

DEMYSTIFYING EXCLUSION FROM AN INCLUSIVE LIFESTYLE

THE CASE OF SURF INDUSTRY BRANDING



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“Sharing. Because two people can have fun in the waves and smile”

-Ruben-

Abstract

Purpose: This thesis seeks to understand how branding by actors affiliated with a particular industry, i.e. surfing, enact social inclusion or exclusion.

Methodology: Empirical data is based on qualitative methods, entailing a triangulation of semiotic analysis of the World Surf League website, World Surf League original series, and semi-structured interviews with surf athletes. A conceptual model is designed based on two emerging concepts about subjective social inclusion and industry branding, which is used as a guiding principal to collect and analyse the data.

Results: This thesis answers to the research question: *How does branding by actors affiliated with the surfing community enact social inclusion or exclusion?* Empirical data demonstrates that branding does not play an essential role in the social inclusiveness of local surfing communities. Not least, marketing communication executed by the biggest representative actors (e.g. WSL), does enact social exclusion and reduces feelings of responsibility among the surf athletes in the institutional context of the surf industry's brand.

Value: The empirical data should be valuable for anyone interested in, or focusing on, sociology or marketing in the leisure or tourism sector. It greatly emphasises the importance and awareness of social inclusion among all actors affiliated with a particular industry for the individuals' and societal well-being. In this manner, branding is considered as a primary mediator to illustrate its relevance.

Keywords: Social inclusion, Social exclusion, Industry branding, Customer relations, Responsibility, Sport, Surfing

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1.0 Introduction

For clarification of the chosen case in this empirical research, the following chapter starts with the provision of essential background information regarding the appearance of social needs through consumption and its connection to sports. It continues with the research problem, research aim, and research questions of this thesis. The introduction ends with a brief description of the analysed material and delimitation concerning the adopted theories, method and empirical data.

1.1 The social context of consumption

In the understanding of Washington (2015), our world is revolving around the fulfilment of personal needs by the consumption and commerce of products and services. Marketers and branders are specialized in triggering a desire and targeting specific groups to become their customers (Hauge, 2011). Especially, experiences are getting more wanted and marketed which requires marketing and branding strategies to be adjusted to ensure long-lasting customer relationships (Pine and Gilmore, 2018). However, whether it is a product, a service, an experience, latest literature states that most can be classified under a certain industry brand (Bajde, 2019). The pressure to financially succeed is often at the cost of not only the environment, but also human health and social capital (Washington, 2015). According to Washington (2015), the world is currently losing its social connection and is primarily focused on economic growth. To better the social sustainability of society, it is important to first realize the current issues in modern society, such as the declining equity, equality and justice (ibid.). Inequalities through consumption are provoked as the marketing of brands are recognized to influence the social ordering in societies (Licsandru and Cui, 2018). To clarify, Karababa and Kjeldgaard (2014) demonstrate how the economic value of brands is interrelated to the social and semiotic values that lead to feeling socially included in, or excluded from, perceived communities (Heding et al., 2015). As Aaker (1996) states, “The possibility of belonging to a user group or obtaining the approval and acceptance of a group may provide an added emotional tie for the consumer.” (ibid., p.172).

This need to be loved and belong to a community is considered as the third vital element that affects a person’s behaviour and well-being (Maslow, 1943), which is often attained by the consumption of a service or product (Rokeach, 1979, as cited in Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). In this pursuit, the associated user community (Aaker, 1996) can justify the need for

love and belonging to certain person, group, or community for the survival benefit of a person (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, Maslow, 1943, Allman, 2013). Lack of belonging or forms of social attachment is linked to negative “...effects on health, adjustment, and well-being.” (Baumeister, 1995., p.1), as well as, feeling of insecurity, lack of motivation, and change in behavioural self-expression (e.g. holding an aggressive, confident behaviour) (Maslow, 1943). Nonetheless, the issue is that, as Washington (2015) states, “...we now have little or no ‘community life’. We in the West find ourselves anxiety-ridden, prone to depression, worried about how others see us, and driven to consume.” (ibid, p.94). In order to achieve a better, socially sustainable world, societies must embed social cohesion, social inclusion, and social capital (Washington, 2015). Yet, indirect criticism of Washington (2015) is the lack of consensus concerning how social inclusion should be defined, which hinders society’s, as well as companies’ inclusivity (Licsandru and Cui, 2018). Additionally, this thesis responds to the limited amount of research that analyses social inclusion or exclusion to a user community through the act of industry branding (Bajde, 2019). Explicitly, to examine how branding enacts social inclusion or exclusion to a user community, this empirical research elaborates on the case of surfing. The sport can be performed in multiple ways, yet, this thesis focuses at wave surfing, the act of riding a wave while standing on a surfboard.

1.1.1 The social context of surfing

The marketing communication of surfing is a multifaceted case, as the sport balances between being a form of commerce and a form of leisure (Warren and Gibson, 2017). Moreover, since consumption already has “...individual, social, psychological, and economic dimensions...” (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014., p.121) makes the understanding of value from the users’ side extra complicated. Generally, the interaction with surfing is aligned with nature tourism wherein the activity, challenge, and community bonding with other members of the sport stands central (Vespestad et al., 2019). The social and physical setting are considered valuable as it can create optimal enjoyment and experiences in adventure sport (Morgan et al., 2005). Additionally, sport has not only been described as a vehicle for social change (Kaufman and Wolff, 2010), but also as a way to teach people how to enhance their individual and community’s well-being (Donnelly, 1993, as cited in Kaufman and Wolff, 2010., p.156). Yet, there is exciting criticism regarding sports. Kaufman and Wolff (2010), address that the social benefit of sport has been idealized and that positive outcomes of participation are not generalizable. The beneficial encounters are identified to exceptionally serve the interest of

those already privileged or set in power by the way sports are organized, leaving little chance for a social change in sport communities (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011). Through secondary data, Kaufman and Wolff (2010) explain that sport has also been a medium for oppression, inequality, racism, ableism, and homophobia (ibid., p.155). Although there is various literature written about the social inclusion and exclusion identified in sports (e.g. Dashper and Fletcher, 2013., Bi, 2011., Moore et al., 2010., Gibson, 2004), the issue of race and ethnicity has remained an understudied topic. Especially in regard to surfing, Wheaton (2017) addresses that social exclusion and demotivation among minority groups to participate in the sport is a notable issue largely caused by marketing communication and segmentation.

Laderman (2014) describes how surfing started as a small culture in Hawaii, but has now become a commercialized money factory due to the American influence. Here, the media played a central role in the development of the sport and user imagination (Ponting, 2008, Hough-Snee and Eastman, 2017, Laderman, 2014), which depended on a tripartite of marketers, including the surf corporations, surf media, and surf-tourism operators (Ponting, 2008). At first, American investors in the surf industry were solely targeting white Americans and Western elite (Laderman, 2014). Later, young travellers worldwide got also excited to interact with the new foreign surf culture and were observed trying to replicate the life, surf style, and behaviour of the professionals who appeared in the media (ibid.). Their aim was to experience the dream and perfect surfers' life (Ponting, 2008), and to be, as a 'surf fan', associated with 'real surfers' (Moutinho et al., 2007). According to Dolnicar and Fluker (2003), certain marketing strategies can be developed making it more appealing for a chosen segment to partake in surf-tourism. Surf athletes are recognized to travel to both domestically and internationally (Dolnicar and Fluker, 2003), whilst consequently causing increased events of rage and localism due to unwanted crowds in the water (Usher and Gómez, 2016, Buckley, 2002, O'Brien and Ponting, 2013). Moreover, as businesses in the surf sector are mostly run by foreign investors, it largened the tension among and between the citizens and foreigners (Towner, 2016).

Yet, even though surf-tourism is partly activating negative social and political effects, (Laderman, 2014), Boyd (2017) states that it is undoubtable that it has also fostered global ideas of identity and global community belonging, especially among young, western surfers. This social value and goodness related to the activity of surfing is described as the "...good and valuable in human life." (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014., p.120). However, once a certain

user imagery is set, it is determined to being enduring, lasting, and difficult to change (Aaker, 1996, Hedning et al., 2015). Wheaton (2017) indicates that "...surfing's imagery as a white, male, youthful, privileged activity..." (ibid., p178) has remained the hegemonic one. Despite this, Reynolds and Hritz (2013) discovered that many associations regarding the stereotypical surfer have not been identified among the athletes themselves.

Overall, interest in adventure sport, geographical location, income, and availability of resources (e.g. surf equipment), are already partially framing the surfing community (Pearson, 1982). Nevertheless, the media still plays a vital role in the development of our sport imagination and racialization of the community, leading to minority groups, such as black people, feeling excluded from the sport (Wheaton, 2017). As stated by Wheaton (2017) "Surfing participants often claim - indeed believe - that surfing culture is inclusive of all, and that race and gender do not matter. However, despite a desire for an inclusive cosmopolitan citizenship... surf culture and the surfing media continue to perpetuate what Chivers-Yochim terms an "imagined community or whiteness." (ibid., p.178). Due to the discrepancy between marketing communication and self-identification, Reynolds and Hritz (2013) argue that the media should better display the actual values the surf athletes embrace, as well as place more emphasis on the representation of non-stereotypical surf athletes (Wheaton, 2017). As the title indicates, this thesis demystifies whether there is still social exclusion from a sport and lifestyle that is believed to be socially inclusive. Currently, the number of participants in the sport is continuously growing in parallel with the increasing popularity of adventure sports and adventure tourism (Porter and Usher, 2019). Nonetheless, to what extent can one speak of social growth if not all people feel able to partake in the sport?

1.2 Problematization

The generated associations and attached semiotic and social values by the marketing communication (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014) made surfing a case of branding rather than purely a leisure activity. As written in the book of Laderman (2014), "There would come a time, especially in the 1990s, when surfing was ascribed an edginess, a sense of rebellion – though without actually being those things. Edginess does sell, however, and surfing thus became a brand -, or better yet, a branding vehicle, and one that businesses did not hesitate to exploit." (ibid., p.137). Moreover, earlier research identified the co-creation between actors and the success of surf-brands whilst simultaneously market the subculture of surfing:

“Wearing surf brands marked consumers as different from the mainstream, and ‘in the know’ within surfing subculture. Consumers in this way co-created the market for surf wear” (Warren and Gibson, 2017, p.181). Nevertheless, recognizing the influence of surf athletes themselves on surf branding and whether this enacts social inclusion to, or exclusion from, the subculture at large is an understudied topic. Instead, on the issues of the surfing community, existing literature covers topics such as: tribal consumption (Moutinho et al., 2007), local community participation (Towner, 2016, Mach, 2019, O’Brien and Ponting, 2013), territory and localism (Usher and Gómez, 2016), experience, embodiment and social narratives (Ford and Brown, 2006), and social construction of space (Ponting, 2008, Mach and Ponting, 2018). However, neither do these literatures explicitly focus at the personal characteristics of surf athletes such as: disabilities (Lopes et al., 2018), conflicts, stereotypes, masculinity (Pearson, 1982), and gender (Fendt and Wilson, 2012).

Literature by Laderman (2014), and Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017) are one of the few authors who do emphasize the increasing community’s exclusivity as a consequence of the American regime and its dominance in marketing communication. Whereas Laderman (2014) highlights it through the political history of surfing, Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017) designed a book covering the colonization, race and ethnicity, gender issues, and surf culture. Overall, the dearth in empirical research regarding social exclusion is a problematic sign since recognition among the community itself with regard to social inequalities and obstacles is obligatory to reshape the hierarchical social structures in the sport and to use them for the social development in society (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011). Concerning the history, the sport has already greatly developed to currently being recognized as a world representative sport by the 2020 Olympic Games (ISA, n.d.).* Yet, this thesis adds to the understanding that there is still space for improvement regarding the community’s inclusivity.

1.2.1 Research aim and questions

Existing literature indicates that the surf industry entails various marketers (Wäsche et al., 2013, Ponting, 2008), and that, generally, the given meanings and values are constantly co-created between them and their customers (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). However, recognition of the customer (e.g. surf athletes), as marketers and contributors to the social development of the sport has not been analysed so far, despite its relevance. Furthermore, this thesis may be the first to analyse the social inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the sport entirely

**Note: due to COVID-19, the Olympic Games have been postponed to 2021 (Olympic, 2020).*

based on the theory of branding. In this respect, two emerging concepts on subjective social inclusion (Licsandru and Cui, 2018) and industry branding (Bajde, 2019) are synthesized into a conceptual model to analyse and respond to the problematization of this thesis. The model consists of five factors that are interrelated to the development of inclusive marketing: 1) market actors, 2) marketing communication, 3) self-awareness, self-identification and self-referencing, 4) subjective social inclusion / exclusion, and 5) marketing effectiveness.

Overall, the aim of this thesis is to understand how branding by actors affiliated with a particular industry, i.e. surfing, enact social inclusion or exclusion. Explicitly, it contributes to the awareness of social inclusion and exclusion, as well as branding in context of the surf industry. Accordingly, the main research question and sub-questions are:

RQ. 1. How does branding by actors affiliated with the surfing community enact social inclusion or exclusion?

- *RQ. a. How is the surfing community branded by its affiliated actors?*
- *RQ. b. How do actors reflect on their affiliation with the surfing community?*

1.3 Surfing as a case

As outlined above, sport can positively stimulate the social sustainability within societies (Donnelly, 1993, as cited in Kaufman and Wolff, 2010). Yet, it is greatly dependent on the way it is communicated and presented by marketers (Hough-Snee and Eastman, 2017). Therefore, the branding phenomenon is used as a medium to identify the social inclusiveness of the surfing community. In contrast to the traditional form of marketing, this thesis follows the concept of an ‘industry brand’ that entails a variety of market actors who all work within a certain sector (Bajde, 2019). Complementarily, they create the brand identity and associated user community (ibid.), which, hence, becomes a case of subjective social inclusion or exclusion (Licsandru and Cui, 2018). Both emerging concepts, of Bajde (2019) and Licsandru and Cui (2018), led to the design of a conceptual model which served as a guiding principal to collect and analyse the empirical data. In this context, two are considered as key representatives of the multiple affiliated actors with surfing: the World Surf League (WSL), and surf athletes competing or working in the industry. This thesis includes secondary data derived through semiotic analysis of the WSL website and WSL original series, and primary data collected through interviews

with surf athletes. Both marketers are briefly introduced prior to the *Purpose and delimitation* section.

World Surf League – WSL is a formal institution from Los Angeles governing professional surf competitors nationally and internationally (WSL, 2020b). WSL in particular is considered as a significant marketer due to its popularity with regard to surf media events that are avidly followed by action sport participants and fans across a diversity of continents, ages and genders (Wheaton and Thorpe, 2019). In addition, WSL provides their own original series of which two, *Brilliant Corners* and *Transformed* (WSL Studios, 2020), are integrated in the empirical data. The series contains information of less known surfing communities and surf destinations, such as India, Senegal, and Afghanistan (ibid.).

Surf athletes – An athlete is here defined as a professional who is well trained and educated in their sport or profession. One can argue that those could be defined as professional surf athletes, however, this thesis is not limited to one who is “...doing a job, sport, or activity for money, rather than just for fun.” (Longman, 2020). Especially the athletes competing or working in the industry are recognized to provide knowledgeable information regarding the social inclusiveness of the sport as well as the related marketing communication.

1.4 Purpose and delimitation

This thesis is a case of surfing and entails qualitative research through a triangulation of methods, including semiotic analysis of the WSL website and WSL original series, and conducted interviews with the surf athletes. Direct cause or effects on the social inclusiveness are not validated through this report. Empirical data contributes to the conceptualization of emerging theories in the field of sociology and marketing. As social inclusion and exclusion are subjectively defined (Licsandru and Cui, 2018), findings are not absolute to each individual actor. Further research is required to strengthen plausibility of the proposed conceptual model of this thesis and to develop a new theory.

2.0 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework enlightens our understanding on inclusive marketing (Licsandru and Cui, 2018) through the concept of an industry brand (Bajde, 2019). In this context, values and meanings towards the identity of the industry brand are co-created among multiple actors (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). The first section outlines the characteristics of industry branding, followed by the related online and offline branding strategies. Afterwards, the obtained subjective social inclusion through inclusive marketing communication is described and simultaneously serves as an introduction to the new conceptual model of this thesis.

2.1 Industry branding characteristics

Theories regarding the concept of marketing and branding include a dynamic background, yet play a significant role in the social development of our societies (Kornberger, 2010, Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). In the traditional form of marketing, it is about customer attraction (Hauge, 2011) whereby the marketing mix was a common strategy to promote goods (Grönroos, 1994). For the past decades, researchers have expressed the urgency to shift the perspective on marketing as it hindered a full appreciation for the role of services and customer relationship building (Grönroos, 1990, Grönroos, 1994, Normann and Ramirez, 1993, Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Marketing literature became goods, services, cultural and community (Heding et al., 2015), as well as story and experience centred (Hauge, 2011, Sundbo and Sørensen, 2013). Especially, the human interaction is considered to positively add to the experience and relationship building with the customers willing to return (Grönroos, 1990). According to Normann and Ramirez (1993), the success of businesses was by making the customers aware that their role was not to consume, but to create. Subsequently, the encounters between organizations and customers changed whereby both were considered as co-creators of business offerings during the ‘joint-’ and ‘customer-sphere’ (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). Nonetheless, it is criticized that most literatures exclusively focus on the co-creative value derived through exchange of money (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014, Frenzel, 2017), whilst this economic value, is interrelated with the social- and semiotic values attached to a brand (Graeber, 2001, as cited in Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). The economic value includes the financial benefit, the social value is considered as the “goodness”, and the semiotic value refers to the cultural meanings given to a brand (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014., p.120). Developing from a more sociocultural perspective, the three value dimensions can be recategorized into multiple variations of market-initiated values that should be “...conceptualized as cocreated

through the practices of a multiplicity of actors, such as: consumers, companies, the media, the state, and brand communities, operating in the marketplace.” (ibid., p.124). In today’s market context, associating a specific user community with a brand (Aaker, 1996) is a perfect example of how semiotic- and social value can result into economic value (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). The phenomenon can hence be recategorized under the “identity and linking value” attached to a brand (ibid., p.120).

However, in spite of it being a product or service that is marketed, most marketing literature refers to a singular item whilst indicating to be part of a wider industry with multiple actors (Bajde, 2019), and co-creators involved (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). Branding in context of an industry has thus existed for longer but the gap in literature limited researchers to apply the theory in all societal occasions. Therefore, the article of Bajde (2019) argues for a new ‘industry branding’ concept. It refers to “...a set of purposeful efforts aimed at establishing certain identifications, representations and affective entanglements with a chosen (industry) brand in a particular cultural environment” (ibid., p.499). Nevertheless, branding an entire industry, instead of a specific product, service, person, organization, or place (Eshuis and Klijn, 2012), requires a shift in marketing literature to deepen the understanding of this emerging concept (Bajde, 2019).

Unlike the commonly way of branding, an industry brand does rarely require labelling with trademarks and a logo. Instead, the name and identity of the industry is used to differentiate itself from the other sectors, similar to sociocultural branding (ibid.). Due to the strong reliance on the given identity, industry branding has similar characteristics of social- and semiotic value creations (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). Nonetheless, it is not focused at a singular product or service, but at the value generated by a multitude of actors affiliated to a particular industry (Bajde, 2019). It covers two inter-related dimensions: the wide range category of products and services at a “product dimension”, and the set of products and services affiliated to the industry at an “institutional dimension” (Bajde 2019., p. 501). As the provider cannot directly influence the associated identity or image, it can solely try to stimulate a desired result through chosen brand strategies (Aaker, 1996, Aaker, 1991, Raff, 2008). Those strategies are designed to achieve “...what the organizations want the brand to stand for in the customer’s mind.” (Aaker, 1996., p.25). With regard to the industry brand, the associated name and identity is significantly enhanced by the branding strategies of the multiple market actors (Bajde, 2019).

2.1.1 Industry branding challenges

Generally, creating a strong brand identity is a fundamental aspect of setting a strategy as it helps a brand to differentiate themselves from its competitors (Shostack, 1977). Yet, in order to generate a strong identity that leads to successful stimulation among customers to feel personally attracted, it is essential to have all brand strategies aligned and coherent (Eshuis and Klijn, 2012). The fact that this empirical study adopts the theory of an industry brand, there is the risk that the multiple marketers are not equally interested in the same type of brand identity (Aaker, 1991), nor co-created values with the customers (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). Following Aakers' (1991) literature, marketers are often primarily focused at the associations that directly or indirectly generate customer consumption. The diversity of interests and places can make it challenging to construct a strong brand identity and given meanings (Pike, 2009). Especially with the current globalization, the need to investigate the socio-economic development at wider scale is increasingly relevant as negative performance by one of the actors in the industry can have an undesirable effect on the capacities of other companies to attract customers (Bajde, 2019). In the case of surfing, surf athletes are identified to be able to co-destruct the success of other affiliated actors due to conflicting desires and perceptions of the industry (Warren and Gibson, 2017).

Nevertheless, branding the industry is not always a deliberate decision or strategy. Even though the industry branding concept emphasises the 'purposeful efforts' of branding, the created identity and culture are influenced by any affiliated actor, such as employees and customers (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014., Bajde, 2019). As stated, its existence "...can entail strategic efforts of industry branding or they can occur through other processes that are not driven by strategic motivations to support or oppose an industry." (Bajde, 2019., p.499). Recognizing any actor affiliated with the industry brand as a co-creator would automatically mean that everyone has certain responsibilities. However, Bajde (2019) fails to clarify the different roles, responsibilities and level of influences the different market actors have in constituting the industry brand.

Since his concept has not received much academic attention and application yet, Powell (2019) suggests that further research could analyse how the various corporations experience this cross-sectional partnership of the brand and what expectations and positions the consumers hold. In the same manner, Story and Hess (2010) state that there is a continuous debate who is mostly

responsible for a brands' performance, having the brand organizations and the customers at opposite ends of the scale. Although, the information search, brand evaluation, and marketing communication are examples of responsibilities that may be allocated to customers (Story and Hess, 2010), the extent to which they shall take its actual responsibility is dependent on the customers' personal feeling of satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Story and Hess, 2010, Kaufmann et al., 2012). Story and Hess (2010) also state that customers who are fully committed to a brand can become "...desensitized to objective brand performance and are prepared to attribute the blame for any failure elsewhere." (ibid., p.248). Thus, on the one hand, considering the customers as marketers would stimulate the personal commitment and marketing communication (Story and Hess, 2010, Kaufmann et al., 2012). On the other hand, lack of defined roles, positions and claims between the different actors can lead to dissatisfaction and unsuccessful overall performance (Pike, 2009, Story and Hess, 2010).

To summarize, this thesis develops the concept of industry branding which acknowledges the multitude of actors generating the identity of a specific sector (Bajde, 2019). Even though branding in the context of an industry has recently been acknowledged, it has existed for longer and its relevance for understanding global socio-economic developments of industries is increasing (ibid.). The presented empirical research here further elaborates on the partnership and relations between the corporations and customers (Powell, 2019, Story and Hess, 2010), whereby identity is a co-created social- and semiotic value attached to the brand (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). Those can be stimulated through various marketing communications (e.g. online or offline), as is explained in the next sections.

2.1.2 Online marketing communication

Many service providers choose to predominantly brand online as it optimizes the public scale one could globally reach (Raff, 2008). Online branding, also known as e-branding, involves differentiation by the means of the internet (e.g. websites, social media platforms, and video content) (ibid.). In order to positively interact with this diverse audience, it being from various backgrounds and cultures (Raff, 2008), service providers are advised to think about new approaches in their planning, service delivery (Bi, 2011), marketing goals and strategies (Danowitz et al., 2012). As marketing mostly revolves around strategies to convince the audience to become their customer (Hauge, 2011), Licsandru and Cui (2018) indicate that multicultural marketing approaches are obligatory for effective marketing results. This entails

finding global values that are embedded in many communities namely “safety, style, status and service” (Raff, 2008., p37). Additionally, Licsandru and Cui (2018) write, “We argue that rather than focusing on dissimilarities between ethnic groups and individualising them in marketing communications, marketing messages could benefit from more ‘normalised’ portrays without conspicuous subcultural signifiers...” (ibid., p. 333). Marketing communications that are not mono-ethnic or diverse can in fact lead to the misunderstanding of cultural nuances, stereotyping, customer prejudice (Davidson, 2009, as cited in Licsandru and Cui, 2018), as well as exoticization and exclusion (Schroeder and Borgerson, 2005, as cited in Licsandru and Cui, 2018). Consequently, some segments can become directly excluded via discrimination in their ability to consume the good or partake in a brand (Oxoby, 2009).

2.1.3 Offline marketing communication

Common examples of offline branding activities include the products, organized events, documents, as well as the users interacting with the brand (Raff, 2008). Nevertheless, for deliberate marketing efforts taken by the users, it is essential for them to have communal values (Kaufmann et al., 2012), and a feeling of commitment, trust and satisfaction in the brand (Story and Hess, 2010). Positive responses also entail higher level of responsibility (Story and Hess, 2010), brand loyalty (Licsandru and Cui, 2018, Aaker, 1996) and obligation (Kaufmann et al., 2012) to support the brands performance. According to Kaufmann et al. (2012) it is the “resonance” (p. 407) wherein the customer holds an active behaviour in the creation of the brand and given value in response to their sense of belonging to the community.

The possibility of belonging to a user community or obtaining the approval and acceptance of a group, enables an added emotional tie for the customer alongside perceived self-expressive and functional benefits (Aaker, 1996), e.g. status (Holbrook, 1999). It is highly driven by the brand’s identity and associated user community which includes for whom the customers believe the brand is providing its product and/or services to (Aaker, 1991). Likewise, the brand personality is significantly influencing this user imagery (Aaker, 1996), however it does not entail physical and demographic traits of a user yet (Batra et al., 2013). As stated by Aaker (1996), “User imagery can be driven by actual users, those who are seen ‘around town’ using the brand.” (ibid., p.173). Similar to online marketing, the outcome contributes to the customers identification of whether they feel part of the user community or not (Licsandru and Cui, 2018, Aaker, 1991, Aaker, 1996), also defined as the “social out-group” or “social in-group” (Heding

et al., 2015, p.125). Overall, tribal marketing approaches could support the strengths of a related community and foster "...a sense of tribal belonging and membership – the ‘we-ness.’” (Gyimóthy and Larson, 2015., p.12). Targeting a specific user allows companies to customize the services for a selected segment (Gemmel et al., 2013), but "...a problem with a strong association, particularly a strong user association, is that it limits the ability of a brand to expand its market..." (Aaker, 1991., p.124). Moreover, the actual user profile may not be desirable or controllable (Aaker, 1996), plus the related brand personality is an enduring factor, despite any efforts to augment or change it (Aaker, 1996, Hedning et al., 2015).

To summarize, online as well as offline marketing communications influence the associated user community. The chosen marketing strategies result in a perceived level of inclusiveness and exclusiveness to the brand. To prevent negative encounters, Licsandru and Cui (2018) propose a new subjective social inclusion terminology and framework as further explained in *2.2 The missing consensus of inclusion*.

2.2 The missing consensus of inclusion

Although the interrelationship between social inclusion and branding is an explored topic in various literatures, there is still a missing consensus of how social inclusion should be defined and analysed. According to the Longman Dictionary (2012), inclusion can be defined as “The act of including someone or something in a larger group or set, or the fact of being included in one.” (ibid., p.890). The explicit appearance in relation to its context, time and object is neglected from the provided definition, indicating that social inclusion and social exclusion exists in various scenarios. Concentrating on literature in sociology, inclusiveness appears to be defined as something objective, but does not constitute to the subjective feelings or experiences of a person (Allman, 2013, Licsandru and Cui, 2018). It completely disregards the subjective experiences of a person and mostly refers to measurable dimensions, for instance level of access, risk, or health’ (Licsandru and Cui, 2018).

Licsandru and Cui (2018) propose the term ‘subjective social inclusion’. In contrast to most literature, the concept exclusively focuses on the individuals’ feelings of being (Fisk et al., 2018), containing the five dimensions of acceptance, belonging, empowerment, equality and respect (Licsandru and Cui, 2018). Those were extracted from scrutinized descriptions of social inclusion and reformulated into a new definition: “...the individual’s feelings of belongingness

to a host society in which he/she feels accepted, empowered, respected and fully recognized as an equal member.” (ibid., p.331). In regard to the same conceptualization of theories by Licsandru and Cui (2018), they identified that subjective social inclusion can be extracted from, and analysed through, inclusive marketing as shown in *Figure 1*.

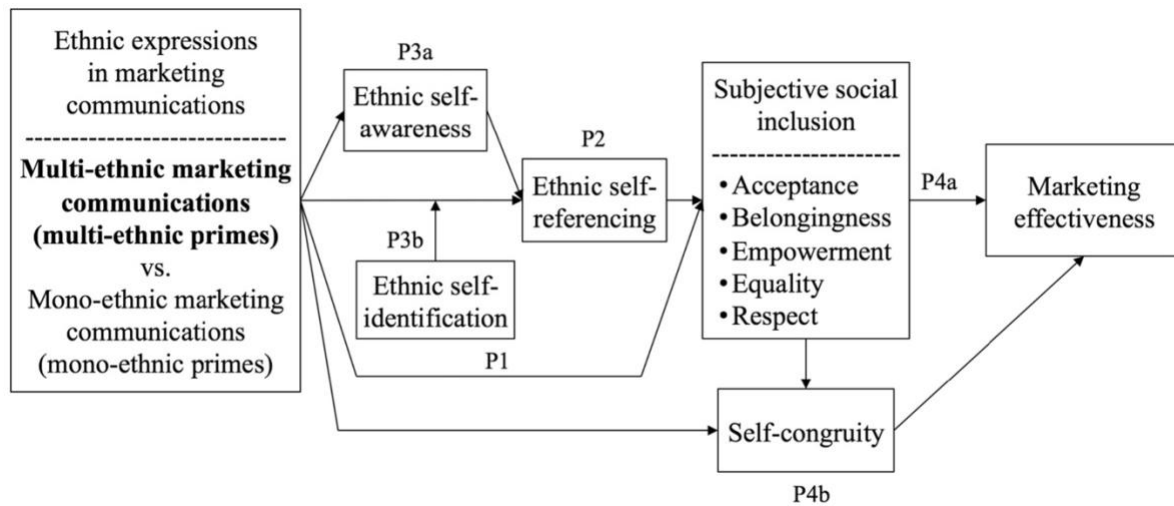


Figure 1. Theoretical model of inclusive marketing (Licsandru and Cui, 2018, p. 333)

The concept implies that marketing featuring a diverse user community in a non-targeted way have a higher probability of achieving subjective social inclusion and beneficial responses from the users (ibid.). Throughout this process, the theoretical model illustrates how the user reflects on their personal awareness, identity and ability to self-reference with the marketing content. According to Licsandru and Cui (2018), positive encounters can result in marketing effectiveness wherein the user finds common characteristics between him- or herself through self-congruity with the brand. Moreover, it stimulates a stronger co-creative behaviour among the users to market the brand, as a pursuit of their commitment, inclusion, and loyalty to the community (Kaufmann et al., 2012). As stated by Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014, “Through marketing communication practices, these [social] values are attached to the objects, translated into semiotic value, and transformed into exchange value.” (p.121).

Nevertheless, before the theoretical model can be applied to this empirical research, one should first carefully analyse under which conditions their framework has been written. Apart from the fact that the model is not attested (Licsandru and Cui, 2018), their literature partially adds to the wide range of marketing theories that fail to fully clarify the outcomes and reasoning of the different approaches (Heding et al., 2015). So far, there is relatively little known about

“...the factors contributing to (non)favourable consumer responses to marketing attempts to engage with diversity...” (Vorster et al., 2020, p. 53). However, the five dimensions of subjective social inclusion (i.e. acceptance, belonging, empowerment, equality and respect) still depart from solely an individuals’ interaction with the brand and neglect the chances of social exclusion. Nonetheless, having a feeling of belonging or membership to such a relational community, i.e. the "quality of character of human relationship, without reference to location (Gusfield, 1975, as cited in McMillan and Chavis, 1986), does not directly indicate that one feels socially included. In this case, level of influence, fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connections cannot be missed to completely avoid social exclusion (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). Fisk et al. (2018) and Vorster et al. (2020) explain that, especially in sociocultural contexts, it is important to look beyond the subjective social inclusion and also investigate the embedded structures of privilege, oppression and power from a macro level. By doing so, for instance, level of empowerment (Licsandru and Cui, 2018) and chances to influence the community (McMillan and Chavis, 1986) are not limited to the individual’s context but can instead be analysed from a wider institutional perspective (Bajde, 2019).

Furthermore, the original theoretical model is written concerning the marketing executed by a singular organization or brand (Licsandru and Cui, 2018). However, to interrelate it with the concept of industry branding (Bajde, 2019), it is important to acknowledge the sociocultural context wherein a multitude of market actors is involved. The original model is providing essential indicators to extract subjective social inclusion departing from marketing strategies (Licsandru and Cui, 2018), yet, it currently prevents application of this concept to any market context involving multiple marketers wherein results would be self-governing and potentially lead to social exclusion. Therefore, the theoretical model is altered into a conceptual model that incorporates the various market actors affiliated with an industry brand. Likewise, it recognizes the chances of social exclusion as potentially influenced by wider institutional factors other than the individuals’ circumstance and marketing encounter.

To conclude, with regard to industry branding, one can analyse the user community from two different dimensions of the brand (Bajde, 2019). Firstly, from an “institutional dimension” (ibid., p. 502), here, all affiliated actors are defined to contribute to a unified brand and behold one user community. Secondly, from an “product dimension” (ibid., p. 502), each individual actor, i.e. product or service, has their own user community. As this thesis attempts to outline the social inclusiveness and exclusiveness enacted by all affiliated actors with the surf industry,

it analyses the user community from an institutional dimension. To respond to the thesis problematization, the subjective social inclusion concept of Licsandru and Cui (2018) and the industry branding concept of Bajde (2019) are synthesised into a new conceptual model. Subsequently, it was used as a guidance to collect and analyse the empirical data as further outlined in the next *Conceptual framework*.

2.3 Conceptual framework

The aim of this thesis is to understand how branding by actors affiliated with a particular industry, i.e. surfing, enact social inclusion or exclusion. Hereby, the industry branding concept of Bajde (2019) made it achievable to analyse the enacted social inclusiveness and exclusiveness of surfing through marketing phenomena (e.g. the inclusive marketing concept of Licsandru and Cui (2018)). In this pursuit, surfing is considered to be branded as an aspect of singular surf products and services (e.g. surf schools, surf federations), as well as a unified brand covering all affiliated actors with the surf industry. Simultaneously, the surfing community is equivalent to the user community of the surf industry brand wherein two key market-representatives are taken as proxy: WSL, and surf athletes competing or working in the industry.

In order to respond to the sub-research questions and main research question of this thesis, it exploits the inclusive marketing framework of Licsandru and Cui (2018). Additionally, this thesis contributes to the validation of their emerging concept and the lack of literature written on social inclusion analysed through branding. As the terms social inclusion (Longman, 2012) and industry branding (Bajde, 2019) can be interpreted and applied in various scenarios, using a conceptual model as a guiding principle helped to stay within the scope of this thesis. “Sensitizing concepts” are supposed to give a “...very general sense of what to look for and act as a means for uncovering the variety of forms that the phenomena to which they refer can assume.” (Blumer, 1954., as cited in Bryman 2012, p.388). Hence, it enables evaluation, understanding, and justification (Bryman, 2012) of the way branding enacts social inclusion or exclusion by the support of previous literature.

However, as the original framework is based on a singular marketer, as well as an individual’s context, it was necessary to adjust it to the sociocultural characteristics of the industry branding concept (Bajde, 2019). This included adding the multitude of market actors, and chances of

social exclusion to allow findings to be self-governing. Simultaneously, it elaborates the various roles and responsibilities of the market actors that earlier research failed to address. Overall, this thesis defines five key-factors to being present in inclusive marketing of an industry brand which jointly help to answer to the main question RQ. 1. *How does branding by actors affiliated with the surfing community enact social inclusion or exclusion?* Additionally, throughout the course of inclusive industry marketing, answers can be given to the sub-questions: RQ. a. *How is the surfing community branded by its affiliated actors?* and RQ. b. *How do actors reflect on their affiliation with the surfing community?* In this manner, it adds to the transparency of how conclusions regarding the main research questions were constructed and presented in the *Discussion*.

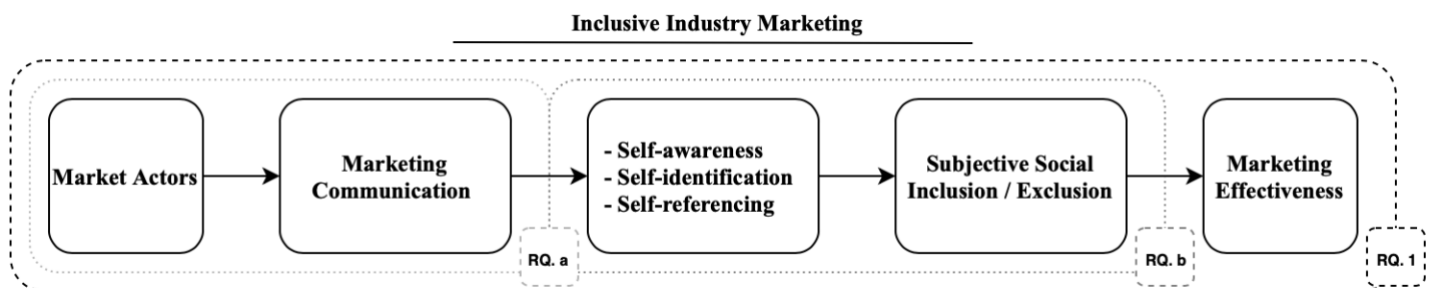


Figure 2. Conceptual model of inclusive industry marketing. Based on literature by Bajde., 2019, Licsandru and Cui., 2018. (Own illustration, 2020)

The *first factor* of the conceptual model refers to the multiple market actors affiliated with the surfing community. According to Bajde (2019), this can be any actor who is purposefully contributing to the marketing and identity formation of an industry. Likewise are actors, such as the surf athletes, also co-creators of the brands' associated meanings and identity (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014), e.g. when being observed by the public while interacting with, or using, the brand (Aaker, 1996). In this context, marketing the brand might not always be a deliberate attempt pursued by market actors (Bajde, 2019). In fact, not every actor is identified to have common aims. Even though, "Industry branding can be motivated by social and political aims related to protecting the rights and interests of vulnerable groups or society at large.", economic growth is often prioritized whereby marketing the brand is used for diverging reasons (ibid., p. 500).

The *second factor* entails how and what has been communication by the market actors. An ideology of Licsandru and Cui (2018) is: "Multi-ethnic marketing communication are likely to

exert a more positive effect on subjective social inclusion than mono-ethnic marketing communications.” (ibid.333). In order for an international industry, such as surfing (ISA News 2014) to diminish social exclusion and to benefit from the diverse audience, it is essential for the marketing to be multi-ethnic in order to encourage normalization among all customers (Licsandru and Cui, 2018). Equally, the inclusive marketing concept is also stated to be applicable for other groups or vulnerable individual with other self-concept characteristics, such as “individuals with mental health impairment, women, or people with disabilities” (ibid., p. 335).

The *third factor* revolves around the individuals’ self-awareness, self-identification and self-referencing (Licsandru and Cui, 2018), wherein a congruence between the customer characteristics and values with the brand are evaluated (Licsandru and Cui, 2018, Kaufmann et al., 2012). In regard to an industry brand, Bajde (2019) states that users “...might dream of working in a particular industry...” and hence reflect on their personal relation and association with the brand (ibid., p. 499). The self-awareness and self-identification regarding their person ethnic heritage allows the customer to categorize themselves along the ethnic criteria of a user (Licsandru and Cui, 2018) and to determine whether he or she belongs to the social in-, or social out-group (Heding et al., 2015). The stronger the self-identification, the higher self-referencing and likelihood that the inclusive marketing communication - and association to the industry brand - has an efficient impact (Licsandru and Cui, 2018, Kaufmann et al., 2012).

The *fourth factor* analyses whether the ability to self-reference with the marketing communication has led to a subjective social inclusion or exclusion. Segments with similar self-concept characteristics and values as featured in the marketing communication are most likely to feel socially included (Licsandru and Cui, 2018) and to partake in the user community (Kaufmann et al., 2012). As stated, one might be “...proud or ashamed to be associated with a particular industry, and might thus use the industry brand as a resource to connect with, or to distant themselves from others.” (Bajde, 2019, p. 499). Nonetheless, having this feeling of belonging or membership to other members of the community does not directly initiate a feeling of social inclusion as lack of: influence, fulfilment of needs, or shared emotional connection in the wider institutional context can still make one feel excluded from the relational community (McMillan and Chavis, 1986).

The *fifth factor* discusses the overall marketing effectiveness and the self-congruity between the user and the brand (Licsandru and Cui, 2018). Successful outcomes entail one being subjectively socially included (ibid.), plus “...the industry being proper or acceptable (i.e. being congruent with current norms and beliefs), but also as being desirable and inspirational.” (Bajde, 2019, p. 501). Consequently, users shall held a positive behaviour, aligned with an increased level of satisfaction, trust and commitment that encourages a stronger feeling of responsibility (Story and Hess, 2010) and brand loyalty (Aaker, 1996). The last phase is also called the “resonance” wherein the feeling of emotional obligation and commitment to the community lead to active co-creative behaviour towards the brands’ performance and value (Kaufmann et a., 2012., p. 407). In this context, the user shall encourage outsiders to become a member and actively defend the reputation of the brand (ibid.).

3.0 Methodology

The aim of the thesis is to understand how branding enacts social inclusion or exclusion to a user community. It responds to the relevancy of having an inclusive society wherein there is an identified human need for social connection and integration (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, Maslow, 1943, Allman, 2013). Since the thesis is a case of surfing, it analyses how the affiliated actors contribute to the branding of their surf industry and enact a feeling of social inclusion or exclusion to the surfing community. How and what they communicate is identified as a medium to respond to the problematization of this thesis. Resulting in the main research question and sub-questions:

RQ.1. *How does branding by actors affiliated with the surfing community enact social inclusion or exclusion?*

- RQ. a. *How is the surfing community branded by its affiliated actors?*
- RQ. b. *How do actors reflect on their affiliation with the surfing community?*

3.1 Research approach

A triangulation of qualitative data is applied, including secondary data derived from WSL website and their original series, and primary data derived through interviews. Overall, data material entailed:

| METHOD | PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA | VOLUME |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|
| Semiotic analysis | WSL website | 57 web articles |
| Semiotic analysis | WSL original series: <i>Brilliant Corners and Transformed</i> | 18 episodes |
| Qualitative analysis | Semi-structured interviews | 11 interviews |

Table 1. Overview of empirical data (Own illustration, 2020)

The nature of the thesis was determined to be qualitative since it explores study participants' subjective feelings and behaviours as marketers of the surf industry brand. From the ontological standpoint, a social constructivist approach has been adopted which implies that the world does not objectively exist, and that reality is constructed based on the given meaning and experiences by the individual (Bryman, 2012). In this pursuit, to explicitly understand the behaviours, reasoning, meanings, and experiences would have been difficult to define through quantitative research.

In terms of epistemological considerations, interpretivism permitted the researcher to accept the subjective meaning people give towards the social impacts of branding (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, it allowed the researcher to analyse the data based on her own interpretation and understanding of the empirical findings. Especially in the course of semiotic analysis, there is "...a sense of arbitrariness in interpretation..." (Bryman, 2012., p.560), and a risk of failure to understand the "...unstable and power-laden nature of social meanings..." (Hannam and Knox, 2005., p.26). Likewise, interviews do require personal interpretation owing that it is none of our reserved capabilities to be able to read people's minds (Silverman, 2013). Therefore, one should always be aware of their own subjective meaning given to the data (ibid.).

Concerning the link between theory and research, an abductive approach has been applied. Therefore, the process had neither pure deductive nor inductive characteristics (Bryman, 2012). An abductive approach allowed the researcher to describe the act of branding from the participants perspective, and simultaneously link it to a social scientific account of theories. Even though, pre-determined coding and theories were chosen based on the five factors of the conceptual model, it did not lose touch with personal interpretation of the interviewees (ibid.). Throughout the empirical data analysis, new insights about the existing social inclusion and branding phenomena appeared, resulting in two new sub-categories: general media, and inside-surf media.

3.2 Research design

To define the reliability and credibility within qualitative research is relatively difficult since the research is by nature less measurable (Bryman, 2012). Instead, various methods are applied to support the trustworthiness (Booth et al., 2008), and authenticity of the empirical data (Bryman, 2012). Firstly, the thesis is relying on a triangulation between the semiotic document analysis and interviews. Although documents are criticised for losing credibility and representativeness over time (Bryman, 2012), it strengthens the relevancy of conducting up-to-date analysis on how the media is currently branding the industry and its affiliated surfing community. Findings add to the understanding of previous literature regarding the media covering surfing, for example by Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017).

Secondly, to strengthen the findings derived through semiotic document analysis, interviews were conducted to receive further insight into how the media is communicated and received by

the beholder. Besides, questions concerning the surfing community were proposed which provided insight of how the interviewees contribute to, and experience the, enacted social inclusion or exclusion.

Thirdly, a semi-structured method had been chosen to stay within the scope of the thesis and to be open to unforeseen, valuable, information shared by the interviewee (Bryman, 2012). Since the researcher trusts the interviewees for giving answers that are truthful to the situation and personal interpretation, findings are determined to being trustworthy. Moreover, interview questions were asked in multiple ways in order to confirm that questions and answers were understood correctly. Disadvantages of interviews are that the researcher is analysing it through the eyes of the respondents' perspective, which challenges the reliability of the findings (Bryman, 2012, Booth et al., 2008). Yet, the researcher has long-term personal experiences with the surf industry, which made her better equipped to understand the language and sensitive of contexts the interviewees were referring to throughout the interviews (ibid.).

Fourthly, as the topic had been chosen due to personal leisure and work experiences in the surf industry, it is important to further elaborate on the trustworthiness of this thesis. Even though personal experience with the surf industry was the stimulus to conduct research regarding the inclusiveness of the surfing community, the researcher had not executed any previous research regarding the topic. Since the data collection and analysis are based on existing literature and analysed according to the conceptual model, personal bias has been prevented as much as possible. In addition, to support the strength of this empirical research, given claims are evidenced by direct quotes from the interviews in the *Empirical data* (Booth et al., 2008).

Fifthly, looking at the generalization of this thesis (Bryman, 2012), the adopted method includes a cross-population between various countries, permitting the results to be interpret independent of a singular location (see *Table 2.0*, p. 32). One nationality is kept blank respecting the protection of the actors' privacy. In spite of the relatively limited amount of athletes who partake in national competitions or contribute to the performance of professional athletes, data cannot be extrapolated to the experiences of the estimated 50 million surfers worldwide by 2020 (ISA News 2014). Yet, this thesis contributes to the general understanding of how the surfing community is branded by its affiliated actors, with the key players -WSL and surf athletes- as proxy.

3.3 Data collection and sampling

The data collection was executed through three phases that were documented in weekly notes written in a Word document to keep track of the process and decisions made. The first phase entailed gathering secondary data of existing literature about surfing. After a problematization of social inclusion was identified, research continued to discover the relation to branding and branding theories. Findings indicated which information and theories were already existing and helped the researcher to decide on suitable approaches for the empirical research of this thesis. Correspondingly, a structured approach followed through integration of the conceptual model. This includes that "...the researcher establishes in advance the broad contours of what he or she needs to find out about and design research instruments to implement what needs to be known." (Bryman, 2012., p.12).

The second phase included analysis of the WSL website and their original series. Semiotic analysis is a primarily applied method in the analysis of promotional materials and marketing (Hannam and Knox, 2005). According to Hawkes (1977, as cited in Hannam and Knox., p.25), "...a sign not only stands for something but also, crucially, stands for something to somebody". Therefore, the researcher paid extra attention to the given meanings and interpretations one could make upon the communicated user community. In addition, having a closed corpus of data analysed through specific units and categories is a semiotic trait (Hannam and Knox, 2005). Focus points were based on the five factors of the conceptual model to understand how, and who are represented by the marketing communication of WSL. As Licsandru and Cui (2018) state, the more normalized each person and segment is presented, the higher likelihood to provoke subjective social inclusion. The majority of data was collected on the 7th and 8th of March 2020, which resulted in 57 web-articles that were provided on the homepage of WSL. The web-articles and videos were discovered to be daily updated with approximately five new contents that would replace the oldest ones. It is a common strategy within online branding since the web can only provide a limited amount of information and impression during a relatively short visit by a user (Raff, 2008). The organizations are thus required to prioritize some of their content. An individual link to the WSL website and to each visited web-article is provided in appendix 1.0.

Apart from that, the two WSL original series of *Brilliant Corners*, and *Transformed* covered separately nine episodes, each being from a duration of 18-25 minutes. Those particular series

gave the researcher an understanding of how the surfing community is experienced by less represented countries that would be difficult to gain access to in the timeframe of this thesis. As the disadvantage of semiotic analysis is that its rather atheoretical and difficult to code without personal interpretation of the researcher (Bryman, 2012), the original series were watched twice prior to the conduction of the interviews and once after. The researcher paid attention to the information given about the marketing communication and characteristics of a surf athlete such as segment group, experiences, and feeling of belonging to a community. Therefore, the collected data does not entail a full transcript of the verbally shared information, but includes quotes that contained explicit expressions relevant to this empirical research aligned with the five factors of the conceptual model. Both WSL website and original series started with unstructured notes that were afterwards structured and coded as later explained in the *Data analysis* of this methodology. Individual links to each WSL original series is provided in appendix 2.0.

The third phase included the conduction of semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were based on the conceptual model and reformulated twice after consultancy sessions with fellow students of the master programme. Accordingly, one pilot study with an amateur surf athlete was executed successfully and chosen to be integrated in the findings. After the first interview with a professional athlete, one additional obligatory research question was added to better identify how responsible the respondents feel for the performance of the surf industry brand. Overall, questions were documented in an interview guide that ensured the researcher that nothing had been forgotten to ask (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, questions were not allowed to lead the results. One of the actions taken to prevent this issue was by avoiding the words “inclusion and exclusion” in the interview guide. During one of the interviews with a head director of a national surf team, not all questions were applicable as he holds a different position than the other actors. Yet, the same interview guide was still used as a guiding principal. The interview guide is attached in appendix 3.0.

As this thesis analyses the industry through the understanding of actors already affiliated with the surf industry, respondents had to either perform in a national surf competition, or have a recognized profession (e.g. surf coach or surf director). Although the respondents are kept anonymous, it is good to mention that interviewees are not part of the classified WSL athletes but still as successful representatives to outline the thesis problematization. To find the respondents, at first, six actors were contacted directly by text or mail and all agreed to

participate. Through the course of snowball sampling, ten more emails were sent to surf athletes with a positive result of four more respondents. Additionally, during one interview with a surf coach, the interviewee got assisted by another amateur surf athlete halfway through the interview, who felt interested in providing her perspective on the proposed research question. The respondents were chosen based on their active participation and role within the surf industry, whereby age nor gender were considered as a dependent factor. Therefore, the categories presented in table 1 are estimates of their age. To summarize, a total of eleven interviews were conducted with twelve interviewees: nine (semi)-professional surf athletes, two amateur surf athletes, and one surf director of a national team.

Since the interviewees were based in foreign countries, the interviews were conducted over Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, and Messenger calls. Conversations were in English as it was confirmed by all interviewees to feel comfortable speaking the language. Nonetheless, the researcher is aware of possible language barriers as the interviewees might not contain a large vocabulary to use for the best purposes to express their feelings or opinions (Rose et al., 2003). Conversations lasted between 1 and 1.5 hours and were recorded in order to transcribe and analyse the findings. An online transverter, *Trint*, from audio into text was used in order to transcribe the collected data. Each transcript was personally checked and corrected to the audio recording. Disjointed expressions were removed to create fluent sentences but do not affect the meaning of the given statements.

| | ROLE / PROFESSION | GENDER | NATIONALITY | AGE |
|---|---|--------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | Amateur surf athlete (pilot study) | Male | Swedish | 25-35 years |
| 2 | Amateur surf athlete | Female | Dutch | 25-35 years |
| 3 | Local surf coach and competing surf athlete | Male | Portuguese | 25-35 years |
| 4 | National surf coach and ex-competing surf athlete | Male | Portuguese | 35+ |
| 5 | National competing surf athlete | Male | Norwegian | 25-35 years |
| 6 | Surf instructor Ex-national competing surf athlete | Male | Morocco | 25-35 years |

| | | | | |
|----|---|--------|------------|-------------|
| 7 | Surf coach and ex-national competing surf athlete | Male | Portuguese | 25-35 years |
| 8 | National competing surf athlete | Male | Norwegian | 25-35 years |
| 9 | Surf coach | Male | Portuguese | 25-35 years |
| 10 | National competing surf athlete | Female | Danish | 25-35 years |
| 11 | National competing surf athlete | Female | Danish | 25-35 years |
| 12 | Surf director national team | Male | x | 35+ |

Table 2. Summary of interview respondents (Own illustration, 2020)

3.4 Data analysis

The data is analysed through a thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012), following the five defined factors of the conceptual model. Subsequently, all collected data was colour-coded and structured throughout the findings. The five factors are:

- 1) Market actors: any actor affiliated with, or representing, the surf industry
- 2) Marketing communication: how and what is communicated regarding the surfing community
- 3) Self-awareness, self-identification, and self-referencing: the capability to self-reference with the communicated surfing community
- 4) Subjective social inclusion / exclusion: how the current community is experienced and contributes to -and get affected by- the enacted social inclusion or exclusion
- 5) Marketing effectiveness: how socially included, committed, and responsible actors are towards the industry brand.

After all data had been stored and coded in Word, the researcher analysed it for reoccurrences and differences between the various methods. Throughout this process, it was fundamental for the researcher to identify the irrelevant data, and to reduce it to the amount only required to answer to the research questions (Bryman, 2012). To ensure data has been analysed correctly, a respondent validation was executed with the interviewees to confirm the given interpretations and statements. Overall, secondary research and the primary research have been combined in the *Empirical data* in order to respond to the problematization of this thesis.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Throughout the course of this thesis, ethics of the empirical data were carefully evaluated. Regarding the WSL semiotic analysis, data was derived from online sources accessible to the general public. Receiving permission from the organization was not seen as a necessity as long as the addressed actors on the website were kept anonymous in relation to any personal information (Silverman, 2013). The researcher contacted WSL twice per mail to inform them regarding the intention to use its information for the thesis, and, if they would be interested to participate in an interview. Nevertheless, the researcher did not receive a reply to the requests. Concerning the interviews, prior to the conversation a consent to audio-record the interviews and to further use of the collected data for this empirical research was explicitly asked to every respondent. As the interviewee could have been unwilling or unable answer to personal questions, i.e. feelings, thoughts, and attitudes towards the brand (Aaker, 1991), it was clearly communicated that the interviewees were not obligated to answer every question and that it was a voluntary act to participate. Only after the respondent agreed to the conditions of the interview, the audio recorder was put on. In respect of the interviewees' privacy, any further identification of the individuals by the reader has been minimized. In this regard, the interviewees' names are replaced by pseudonyms, and related company names or private names have been deleted from the transcripts.

3.6 Limitations

Pointing out the scope and limitations of this thesis is essential to understanding the way research can be interpreted, generalized, as well as how conclusions are constructed (Booth et al., 2008). Through the use of secondary data, the researcher has to rely on how empirical data has previously been collected. Neither was the researcher able to receive the exact statistics of number of visitors per marketing channel facilitated by WSL. Hence, no conclusions can be given regarding the impact the website has on the associated user community by the general public. To prevent weakening of the reliability of this thesis, findings do not rely on a single method but on a triangulation of data between the WSL website, WSL original series, and empirical interviews. Furthermore, as the interviews were conducted through online platforms, the exact setting of where the interviewee was situated varied, and, due to network issues, some questions and answers had to be repeated. Neither was scheduling a meeting offline optional as the thesis was written during COVID-19. Nevertheless, the pandemic did not have a direct influence on the empirical data collection and findings of this research.

Lastly, a limitation to this thesis is that it is primarily structured and analysed through the literature written by Licsandru and Cui (2018) and Bajde (2019). Both emerging concepts still have to be attested by empirical research for the evidence and plausibility of their articles (Bryman, 2012). However, this thesis validates their scientific account of literature and conceptualization of theories as findings provide useful data for scientists in social science as well as marketing. From the understanding of the researcher, there is no further existing theories on branding from a subjective social inclusion perspective nor industry perspective. Hence, this thesis contributes to the knowledge of both concepts by synthesizing two emerging understandings on branding and provides new insights for academics in the field of sociology and marketing.

4.0 Empirical data: Inclusive industry marketing

The following chapter reveals the findings of this empirical research connected to the five defined factors of inclusive industry marketing. Although analysing the data through set coding entails the risk of losing a sense of context and narrative flow, it is a sufficient way to stay aligned with the adopted theories of the conceptual model (Coffey and Atkinso, 1996, as cited in Bryman, 2012). Since every factor is determined to be interrelated to the development of inclusive marketing, one could find common characteristics and overlaps between the five factors: 1) market actors, 2) marketing communication, 3) self-awareness, self-identification and self-referencing, 4) subjective social inclusion / exclusion, and 5) marketing effectiveness. The benefit of abductive research is that frequently appearing characteristics in the empirical data could lead to the generation of new categories (Kovács and Spens, 2005). In regard of this thesis, it led to two new sub-categories: general media, and inside media. References to the original series are cited by the name, season and episode number. Hence after, direct links can be found in appendix 2.0.

4.1 Market actors

The market actors include any actor affiliated with the surf industry, and, thus, contribute to the marketing and brand identity formation. Empirical data collected through interviews confirmed that WSL is considered as one of the biggest representatives of the sport. Not only due to its diverse range of content (WSL, 2020b), also because it is considered as a main source for other content creators in the surf industry. As stated by Espen, *“I think the WSL has to set their requirements of the diversity and they have to make it visible. So that all the other like surf magazines, surf media, surf channels, and the people on Instagram can actually easily put it up themselves and say WSL sort of does this or it's that.”*. Despite the fact that WSL is widely known among the surfing community, it was mentioned that people who do not interact with the surf industry yet, can have difficulties finding content of WSL (e.g. Marie). Not least, Martin indicates that the general public can even be non-aware of its existence. Results illustrate that the marketing communication of WSL is thus mostly communicating to the actors who are already partaking or interested in surfing. Therefore, Diogo mentions that the given meanings and brand identity to the general public is mostly relying on known surf related actors, for instance surf clothing brands, celebrities who surf, or professional athletes such as Kelly Slater. Kelly Slater was not only mentioned by every interviewee, he also frequently appeared in the data analysis of the WSL website wherein he is nicknamed as the *“GOAT”* of

surfing, meaning the Greatest Of All Times (Surf Breaks, 2020). Other general actors such as travel influencers (Tom and David), car brands (Lisa), and butter companies (Samuel) were also mentioned throughout the interviews as carriers of the brand. Yet, those are identified as primarily using the surfers' lifestyle as a marketing tool to promote their ~often~ non-surf related item.

Looking at the findings, noticeable is that no athlete directly referred to themselves as being the biggest representative, while the majority of interviewees got introduced to surfing by seeing other surf athletes perform in the water or by having friends or family who practice water sports. The respondents do think that their participation in surfing, especially part of their profession as a surf coach, inspires others to try it. However, it is not always a deliberate act and determined to affect the identity of the surf industry minimally when referring to the industry at a larger scale. Findings consists of responses such as: *"I think it also depends on what kind of scale you're thinking about. For instance, the US represents brands through surfing. But I think that the surfers, as well in the water, represent the sport... then people will think like, oh this actually looks cool."* (Lisa). For this matter, findings demonstrate that the perceived level of personal representativeness as a market actor greatly depend on the level of public awareness as supported by marketing communication.

From a co-creative perspective, every affiliated actor has an influence on the performance and value of the brand (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). However, there is no empirical evidence that the different actors are deliberately collaborating the given identity. Samuel did mention that he does collaborate with customers to an extent of adopting newly, suggested, ideas and initiatives. Nonetheless, collaboration with other commercial surfing federations or companies was not applicable as it would not fit their business purposes. Moreover, his marketing strategy is to present surfing as an open community but particularly for his country, rather than worldwide. Furthermore, collaboration with surf athletes to market the sport seems challenging as they prefer to classify surfing as a lifestyle rather than a brand. As stated by David, *"They kind of make it as a brand, trying to make so many people surfing... ...Especially concerning the surf schools, surf camps overall, lodges, everything that is related to surfing call surf a brand, not a lifestyle. And they sell it as a brand."*

To summarize, the experience of being a marketer among the respondents is minimal in comparison to other affiliated actors with larger public awareness. Additionally, each actor has

their own initiatives, marketing goal, and values connected to the sport. The surf athletes make a distinction between themselves and bigger representative actors. Contrary to the bigger actors, surf athletes prefer not to be associated with a brand as for them the act of surfing and embedded lifestyle are primary aspects of the sport. Henceforth, deliberate acts of marketing, other than it being one's profession, are minimally executed by the surf athletes.

4.2 Marketing communication

The second factor of the conceptual model is the marketing communication. It entails how and what has been communicated by the market actors. What became directly noticeable throughout the empirical data collection, is the exciting gap between what is communicated to the general public, versus what is communicated to people who are already involved or interested in the surf industry. To exemplify, Lisa states *"I also think that in media there is a difference between general media and surfers who already know surfing... [the] inside of surf media..."*. Both marketing communications are having distinctive purposes and characteristics in the way the user community is presented. It is a common characteristic of the industry brand evaluated from a production dimension, wherein each organization has their own marketing strategies and customers (Bajde, 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to continue this section through separation of the two revealed media dimensions: general media, and inside-surf media.

4.2.1 General media

According to the empirical data, examples of the general media are executed by the bigger surf-brands, professional athletes, travel influencers, and non-surfing related companies. Simultaneously, they were also named as the biggest representative actors of the industry. Their marketing communication is recognized to be often less diverse, less multinational, lifestyle oriented, and showing a selective part of surfing. The strategy of the bigger actors is believed to feature the already known professional athletes to attract new users, *"It is all about the guy that everyone knows. Or the good-looking guy, or the guy that has more sponsors."* (Diogo). Moreover, the majority of presented professionals are from the *"main countries"* (Martin) with the best waves, and belong to the *"stereotypical"* (Adam and Ayla) and *"rich"* (e.g. Ayla) surfers. However, as not everyone is able to associate him- or herself with this category, it is potentially limiting people's feeling able to join the surfing community. As David explains: *"So, the only way to make surf become more known is to associate it to something*

that the entire world feels in common. Unfortunately, poverty. That is how football got known, is by poverty. It's a sport of poor because everyone can play it. So, surf should be accessible as football is." (David).

The dearth of diversity in the general media was also mentioned in the original series by a black girl from Jamaica: *"There is nothing about mainstream here or representative of surf coaches here. I don't think they see the benefit of having black or women of colour on their ads. All you can do is keep doing what you are doing and hope that they can see the need to change, the need to be representative, the need to be diverse..."* (Transformed S2E3). Generally, lack of multi-ethnic representation or other self-concept characteristics can lead to minimal chances to self-reference, and consequently make one feel socially excluded from the host community (Licsandru and Cui, 2018). In context of this thesis, surf athletes whom are underrepresented by marketing communications are likely to feel excluded from the surfing community as a unified brand. Although some respondents would like to see it changed, Martin says that he might not be interested. Particularly, his concern is to see less-performing surf athletes: *"The media is about the really good surfers, that's not what you see every day. But it's also the people that you want to watch. Nobody wants to watch the average Joe. Or at least not as many people."* (Martin). It illustrates the diversity of interests and held values among actors in the surf industry, as well as in today's sociocultural market context (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014).

Concerning the WSL website, many similarities were discovered with the characteristics of the general media since a limited number of nationalities were represented on their homepage (WSL, 2020b). The organization supports over 8,500 surf athletes from 85 countries, yet general posts mostly featured the largest segments from Australia, United States, or Brazil (WSL, 2020a). The majority of content is only available in English and, especially with the upcoming Olympics, WSL seemed to accentuate its strong composed team of American professional athletes. For example, given statements are: *"Team USA, is nothing to shake a stick at."* (Martin, 2020) and *"The United States fielded an absolute dream team of surfers..."* (Howard, 2020). Following the theory of Licsandru and Cui (2018), it could give extra power and recognition to one feeling associated with the USA, but potentially discourage other segments from foreign countries to participate in the sport.

To further determine the social inclusiveness, one could also look at gender (ibid.). Recognized is the majority of content dedicated to demonstrate the performance of male surf athletes. Exceptionally, on *International women day* ~8th of March~ it was visible that special posts were dedicated to shedding light on the strength of female athletes more frequently than usual. Under-representation of females is presumably also due to the larger number of qualified male athletes than female athletes at WSL (WSL, 2020a). Although, among all surf-media there are signs of improvements, according to Lisa are under-representations and discrimination by gender still very common in marketing communications: “...you see a guy who is ripping it, who is being amazing. And you see the girl being in bikini on the beach. I would want to change things around and the girl ripping it.” Overall, based on the given comments by the interviewees, the general media seems to represent solely a certain amount of surf athletes and is particularly focused on the economic values attached to the brand. Even though most respondents would like to see this approach be changed, a change might not always be in everyone’s favour.

4.2.2 Inside-surf media

In contrast to general media, the inside-surf media is viewed by people already interested at, or interacting with, the surf industry as it requires effort and knowledge to find the information (Lisa, Adam, and Espen). Findings illustrate that this entails marketing communication provided by the surf athletes, as well as online organizations, e.g. social media channels or online magazines. How actively the surf athletes were contributing to the online content differed per actor. Whilst some prefer to keep the number of posts minimal, or mainly communicate to their family and friends (e.g. Diogo), other surf athletes tried to reach as many viewers as possible (e.g. Brahim). Overall, reasons for being active on social media were linked to sponsoring obligations, healthy lifestyle promotion, same race or gender support, professional performance updates, and simply status. This opportunity for actors to create their own content is noticed to positively stimulate the diversity in marketing communication. Additionally, it is recognized to provide a better reflection of the offline surfing community, like Espen mentioned, “...it is probably a good thing, that it's all diverse again. You show every single part of surfing, or effort. And you can see every single one of those surfers in the line-up, you know. For me, at least, it's hard to see like a stereotypical surfer or hard to say what it is. Because there's so many different aspects of it.”

Furthermore, the empirical data shows that the increased diversity in social media is considered as a recent change connected to the growing social media trend (e.g. Tom). The original series of WSL is a perfect example of made efforts to generate more attention to less known surf destinations and athletes around the world. It was relatively recently introduced with the first *Brilliant Corners* series uploaded in 2019 and *Transformed* in 2020 (WSL Studios, 2020). On the one hand, as there are multiple episodes of the analysed series *Transformed* and *Brilliant Corners*, it prevents one episode from standing out, and normalizes (Licsandru and Cui, 2018) the given information regarding the minority groups. On the other hand, since the rest of the website is covering only professional and well-recognized surf athletes of WSL, it generates a clear gap between the known surfing community and less known surfing communities. Therefore, it is debateable how socially inclusive the industry brand is marketed with the WSL original series as proxy.

To conclude, there is an existing gap between the characteristics of the general and inside-surf media. The general media has received criticism of using the surfers' lifestyle as a marketing tool or brand, rather than supporting the actual subculture and profession. Subsequently, the general media has lost its connection with surf athletes, who indicated the inside-surf media to be a better representation of the offline community as well as sport.

4.3 Self-awareness, self-identification, and self-referencing

As described in the *Conceptual framework*, the stronger the self-identification of a person, the higher self-referencing and likelihood that a person can connect with the marketing communication (Licsandru and Cui, 2018, Kaufmann et al., 2012) and the surf industry brand. To analyse the ability and necessity to self-reference, questions concerned if the surf athletes experienced an overlap between themselves and the presented athletes in the marketing communication. The respondents indicated it to be a complex issue, differing between media types, as well as surf destination (e.g. Brahim). From the inside-surf media's perspective, Espen mentioned that the diversity gives anyone the possibility to find a personal overlap. Likewise did Diogo mention that he does not define himself with only a singular representation of a surf athlete, but with "...a little bit of everything." that the inside marketing communication is covering. In contrast, self-referencing with the general media seemed to be limited and only included overlap regarding the way the athletes present themselves online (Ayla), and their followed lifestyle (e.g. Ruben). Ayla says, "*What I think, I have to look good on the picture I*

post. So, I mean I do it too. For sure... I don't wear bikinis and wear like a thick wetsuit, gloves and hoodie and all that. Then I guess that's the difference. But yeah, I am not a good role model if you look at my Instagram I think."

Apart from that, whilst all surf athletes notified the limited representation in the general media, it became clear that not everyone has always been consciously aware of whom is exactly represented: *"I really never thought about it, because I could not care."* (Martin). Opposite results were collected from the analysed WSL original series that featured surf athletes with differing self-concept characteristics (e.g. disabled) (Transformed S1E2). Here, the athletes indicated to have difficulties self-referencing with the marketing communication (e.g. Transformed, S1E1., Transformed S2E3., Transformed S3E1). The identified lack of media representativeness even led to the establishment of a federation to support the minority of black surfer girls. As the respondent addressed, *"We started because of the lack of representation in the surf industry, in the professional surfing. So, we started looking for girls all over Africa, all over the dashboard..."* (Transformed, S3E1). Likewise, other represented surf athletes (e.g. a girl from Jamaica (Transformed S2E3)), and a guy from Afghanistan (Transformed, S1E1)), tried to receive more online as well as offline recognition, to inform and inspire other surf athletes about their participation: *"A message to the world that Afghan people surf as well"* (Transformed S1E3). In addition, another surf athlete addressed, *"When I was younger, I didn't see many black girls surfing. I used to take my kayak and watch the surfers. I thought to myself, why don't I become a surfer to represent my country as a Senegalese and as a black woman surfing?"* (Transformed S3E1)

To review on the findings of factor three, the two dimensions of media made it difficult for the athletes to determine their ability to self-reference with the marketing communication. Even though, most interviewees had not intentionally paid attention to whom is represented, the ability to self-reference with the inside-surf media was recognized to be rather easy. Apart from that, the featured athletes in the WSL original series indicated to be consciously aware of their minimal media coverage, and tried to expand their segment online as well as offline.

4.4 Subjective social inclusion / exclusion

According to theory by Licsandru and Cui (2018), the more inclusive the marketing communication, the greater chance that one could feel socially included in the host community,

and proud to be associated with the industry brand (Bajde, 2019). Based on the previous three factors, one can conclude that the diversity and multicultural content provided by inside-surf media would make a surf athlete feel more easily socially included than the general media. Especially on social media platforms, surf athletes with common characteristics and lifestyles are identified to make groups (Brahim) and virtually connect: *“To look at the people they like, and connect with the people or their style or thoughts. Which is really, really cool. A difference too from when everything was in magazines and stuff, they chose what a surfer was ...”* (Espen). Simultaneously, the actors are identified to have an influence on the establishment of online user communities and relational connections between the surf athletes.

Apart from that, the bigger representative actors were also addressed to encourage interactions with new users by mostly portraying the positive vibes of surfing in a healthier and friendlier way than its reality (e.g. David). Through marketing communication, they reflect a global surfing community or tribe (Tom), whilst findings indicate that not all surf athletes experience its existence: *“No. That doesn't exist. That's just like something they sent out there to make surfing look nice. [But], that doesn't exist on a global surfing community... I belong to the surf world, but I don't belong to a community.”* (Diogo). Diogo indicated that offline, communities do exist but he does not feel included to one as his time spend at a fixed location has been limited due to frequent travelling. For this matter, the athletes feel mostly connected to their local or national surfing community, rather than the tribal community as presented by the general media. To become part of a community, it is essential to be consistently present in the water and to respectfully interact with others at location (e.g. Ruben). Brahim explains that one is considered to be part of the community once *“...you know a lot of people in the water and show your face pretty often.”*. Technically, this can be anyone with the ‘right’ behaviour: *“Yes it does not matter if you are yellow, white, black, blue, green, or pale. What really matters is who you are as a person.”* (David).

Conversely, every interviewee also explained that the strongly geographically defined communities can cause tension and negative atmospheres, especially at locations where there is a relatively smaller number of waves (e.g. Brahim). In fact, every surf athlete answered the negative atmospheres to be the least favourite aspect of the sport in comparison to other sports. Still, Marie, and Ayla indicated that before they started surfing, they were not aware of those tensed atmospheres. Due to the knowledge gap between what is portrayed in the media and experienced in reality, Diogo believes that this tension and negative atmosphere could easily

scare someone who is not familiar how to cope in those situations. He elaborated further on the topic and said, *“I think that 90 percent of the people that started surfing they don't know this part... And then they are like what the hell is going on in surfing. It turns out the surf is to be fighting in the water, to get punched in the face, screamed at, or to be looking at in a weird way. So, I think that most of the beginners don't know what this part of surfing is, sadly.”* (Diogo).

Regarding the level of influence, the amateur surf athletes did not feel to be in the position to affect the surfing community and referred to the surf coaches and surf competitors to have greater opportunities to influence the industry. Findings can confirm that the support and user integration to the community was considered as an obligatory act in context of being a surf coach (e.g. Espen) and head director of the national team (Samuel). Likewise, Ruben mentioned to feel responsible as a surf coach contributing to the social development of the sport and informing younger generations to, *“Respect the young ones, respect the new ones, respect your local community. Know how to give waves to another person when you feel like to give. Sharing. Maybe even catch a wave with another person. Sharing. Because two people can have fun in the waves and smile.”* (Ruben). Nevertheless, focussing at the competing surf athletes, the results differed. Helping new users to start surfing would always be of their interest, but is not considered as their primary responsibility neither reason to participate in the sport. Instead, among all surf athletes, the most likeable aspect of surfing compared to other sports was the experience and embedded lifestyle, e.g.: *“Well, first of all, it's a lifestyle...”* (Tom), *“Some kind of freedom feeling the whole.”* (Adam), *“It's a way to clean your mind.”* (Brahim), and *“It's never the same... So, there is always waves to push yourself.”* (Martin).

Overall, it was notified to be rather an *“individual”* (e.g. Samuel), and *“selfish”* sport (e.g. Ayla) whereby personal progress is a primary factor. Therefore, having influence on the community as an obligatory factor to feel included (McMillan and Chavis, 1986) has not been detected throughout this empirical research. None the less, shared emotions and membership are still identified to positively contribute to support personal development (e.g. Tom), integration and acceptance (e.g. Diogo), and a feeling of belonging: *“...this is because we all come from the same culture. Like I love the sea and trying to be there every day... Even though, I come from Morocco and they come from here [the Netherlands], they welcome me and they share the waves and we started to be friends since day one.”* (Brahim).

To summarize, the marketing communication does not seem to play a substantial role in the community formation and feeling of belonging among the affiliated actors. Since the general media is portraying the surfing community as a healthy and friendly global tribe, a knowledge gap is denoted between the marketing communication and its reality. By comparison, social inclusion to a community is strongly location depended and requires time, effort, and respectful behaviour. Additionally, it is considered as an individual sport and lifestyle wherein having a community or influence did not seem a necessity.

4.5 Marketing effectiveness

The results of inclusive marketing are considered effective once the user feels subjectively socially included (Licsandru and Cui, 2018) and feels content with the norms and beliefs of the industry brand (Bajde, 2019). Hence, it stimulates a positive behaviour, including: brand loyalty (Aaker, 1996), feeling of obligation and commitment to the community (Kaufmann et al., 2012), and feeling of responsibility to support the brand (Story and Hess, 2010). Yet, the empirical data revealed that the positive behaviours are determined by three main factors: perceived level of influence, one's self-concept, and lifestyle.

Firstly, the feeling of commitment and responsibility were aligned with the perceived level of influence. Even though, it is not identified as an essential factor to feel socially included in the personal community, it is an appearing issue in the institutional community of the surf industry brand. In most destinations the industry was notified to be too developed and industrialized (Marie and Ayla). Therefore, personal influence to the industry at large was perceived to be minor and inconsiderable. As a consequence, influences were noted to be limited to ones' personal community or country: *"I mean the surf-scene, it's just so static, like that's how it is. [However,] here in Denmark it is so new that you can do really new things with it. That you can change things and do stuff. Like you can stop that whole aggressive scene in the water, to make it better because it's all so new here."* (Ayla). Accordingly, the majority of the respondents addressed not to feel responsible for the industry at large as it was experienced as a manner beyond their own capacity or willingness. Instead, the respondents referred to the biggest representative actors and financial investors (Diogo) to be responsible for the overall development. Some given reactions to how responsible the athletes personally felt for the development of the sport were: *"<Laughter> Very little, close to nothing... <Laughter> I mean, that would be like if you had interviewed Kelly Slater like that question would be*

relevant. You know, unfortunately, you're stuck with me... ” (Martin). Moreover, Diogo said “No no. I feel responsible for surfing to spread... [but]as an industry no.”.

Secondly, ones’ feeling of responsibility is also likely to depend on one’s self-concept in regard to feeling different from other surf athletes. Looking at the original series, the episodes featured actors from less known and developed surf destinations (WSL Studios, 2020). Additionally, it covered minority groups such as people with a disability (Transformed S1E2), being a veteran (Transformed S3E3), or being black race (e.g. Transformed S2E1). The more one felt personally distinctive, the larger responsibility he or she seemed to have for the next generation to start surfing: *“She has taken it as her personal responsibility to empower women of colour to have access to surfing and to see a place for themselves within the global surf industry.”* (Transformed S2E3). Concentrating at the interviewed surf athletes, eleven out of twelve respondents experienced their surf destination to be either developed, or being currently under development: *“In Portugal almost everyone surfs nowadays... I'd say Europeans in Central Europe. People just want to get away from that normality. Be different. Be a little bit like a rebel out of society.”* (Diogo). Nonetheless, Ayla was the only interviewee who did mention consider her destination to be less developed, and simultaneously identified herself as the first generation of Denmark to surf. This, in addition to her being part of the National team enlarged her feeling of responsibility to support the local surf development.

Thirdly, empirical data confirms that surfing is not solely a sport, but also a followed lifestyle that anyone with self-motivation (e.g. Marie), self-inspiration (Espen), personal interest (Brahim), and personal dedication (Martin) can pursue. Notwithstanding, it is recognized to affect the level of responsibility and co-creative behaviour of being a marketer or role model to the general public. For clarification, through the understanding of the head director of a National team, Samuel, do most of their national athletes not feel-, or wanting to be a role-model, *“Because a lot of the people who start surfing, you know, did it as a lifestyle. It's a lifestyle... They just don't see themselves as role models. So why? I don't think I can give you a further explanation for why. I just think it's part of the culture.”* (Samuel). Furthermore, Espen responded with, *“...I kind of hope I'm not because I want them to be inspiring themselves.”*. Despite him not feeling responsible for the development of the sport, he also recognized that indirectly, anything posted on social media contributes to the performance of the surf industry, *“I feel like the ones that are active on social media is the one responsible and*

who choose to be active. That's your responsibility and you're taking that up on you by being active." (Espen).

To summarize, the marketing effectiveness is depended on three main factors: perceived level of influence, one's self-concept, and the surfers' lifestyle. Lack of perceived influence discourages actors to feel or be responsible for the development of the industry as a comprised brand. When considering oneself to be different compared to the other athletes, level of responsibility to support the social development of the sport is recognized to be positively enhanced. Nonetheless, as in many destinations the surf industry is already regulated by bigger representative actors, personal influence is often limited to the development of ones' local destination or segment group. Last but not least, the lifestyle is a continuously appearing characteristic of the sport throughout all five identified factors of inclusive industry marketing. On the one hand, is anyone with self-motivation, self-inspiration, and interest able to pursue this lifestyle. On the other hand, it restrains some surf athletes from having a co-creative behaviour in terms of feeling responsible and committed to market their affiliated industry.

5.0 Discussion

The following discussion elaborates on the analysed data and critically examines the findings through theory. Moreover, as new findings appeared through the application of abductive methods, the discussion is strengthened by external literature which adds to the credibility of this empirical research. In addition, since direct referencing to social inclusion and exclusion were avoided in the interview guide, given conclusions are mutually clarified through the previous studies as well as the conceptual model. The chapter is structured according to the inclusive industry marketing factors: 1) market actors, 2) marketing communication, 3) self-awareness, self-identification and self-referencing, 4) subjective social inclusion / exclusion, and 5) marketing effectiveness, that jointly give an answer to the sub-questions of this thesis:

RQ. a. How is the surfing community branded by its affiliated actors?

RQ. b. How do actors reflect on their affiliation with the surfing community?

Since every factor is determined to collectively indicate the way branding by the affiliated actors with surfing enacts social inclusion or exclusion, a direct answer to the main research question is given in the *Conclusion*.

5.1 Market actors and their communication

The following section discusses the findings of the first two inclusive marketing factors: 1) market actors, and 2) marketing communication. Earlier research had classified the marketers in three categories including surf corporations, surf media, and surf-tourism operators (Ponting, 2008), but failed to acknowledge the surf athletes as substantial contributors. Among the diversity of market actors in an industry brand (Bajde, 2019) and through the integration of surf athletes as recognized co-creators of the social-, semiotic-, and economic values (Graeber, 2001, as cited in Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014), diverging ways of marketing and related market actors are discovered. Even though the author considered the interviewed surf athletes as key representatives of the surfing community, findings reveal that the interviewees make a separate distinction between themselves, and the bigger representative actors such as WSL. Particularly, both groups are indicted to provide content to different media dimensions: the general media, and inside-surf media. The general media is communicated by the biggest representative actors and the inside-surf media primarily by the surf athletes. Those two dimensions appeared through inequality of public awareness, levels of representativeness, and differing financial contribution to the surf industry. Moreover, it is observed that the biggest

representatives have contrary perspectives on surfing, viewing it as a brand, versus the surf athletes viewing it as a lifestyle.

Whilst the surf athletes appreciate the social and semiotic values attached to the practice of the sport and subculture, the bigger representative actors are identified to mainly focus on the economic values. This illustrates the complexity of surfing, as by some it is solely considered as a form of commerce, whilst by others a form of leisure (Warren and Gibson, 2017). Earlier research by Warren and Gibson (2017), had already pointed out that among the surf-brands, the head directors are underestimating the users' value and have disconnected themselves from the subculture, creating their own disadvantage in profitability. Moreover, although values are determined to always be subjective and context dependent (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014), understanding the athletes' values are essential enablers to co-create the success of the brand (Kaufmann et al., 2012). The empirical data has demonstrated that many surf destinations are already developed or controlled by the bigger representatives who behave according to their own marketing principles and values. Through theory it is justifiable that the lack of co-creation and differing values have led to the reduced feeling of being a brand representative among the interviewees.

Hitherto, the institutional dimension of the surf industry brand is predominantly marketed by the biggest representative actors rather than by the surf athletes. This empirical research can confirm in reference to earlier literature on surfing (e.g. Wheaton, 2017), that the general media is still primarily portraying the mainstream athlete. Since this media receives greater public awareness among outsiders who are not partaking in the sport yet, the industry risks strengthening the stigma of being exclusively associated with a selected target group (e.g. Western, white, and rich) (Wheaton, 2017). Similarly, the WSL website features mostly surf athletes from widely recognized surf destinations (e.g. USA and Brazil). Although there is more diversity found through in-depth investigation of their website, it is debatable whether the provision of the WSL original series makes their marketing strategy more socially inclusive. Firstly, their content is anticipated to be mostly viewed by athletes who are already interested or partaking in the surf industry. Secondly, the content requires effort to find it and differs from the key information WSL is communicating on their homepage. For those reasons, it is disputable that ~departing from external literature~ WSL applies a "commercial multiculturalism" marketing implication whereby the diversity of surf athletes from different communities is documented without further rearrangement of power and resources (Burton,

2002) in the sociocultural context of the sport. As Burton (2002) states, it "... promotes diversified multicultural marketing strategies to meet the needs of different cultural groups but without fundamentally changing the nature of society." (ibid., p.209).

The current marketing approach and identity of the surf industry brand is potentially decelerating the growth of its surfing community (Aaker, 1991), and lessening the feeling of social inclusion by a larger number of actors who desire to be affiliated with it. In order to generate a strong brand identity one feels personally connected with, the branding strategies of the inside-surf media and general media should be aligned and coherent (Eshuis and Klijn, 2012). Currently, the surf athletes feel more connected with the inside-surf media rather than the general media (e.g. WSL). As mentioned in the *Introduction* of this thesis, earlier research had therefore already requested a change in the marketing communication to be better aligned with the self-identification of the surf athletes (Reynolds and Hritz, 2013), and to cover a greater representation of non-stereotypical surfers (Wheaton, 2017).

Apart from that, the usage of a brand can enhance a person's identity creation (Aaker, 1996, Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014), and status (Holbrook, 1999). Whereas some are proud to be connected to an industry, others might be ashamed and prefer to distant themselves from it (Bajde, 2019). Regarding the surfing community, especially 'surf fans' are identified to have a strong desire to be associated with the surfer' lifestyle, fashion and community whilst 'real surfers' are identified to express lower desires for social recognition (Moutinho et al., 2007). The fact that some athletes do not have a strong desire to be affiliated with the surf industry can be an additional factor why the interviewees were generous about their personal representativeness. Nevertheless, the surf athletes did confirm that their presence in the water does add to the motivation and inspiration for new people to start surfing. Particularly surf athletes featured by the WSL original series showed their wish to be a representative for their own local community or other people with similar self-concept characteristics.

Besides, through the existence of the inside-surf media, the level of representativeness and awareness by other members is identified to be more attainable. The inside-surf media is determined to be generated by anyone who simply feels interested or obligated (Kaufmann et al., 2012) to contribute to the marketing communication of the industry. Over here, unlike the general media, not all communicated content is a conscious act of marketing. Some surf athletes are partaking online to communicate their authentic experiences, progress in surfing,

or to connect with other athletes from their related segment, community or tribe (Gyimóthy and Larson, 2015). The empirical data has outlined that this diversity in content and audiences, causes the communicated user community to be multicultural, multi-characteristic, and to be a better portrayal of the offline surfing community and lifestyle. The inside-surf media has become so diverse that stereotypes were noticed to be disappearing, which implies that associated social-in or social-out groups are minimized (Heding et al., 2015). Accordingly, the inside-surf media is recognized to be more multi-ethnic (Licsandru and Cui, 2018) than the general media that is appearing to entail mono-ethnic (Licsandru and Cui, 2018) characteristics of branding. For this reason, the inside-surf media is concluded to likely be experienced as more socially inclusive than the general media.

The answer to the sub-research question, RQ. a. *How is the surfing community branded by its affiliated actors?* The findings revealed that the surfing community is online branded through two media dimensions: the general media, and inside-surf media. Yet, due to the discrepancy between marketing communication and conflicting values between the affiliated actors, branding the sport is not always a deliberate act. The inside-surf media entails a more diverse and socially inclusive content, that is better aligned with the lifestyle and the offline community, than content of the general media. However, this is mainly created for personal interests rather than related marketing purposes. By contrast, the general media is noted to be purposefully marketing the industry as a brand to attract new surf athletes. Its content is identified to be positively experienced by a smaller segment since the information is mono-ethnic and homogeneous. Offline, the surfing community does inspire people to start surfing, yet its impact is believed to be minimal and segment-orientated.

5.2 The need to self-reference and belong to a community

The following section discusses the third and fourth factors of inclusive industry marketing: 3) self-awareness, self-identification and self-referencing, and 4) subjective social inclusion / exclusion. Previous literature considered the ability to self-reference regarding marketing communication as one of the core-aspects provoking greater chances of subjective social inclusion to a user community (Licsandru and Cui, 2018). Conversely, lack of self-referencing could lead to perceived social exclusion and demotivation to partake in the brand (ibid.).

In regard to the empirical data, the majority of surf athletes are most likely to find overlapping characteristics between themselves and the community presented by the inside-surf media rather than by the general media. However, findings also demonstrate that this ability to self-reference relies on the consciousness of the receiver. Despite the athletes' awareness of the inside-surf media to be more multicultural and diverse than the general media, most interviewees had not explicitly addressed paying attention to it. Within context of this thesis, all interviewees are already affiliated with the surf industry. Therefore, identification with the social-in or social-out group (Heding et al., 2015) is perhaps not essential anymore.

Concerning the results derived from the WSL original series, the importance of self-referencing with any offline or online market communicator was a greater appearing factor among most surf athletes. As stated in earlier research by Wheaton (2017), "The voices of minority ethnic and indigenous surfers are often absent from surfing culture, media, and research." (p.178). In response to the under-representativeness but positive experiences in their local surfing community, the minority groups featured by the WSL original series communicated to feel extra empowered to hold an active and visible position in the surf industry. By being present and observed in the water as a surf athlete, they desired to inspire more people with similar demographic or physical traits to participate in the sport, whilst increasing their wish to eventually change the social dynamics in the industry as a unified brand. Thus, the lack of representation by the general media can also awaken a larger feeling of responsibility to strengthen their local surfing community. Presumably, the WSL athletes feel socially included in the community he or she associates with, which encourages a feeling of commitment (Licsandru and Cui, 2018), obligation (Kaufmann et al., 2012) and responsibility (Story and Hess, 2010) to support future development. The given emphasis and pressure by the minority groups to increase the level or representativeness, can stimulate a change from a "commercial multiculturalism" marketing implication into a "corporate multiculturalism" marketing implication (Burton, 2002., p. 210). In this manner, the public pressure can eventually obligate organizations to prioritize the minority cultures' participation and interest in the brand (ibid.). As indicated in the *Theoretical framework*, the industry branding can thus be influenced by social and political aims for the benefit and support of vulnerable groups and social development in societies (Bajde, 2019).

In fact, the offline surfing community was noted to be more multicultural and diverse than the way it is marketed online by the general media. However, this does not mean that the surf

athletes felt related to a community based on the industry as a unified brand. Even though the general media is presenting the surfing community as a 'global tribe', empirical findings indicate that personal communities are strongly geographically dependent. Departing from external literature by Richardson (2013), tribes are not held together by a certain community, but by shared emotions and shared beliefs. From this perspective, it is extra justifiable why most respondents felt mostly connected to their local community instead of global tribe. The strong territorial community, surf rage and localism are widely covered issues (e.g. Usher and Gómez, 2016., Buckley, 2002., O'Brien and Ponting., 2013). Notwithstanding, critical events are not individually targeted, but more as a response to protect the water from becoming overcrowded. Likewise, the sport is described as an individual and selfish practice wherein personal progress and the lifestyle are fundamental characteristics. Within this context, having a community is preferable but not necessary, as values attached to the sport are often more intrinsically than extrinsically focused (Moutinho et al., 2007). To become integrated in a local community, empirical data illustrates that frequent participation in the sport and respectful behaviour towards others at location are obligatory prerequisites. The community is noted to be accessible to anyone no matter one's self-concept or demographic traits, but lack of attendance can still result in social exclusion from local communities despite having common relational characteristics (e.g. passion for the ocean). Therefore, in context of local integration and participation in the sport, the marketing communication does not seem to play a substantial role.

To summarize, an answer can be given to the sub-research question, RQ. b. ***How do actors reflect on their affiliation with the surfing community?*** Noticeably, every respondent described the belonging to their personal community dependent on their geographic location. Common relational connections with other surf athletes are affirmed but did not counteract the necessity of belonging to a local community. Besides, the necessity to self-reference with the marketing communication depended on ones' self-concept. Although the minority groups covered by WSL communicated their wish for larger representation of their segment, the belonging to the local surfing community had presumably strengthened the feeling of commitment, obligation and responsibility to support the social development and integration of new members. Moreover, since surfing is greatly individual- and lifestyle-oriented, having a community and marketing representativeness is preferable but not necessary to participate in the sport.

5.3 The necessity for social inclusion

The following section discusses the fifth inclusive industry marketing factor: 5) marketing effectiveness. As outlined previously, social inclusion can lead to positive behaviours (Licsandru and Cui, 2018), e.g. feeling of responsibility (Story and Hess, 2010). Yet, the limited given influence of the surf athletes on the industry as a unified brand led to minor feelings of responsibility and strong reliance on the decisions made by the bigger representative actors. However, giving those actors such as WSL the rights to administer the surf industry involves the risk of staying socially exclusive and keeping the dominance of the American regime as originated from its history intact (Laderman, 2014). According to earlier research by Towner (2016), local communities are often excluded from the surf industry and businesses (e.g. surf schools) are often run by foreign investors. This causes a distressed atmosphere within the local communities and creates tension among and between the citizens and foreigners who did and did not get accepted in the surf industry (ibid.). It demonstrates why Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) emphasize that a change of hierarchical social structures can only be achieved once there is full recognition of the social inequalities and existing obstacles by every member of the sport community. As stated, “Development would thus involve a much more radical vision of social change in which actors would be empowered to participate critically in the transformation of not only their own experiences in society but also of the world itself through a collective resistance against the hegemonic structures and relations of inequality that get reproduced through sport.” (ibid., p. 293).

Currently, empirical data reveals that surf athletes describe the sport to be accessible for anyone with self-motivation, self-inspiration, and interest to invest in the related lifestyle. Accordingly, for some athletes this has minimized their active behaviour and feeling of responsibility to support the social development and integration of new members to the sport. On one hand, surf athletes with different self-concept characteristics than the majority of the surf athletes (e.g. minority groups) indicated to feel responsible for the integration of their personal segment. On the other hand, since not everyone is fighting for a social change and the industry is primarily regulated by bigger representatives, lack of influence would make any athlete incapable to extensively contribute to social development despite their feeling of responsibility. In order to enhance the inclusivity of the sport, Burton (2002) explains that by moving beyond the “corporate multiculturalism” marketing implementation towards a “critical multiculturalism” marketing implementation, the multicultural context in society would be centralized and

differences in power, history, ideology and culture will be acknowledged (ibid., p. 210). As indicated before, whilst surf athletes are mainly supporting the semiotic- and social values attached to the brand, the bigger representative actors are identified to pursue their own economic agenda. Consequently, it reflects the existing debate (Story and Hess, 2010) about who needs to take the responsibility for the development of the brand, with the surf athletes and biggest representative actors at opposite ends.

To conclude, currently, the marketing effectiveness of the surf brand is minimal as the marketing communication is predominately generated by the bigger representatives which is rather socially exclusive than socially inclusive. Additionally, the surf industry brand is not functioning as a unified brand, and reducing under-representativeness or social exclusion are not everyone's priority. For these reasons, it would require greater awareness of inequalities and rearrangement of hierarchical social structures as well as power to enhance inclusivity and positive behaviours of the surf athletes towards their affiliated brand.

6.0 Conclusion

This thesis has investigated how branding by actors affiliated to a particular industry enact social inclusion or exclusion. It essentializes the human need to belong and feel connected to a community for the survival benefit of a person (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, Maslow, 1943, Allman, 2013) and for the support of a socially sustainable society (Washington, 2015). As social inclusion is by nature related to a certain group or community, the theory of branding and its associated user community is applied as a medium to deepen the understanding of both sociology and marketing phenomena. In this manner, two emerging concepts on subjective social inclusion by Licsandru and Cui (2018) and industry branding by Bajde (2019) were adopted to analyse the case of surfing. Moreover, a triangulation of qualitative methods and a conceptual model facilitate the response to the main research question: *How does branding by actors affiliated with the surfing community enact social inclusion or exclusion?*

This empirical research has demonstrated how surfing can be considered an institutionalized ‘industry brand’ (Bajde, 2019). The sector entails a multitude of organizations and users whom all contribute to the brand identity of the surf industry. Even though this thesis considers the interviewed surf athletes as key representatives of the surfing community, findings reveal that the interviewees make a separate distinction between themselves and bigger representative actors. Since values are subjective and context-dependent (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014), each actor is identified to emphasize a different value to whom one is behaving accordingly as a marketer. Among the surf athletes, they embrace the social values connected to the practice of the sport, and semiotic value attached to the sub-culture and lifestyle. Nevertheless, the bigger representative actors are believed to mostly concentrate on the economic values attached to the surf industry brand. The variety of enhanced values has resulted in deliberate, undeliberate, passive and active forms of marketing communication executed by the affiliated actors. Additionally, two media dimensions are detected: the general media communicated by the biggest representative actors, and the inside-surf media by the surf athletes. Due to multi-ethnic characteristics and diversity, the inside-surf media is identified as being more socially inclusive than the general media. Moreover, the content is created by the surf athletes themselves and provides a composite image of the offline surfing community. In contrast, the general media is mono-ethnic and likely to be experienced as more socially exclusive. However, they are created by the biggest representative actors who are predominantly marketing and managing the surf industry brand.

On a smaller scale, the surf athletes associate themselves with their local communities wherein time, effort and respectful behaviour are required to become socially included. In this context, marketing communication does not seem to play a substantial role. The athletes feel responsible for their local community or segment and anyone interested is welcome to give surfing a try. By contrast, the two media dimensions did lead to associated levels of social inclusion and responsibilities within the surfing community as a unified brand. Despite the absence of direct referencing to social inclusion or exclusion in the interviews, certain arguments can be given through the clarification of previous literature. As demonstrated in this thesis, aspects that are partially essential for the support of subjective social inclusion are: level of influence (McMillan and Chavis, 1986), marketing representativeness (Licsandru and Cui, 2018), and affirmation of mutual values (Kaufmann et al., 2012). Nevertheless, the surf athletes expressed to have a limited level of influence, under-representativeness by the general media, and to have conflicting values with the bigger representative actors. In this manner, it is justifiable that the surf athletes are being socially excluded from the industry as a unified brand. Accordingly, they have a minimal feeling of responsibility and execute a smaller number of activities to support the overall development of the surf industry brand.

In conclusion, branding does not play an essential role in the social inclusiveness of the locally experienced communities. Not least does it enact social exclusion and reduced feelings of responsibilities among the surf athletes in context of the surf industry as a unified brand. To reduce social exclusion in a sport and lifestyle that is locally identified to being socially inclusive, this thesis is accentuating the necessity for social inclusive marketing implementation. Yet, this thesis also discusses that it would first require a greater awareness of inequalities, and subsequently, a larger rearrangement of hierarchical social structures and power in the industry at large. Simultaneously, rearrangements could give more surf athletes greater opportunities to support and influence the social development of the sport as well as the development towards a more socially inclusive society.

7.0 Theoretical implications and contributions

This thesis adds to sociology and marketing literature in regard to how branding plays a significant role in enacting social inclusion and exclusion. An expected critique of this report is that the results may lack transferability. Surfing is a narrow case as it does require specific interest in adventure sports, access to water, equipment, and income to travel. However, because surfing belongs to this wider sector of adventure spots, one might expect other sport industries (e.g. ski & snowboard industry) to behave similarly if they match the institutional characteristics of Bajde (2019). Hence, the existence of social inclusion and exclusion through branding applied to other cases can be equally relevant.

Furthermore, though this thesis only analysed one industry, the proposed conceptual model synthesized by the researcher is a logical concept for analysing other industry brands. The model does not fail to acknowledge the multitude of actors contributing to the identity formation one can feel socially included in, or excluded from, Plus, it does not fail to reflect on each individual role and responsibilities to deliberately perform as a market actor. Compared to other researchers, the model is more efficient and comprehensive because it combines both issues and fully sees the complexity of inclusivity.

Yet, in some scenarios, ideologies of the conceptual model might be less applicable. This majorly concerns future research that does not depart from an industry brand but from, for instance, an organizational brand (e.g. Hermès) with differing marketing strategies (e.g. having a logo and trademark). As it concerns the performance of a particular organization rather than a multitude of organizations comprising an industry, the organization (e.g. Hermès) might play a central role in the way branding enacts social inclusion or exclusion. Nevertheless, the process of inclusive marketing is still expected to be applicable and relevant for future research in sociology and marketing.

8.0 Further research recommendations

The empirical data comprises a case study of the surf industry band whereby research is framed to the experiences of the surf athletes. As the brand entails numerous affiliated actors, further research can illustrate which marketing strategies are adopted by other actors, e.g. surf-brands, surf-tourism agencies, and how they contribute to the inclusivity of the industry. In the same manner, the empirical data has revealed that the surf lifestyle has also been applied to the servicescape and experience of a product or service but it was beyond the scope of this thesis.

Additionally, as two new media dimensions are detected in the course of this thesis, further research can entail in-depth clarification per dimension and analyse its extraction of social inclusion or exclusion. Findings can potentially contribute to the understanding of how the socially inclusive characteristics of the inside-surf media can be used to better the content of the general media for the benefit of the entire industry.

Lastly, on account of surfing being a case of leisure as well as commerce, findings indicated the complexity to analyse the industry through a branding phenomenon. Therefore, further research can strengthen the empirical data and understanding of industry branding (Bajde, 2019) in context of other leisure or tourism sectors. Likewise, those can be connected to inclusive marketing strategies as illustrated throughout this thesis and strengthen the plausibility and evidentiality of the proposed conceptual model.

Interviewer: Is there still anything you feel that should be added to this conversation before I stop the recording?

Interviewee: Yes there is one thing, if you can make a quote...



"Everyone should at least try to surf one time in their life independently of their age because you're never too old to learn something new"

-David-

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Appendices

Overview of appendices:

- Appendix 1.0 – WSL homepage and web articles
- Appendix 2.0 – WSL original series
- Appendix 3.0 – Interview Guide

Appendix 1.0 – WSL starting page and web-articles

WSL starting page: <https://www.worldsurfleague.com>

1. The Olympic Media Tour Continues – 25 February 2020, Sean Martin
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/447901/the-olympic-media-tour-continues>
2. Slater’s Hawaian Offseason - 25 February 2020, Jake Howard
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/447895/kelly-slater-jack-coleman-hawaii>
3. Victory in the fight for the bright [VIDEO] - 25 February 2020, Jake Howard
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/447904/tudor-wants-another-title>
4. Can Joel Tudor actually pull of another world title? - 25 February 2020, Ben Collins
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/447907/why-joel-tudor-is-still-the-most-important-name-in-longboarding>
5. Serious fun with Julian Wilson – 26 February 2020, Ben Collins
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/447913/some-very-serious-fun-with-julian-wilson>
6. Snapper’s world champ heritage [VIDEO] – 26 February 2020, Presented by Cayla Moore
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/447966/who-is-going-to-dominate-at-snapper>
7. Olympic moment in Laker Country - 26 February 2020, Jake Howard
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/447949/caroline-marks-kolohe-andino-los-angeles-lakers-surfing-olympics>
8. We’re one month out, you ready? - 26 February 2020, Sean Martin
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/376569/gold-coast-one-month-away>
9. #tournotes: Kelly at Haleiwa – 27 February 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448027/tournotes-slaters-offseason-at-haleiwa>

- 10. Jordy Smith Scores in Cape Town - 27 February 2020, Sean Martin**
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448025/jordy-smith-as-sharp-as-ever>
- 11. Slater Opens up About 2020 Tour - 27 February 2020, Jake Howard**
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448023/slater-opens-up-about-2020-tour>
- 12. Slater on Last Season's Struggles [VIDEO]- 27 February 2020, Jake Howard**
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448064/the-goats-mindset-heading-into-his-30th-year-on-tour>
- 13. Couzinet Returns Home to surf one of the World's great lefts. – 28 February 2020, Jake Howard**
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448081/surfer-jorgann-couzinet-returns-to-reunion-island>
- 14. Logan Dulien Shares the Raw History of Snapt [VIDEO]– 28 february 2020, Chris Cote**
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448091/exclusive-interview-with-surf-filmmaker-logan-dulien>
- 15. The continuing Legacy of 'Snapt' – 28 February 2020, Jake Howard**
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448083/the-continuing-legacy-of-snapt>
- 16. Surfrider Stands up for Ocean health in Washington D.C. – 29 February 2020, WSL**
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448186/surfrider-goes-to-washington>
- 17. Banting Tops Podium at Vissla Central Coast pro, 29 February 2020, WSL**
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/events/2020/mqs/3283/vissla-central-coast-pro>
- 18. Baum Takes out Sisstrevolution Central Coast pro, 29 February 2020 → Reuploaded:**
Matt Banting and Sarah Baum Take Victory at Avoca Beach, 1 March 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448241/matt-banting-and-sarah-baum-take-victory-at-avoca-beach>

- 19.** Double-Arm Stall masterclass With Damien Hobgood - 29 February 2020, Ben Collins
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448198/want-a-masterclass-in-double-arm-drag>
- 20.** SUP Champ Takes her first WSL Victory- 1 march Reuploaded: Watanabe and Gomez Claim Inaugural SLO CAL Open at Morro Bay Wins [VIDEO], 1 March 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448287/watanabe-and-gomez-claim-inaugural-slo-cal-open-at-morro-bay-wins>
- 21.** First QS Qin for 17 year old Watanabe- 1 march 2020. Reuploaded as: Taro Watanabe Wins Maiden QS at SLO CAL Open Morro Bay [VIDEO]. 1 March 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448260/taro-watanabe-wins-maiden-qs-at-slo-cal-open-morro-bay>
- 22.** Wright's Comeback Starts in Manly [VIDEO] – 29 February 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448208/world-champs-ready-to-kick-start-the-2020-season>
- 23.** It was a busy weekend on the QS [VIDEO] – 1 march 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448294/it-was-a-busy-weekend-on-the-qualifying-series>
- 24.** Newcastle Delivers World-Class Waves [VIDEO] – 2 march 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448392/newcastle-delivers-world-class-waves>
- 25.** Italo Pays it forward to students in Brasil, 1 March 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448253/the-peoples-champ-pays-it-forward>
- 26.** Kai Lenny talks through the biggest Wave of His life, 2 March 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448341/kai-lenny-talks-through-the-biggest-wave-of-his-life>
- 27.** Medina: Nothing but the Best - 2 March, 2020, WSL

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448387/gabriel-medina-nothing-but-the-hits>

Famously heavy wave now an Olympic venue – 3 March 2020, WSL

28. Famously heavy wave now an Olympic venue – 3 March 2020, WSL

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448475/teahupoo-approved-as-venue-for-2024-olympic-surfing>

29. Straight in the Deep end for Nichols – 3 March, 2020, Sean Martin

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448479/nichols-prepares-for-2020-campaign>

30. Teahupo'o is in the Olympics [VIDEO], 3 March 2020, Hunter Jones

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448493/teahupoo-is-in-the-olympics>

31. Sydney Surf pro Essentials – 4 March, 2020, Ben Collins

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448482/manly-essentials>

32. The big question for CT hopefuls – 4 march 2020, Jake Howard

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448557/the-big-question-for-ct-hopefuls>

33. World Champions Want a Big start [VIDEO] - 4 March 2020, WSL

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448578/world-champions-want-a-big-start>

34. Mason Ho earns perfect 10 in Rangiroa Barrel Fest – 4 March 2020, Andrew Nichols

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448577/mason-ho-earns-perfect-10-in-barrel-fest-at-air-tahiti-rangiroa-pro>

35. JJF's Pre season as The surf Ranch [VIDEO], 5 March 2020, WSL

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448690/jjfs-pre-season-at-the-surf-ranch>

36. Mason ho goes big at Rangiroa [VIDEO] – 6 March 2020, WSL

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448836/mason-ho-goes-big-at-rangiroa>

37. Kai lenny & Lucas Chianca, Nazaré [DOCU] – 6 March 2020, WSL

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448670/kai-lenny-lucas-chianca-nazar>

38. Wilson Wins Surfest Newcastle Pro – 5 March 2020. →Reuploaded as: Julian Wilson Takes Crown In New Hometown At 35th Surfest Newcastle Pro, 8 March 2020
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/449065/julian-wilson-takes-crown-in-new-hometown-at-35th-surfest-newcastle-pro>

39. Catch up with LA’s Longboard Icon – 7 March 2020, Sean Martin
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448567/catch-up-with-los-angeles-longboard-icon-kassia-meador>

40. Congratulations Bronte Macaulay! – 7 march 2020, WSL
https://www.facebook.com/wslqs/posts/1317587201735358?comment_id=1317619181732160

41. Dawn Patrol: Sudney Surf pro – 7 march 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448876/sydney-dawn>

42. There is much to celebrate on international Women’s day – 7 March 2020, Jake Howard
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448830/theres-much-to-celebrate-on-international-womens-day>

43. Tyler Wright Strong in 2020 Debut [VIDEO] – 7 March, 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448955/tyler-wright-strong-in-2020-debut>

44. Carissa Moore’s Olympic Sneak preview? [VIDEO] – 7 March, 2020, WSL
https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/449026/carissa_excellent

45. Top five: Bryan’s win against a 2x world champ. [VIDEO] – 7 March, 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/449041/top-five-bryans-win-against-a-2x-world-champion>

46. Hamilton: I really want to qualify this year. [VIDEO] – 7 March, 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448952/bethany-hamilton-i-really-want-to-qualify-this-year>

47. Women that are changing the game in 2020 – 7 March 2020, Monica Medellin
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448873/women-that-are-changing-the-game-in-2020>

48. International Women's day 2020 [VIDEO] – 7 March, 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448906/international-womens-day-2020>

49. Men's championship tour, Jeep leaderboard, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/athletes/tour/mct>

50. Post show: Challenger series kickoff at manly [LIFE STREAM] – 8 March 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/449042/post-show-challenger-series-kickoff-at-manly>

51. VISION Petersop, Slater and Andino talk gold coast [DOCU] – 4 March 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/447903/vision-peterson-slater-and-andino-talk-gold-coast>

52. How Stephanie Gilmore Changed surfing – 8 March 2020, Ben Collins. → Reuploaded
as: Gilmore bring style to every heat – 21 March, 2020, Ben Collins.
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448997/how-stephanie-gilmore-changed-womens-surfing>

53. Liam O'Brien's Pair of Excellent Rides [VIDEO] – 8 March 2020, ridden waves,
WSL
https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/449220/liam_edit

54. Hamilton Begins Road to Championship Tour Qualification [VIDEO] - 8 march 2020
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/449083/bethany-hamilton-sets-sights-on-championship-tour-qualification>

55. ADS opens strong, talks competitive plans for 2020 [VIDEO] – 8 march 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/449156/ads-returns-strong-talks-competitive-plans-for-2020>

56. Top five: day 2, sees standout rail work from Colapinto – 8 march 2020, WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/449226/top-five-smooth-rail-work-from-colapinto>

57. Post Show: Day 2. Sees Men Challengers Start in Sydney [VIDEO], 8 March 2020,
WSL
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/449225/post-show-mens-challenger-series-starts-in-sydney>

Appendix 2.0 - WSL Original Series links

Overview of all WSL Original Series produced by WSL Studios:

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/watch/411200/original-series-hub?hubId=411200&s1=watch>

2.1 WSL Original series: *Transformed*

- The Cuba Unknown (Season 1, Episode 1):
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/410742/transformed-s1e1-the-cuba-unknown?playlistId=442598&s1=watch>

- Freddy (Season 1, Episode):
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/410746/transformed-s1e2-freddy?playlistId=442598&s1=watch>

- Surfistan (Season 1, Episode 3):
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/411077/transformed-s1e3-surfistan?playlistId=442598&s1=watch>

- Sawubona (Season 2, Episode 1):
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/429046/transformed-s2e1-sawubona-i-see-you?playlistId=442594&s1=watch>

- Sentinel Ocean Alliance (Season 2, Episode 2):
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/429921/transformed-s2-e2-sentinel-ocean-alliance?playlistId=442594&s1=watch>

- Surf Girls Jamaica (Season 2, Episode 3):
<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/430894/transformed-s2-e3-surf-girls-jamaica?playlistId=442594&s1=watch>

- Émerger (Season 3, Episode 1):

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/447970/wsl-studios-transformed-season-3-merger?playlistId=447965&s1=watch>

- Beyond The Surface (Season 3, Episode 2):

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448196/wsl-studios-transformed-season-3-beyond-the-surface?playlistId=447965&s1=watch>

- Operation Surf (Season 3, Episode 3):

https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/448391/transformed_op-surf_neulion?playlistId=447965&s1=watch

2.2 WSL Original series: *Brilliant Corners*

- Madagascar, Presented By Hydro Flask (Chapter One):

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/415352/brilliant-corners-madagascar-chapter-one?playlistId=415354&s1=watch>

- Madagascar, Presented By Hydro Flask (Chapter Two):

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/415356/brilliant-corners-madagascar-chapter-two?s1=watch>

- Madagascar, Presented By Hydro Flask (Chapter Three):

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/415951/brilliant-corners-madagascar-chapter-three?s1=watch>

- Papua New Guinea (Chapter One):

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/442398/brilliant-corners-papua-new-guinea-chapter-one?s1=watch>

- Papua New Guinea (Chapter Two):

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/442399/brilliant-corners-papua-new-guinea-chapter-two?s1=watch>

- Papua New Guinea (Chapter Three):

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/442591/brilliant-corners-papua-new-guinea-chapter-three?s1=watch>

- Soul & Surf Kerala – India (Chapter One):

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/447205/india-soul-surf-kerala?s1=watch>

- Old Spice – India (Chapter Two):

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/447207/india-old-spice?s1=watch>

- Kovalam Skate Club – India (Chapter Three):

<https://www.worldsurfleague.com/posts/447209/india-kovalam-skate-club?s1=watch>

Appendix 3.0 - Interview guide

Opening questions

- 1. What exactly is your role or profession within the surf sport?**
 - a. For how many years have you been active with surfing?
 - b. What is your main motivation to do what you do in surfing regarding this role or profession?
- 2. When thinking about the sport, what do you like of surfing in relation to other sports?**
 - a. What makes surfing unique?
- 3. What don't you like of surfing in relation to other sports?**
 - a. Why would this be?

Market actors

- 4. Where did your interest for surfing come from?**
 - a. What exactly inspired you? Can you recall any specific moment or event that triggered you?
 - b. In what way do you think the media was contributing to your interest?
- 5. Is there someone you personally consider as an inspiration or role-model in the surf industry?**
 - a. Why do you consider this person to be inspirational?
 - b. How has this person influenced your individual passion for surfing?
 - c. Do you think you would have been surfing if he or she was not there as an inspiration?
- 6. Do you consider yourself as an inspiration for other people to start surfing?**
 - a. Why?
 - b. Are there any actions you have taken towards inspiring or helping others to start surfing?
- 7. What do you think would mostly stimulate people nowadays to start surfing?**
 - a. How do you think the media is contributing to this?
 - b. What would make surfing currently accessible?
 - c. Do you think there is enough effort taken towards helping people to start surfing?

8. Are there any perceived barriers one could face if he or she is also interested to start surfing now?

- a. Who exactly would be most likely to face those barriers and why?
- b. Did you personally experience a similar barrier as well?
- c. What would according to you help to overcome those barriers?

Media influence

9. Who or what do you think are currently the biggest representatives of the sport, creating the general image?

- a. Have you ever considered to whom it is targeted?
- b. How are they contributing to the social development of surfing?
- c. Do you feel that all the surf actors are having the same intentions with the sport?

10. Which media channels do you personally follow that cover surfing?

- a. What makes you interested in particularly those channels?

11. How would you describe the way surfers have been presented by the media?

- a. When speaking of media that is covering surfing, what kind of media are you exactly referring to?
- b. How would you describe the content of what is mostly posted?
- c. Do you experience any themes or reoccurring characteristics in the way media is presenting surfers?

12. Do you feel like any groups are under-represented in the surf industry? If so, who?

- a. Do you feel like any groups are over-represented in the surf industry? Who? Why?

13. How would you describe yourself as a surf athlete? / surf coach? Self-reflection?

14. Do you overall think that the media is portraying a fair representation of the actual surfers you have seen around?

- a. In which ways is the media well reflecting the reality of surfing?
- b. In which ways is the media lacking the reflection of reality of surfing?

15. Do you personally feel that the media is portraying the same as how you consider or describe yourself as a surf athlete? / surf coach?

- a. In which ways is it similar or different?

16. How active are you personally on social media?

- a. Are your posts surf related?
- b. When you think about it, do you think you are portraying a certain image through your media?

- c. Is this on purpose?

17. What would you like to see changed or added when it comes to media covering surfing?

- a. Who is mostly responsible to make this happen?
- b. How would this effect the surf industry?

Community characteristics

18. When talking about the surfers among each other, how would you describe the atmosphere?

- a. How would you describe the relation between one and another surfer?
- b. Do you experience any hierarchy within surfing?
- c. What sets the hierarchy?

19. Do you experience any form of a surfing community or group?

- a. In which way?
- b. How would you describe this community or group?
- c. Would you consider someone who does not meet that full description still be able to become part of that community?

20. What is your opinion towards the openness of surfing community?

- a. By whom is it influenced?

21. Regarding your personal position in the surf sector, how would you describe the community you would belong to?

- a. What makes you feel part of this particular community?
- b. How would you define your contribution to this community?

22. According to the Olympic, surfing can now be recognized as a world representative sport. How world representative do you experience the sport to actually be?

23. What are your thoughts upon stimulating more people worldwide to start surfing?

- a. What do you think is needed to make that happen?
- b. How do you think the media and marketing is influencing this?

24. How do you anticipate that the sport shall develop in the future?

- a. Who or what do you consider to be a big influencer on how the sport shall develop?
- b. How do you think this shall effect the surfing community?
- c. Where would you like to see the sport heading in the future?

d. What would be needed to make that happen?

25. To what extent do you personally feel responsible for the development of the surfing community?

a. Are there any actions you have taken towards this?