

**EXPLORING THE TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR AND EXPERIENCES OF NORWEGIAN
SURFERS: COLD- VERSUS WARM-WATER SURFING**



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TOURISM IN MARINE

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Abstract

More affordable travel opportunities have facilitated a swift rise in surf tourism, which is a growing multi-billion dollar global business niche within the broader sport tourism industry. It is argued that a growing number of surfers who are searching for the perfect wave without the crowds found in well-established surfing destinations are shifting to cold-water surfing. Previous research on surf tourism has largely focused on warm- and temperate-water surfing and related travel. However, an exploration of and an attempt to comprehend cold-water surf tourism and how it compares to similar activities in warm-water has been overlooked. This study focuses on understanding the travel behaviour and related experiences of Norwegian surf tourists domestically and internationally, to cold- and warm-water destinations. Data were collected using a phenomenological approach and semi-structured in-depth interviews with 18 experienced Norwegian surfers. Results show that these surfers are highly mobile, visiting warm-water surf destinations such as Morocco, Bali, Australia and Hawaii and also cold-water surf destinations such as Norway, Iceland, Scotland and Canada. They travel to surf at least once a year, staying between 10 days to three months, preferably in cheap accommodation. The longer the travel distance, the longer the stay. Their experiences of “localism”, where local surfers behave aggressively toward visiting surfers were more common in crowded warm-water destinations. In addition to the enjoyment of surfing, these Norwegian surf tourists valued opportunities to create new social relationships, experience new and different cultures and expand their “world-view” via their surf travel. They appreciated unique natural environments and experienced a deep

connection to nature. This research presents the first empirical data on the travel behaviour and related-experiences of surf tourists from a non-traditional surfing nation in Scandinavia.

Keywords: Extreme sports, cold-water surfing, warm-water surfing, surf tourism, travel behaviour, travel-related experiences

Introduction

Aqua-marine warm seas, white sandy beaches, bright sun, blues skies, and tanned - fit bodies are images connected to surfing (Booth, 2004). Traditionally surfing, and especially surf tourism, has been associated with warm-water (sea temperatures over 20 degrees Celsius) tropical and sub-tropical locations such as Hawaii, Tahiti, Indonesia and Fiji and thought of as a lifestyle sport (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011; Wheaton, 2004). In more recent decades, the improved insulation properties of wet-suits and dry-suits have allowed surfers to safely and more comfortably surf waves in cold-water (Mach, 2014), (sea temperature less than 12 degrees Celsius; Booth, 2011) in coastal countries such as Ireland, Scotland, Norway, Iceland, and Canada. Cold-water surfing does not elicit any of the predominant warm-water surfing images (Langseth, 2012) but nevertheless many sub-polar cold-water coastal regions provide rideable waves. As a consequence, surfers now travel both to warm- and cold-water surfing destinations (Elmahdy, 2015; Sotomayor & Barbieri, 2016).

Despite the improvements in wet-suits and dry-suits (Mach, 2014; Sotomayor & Barbieri, 2016), surfing in cold water provides a number of physiological risks for participants (Parsons, 2014) including; hypothermia, shortness of breath, elevated heart rate and blood pressure, adverse skin reactions, exostosis ('surfer's ear') (Kroon et al., 2002), restricted mobility and increased risk of drowning due to elevated buoyancy and a lessened ability to 'duck-dive' under wave turbulence (Ulkestad, 2013). Thus, surfing can be considered an extreme sport (Brymer,

2005; Brymer & Gray, 2009; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013; Nathanson, 2013), which Robinson (1992) defines 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” (p. 90).

A number of analytical frameworks including theories such as sensation seeking (Rossi & Cereatti, 1993; Zuckerman, 2000), psychoanalysis (Hunt, 1996), and masculinity theory (Wheaton, 2003) have been employed to provide explanations for participants’ motivations to engage in such sports. These theories claim that a combination of previous experiences, socialisation processes and personality attributes promote a desire for a participant to endanger their life via extreme sports (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013). Athletes within these sports conquer new frontiers, push boundaries (Kusz, 2004), and seek adrenaline kicks (Brymer, 2010). These approaches have been criticised for creating negative stereotypes which might not accurately explain the actual motivations and experiences of the participants (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013). 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 motivate them to learn about their surrounding environment and master the necessary skills to perform the task properly. Participants are aware of their own capabilities and make calculated decisions about engaging in their chosen activity to prevent taking any unnecessary risks.

A number of recent studies have shown that participation in extreme sports can generate beneficial psychological outcomes (Brymer, 2010; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013). 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, Downey & Gray, 2009; Brymer & Gray, 2009, 2010). Studying surfing and spirituality, Taylor (2007) found that surfers had strong connections to and admiration of nature, accompanied by enhanced environmental ethics and awareness.

Surf tourism has grown beyond the breadth of research in the subject area, which has been limited to 18 countries, while surfing occurs in more than 160 countries and under very different conditions (Martin & Assenov, 2012). Previous research on surf tourism has largely focused on warm- and temperate-water surfing and related travel while, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have explored and attempted to understand cold-water surf tourism and how it compares to similar activities in warm-water. Likewise, with the exception of Langseth (2012) who explored surfing identity in Norway, no previous studies have addressed Norwegian surfing or surf-travel behaviour. As a consequence, the study reported here was undertaken to provide insights into the travel behaviour and related experiences of Norwegian surfers and, in particular to compare their experiences with cold- and warm-water surfing locations in the context of exploring and contrasting an extreme sport undertaken in different conditions.

Literature Review

Surfing is one of the oldest practiced sports; surfers began to ride waves with wooden boards in Polynesia thousands of years ago (Booth, 2001; Levinson & Christensen, 1999). When early European travellers and explorers encountered those surfers, they praised their surfing skills and wrote highly about them (Levinson & Christensen, 1999). However, later surfing was disapproved of and banned by missionaries in Hawaii because it was perceived as a sinful activity due to the continuous intermingling between men and women (Booth, 2001). The sport

suffered a decline in practice by the end of the 19th century but was revived in the early 20th century (Booth, 2001, 2004; Levinson & Christensen, 1999). Surfing became prevalent once more during the 1950s and 60s (Booth, 2004; Lazarow, Miller, & Blackwell, 2008) mainly due to the introduction of cheap air travel (Booth, 1995), the manufacturing of lighter surfboards, and the media's role in demonstrating the surfing culture (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013). Since then, surfing thrived in California, rapidly diffused to the Pacific Rim (Booth, 1995, 2001, 2004), and lately it spread in Northern Europe and the Arctic as well (Langseth, 2012).

Surf Tourism

Surfing and travelling are intersected behaviours, since surfers travel to surf high quality waves (Reis & Jorge, 2012). Hence, surfing may be studied under the *sport tourism* perspective (Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003b) which is defined by Gibson (1998) as “leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home communities to play, watch physical activities or venerate attractions associated with these activities” (p. 10). Surf tourism is foremost an active, recreational and nature-based type of sport tourism, but the concept also includes the non-surfing travel companions and spectators (Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003a), albeit this study focuses only on the active surf tourists. According to Fluker (2003), surf tourism can be defined as:

the act of 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 surfer relies on the power of the

wave for forward momentum, is the primary motivation for destination selection (p. 7).

More affordable travel opportunities have facilitated a swift rise in surf tourism (Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003b; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013), which is a growing multi-billion dollar global business niche (Buckley, 2002; Sotomayor & Barbieri, 2016) within the broader sport tourism industry (Martin & Assenov, 2012). Today, about 35 million people pursue surfing worldwide (Mach & Ponting, 2018; O'Brien & Eddie, 2013; Porter & Usher, 2019), searching for the waves that provide high quality surfing (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013) and are willing to travel to different destinations in search of these experiences (Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003a).

Market Segmentation of Surf Tourists

As surf tourism has evolved, so too has the types and numbers of surf tourists (Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003a). Surfers range from low-skilled 'weekend warriors' to 'hard core' practitioners who train to acquire the needed technical skills and are very committed to their chosen discipline (Salome, 2010; Wheaton, 2004). Even though surfers can be seen as a homogeneous segment distinguished by their shared passion for the sport, a broad variety of surfers with different lifestyles, demographic characteristics, and motives for surfing exist (Dolnicar, & Fluker, 2004; Kruger & Saayman, 2017). The demographic profile of surf tourists have changed from some of the old stereotypical images of surfers as mainly hedonistic, casual, anti-establishment, introverted, and having unconventional attitudes towards recreational drugs (Pearson, 1979).

A number of studies have shown that the majority of surf tourists are males with relatively high incomes, aged about 30 years on average, and very mobile in their search for surf (Barbieri &

Sotomayor, 2013; Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003a, 2003b; Kruger & Saayman, 2017). Gender differences apply; according to Reynolds and Hritz (2012), female surf travellers are found to be more keen on socialising, while males focus more on displaying their skills. Both genders display a conservative lifestyle, are thrifty and have no wish to rebel, thus contradicting the stereotypical image of surfers as “hippies” and non-conformists (Reynolds & Hritz, 2012).

Dolnicar and Fluker (2003b) identified five unique market segments of surf tourists with distinct profiles and surf-related preferences. The “radical adventurers” had the lowest income, are the youngest surfers, and regard lack of crowds, local culture, time of local surf season, secret surf locations, and the quality of the natural environment as most important. “Ambivalents” have no destination or surf preferences. The “luxury surfers” are not concerned with prices or exchange rates, but more concerned with the quality of food and accommodation, and safety. The “price-conscious adventurers” are keen on exploring new locations and lack of crowds is important to them, while the “price-conscious safety seekers” have the highest incomes, are the oldest group of surfers, and have been surfing for many years. For this group, quality of accommodation and family facilities are very important. Both price-conscious groups emphasise the importance of personal safety, health, quality of meals, and reliability of dates. The “luxury surfers” and the “price-conscious safety seekers” have the highest incomes and are willing to spend more money on their surf trips. Thus, tour providers regard them as the most lucrative segments.

Surfers and their choices of Surf Destinations

Surf tourism today, occurs in thousands of coastal regions from Iceland to Antarctica (Ponting & McDonald, 2013). According to Ponting and McDonald (2013) who examined the

production and consumption of surf tourist space, crowded urban surf breaks in surfers' homelands prompted demand for surf tourism to destinations providing uncrowded conditions and high quality waves. With the inflow of tourists, local surfers often feel the urge to protect the waves they surf daily (Usher & Kerstetter, 2015). This phenomenon is identified as 'localism', which is a type of human territoriality (Usher & Kerstetter, 2015) that could be described as "the various exclusionary cultural practices by which a number of surfers attempt to control access to particular surfing "spots"" (Scheibel, 1995, p. 255).

A number of studies on localism have demonstrated that coercive measures frequently arise when surfers do not practice or are oblivious of surf etiquette (e.g. Daskalos, 2007; Kaffine, 2009; Towner & Lemarié, 2020). Moreover, outsiders such as newcomers, domestic and international tourists may be intimidated and menaced if local surfers observe scant acknowledgment for the local values, etiquette and context (Olive, 2019; Towner & Lemarié, 2020). The outcome is a range of responses by the locals who seek to inform outsiders on to what comprises acceptable behaviour (Nazer, 2004). Often, the form of expression seems hostile and may range from threatening looks and verbal abuse to damage to property and in extreme incidents violent confrontations or physical attacks (Olivier, 2010; Towner & Lemarié, 2020). According to Beaumont and Brown (2016) localism is aggravated by overcrowding. Furthermore, it is reported that threats and intimidating behaviour by local surfers is needed to keep the crowds at some surf breaks to a controllable size and that severe congestion can ruin the experience for everyone (Nazer, 2004; Towner & Lemarié, 2020).

Callard (2014) argues that a growing number of surfers who are searching for the perfect wave without the crowds found in well-established surfing destinations such as Australia and Hawaii are shifting to cold-water surfing. According to Callard (2014), the popularity of warm-

water surf destinations has led to overdeveloped beach resorts and overcrowded surf breaks.

Driven by a sense of adventure, some surfers are seeking out unexplored locations. The search has forced them farther towards the poles, into colder, occasionally icy, waters where they do not have to share the waves with crowds of other surfers – places such as Stavanger, in Norway (Callard, 2014; Elmahdy, 2015), Vancouver Island, in Canada, and the Reykjanes Peninsula, in Iceland (Callard, 2014).

Methods

Phenomenological approach

Phenomenology is progressively being considered and utilised in leisure and tourism experience studies (e.g. Fendt, Wilson, Jenkins, Dimmock, & Weeks, 2015; Hayllar & Griffin, 2005; Schmidt, 2005). Phenomenology regards knowledge as situated and subjective, and derived only from how individuals picture and interact with the world (Schmidt, 2005).

Phenomenological studies provide an opportunity for the subjects' voices to be heard (Willson, McIntosh, & Zahra, 2013). "Since the subject is considered an expert in the field under investigation, strong rapport can be built through emphasis and trust as the person shares their own realities and worldviews" (Fendt et al., 2013, p. 7).

This research deliberately adopted a phenomenological approach, applying qualitative research techniques to provide an in-depth understanding of the interviewees' travel behaviour and experiences. Because the intent of this research was to provide in-depth insights into the lived experience of surfers and to solicit their views on their motivations and experiences in both cold and warm water surfing environments a phenomenological approach was deemed to be the most suitable (Kvale, 1983; Willson et al., 2013).

Data were collected by the primary researcher (first author) using semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews. These interviews were conducted in ways that allowed the interviewees to talk at length and share as much information as they wished to without strong direction or constraint from the interviewer (Seidman, 1991). An interview form was used to guide the conversation to ensure that all pre-planned topics were covered, while also allowing other issues to surface. The interviewees were asked to introduce themselves; how, why and when they started surfing; and to talk freely about their domestic and international travel behaviour and related experiences in both cold- and warm-water surf destinations. The primary researcher used flexible and responsive interviewing techniques, adapting to new information and altering direction in the conversation whenever it was found necessary to get a more profound understanding or gain unanticipated insights (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Each interview lasted between 40 and 120 minutes and was held in locations of the interviewees' choice to allow the respondents to feel comfortable and at ease during the interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded; notes were taken during the interviews and transcriptions were made immediately after each interview by the primary researcher. All interviewees' identities were kept confidential. Quotes, anecdotes, and narratives from the interviews were employed as the main data for the study, supplemented by the in-situ notes made by the interviewer.

Sampling

The study applied purposive sampling to recruit experienced surfers (defined as more than 10 years actively involved in surfing) who were known members of the Norwegian surfing community and who were expected to be especially informative (Neuman, 2011). The primary

researcher was introduced to the first interviewee through a common friend, this was followed by a snowball sampling technique where interviewees recommended other surfers to approach.

Snowball sampling is a subset of purposive sampling and is a non-random sampling technique 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). The final sample was comprised of 18 experienced Norwegian surfers (14 men and 4 women). Participants’ ages ranged from 25 to 53 years (average age of 35 years). Secondary data were comprised of written material from online surfing blogs and videos supplied by some interviewees. These secondary data enhanced the researchers’ understanding of the different aspects of these surfers’ experiences.

Data analysis

The data were collected and analysed by the primary researcher and subsequently reviewed by the secondary researcher. The data analysis fell into four different phases as recommended by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010); preparation, exploration, reduction, and interpretation. The data preparation phase consisted of the transcription of all the interviews. Interviews were personally transcribed by the primary researcher. All transcribed data were then read carefully, and re-listening to recordings, accompanied by reflection and note taking was also undertaken. All themes related to surfers’ travel behaviour and experiences were highlighted and utilised in the data reduction phase, during which coding and identification of patterns took place, and applying inductive coding approaches (Thomas, 2006). Examples of themes identified include surf travel choices; travel-related experiences: cold versus warm-water surf destinations; localism; and connecting with nature. Data analysis and interpretation occurred simultaneously,

and the primary researcher checked data across the different data sources for inconsistencies, thus increasing the dependability of the data (Golafshani, 2003). Authenticity (Neuman, 2011) was increased by building a good rapport with the interviewees and spending extended amounts of time with them.

Findings

Norwegian Surf Tourists' Travel Choices

The Norwegian surfers interviewed specifically choose to 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). Some expressed that the pull of travelling to surf is like an addiction:

It’s almost like an illness, we talked about travelling, I would love to go to Egypt but there are no waves in Egypt so I probably never gonna see Egypt because its got no waves, if I’m gonna go somewhere it has to be waves. (P-12, female)

Interviewees also expressed the desire to surf new and varied and high quality waves as important criteria in choosing their travel destination.

One interviewee believes that many Norwegian surfers are very mobile, they have the means and find the time to travel whenever they want to:

Actually most people from Norway are very well situated with money. So we travel everywhere in the world, Australia, Asia, Indonesia, Hawaii, America,

everywhere. I mean two thirds of the world is water, and it is coast everywhere and waves break on many places. (P-1, male)

The interviewees are very active travellers who regularly travel abroad to surf in both warm- and cold-water surf destinations. They travel to various surf destinations in Asia, Europe, Africa and the Pacific:

I've been a lot to the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua, Hawaii, Indonesia, the Maldives, Portugal etc. (...). I've also been travelling to surf in cold water like: Lofoten (Norway), Ireland and Canada. (P-10, female)

Another surfer mentions more surf destinations: "We've been to Costa Rica, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and New Zealand, the Pacific; we've been to Galapagos, the Marquesas, Tahiti, Niue, Fiji, also Morocco" (P-16, male). They are also very active surf travellers domestically: "You've got Jæren outside of Stavanger, you got Hoddevika (Stadlandet) in North West coast and you have Lofoten way up in the north, they're pretty much the three biggest areas for surfing in Norway now" (P-17, male). Moreover, participants travel for weekends, long weekends or day trips to cold-water: "local surf destinations like Stad, Flø and Alnes" (P-14, male).

Despite the relatively high income of all interviewees, findings show that they are very concerned with prices and are price-conscious travellers who tend to choose "often low, low price accommodation, flight, car plus cost efficient food. We often make our own food" (P-14, male). Another interviewee stated: "We stay in really cheap places like local places (...) some

cost-efficient lodge, motel or hut, local transport, like really cheap, we travel on a budget” (P-16, male). One of the interviewees described his budget and accommodation choices saying:

I went on one long trip just around the world, but then I was travelling for six months (...) was really backpacking budget. That was in 2004 I think, I had 60,000 NOK something like that for half a year (laughs) not much. (...) South Africa, Portugal and Morocco, I've been to a couple of times. That's been like a two-week vacation, had a budget maybe 10,000 - 20,000 NOK (...). Stayed sometimes in hostels when I went around the world and in Morocco and Portugal it was just local accommodation, guest houses. (P-15, male)

Camping is very common among Norwegian surfers as well, especially when they travel to cold-water surf destinations where surf spots are often located in remote areas: “If it's good for camping I'll camp, very fond of, I'd rather stay close to the sea” (P-11, female). Sometimes they stay in surf camps: “We rented a motorhome and we stayed at a surf camp, all on budget, very price-conscious” (P-18, male). Another participant says: “We just went camping, got camps and we had a vehicle cause in Iceland you can drive around a lot, so we can drive to remote beaches and things like that. We just had our tents and went camping” (P-15, male). Often the surf spots in cold-water surf destinations are located in remote areas with limited or non-existent facilities. Hence, participants find camping a very practical and financially friendly solution.

The duration of surf trips depended on the chosen surf-destination. When travelling within Europe interviewees tended to stay for between one or two weeks, but when they travelled

to far away destinations outside of Europe, they usually stayed for a minimum one month up to three months:

You don't go on a two-week holiday far abroad, if you go on a two-week or a one-week you go to Portugal or you go to South of France, Biarritz, Hossegor (France), Peniche (Portugal). (...) When you go on a big trip to Indonesia or to Australia or to Hawaii you usually stay for like six weeks, two months because you wanna catch as much surf as possible and it's not given that when you plan 'umm, I'm gonna go this summer two-weeks to Hawaii', well it could be totally flat in those two weeks and you go to a very expensive place for sitting on the beach which you could have done here. (P-1, male)

Interviewees stated that they prefer to travel with a small group of friends (2-3 people) who they can share their surfing experiences with. Moreover, according to the interviewees, a small group of visiting surfers are more accepted by locals than bigger groups: "I prefer to travel with a small group of good friends that I can share the waves with, the best is to have maybe two or three other friends to surf and stay with" (P-17, male). They travel when the weather conditions are good for surfing: "You follow the weather forecast, you time everything to see when it's gonna be at its best and you travel to places where there are good conditions" (P-2, male). During these trips they attempt to surf as often as they can: "We try to do surf-specific trips so when we go on the trip for surfing we surf every day and several times a day as well" (P-18, male).

A car is the main mode of transportation for Norwegian surf tourists: “In Norway it’s mostly by car, abroad it’s plane plus car, you always need a car” (P-14, male). Having a car is seen as essential whether Norwegian surfers are travelling domestically or internationally. Surf tourists need to drive from one surf spot to the next searching for rideable waves. Thus, a car is both cheap and practical as explained by an interviewee:

It’s cheaper to go by car. It takes a lot of time but you need to be able to check out different spots in the different areas and also you need to have a car because you have to bring a lot of equipment so a car is pretty much maybe the most important part of the equipment. (P-17, male)

Cold-water and Warm-water Surfing Compared

Interviewees differentiated between their surfing experiences in cold-water to warm-water locations. There are a range of challenges and risks associated with surfing in cold-water including; discomfort and pain, breathing difficulties, muscle and joint immobility, skin irritations and damage, an inability to stay in the water for extended periods, and potential hypothermia. Furthermore, the thick wet-suits or dry-suits (including, booties, gloves and head coverings) worn by surfers in cold-water environments tend to hinder movement while surfing and make a surfer more buoyant which can compromise the ability of a surfer to “duck-dive” under waves to reduce their turbulence and associated wave “hold-down” (under) danger. For example, one interviewee stated:

Cold-water surfing is not particularly “skin-friendly”. I’m sure the face gets a lot of beating, it’s not healthy for the skin. Second, we get really cold in the winter months, it may be not so healthy for the neck and joints. Third, the surf is more demanding due to the wetsuit. It takes a longer time to become a good surfer. (P-14, male)

Some interviewees recognised the danger in cold-water surfing locations such as Iceland:

Actually, it is because the Gulf stream does not reach Iceland in the same way as it does to the Norwegian coast so it’s a bit colder. You can actually experience ice floating around in the water. It’s always dangerous in the winter when it’s ice. (P-15, male)

Despite their understanding of the risks and discomfort of cold-water surfing many interviewees stated that they prefer to surf in cold-water than in warm-water due to the advantages they experienced:

All in all, I prefer to surf in cold water mainly because of the small crowd, but also because of the feeling of doing something unique, exotic, unusual, and dangerous. It is important to understand that the waves are equally good in cold water destinations, but less crowded. Additionally, the locals are often friendly and may often invite you for a drink after the surf. This makes the whole difference. So, despite the obvious negative sides, cold water surfing often brings you greater experiences. (P-14, male)

Interviewees described their surfing experience in cold-water with words such as ‘fresh’, ‘pure’ and ‘clean’, for example:

Cold water is really fresh, you know when you paddle out in the morning and you’re kind of tired. You just take a breath and you’re really like cold, kind of nice, I like that. It’s really fresh as well. The same with the warm water but it’s not as stressful I think and sometimes the water is more pure in the winter especially in Norway, it’s a bit cleaner. For example, sometimes in warm water even though it’s warm, it doesn’t look tempting. But sometimes in Stavanger and its really cold in the winter, it doesn’t matter if it’s cold it’s just the freshness of it. (P-16, male)

The interviews also revealed that there is an exploration aspect to surfing in cold-water which they did not experience in warm-water surf destinations where surfing is more well-established. In cold-water, surfers explore and attempt to find new surf spots and new waves to surf while being surrounded by nature with just a few other surfers. Hence, there is a sense of discovery:

Well, in the later years I’ve been more and more into cold water surfing probably because also you get the nature experience with just fewer people and just scenery. I’ve been exploring a lot of places in North of Norway, looking for new waves. It’s just the whole travel and exploration aspect of the whole thing. You know you might not surf that much it’s just the whole idea of maybe finding a

wave that no one else has surfed before and experiencing just trekking and just bringing a tent and camping. The whole experience really. So in warm places, go travelling, you often end up in places where there are a lot of people and it can be a bit of a hassle with the locals. Yeah, it's often like more tourist people.

(P-15, male)

Connecting with Nature

The beauty of and unique connection to nature in cold-water destinations was a benefit emphasised by all the surfers participating in this study: “Lofoten (Norway) for example, it's the most beautiful place I've been, the waves are really good and you kind of have two mountains on each side and it's just so beautiful” (P-9, male). Especially when speaking about their cold-water surfing experiences, Norwegian surfers expressed a strong positive connection to nature and their sense of a deep relationship with their surrounding environment, for example:

Cold water surfing is a balance between your own energy and the energy of the ocean. You need to connect to the ocean by using your own energy and mind to master the energy of the ocean. It's often also windy and maybe snow or hail.

All this, with the constant energy of the moving waves is a big experience of nature. And of course, the fact that it's very cold makes you feel alive. (P-14, male)

Crowding at warm-water surf destinations was considered as a major factor which negatively affects connection to and appreciation of the surrounding natural environment while

surfing. The interviewees universally shared their sense of being overwhelmed by the crowding in the water and the “fight” for the waves. This contrasted with the value they placed on relaxing and enjoying their surfing experience and the opportunity to take in and appreciate the beauty and uniqueness of nature surrounding them. A good example is interviewee P-18 who stated:

The crowd is a big thing that affects the connection with nature a lot. If you're with big crowds, especially if it gets competitive and you're fighting for the waves, you have to work a lot to get the waves it takes away the focus from being in and with nature. So crowds affect my connection a lot and I prefer definitely less crowds and call it the spiritual part of it is stronger then. (...) It's very different, for me the crowds affects that a lot. Your attention is drawn to the people and what they are doing instead of relaxing and appreciating the place you are in. (P-18, male)

Localism

All interviewees explained that the major problem they faced when they travelled 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). Local surfers can become aggressive in certain places in the world, they shout at visiting surfers and can be intimidating: “I have been out travelling and when you paddle out they can say to you “(finger snapping sound) get on shore now, who are you? Go on shore, go on shore” (P-3, male).

Crowding is the main factor that leads to localism-related aggression as one interviewee explains:

That is very dependent on how crowded it is, if it's not crowded everybody is welcoming, if it's very crowded nobody is welcoming. That's just the way it is with surfing. So if you go to Australia and you go somewhere where nobody else is surfing then everybody is going to be happy to see you. If you go to the Gold Coast, Snapper Rocks probably the most crowded waves in the world nobody is going to be happy to see you there. You're just another person who is in the way and locals are especially angry. (P-17, male)

Because most of the well-known and popular surf locations worldwide are in warm-water there is a strong relation between crowding in the waves and warm water surfing destinations. Thus, the Norwegian surfers interviewed contrasted their experiences in cold-water surf, where there are less surfers, with their travel to warm-water surfing destinations which are frequently crowded: "My experience is that cold-water surfers in general are more friendly towards new faces, I've had bad experiences in warm waters, but never in cold waters" (P-14, male). Another interviewee stated:

I guess it all depends on how many surfers you are in the area (...) like Iceland and the Faroe Islands if you meet someone you instantly start talking to them and become friends because you meet when you're surfing, it all depends on how many surfers you are (...). Iceland, they were super friendly, so we got to

know them and as I said we were invited to stay at their place. We went surfing with them, they showed us some surf spots, and they showed us around town. It was a really nice experience. (P-15, male)

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Despite the negativity associated with localism, the Norwegian surfers interviewed shared that they learned ways to adapt and were able to find ways to reduce 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). Another interviewee shared that his approach of befriending local surfers was deliberate and helpful:

I had very good connection with local surfers that took me in, like being into the community and not having to pay directly but instead like buying some beers in the evening. (...) You don’t have to pay for a guide service, you don’t pay for transport, you meet them and you drive a local person’s car and there are several people in the car so you share the cost of petrol. Especially travelling alone, the alternative would be to rent a car and pay for things myself but meeting locals you share the cost and you get all the knowledge on where to go, so as a surfer it’s very valuable to either know somebody locally or get to know somebody and go surfing with them. (P-18, male)

Benefits from surf tourism

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, was considered very beneficial by interviewees. They were able to gain insights into new cultures by befriending the locals, they were sometimes welcomed into their homes as well as the local surf breaks. They were able to have more authentic and genuine connections with local people who shared a passion for surfing.

The Norwegian surfers interviewed believed that their surf-related travelling affected their personalities in positive ways by making them more open-minded than 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).

Discussion and Conclusions

Travel behaviour

The high level of personal income in the Nordic countries allows many Nordic citizens to travel and spend their holidays abroad (Elmahdy, Haukeland, & Fredman, 2017; Medieministeriet, 2011). Nordic citizens are also frequent domestic travellers; with nature-based recreation and tourism a common part of everyday life (Elmahdy et al., 2017; Norden, 2016). Many Norwegian surfers (who are entitled to 25 working days of paid vacation per year, in addition to public holidays; Ray & Schmitt, 2018) are active travellers to well-known warm-water surfing destinations such as Australia, Hawaii and Bali but some also travel to cold-water surfing destinations such as Iceland, Ireland, Canada and their homeland, Norway. Their surfing travel, while primarily driven by the opportunities to surf rideable waves (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013), also provided a range of other beneficial connections and experiences (Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003a). These included opportunities to connect with nature, to "feel alive" and to make new friends, experience different cultures and to have a more open "world-view". (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013; Beerli et al. 2007; Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003a).

As found in previous research on surf tourism (Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013; Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003a, 2003b), the majority of Norwegian surf tourists participating in this study are

males, with high income and an average age of 35 years. They are independent travellers who tend to travel in small groups (of four or less), prefer to make their own travel arrangements and to have the freedom to follow the waves and to explore and discover on their own (with their 'surfing-buddies'). Even though they have relatively high incomes, they are price-conscious and budget-minded travellers who book cheap flight tickets, buy cost-efficient food, stay in cheap local accommodation, and often camp (especially in cold-water surf destinations which may lack suitable facilities). They prefer to rent cars for transportation in order to explore and reach more remote surf spots.

Travel-related experiences: Cold versus warm-water surf destinations

In addition to surfing in the cold-water of Norwegian coastal surfing locations participants in this study also chose to travel to other cold-water surf destinations. Here they surf in remote locations and expose themselves to extreme weather conditions and very cold water (less than 8 degrees Celsius) that provides challenges to human survival. The decision to travel and surf in such extreme cold-water conditions is due to the personal benefits gained from it. Cold-water surfing provides participants with unique and exotic surfing experiences as the water is perceived as more 'fresh', 'pure' and 'clean' than warm-water which is often crowded and where the locals are more aggressive. The sense of adventure, exploration, connection with nature and exposure to extreme natural elements were viewed as important benefits in these locations. This supports Salome's (2010) description of lifestyle sports as individual activities to which sensation, freedom, adventure and risk are vital.

Localism and social interactions

Norwegian surfers experience aggressive actions by local surfers as is widely reported for other “outsiders” visiting popular surf breaks (Olive, 2019; Towner & Lemarié, 2020; Usher & Kerstetter, 2015). This is particularly prevalent in popular, well known surfing breaks in warm-water locations that are crowded with many surfers. This contrasts with the lower numbers of surfers at cold-water surf breaks and causes Norwegian surfers to often prefer such locations despite the challenges associated with very cold-water.

Despite the negative experiences associated with localism, Norwegian surf tourists have negotiated positive interactions with local surfers and made new surfing friends who have allowed them to learn more about different cultures, introduced them to new hidden surf spots, and often saved them money by welcoming them into their homes and sharing their cars to travel between different surf spots. Hence, the findings show that participants are serious leisure participants (Stebbins, 1992, 2007), who gain various durable benefits via their travels and who often succeed in obtaining acceptance into surfing subcultures not only locally but on an international level as well.

Research Contributions and Implications

Research on surfing and surf-riding tourism has attracted increasing attention in recent years (Orams & Towner, 2013). However, research has tended to focus on tropical and sub-tropical warm-water surfing destinations such as Hawaii (Walker, 2011), the Maldives (Ponting, 2014), Costa Rica (Krause, 2012); Indonesia (Towner & Orams, 2015), the Philippines (Porter, Orams, & Lück, 2015), Fiji (Ponting & O’Brien, 2015), Papua New Guinea (O’Brien & Ponting, 2013) and the wider Indo-Pacific (Buckley, 2002). Martin and Assenov (2012) conducted a review of surfing tourism research in the published literature and concluded that while the area

was growing as a focus for researchers, it was still in its infancy with only a limited number of topics explored and only 10 per cent of the countries with surfing resources studied. As a consequence, they called for an expansion of the limited works to a wider range of locations and aspects of the sport in the context of tourism. This study seeks to meet this call by offering the first exploration of the experiences provided in warm-water more established surfing destinations versus a cold-water emerging surfing destination such as Norway.

The findings provide support for the growing understanding of the reasons for engaging in extreme sports that show that such activities generate a range of benefits for participants. Interestingly, the findings reveal that extreme low water temperatures are preferred by some surfers due to the opportunities and benefits such locations offer. These include connections with nature, including exposure to extreme conditions, wilderness, experiences, less crowding and a sense of exploration and adventure.

Cold-water surf destinations such as Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, Scotland and Canada can consider the findings of this study and develop strategies to develop coastal surfing locations as new, exotic 'cold water' surfing destinations. In doing so it is important to recognise that what attracts surf tourists to these places is not only the surf, but also high quality natural scenery, and less crowds than the currently more well-known warm-water surfing destinations. Protecting these attributes needs to be carefully considered alongside of any promotional strategies designed to grow surfing tourism in cold-water settings.

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