So I was thinking, "well, what they see is a girl and they are judging me by being a girl, I cannot surf. I need to show them". So I said "Ok", coz we were only three persons in the sea and it was amazing how they could just ruin it for me. So when both of them surfed and were paddling out, I was like "I need a big wave. I need a big wave. I need a big wave. I'm gonna show these boys who are so young boys, I'm gonna show them, little guys". So I got a good big wave and I did many turns as I could on that wave and just passed them like (hooh: swift movement sound). And after that they were like "wow, what a great wave you had, I guess this one is yours", they started to say. I'm like "yeah, I knew, you judged me you boys" (laughs). So I see as a woman, if they don't know you, you need to fight for your right. (P-13, Female)

Female surfers clearly expressed that this gender-based discrimination is not permanent. They only face these problems when they are new or when they surf among male surfers that do not know how skillful they are. One of the female informants says, "now, I am sort of surfing

with people I know so it's not really an issue, it was more of an issue starting out I suppose (...)" (P-11, Female). After they demonstrate their skills and get to surf with the same male surfers several times, they get to be respected and given the same rights as their male counterparts.

On the other hand, another female informant expresses a different point of view. She denies the presence of any kind of sex-based discrimination among the surfers not even an initial discrimination. She explains that it is all about the person's personality and attitude in the water, "No, no, no, no. I don't think it's a girl or boy. I think it's about personalities, coz there's some girls that have problems; they are cocky in the water, they're rude, they're sneaking It's about personalities" (P-12, Female).

As for the males' point of view, an experienced male surfer states that the female surfers are taken as seriously as any other surfer. If they succeed in proving themselves as good surfers they get included in the group as any other surfer without any sex discrimination. It is all about the skills he states:

They are taken as seriously as any other surfer, but it's the hierarchy again. If they're not good they'll be left down at the bottom of the ladder as with everyone else that's not good. But when they get better, they have to climb the ladder as with everyone else, but they don't get free rides (laughs). But if they prove themselves and they get better, they're not discriminated for their sex. They might get discriminated because they're not good, but that's the same if it's a boy or if it's a girl. They'll be discriminated because they're not good enough and they won't be able to climb the ladder. (P-8, Male)

The Scarcity of Surfing Resources – The Waves

The different surf spots along the Jæren coast are usually crowded and it is a very rare occasion when only one small group of three or four friends is the only group out surfing in the ocean. Most of the time there is a large number of surfers in the water which cause problems, as illustrated by one of the informants:

Surfing is not two days that are the same, you have one day when just a few waves comes through and only one place in Jæren picks up some waves, and of course everyone wants to go there and surf those waves and it might be really crowded and there is just one wave for one surfer and waves can be few and far between, so everyone sitting around waiting and waiting and waiting and of course the best surfers they get the best and surf most waves. And then actually there can be quite an agro environment in the water, in the lineup because no one thinks they get the waves they deserve (laughs). (P-8, Male)

The crowd in the different surf spots in Jæren is a main reason why the majority of the members of this surf community are not keen on having any new surfers in the water: “They want to have the waves by themselves, me, me, me, me, me, that’s like everybody who surfs” (P-3, Male). One of the informants explains that there is a state of paradox with surfing. He says that surfers need to accept that surfing in Norway is growing and there is nothing they can do about that apart from accepting this fact and be happy about it:

Yeah, but you know like getting more people everything grows, you can’t stop that. You might as well be a part of it. I used to work a little bit for a surf shop, and for a surf shop to be able to survive here, that can supply us with good

products they need a market, you know. Therefore, people have to start surfing and you just need to accept that it's growing and yeah, be happy with that. Find good solutions to how to solve the problem with your ego and keeping your waves for yourself (laughs). (P-6, Male)

This informant sets an example for another type of surfers, who are aware of the importance of the growth of the surfing scene in Norway. That there are certain types of businesses that depend on surfers and they need more people to start surfing in order to maintain their businesses.

Other informants also admitted that they see some of the surfers fall in the trap of egoism; specifically the older surfers and they even spot themselves falling in the same trap too sometimes:

Particularly mainly the older guys who started surfing, they have pride and they always feel like it's their place. My waves sort of thing and I can feel it on myself sometimes as well. If I'm out surfing and a bunch of tourists from somewhere else turns up and get in the water and just don't really know maybe what they're doing, getting my waves. I can feel this pride "Why? Why are you coming here? This is my place, you know". (P-11, Female)

This informant explains that some surfers become egoistic, specifically the older ones who get the feeling that the surf spots and the waves belong to them. She admits that sometimes she finds herself acting in a similar manner but then she monitors and readjusts her way of thinking and behaviour stating that:

This is a bad thing you know, coz it's a selfish thing. I don't like that part so I try if I ever end up thinking that, I try to just, you know, I don't wanna be that

kind of person. I think a lot of love for everyone is the best way to go. The worst thing for me yeah, the selfishness that it brings, where you get so carried away that you can't see it happening in the water. And you're just grumpy and then what's the point of doing it if you're not having fun. (P-11, Female)

Many of the surfers who were interviewed in this study admitted that their cravenness for the waves makes them behave in a bad manner in the water sometimes. However, a number of surfers also admitted that whenever they spot themselves misbehaving towards others in the water, they attempt to adjust their behaviour right away. This could be acknowledged as a useful method for personal development and improving their self discipline by fighting against selfishness.

The In-Group Members of the Jæren Surfing Subculture

According to the information supplied by the all-year surfers interviewed in this study, the number of surfers in the Jæren region is between a hundred and fifty and two hundred surfers. An all year-surfer is a surfer who demonstrates dedication to the sport by surfing all year round, including the long, cold winter months in Norway. The surfers' age range is between 20 to 55 years old, with a majority of surfers in their thirties and forties. Surfers in Jæren choose jobs that provide them with the flexibility to surf regularly. A large number of surfers work in the oil business; they work two-weeks off shore and have four-weeks free. Many others are fire-fighters who work shifts or work two days and have four days off. A number of surfers have their own private businesses while others choose to work part-time, giving surfing the priority in their lives. Surfers go surfing a minimum of two days per week and a maximum of two times per day. All interviewees in this study admitted that they go surfing whenever there is surf. It is a rule; whenever the weather conditions are good for surfing and there are good waves, they are out

surfing in the ocean. The only exception for this rule is when they are travelling out of the region for work, only then they do not attempt to check the surf weather forecast not to be teased if there are good waves while they are away working.

The coming section attempts to provide a thorough description of the many benefits surfers reap after they succeed in becoming in-group members of the Jæren surfing subculture along with a brief description of the difficulties they face, sacrifices they make and sometimes negative behavioural traps they fall into in order to continue gaining these benefits.

Benefits of Surfing

All surfers who have been interviewed in this study are aware of the various negative perceptions many of their non-surfer family members, friends and coworkers have on them and their lifestyle. They are perceived by many members of the society as a group of risk takers who are sometimes putting their lives in danger by surfing in freezing cold water, big waves and currents just for the sake of the thrill and excitement. While all people are staying inside their well insulated, warm homes, surfers are out in the ocean surfing in all weather conditions. They are straying from the social norms and therefore, are criticized for adopting a hedonistic, selfish and child-like behaviour by other members of their society. One of the informants illustrates how he compares surfing to relationships, whenever he attempts to explain to non-surfers what surfing means to him and to other surfers:

It is exactly that, it is a relationship. I use it a lot when I explain surfing to people that don't surf. Its like, "why are you sitting there before the sun goes up?" You know, and "why in the winter, its minus five degrees, you're changing out its freezing cold, why you do that? It's crazy!" But then you have

to say it's the same if you look at a relationship from the outside and you think why are these people together? All they do is fight and beat each other up over something. Unless you are in a relationship and understand the love that is there it might look from the outside, uh, it's horrible. They're only fighting, but that's the outside, you know. You have to be in the inside to understand what is actually there. And that's what happens when you get the virus with surfing as well. It's (...) what you get out of it (...) takes the inconvenience of freezing and being cold, it smashes it. (P-1, Male)

The surfer explains that surfing is a very personal experience that is why he uses these relationship resemblances when he tries to explain surfing to non surfers. People are only looking at surfers and surfing from the outside. They have not experienced the many good and positive feelings that surfers feel before, after and in the act of surfing. Non surfers have not reaped any of the many benefits of surfing that is why they only perceive it as an unhealthy activity performed by a group of people who are off their hook.

Surfers gain many benefits out of surfing. It provides them with various sociological, psychological and physiological benefits that make them always return back to the ocean looking for more.

Social Benefits

Social Integration and Social Bonding

The Jæren surf community is not a big community when compared to surf communities in other countries. Therefore, the majority of surfers in this region know each other well. They meet occasionally during their surf sessions in one of the surf spots along the Jæren coast and use social media such as facebook, instagram, etc. to communicate and share surf-related

information, videos or photos. Social integration is an important social aspect of the surf experience; where a surf member knows that he is surrounded by other members that share the same values and understand his passion. A surfer states:

I want to talk and tell and share the experience. After this when I get up to my car I always talk with the people if I see them and I go “Yeah, yeah, it was so fun, and you will have so much fun, enjoy”. I’m like that and I like to share that passion with other surfers coz sharing at home, it’s not possible (laughs), and I can get more disappointed. So I have experienced that my surfing experience I need to share with other surfers, coz the other ones they do not understand. (P-13, Female)

This informant explains that people outside the surf community do not understand the passion she has for surfing. When she attempts to share her surf experience with family members or friends who do not surf she gets disappointed because they do not show much interest in the conversation, simply because they do not understand what surfing means to her. That is why she decided to share her surf experiences with other surfers, whom she knows will interact with her in a positive manner, consequently, enhancing her satisfaction after a surf session.

There is a consensus among the group of surfers interviewed in this study that surfing is an individual sport. “I think we’re lucky in Norway with the scene being so small and we know each other really well. We’ve got a good community and there are a lot of good people in it, but it is an individual sport” says one of the informants (P-11, Female). Surfers do share the same passion, values and sometimes experiences among each other. Yet, when it is surf time, a surfer would rather meet with just two or three close friends and surf together: “We want to have that

wave, we want to be alone, me and three guys that would be fantastic if we have this condition” (P-2, Male).

Surfers are aware that their satisfaction depends on a scarce resource which is the waves, the more surfers in the water, the fewer waves they will catch. “Less friends, more waves, that’s the old rule” (P-1, Male) says an informant. Yet, they all confirmed that they would still like to surf with a few friends instead of completely alone and considered having these close surf friends as one of the benefits of surfing because then they get to share the fun and demonstrate their skills to each other:

Well, it’s a fantastic feeling because maybe I have some good jumps and some good waves and you talk to the other guys, and “did you see that? Did you see?” It is just a great feeling to be out and you know, doing what you like best. (P-2, Male)

Benefits of Travel

Norwegian surfers are very active travellers, always in search for the perfect wave wherever they travel. All the informants stated that they mainly travel to places where they can surf: “Ninety five percent of my travels the last thirty years have been just for the reason of surfing” (P-8, Male). Surfers in Jæren are very mobile, they have the means and they find the time to travel when they want to, as one of the informants explains:

Actually most people from here, from Norway are very well situated with money. So we travel everywhere in the world, Australia, Asia, Indonesia, Hawaii, America er everywhere. I mean two thirds of the world is water, and it is coast everywhere and waves break on many places. (P-1, Male)

When Norwegian surfers travel to surf in far away destinations, they usually stay for a minimum of a month up to three months; they stay in cheap places such as bed and breakfast hotels or rent and share apartments together due to the long period of their stay in a foreign country.

Surfers explained that the major problem they face when they travel to surf in different destinations is localism. “One of the biggest global problems with surfing is localism, you don’t want other people to come and surf your waves” (P-1, Male). Locals can become aggressive in certain places in the world, they shout at foreign surfers and they get aggressive sometimes because they feel that foreign surfers do not give them the respect they deserve and sometimes violate a well known international surf rule which is that the locals must always have the first waves:

People come with the wrong attitude sometimes, that’s why, you’re just out there. You don’t respect the locals, the locals are there surfing all their lives and it’s becoming popular. So people come from all over the world and that’s common, just take every wave and the locals always should have the first waves you know (P-5, Male).

Even though sometimes, surfers get treated in a bad way by the locals of their host destinations, still they decided to look at the positive side of the experience of their surf trips. They learn how to adapt to different cultures and how to have a good attitude to be able to survive the harsh localism-related conditions and problems: “If you’re patient and you have a good attitude most of the time you can be surfing” (P-5, Male) says one of the informants.

By going on surf trips, surfers get to meet and make new friends: “That’s the good thing with travelling you meet a lot of friends there and if you come back you have them” (P-4, Male). Having local friends in the different surf-destinations, proved to be very beneficial, surfers get to know new cultures by befriending the locals, they also welcome them into their homes when they decide to revisit their countries again. Surfers believed that their surf-related travelling affected their personalities in positive ways by making them more open-minded than other non-travellers who stay in the same place all their lives: “...they’re (surfers) often very into travelling which makes eyes more opened than people that grow up in one place” (P-7, Male).

Enjoyment/Fun

All surfers affirm that it is so much fun to be out surfing in the ocean all year round. Surfers experience strong feelings of happiness and cheerfulness before, during and after surfing:

It’s almost like the most happy feeling and you know your whole body is so exhausted but your mind and everything is so happy and you stay like that for maybe a couple of days and you are really in a good mood... (P-6, Male)

Another surfer confirmed that surfing provided her with feelings of joy and happiness. She stated that her happiness was stimulated by chemicals in the brain such as dopamine and adrenaline:

Yeah, you get the adrenaline cake, and that you can read about the brain, and you get this great sensation of happiness and dopamine... It’s nice to be there and be filled with a lot of joy. I get filled with happiness there and I can take that home with me. (P-13, Female)

Surfing was described as a sport activity that provided its participants with marvelous sensations and pleasurable feelings:

I guess it is pure pleasure. I mean it's the pleasure of the simple act of riding a wave, it's fantastic. It only lasts a few seconds, and imagine all the thinking and focus and energy that goes into those few seconds were we're actually on that little piece of styrofoam. (P-7, male)

All the feelings of enjoyment, happiness, excitement and pleasure that the whole surfing experience provides those participants was summed up by one surfer in one short sentence: "It's hundred percent fun" (P-3, Male).

The State of "Play"

Surfers stated that they experience strong feelings of enjoyment, cheerfulness and pleasure during and after surfing. They feel that they are out playing and that the ocean is their playground; "You feel like you're playing with nature, on nature's terms..." (P-8, Male). When in the ocean, surfers confirmed that they left all their daily problems and worries behind and their only focus was their next wave. It was like taking a break of all the troubles in the world:

You're out there in the ocean, you don't have a telephone with you, nobody can reach you. It's like being a little boy again; growing up in the 70s and 80s when there was no mobile phone, there was no Google knowing where you are. I think this is the last place where you can do stuff like that. You know, you're off the grid; you can't bring your phone, you can't bring anything electronic with you. So you have serenity for some hours. (P-1, Male)

Feelings of excitement were also experienced by surfers. Knowing that it is time to go surfing filled them with feelings of anticipation and incitement:

You're really excited and you're like trying to, like um you're looking forward to see the waves. You're like a little kid you know, getting before Christmas, really excited like (woohoo sound) and that gives you like a really boost of happiness I think. (P-6, Male)

The 'State of Play' was also demonstrated in the form of competition and challenging oneself, where a surfer continuously tests his own skills and capabilities and experience feelings of pleasure, satisfaction, mastery and a restored confidence after he succeeds in catching a wave:

I think OK, will I make it? Will I make it this time? Sometimes, if it has been a long time since the last time it's difficult to get the self courage like "Yes, I know how to surf. OK it's been a long time but I know it's like riding a bike". You know how to do it, but you need to just give what you get in the moment. And I'm like there, my heart is beating for the first time like "It's coming, it's mine" (laughs) and paddling and then I feel like "wow, yes, I did it". I always scream a little or I sing, I'm like "woooohoooo" and I use my arms, I always do like (stretch arms up high in opposite directions and laughs). And I "yeeehoooo", I'm just so happy and doing turns or whatever and I end up like "Yaaaaaay" and I finish the wave and I'm paddling out like "Yes, see you know how to do it". It's nice, and like the biggest smile, very satisfied. (P13, Female)

It is noteworthy to mention that even though all participants affirmed that surfing was a source of happiness, they all stated that often it becomes a source of frustration as well. This happens when a surfer does not manage to surf as good as he expects as one of the participants

stated that he is “usually happy unless it was a crappy surf and you get frustrated, that can be as well, it’s either happy or frustration” (P-1, Male).

Similarly, another surfer stated that:

It goes together with like the happiest feelings that you have and the most frustrating feelings that you have. Like on a personal level, when I don’t manage to do the stuff that I want inside the water, like doing turns and stuff... (P-6, Male)

The "Flow" Experience

Participants compared their surfing experience to a flow experience; they illustrated how they become deeply immersed in the surfing activity to the extent of getting completely lost in it. They get the feeling of being in a different world; losing track of time and feeling as if they are in a trance-like state:

You forget about everything else, and not that you forget about it but you focus so much on what you do. That is a good thing and it’s such a different world from sitting in the office to being in the water. The experience from doing it is so special; all in all it makes you more balanced I think. Get away from earth, you notice that when you surf and get float, more or less weightless out in the sea. (P-7, Male)

Another informant describes his surfing experience as entering a complete flow state of mind. The surfer explains that he cannot fight the wave he is riding. On the contrary, he learns how to flow with it:

You can't fight the wave, you have to flow with it and go with the wave. You can't fight it, there is so much power in a wave and there is so much going around and everything is moving and you have to deal with all the movements. Like you're going the way it's going in towards the shore and at the same time it starts breaking in one direction. So you're moving in all dimensions, like you're moving in towards the shore but at the same time you go along the shore and you go often down on the wave and everything is just moving around you... (P-8, Male)

The surfer expresses an understanding of the impossibility of fighting a wave and a total awareness of the state of flow he is in when riding this wave. The awareness of the power a wave has on him and how all what he can do is just move and flow with the wave in all the different directions it takes him to. Yet, holding on to the wave by trying to deal with it and respond to all the different movements it is subjecting him to.

In addition to the total immersion in the surfing activity, the surfers also explained that they get a sense of freedom when out in the ocean: "When I'm surfing I have no thoughts and I feel free (...) it's pure freedom I think" (P-4, Male). Moreover, the surfers explained how they lose track of the time while surfing. The act of surfing a wave happens very quickly, as one of the surfers describes it:

Sometimes I suppose when you think back, when you've had a wave and you've surfed, it happens really fast. But then when you look back at it it's like slow motion, then you can like hear, I can anyway hear if I've done like a good turn... (P-11, Female)



Figure 6. A Surfer in Jæren, Norway. Photograph taken by Andås (2014).

Similarly, another surfer expresses how he sometimes loses self-awareness and forgets what he has just done while riding on top of a wave:

The thing is that sometimes when you surf a wave, you're just finished and when you paddle out I'm thinking "what did I do? What did I do? I just forgot! That can't be true. I forgot what I did!" But sometimes it's like that, I don't know why but then you can maybe sit and then yeah, I did that turn then the wave closed and I nearly hit the rock. But that can happen sometimes that you actually forget what you just did. (P-3, Male)

Environmental Benefits

Surfing is a pure nature-based sport. When speaking about their surfing experience, participants who surf all year round in different surf destinations all over the world in addition to their main cold-water surf destination which is Jæren, Norway. They did not start complaining about the freezing cold water or the harsh weather conditions. On the contrary, the surfers expressed a strong positive connection to nature and a development of a deep relationship with their surrounding environment:

Surfing makes me both connect and appreciate nature. While you surf you meet the wildlife in the ocean and I've seen animals close up in its natural environment. I know that I would never meet these animals like this in any other way. Dolphins, manta rays, whales, turtles, sharks, fish in different shapes and colours, pelicans and other birds. Makes me feel connected to the nature because it also feels like my natural environment, makes you have something in common with the animals in a weird way. You also start to care about the nature in a different way, you want the nature to last because it's your playground and many surfers are very nature friendly. We often arrange beach clean ups, etc. (P-10, Female)

The words of this surfer present a genuine intimacy with nature and its creatures. The surfer describes how she blends with nature, her strong connection with the various sea creatures she meets in the ocean and the feelings she gets while surfing. She gets the feeling that the ocean is her natural environment too, the awareness of being another equal creature in the ocean and how this connection to nature made her start to care more about her surrounding natural environment via sustainable practices.

It might be argued that surfers are not as environmentally friendly as they claim to be. Surfers in Jæren are banned from surfing some of the best surf spots during the winter months because it is believed that they negatively affect the bird life in this region. A surfer who is spotted violating the surf ban is given a fine that reaches five thousand kroners and if the fine is not paid, the surfer risk being put in prison:

That's an issue here in Jæren, but well we never really cared about the ban and no surfers have ever been prosecuted for violating the surf ban. And hopefully now they will take away surfing from the Jæren protection plan... because in east Larvik, which was one of the places where they started it, that's one of the reasons they banned surfing in Jæren because they've done it there... But now they've just taken surfing away from the ban in Larvik, which means the whole foundation of having a surf ban here is taken away... because they found out that surfers don't influence the birds, because they don't know, we have scientific report that says that birds don't care about the surfers. But all those who made the laws and the protection plan, they just (finger in mouth then in air sign) "yeah, surfing is no good", that's the way they did it. (P-8, Male)

Surfers confirm that the majority of the surf community members in Norway are very environmentally friendly:

Yeah, a lot of surfers are a bit more aware of the environment than others... like we try to stay from the sand dunes and we're not supposed to drive because that of course will reflect on all the surfers. If some surfers take their

car, like, I can drive on the beach if I want, in the sand dunes but I will not do it because this will fuck up for everyone else. (P-8, Male)

Similarly, another surfer illustrates how the surf community participates in making a difference by trying to protect and maintain their surrounding environment:

When you get out of the water and you see trash you take it with you, because it's your playground, you don't have trash falling around. All the trash that we pick up here is from the oil industry, its big plastic tanks and oil barrels. You won't believe what's throwing up on the beach after a proper storm, stuff from supply boats that are out in the oil rigs and end up on our beach. And for many years we have the 'clean the beach' days, you know there's a big movement within the surf environment, if it's windsurfers or whatever you surf of keeping the beaches clean. And for many years going on, Surf-rider Foundation which is an international organization of surfers taking care of the local beaches. So we have twice a year 'Clean the beach days' and every year its tons of tons of trash, we just pick up in one day, just to make a little different day and effort. (P-1, Male)



Figure 7. Surfrider foundation, Norway - Beach clean up. Photograph taken by Nilsen (2014).

On the other hand, many people are under the impression that all-year surfers are out there in the ocean in the middle of winter, surfing big waves in cold water, storms and bad weather conditions, are attempting to prove something to themselves and to the world. Maybe they are trying to prove that they want, they can and will conquer nature. In opposition to this widespread idea, nature was not seen through surfers' eyes as a place where they attempt to conquer its different elements. They clearly expressed that they do not seek to fight nature or try to defeat it:

You're much in sync with nature. You get the feeling you have adjusted to nature, not conquering because conquering is such a white defeat, if you conquer something somebody has been defeated. You cannot defeat a wave.

The wave will always win over you. You can only try to hang on and not get defeated; I think that is more correct, the feeling of non-defeat. (P-1, Male)

This surfer clearly states his awareness of the impossibility of defeating nature or of defeating a wave in the ocean. He explains that his relationship with the ocean is not built on rivalry but is a relationship built on harmony and being in sync with nature.

Surfers also declared that they acquired a number of beneficial transformations by being regularly in contact with nature. They described how they became more humble through surfing and how they accepted the fact that they cannot be always in control by acknowledging that they are part of something much bigger and stronger than themselves which is Mother Nature, as one surfer stated, “just being out you feel like small and alone in comparison” (P-9, Male).

By being frequently present in the ocean, surfers are reminded on a regular basis of how small and unattended they are compared to their surroundings. On humility and the feelings of losing control one of the surfers stated that:

The whole kind of like personal situation where you actually are in the water and you feel, first thing you feel very humble because you're in the Mother Nature and everything is out of your control. Yeah, I bet like all the surfers have been saying that. The humble feeling of being in something you don't have any control over. (P-6, Male)

Similarly, another informant expressed how beneficial it is to not be in control sometimes, and that it is nature's way to provide him with a balance in his life every now and then:

You feel balanced again, because I mean there are a lot of things, it's not only riding a wave. Sometimes, I mean getting pounded by waves and you know feeling not in control is a nice feeling as well, to kind of be set back to zero position again. That's it, you're not always in hundred percent control. And then nature comes and says "fuck you" (Tch sound: being smashed by a wave). Then your ego gets a little readjusted, you're not that cool (laughs) and I think that's pretty good, everybody should have that once a week, get your ego put back to place and it's like OK. I like that, I need that too. I'm a very active person and sometimes I need a little readjustment, somebody who's bigger and stronger than me that tell me "you're not big and strong there" (P-1, Male)

Moreover, the natural environment was regarded by some surfers as a sacred place where they connect with God and learn to be more humble and modest which goes hand in hand with their religious beliefs. While some people might not recognize the deep connection between outdoor recreation and creation and religion, surfers can see this connection very clearly through their daily encounters with their surrounding environment while in the sea:

It's so giving, you know I'm a Christian, so I like feel the connection to God it's really in the water and like I feel so humble being out there, so yeah, it's almost spiritual I think being in the water, being in the nature, yeah (laughs). It's where we come from you know, we can't stay stuck in a concrete jungle. You need to stay out in the nature. It's a recreational place I think. (P-6, Male)

Physical and Mental Health Benefits

Physical Health

All the surfers that have been interviewed in this study confirmed that surfing promoted positive well-being and motivated them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Surfers affirmed that surfing provides a double benefit; they are out having fun in the ocean and exercising at the same time. Surfing was seen as a regular training that keeps them active, fit and healthy. It was perceived by one of the surfers as “a natural way to stay in shape and while other people go to the gym, you just do what you love” (P10, Female).

Surfing motivated the informants to take extra care of themselves and of their overall health because they want to continue surfing and they are aware that they need to stay fit in order to surf:

You do start caring about yourself a little bit more like me getting older, health wise. That’s also a benefit of being passionate about something which involves physical fitness coz you do wanna keep doing what you do. Otherwise, I definitely wouldn’t care that much about myself. (P-7, Male)

Surfing has been also acknowledged as a main reason for surfers to resist the temptations of disadvantageous and unhealthy habits such as alcohol consumption:

That’s a really good thing about surfing; focus on yourself, health, because let’s say Sunday it will be good but only in the morning because at twelve o’clock the wind will come back. Saturday, people will go to town, will have some beer. I can be out, no drinking, go back home maybe at one o’clock or two o’clock in the night and surf in the morning. (P-3, Male)

Similarly, another surfer tells how she decided to completely quit drinking alcohol when she started surfing:

When I started surfing I completely quit drinking, because it's Saturdays and Sunday mornings, it's always empty lineup coz everybody is out Friday and Saturday. So I can have it (laughs). I go out but not drinking, drive home, sleep good and then in the morning (laughs). (P12, Female)

The same informant who just gave birth stated that her motivation to regain her physical fitness quickly is induced by her desire to surf again:

I want to stay in shape, like now I don't surf that much but I bring him in the trolley and go for a run, so when I get to surf at least my cardio is OK. You care about your health because you want to go out there. If you're in a bad shape, it's horrible. (P-12, Female)

Surfing was even seen as a more superior sport than other regular sports. A surfer explains that if he was playing any other sport he would not have been as fit as he is today at his age. Still out in the ocean surfing, competing and beating other younger surfers:

Still being out there after all these years and I still catch a lot of waves. It's very satisfying. If I was a football player and having played this much football as I've been doing surfing. Or as been as active football player as I've been a surfer I would have been a wreck now. My body wouldn't be working at all and now after thirty three years of a lot of surfing, you just get more and more fit. (P-8, Male)

Personal Well-Being

Surfers positively associated psychological well-being with surfing: “If I should compare it with anything I’d compare it to a really good meditation” a surfer says (P-11, Female). A number of surfers admitted that surfing has played an important role in helping them overcome their depression and anxieties. Surfing was described as a type of therapy by a number of surfers. One of the informants explained how she used surfing to overcome her depression after a divorce and becoming a single parent with two kids at an early age:

It was a hard time for me, to be raising the kids, studying and all this new life situation. So surfing for me in the start was kind of a lesson to learn in life. It’s like you have a fight with the ocean, with the waves coming towards you, with the current. You don’t know where to be. You end up everywhere you don’t think you would end up in the sea but you keep on trying. For me, I felt that I was not succeeding so much maybe as a single parent alone and I’m feeling lonesome. I was succeeding in the sea (laughs) and I experienced that: “Oh, yeah, I did it. I rode this wave” (...). I used the sea as kind of a therapy and I always felt more rested to get home with the kids after a session. So after a while I didn’t use it as a therapy because it was just for fun and for pleasure and something you cannot do without. Just have to surf (...). (P13, Female)

Similarly, another surfer states that surfing has been beneficial for him when he was having personal problems: “It was good for me to have surfing when things were bad in my relationship. That’s been fantastic; it made me also very happy in a way” (P-7, Male). When a person is having a hard time in a relationship, it is easy to sink into depression or sadness. But as this

informant states, surfing was the activity that gave him a happy feeling when he was passing through a bad time.

Self-Esteem, Self-Perception and Feeling Proud

Participants declared that surfing enhanced their self-esteem and self perception. It improved their confidence, self worth and made them feel good about themselves:

It helps; it makes you better, yeah. I think it makes people better. It makes them feel good about themselves. It makes you feel good and what makes you feel good makes you also feel like it's good for your own perception of yourself as well. (P-7, Male)

Another surfer stated that surfing enhanced surfers' self-esteem and made them feel unique and superior because they were out surfing in all conditions and were able to master the different surfing skills:

I remember when I was younger I felt I um, you had a lot of self-esteem, because you were doing something unique and you were part of something special. So I felt that we were a little bit above the rest and if there was another guy that was er I don't know maybe very good looking and all that, we felt we were looking down on them because we were surfers and we were out there in all conditions and he was probably just building muscles and you know paying attention to his looks and all that. So we felt that we were um yeah a little bit you know up there. (P-2, Male)

Surfers also declared that surfing made them feel proud of themselves. They felt that they were good representatives of their country which gave them a sense of pride in their community. The

following two quotes illustrate how different surfers felt very proud of themselves because they are surfers:

When the Crown Prince is here, he also kite-surf, windsurf, surf and stand up pedal. And I have equipment. So I take him out, normally he's here to open the concert house or museum so he sends me a message "Well I have three hours, what can we do?" So we go out. So that's kind of special too, that the shop and my position has given me the opportunity to go to spend maybe three hours with the future king of Norway, not everyone can do that (...) I'm a royal surf guide of Jæren. (P-2, Male)

The informant describes how being one of the old well known surfers in the region gave him the chance to surf with the Prince of Norway and how this made him feel very proud of himself and of being a surfer.



Figure 8. Interviewee P-2 with Crown Prince of Norway. (Copyright 2014 by Interviewee P-2)

Similarly, another informant says:

It makes me I guess a little proud because the surf sport in Norway, it has been very small. It's growing really fast and to be like kind of I don't know, being a good ambassador for the sport in Norway, pushing it further and educating people, yeah. (P-6, Male)

This informant feels proud of being a surfer in a small surfing community in Norway, he is proud to be a good representative of the sport in his country and how he feels he has an effective role in teaching and educating other new surfers and other people about the sport. Other participants described similar reasons to feel proud of being surfers and of being recognized as top surfers in Norway which gave them a very high sense of satisfaction and enhanced their self esteem.

Lifestyle and an Enhanced Quality of Life

All surfers who have been interviewed in this study confirm that surfing is not merely a sport, for serious and dedicated surfers, it becomes a lifestyle, an addictive lifestyle. Surfers used words such as "addiction", "obsession" and "illness" to describe the high level of their attachment to surfing. There is an agreement among all participants that surfing is very addictive but in a positive way due to the many benefits they gain from it:

I think when you start surfing; it's an epiphany that happens. I think that happens with everybody, you do something, you try, you wanna become better and then something happens that one day, that special day when you realized this is how it works when you actually get the first hinder. You know, you're like "ha, ah ok" and then you get hooked. After you're hooked I think everything surrounds your lifestyle, because it becomes a lifestyle. (P-1, Male)

It might be argued that surfers in Norway have an extreme and unhealthy lifestyle; they surf in freezing cold water and put their lives on the line by surfing in risky conditions. On the contrary of what many people believe, female surfers confirmed that they do not get cold in the water except after a minimum of two hours of surfing, while male surfers stated that it takes them over three hours of surfing to get cold. They use thick wetsuits that reaches 7 millimeters and covers all their body apart from their face. The wetsuits protects them from the cold for a good amount of time; they stated that a person standing on shore fully dressed would get colder than them being in the water with their wetsuits on and doing a physical effort while surfing.

As for the risk the sport involves, when asked about a recent death incident of a 25 years old beginner who died while surfing in Karmøy, Norway. All informants confirmed that surfing is as dangerous as anything else in life. If a person does not know the extent of his own skills and capabilities then he endangers himself:

There was a guy that drowned here up in Karmøy a couple of weeks ago. But that can happen when you're inexperienced, you're not from the area, you don't know the surroundings and you don't know what's happening in the water. Um and of course if you don't know the limits of your own skills, it can be dangerous. (P-8, Male)

The informant explains that everything gets dangerous when a person does not know what he is doing, when a surfer lacks the skills and experience and decides to surf in advanced surf spots and stormy conditions then it becomes risky for them. All informants affirmed that serious injuries or accidents while surfing is a rare occurrence, they usually get some cuts or bruises when they hit a rocky bottom in the water or if they get hit on the head by another person's

surfboard or sometimes their own surfboards. The surfers stated that they know their own skills and limits and they do not attempt to take any unnecessary risks while surfing:” I think it’s pretty much for everything you do in life. Be aware of what you’re doing, if it doesn’t feel good in your stomach when you look at it, don’t force it, you know (...)” (P-1, Male) says one of the informants.

Participants confirmed that they have a fantastic lifestyle that provides them with a happy, fun and pleasurable life: “just happiness and you don’t desire anything else, you just feel fulfilled” (P-5, Male). They explain that surfing enhances their quality of life and makes them satisfied. They affirmed that surfing made them better persons:

I would say it increases your life quality, to have something you really are inspired and like pushing yourself in that direction gives so much energy and like extra pinch in your life, your everyday life. In that way it makes you a better person. (P-6, Male)

Surfers confirm that they become more energetic after a surf session. They are more ready to face any problems they have after they surf and many of them affirmed that they are much more productive when they start a working shift after they have been out surfing:

I feel ready for anything, if I start my day with surfing I don’t need more and that’s the truth, I don’t need anything else. Whatever can happen the rest of the day, I’m like yeah good. That’s a good feeling, coz I’m a nurse, I work at the hospital. If I can start the day by surfing in the morning and then go to work, I’m the best nurse ever (laughs). I think I’m a good nurse now as well but if I jump out of the water, got to work, there’s another sensation. (P-13, Female)

Surfers confirm that they do not become better and more productive only at work, but they feel that they are better family members too when they are back home after surfing, “you’re content when you get out of the water, yeah, and you be a better person when you come home because you’ve been surfing” (P-9, Male).

The Cost of Surfing

However, every good thing has a bad or dark side to it. Surfing is a very unpredictable sport because it depends on the weather which makes surfers terrible planners:

Surfing is unpredictable, like when there is waves you have to surf, you can’t say that OK every Thursday at four to five that’s my surfing practice hour, it doesn’t work like that, so when there’s waves you’re surfing and then of course everyone else have to wait, girlfriends, boyfriends, whatever. And that’s very hard to accept for some people. (P-8, Male)

Surfing is very unpredictable because surfers cannot decide when to go surfing, nature decides for them when they can go surfing. Consequently, surfers cancel or reschedule many appointments which often cause them problems, sometimes at work if they have the flexibility to cancel/reschedule work appointments; this usually happens if they are self-employed. And most importantly serious relationship problems that often leads to break ups and even divorce, as stated by all the informants. “I think it’s a higher divorce rate within the surfing community than the rest of people” (P-7, Male) says one of the informants.

Non-surfing significant others often cannot tolerate the unpredictability of the schedules of their surfing partners and the common plans that gets cancelled in favour of surfing. Significant others start accusing their surfing partners as being irresponsible, off their hook, not growing up

and not realizing the seriousness of their relationship. They make them choose between surfing and their relationship and this is when these relationships come to an end as illustrated by the informants in the coming quotes: “if you are with a girl that’s saying that “Well, you can’t go, you can’t go and no”, time after time well it’s (Pew sound) out with that girl” (P-2, Male). Sometimes the surfers are the ones who end the relationship but other times, the non-surfing partners are the ones who decide to leave:

... It can be flat for three weeks and that Saturday when we have plan for three months to go to visit our parents I have to say “sorry darling I can’t” because it’s Saturday and only on Saturday you know, that’s forecast you can see when there’s waves coming and stuff. And usually it is when you have planned something (laughs). You can do it twice and the third time your girlfriend says or your boyfriend says “no, that’s it”. (P-1, Male)

The informants explain that if they have a partner who surfs too then they both have the same passion for the same activity and they do not face any problems or if the non surfer partner has a passion of his/her own too, then in this case too, the relationship works well. One informant gives an example of his personal experience:

That’s why I’m married to this girl; she’s fantastic (...). She is really into the whole fitness, healthy lifestyle and like exercise maybe five times a week you know, so most of the time she is the one that’s more busy. So if she has a hobby she’s more like er accepting towards my hobby, even though my hobby is so much more spontaneous because we need to go when there’s surf. (P-6, Male).

Surfers explained that according to their personal experiences, when they are in a relationship with a partner who surfs too or has his/her own hobby/passion, then there is mutual understanding between them and the relationship works very well because both partners are busy doing something that makes them happy.

Several surfers also stated that they passed up better study opportunities and later on better job opportunities to stay near the ocean and be able to continue surfing. However, they all confirmed that they never regret the fact that they took these decisions, and if they were given the chance to choose all over again they would take the same decisions because they are happy with their lives and are content with the benefits they gain from being able to surf regularly:

I'm happy with it (his life), I think you shouldn't live your life through other people's visions and expectations. You know, you should do what you think is good, but also listen to other people of course coz it's very hard to get to know yourself without using other people as a mirror (...), but at the end of the day you gotta do what you think is right. (P-7, Male)

Surfers are open to criticism and are willing to adjust their behaviour in order to develop and become better human beings just as any other member of their society. But they have a lifestyle that brings them happiness and fulfillment. They have an enhanced quality of life because of their surfing activities and they are aware that the benefits they acquire from surfing are very personal that many people around them cannot comprehend why they continue doing what they are doing, but as the latter informant says, people should not live their lives according to others' visions and expectations, they should do what they think is right and good for them as long as they are leading healthy lives that makes them satisfied and content.

Summary of Findings

Surfing in Norway started in the early eighties by a few surfers who all started surfing by coincidence. Norwegians did not believe that it was possible to surf in Norway because of the cold weather and the low temperature of the water. Furthermore, they have not seen anyone surfing in the North Sea before which made them believe that it was impossible to utilize any of the beaches for the purpose of surfing. However, nowadays Norway has become an increasingly popular cold water surf destination which attracts more surfers day after day.

A surfing subculture is present in the Jæren coast which is known for having the best surf spots in Norway. Members of this subculture check for a number of qualities in a new surfer before including him in their group. A novice must demonstrate competence and show that he is a good surfer. Commitment is also an important quality; a novice should be seen surfing constantly throughout the year. Having a friend in the surfing subculture can also facilitate the novice's attempts to be included in the group by being introduced to other members of the group.

Participants were found to gain a wide range of benefits by surfing regularly. They stated that surfing provided them with feelings of happiness and joy. The ability to master the surfing skills supplied them with pleasurable experiences and extraordinary sensations. The "flow" state was experienced by surfers who reported getting completely immersed in the surfing activity along with a sense of alteration of time. They felt as if they were in a different world and lost track of time. The "play" state was experienced as well, surfers stated that they perceived the ocean as their playground and affirmed that surfing supplied them with feelings of enjoyment and excitement. It provided them with an opportunity to leave their everyday obligations and problems behind which gave them a sense of freedom.

Participants reported that the social aspect of their surfing experience was one of the benefits they acquired. The Jæren surfing subculture provided members with a sense of belonging. Surfers stated that their social circle widened because of their surfing and they succeeded in gaining a number of good friends who share the same values and passions. Surfers are very mobile on a local and international level. They travel a lot to different surf destinations all over the world, which give them the opportunity to build new relationships, experience new cultures, and positively affect the way they view themselves and the world.

Moreover, participants expressed a strong positive connection to their natural environment. They had a sense of unity with the environment and believed it made them more humble. Some surfers reported that nature was a sacred place that allowed them to connect to God. Surfers developed environmental awareness and were engaged in a number of environmentally friendly practices. Physical and mental health benefits were also positive outcomes. Surfers reported that surfing made them more physically fit and was a source of motivation for adopting a healthier lifestyle. Mental health benefits in the form of depression and anxiety reduction, and enhancement of self-esteem, self-perception and feeling proud were reported by surfers as well. Participants affirmed that surfing provided them with a fantastic lifestyle and enhanced the quality of their lives.

Discussion

This study aims at exploring and identifying the benefits gained by surfers in the Jæren region, south of the city of Stavanger in Norway. The problem statement for the study is: What are the benefits acquired by cold water surfers in Norway? To provide a deeper understanding of these benefits and how the surfers' experiences unfold, a description of the commencement of surfing in Norway and the inclusion process in the Jæren surfing subculture is provided. The previous chapter presented the results of the study with a focus on using the participants' own words to provide a deep understanding of their surfing experiences and the benefits they obtained by surfing regularly. Moreover, the commencement of surfing in Norway and the inclusion process in the Jæren surfing subculture were presented as well in the previous chapter in order to provide a backdrop for the discussion of the benefits.

The purpose of this Discussion chapter is to consider the key themes and interpret their meaning and theoretical relevance; the chapter will attempt to review and discuss the findings in the context of the existing literature. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses central aspects that are connected to surfing which include lifestyle sports, extreme sports and serious leisure to provide a background for the understanding of the benefits that surfers gain from the sport. Surf tourism as a niche in the sport tourism industry is reviewed in the second section of the chapter which discusses the various benefits revealed from participation in a sport activity such as surfing.

The Specific Features of Surfing as a Sport

The study shows that surfing fits well into the definitions of lifestyle sports. Lifestyle is a term used by all surfers in this study to describe surfing which justifies the use of the label

lifestyle sports by Wheaton (2004a). Surfing in Norway is an activity that presents a possible challenge to the established ways of seeing, comprehending and performing sports (Wheaton, 2004a, 2013). Participants surf in cold water and extreme weather conditions all year round which presents an alternative to mainstream sports. Surfing is characterized by being anti-competitive and more participant-driven which corresponds to the philosophy of lifestyle sports. Surfers are committed sportsmen who are members of a sub-cultural community that promotes similar interests, values and ways of life (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011). Furthermore, participants perceive surfing as a lifestyle that will be maintained throughout their lives, a lifestyle that is worth spending their time, energy and often money on and that ranks on the top of their list of priorities (Salome, 2010; Wheaton, 2004a, 2013).

Likewise, the study shows that surfing is regarded as an extreme sport. Surfers riding big waves and surfing in extreme weather conditions in the cold North Sea sets an example for a challenging outdoor sport activity. However, the findings were found to oppose the misperceptions associated with extreme sport participants as teenage boys who are adrenaline fuelled, deviant risk-takers attempting to endanger their lives by taking unnecessary risks (Brymer, 2005, 2010; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013a, 2013b). Surfers interviewed in the study were all adults, with the majority in their thirties and forties which oppose the misperception of participants as teenagers who are immature and irresponsible. In accordance with Brymer (2010) participants showed an awareness of the probable risks of surfing; they knew the limits of their own skills and competences and did not attempt to take any unnecessary risks. They were even aware of novice surfers' inexperience and often gave them advices on where to surf and how to protect themselves from taking unnecessary risks while surfing. Booth (2004) stated that a cultural context is what makes surfing an extreme sport, which was found to be true. Surfers'

differ from mainstream athletes; they are perceived by the wider society as hedonists, who do not conform to social norms and values. This may be due to the unpredictable nature of surfing which depends on the weather conditions, so gives the impression that surfers prioritize their pleasure above other values and obligations.

The findings support the position of surfing within the field of serious leisure as well. Surfers showed progression and strong engagement in their chosen activity. They also belonged and committed to a defined subculture which is the Jæren surfing subculture which corresponds to the serious leisure theory as stated by Kane and Zink (2004). The six characteristics of serious leisure identified by Stebbins (1992) are all recognized in the findings of the study which confirms Barbieri and Sotomayor's (2013) earlier findings. Surfers' demonstrated perseverance to reach set goals such as succeeding in including themselves in the surfing subculture when they are novices and climbing up the surfing hierarchy gradually afterwards. A career-like pattern was apparent between surfers; they were assigned to competitive hierarchies according to their skills and passed through career stages like the four-stage framework which comprises of pre-socialization, selection, socialization and finally acceptance which leads to inclusion in the surfing subculture. Participants displayed personal effort by training regularly, acquiring the required skills to master the waves and advancing in the surfing ladder. An ethos was clearly demonstrated through the Jæren surfing subculture, where surfers' shared the same beliefs, values and attitudes. Participants were also found to highly identify with surfing and developed a sense of belonging to their subculture. Finally, surfers acquired a number of durable benefits which will be thoroughly discussed in the following section.

Stebbins (2007) stated that involvement in a serious leisure activity has a number of costs as well. The findings of the study are also consistent with this aspect of the concept of serious

leisure. Surfers are always eager to surf and are out surfing whenever the weather conditions are good which frequently make them lose control of their time by cancelling or postponing appointments and by creating problems with significant others who feel un-prioritized. Moreover, very committed surfers are marginalized in the society due to their high level of commitment, which usually require spending a lot of time and energy on surfing which sometimes negatively affect other areas of their lives.

The previous section showed that surfing fits well into the definitions of the three fields of lifestyle sports, extreme sports and serious leisure. The following section will discuss the benefits that surfers gained from surfing in Jæren.

Benefits Gained by Surfers in Jæren, Norway

Participants acquired a wide range of benefits by surfing actively year round. A benefit was defined by Driver et al. (1991) as “a change that is viewed to be advantageous - an improvement in condition, or a gain to an individual, a group, to society or an entity” (p. 4). The benefits gained by surfers in this study are found to be consistent with the four main types of benefits of sport that were identified by Wankel and Berger (1991) building on Driver et al.’s (1991) research on the benefits of leisure. The first type of benefit is personal enjoyment which is demonstrated through enjoyment/fun and flow. The state of play is an additional distinguishing benefit that is recognized in the findings as well. In accordance with Willig (2008) who reported that participating in extreme sports provided participants with many pleasurable feelings, surfing was found to grant participants with strong feelings of happiness and joyfulness. Words and expressions such as ‘fantastic’, ‘pure pleasure’ and ‘hundred percent fun’ were used by participants to describe their surfing experience, which confirm that these pleasurable feelings

were acknowledged by the surfers as a beneficial outcome instead of a motivational factor to participate in the sport as reported by Willig (2008).

Flow was recognized as a benefit of surfing as well; the different characteristics of flow which Csikszentmihalyi (2002) identified were experienced by participants. Surfers focused so much on what they were doing during surfing; they were completely immersed in the activity to a degree where they lost self-consciousness. They became one with the activity and felt as if they were in a different world. Participants also lost track of time, they felt that time was altered and passed faster than normal. In accordance with the findings of Celsi's (1992) study which investigated the transcendent benefits of high risk sports and concluded that participants did experience flow, surfers as extreme sport participants were found to meet the criteria of flow as well. On the other hand, Csikszentmihalyi (2002) reported that flow may have addictive effects on individuals who experience it. In consistence with a study conducted by Partington et al. (2009) on surfers' addictive tendencies linked to their flow experience, surfers in this study displayed signs of dependence on surfing as well which may be associated with their flow experience.

In accordance with Ackerman (2011) who stated that extreme sports trigger deep play, surfing was identified as an outdoor and extreme sport activity which triggered deep play. Surfers out in the ocean attempting to catch and ride waves were recognized to be in a state of mind known as the state of "play". Play was associated with intrinsic feelings of pleasure, freedom and enjoyment (Ackerman, 1999, 2011; Gordon & Esbjörn-Hargens, 2007; Kerr & Apter, 1991) which were all experienced by the participants. When surfers were out in the ocean, they left all their daily worries and problems behind. Surfing provided them with a serenity of mind for some time; they were in what is known as the "paratelic" state. This was found to be

consistent with Kerr and Apter's (1991) description of individuals experiencing play. Kerr and Apter (1991) stated that individuals in play created their own small and private worlds which he called a protective frame or a psychological safety zone where they were temporarily isolated from the outside world and its problems. Participants conveyed telic episodes as well. They conveyed how they experienced feelings of frustration when their surfing skills and competences did not match the challenges they faced during a surf session. This confirms Kerr and Apter's (1991) statements on how individuals experiencing play tend to shift back and forth between the paratelic and telic states of mind at different times during the same day.

Wankel & Berger (1991) identified the second type of benefit of sport as personal growth which was demonstrated through physical and mental health benefits. Regular participation in physical activity is known to provide individuals with health benefits such as physical fitness, weight management and muscular strength (Wankel & Berger, 1991). The findings of the study confirmed that surfing promoted positive health and provided participants with a number of physical health benefits. Participants were motivated to adopt a healthy lifestyle in order to be able to continue surfing; for example, they quitted or reduced their consumption of alcohol, slept and woke up early and managed their weight to stay fit. At the same time health benefits were a beneficial outcome of surfing; surfing as a sport activity improved participants' personal fitness, and prevented unhealthy weight gain as stated by Haskell et al. (2007). In accordance with Frank et al. (2009), the findings proved that surfing improved and maintained older participants' neuromuscular functions and provided them with an enhanced quality of life.

The findings confirm the presence of a positive relationship between surfing and participants' mental well-being which supports previous research evidence stating that sport activity promotes mental health (Biddle & Mutrie, 2007; Fox, 1999; Wankel & Berger, 1991).

Surfing was effective in reducing and treating depression and anxiety symptoms of the participants. During the period of time when they were feeling down and hopeless, surfing was recognized as the positive thing in their lives that made them feel happy and helped them overcome their depression. This may be considered as an evidence that the effect of surfing as a physical activity has the same significance as psychotherapeutic approaches as reported by Fox (1999). Similar findings were found between surfing and anxiety reduction. Surfing helped participants overcome anxiety disorders such as social anxiety and reduced the worry and tension elements. This proves that the anxiolytic effect of exercise which helps treating anxiety disorders (Biddle & Mutrie, 2007) was manifested in surfing as a beneficial physical activity.

Wankel and Berger (1991) only reported anxiety and depression reduction as beneficial mental health outcomes of sport. However, alternative previous research findings proved the presence of additional mental health outcomes of sport which were found to be consistent with the findings of this study. Fox (1999) confirmed that physical activity provided participants with a more positive mood which was consistent with the study findings. In accordance with Biddle and Mutrie (2007), the findings of the study also affirm that surfing as a sport activity boosted participants' self esteem, enhanced their self perception and provided them with feelings of pride through mastering the waves and acquiring and developing their surfing skills.

Surfing provided participants with both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Hedonic and eudaimonic approaches are two different approaches to defining well-being. Researchers confirm that well-being is best achieved when aspects of both approaches are combined (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The hedonic view equates well-being with experiencing happiness and pleasure. Hedonic well-being is the subjective well-being of individuals which is manifested in the existence of positive mood, the absence of negative mood and an overall satisfaction with life (Ryan & Deci,

2001). The study findings indicate that participants do experience strong feelings of happiness and joyfulness which are equated with hedonic well-being. On the other hand, eudaimonic well-being is deeper than the subjective states of happiness and pleasure. It is equated with individuals' self realization, self actualization and human fulfillment (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Singer, 2008). The study revealed that surfers continuously seek to acquire, develop and maintain their surfing skills. Mastering the waves provide participants with a sense of achievement and self actualization which is highly associated with eudaimonic well-being.

The third and fourth main types of benefits of sport identified by Wankel and Berger (1991) were social harmony and social change. Surfing as an extreme sport is found to have both social benefits and costs. Consistent with Butts (2001), the presence of a well-defined surfing subculture, in this study, the Jæren surfing subculture supplied the participants with a sense of social belonging and relatedness which was associated with positive interpersonal relationships. Even though surfing is an individual sport, yet, surfers created what Turner (1970) called *communitas* which was considered a transcendent benefit that was gained by high risk sports in Celsi's (1992) study. Through *communitas* or social bonding participants shared their surfing experiences, values and interests. Although *communitas* is known to promote status equality between participants (Belk et al., 1989), this was not found to be fully true between members of the Jæren surfing subculture. A hierarchical structure was found to be present in this subculture, where the old and more experienced surfers were on top of the hierarchy and the new and less experienced ones were situated at the bottom and had to gradually climb up the hierarchy of surfing in accordance with their surfing skills. It is also note worthy to mention that female surfers faced similar difficulties to the ones faced by novice surfers while attempting to become members of the Jæren surfing subculture and climbing the surfing hierarchy.

However, in agreement with Lazarow et al. (2008) the sport of surfing and the participants' subculture helped in creating what they called a "social fabric". Surfing was found to bring people together and connect generations that would not otherwise be present in the same place and at the same time. It connected participants of all ages who had different backgrounds and careers. Wankel and Berger (1991) stated that sport has the potential to serve as an agent for social change. Social change is manifested in the continuously increasing numbers of surfers who attempt and succeed in joining the Jæren surfing subculture. Although surfing in cold water in Norway is categorized as an extreme sport, still the sport is growing and becoming more famous, which indicates that it is being perceived in a positive way by more members of the society, consequently leading to social change. The findings proved as well that surfing provided the participants with a sense of pride in their community by acting as good representatives for the sport in Norway.

On the other hand, a number of social costs were found to be related to surfing. Surfing is dependable on the weather conditions which makes it a very unpredictable sport unlike other sports. In agreement with Butts (2001), when the waves are good, surfers cancel or postpone appointments, are often late to work, and call off plans with significant others, family members and friends. Moreover, they may refrain from accepting job opportunities to be able to stay near the ocean and surf regularly. For these reasons, as mentioned by Booth (2004) many members of the society label them as a group of hedonists who stray from social norms.

Participants' connection to the natural environment proved to benefit both the surfers and the environment. In accordance with the findings presented by Brymer et al. (2009), Brymer and Gray (2009), Brymer and Oades (2009), Brymer and Schweitzer (2012) and Taylor (2007), participants in this study have a positive and healthy connection to their surrounding natural

environment. Surfing as a nature-based sport made surfers appreciate, unite and positively connect with nature and other living creatures. Moreover, the environment acted as a facilitator to surfers' positive understanding of themselves and their position in the natural world. Furthermore, the environment was seen as a provider of spiritual benefits and a facilitator for surfers' connection to God. Contrary to the widespread beliefs about extreme sport participants as sportsmen who seek to fight against and defeat nature, the findings proved that participants perceived nature as a source of power that could not be conquered. They confirmed that they cannot defeat the waves in the ocean; they have to try to be in sync and harmony with the ocean and its waves and other living creatures. Surfers' awareness of the power of nature over them made them recognize that their surrounding environment provided them with strong feelings of humility and modesty.

In agreement with Brymer and Gray (2009) and Brymer et al. (2009), participants' positive connection to the natural environment through their outdoor sport participation made them more environmentally aware. This awareness motivated them to be more environmentally friendly and join international organizations such as Surf-rider Foundation which take care of the local beaches. Participants adopted environmentally sustainable practices such as organizing 'clean the beach' days, collecting trash from inside the water and along the shore and protecting coastal sand dunes. These findings proved that extreme sport participants' deep connection to nature had a transformational effect on them. It transformed any tendency for anthropocentricity and replaced it with eccentricity as reported by Brymer and Oades (2009).

Participants were found to be very active travellers, they are surf tourists who travelled to various surf destinations searching for rideable waves. Reynolds and Hritz (2012) categorized surf tourists as adventure tourists. They stated that surfers as adventure tourists pursued unique

and cultural experiences, which was found to be partially true. Surfers as travellers pursued the rideable waves in a surf destination, however, they acknowledged the unique and cultural experiences which was identified by Weber (2008) as exploration as a beneficial outcome of their travelling. Similarly, Reynolds and Hritz (2012) reported that creating new relationships and retaining the old ones was a motivational factor for surfers' travelling. However, the participants' of this study reported that meeting people from different cultures and making new friendships was a beneficial outcome as well but was not identified as a motivational factor, which show that travelling is beneficial in helping surfers create *communitas* in their host destinations as well. In agreement with Weber (2008), participants' travelling positively affected how they viewed the world and provided them with a sense of discovery. The travel phenomenon was found to release social benefits through the creation of *communitas* in the host destinations and personal growth benefits through the transformations that happened to participants as a consequence of their constant travelling which was manifested in their wider viewing of the world and the deep changes in perception.

A wide range of benefits gained by participants were determined and discussed throughout the previous section and are summarized in Table 2. A nature-based extreme sport such as surfing proved to supply practitioners with many benefits that had a positive effect on them and provided them with an overall enhanced quality of life. The benefits identified in this study were found to be consistent with Wankel and Berger's (1991) presentation of the types of benefits of sport which were displayed in the form of four main benefits as shown in Table 1. The study suggests expanding the findings of Wankel and Berger's (1991) study to comprise and better represent all types of sports including mainstream sports and alternative sports such as lifestyle and extreme sports. The study proposes including the state of play as a third distinguishing

benefit under personal enjoyment, adding learning as a distinguishing benefit under personal growth and adding environmental benefits as a fifth main type of benefit from sport as shown in Table 2. Furthermore, the travel phenomenon was found to release a number of benefits as well, the creation of *communitas* in host destinations which could be added as an additional distinguishing benefit under social change as shown in Table 2 and the exploration or discovery of new territories maybe added as a distinguishing benefit under learning in the personal growth benefits as displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Benefits from cold water surfing in Jæren, Norway

I Personal Enjoyment	II Personal Growth	III Social Harmony	IV Social Change	V Environmental Benefits
- Enjoyment/Fun - The state of 'Flow' - The state of 'Play'	<u>Physical health</u> - Physical fitness - Muscular strength - Weight management - Reduced alcohol consumption <u>Mental well-being</u> - Anxiety reduction - Depression reduction - Positive mood - Self esteem - Self perception <u>Learning</u> - Skills acquisition - Self actualization - Exploration/Discovery - Changes in perception	- Socialization - Intergroup relations - Social bonding and creation of <i>communitas</i> - Pride in community	- Social status - Creation of <i>communitas</i> in new host destinations	- Understanding of Human dependency on the natural world - Unity with nature - Realization of Humility - Spiritual growth - Environmental awareness - Environmental protection via sustainable practices

Note. Reworked after Wankel and Berger (1991, p.123)

Research Contributions

Most of the findings of this study are in line with previous research, which supports the validity of the study. The study adds to the body of knowledge within the field of leisure and recreation. The findings revealed that some of the benefits found from other extreme sports also apply to cold water surfing. The study revealed numerous themes that helped understand the participants' lived experience. Therefore, the study contributes to expanding the area of knowledge both for surfing and for extreme sports in general. It contributes to understanding and acknowledging surfing as a positive and beneficial human experience rather than an unhealthy and deviant practice. The benefits identified in this research can be utilized by health organizations to promote surfing in Norway and elsewhere as an advantageous nature-based extreme sport activity which can positively affect participants in many ways and enhance their quality of life.

It is noteworthy to mention that only one previous study was conducted by Langseth (2012) on the surfers in Jæren as well. However, the latter study focused on investigating only the social aspect of the Jæren surfing subculture.

Implications for Destination Development

The various benefits of surfing identified in the study can be utilized by surf destinations attempting to attract more surfers by incorporating these benefits into their travel and tourism promotional campaigns (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013). For instance, a city such as Stavanger in Norway can include the findings of the study to its marketing strategies to market the city as a new, exotic 'cold water' surf destination which can provide surf tourists with magnificent natural scenery, consistent waves, less crowd than well-known warm water surf-destinations and a variety of beneficial outcomes. Dolnicar and Fluker (2003b) identified five unique market

segments of surf tourists. Surfers belonging to these segments rated lack of crowds, the quality of natural environment, personal safety and health concerns as the most important qualities of a surf destination which are all consistent with the Jæren region. Moreover, the “luxury surfers” and the “price-conscious safety seekers” were found to be two surf segments which have the highest incomes and showed a willingness to spend vast amounts of money on their surf trips. Therefore, they were recognized as the most lucrative segments, which suggest that they would show willingness and afford to travel and spend money on a surf trip in Norway which is known for being one of the most expensive countries in the world.

The findings revealed that reaching the different surf spots in the Jæren region is impossible without owning a car due to the unavailability of public transportation lines to this area. Some of the municipalities in Region Stavanger (RegionStavanger, 2015) might take into consideration this problem and work on extending the public transportation lines to reach the Jæren region which is considered as a rural area with no public transportation facilities. This will allow young individuals who are interested in surfing but have not reached the legal age to issue a driving license or who do not own a car to start surfing regularly. It will also encourage more young individuals to engage in surfing which proved to be a beneficial sport activity at an early age. Furthermore, the presence of an easily accessible public transportation system is an important factor that surf-tourists might consider while choosing a surf-destination.

Due to the extreme weather conditions in Jæren, Norway, surfers are obliged to wear thick wetsuits to protect themselves from the cold water. During the researcher’s observations, it was noticed that surfers change into and out of the wetsuits before and after surfing in the parking lots near the surf spots. Surfers change their wetsuits in extreme weather conditions due to the unavailability of any facilities in these areas. Participants confirmed that this is a main reason

that many new surfers refrain from surfing, not because it is cold inside the water, but because it becomes very cold to change their wetsuits outside the water in rainy and windy weather.

Therefore, the study suggests that the municipal authorities who are responsible for the municipal planning activities and development of the municipalities in Region Stavanger (RegionStavanger, 2015) might attempt to build toilets and changing room facilities near the different surf spots for surfers to find clean and sheltered places to change into dry clothes after participating in their chosen sport activity. The establishment of these minimal welfare facilities is of value to both local surfers and surf tourists. The provision of such facilities is an important promotional tool which should be incorporated in marketing the Jæren region as a cold water surf destination. It helps enhancing surf tourists' overall experience and consequently, contributes to the development of surf tourism.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study is that the sample is limited to one area which is the Jæren region in Norway. Surfers in other countries may gain more or less benefits and may have different experiences. Surfers in Norway; an economically stable western country may have the time and money to surf on a regular basis and travel to different surf destinations which consequently allow them to reap many benefits. However, surfers in other countries may have more restrictions in terms of money and time which might affect the abundance of beneficial outcomes they acquire from surfing. The findings of this study should not be generalized to other surf destinations. However, the study does contribute to the development of theory about lifestyle sports and sport tourism as argued in the Research Contributions section.

Due to time constraints, the chosen sample consisted of only experienced surfers, which is another study limitation that prevented understanding and capturing the experiences of novice

surfers from their points of view. This is important because skilled surfers may have different activity orientations, preferences and experiences than novice surfers (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013).

Conclusions

The aim of this study has been to identify and present the different benefits gained by cold water surfers in Jæren, Norway. Surfing is a relatively new sport activity in Norway and was found to be interrelated with fields such as lifestyle sports, extreme sports, serious leisure, sport tourism and surf tourism.

Participants gained a wide array of benefits by surfing regularly. Surfing offered participants with personal enjoyment by experiencing flow, deep play and feelings of joy and happiness. It provided them with personal growth in the form of physical and mental well being. They stayed fit and in shape through their regular involvement in a physically demanding sport activity such as surfing. Mental well-being benefits were manifested in depression and anxiety reduction, in addition to improvement in mood states, self esteem and self perception of practitioners. Moreover, self realization, self actualization and exploration were realized as well. Learning through acquisition of skills was also a benefit from surfing.

Social benefits in the form of social bonding, creation of communitas, social harmony and belonging to a well-defined subculture were all acquired by participants. The continuously rising numbers of surfers in Jæren proves that surfing is effectively leading to social change. It is altering people's views of extreme sports and attracting more members of the society of all ages. Surfing as nature-based sport activity allowed participants to positively connect to their surrounding natural environment. It provided them with feelings of unity with nature, an awareness of humans' dependency on the natural world and, a realization of humility and spiritual growth. Furthermore, participants became more environmentally friendly and adopted a number of environmentally friendly practices. Through their continuous surf-related travel,

surfers gained benefits such as the creation of *communitas* in the host destinations, exploration of new territories, acquiring a sense of discovery and a widened worldview.

Surfing is a sport that provided practitioners with numerous benefits which helped them achieve an overall enhanced quality of life. This proves that alternative types of sport can provide many beneficial outcomes that in some cases exceed the benefits offered by mainstream sports, which might encourage more people to engage in such sport activities in the future without being perceived in a negative way.

In this sense, future research may consider carrying out a cross-cultural comparison on benefits gained by surfers in different locations. Conducting a study to examine novice surfers' lived experiences and the benefits they gain from surfing in comparison to experienced surfers' experiences may be beneficial as well. This study briefly reviewed gender related issues in the Jæren surfing subculture, future research may consider conducting a deeper examination of gender and surfing in Norway, especially that Norway is a country which highly promotes gender equality in all aspects of society. Furthermore, a comparative study of benefits acquired by surfers and downhill skiers or base-jumpers in Norway as three different extreme sport types may be conducted to examine whether these sport participants gain similar or different benefits.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Table A1. Specific types and general categories attributed to leisure

Categories	Description of potential benefits derived from leisure participation
PERSONAL BENEFITS	<p>1. Better mental health and health maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holistic sense of wellness Stress management (prevention, mediation and restoration) Catharsis Prevention of and reduced depression, anxiety, and anger Positive changes in mood and Emotion <p>2. Personal development and growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-confidence, self-reliance Self-competence, self-assurance Value clarification Improved academic and cognitive performance Independence and autonomy Sense of control over one's life, humility, leadership Aesthetic enhancement Creativity enhancement Quality of life and/or kife Satisfaction <p>3. Personal appreciation and satisfaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of freedom, self-actualization Flow and absorption, exhilaration Stimulation, sense of adventure Challenge, nostalgia Creative expression, aesthetic appreciation Spirituality, positive change in mood or emotion
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spiritual growth, adaptability Cognitive efficiency, problem solving Nature learning, environemntal awareness and understanding Cultural and historic awareness and appreciation Tolerance, balanced competitiveness, balanced living Prevention of problems to at-risk youth Acceptance of one's responsibility
Psycho-physiological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cardiovascular benefits including prevention of strokes Reduced or prevented hypertension Reduced serum cholesterol and triglycerides Improved control and prevention of diabetes Prevention of colon cancer, reduced spinal problems Decreased body fat and obesity and/or weight control Improved neuropsychological functioning Increased bone mass and strength in children Increased muscle strength and better connective tissue Respiratory benefits (increased lung capacity, benefits to people with asthma) Reduced incidence of disease, improved bladder control of the elderly Increased life expectancy, management of menstrual cycles, management of arthritis Improved functioning of the immune system Reduced consumption of alcohol and use of tobacco
SOCIO-CULTURAL BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community satisfaction Pride in community and nation Cultural and historical awareness and appreciation Reduced social alienation Community and political involvement Ethnic identity Social bonding, cohesion, and cooperation Conflict resolution and harmony Greater community involvement in environmental decision making Social support Support democratic ideal of freedom Family bonding Reciprocity and sharing social mobility Community integration Nurturance of others Understanding and tolerance of others Environmental awareness, sensitivity Enhanced world view Socialization and acculturation Cultural identity Prevention of social problems by at risk youth Developmental benefits of children
ECONOMIC BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced health costs Increased productivity Less work absenteeism Reduced on-the-job accidents Decreased job turnover Maintenance of physical facilities Stewardship and preservation of options Husbandry and improved relationships with natural world International balance of payments Local and regional economic growth Contributions to net national economic development
ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of human dependency on the natural world Environmental ethic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preservation of particular natural sites and areas Public involvement in environmental issues Environmental protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecosystem sustainability Species diversity Maintenance of natural scientific laboratories Preservation of particular natural sites and areas

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Appendix B

List of questions prepared for interviews

Name:

Age:

Profession:

Relationship status:

When did you start surfing and what made you choose this particular sport activity?

Describe your thoughts/feelings: Before a surf session, while surfing and after a surf session?

How often do you surf?

Describe if you have felt as if you have been outside everyday life while surfing?

What kind of relationship do you have with the surrounding natural environment?

Do you think surfing benefited you? If yes, how?

What do you as a surfer get out of this sport?

What is the negative side of surfing (hard side)? For example, accidents, failures, risks.

Is surfing a dangerous sport? If yes, how?

How does it feel to surf in cold water, in the winter?

Do you prefer to surf alone or in a group? Why?

Describe your relationship with other surfers in Jæren?

If someone would like to start surfing, what should s/he do?

How much does it cost to surf? What is the cost of surfing equipment?

Are there surf schools? Where? How much does a surf course cost?

How can a new surfer become a member of the group of surfers who surf regularly?

How many female surfers are out surfing on a regular basis?

Is it easy for females to integrate in a male-dominated sport such as surfing?

Do you share your surfing experience with family members? Friends? Coworkers? If yes, how do they react? Do they react in a positive or a negative way?

Does surfing have a (positive or negative) effect on your personal relationships? If yes, how?

What is your surf-related travel behaviour?

How often do you travel? Where do you travel?

Where do you stay and for how long? What is your travel budget?

To conclude, tell me five benefits you believe you get out of surfing?