Has Surfing been institutionalised within the United Kingdom?

Daniel Jones
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Abstract

This study will enable the reader to obtain a critical understanding of surfing subculture and its growth, its effect on society in relation to design and the establishments that have been organized to document its change and future. This paper discusses whether surfing subculture has become institutionalised in the United Kingdom. It attempts, from examples of museum branding and websites, to analyse the portrayal of surfing to the dominant culture, in order to demonstrate if a fair representation of surfing has been established. The project is split into two aspects the first, a theoretical paper analyzing surfing subculture and museology. The second the design and implement a new surfing museum brand, web site and promotional material that accurately depict modern day surfing subculture.

Contents

Introduction

This paper discusses surfing in relation to the branding and web sites of surfing museums in the United Kingdom. It explores the sociological position of surfing in our society and whether it has become institutionalised in the United Kingdom. This is shown, initially by defining and discussing subcultures, then analysing statistical facts about future growth and trends of the surfing industry. Subsequently, it will take into account how surfing is currently reflected in museums, its values and representations of alternative heritage are studied. In conclusion, the study will examine how the spirit of surfing might be represented in museum branding and websites rather than it being lost and institutionalised, into the stereotypical design of the dominant culture.

The paper tries to recognise the position of surfing subculture within the frame of the dominant mainstream and how stereotypical design has influenced current museum branding and websites, allowing for an unfair representation of surfing to be reflected to the mainstream culture. The paper highlights this and compares it to current surfing design, in an attempt to produce a brand and web site for a museum, in the practical aspect of this project that emulates modern day surfing design.

The author chose this project due to continuing participation in the field of study, not only does the author surf, but also designs surfing websites. It is imperative that a fair representation of surfing is available to inform and educate rather than to 'generate a desire to retreat into a fantasized past'.[1]

Little, if any academic study has been carried out in the field of surfing museum design (branding and a website) and so this paper begins to explain how surfing should be reflected to the dominant culture, through the theoretical aspect and practical design. The reader should gain a clear

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[1] Wallace, M. (1995) pg121

understanding of the question and be able to see that insight demonstrated in the application of the final practical material.

Surfing as a Subculture

Subculture. My small colour Oxford English dictionary describes it as 'the distinct culture of a group existing within a larger culture'.[2] But to define surfing as a sub culture it requires an approach that goes beyond this definition to a deeper understanding and accuracy. It crosses boundaries that can be seen only from a surfer's perspective looking out on the world around. Otherwise it would be hard for anyone to gain and critical understanding and clearly represent the subculture (its core values, morals, philosophies and stoke factor) due to surfing's fluxuating extremes and changing nature. The development of a definition of a subculture from a wide range of social activities can be frustrated further by being forced to apply to a scholar's cultural theories. This and other factors such as how academia could truly hope to attribute 'the stoke' factor of surfing could account for the lack of critical academic study completed in this field. This chapter aims to gain a realistic image of the counter-hegemonic subculture of surfing.

Many attempts have been made on defining subculture to varying degrees success. Thornton in her book Club Cultures provides us with an initial definition of a subculture. 'Subcultures are said to have a distinctive enough shape and structure to make them identifiably different; they are focused around certain activities, values …territorial spaces and can be either be loosely or tightly bounded'.[3] This can be applied the surfing sub culture.

Brian Longhurst describes subculture in his book Popular music and society as 'providing a structure of an alternative value system, which

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[2] Stevenson, A. (2002) pg 701
[3] Thornton, S. (1995) pg 119

contains its own rules system'[4]. Lines of similarity can be drawn through experience between both sociological statements when applied to surfing subculture.

While beginning to define the surfing subculture the reader needs to remain aware of the interplay between the dominant mainstream culture and subcultures. They are continually feeding from one another and constantly changing. 'The insight which surfers gain while riding waves flavours their entire way of life. Laid-back in the extreme, they chose a style of dress that was appropriately loose and casual. Energised by the intensity of their experience, they used bold strips and slashes of colour in a way, which set them apart from the drab beats. Tanned skin, sun bleached hair, and bare feet or minimal sandals completed the original look – one which would remain fundamentally unchanged over many decades and which would influence millions of non-surfers'.[5] These are just some of the defining attributes of a surfers and non-surfers alike.

As a basis, Dick Hebdige, considered the foremost academic and his theory on subcultures, suggests that there is a continuing fight for identity between subcultures and mainstream culture, where meaning is constantly negotiated and renegotiated, through multiple boundaries of society like behaviour, language, clothes, music and the media. 'Skateboarding, like other subcultures [surfing], attempts to separate itself from groups such as the family, to be oppositional, appropriative of the city [sea], irrational in organisation, ambiguous in constitution, independently creative, and exploitative of its marginal or sub status'.[6] Here Ian Borden describes skateboardings cultural identifiers, which suggest that it is trying to move away from the mainstream and this can be applied to surfing. The surf subculture has constantly been trying to move away from the mainstream culture. 'Like the Bikers and Ton-up Boys, the surfer took a sport and transformed it into a way of life. In one sense this was a very

[4] Butts, S. L. (2005)
[5] Polhemus, T. (1994) pg48 a
[6] Borden, I. (2003) pg137-138

mainstream, leisure age thing to do in the 1950's. But in another sense it was dropping out'.[7] This shows that it was a very literal change in society and the lifestyle of participant. Making surfing very fashionable using bold colours and loose fitting garments in various styles, from surf grunge to soul surfer. The surfers behaviour reflected this style in there relaxed attitudes to everything accept the destruction and damage of mother nature, which a significant majority of surfers would oppose making surfers different to other subcultures like, skateboarding and motor cross, even the mainstream culture, to a point. This lead, in 1990 to the formulation of Surfers Against Sewage or S.A.S, to create a united voice of surfers to clean up beaches, rivers, lakes and estuaries, making surfing unique compared to other sub cultural activities. 'The creation of Surfrider [S.A.S in the U.K] allowed surfers to become environmental activists, thus ensuring their popularity among other normally non-aligned sub-cultures'.[8] Music has also played a significant role in defining surfing subculture from mainstream culture. It has a distinct up beat vocal and instrumental quality, with harmonies mixed to create an added dimension to the music. It was initially influenced by the ever changing mood of the sea and while that still remains in modern times, new 'sustained electro riffs'[9] have emerged on guitars, with artists like Jack Johnson, who is a surfer and Tom Carroll who has won the world surfing championships leading the way in sharp comparison to the Beach Boys who did not surf. As Dr. S. L. Butts has explained, 'I think the culture part of the subculture still very much exists'.[10]

Other 'major factors that have affected the surfing subculture have included the explosion of types of media that can relay that information all over the world, the popularity of beach attire, the increased quality of surfing films, and the attention-getting risk-takers taking on bigger and

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[7] Polhemus, T. (1994) pg48 b
[8] Gabrielson, B. (2005) a
[9] Gault-Williams, M. (2005)
[10] Butts, S. L. (2005) a

bigger waves',[11] Jane Schmauss remains adamant that 'It has always been its own subculture, certainly in California, and has no interest in becoming mainstream - tell that to the media and wannabees'[12]. These comments show in black and white how the surfing subculture is trying to resist the mainstream culture. The attached creative project addresses this issue through the design of a surf museum brand and website although it is inherently hard to define the 'stoke' value of surfing, which is a defining characteristic, through design language. Stoke is a term used to describe the behavioural condition of a surfer who is wound up or full of enthusiasm, for example after riding a great wave.

The mainstream culture has been constantly changing to try to re-incorporate the surfing subculture, or at least produce a dominant framework of meaning for it by releasing news reports and articles in the mass media. Hebdige also suggests that the commodification of this process is an evitable result. For example, swimming shorts in the past were only to be worn in the water, but the commodification and the homogenous commercialisation of surf wear has brought beach fashion and board shorts to the high streets to be worn in every day life, masking the fact that it is 'easier to look the part than live it',[13] allowing companies like Quiksilver (with an annual turnover of $1.5 Billion), Billabong and Rip Curl to increase their retail market shares considerably in an 'industry still growing at 10-12% globally'.[14]

Surfing in the U.K is not world renound due the lack of consistently good waves conditions, thus having a knock on effect on the mass media portrayal of surfing in the U.K. This negotiation and reintegration of the subculture to the mainstream has created two types of characterizing factors for society. The first are people who part take in the sport regularly and living the lifestyle, wearing the clothes etc. The second would be

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[11] Schmauss, J. (2005) a
[12] Schmauss, J. (2005) b
[13] Mahne, C. (2002)
[14] Mahne, C.,(2002)

people who may have tried the sport once or twice (or possibly never tried it) who like the ideology the sports image has created and want to portray that as their identity.

Change from minority to mainstream

The change is it not only rooted in the facts, it goes beyond and has 'become deeply entrenched in society'.[15] The exponential growth seen in surfing subculture can be highlighted and forecast through a number of statistics. In the last 60 years the commercialisation of surfing has proceeded at an ever-increasing rate. With the end of the Second World War, more people than ever before had free time to escape or rebel against the dominant culture and in 1955 'veracious market demand leads [Dale Velzy and Hap Jaccobs] firms to develop production glassing facilities',[16] to mass produce surf boards. This facilitated the on-set of a massive subcultural boom, which has continued and could be suggested as the subcultures modern day birth.

While researching this project, contact was made with Dr. Steven Butts a Senior Lecturer from Plymouth University, who has a special interest in surf culture sociology. He suggested that 'In terms of a general view, I think the surfing culture has moved towards becoming mainstream, but I don't think it has yet. I suppose a parallel could be skiing. Lots and lots of people do it, but is skiing part of mainstream culture for people in the U.K?   Certainly is more than surfing, but again this could vary region to region. While some of the gear has become more mainstream, and you see more surfing images in advertising, I think the "culture" part of the subculture still very much exists. It doesn't take a surfer very long to figure out that somebody else is a non-surfer'.[17] Dr. Bruce Gabrielson a representative of the USSF Sports Science Committee also drew a similar conclusion between the growth of surfing and snowboarding. 'The

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[15] Butts, S. L. (2005) a
[16] Stecyk, C.R. (2002) pg 230
[17] Butts, S. L. (2005) b

invention and acceptance of the snowboard in the late 70s or early 80s by many established people who enjoyed skiing saw the immediate popularity the snowboard had. Since the snowboard was created by a surfer, Chuck Barfoot, its growth and cultural popularity had an immediate impact on surfing',[18] thus affecting the activities financial growth.

Changes in the United Kingdom's economy and demographics will play a key role in the extreme sports market share, especially the available levels of disposable income. Demand and participation can therefore be profoundly controlled by the position of the economy. Figure 1 demonstrates the growth and predicted growth of consumer expenditure and saving between 1998 and 2007. The clear increase of disposable income by approximately 21% reports Mintel is set to please extreme sports operators as consumer affluence has led to a similar increase in consumer spending by 22% in real terms says Mintel.

Mintel 2003 Extreme Sports report highlighted the factor that since September 11th terrorist attacks there has been a slow worldwide recession, while the U.K economy is forecast to continue to grow although at a slower rate. Increasing levels of disposable income and consumer expenditure will add to the demand for more alternative sports such as surfing and the initial outlay of board, wetsuit and leash needed in order to regularly participate will become less of a financial barrier for many consumers. With disposable income and consumer expenditure set to increase, Mintel also reports that a key population age group is set to rise. 'The key demographic for extreme sports are 15-24 year olds, a group which is set to increase by some 11% between 1998 and 2006'.[19] The British Surfing Association carried out a survey of it members in 2001 and found that '50% were aged between 15-34',[20] confirming the key demographic Mintel outlined in the 2003 Extreme Sports Report. This is an encouraging sign for the surfing market as it suggests there will be an

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[18] Gabrielson, B. (2005) b
[19] Extreme Sports Report (2003) http://www.mintel.com
[20] B.S.A, (2001) pg 2

increase of population in a key age group which promises more participation in this type of sport. This shift highlights a general trend of a growing number of people such as students and singles who gravitate towards these sports. On a broader scale population research suggests that the general trend of marrying and having children later will increase and effectively be an added bonus for the surfing industry, allowing participants to pursue the activity via spending more time and money well beyond the age of 24. Figure 2 shows population change from 1998 to predicted change for 2006.

The British Surfing Industry has also recorded a clear increase in the total surfing industry turnover since 1995 (Figure 3). Even in 2001, when the fewest businesses responded, total industry turnover had still increased and was at its largest ever. More recent figures released by the South West Regional Development Agency in 2004 suggest that the 'surfing industry in Cornwall alone is worth £64 million'.[21] Add this to Tourism Officials North Devon figures of around £35 million, and it is now estimated the 'surfing industry brings at least £100million to the region per year creating 2,000 full and part time jobs'.[22]

While the latest figures taken from an article in the Western Morning News seem to show a decline in growth from 2001 (Figure 3) this could be attributed to an underestimation of true value of the surfing image and that the article only represents figures for Devon and Cornwall. Anthony Weight, a surf industry backer, says that 'Because it's a leisure industry, its economic impact hasn't been treated with the seriousness it deserves'.[23] This could account for the variation in the two figures. Although more likely it presents the author with the fact that spending cannot be equated to participation and that surfing subculture is actually more about spending money than participating.

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[21] Andrews, P. (2004) pg 1
[22] Andrews, P. (2004) pg 1
[23] Andrews, P. (2004) pg 4

With the consumer driven growth of the Extreme Sports Industry, a niche market has developed for a Satellite TV channel called Extreme. It broadcasts every type and aspect of extreme sport possible. Interestingly, though, research conducted by BMR/Mintel has shown (Figure 4) that only a small minority who view sport on TV are encouraged to participate. Lending further weight to the theory that surfing subculture is more about money now than participation.

So, exposure given to extreme sports seems to act in two ways. One way is to *increase* interest and the other way is to maintain a level of interest. It has little effect on participation levels. Nonetheless, increased media coverage of sports does raise the profile and is therefore more likely to encourage young people to minimally embrace the lifestyle, driving an increase in consumer spending on clothing, music, magazines and DVD's which provide the frame work of the activity, even if they do not participate themselves.

Due to the very nature of extreme sports the risk of injury or death is always high. Negative publicity will always put doubt into people's minds that are considering taking up extreme sports. In September 2004, the tragic death of Stephen Quinn, 30, from Perranporth, Cornwall made headlines after going Bodyboarding and sustaining a head injury he was swept onto rocks. While on December 23, 1994, Hawaiian Mark Foo died in his very first session at Mavericks, he caught a 40-foot wave and wiped out, never resurfacing, a few hours later he was found drowned, this made the surf and main media headlines worldwide. Jon Krakauer reported in Outside Magazine, May 1995: 'Most of the surfers who were present at Maverick's that day view Foo's death as a freak accident. This may well be the case. But nagging doubts remain'.[24] The fact that surfing is a dangerous activity acts as a hindrance to getting more people to participate, thus curbing any complete absorption into the mainstream.

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[24] Krakauer, J. (1995) *http://outside.away.com/magazine/0595/5f_foo.html*

While heightened publicity due to death or injury may improve safety it is likely that it would put off new participants in to surfing.

This study suggests that aspects of surfing such as continual consumption of surfing style apparel, the improved quality and numbers of surf films, and the consistent desire of the media and public to see bigger and bigger waves ridden has taken these aspects of surfing and entered them into the mainstream. Museums are one way in which cultures are 'formalised' in society.

Museums, Values and Representation of Alternative Heritage

In the first two chapters surfing has been described as a subculture and it has been shown that surfing as a culture is growing. These developments have lead to, and are adding to a growing strand of alternative ideologies in the U.K. Nick Merriman says that 'work on youth subcultures, for example, demonstrates the existence of ideologies oppositional to the dominant ideology'.[25] These oppositional ideologies go against the dominant culture and overtime will and have produced 'alternative heritage'. As Dr. Gabrielson has argued, 'The surfing image of the young, carefree, tanned athlete has cought on with major corporations who use the image to market about everything you can think of. This in turn, along with a few more recent surf movies [such as Blue Crush 2004 and Billabong Odyssey 2005], has caused a hugh popularity increase, particularly among females'.[26] This increase in awareness has fuel demand for surfing Heritage, with the opening of The British Surfing Museum in Brighton in 2004.

Anne Partington Omar's describes museums as, 'A museum is an institution which collects, documents, exhibits and interprets material evidence and associated information for the public benefit'.[27] Museums can provide an overview of surfing culture but 'worse, [museums have]

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[25] Merriman, N. (2000), pg17
[26] Gabrielson, B. (2005) c
[27] Partington-Omar, A. (1991) pg79

become a commodity devoid of specific content, that ultimately supports the dominant ideology by showing the past as being the same as the present and thereby prevents any conception that society could be different and thus silences any potential dissent and conflict.'[28] It would appear that current surfing museums, through their stereotypical branding and website design stuck in the1950s and 60s do not present an accurate view of modern day surfing subculture. The acting Director of California Surfing Museum, in discussing the California Surfing Museum, explains that 'Museums are really here to reflect the past - the way things used to be - and have served to increase credibility rather than to promote or [add to the] mainstream'.[29] Thus presenting an inaccurate view of surfing's current design and unique identity, which initially defined the surfing subculture.

Heritage is described as 'the proliferation of representations of the past',[30] by Nick Merriman in his book Beyond the Glass. So, alternative heritage must be 'different from what is usual or traditional'[31]; alternative heritage. Nonetheless, at this level a definition can be established but a closer inspection reveals that it is extremely difficult to accurately define. Many scholars have attempted this and failed because according to Hewinson, in his book The Heritage Industry. Heritage can be defined as 'anything you want'.[32]

Research conducted suggests that Heritage can be broken down into two categories. One strand is to 'serve the peoples need for a sense of identity and belonging',[33] which are seen positively and are called 'Heritage Centres'. The other is the 'Heritage Industry' and has 'become synonymous with the manipulation (or even intervention) and exploitation

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[28] Merriman, N. (2000) pg3
[29] Schmauss, J. (2005) c
[30] Merriman, N. (2000) pg8
[31] Stevenson, A. (2002) pg20
[32] Hewison, R. 1989, pg15
[33] Merriman, N. (2000) pg8

of the past for commercial ends'.[34] Merriman believes that even though the boundaries of these two categories can be difficult to 'discern', as a rough guide between the two institutions, ones primary objective is to educate, with the secondary objective to financially break even (heritage centre institutions), while heritage industry institutions are financially driven and have little respect for the objects and meaning themselves.

The reader may have noticed the introduction of the term 'institution'. It has been referred to as a way the dominant culture (or heritage) is communicated, using a type of institution such as 'Monument to the dead, Community centre, Church or Temple, School, Library [and] Department store'.[35] These are examples of public organisations of significance used in a questionnaire to gauge people's opinions of Museums. They are all formal establishments or systems of control, with recognised rules and regulations, displaying and strengthening the dominant cultural ideology, more importantly and specifically, they represent the complete opposite to surfing.

Surfers, therefore have created their own ideology that allows individuals to instigate their own course of action usually in opposition of dominant mass activities, nonetheless surfers can be compared with Iain Borden's critique of skateboarders in society. He writes, 'Skateboarders may then be compared with Lefebvre's characterization of the nineteenth-century critical lifestyle, romanticism, for like romanticism skateboarding brings together a concern to live out an idealized present, involves coded dress, language and body language, unites individuals of different social construction and in general tries to live outside society while being simultaneously within its very heart',[36] producing a counter hegemonic lifestyle, which surfers fit into unconsciously.

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[34] Merriman, N. (2000) pg8
[35] Merriman, N. (2000) pg156
[36] Borden, I. (2003) pg138

Althusser, for instance calls it 'a teeth-gritting harmony that ruling ideology is reproduced precisely in its contradictions'.[37] In other words the opposite ideology of the institution has been created in the surfing subculture, in which surfers will do anything possible to rebel against anything from the dominant culture. Nonetheless surfing museums simply by their perceived image as an institution, imply that surfing as a subculture has been formalised, rationalised and homogenised into the mainstream. As Borden said, 'subcultures try to live outside society, while being simultaneously within its very heart'.[38] The individual therefore believes they are escaping the control of mainstream ideology, while really they are just moving to another set of ideologies designed to control behaviour and values.

Heritage institutions can homogenise the dominant cultural ideologies through commodification. When surfing museums started opening around the world (after the surfing subcultural boom in the 50's and 60's), especially the new Laguna Art Museum in 1986, one of the first recognised institutions of artistic culture for surfers. Surfing artwork and memorabilia were now being formally presented to paying customers. These artefacts behind glass cases are 'divorced from their original context of ownership and use, and redisplayed in a different context of meaning'.[39] Through this method of displaying artefacts it takes surfing away from an uncomplicated existence, where only surfing, nature and freedom mattered and allows the mainstream ideology/design to be imposed on to Surfing through Museum Displays. Rather than the displays adding to the surfing culture and creating there own unique style, they detract from it's meaning and apply a new one, that is associated with surfing subculture, through the mainstream.

This allows the subcultural values of surfing through museums to become tolerated and watered down by the 'legitimacy of the culture it

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[37] Hebdige, D. (1979) pg133
[38] Borden, I. (2003) pg138
[39] Smith, S. C. (2000) pg9

defined and displayed',[40] through stereotypical branding and exhibitions. These museums formally portray and present the subject matter in a way everyone will find acceptable. Legitimisation comes through the perceived values of museums as institutions held by the public, which adds to the process of homogenisation of surfing's subcultural values, styles and language into the mainstream culture, thus producing a commodity.

The increase in media exposure of the activity for example Channel 4 who broadcast, To the Ends of the Earth – Ride the Wild Surf (2001), a hour-long documentary depicting the lifestyle of big wave rider Laird Hamilton, Dave Kalama and Rush Randle in a winter season on Maui, Hawaii. Has indirectly led to a number of surfing museums around the world being established to help the public understand and rationalise images of surfing increasingly being used throughout popular culture. This is an attempt by the dominant culture to draw surfing subculture into the mainstream. Most noticeably the California Surf Museum, Oceanside, The International Surfing Museum, Huntington Beach, California, Torquay Surfworld Museum, Australia and The British Surfing Museum, Brighton, Great Britain. As surfing develops into popular culture, through its clothing, history, literature and music, it appeals to the wide audience has increased and there interest is evident through the growth of surfing museums around the world that have tried to capitalise on this since the mid 1980's.

The recent 'Heritage Boom' that several authors such as Robert Lumley, Mike Wallace and Anne Partington-Omar refer to, has seen the UK devouring the past in mass commodity, that has never been seen before, 'What is driving this commercialism of the past is unclear'[41] according to Wallace.

One group of people would see surfing subculture museums as a positive step to making it more acceptable for all, allowing understanding of the activity and moving away from its anti social roots. While another

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[40] Dominique, P. (1994) pg74
[41] Wallace, M. (1995) pg121

group would see it in a negative step, in the sense of the legitimisation of an activity, which initially started from wanting to break away from and escape the legitimacy of mainstream dominant culture to create a counter hegemonic lifestyle.

Surfing Museums allow 'those wishing to take up surfing have a greater understanding of where surfing came from, how it developed, and what it has meant for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years',[42] but its hard for Surfing Museums to '[bring] the stoke of surfing to non surfers and [help] those already riding the waves understand that we are blessed to be part of something unique',[43] as Peter Robinson, has said of The British Surfing Museum. This adds another element that will curb the absorption of surfing into the mainstream as museums struggle to fully reflect surfing's 'stoke' value, which is a term used to describe the thrill and excitement of riding the oceans wave.

Therefore putting surfing in a museum is like the front line of a war in meanings that are continually changing and fighting each other. Museums may never achieve a definitive position in society that everyone will be happy with when displaying the surfing lifestyle. After all if something is to be put in a museum it has to be formalised and displayed in the 'correct' way. Surfing is rooted in breaking out of this 'correct' mould although it appears that there is a link between, the increased commodification of surfing and the Heritage Industry. If this continues, it will have a negative affect on surfing as it becomes homogenised into the dominant culture, with the loss of the uniqueness that initially defined the surf subculture as counter hegemonic way of life.

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[42] Robinson, P. (2005) a
[43] Robinson, P. (2005) b

How might museums represent the spirit of surfing rather than it being institutionalised?

This chapter's content is fundamental in completing the creative work, as it deconstructs current museum imagery to draw conclusions for this chapter especially, and the rest of the project, to help formulate the final design artwork. The chapter aims to layout the differences between how surfing is stereotypically seen, through the lens of the institution, in other words a museum, and how it could be portrayed in a type of 'Alternative Museum'. This will be shown through case studies and the significant creative project.

First, it is necessary to discuss the current design aspects of surfing and then link this with museums and how, if so, they are detrimental to surfing as a subculture trying to stake its claim outside of the dominant culture. Museums 'artefacts [are] systematically organised to demonstrate aspects of cultural difference and change',[44] to fit the historical account that the curator tries to build up. It is this process and exactly how the way it is built up which will be examined, in relation to the design of museum branding and a web site.

The British Surfing web site displays its content in a formally designed fashion. This display is a long way from the natural flow of creative inspiration that derives from surfing (See Figure 5). For example, a surfer's individual wave riding style can never be reproduced, just like the same wave can never break twice. Minute differences in waves are what make them individual and it is this uniqueness that should break any type of formal layout or design. Time and time again, while researching this project, surfing museums' identities and web sites reflection of this aspect of surfing creativeness was missing and had not been transferred into museums' design. Surfing subculture 'is obstructive, using irony and other devices to create reasonable distances between skaters and others,

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[44] Smith, C. S. (2000) pg7

breaking up the kind of familiarity which relies apon transparent identification'.[45] For example Figure 6, an advert for surf clothing company, Volatile, immediately grabs your attention as being against the 'norm', almost abusive, remember surfing is based on freedom and nature and would rarely ever resort to a display of extreme violence. The sharks and red filter used produce a dangerous aesthetic quality. Distorted text and imagery help hide the meaning of the advert to the non-surfer, allowing participants of the activity to recognise the 'underground' uniqueness of the products.

This is something, that surfing museums do not reflect. Design artwork and 'ads, of course are culture trying to claw back the deviants from anarchy of nature into commercial, culture sense.'[46] Surfing subcultural art thrives on creativity, irony, fluid content, deconstructed and juxtaposed imagery, for an example see Figure 7 taken from the accompanying creative project. It has a unique individual style mixing the boundaries of vector graphics, photography and textural design fluidly. The tree, cloud and rainbow symbolise nature juxtaposed with the city creating the irony, that surfing is now a big industry organized from those buildings not the beach, from which, initially surfers wanted to escape. There are few if any of these characteristics shown through the branding of online museums. The surfing museums appear to use stereotypical images to attract viewers (See Figure 5). The viewers would be familiar with this stereotypical design because it has been homogenised over time through the mass media to the populace. Concluding that the majority of museums studied take their branding and design from the stereotype rather than from surfing and its unique design language.

Standardised formats and layouts, even in some cases research revealed not even a clear identity had been derived. For example, in the Californian Surfing Museum site (Figure 8) we can see little if any

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[45] Borden, I. (2003) pg137
[46] Fiske, J. (1992) pg67

identifiable brand marking apart from a vague logo, lots of typography and surfboards as buttons, which is hardly unique branding and website design. Such representations of surfing used by museums purporting to represent surfing help to homogenise the surfing subculture into the dominant mainstream culture, either by playing on the stereotypical or misrepresenting the true ideas and values within the surf culture.

The British Surfing Museum, through its identity relates more to the roots of surfing in a stereotypical design. Although the design identity produces a positive representation, however, not all museums rely on the stereotypes and iconography from a commercialised notion of surfing. There are other more positive and representative ways that the spirit of surfing could be reflected through the design of museum branding and a web site. The Australian Surf World Museum (Figure 9) achieves this in an effective, stylish manner in comparison to The British Surfing Museum brand and web site, which reflects surfing with a stereotyped image one would expect from a 'British' museum. This is analysed in a case study in this chapter.

After researching both aspects of the project, I have produced the branding for modern day surfing museum and an initial website. The target audience would aesthetically appreciate, a 'trendy' web site designed for 15-34 year olds, it should immediately achieve popularity, while achieving its branding and website design from the activity, rather than the stereotype. It focuses on the user exploring and interacting with the website design learning for themselves rather than the legitimacy of formal design educating. This produces a physical sensation as shown through the user learning to navigate at The Australian Surf World Museum site. As apposed to the conceptual sensation of the British Surfing Museum, which is standardized and static. The 'surf museum' brand and website created for this project combine the best of practical and theoretical knowledge gained. Producing a brand that is visibly strong and currently in touch with modern day design through use of textures and distress. The

website uses the branding and develops it to the next level as it becomes interactive with the user. Based on the design language of current fashions and trends within the surfing industry, it reflects surfing without conforming to any presuppositions, where other museums fail, producing a comprehensive 'surf museum' brand and website for all.

Case Study
British Surfing Museum and Surf World Museum Australia

The British Surfing Museum website is designed using the stereotype of surfing (Figure 5). In comparison to the Surf World museum, which has a unique style and brand (Figure 9). There is clearly is a wide gulf between the stereotypical design that many surfing museums use and its modern day counterpart. The majority of surfing museums tend to portray the image of surfing that all ready exists, in the homogenous dominant culture. For example the stereotypical ideas that all surfers are laid back, have bleached blonde hair, and have some connection with hippies is derived from 60's surf music and a stew of popular surf teen films such as Beach Party (1963). The difference between the stereotype and the unique can be seen in a comparison between the branding and websites of the British Surfing Museum and The Surf World Museum Australia. The latter produces a strong brand identity, through bold strips of colour and minimal design, using flat space to emphasize content. In comparison to the British Surfing Museum, which uses hand written artwork and dashes of paint to produce a laid-back brand identity. The Surf World website uses fluid content through animated design, irony through its textual content on the front page and juxtaposes images of historic objects with new vector graphics. These are all inherent qualities of surf cultural design, where as the British Surfing Museum uses a 3-column layout and is standardised. Ultimately such a rigid structure gives it an institutional feel, thus lacking the reasonable distance that surfing culture art tries to create between the dominant culture and the subculture.

These two museums offer an insight into exactly how a museum should be branded, but they lack a true reflection of surfing's current identity, which is something that the attached creative aspect of this project achieves, through interactive design and going back to the 'inherent qualities' and using them in the design of a new museum brand and website.

Conclusion

This paper suggests that a distinct surfing culture exists and that the growth of extreme sports, an increase in consumer expenditure and disposable income, along with the added bonus of increased population in the key demographic age group of 14-25 year olds, is a positive sign for the future growth and the continued institutionalisation of surfing. Television coverage will play a large role in the financial growth of the activity, as it appears to glorify surfing through programmes and advertisements, and films such as Billabong Odyssey, allow the activity to be viewed by the mass in a positive and negative way and x Commerciality and the pro tour have certainly given surfing a higher recognition factor'[47] allowing the subculture homogenised into the dominant culture

The number of surfing related establishments such as surfing museums will increase in an already 'booming' heritage sector in order to feed society's materialistic desire for more information, products and services related to surfing's history, present and future. This is reflected in the opening of the first British Surfing Museum in Brighton.

It appears that little academic work has been completed in the field of

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[47] Schmauss, J. (2005) d

surfing, hiding the true meaning of its unique design language and allowing for a stereotypical reflection to be absorbed into the mainstream and it is this that the reader perceives at current museums, especially at the California Surfing Museum see Figure 8.

The results of the study have shown that surfing has moved from a subculture into a popular culture, but has yet to be fully homogenised into the dominant culture. Stephen Butts has explained that 'I think the surfing culture has moved towards becoming mainstream, but I don't think it has yet. Surfing is being homogenised and but how far this dispersion of surfing culture will reach is inherently hard to articulate.

The evidence presented in this paper demonstrates that the continual growth of surfing subculture will eventually move it from a subculture into the wider culture, thus allowing it to be institutionalised for the masses. Nonetheless there will continue to be participation factors that will curb any complete absorption into the mainstream such as the activities danger level and physical location of beaches in relation to the populace. Eventually surfing museums will homogenise surfing culture to the population rather than the populous going to the beach making it even more likely that surfing will become mainstream. This process has already begun in the United Kingdom through the first surfing museum and will continue into the immediate future, and for the foreseeable future.

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