Making waves: Contesting the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers

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Abstract

The surfing industry is a multi-billion dollar a year global business (Gladdon, 2002). Professional female surfers, in particular, are drawing greater media attention than ever before and are seen by surf companies as the perfect vehicle to develop this global industry further. Because lifestyle branding has been developed as a modern marketing strategy, this thesis examines the lifestyle marketing practices of the three major surfing companies Billabong, Rip Curl and Quicksilver/Roxy through an investigation of the sponsorship experiences of fifteen sponsored female surfers.

The research paradigm guiding this study is an interpretive approach that applies Doris Lessing’s (1991) concept of conformity and Michel Foucault’s (1979) notion of surveillance and the technologies of the self. An ethnographic approach was utilised to examine the main research purpose, namely to: determine the impact of lifestyle marketing by Billabong, Rip Curl and Quicksilver/Roxy on sponsored female surfers. The data collection was conducted over a four-year period and was predominantly based on interviews supported by observation, field notes and document analysis that included the analysis of visual material represented in magazines, newspapers, surf-related websites and DVDs. Interviews were conducted with fifteen female surfers who were predominantly sponsored by either Billabong, Rip Curl or Quicksilver/Roxy and included other non-surf-related companies to discuss their sponsorship experiences. Four representatives from three manufacturers of global surf wear, Billabong, Rip Curl and Quicksilver/Roxy, were also interviewed in order to determine the motivation, selection criteria and philosophy that will impact on the sponsorship of these female surfers.
Results from this study indicate that lifestyle marketing by the Big Three through sponsorship provides a limited number of female surfers with the opportunity to compete on the professional surfing circuit. While there has been a pronounced increase in the number of women and Generation Y girls taking up surfing, their gendered position is continually under surveillance and being shaped by other surfers, spectators, leading sport and surf brands, the media and society in general. All of these onlookers make assumptions about how female surfers should look, behave, surf and be represented. Therefore, despite the potential of lifestyle marketing to raise the profile of women’s surfing, in the last two decades there appears to be limited improvement in the promotion of this sport. This is due to a lack of sufficient funds and support from companies as well as the ongoing control of women’s surfing by the surf companies, the ASP and the media. The literature dealing with aspects of effects of commercialisation within the surfing industry and contemporary issues affecting women in the sporting context illuminates the problems being encountered by female surfers.

The study found that the attributes of female surfers recommended for sponsorship selection were surfing ability, an appropriate look or image, engaging personality and the ability to communicate effectively in public. The Big Three confirmed that all four attributes were highly regarded in the sponsorship selection process of female surfers. However, the terms and conditions of a sponsorship agreement or contract by the Big Three serve as a form of surveillance over female surfers. In order to fulfil the sponsorship requirements of surf companies, female surfers undergo self-surveillance and compliance. This self-surveillance takes the form of scrutinising their look,
dress and behaviour at surfing competitions and events in order to secure media attention. Furthermore, the commercialisation of the surfing industry has encouraged the continued use of sexualised images of sponsored female surfers to sell products and increase company profits and has served to devalue women’s surfing performance. The conundrum is whether the commercial aspects of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers can coexist so that their marketability is not just being used to sell products but is equitable to all concerned. My study not only adds new knowledge to the lifestyle marketing and sport literature but may empower female surfers that they can be empowered to make informed decisions regarding their sponsorship.

In order to develop a deeper understanding about the complexities surrounding surfing as a competitive sport, three recommendations for future research are suggested. The first recommendation is to investigate the practices and aspirations of the ASP regarding the future promotion and support of female surfers. A second recommendation is to investigate the intentions of non-surf-related companies to gauge and determine the extent of their business interests in women’s surfing. Finally, there has been a significant increase in the use of surf-related websites and social networking as marketing strategies by surf companies. Therefore, future research examining the impact of modern technology would be meaningful as women’s surfing and other action/lifestyle sports continue to source methods for promotion and growth. All three recommendations will help raise awareness about the issues surrounding the future promotion and opportunities for
amateur and professional female surfers and assist in the future direction of women’s surfing in general.
I declare that this thesis has not previously been submitted for any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Roslyn Franklin  Date: April 3, 2012
Dedication

Mary Menhinnitt – March 5, 1920 - May 7, 2012.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Mary Menhinnitt, who has encouraged me in all of my endeavours and has always been there for me.
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I am indebted to many people who made completion of this thesis possible. I would like to acknowledge and express my thanks to Dr. Juliette Goldman, whose mentoring and guidance during my postgraduate studies was an inspiration for me to embark on an academic career. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my PhD supervisors for their assistance and guidance to complete this research. To Dr. Lorelei Carpenter my sincere gratitude in taking over in a time of need and mentoring me through the final stages of my thesis – for your patience and encouragement, your consistent interest in my work, for being my writing role model – I could not have hoped for a better supervisor.

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female surfers who participated in this research and for their willingness to share their stories and experiences so openly. These surfers have assisted in opening the conversations about improving the sponsorship opportunities for future female surfers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Making waves: Contesting the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers

Prelude

It is the hardest thing in the world to maintain an individual dissident opinion, as a member of a group. Most give in to the majority opinion and obey the atmosphere.

Doris Lessing (1991), Prisons we choose to live inside.

Surfing is getting too political now it’s not about how you surf it’s how you look.

Female surf competitor, 2010.

This thesis is written by a female researcher who is influenced by Doris Lessing’s (1991) concept of conformity and the call to “maintain an individual dissident opinion” (p. 49) to explore issues surrounding the sponsorship experiences of female surfers. The comment above by a female surf competitor (2010) exemplifies the motivation behind the choice of thesis topic for the need to challenge conformity through surfers’ stories of breakout and to contest the taken-for-granted values and norms that are behind the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers. This includes the necessity to investigate the lifestyle marketing of female surfers through sponsorship by Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy propagated through the media to determine whether it is beneficial to the general advancement of women’s competitive surfing.

The growth in women’s participation and achievement in surfing has led to a significant rise in lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of both amateur and professional female surfers by the largest three surfing companies, Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver, or rather its female brand Roxy. These companies are referred to in this thesis as the Big Three because of their market dominance. I
chose these three surfing companies because they are considered to be historically well-established surf brands, and currently the three most popular surf brands in the world (Pech, 2003; Stranger, 2010). However, the history of women’s competitive surfing has been underscored by a predominantly male orientated industry that has focused on sexualised images of female surfers instead of their surfing performance. I use Doris Lessing’s (1991) concept of conformity and Michel Foucault’s (1979) notion of panopticism and the technologies of the self as a theoretical framework in this thesis to examine the lived sponsorship experiences of female surfers to help me reflect and gain understanding about the processes and practices involved in their lifestyle marketing and sponsorship. In the subculture of surfing, contesting the male dominated ideology and set of values and beliefs that have evolved over a significant period of time involves resistance. This resistance would require an individual or group, such as sponsored female surfers, to go against the status quo (Lessing, 1991) and risk exclusion. Therefore, to guide my examination of the impact of lifestyle marketing by Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy on sponsored female surfers I also draw upon Michel Foucault’s (1979) concepts of panopticism and the technologies of the self as a theoretical framework to understand how the surf industry, companies and media monitor and scrutinise their female surfers to ensure that they conform to the requirements of sponsorship.

This appears to be the first study of its type to use the combined concepts and theories of Lessing and Foucault to understand the implications of sponsorship by the Big Three on female surfers. The research presented here adopts an interpretive paradigm and utilises a mixed ethnographic methodology
to interview fifteen sponsored female surfers who ranged in surfing experience from early career junior surfers to high level professional female surfers some of whom have been early pioneers in the sport. Representatives from the Big Three surf companies were also interviewed. The observation and interview data is supplemented by an analysis of subcultural visual surfing media represented in magazines and newspapers, and on surf-related websites and DVDs media to understand the social context of the female surfer’s experience of sponsorship. This study contributes to the context of sports marketing and branding and lifestyle sport research and also contributes to other socio-cultural research regarding women in sport, adding to the literature about the promotion and advancement of females within the sport of surfing.

Similar to Wheaton’s (2002) early career as a researcher, I am an experienced participant in a predominantly male dominated non-traditional sport and although my research is not consciously feminist, it is enhanced by the application of a feminist perspective. I acknowledge the groundwork done by earlier feminist researchers whose common belief is the presupposition that women are oppressed and that the central reason for research revolved around not just ‘knowledge for its own sake’, but rather knowledge explicitly dedicated to bringing about change and improvement in the oppressive nature of their situation as women (Wadsworth, 2001; Walters, 2005). However, unlike Wheaton, because of my background in women’s competitive surfing, my primary concern is about women and their experiences, in particular female surfers’ sponsorship experiences which are central to my theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the research. It is not my intention to try and emancipate, empower or even offer any solutions to the issues surrounding
women’s surfing sponsorship especially by the Big Three. Rather, it is my intent to make waves to create awareness and highlight the continued gendered power differences in the surfing subculture. Like Wheaton, I too would not describe this research as “specifically a feminist ethnography” but rather “feminist-inspired research” (p. 252). My genealogy suggests I am from a second wave generation of women. However, my education, sporting background, life experiences and the fact that I was brought up in an environment where women can do anything, leads me to be more aligned with the tenets of third wave feminism. Therefore, I start this discussion with a focus about how being a female researcher, an active surfing participant and a firm believer of the capabilities of women became central to the inclusion of third wave feminist literature to underpin my theoretical stance and interpretation of my data. The following ‘arrival story’ identifies my involvement and interest in my thesis topic.

**Research Impetus: My Arrival Story of Getting Out There**

The motivation for this research stemmed from my prior involvement and participation in surfing, which included competing at local, state and national levels. As a surfing baby boomer – someone born between 1946 and 1964 – I have been surfing for over thirty five years and was an original founding member of the Queensland Women’s Boardrider’s Club during the 1970s. My surfing experiences have exposed me to a culture that inspires me to maintain a close contact with the ocean. My surfing experiences also encouraged me to advocate equality for women on the waves at a time when there weren’t too many women riding surfboards. During the 1970s I recall occasions where the men’s surfing
competitions were combined at the same locations, took preference over the women's competitions and were relegated to coping with the worse surfing conditions of the day. Media coverage of surfing events during the 1970s was dominated by pictures and stories of male surfers. In contrast, coverage of the women's events consisted of a small paragraph in the back of the newspaper with the women's surfing results, if at all at most.

My education and home background played an important role in my 'women can do anything attitude'. I grew up in Brisbane where I attended a private girl's secondary school and although feminism was never implicitly discussed, explicitly the school philosophy was always about a vigorous belief in the capacity and responsibility of women to contribute significantly to society. As a physical education teacher from the early 1980s, I always had a strong interest in the promotion and encouragement of girls in sport and specifically in the sport of surfing. During these years of being immersed in all forms of sport, I became increasingly frustrated with what were considered stereotypically 'feminine' types of sports, those in which women were expected to engage. According to Koivula (2001), sports generally have been labelled as masculine and “based on stereotyped expectations regarding gender and perceived gender differences” (p. 377) and “beliefs about the appropriateness of participation due to gender” (p. 378). Surfing was considered one of 'those' sports deemed generally unsuitable or unusual for women. In other words it was a sport for women who did not conform to what was considered to be appropriate for females. I became involved in competitive school surfing in the 1980s and noticed that girls were not permitted to participate. It was at this time that I not only encouraged but instigated the inclusion of a girls' division in
school surfing competitions on the Gold Coast, and was active in coaching and managing these teams. I have also been involved in the Gold Coast Girls Boardrider’s Club, and in the late 1990s I took on the role as Secretary. At the time of writing I am a volunteer surf lifesaver at Mermaid beach Surf Lifesaving Club and coordinator for the girls division of MNM (Miami Nobby’s Mermaid) Boardrider’s Club. With over thirty-five years of involvement in surfing, I have extensive ‘insider’ knowledge of the surfing culture and a wide range of networks within the industry which assisted me to gain access to the participants and companies studied. I do not wish to claim, however, that my personal experience in the surfing culture had led to a guaranteed acceptance by the research participants. Rather, it helped in my participation at surfing events and allowed me to develop a rapport when interviewing female surfers and surf company representatives, as they saw me as having credibility. My researcher role became that of a participant observer.

My interest in the topic was further engaged by working collaboratively on a project in 2005 with a university colleague, Dr. Lisa Hunter, who was investigating the impact on girls’ participation in surfing through their attendance at two ‘learn to surf’ programs held in Australia. These were the Roxy Surf Jam and Billabong Girls Get Out There Day events. In 2005 the Billabong program attracted over 1,771 female participants across twelve locations at beaches all around Australia. The Roxy Surf Jam attracted over 3000 participants and was held in over twenty-two locations including two in New Zealand. The purpose of the project was to observe whether participation in surfing itself, or promoting surf brand products, was the leading motivation behind the promotion of novice female surfers through those ‘learn to surf’ events. The resulting paper,
presented as part of a forum at the 13th Commonwealth International Sport Conference in Melbourne, 2006, provided the first forum in which I explored issues related to the promotion and sponsorship of female surfers. Therefore, my avid interest in, and passion for, surfing and my belief that girls and women should be promoted in an appropriate way, has led me on this journey to provide an authentic account of female surfers’ experiences of sponsorship and to develop a sense of that ‘reality’. This study includes an accompanying examination of the practices and philosophy behind the lifestyle marketing of female surfers.

As a long-time female surfer I am aware of the challenges facing women in the surfing culture and am concerned by the continuing lack of support for female surfers and their use in the marketing of surf brand products. In this thesis I consider the leading surf companies and the surf media as representing the dominant powers that inadvertently influence the identities of individual female surfers. Many female surfers have been influenced to take up the sport by male family members. In recognition of their contribution to the sport, this study does not intentionally set out to be anti-male or critical of the men’s position within the surfing culture. In fact, I have the upmost respect for the significant men in my life who have been influential in shaping my love of the ocean and been prominent in guiding young people into a lifestyle sport that has changed their lives. My study therefore acknowledges that many men have made a significant contribution to the development and promotion of surfing as a professional sport.
Theoretical Perspectives

To explore the sponsorship experiences of female surfers and justify the inclusion of the concepts of Lessing (1991) and Foucault (1979), this thesis begins by examining the evolution of women’s surfing. Surfing had its origins in Hawaii where it was once commonplace for as many women to be in the water as men (Booth, 2001a). In early ancient Hawaiian narratives dating back over 1500 years, women were celebrated and depicted as central characters in the Hawaiian culture and who inflicted mortal vengeance on any male who disrespected them in the surf (Walker, 2011). Since those mythic beginnings, women’s surfing has experienced waves of change where females’ participation in the sport has been constrained by male domination and by surf media focus that represents female surfers as primarily bikini-clad sexualised objects. Male dominance in competitive surfing, combined with the shift in media focus, has devalued female surfing performance and rendered problematic their abilities to ensure sponsorship opportunities. The gendered position of women within the surfing culture, and a continued media focus on their sexualised images, has therefore served to devalue their surfing performance and reduce opportunities for sponsorship.

The combined concepts and theories of Lessing (1991) and Foucault (1979) are used to understand the implications of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship on female surfers. In keeping with the interpretive paradigm, Lessing’s concept of conformity has helped me to rethink my ethnographic research practices to investigate how female surfers come to accept their environment or the surfing world in which they are active participants.
Foucault’s theory of panoptic control and surveillance also guides my understanding of how the surf industry, companies and media monitor and scrutinise their female surfers to ensure that they conform to the sponsorship practices specified as part of their contractual agreements. Finally, Foucault’s (1988) concept of technologies of the self has assisted me to examine the ways power operates in the relationship between the surf company and sponsored female surfers.

While Foucault will be the theoretical foundation of this thesis, Doris Lessing’s (1991) understanding of the breakout concept as a lens in a pragmatic manner highlights the level of constraint or empowerment being undertaken by female surfers in the sponsorship process. Lessing’s ‘break out’ concept refers to breaking free and resisting the ‘prison’ created by the pressures imposed by society to conform. She suggests that even though individuals are kept under varying degrees of surveillance within society by the dominant powers, they are “still able to choose or resist dominant discourse” (p. 19). Lessing believes that quite often women are trained to accept the status quo. In other words, in the context of a male dominated surfing industry women have been conditioned to conform to what is considered ‘feminine’ and acceptable so they can gain sponsorship and support for their careers. I suggest that from an outsider’s perspective looking at women’s competitive surfing through the media’s lens, they may assume that female surfers are ‘riding a wave’ of improved surfing conditions, promotion and sponsorship. In reality however, the apparent progress towards equal conditions for female surfers may well only be cosmetic, with women and girls disciplining themselves or conforming to sponsorship requirements or, as Lessing terms, “obeying the
atmosphere” (p. 49). At best they may be struggling against the undercurrent of dominant forces within the surfing industry.

In Foucault’s (1988) earlier theoretical understandings about surveillance, the panopticon and power were deterministic in that they did not allow space for individuals to create change through resistance. I use Foucault’s theory in conjunction with Lessing’s (1991) notion of the ‘self-imposed’ prison to understand how resistance could be made difficult when faced with the attitudes of the mainstream majority. Surveillance by the majority, and the resulting self-surveillance and compliance, are complex in that surveillance has the power to either suppress or empower those being observed or gazed upon. Many researchers (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010; Duncan, 1994; Johns & Johns, 2000; Markula, 2003, 2004; Pringle, 2005; Rail & Harvey, 1995; McGuire, 2002) have applied the theories of Michel Foucault to study gender issues in sport and physical activity and this suggests that a Foucauldian-inspired analysis can inform a discussion of women’s empowerment. Foucault (1983) was particularly interested in different forms of power “which make individual subjects” (p. 212) that connect them to a particular identity. He believed that the body was a site for the workings of power and was therefore interested in the social processes that impacted on human relations that produced distinctive experiences and created specific identities. In addition, Foucault emphasised the importance of studying ‘experiences’ to help understand the construction of individual identities. Foucault also acknowledged that the mechanisms of power could not be studied apart from the mechanisms of exploitation and domination. These beliefs follows Foucault’s (1991) claim that:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it
‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him [sic] belong to this production (p. 194).

Foucault's (1988) statement recognises that power is a major factor that serves to transform, control or discipline the practice and behaviours of individuals. He refers to a new kind of ‘disciplinary power’ that was created and observed in schools, mental institutions and prisons in the 18th century Europe. Foucault argued that the mechanisms of surveillance in these systems no longer required violence or force, as people learned to discipline themselves. Foucault (1979) built on the idea of the panopticon, or prison tower as conceptualised by Jeremy Bentham, to illustrate the function of disciplinary mechanisms in everyday society as a means of social control (Duncan, 1994; Markula, 2003; Rail & Harvey, 1995). Foucault's concept of the central panopticon or tower, serves as a means of surveillance whether it has prison guards in it or not. The panoptic effect of these subtle and unseen forces leads to self-surveillance and systematic control by those under surveillance.

Rail and Harvey (1995) argue that “panopticism represents a view of society that makes evident the ways in which surveillance and self policing are used to ensure social control and order” (p. 167). Foucault (1979) confirms that eventually the panopticon “induces a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (p. 201) which indicates that the external application of surveillance becomes unnecessary as individuals become the principal of their own “subjection” (p. 202). Surveillance is particularly evident with the introduction of modern technologies such as internet websites and live broadcasting of sporting events by the media where
the performance of athletes, and in this study surfers, are under constant and often close scrutiny. A recent study by Fuchs (2010) indicates how important the topic of surveillance has become in the media and in our daily lives. In acknowledgment of the fact that other literature and studies (Lyon, 2003; Goodrich, 2002), especially since the September 11 attacks, have concentrated on the concept of surveillance, it is important to clarify that in the context of this study surveillance refers to Foucault’s (1990) concept of panopticism.

Foucault’s (1990) later analysis of panopticism emphasises that no power/knowledge like that wielded by the lifestyle surf companies is entirely dominant or ascendant over other discursive fields (being female surfers). Foucault describes power as “not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations” (p. 94). He suggests that the institutions freeze particular relations of power so that only a certain number of people are advantaged. For the purpose of my study, Foucault’s understanding of power can be used to investigate the different ways female surfers experience sponsorship by the dominant Big Three surfing companies. In the surfing context, when a sponsored female surfer represents an individual surf brand through sponsorship she is continually being scrutinised and gazed upon by other surfers, spectators, leading sport and surf brands, the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) (the governing body for surfing professionals that predominantly sponsors the world’s major surfing events within the ASP World Tour), the media, consumers of surf products and society in general. Through the lens of Lessing and Foucault, I examine how female
surfers are engaging in self-surveillance to ensure they secure sponsorship from the Big Three surf companies.

This study therefore takes into account the dynamics of gender as a dimension of social inequity and difference within the sport of surfing where apparent progress in women’s competitive surfing conditions may be only illusionary. I use the arguments and analogy of the inner prison and panopticon of Lessing (1991) and Foucault (1979) respectively to analyse surfing sponsorship as well as the experiences of female surfers to understand how they negotiate the power relations evident in a male dominated surf industry. As elite performers, female surfers need to tell their stories and take back their identities from the sponsors and their media-promoted meta-narrative.

Foucault’s (1988) later work demonstrated his interest in exploring processes by which an individual might form and understand themselves as a subject within power relations. Foucault believed that an individual can modify their behavior and chooses to transform his/her identity by engaging in a process that he labeled the technologies of the self. Foucault (1988) defines technologies of the self as practices that:

Permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (p. 18).

Foucault’s work does not indicate that an individual who engages in technologies of the self necessarily transforms themselves. Similarly, Lessing (1991) infers, individuals have the opportunity to internalize the external forces and choose to conform or resist. Other research (Duncan, 1994; Markula, 2001)
has analysed how physical activity acts as a technology of domination that as Markula (2003) states “anchors women into a discursive web of normalising practices” (p. 88). In the surfing context, this study allows the identities of female surfers to be situated at the centre of the research to examine whether they constantly undergo practices of self-examination and even self-policing to ensure they comply with the dominant image requirements of the Big Three to attain or maintain sponsorship.

Rail and Harvey (1995) explain that the technologies of the self assist individuals to identify themselves as “a subject that can free them from the control of disciplinary practices that leads to transformation” (p. 88). Although as Foucault (1980) suggests, the practice of self-surveillance can alter individuals’ existing beliefs, making them conform to what the majority want and accept as a “regime of truth” (p. 133). Therefore, the assumptions made about how a female surfer should look, behave, surf, and be represented is being shaped by other surfers, spectators, leading sport and surfing brands, the media and society in general and all impact upon female surfers’ practices of self to counteract the power relations of the media and the Big Three.

Today’s generation of young professional female surfers appears to display qualities of liberation and self reliance that challenge previous notions of male dominance in the sport of surfing. Yet, there are still mixed messages about whether the promotion of women in surfing is empowering or based on a different form of compliance. The adoption of Foucault’s theoretical perspective and Lessing’s (1991) notion of conformity help direct my focus on identifying and analysing gender equity and power discourses within the sponsorship practices of leading surf companies. Women’s small scale local coalitions and
partnerships (consisting of researchers and their co-participating, co-authoring, and co-researching women) that witness and honour the mini-narratives or stories of the marginalised females can make an indispensable contribution to change by highlighting how women inadvertently still conform to male dominance. Women may then be able to make waves and improve the conditions and status of women’s surfing. Lessing’s concept of conformity and Foucault’s (1988) concept of the technologies of the self are both useful to my enquiry because they provide a theoretical lens to examine whether the lifestyle marketing through sponsorship of female surfers is a controlling or transformative practice that encourages individual resistance and freedom. The theoretical perspectives will be clarified in more detail in Chapter 4.

The following section describes the transformation of surfing from a sport, the participants of which were predominantly interested in the physical act of surfing and being one with the ocean to the introduction of a competitive commercialised environment where lifestyle marketing of surfers is being used to enhance the company profits of the Big Three.

**Surfing as a Lifestyle Industry**

As pointed out by Lanagan (2003) the sport of surfing has been transformed from what was once engaged in as a purely enjoyable physical act to a sport that has been commodified and appropriated by business interests and used to create a lucrative and popular market based on the sales of lifestyle clothing. Booth (2001b) agrees that the change in female participation and spectatorship in the surfing over the years, combined with the increased role that women play in purchasing decisions, has led more companies to
strategically incorporate professional female surfers in their lifestyle marketing strategies to promote their brands and endorse their products.

For the purpose of this thesis, lifestyle marketing is defined as a strategy that develops products, services and promotional approaches based on recurrent patterns of attitudes and activities engaged in by a specific group, population or demographic to enhance its way of life (Bennett & Lachowetz, 2004; Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007). This has meant a shift from traditional mass marketing approaches to a new ideology of lifestyle that incorporates a deeper sense of “authenticity and moral purpose and self realisation” (Binkley, 2003, p. 232). The strategy of lifestyle marketing is used to encourage consumers to associate a product or products with the promise of an enhanced lifestyle. In other words, a company transmits the message through a variety of media that the consumer’s life will change for the better once they acquire its product.

The argument that surfing has become a lucrative industry is supported in a report by Stranger (2010). The report indicates that currently the board sport market is worth approximately AUD$8 billion (LaFrenz, 2009), with Quiksilver’s estimated worldwide sales currently cornering 37% of the market. Billabong has 11% (of worldwide sales of AUD$490 million) and Rip Curl 8% (worth AUD$340 million). Arthur (2003) argues that this growth has intensified the competition between surf brands as they compete against each other for market share across a range of surfing products. Commercialisation of the surfing industry has not only meant these companies must contest for the support and buying power of the surfing public but also that they now cater to a global fashion-based clothing industry in direct competition with mainstream and sport clothing
(Lanagan, 2003). The growth in the popularity of surf fashion and professional
surfing has popularised surfing for both women and men as part of the
mainstream consumer market.

The result is that surf companies, which in the past have predominantly
sponsored male surfers, are now realising the commercial potential and value of
lifestyle marketing high profile female surfers to sell products and enhance
brand image and recognition to women and girls. Hence, the Big Three surfing
companies can now use the lifestyle marketing of both male and female surfers
at major surfing events to enhance their brand image and profile to increase
profits. The lifestyle marketing of female surfers has brought about increased
media exposure and public interest resulting in ‘free’ publicity for sponsored
surfers and surf companies, while also enlisting the loyalty of consumers to their
brand power. Bennett, Henson and Zhang (2002) and Cousens, Babiak and
Bradish (2006) claim that this form of marketing can positively impact upon
brand reputation and is considered a valuable asset to increase brand profits.
Yet, within the surfing industry, the actual impact and extent of lifestyle
marketing opportunities and the promotion and elevation in status of female
surfers still appears uncertain.

Research (Lanagan, 2002; Langford, 2000; Lucas, 2000; McDonald,
2000; Shaw & Amis, 2001) has indicated an increase in the studies outlining the
impact of sponsorship in other female sports and surfing sponsorship generally.
However, no research to date has examined the lifestyle marketing and
sponsorship experiences of female surfers by the Big Three surf companies.
From a research perspective, the incorporation of well-recognised and
established brands, such as the Big Three, can provide appropriate sites for
data collection because of their long-standing reputations and position as market leaders within the surfing industry.

Binkley (2003) believes that the adoption of a lifestyle marketing approach by many corporations has come about as a response to the increasing frantic pace and obligations of today’s modern society and personal life. Businesses have grown to realise that their success is dependent upon developing strategies based on knowledge about consumer behaviour. Therefore, lifestyle marketing has enabled brands to align themselves with consumer needs, interests, desires, economic levels and values, and have resulted in profit. The integration of a company’s message with the lifestyle pursuits of a targeted market adds immediate credibility to the corporation or sponsor. As Solomon (2007) argues:

The growth of lifestyle marketing has come about as a result of an understanding that people sort themselves into groups on the basis of the things they like to do, how they like to spend their time, and how they choose to spend their disposable income. This in turn creates opportunities for market segmentation strategies that recognise the potency of a consumer’s chosen lifestyle in determining both the types of products purchased and the specific brands most likely to appeal to a certain lifestyle segment (p. 29).

In other words, a lifestyle brand aims to sell product by convincing potential customers that, by publicly associating themselves with the brand, they will identify with the desired group or culture. Lifestyle marketing is a rapidly growing strategy that an increasing number of companies are using to promote the sale of their products and is explored in more detail in Chapter 3.

Sport is particularly suited to lifestyle marketing because it provides companies with a means of offering an appealing way to market their goods and
services to consumers (Cahill, 2006; Reece, 2009) especially in a consumer and outdoor based society that is shaped by the media that over represents and promotes sporting prowess. Sporting corporations and brands are prepared to remunerate athletes with increasingly generous yearly salaries, which may encourage other aspiring athletes or enthusiasts to adulate and strive to emulate its sporting heroes. Many sports have achieved the status of a sought after lifestyle. These include what Ravenscroft, Wheaton and Gilchrist (2005) describe as “extreme, alternative, lifestyle, whiz, action sports, panic sport, postmodern, post-industrial and new sports” (p. 13). Over the past 20 years research (Bennett, et al., 2002; Bennett & Lachowetz, 2004; Petrecca, 2000; Rinehart, 2008, 2000; Wheaton, 2010) has shown that the development of lifestyle and action sports that include a wide range of mostly individualised sporting activities, including practices such as surfing, skateboarding and kite-surfing, have presented sport companies now with a further opportunity to incorporate lifestyle marketing as part of their corporate sponsorship strategies. The lifestyle marketing of these types of sports by companies has led to increased public awareness of, and consumer interest in the brand or sport company, enhanced brand image and reputation and attracted youth audiences and consumers. With many women and girls taking up lifestyle sports such as surfing, an important development in lifestyle marketing for companies has been the identification of both female consumers and participants as marketing targets.

The female consumer has become one of the most valuable and targeted commodities in many lifestyle sports. This is backed up by the work of researchers such as Cole (2000), Lucas (2000), Nauright (2005), Thorpe (2007)
and Wheaton (2010) who point out that mainstream sport companies such as Nike, Reebok and Adidas have reached the forefront of the rapid growth of lifestyle marketing, not only because of the development of their successful brands, but because of an awareness that women are becoming core consumers and represent a significant target market. These companies have realised the decline in the male market and, as Geissler (2001) confirms, have capitalised on the potential of the rising interest in the women's sport market. At the same time, there has been a growth in the lifestyle marketing of female athletes in sport, particularly in surfing (Wheaton & Beal, 2003). Murphy, Karimzadeh and Wicks (2007) argue that lifestyle marketing has become a popular strategy employed by companies to create a unique and authentic personality that corresponds with consumer values and image needs. Binkley (2003) believes that consumption and marketing have “moved away from an impersonal, mass-minded approach into a new era of ‘personal niche’ or lifestyle marketing where individual authenticity is sought after and valued” (p. 231). One successful strategy that has been undertaken by companies to branch out into the lifestyle-branded product category has been to become involved in lifestyle marketing through the sponsorship of athletes (Reece, 2009). The heightened interest from these mainstream companies has had a flow-on effect of challenging surf companies to examine their lifestyle marketing practices and approaches used to improve their marketing goals.

Research by Ravenscroft et al. (2005); Sweeney Sports Research (2009-2010) and Wheaton (2010) has demonstrated that surfing is currently considered to be one of the fastest growth lifestyle sports and is attracting a significant increase in the numbers of women surfers. Grow (2008) and
Heywood (2007) confirm that surf companies are now actively seeking lifestyle marketing opportunities with female surfers through sponsorship. An article written in the National Publication of the Surfrider Foundation magazine, *Making Waves*, by McClain (2003, February 15) concludes that surf companies are creating greater association and authenticity with their individual surf brands through women’s surfing. McClain argues that the female surfing market represents “a specific niche lifestyle market whose potential has just started to be realised allowing sponsors to connect with their consumers through identification with popular female surfers” (p. 2). This realisation has provided improved opportunities for female surfers to obtain financial benefits and security. However, the sponsorship opportunities for women are limited and are mainly offered to those who have an appropriate image or who conform to surf company sponsorship requirements. The potential for the exercise of agency or resistance by female surfers is always there and works, as Foucault (1995) argues, to make each individual “his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over and against himself” (p. 155). In other words, female surfers can resist practices of domination and resist the group mind (Lessing, 1991). As Rail and Harvey (1995) note, this allows “the existence of a body escaping repression: an active, autonomous and powerful body” (p. 175). Other researchers (Chapman, 1997; Johns & Johns, 2000; Markula, 2003) have also considered Foucault’s technologies of the self and the transformative possibilities of sporting practices. As such, Foucault’s technology of self and Lessing’s concept of conformity are useful as the framework to examine the extent of social control and impact of power exerted by the Big Three and how this influences the agency of individual female surfers.
Research Purpose and Objectives

Research supports the belief that lifestyle marketing in sport to date has predominantly been beneficial to both the sponsored athletes and sponsoring companies (Cornwell & Maighan, 1998; Slack & Amis, 2004). Yet, this is a taken for granted assumption particularly when investigating the sponsorship benefits for female surfers. There appears to be little sport management or marketing and sponsorship literature that explores issues regarding the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of females in surfing. Historically, surf companies have only endorsed what was considered a ‘feminine’ surfer, based on her physical attributes rather than her performance (Booth, 2001a; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; McGloin, 2005; Stedman, 1997). This view has been confirmed in other studies about women in action sports such as skateboarding and snowboarding where men relate to women as sexual objects rather than as sporting equals (Anderson, 1999; Beal, 1996; Beal & Wilson, 2004; Giannoulakis, 2008; Vlachos, 2008). Cori Schumacher, who won the women’s world longboarding championship in 2010, is a current example of a top professional female surfer who is experiencing sponsorship difficulties. Cori has no major sponsors or endorsements and in an article in the New York Times she stated that:

For me, getting real turned off [competitive surfing] had to do with how women were treated at the contests in the ASP and how women were treated within the surfing industry. You have to look this particular way, have to have no views, have to be somebody who is basically like a blank billboard upon which a brand can assert their image (Weisburg, 2011, para 13).

Cori Schumacher’s comments reinforce my interest in an exploration of female surfers’ experiences of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship by the Big
Three surf companies to determine whether this is a commonly held view. Such a feminist or outlaw perspective can provide a valuable portrayal of women’s sponsorship experiences in the surfing context in an attempt to obtain new knowledge and understandings about the impact of lifestyle marketing by the Big Three on sponsored female surfers. In this process it is important to include an examination of the practices and philosophy behind the lifestyle marketing of female surfers by the Big Three. The purpose of this thesis then is to determine the impact of lifestyle marketing by Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy on sponsored female surfers.

The objectives are to:

1. explore the lifestyle marketing experiences of sponsored female surfers;
2. analyse the lifestyle marketing practices of Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy and
3. examine the impact of lifestyle marketing through sponsorship by Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy on sponsored female surfers to determine whether it is beneficial to the general advancement of women’s competitive surfing.

The main purpose and objectives of this thesis are based on investigating and challenging three assumptions articulated in current literature. First, lifestyle marketing through sponsorship has substantially improved and contributed to opportunities for female surfers to participate in surfing at a professional level (Collins, 2000; Slack & Amis, 2004). Second, lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers is being used as a successful marketing tool by the Big Three surfing companies (Dolphin, 2003; Fahy, Farrelly, & Quester, 2004; Lui, Srivastava, & Hong, 1998; Tripodi, 2001). Finally, lifestyle marketing
through sponsorship can be beneficial to both the sponsored athlete and the sponsoring company (Cornwell & Maighan, 1998; Slack & Amis, 2004). In answering the research objectives this thesis will examine the accuracy of these assumptions.

The following section describes the rationale for the research design developed to address the research purpose and objectives and to gather the primary empirical evidence.

**Research Design**

In order to provide a broader and deeper insight into the unique and complex dynamics of lifestyle marketing of female surfers, I use an interpretive paradigm and employ a mixed ethnographic methodology of direct and participant observation, as well as in-depth interviewing of fifteen sponsored female surfers and representatives from the Big Three. Based on a feminist study of gender relations in windsurfing culture by Wheaton and Tomlinson (1998), I argue that an ethnographic approach is equally suited to research involving female surfer’s experiences, because the focus of the enquiry gives voice to the subjective experiences of women. The methodology helps place women at the centre of the analysis and challenges the dominant values and norms, especially in the male dominated sport of surfing.

In keeping with an interpretive paradigm, ethnography involves data gathering by means of involvement in the daily lives of the participants being studied in their natural setting. Flick (2007) claims that the process of ethnography implies being immersed in the culture, observing and talking to the participants in order to discover their interpretations, social meanings and
behaviours in their environment. This is particularly relevant in this study as it means ethnography is not just about giving an account of aspects of a particular subculture but produces a wide-angle view of the behaviours and practices within the setting being studied. Krane and Baird (2005) argue that “ethnographers employ multiple methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the social environment and perception of the members of the social group” (p. 87). This thesis is an ethnographic study used to examine and understand the subculture of women’s competitive surfing through the lens of its sponsored female surfers. In carrying out this study, I was able to immerse myself in the surfing environment, as both participant observer (Labaree, 2002; Mulhall, 2003) and ‘partial insider’ within the surfing community, over a four-year period from 2007-2010. To do this, I examined data elicited from interviews from fifteen sponsored female surfers who ranged in age from 13 to 39 and from representatives of the Big Three. Interview data is supported by observations, field notes, and analysis of surf-related documents and literature, including analysis of visual material represented in magazines, newspapers, surf-related websites and DVDs. I also interpreted my findings from the theoretical perspectives of Lessing (1991) and Foucault (1979) to show how the complex discourse surrounding conformity, power and control by media and surf brands, and the use of female surfer’s body image to sell products, can impact upon these surfers’ lived experiences and sponsorship opportunities.

Mulhall (2003) believes that using the first person “projects a certain perspective that emphasizes the personal experience of the ethnographer and their particular concerns” (p. 312). Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2001) suggest that writing in the first person is particularly effective where the ethnographer is
a member of the group they are studying. Gilbourne and Richardson (2005) believe that this style embraces “the genre of an author in the text” (p. 327). I also choose to use the first person to ‘make waves’ as a female researcher in this study. In addition, as a female researcher, I incorporate a feminine lens that assigns an active role in interpreting and contesting the power relationship between sponsored female surfers and the Big Three.

Limitations of the Study

My study involves getting sponsored female surfers and surf company representatives to participate in an ethnographic study that employs interviews, observations and field notes. The study is limited to the experiences of fifteen sponsored female surfers and the three surf companies, Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy. Whilst the sample size for the sponsored female surfer group may appear limited, it was this number that was conveniently available for my study and the observation of hundreds of female surfers at various surfing events over the four year period added depth to the qualitative nature of my study. Other ethnographic studies (Brewer & Sparkes, 2011; Corner, 2008; Hannis-Martin, 2006; Howe, 2001; Knijnik, Horton & Cruz, 2010; Langseth, 2011) have only examined small groups of participants which did not detract from the quality or rigor of the results. The strength of the small number of participants in this study lies in the experience of sponsored surfers interviewed and the rich data they provided. I was aware that the sponsorship experiences of female surfers being interviewed might vary considerably depending on their generational views and perspectives. Therefore, the views of the surfers selected for interview were not necessarily representative of all female surfers.
As mentioned in the prelude the Big Three surf companies were chosen because of their historical significance in the establishment of the surfwear and are currently the three most popular surf brands in the world.

An ethnographic approach allowed me to collect interview data and observe participants in the research setting. I was conscious that any study that engages in an examination of human experiences and opinions can draw out contradictions and issues that perhaps are not necessarily representative of that whole group. In addition, similar to other ethnographic research, the locations used as data collection sites in this study cannot be ultimately generalised to other locations, areas or cultural settings. As an ethnographic researcher and partial insider in the surfing community, another limitation was the continual struggle to remain open-minded (Herndl & Nahrwold, 2000). I was consciously aware of my constantly shifting position as both female researcher, active surfer, which included my ‘insider’ relationship within the surfing industry and how these roles could impact upon my observations, and the analysis. My ‘insider’ status necessitated employing both personal and epistemological reflexivity (Willig, 2001) to reflect upon my established values, experiences, interests, commitments and social identity connected to the surfing culture and how this may shape the research process. Epistemological reflexivity enabled me to reflect on the assumptions made at the beginning of this chapter and to identify the implications of these assumptions for the research findings and conclusions.

In addition, I was aware that the sponsored female surfers had loyalty and contractual agreements with surfing sponsors and that any comments recorded could impact upon their future agreements. Thus, it may have limited
the type of information the participants were willing to disclose. Likewise, I was conscious that the surf company representatives had to be cautious with information given to maintain reputation and confidentiality. Therefore, the reader needs to be aware that my interpretation of the research data is based on previous experiences and beliefs and to consider their own beliefs when engaging in the research being presented.

The final limitation was related to the use of the computer programme Leximancer. In the early stages of my thesis I initially used Leximancer as my main analysis tool because research had cited it as being the most appropriate and efficient way available to sort the large amount of transcribed interview data. I did find Leximancer useful in sorting the data and highlighting relevant themes. The use of concept maps visually identified the main concepts obtained from interview data, and alleviated the arduous task of retrieving relevant quotes from the transcribed interviews to be used in the analysis. However, as my thesis progressed, and because I had a close working knowledge of the surfing culture, I discovered that manually coding and manipulating my data gave me more control over my work and ownership of the themes derived from this process. At times also I found that the concepts established though Leximancer restricted my flow of writing. Dey (1993) substantiated my view and argued that the use of a computer for analysis can encourage a mechanical approach and the “roles of creativity and intuition and insight in the analysis are eclipsed in favour of a routine and mechanical processing of data” (p. 63). Seidel (1991) also contends that there is the possibility that an “obsession with the technology and techniques will blind the analyst to the crucial assumptions of his or her research” (p. 112-113). Therefore, for the purpose of this ethnographic study I incorporated manual coding as my primary method of
analysis to enable familiarity with the interview data, observations, field notes and analysis of surf-related media to establish themes, and used Leximancer as a complementary tool to triangulate the data and enhance validity of the findings.

**Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into seven chapters as follows:

In Chapter 1 I outline the motivation behind my choice of thesis topic, and present the theoretical perspectives and purpose and objectives of the thesis. I include the overall structure of the thesis and provide a definition of terms.

In Chapter 2 I contextualise and examine literature relating to women in sport. In this chapter I also investigate a broad range of concerns in order to discuss the dynamic and ongoing debate about the lifestyle marketing of female athletes through sponsorship. I also examine the historical evolution of women’s surfing and provide an understanding about the growth in participation and performance of women in this sport.

In Chapter 3 I investigate literature regarding the marketing of female athletes. The chapter addresses aspects of brand building and lifestyle marketing. Furthermore, it establishes the development of the surfing lifestyle brand as a lucrative marketing strategy by the leading Big Three surf companies. It begins with a narrative account of the evolution of surf brands and examines the growth of lifestyle marketing by these companies as a means of enhancing brand image and reputation. Finally, an overview and profile of each of the Big Three surf companies with an emphasis on their differing marketing strategies are presented and discussed.

In Chapter 4 I present a conceptual overview of Lessing and Foucault’s
work to illustrate its usefulness in an examination of issues surrounding the lived sponsorship experiences of female surfers. The chapter outlines the research design for the thesis and presents justification for employing an ethnographic approach, discusses the data collection tools and details the procedural issues that are relevant to the thesis. In addition this chapter considers the factors involved in gaining access to the research sites.

In Chapter 5 I present an analysis and discussion of the data pertaining to the lifestyle marketing of female surfers through sponsorship supported by interviews, observations, field notes and document analysis.

In Chapter 6 I present an analysis of the interview data relating to the practices, motivation, selection criteria and philosophy relating to sponsorship by the Big Three surf companies, Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy.

In the final chapter I review the purpose of this thesis and the extent to which the results support the expectations explicitly contained in the objectives and research findings presented in chapters 5 and 6. I also outline the practical and theoretical implications of my study. The chapter concludes by providing some direction for future research that will assist in gaining a greater understanding of the position of women in professional surfing, help to raise their profile and improve conditions for women in the sport.

**Definition of Key Terms**

For the purpose of this thesis the following definitions will be used:

*Baby Boomer Generation*: the generation of people born between 1946 and 1964.
Big Three: refers to the domination of three large Australian surf companies that operate on an international scale, Billabong, Rip Curl, Quiksilver, and its female equivalent Roxy – all of which consistently rank amongst the top-five surf companies internationally (Stranger, 2010).

Brand Equity: “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by the product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers” (Aaker, 1991, p. 15).

Brand Personality: a marketing strategy wherein a brand incorporates an accompanying brand name, trademark and a popular athlete in their strategy to create human-like qualities to reinforce the consumer’s beliefs about that brand (Hoffman & Preble, 2003).

Brand Reputation: “a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or combination of these intended to identify the goods, services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from their competitors” (Kotler, Wong, Saunders & Armstrong, 2005, p. 259).

Commodification: in the sport sense means that owners or sponsors of professional sporting teams try to extract as much surplus profit from their labour (the players) to increase consumer spending (spectator and purchaser of sporting goods) (Gottdiener, 2000, p. 179).

Feminine sports: those sports in which it is considered appropriate for women to participate and that allow women participants to remain true to the stereotyped expectations of femininity (such as being graceful and nonaggressive) and that provide for beauty and aesthetic pleasure (Koivula, 2001, p. 378).


Inequity/Inequality: The meanings of inequity and inequality have been described as being interchangeable. However, for the purpose of this thesis the term inequity is used to signify any injustice or unfairness.

Lifestyle: "A particular set of attitudes, interests, and opinions and identifiable patterns or mode of living" (Michman, Mazze, & Greco, 2003, p. 181).

Lifestyle marketing: "consists of segmenting a complex market into niche subdivisions based on interests, attitudes, and beliefs. This marketing technique creates an enthusiastic and loyal consumer-base and establishes the brand as a valuable part of the consumer’s everyday life" (Fuse Marketing, n.d.).

Lifestyle sports: A general term for sports featuring speed, height, danger or spectacular stunts. This includes more than a dozen individual sports that have emerged in the past few years or are considered too dangerous to be included in traditional competitions: BMX stunt riding, inline skating, snowboarding, surfing, rock climbing, sky diving, scuba diving, free diving, and motoX (Ravenscroft et al., 2005).

Marketing mix: “The elements of the communication paradigm dictated by an organisation or company to develop an Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) strategy to coordinate the content, frequency, timing, and medium of communications in collaboration with its paid agents” (Meenaghan, 1999, p. 138).
Non-traditional sports: a form of leisure-time physical activity that is planned, structured and competitive, but is not recognised as a modern or socially accepted sporting event (Smith, 2010, p. 12).

Party wave: a wave surfed by several people at once.

Self-surveillance: “the attention one pays to one’s behaviour when facing the actuality or virtuality of an immediate or mediated observation by others whose opinion he or she deems as relevant” (Vaz & Bruno, 2003, p. 273).

Sport marketing: divided into two categories: “the marketing of sports (marketing sporting events and equipment to spectators and participants) and marketing with sports (promotion of non-sport products at sporting events using athletes to endorse non-sport products)” (Shannon, 1999, p. 521).

Subculture: “Distinctive lifestyles, values, norms, and beliefs of certain segments of the population within a society” (Workman & Freeburg, 2000, p. 358).

Surfing: In the context of this thesis refers to surfboard riding.

Surveillance: Surveillance or the panopticon determines “whether an individual is behaving as he should, in accordance with the rule or not” (Foucault, 1994, p, 59) and is based on “a principle of compulsory visibility” by the one being observed “through the invisibility of the disciplinary power” (Foucault, 1977, p. 187) which leads to self-surveillance on the part of the individual.

Target market: “An approach that focuses on attracting a specific potential purchaser, whose lifestyle, preferences, and aspirations are predisposed to see a match with the offer” (Brannon, 2005, p. 404).
Summary

This chapter commenced with a discussion of Doris Lessing (1991) and Michel Foucault’s (1979) theories that provide a theoretical framework in this study to examine the level of contradiction, power and agency at play in the lifestyle marketing of sponsored female surfers by the Big Three. This research was the product of a four-year ethnography in which I was able to immerse myself in the surfing environment as both participant observer and ‘insider’ within the surfing community. Utilising the concepts of Lessing and Foucault enabled me to interpret and explore the technologies of power within the surfing industry and the level of conformity being undertaken by sponsored female surfers. In addition, I provided an overview of the main research purpose and objectives to outline how this research will determine whether the process of lifestyle marketing of female surfers by the Big Three through sponsorship is equitable and beneficial to both sponsors and surfers. Finally, I outlined the structure of the thesis and provided a definition of terms pertaining to the frequently used lifestyle marketing, sponsorship and surfing terminology to enable clear understanding of the implied use of each term in the context of the thesis.

In Chapter 2 I examine literature relating to women in sport within the surfing context and investigate a broad range of relevant issues in order to discuss the dynamic and ongoing debate about the lifestyle marketing of female athletes through sponsorship. I also include a discussion about the inclusion of popular cultural media sources in the surfing context, examine the historical evolution of women’s surfing and provide an understanding about the growth in participation and performance including the lifestyle marketing of women in this sport.
Chapter 2: Contextualising the Study
Women Making Waves

Introduction

In Chapter 1 I introduced the concepts of Lessing (1991) and Foucault (1979) that I use as a theoretical paradigm to examine and understand the lived sponsorship experiences of female surfers. I also provided an overview of the main research purpose and objectives for this study. This chapter critically examines the literature that considers the position of women in the sporting context and particularly women in the sport of surfing.

With surfing’s history of male domination, it is important to address relevant issues connected to women in sport that will link to the surfing context. In Chapter 1 I noted that my work is not intended to be hyper-critical of the male surfing industry. My review of academic work about the historical evolution of women’s surfing, both internationally and in the Australian context, provides valuable background information about the growth in participation and rise in performance – particularly in women’s professional surfing – to highlight female surfers’ continuing struggle with sponsorship, media exposure and equitable promotion in the sport. As this thesis conveys narratives of female surfer’s sponsorship experiences through the lens of myself – as a female researcher who is already immersed in the surfing culture – I argue that it is also useful to include the theoretical underpinnings of “third wave” feminism that Heywood (2008) refers to as “third-wave stealth feminism” (p. 71). The term also provides an ideal metaphoric backdrop for this thesis because the current generation of girls and women understand feminist activism in a broader sense as opposed to following a leader or established movement. Because feminists and feminism
during the 1990s suffered from bad public relations and media representation (Gillis, Howie & Munford, 2004; Harris, 2001; Heywood, 2003; Walters, 2005) younger women disassociated themselves from being labelled ‘feminist’. However, Heywood (2003) notes that amongst the current generation of girls and women there is an increasing number of “productive alliances of feminist organisations around issues related to women’s sport as well as feminist ideology in organisations like the Women’s Sports Foundation” (p. 51). Thus these everyday feminists are going under the radar and advancing their causes in a “kind of stealth feminism that draws attention to key feminist goals” (Heywood, 2003, p. 51) and without the stigma attached to the word ‘feminist’. As well as its relationship to the general population of Generation Y, third wave feminism presents implications and connections to the current generation of female surfers, such as Sally Fitzgibbons and Tyler Wright from Australia, Carissa Moore and Coco Ho from Hawaii, Paige Hareb from New Zealand and Lakey Peterson and Courtney Conlogue from California, just to mention a few. This current generation of young female surfers has the opportunity to challenge and transform the thinking of an historically male dominated surfing industry. The combined concepts and theories of Lessing (1991) and Foucault (1979) are used to understand the implications of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship on female surfers. In keeping with the interpretive paradigm, Lessing’s concept of conformity has helped me to rethink my ethnographic research practices to investigate how female surfers come to accept their environment or the surfing world in which they are active participants.

Therefore, in this chapter, I review literature that contextualises the study through the use of nine sections that will assist the reader to gain a progressive
understanding of the rise of professional women’s surfing. The sections are: Third Wave Perspectives; Popular Cultural Media Sources in the Surfing Context; The Female Sporting Context; Women in Surfing History; The Development of Women’s Competitive Surfing; Today’s Professional Surfing Circuit; Media Surveillance of Female Athletes; Media Surveillance of Female Surfers and Summary.

The next section explores contemporary surf culture and the place of ‘third wave’ or ‘third wave stealth feminism’ (Harris, 2001; Heywood, 2008) as a perspective to examine the development of women’s competitive surfing and the influence that media and the introduction of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship has had on the promotion of individual surf companies and the current generation of female surfers.

**Third Wave Perspectives**

Lesley Heywood and Jennifer Drake (2004) argue that third wave feminism has become part of a global struggle for human rights and contend the philosophy behind third wave feminism is linked to environmental, anti-corporate and human rights issues whose “activists are opposed to the many institutions within which previous women’s gains have been made” (p. 11). They also acknowledge that:

Many men and women choose to identify with third wave feminist perspectives whether or not they are part of a post-boomer generation, and as such the third wave refers to both a feminist generation and to emerging forms of feminist activism (p. 17).
Therefore, while gender and culture still play an important role in a third wave approach, it recognises multiple forms of feminist work and activism. In my work I use the notion of third wave feminism.

Heywood (2008) first used the term “stealth feminism” (p. 71) to describe three simultaneous occurrences during the early stages of third wave feminism. First, post-Title IX, a law passed in the United States of America in 1972 that requires gender equity for boys and girls in every educational program that receives federal government funding – there was a definite shift in attitude in the ways young women engaged in feminism. Given the range of issues in lives of young women worldwide, many were more interested in and attuned to the “think globally, act locally” (Harris, 2001, p. 5) approach and individual commitment than following a leader or established movement. The second occurrence for Generation Y women was that they had grown up with the benefits of Title IX and as such, feminism was entwined naturally into their lives. The Title IX legislation had significant implications for women’s participation in sport in Australia and was successful in getting women and girls active in sports programs and alternate sports that were usually the domain of men. As Heywood (2004) argues, this generation of third wave feminists whether they adhere to that label or not, are “using athleticism as an activist tool” which can have “important social consequences” (p. 45). The increase in women taking up sport opened up the market for sports brands such as Nike and Reebok to utilise the image of strong female athletes to sell their products. Compared to women from Generation X, who were born between 1970 and the early 1990s, Heywood (2008) argues that Generation Y female athletes, who were born between 1992 and 2000 and grew up in playing sports and participating in
action sports such as surfing, had the opportunity to experience a balanced
gendered outlook on sport.

The final reason why Heywood (2008) described third wave feminism as
“stealth feminism” was because, given sport’s tradition as a predominantly male
domain, girls and women are progressively “not only being supported in
demonstrating achievement, competence, and strength, but are required to do
so” (p. 71). Harris (2001) believes the current generation of girls and women
understand feminist activism in a broader sense and are expanding their
concepts of “issues and activism beyond the familiar” especially outside the
Western world to include the representation of “all girl’s voices” (p.30).

Therefore, third wave female activists take into account the multiplicity of issues
and take part in resistance and consciousness-raising against oppressions such
as race, class and gender. Krista Comer (2004) built on Heywood’s work and
argued that a major difference in attitude between Gen X and Gen Y is that the
third wave approach is a more blended one in that it embraces “valuing ‘girl-
ness’ at the same time as one aims to achieve at the highest level” (p. 241).

Heywood and Dworkin (2003) believe that “athleticism can be an activist tool for
third wave feminists and have important social consequences” (p. 45) especially
with women taking part in lifestyle sports such as surfing, snowboarding,
rockclimbing and skateboarding. Women taking part in these types of sporting
activities means that the cultural myths of women being the weaker sex and an
emphasis on women’s bodies reinforcing negative sexual stereotypes is being
challenged. The notion of stealth when applied to feminism suggests that it
draws attention to key issues surrounding femininity without young women
having to identify themselves as feminist, even though they might agree in principle with feminist political views.

Harris (2008) and Heywood (2000) agree that today’s modern female surfer represents the successful articulation of third wave feminism by linking beauty culture with physical skill and independent sexuality. I draw on a comment by an Australian girl highlighted in an article by feminist writer Anita Harris (2001), about categorisations of young feminism. The Australian girl’s comment emphasises the tenets of third wave feminism:

To me feminism means so many things. I can’t go by what mainstream media’s representation is or what they try to present because we are all different and are going to have different opinions. I don’t know about all these waves of feminism. I’m riding my own personal tidal wave (p. 28).

The comment suggests that some young women are engaged as feminists, but are not interested in traditional notions and find the categorisations implied by being labelled feminist “alienating, divisive, too simplistic and unrepresentative” (Harris, 2001, p. 28). I agree with Harris’s view that the previous categories of feminism emphasise the limitations for articulating young women’s voices. Harris proposes three key features of “uncategorised” young or third wave feminism as “diverse, multiple, and open to a range of viewpoints; using technology, popular culture and the media in savvy ways; and is do-it-yourself (DIY) rather than leader focused” (p. 29). Yet the images being portrayed still necessitate a preference towards a certain body type and in the case of the preferred surfing image, it is blonde, slim and attractive. These images suggest what sort of symbolic capital (McRobbie, 1991), or attractiveness, is important in contemporary surfing culture.
Historically, the media has ignored, or limited, coverage of female surfers. The third wave or third wave stealth feminism has created a cultural context where the empowerment of girls and women is embraced by the media. These powerful images of successful female athletes are in some ways challenging historical exclusion of media coverage of women and are helping to usher in a new third wave of female athleticism. Paradoxically, female surfers, particularly those supported by the media, encompass the essence of third wave feminism and may feel a sense of empowerment rather than still being exposed to patriarchal objectification, as was the case in the second-wave feminist era. These features, and some of the ideals of third wave feminism, have been valuable when analysing the responses of female surfers from Generation Y. Therefore, this study takes on a feminist standpoint and like Lessing, who gives voice to the silent women – the refugees and homeless of our century – so too can this ethnographic study give voice to female surfers’ experiences of sponsorship.

Therefore, I apply my understanding and awareness of third wave feminism to Foucault’s (1990) notion of technologies of the self and Lessing’s (1991) notion of conformity and/or choice to understand the attitudes of the new generation of female surfers. Foucault’s (1994) notion of the technologies of the self imply that the external application of surveillance by surf companies, the media and even the public encourages female surfers to engage in self-surveillance to maintain the requirements of their sponsorship agreements. However, in the third wave context, having freedom of choice may indicate that female surfers are using their sexuality to gain control and a sense of empowerment rather than feeling exploited by the media and surf brands.
Lessing’s (1991) concepts of conformity and Foucault’s (1979) notions of technology of self as a combined theoretical lens is used to assist my understanding to determine whether lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers is being embraced by Generation Y and whether the tenets of third wave feminism are influencing girls and women to be active in their choices about their bodies and identities exemplifying a level of individual resistance and freedom in the male dominated culture of surfing.

Before embarking on literature regarding women in the sporting context and in surfing, a justification for the use of articles by sports writers and surf journalists and analysis of cultural visual material represented in magazines, newspapers, surf-related websites, photographic images and DVDs to illustrate their use as a source in the context of this thesis is provided.

**Popular Cultural Media Sources in the Surfing Context**

The following literature review includes excerpts from articles by sports writers and surf journalists and an analysis of cultural visual material represented in magazines, newspapers, surf-related websites, photographic images and DVDs to highlight the different ways female surfers are represented by both mass and niche media. In the surfing sponsorship context, pictorial surfing representations illustrated through these mediums are described by Beal and Smith (2010) as the “central currency of the industry and these photographic narratives are used to sell other products such as apparel” (p. 1111). As Knijnik, Horton, and Cruz (2010) imply, the media is “an omnipotent force in the construction of an athletes’ image” (p.1179) which not only affects
who gets sponsorship but also emphasises the power of the media in the creation of these other mediums.

Because the growth of surfing as a lifestyle sport has been significantly influenced by the media I have drawn upon a variety of surf-related sources that in my opinion enhance understanding about the surfing culture, the research participants and the internet environment being used by current consumers of surf products. In a similar way, researchers such as Duncan (2006); Thornton (1995); Thorpe (2011) and Wheaton and Beal, (2003) have highlighted that there are two forms of media representation: mass media – television, newspapers, videos or DVDs, such as Blue Crush (Grazer & Stockwell, 2002), and general internet sites – and niche or sub-cultural media such as surf magazines, surf-specific websites and surf specific videos or DVDs. Mass media are those media technologies that are intended to reach a large audience by mass communication, whereas niche media is more relevant to a particular market or, in the case of surfing, an intended surfing subculture.

Wheaton and Beal (2003) believe that alternative cultures such as surfing are “taste cultures” (p. 157) in which niche media plays an important role in disseminating information about a particular culture’s activities to its members. Other researchers (Borden, 2003; McRobbie, 1997; Stranger, 2010; Thornton, 2005) have pointed out that consumption and analysis of specialist media is important in learning sub-cultural values. Therefore it is important for me as a participant ethnographer within the surfing culture to utilise these multiple sources of data to truly engage in understanding the processes and experiences of female surfer sponsorship.
Over a dozen researchers (Brewer & Hunter, 2006; Gunter, Nicholas & Huntington, 2002; Lecce, Bandar, Sprague, Swiontkowski, Schemitsch, Tornetta, Devereaux & Guyatt, 2004; Miller & Slater, 2000; Moss & Hendry, 2002; Murthy, 2007, 2008) have utilised online or e-questionnaires because it was an effective method of interviewing, sometimes providing more personal, intimate responses compared to face-to-face interviews, it also attained an improved response rate from participants and was effective in collecting interview data from inaccessible geographical locations. The purpose of this approach to ethnography does not place the information from other surf-related sources above other academic writing but rather I acknowledge their place in relationship to them. A more detailed account of the use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis is discussed later in Chapter 4.

The next section begins with an examination of literature relating to women in the sporting context.

The Female Sporting Context

It is well documented that the promotion and progress of women’s sport has been devalued (Grau, Roseli, & Taylor, 2007; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Higgins, 2007; Lucas, 2000; McDonald, 2000; Theberge, 2000; Thorpe, 2007). Only limited academic research (Love, 1989; Booth, 2001b; Comer, 2010; Corner, 2008; Heywood, 2008; Knijnik et al., 2010; McGloin, 2005; Rinehart, 2005; Stedman, 1997; Vlachos, 2008) has examined the position of women specifically in the sport of surfing. This section addresses some of the stereotypical gender issues relevant to the participation, sponsorship and
marketing of females in sport in general, and relates these to the surfing context.

Historically, the inclusion of women into organised sports was controlled and regulated by male physical educators and promoters who imposed different sets of rules, clothing, time and spatial dimensions on women’s sports compared to men’s sports (Cahn, 1990). In today’s society, sport for men – as either spectators or participants – still provides opportunities to exemplify the masculine elements of strength, aggression, toughness, competitiveness, speed and skill which maintains and affirms men’s identity and their “physical, symbolic and economic dominance over women” (Stevenson, 2002, p. 212). The perpetuation of men’s dominance in sport is central to the concept of power described by Connell (2002) who argues that certain types of sports have been considered more appropriate for men or women according to how they display stereotypical gender-typical traits. Other researchers (Anderson, 2009; Carty, 2005; Cole, 2000; McGinnis, McQuillan, & Chapple, 2005; Messner, Duncan, & Cooky, 2003; Pringle, 2005; Shaw, 2007; Stevenson, 2002; Thorpe, 2010) emphasise the significance of sport in creating and maintaining notions of male dominance and inequity for women. This is particularly relevant in the surfing context with its history of male domination impacting on the progress of women’s professional surfing.

One of the main barriers to women’s interest in participating in sport and physical activity, particularly in non-traditional and male-dominated sports such as surfing and snowboarding, has been the association of the ‘sporty type’ of female athlete with the label of ‘masculine’ or ‘unfeminine’ (Choi, 2000; Thorpe, 2010). Choi argued that the “link between the sporty type and masculinity has
been reinforced through social institutions and the media” (p. 86). This belief has served to preserve the masculine identity of sport and make women’s continued presence a marginal and inequitable experience. Examples of how sponsorship privileges femininity over athletic ability are evident in the literature (Grow, 2008; Harris, & Clayton, 2002) with professional tennis players like Anna Kournikova whose endorsement of products during the 1990s earned her millions of dollars without ever winning a singles title. Even though Kournikova’s tennis performance was below average compared to other top professional tennis players it was her physical appearance that advantaged her over other more talented players. Similarly, Maria Sharapova acquired a US$70 million contract with Nike despite not even being the official number one tennis player in the world. Needless to say, Kournikova and Sharapova’s physical appearance conform to what Lessing (1991) described as patriarchal definitions of beauty and femininity. Yet research (Dworkin & Messner, 2002; Gabbard, 2000; Spencer & McClung, 2001; Theberge, 2000) and a history of surf culture by Kampion and Brown (2003) has demonstrated that women’s interest and participation in sport, particularly non-traditional sports such as surfing continue to increase.

Spencer and McClung (2001) identified factors associated with the increase in women and girls’ participation in sport. These factors included “government legislation focusing on equal rights; the women’s rights movement; availability of new opportunities for participation; greater emphasis on fitness and health issues; greater attendance at female sports events and increased media coverage emphasising visible female role models” (p. 319). Dworkin and Messner (2002) also acknowledged the impact of women’s increasing
participation in sports and argued that “the very existence of skilled and strong women athletes demanding recognition and equal access to resources is a destabilizing tendency in the current gender order” (p. 20). This means that the masculine terrain of the surfing subculture is also being contested. However, the rise in popularity and increased funding opportunities for female athletes in sport generally has also lead to resistance and a rise in men’s leadership and control of women’s sport (Dworkin & Messner, 2002).

An important consideration in this thesis is that, even though there has been a substantial increase in the number of girls and women in sports such as snowboarding, windsurfing, soccer, cricket and rugby, to name a few, which challenge the historical belief that sport is a predominantly male domain, research (Bruce, 2008; Lucas, 2000; McDonald, 2000) in the last decade suggests that the female athletes who appear to be most successful fit into the dominant cultural ideals of femininity, heterosexuality and attractiveness. It is these athletes who receive the most media coverage and gain sponsorship opportunities from leading sports brands. Despite the optimism surrounding the increased participation of girls and women in sport it appears that the underlying message is that athleticism and femininity are still the preferred societal combination (Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar, & Kauer, 2001; McCallister, Blinde & Phillips, 2003). This presents a challenge for women in sport who do not fit a feminine stereotype, particularly female surfers, to be considered or accepted for sponsorship regardless of their image.

Cole (2000) claims that an increased interest in women’s sport is linked to the requirement to create profitable new markets which has led to a number of multinational companies announcing their commitment to girls and women.
Large companies such as Nike and Adidas have realised the stagnation and saturation of the male market (Lucas, 2000). Consequently, as Lucas argues “the growth and potential of the women’s sport market has created powerful brands specifically for women” (p. 151). This trend has had implications for female athletes from sporting codes such as tennis and golf, as well as the non-traditional sports of surfing and snowboarding, as they are empowered to fully pursue their ambitions in sport through sponsorship by these alternate companies (Slack & Amis, 2004; Thorpe, 2007).

Leading surf brands have followed Nike’s and Adidas’s lead with the growth in women’s participation and performance level in the sport and a growing commercial interest in female surfers. These surf companies are seeing the benefits of taking advantage of the growing popularity of sponsorship of both amateur and professional female surfers (Higgins, 2007). However, Heywood (2007) suggests that despite the abundance of images and rhetoric that support and promote women’s surfing, it is also true, as in other women’s sports, that “resources in surfing are still largely controlled by men” (p. 69). Corner (2008) supports this claim and argues that “while women and girls are architects of this takeover [of surfing], they are not its principal power players, and they reap but the most negligible fraction of its profits” (p. 240). The literature demonstrates a distinct gap in addressing issues of empowerment of female surfers particularly in the area of support through sponsorship.

To provide some context about the current position of women in surfing the following section discusses the historical evolution of women’s surfing and its growth in both international and Australian settings.
Women in Surfing History

Today’s generation of female surfers appears to be challenging existing gender-biased thinking about the appropriate positioning of women within the realm of competitive surfing and the surfing culture itself. When looking more closely into the annals of surfing history, the current female uprising is perhaps less revolutionary than presumed. In many ways, the new breed of female surfer is drawing us closer to surfing’s roots and identity where female surfers were more dominant than men (Walker, 2011). It is believed that the earliest female surfers were Polynesian, from Hawaii, where it was commonplace for as many women as men to be in the water (Booth, 2001a). In many early ancient Hawaiian narratives, women were celebrated and depicted as central characters and inflicted mortal vengeance on any male who disrespected them in the surf (Walker, 2011). Women’s long tradition with surfing was also demonstrated through ancient engravings and carvings featuring women surfers (Figure 2.1) (Booth, 2001a). The oldest known board was a small ‘floater’ which was found in 1905 in a burial cave at Ho’ok‘ena and belonged to a 17th century Hawaiian island female chief. It is believed that coasting on a sled was the high chief(ess)’s main amusement (Booth, 2001b).

Polynesian surfing continued until the intervention of American missionaries who, in the 1830s, discouraged women from the sport as they considered the
activity unsuitable for females (Booth, 2001b). Female surfing declined as a result but was rediscovered by Hawaiian women later that century (Booth, 2001a). During the early 1900s, surfing experienced a small revival when Hawaii became a holiday destination. Josephine Pratt was widely regarded as the most accomplished Hawaiian female surfboard riders of that time (Southerden, 2003).

Despite Pratt’s achievements and those of the Hawaiian female surfer Mary Hawkins – described as a surfer, body surfer, long distance swimmer and the greatest woman surfer of the first half of the 20th century (Southerden, 2003) – it was not until the mid-20th century that women’s participation in surfing revived. World War 2 brought about an increased interest in surfing as thousands of women and men were stationed at the US military bases in Hawaii and took up the sport (Southerden, 2003). At the same time, women were encouraged to surf by early board designers Duke Kahanamoku and Tom Blake. Blake suggested that surfing would help women develop ‘beautiful’ and ‘graceful’ figures (Wardlaw, 1991). Thus, the reasons for encouragement were not always about equality of opportunity, but rather to perpetuate the ‘feminine’ and sexualised characteristics and images of women on boards.

It is believed that the first surfboard arrived in Australia in 1912 (Lanagan, 2003) at the same time body surfing was also introduced (Booth, 1994). Prior to this, surfboards were still primarily used by surf lifesaving clubs. Surfboards were not ideal for surfing as they were cumbersome wooden ‘planks’ and were in excess of three metres (Lanagan, 2003). A significant event that sparked interest in women taking up the sport of surfing was in 1915 when Duke Kahanamoku from Hawaii demonstrated “Hawaiian-style surf
shooting” (Southerden, 2003, p. 13) at Freshwater Beach in Sydney. A 15-year-old Australian girl, Isabel Letham was chosen by organisers of the event to surf in tandem with the Duke because of her reputation as a tomboy who spent all her spare time at the beach and swimming (Booth, 1994; Hall & Ambrose, 1995; Young, 1994). The fact that she was chosen for her tomboyish qualities is noteworthy considering that later, women’s interests in surfing declined because of this type of label.

Despite Isabel Letham’s father initially forbidding her to engage in such a dangerous pastime, she was drawn to surfing and continued to surf and inspire generations of women surfers right up until she died in 1995. Surfing journalist Gault-Williams (2003) believed that Isabel originally promoted surfing whilst entering swimming contests but finally earned herself a place in the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame for her contributions and promotion of women’s surfing. A photo of her was taken in about 1917 (Figure 2.2).

Ironically, with the central tenet of this thesis based on the fact that women are being under represented in the surfing culture, the cover of the first Australian surfing magazine to be published (Figure 2.3) featured a woman, Isabel Letham (Gault-Williams, 2003). This is probably one of the earliest examples in the history of women’s surfing in Australia where a woman is represented undertaking the physical act of surfing rather than being depicted only for her physical appearance. Despite Letham’s example, there was still
limited opportunity for females to surf because of the continuing belief that the sport was hazardous and not suitable for women (Gelb & Palley, 1996; Hult, 1994). Letham’s influence and contribution to women’s surfing was a considerable accomplishment during a time when women were not even encouraged to participate in competitive sport for fear of making them less feminine (Coakley, 2001). Another Australian woman, an accomplished bodysurfer by the name of Esma Amor was reported to have surfed even earlier. She was reported to have commenced swimming and surfboard riding around 1912-13. I followed up on information that Esma started surfing before Isabel Letham, and I spoke with her daughter, Bettina Kinnear (personal communication, June 20, 2006), who now resides in England and who confirmed this to be true. She described how her mother originally started surfing to relieve the symptoms of polio (B. Kinnear, personal communication, June 20, 2006). The fact that Esma Amor surfed before Isabel Letham is not so relevant to the focus of this thesis but contributes to an understanding of the historical beginnings of women’s surfing.

A breakthrough for surfing women in Australia occurred concurrently with the Olympic Games in Melbourne 1956. American lifesavers who attended the Games brought with them lighter boards made of balsa-wood, which were
easier to carry and use (Lanagan, 2003; Wheaton, 2005). Booth (1999) believed that the development of lighter and more manoeuvrable surfboards made surfing easier and more accessible to female board riders. In addition, Booth argued that the balsa-wood board changed surfing styles and techniques and allowed women to develop their own style. This was because it made the sport less physically demanding than surfing with the older heavy long boards. According to surfing journalist Gault-Williams (2003), this technological breakthrough heralded a new breed of female surfer, whose style of surfing was likened to a more male-orientated aggressive style.

It was not until the 1960s that women’s surfing really became popular with the advent of Hollywood movies like *Gidget Goes Hawaiian* (Bresler & Wendkos, 1961) and *Ride the Wild Surf* (Napoleon & Taylor, 1964). Kathy Kohner (Figure 2.4) was depicted on the cover of the novel *Gidget*, (Kohner, 2001) a story written by her father, Hollywood screenwriter Frederick Kohner. In the book he tells a story based on his daughter’s experiences surfing at the age of fifteen in the surfing culture of Malibu in the United States of America. The book subsequently led to three *Gidget* movies, a television series, *Gidget* merchandise such as comics and games, and more than twenty ‘beach party’ movies throughout the 60s (Southerden, 2003). Linda Benson, who is recognised as a pioneer of women’s surfing, performed the surfing action...
sequences for *Gidget Goes Hawaiian* (Bresler & Wendkos, 1961). She was Pacific Coast Women’s Champion in 1959, 1960 and 1961. In 1963, at the age of 18, Benson was one of the best-known young women in surfing as she was the first woman to ride Waimea Bay, the big wave spot on the North Shore on the island of O’ahu in Hawaii. Surfing journalist Gault-Williams (2003) observes that Benson’s surfing style incorporated both strength and artistry in riding Hawaiian and Californian waves in the early 60s. The notoriety of the original *Gidget* movie (Rachmil, & Wendkos, 1959) enticed more women and girls to the beach, however, the underlying message was still that girls were more suited to watching from the sidelines and highlighted a boys-only mentality.

Therefore, as Booth (2001a) argued, despite the popularity of Hollywood’s crop of female surfing movies, the physical act of surfing was still considered ‘tomboyish’ and few girls and women participated. Those who challenged the norm and resisted the majority opinion as described by Lessing (1991), were either labelled ‘masculine’ or as having the surfing ability of a man. In order to strive for recognition in a predominantly male industry, female board riders began to organise their own competitions. To investigate the concept of inequity in the surfing context, the development of competitive surfing for women and the influence of film and media on this phenomenon will now be examined.

**The Development of Women’s Competitive Surfing**

From the 1950s to the 1970s the majority of surfing competitions available for women were single amateur invitational events in varying locations around the world including Hawaii, Peru and Australia (Southerden, 2003). The
emergence of competitive surfing for women appears to have originated with the Makaha International Surfing Championship in Hawaii in the early 1950s. Female surfers such as Ethel Kakea, Marge Calhoun and Linda Merrill were amongst the first female world champions, although their achievements were not officially recognised at that stage.

Through the 1970s and 1980s women’s surfing became more physically demanding with power and speed being valued over grace and style (Booth, 2001a; Langford, 2000). Southerden (2003) argued that women’s transformation from a surfing style of feminine grace and beauty to a more male-orientated style involving power and strength widened the gap in attitude towards female surfers as anti-female comments and attitudes were common especially in the media. Flint (1999) confirmed that women were originally introduced into professional surfing to help attract a wider audience and were considered more of an accessory and were not to be taken seriously. Chase and Pepin, (2008) substantiated claims that bikini-clad girls were seen as largely decorative objects and relegated to cheering on the boys from the shore and making beer runs. Other research by Donnelly (2004), Kusz (2004) and Laurendeau and Sharara (2008) implied that action sports or ‘risk’ sports such as surfing are considered to be a male domain, as both risk and sport have been associated with masculine traits of strength and aggression. Therefore the paradox of female surfers being portrayed in a sexualised way in the media, while at the same time any accomplished female surfer being labelled as masculine, made women’s progress in surfing challenging.

It was not until the 1960s that Australian female surfers such as Pearl Turton, Phyllis O’Donnell and Gail Couper, became influential figures who lifted
the profile of women’s surfing (Hall & Ambrose, 1995). The earliest world professional surfing championship was held in Australia at Manly, Sydney in 1964. The event attracted the world’s best surfers, was sponsored by the Ampol Petroleum Company and included women (Booth, 1994). Phyllis O’Donnell became the first women’s world surfing champion. Pearl Turton, who previously featured in the 1966 classic surf movie *Endless Summer* (Brown, 1966), brought international recognition to women’s surfing when in 1963 at the age of 16, became Australia’s first recognised surfing champion by winning the first Australian Women’s Interstate surfing title. After winning the title, Turton was on the cover of the *Australian Women’s Weekly*, was the first women to write for a surfing column for *Surfabout Magazine* and did a live-to-air broadcast on Australian national television wearing only her bikini (Southerden, 2003). This contest was reported as an extremely significant event in Australian surfing at the time and was also the first example of the media devaluing women’s surfing ability. Pearl Turton’s surfing capability was reduced even further in the movie *Endless Summer* (Brown, 1966). Turton was filmed falling off her surfboard rather than showing footage that demonstrated her ability as a national surfing champion. Being asked to broadcast in a bikini and filmed falling off a wave places an emphasis on the gendered focus of the media in what were meant to be two significant events in women’s surfing history.

Another prominent female surfer during the 60s was Phyllis O’Donnell who won several Australian surfing championships and became the first women’s world champion in 1964. This world championship event was regarded as a step forward for women’s recognition in the sport. O’Donnell went on to become the Queensland women’s champion eight times between
1964 and 1973, and in 1996 was the second woman after Isabel Letham to be inducted into the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame (Southerden, 2003). As described by Southerden (2003), Gail Couper was considered to be one of the best female surfers in the 60s and 70s winning the Bells Beach contest in Victoria, Australia (now the longest running surf contest in the world) nine times. She also won the Australian Titles five times and the Victorian titles fourteen times.

Mitchell and Reid-Walsh’s (2007) recollection of an article addressing sexism in surfing by Mary Setterholm, who was the United States women’s national surfing champion in 1974, described how hostile attitudes and prejudices in society kept female surfers in the minority during this time. Setterholm’s article was important in a time when there was a developing awareness of inequity. The gendered nature of surfing began to be addressed with the introduction of a professional competition just for women and, in the following year, the Women’s International Surfing Association (WISA) was formed by Setterholm, Jerrico Poppler and Mary Lou McGinnis (Gabbard, 2000; Lowden & Lowden, 1988). Comer (2010) contends that it was this baby boomer group of women that took on women’s liberation work in surfing. The formation of WISA was instrumental in increasing public awareness of women’s surfing and raising the status of female surfers amongst surfers and society in general. This occurred because it was backed and organised by women. The WISA Hang-Ten Invitational at Malibu in 1975 was the first full scale all women’s professional event and was the first women’s contest to offer prize money (Booth, 2001a). The event was televised and, with a purse of US$5000, female surfers came from all over the world. Margo Oberg won this event and even
though her career of complete domination of her sport is still reported as being unequalled by any male surfer, she was referred to in gendered terms as ‘the girl who surfed like a guy’ (Lowden & Lowden, 1988; Southerden, 2003). So, despite the efforts of WISA and the apparent increased interest in women’s surfing, women’s surfing performances continued to be devalued.

The first women’s professional tour in 1976 was sanctioned under the International Professional Surfers (IPS) organisation, the original world governing body of professional surfing that existed between 1976 and 1982. Three years later a group of professional female surfers, led by Jerricho Poppler, started their own professional organisation called the Women’s Professional Surfing (WPS) specifically to assist women on the professional tour (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2007, Southerden, 2003). The aim of this organisation was to increase prize money and media coverage for women’s professional surfing events. Gabbard (2000) and Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2007) both agreed that this was at a time when the main focus was on bikini contests on the beach rather than the female surfers’ performance. Hence, the challenge for WPS was to promote surfing performance rather than appearance.

The WPS set up by-laws and worked with sponsors, contest directors and the media to advance women’s surfing to a higher level. Gabbard (2000) describes Poppler as being an outspoken advocate whose aim was to increase media coverage and prize money for female surfers. Gabbard believed that this campaign angered and estranged the men’s surfing organisation from including women’s surfing events, especially in Australia, where sponsorship dollars were difficult to obtain and women’s contests were being cancelled. Gabbard also
indicated that “in one Australian contest the prize for first place for the women was $1500 and the prize for the men was $35,000” (p. 84). This was an explicit example of the inequity that existed between men’s and women’s surfing contests. Two members of the WPS, Jericho Poppler and Rell Sunn, became ambassadors of surfing and started an environmental movement to preserve the ocean. Despite their efforts, women’s professional surfing continued to suffer set-backs due to inequitable contest organisation, lack of potential sponsors and minimal prize money being offered (Southerden, 2003; Stearns, 2003). Australian women who aspired to a career in professional surfing also found that a lack of sponsorship made competing overseas problematic and unattractive. All of the factors impinging women’s progress in surfing highlighted the importance of organising local surfing contests to assist Australian women to compete overseas.

Australian women faced many challenges in order to become professional surfers. These included the cost of travel to compete in America and the domination by American women who were winning most of the surfing events. In 1976, the first Women’s World Cup professional event was held in Hawaii and in 1977 the International Professional Surfers (IPS) organisation formed a sanctioned women’s world tour with events in California, Hawaii, Australia and Brazil that accumulated points towards a world championship title (Lowden & Lowden, 1988).

In 1978 it was events such as these that provided the impetus for Isabel Letham to instigate the formation of the Australian Women’s Surfriders Association (AWSA). Pam Burridge, former World Champion from Australia, was amongst its first members. Another champion surfer, Debbie Beacham,
who won the 1982 world title became active soon after in the WPS. Gabbard (2000) argued that the WPS was able to improve the standard and profile of Australian women’s surfing as the larger surfing companies began to host world-class stand-alone contests at world-respected surf locations.

In 1982 the International Professional Surfers (IPS) organisation was replaced by a new organisation called the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP). As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, the ASP was introduced as a governing body for professional surfing to organise the ASP World Championship Tour. Research by Booth (2001a) confirmed that even though the effectiveness of the WPS had diminished and the women’s professional tour was now under the sanction of the ASP, women continued to work towards developing separate events for women. Significant changes began to occur during the early 1990s and it was during this time that the profile and image of professional female surfers were being marketed by companies to promote women’s surfing ability. According to Booth (2001a), for the first time the surf industry, surfing magazines and retailers began to actively target and market female surfers to enhance their brand image. However, the sexual appeal of female surfers was emphasised in the marketing strategies of the surf companies whilst action shots and photographs of male surfers were more prominent in magazines and the media.

During the early 1960s, professional women’s surfing competitions were scheduled alongside of the men’s (Booth, 2001a). However, the women’s contests were quite often cancelled because the promoters refused to lodge the AUD$500 sanctioning fee required by the ASP. Booth (2001b) believed that the resulting irregular competitions in Australia prevented female surfers from any
forward planning to enable attractive proposals for potential sponsors. The consequence of this, as described by surf journalist Stearns (2003), was that female surfers had to compete for significantly less money in unfavourable conditions because the best surfing locations were always reserved for the men. The significantly lesser amount of prize money available and clearly discriminatory competition conditions meant that female surfing champions such as Margo Oberg, Freida Zamba, Rochelle Ballard, Jodie Cooper, Pam Burridge and Wendy Botha, struggled financially to support themselves as professional surfers. Despite the successes of the IPS and WPS, the apparent increase in interest was relatively superficial, and improved sponsorship and competition conditions for female surfers did not change dramatically. During the 1980s and 1990s female surfers continued to be devalued and dominated by the men’s surfing events and women struggled to organise their own competitions. Booth (2001a) and Gabbard (2000) agreed that the struggle to develop a viable women’s professional circuit was exacerbated by lack of media support and backing by the men’s surfing association.

Paradoxically, Gabbard (2000) and Kampion and Brown (2003) concur that at this time women’s surfing was growing at a faster pace than men’s surfing, yet the prize money and sponsorship support was still not equal. The lack of sustained sponsorship for professional female surfers dictated the number of women’s events. As a consequence a movement to partially split the men’s and women’s tours emerged. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the split men’s and women’s tours continued until other significant changes transformed women’s surfing towards greater professionalism and increased media awareness. With the realisation that the WPS would not be able to garner a
sponsoring base large enough to run its own competition, women’s and men’s competitive surfing combined in the hope that one large surfing organisation would give them more negotiating power and lead to a successful women’s international surfing circuit.

To assist the process of combining the men’s and women’s competitions, a new surfing organization called the International Women’s Surfing (IWS) was established in 2000 by five of the world’s top female professional surfers, Rochelle Ballard, Layne Beachley, Kate Skarratt, Megan Abubo and Prue Jefferies (Gabbard, 2000; Southerden, 2003). Similar to the original aims of WPS, this organisation lobbied for improved conditions for the women’s professional tour through the creation of stand-alone women’s events to enhance sponsorship dollars and media coverage. The IWS urged the ASP to sanction more women-only events instead of combining with the men’s competition. The IWS argued that stand-alone contests for professional female surfers competing in the World Championship Tour (WCT) provided more media exposure, better surfing conditions and narrowed the gap in parity with the men (Stearns, 2003). Lobbying by the IWS resulted in one stand-alone surfing event in 2000, two in 2001 and three in 2002 as well as prize money that doubled from US$30000 to US$60000 (Booth, 2001a). Yet, the apparent growth still masked the lack of sponsorship and media attention compared to the men.

For example, insufficient financial support for female surfers was substantiated by surf journalist Stearns (2003) who described how Pauline Menczer, who competed for twenty years winning a total of twenty WCT events and eight World Qualifying Series (WQS) events in addition to winning
the world championship in 1993, was forced to work side jobs to finance her travel expenses to surfing venues to cover contest entry fees. Ford and Brown (2006) agreed that relatively few professional female surfers receive enough financial support from sponsorship or prize money to commit to the travel required in order to be a professional surfer. This factor reinforces the purpose of this study to examine the experiences of sponsored female surfers to see if the competitive surfing conditions for women have improved.

Lisa Anderson, who pioneered a shift in women’s surfing performance and won four-world championships concurrently in the 1990s, provides an example of the lack of support for female surfers. She experienced similar difficulties to Pauline Menczer in her earlier surfing career. Ford and Brown (2006) confirmed that Lisa Anderson had to “negotiate her way through a life of chronic low pay, uncertain contracts, limited team support, media coverage and sponsorship deals” (p. 103). A more recent example of inequity in the sponsorship of women’s surfing events was in 2004 when the WCT held six events with a total of US$65,000 in prize money compared to eleven events for the men with prize money totalling over US$270,000 (Ford & Brown, 2006). At that time, two companies, Roxy and Billabong, sponsored five of the six women’s surfing events. With so few events on the women’s WCT and limited prize money, it meant less media coverage which made attracting sponsorship more challenging. To become a professional surfer it takes years of training and competition for both men and women to reach their full potential. Without vital sponsorship and funding for travel and competition expenses, the status of professional female surfers became prohibitive especially for younger potential female champions.
The cancellation of sporting events and difficulties to maintain a successful sporting career through lack of sponsorship including the growth of corporate media control is not specifically generalised to surfing and has occurred in other sports and to other individual athletes both male and females (Carty, 2005; Koranteng, 2010; Phillips & Hutchins, 2003). Research (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005; Srisiri, 2008) has argued that the cost of sport today in general is becoming so prohibitive that athletes need financial support for equipment, coaching, travel and the latest sport technology. Studies such as those mentioned here imply that companies exert powerful messages that force athletes to conform not only to the sponsor’s values and beliefs but also to demonstrate specific behaviours to be granted sponsorship. Loss of sponsorship whether it be as an individual, team or on a sporting event level indicates that those who do not fit sponsors’ values and beliefs and perhaps even express ‘other’ views are unlikely to receive sponsorship. An example quoted in a New York Times article by Elliot (2001) confirmed that in tennis Martina Navratilova, due to a historical discrimination against lesbians in sport, received very little sponsorship. Homophobic beliefs have been discussed in Shaw’s (2005) discussion regarding the media fit of the New Zealand women’s rugby team. The requirement of the media to have what Shaw described as an ‘angle’ or an appropriate image and dictated by a sponsoring company’s desires indicates an inability to move away from traditional dominant notions of sponsorship and exemplifies Foucault’s view about control and power within sport. It is the purpose of this thesis to determine the ability of female surfers to contest and to resist dominant and traditional notions of sponsorship.
In the latter half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Booth (2001a) argued that women’s participation in surfing continued to be hampered and devalued within the surfing culture because of a shift in the surf media’s focus on representing female surfers as sex objects. Surfing journalist Gault-Williams (2003) believes that surfing magazines and other media during this period were more interested in portraying a sexualised image of bikini-clad females. The shift in media focus to position female surfers as sex objects devalued their surfing performance and capability. As a result female surfers were perceived as ‘less skilled’ than their male counterparts, which in turn hindered viable female professional circuit support (Booth, 2001a). The representation of women as sex objects in the surf media in combination with their long struggle to forge a viable professional circuit support has continued to preserve male dominance in the sport.

Even today, the acquisition of appropriate sponsorship for the top twenty professional female surfers in the world appears to be problematic. In comparison to previous years, competitive surfing for women has become a more credible way for elite female surfers to earn a living. However, the number of women in this category is limited. To add to the timeline of women’s surfing developed by journalist Louise Southerden (2005) in her book \textit{Surf’s Up – The Girl’s Guide to Surfing} (p. 25), Table 2.1 presents a timeline of changes and progress that has occurred in women’s surfing from 1998 to 2012 and highlights the significant achievements of the current generation of women in surfing during that period. To gain insight into the commitments involved in being a professional surfer and the inherent difficulties in obtaining sponsorship, in the following section I discuss the literature regarding the current women’s professional circuit.
Table 2.1
*A Timeline of Women’s Surfing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Significant Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Layne Beachley is the first woman to participate in tow-in surfing in thirty foot waves at a break called Backyards (North Shore Hawaii).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Sarah Gerhardt becomes the first woman to surf the twenty-five-foot-plus waves at Mavericks in Half Moon Bay, California.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Gail Cooper from Victoria is inducted into the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Layne Beachley achieves a first for women’s surfing: wins five consecutive world titles. Blue Crush, the first Hollywood movie about women surfers, creates a ‘surfer girl’ boom. Lisa Anderson is inducted into the Surfing Hall of Fame at Huntington Beach, California.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Layne Beachley achieves a first in the history of surfing: six consecutive world titles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Sophia Mulanovich from Peru wins the world title. Jerrico Poppler is inducted into the Surfing Hall of Fame at Huntington Beach, California.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Chelsea Georgeson (Hedges) wins the world title. Maria and Andrea Moller is the first women tow-in team to successfully surf Peahi, otherwise known as “Jaws”, in Maui.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Layne Beachley achieves a first in the history of surfing: wins a 7th world title. She is the only individual in surfing history to win two consecutive ASP World Championship Tour events as a wildcard. Layne Beachley staged the richest event in women’s surfing history, the Havaianas Beachley Classic at Manly Beach in Sydney. Layne Beachley is inducted into the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame and the Surfing Hall of Fame at Huntington Beach, California.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Stephanie Gilmore from Australia wins the first of four consecutive world titles. Sophia Mulanovich is inducted into the Surfing Hall of Fame at Huntington Beach, California.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Stephanie Gilmore from Australia wins a second world title. At 14 years of age Tyler Wright from Australia becomes the youngest ever winner of a world surfing tour event at the Beachley Classic in Sydney.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Stephanie Gilmore from Australia wins a third world title. Layne Beachley is towed into the largest wave ever ridden by a woman in Australia at ‘Ours’ and creates the $100000 Commonwealth Bank Beachley Classic – the largest prize purse on the world tour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Stephanie Gilmore from Australia wins a fourth world title. Stephanie Gilmore is the youngest ever to be inducted into the Surfing Hall of Fame at Huntington Beach, California. Layne Beachley becomes a new member of the Surfing Australia Board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>International Surfing Association (ISA) Vice-President Debbie Beacham is inducted in the Surfing Walk of Fame, Huntington Beach. Carissa Moore, as 18-year old from Hawaii and sponsored by Nike 6.0 and Red Bull, makes ASP surfing history as the youngest ever ASP Women’s World Champion. Stephanie Gilmore signs a 5 year multi-million dollar sponsorship deal with Quiksilver Women. Layne Beachley is inducted into the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Jessi Miley-Dyer, former ASP World junior champion and six-year veteran on the ASP women’s World Tour is appointed the ASP Women’s world Tour manager position. Stephanie Gilmore from Australia wins her fifth ASP world title.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Today's Professional Surfing Circuit

In recent years the heightened level of participation and performance of female surfers has increased the interest of using the female athletes’ images to sell sporting products. This has had a follow-on effect of enhancing industry profits (Kane & Buysse, 2005). The heightened interest in female surfers has been more about improving brand sales than improving women’s surfing conditions. For women competing in sports such as tennis and golf, lucrative sponsorship arrangements and prize money has been comparable to that of men’s (Higgins, 2007). Yet, in the 50 years since Gidget (Kohner, 2001) created a female presence in the male dominated surf culture, attitudes towards the sexualised representation of female surfers, and increased opportunities for sponsorship has not been forthcoming.

Currently in Australia, there are several avenues for female surfers to engage in competitive surfing. These include competing at local, state and national or international levels. The most prestigious competition is the ASP Women’s World Tour. The ASP sanctions the following international surfing competitions that incorporate female surfers:

- Foster’s ASP World Tour
- World Qualifying Series (WQS)
- ASP Women’s World Tour
- World Longboarding, Junior and Masters Championships
  (Association of Surfing Professionals, 2010)

The differences between the number of competitions available and prize money offered for female surfers on the ASP World Women’s Tour Schedule compared to male surfers in the ASP Men’s World Tour is exemplified in Table 2.2. It also highlights the disparity in prize money available for professional
female surfers. Today, the Women’s World Tour circuit consists of seven events with total prize money amounting to AUD$800,000. This total is one sixth of what can be earned competitively on the Men’s ASP Tour which amounts to AUD$5,325,000.

Table 2.2
ASP World Women’s and Men’s Tour 2011 Schedule and Prize Allocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Prize Money Available</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Prize Money Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roxy Pro (Gold Coast)</td>
<td>AUD$110,000</td>
<td>Quiksilver Pro (Gold Coast)</td>
<td>AUD$425,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rip Curl Pro presented by Ford Fiesta (Bells Beach, Victoria)</td>
<td>AUD$110,000</td>
<td>Rip Curl Pro (Bells Beach, Victoria)</td>
<td>AUD$425,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subaru Pro TSB Bank Women’s Surf Festival (New Zealand)</td>
<td>AUD$100,000</td>
<td>Billabong Rio Pro (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)</td>
<td>AUD$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Bank Beachley Classic Sydney Australia, the richest women’s prize purse, making it the most lucrative of the eight stops of the ASP Women’s World Tour</td>
<td>AUD$140,000</td>
<td>Billabong Pro (Jeffreys Bay, South Africa)</td>
<td>AUD$425,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billabong Rio Pro (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)</td>
<td>AUD$120,000</td>
<td>Billabong Pro Teahupoo (French Polynesia)</td>
<td>AUD$425,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxy Pro (Biarritz, France)</td>
<td>AUD$110,000</td>
<td>Quiksilver Pro (Long Island, New York)</td>
<td>AUD$400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nike US Open of Surfing (California)</td>
<td>AUD$110,000</td>
<td>Rip Curl Search (Puerto Rico)</td>
<td>AUD$1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurley Pro (Trestles, California)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AUD$425,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiksilver Pro France, South West Coast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AUD$425,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rip Curl Pro (Peniche, Portugal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AUD$425,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rip Curl Search San Francisco</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AUD$425,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billabong Pipe Masters (Pipeline, Hawaii)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AUD$425,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>AUD$800,000</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>AUD$5,325,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Difference between total available prize money for the Men’s Tour compared to the Women’s Tour
Total difference=AUD$4,525,000

Currently, the ASP women’s division is made up of the top seventeen women competing in seven events worldwide in Brazil, Peru, Hawaii, Portugal, USA and Australia. The pathway to qualify for the ASP World Tour is through the ASP World Qualifying Series (WQS). By accumulating point totals throughout the season, surfers competing in the ASP World Qualifying Series are then rated and given a chance to qualify for the ASP World Tour. To consider competing in the professional surfing arena and to afford the expenses involved on the ASP tour, female surfers need sponsorship from one of the major surfing or sport companies.

Another significant point of note in Table 2 is the significant number of possible events available to male surfers compared to women. In 2011 male surfers had the opportunity to compete in eleven Prime events (total prize money available (AUD$2,750,000) and twenty-eight Star events (total prize money available AUD$7,370,000) as compared to female surfers eight Star events (AUD$253,000). The figures illustrate that there are a larger number of competitions available for male surfers that provides more financial opportunities for success. The disparity in prize money between male and female surfers highlights the importance of the thesis topic to examine the lifestyle marketing experiences of female surfers and the impact of sponsorship on their careers as professional surfers.

An example that highlights the issues regarding lack of sponsorship for the women’s tour was the cancellation of the final event of the Women’s World Tour, the Gidget Pro event in Maui, scheduled for November 2010, and sponsored by Billabong. The Honolua venue in Maui was reportedly cut from the Women’s World Tour because the ASP could not secure an appropriate
sponsor. In addition to being the final event of the women’s tour, the Honolua event served as the final competition in the Vans Triple Crown. The Vans Triple Crown of Surfing event is a professional surfing title in Hawaii for females and males. Although it is a separate series, it is still incorporated into the established ASP surfing circuit to determine the most proficient big-wave male and female surfers in the world. It is considered to be one of the most prestigious of all the surfing series and is widely covered by the media. The loss of the Honolua event, as described in an online forum on Surfersvillage Global Surf News (2010), meant that the Triple Crown for women was reduced to a ‘double crown’ event reducing once more the amount of prize money media promotion and exposure available for female surfers. One report on this forum described how disappointed the female surfers were to lose the best venue of the tour.

Two of the top seventeen female surfers, Keala Kennelly and Coco Ho, who were both involved in the Honolua event, identified the significance of its cancellation as a huge disappointment for women’s surfing. Surfspots-GPS (2010), an online news forum, maintained that cancellation meant the loss of a major sponsor and hence an event in the Women’s World Tour. It also had implications for female surfers because the loss of possible income through prize money at this event meant less financial support to travel to future competitions. The location in Maui would also have highlighted the high level of surfing ability and performance now being demonstrated by the current generation of professional female surfers. To cut this stand-alone competition from the World Tour and then combine the women with the men’s competition
in Brazil in 2011 was viewed as disappointing by the Women’s Tour participants.

Tour cancellations appear to be a common occurrence for women surfers in comparison to the men’s competition. In 2011, a culminating event for the women’s tour tentatively booked for San Sebastian in Basque was cancelled due to lack of sponsorship (Swanton, 2011). Lack of sponsorship severely limited opportunities for female surfers. With company sponsorship decreasing for female surfers, the ASP claim that they were endeavouring to source every opportunity to secure financial backing to bring the women’s tour to parity with the men’s eleven-event championship (Swanton, 2011) did not eventuate. The reason is that these contests are expensive to run and organise and surf companies have to be confident that there is a positive return for their investment.

Rochelle Ballard, noted as a professional surfer for ten years, big wave rider, co-founder of the IWS who has appeared in several movies, most notably Blue Crush (Grazer & Stockwell, 2002), highlighted the different way commentators cover the men’s and women’s surfing contests:

I hear the hype and interest when they announce the men’s heats and how much more depth goes into the live web cast. If they treated the women like they do the men and then some, I would be very interested to see how much more it (women’s competitive surfing) would grow and attract people. If there was more unity in surfing for women and participation from all parties in the same direction it has great potential (Endo, 2010).

The sponsorship opportunities for male surfers have been enhanced by extensive coverage in the media which is a missing feature in women’s surfing.
Billabong and Rip Curl do not have a specifically named female range similar to Quiksilver’s female brand, Roxy. However, both companies produce clothing, swim and surfwear designed specifically for women and girls (Boullon, 2000). Even though the sales of women’s fashion and surf products are escalating, it is the Men’s ASP World Tour events that are predominantly sponsored by one more of the Big Three. This point suggests that profits from the sale of women’s apparel and products are supporting the men’s competitions. For example, in 2010 Rip Curl sponsored three events in the ASP World Women’s Tour, Roxy sponsored only one event and Billabong participated in none. It was other non-surf-related companies such as Commonwealth Bank, TSB Bank and IPD (International Pro Designs) Nike (who have taken over Hurley surfboards owned initially by Billabong) that sponsored the remaining Women’s World Tour events. Similarly, in 2011, Roxy sponsored two out of the seven women’s events, with Billabong and Rip Curl sponsoring one each. Non-surf-related companies Subaru, Commonwealth Bank, TSB Bank, and Nike sponsored the rest of the tour. In comparison, the 2011 ASP World Men’s Tour saw Quiksilver sponsor two men’s tour events, Rip Curl three events, Billabong four events and Hurley (owned by Nike), one event. The evidence suggests an increased interest by non-surf-related companies in women’s surfing and highlights the preference for sponsorship by the Big Three for the ASP Men’s World Tour.

Despite the developments and women’s surfing achievements, there is still little opportunity for them to earn a living through their sport, either through sponsorship or prize money. The next section identifies how the media is considered a dominant controlling force in the sponsorship experiences of
female athletes through its level of surveillance. The impact of this surveillance on female athletes' sponsorship opportunities and how it relates to the surfing context is discussed.

**Media Surveillance of Female Athletes**

There has been a significant amount of research investigating the gender inequalities in the media coverage of female athletes (Brown, 2007; Capranica, Minganti, Billat, Hanghoj, Piancentini, & Cumps, 2005; Grau, Roseli, & Taylor, 2007; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Klein, 2004; Knijnik et al., 2010; Pederson, Whisenant, & Schneider, 2003; Pringle, 2005; Pritchard, Quacquarelli, & Saunders, 2004; Ross & Ridinger, 2009; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). In particular, Shaw and Amis (2001) observe that the “vast majority of research on sports sponsorship has focused on male athletes, teams and events” (p. 220). Hence the importance of my work to highlight the sponsorship experiences of female surfers.

The history of inequitable media focus on females taking part in non-traditional sports such as surfing and snowboarding has paralleled experiences for women in other sports (Booth, 2001a). As previously mentioned the growth of surfing as a lifestyle sport has been significantly influenced by the media particularly through magazines, newspapers, television, surf-related websites, webcasts and social media. Knijnik, et al. (2010) confirm that in Brazil, the media actively promotes the attractive, blonde, stereotypically ideal appearance of the female surfer where the emphasis is on what could be considered a ‘feminine’ look as opposed to their surfing performance. Similarly, research (Scrogum, 2005; Vander Kloet, 2005; McGinnis, 2002; Messner, Duncan &
Cooky, 2003; Wait, 2008) suggests that heterosexuality is a key factor in determining the femininity of an athlete. Therefore, in order to be successful and get sponsorship, female surfers have the choice of being submissive and accepting the surf company’s and media’s preference for a feminine appearance or challenge hegemonic standards by demonstrating their strength and surfing ability. The attributes of strength and ability could be viewed as masculine and unappealing to prospective sponsors.

Several examples in the literature (Capranica et al., 2005; Henderson, 2001; Martin, 2009; Thomsen, Bower, & Barnes, 2004) have supported the notion of female athletes being portrayed in a sexualised manner in sport magazines. The use of female athletes for their sex appeal, as a marketing strategy by companies, conveys messages about the ‘feminine’ appropriateness of some sports for women. Examples of sexualisation were described in an issue of Sports Illustrated where Olympic swimmers posed topless and had photographs taken in the shower room wearing nothing but an American-flag towel (Brennan, 2000; Spencer & McClung, 2001). Stevenson (2002) also confirmed “there have been countless examples of sports where the female competitors have adopted ‘sexy outfits in an effort to attract media attention” (p. 212). Sports such as beach volleyball, netball and basketball have introduced uniforms that intentionally focus attention on the athlete’s bodies rather than play any technological, practical or performance-enhancing roles. This has led to a number of athletes expressing embarrassment at such explicit exposure and has perhaps led to non-participation for some. An example of this type of discriminating behaviour was experienced by female beach volleyball players thirteen years ago. At this time, the International Volleyball Federation
(IVF) caused an outrage amongst the female sporting community as they decreed that all female beach volleyball players had to wear skimpy bikinis when participating in international competitions (Jeffery, 2012, March 28). A recent newspaper article in *The Australian* (Jeffery, 2012, March 28), confirmed that the IVF has now conceded that its rule discouraged some women from playing the sport and introduced a new dress code that does not discriminate against women. From a marketing perspective, it has meant that not only do the images of female athletes attract media attention but now sport brands are cashing in on the production and popularity of fashion sportswear (Cole, 2000; Lucas, 2000).

Sanders (2007) analysed ways in which female swimmers were represented and/or embodied in feminist theoretical texts, sports photographs and young adult sport fiction and believes that this type of media representation reinforces traditional constraints on female athletes. Sanders believes that:

*The dominant hegemony of masculinity in our culture drives women to see a mandatory double-sided sense of self. When the male body, the muscular body is privileged, female athletes portray their muscular, “troubled bodies” as distinctly feminine in order to show their gender is fully intact, and they are not in danger of resisting cultural norms* (p. 48).

This means that female athletes – especially surfers – find resistance to cultural norms and representations of women challenging. One example of female athletes who have resisted is when the Australian national women’s netball team members who produced a calendar in 2000 to raise funds and increase media exposure. When the players arrived for the photo shoot, photographers pressured them to pose nude. This was confusing and distressing for the athletes and resulted in the team decisively ruling that this form of
representation was not in keeping with the family-friendly principles behind the sport.

Other studies (Capranica & Aversa, 2002; Stevenson, 2002; Vincent, Imwold, Masemann, & Johnson, 2002) support the view that female athletes are not represented equally in the media and confirm that the power of the sport media should not be underestimated as female athletes are successfully being utilised for their sexual image and marketability. Several researchers (Anderson, 2009; Carty, 2005; Cole, 2000; McGinnis et al., 2005; Messner, Duncan, & Cooky, 2003; Pringle, 2005; Shaw, 2007; Stevenson, 2002; Thorpe, 2010) substantiate claims that the lack of representation and/or inappropriate portrayal of female athletes in sport can endorse sport as a predominantly male domain and diminish the perceptions of women’s sporting skills and abilities. In addition, the research reveals that a growing concern amongst female athletes is the potential harm that disparity between profile and perception of male and female sports can have on females specifically on female athletes.

Lapchick, Breden, and Wright (2006) argue that sports media is run mostly by and for men. Other research (Higgs, Weiller, & Martin, 2003; Lucas, 2000; McDonald, 2000; Tuggle & Owen, 1999) supports this view and argues that male hegemony in sport is being perpetuated. For example, Crolley and Teso (2007) attest that media attention on female athletes has traditionally focused on individual sports such as tennis, gymnastics and figure skating and constructs a sense of reality that includes prejudice against female athletes, either consciously or sub-consciously that are usually based on patriarchal ideologies. In these sports the media highlights the feminine grace and beauty aspects rather than masculine attributes of strength and power. This
emphasises that the locus of control, power and surveillance is still being upheld by the media and influences societal ideals about what is considered appropriate. This has served to perpetuate the constructed stereotypical attitudes and sporting activities for women and silenced many women’s sporting achievements.

A useful theoretical consideration described by Carty (2005) that is relevant to this thesis is the debate between radical feminist and postfeminist perspectives about how athletes are portrayed by the media. From a radical feminist viewpoint, women gain some individual material benefits by using sex appeal although this is achieved within the confines of a male-dominated structure that determines what is appealing and feminine. Carty argues that the “system will remain unchallenged and the goal of gender equality is undermined” (p. 134). Carty believes that “women are using their bodies as a form of liberation, and their own decisions to display their bodies demonstrate that they are in control of how images are projected” (p. 134). In this way, rather than viewing the structure, or in this case the surf brands, as confining, female surfers identify and capitalise on the opportunities. From the postfeminist perspective notions of femininity would embrace female surfer’s muscular form, strength, fitness and competitiveness. However, if viewed from Lessing’s (1991) perspective, these athletes may believe they are benefitting from, or are in control of, how they are being represented when actually they are conforming to, and being manipulated by, the media and other external forces such as the leading surf brands. The experiences of female surfers will be examined in Chapter 5. The analysis of female surfers’ experiences in Chapter 5 will shed light on whether the growing acceptance of marketing
female surfer’s athletic bodies to sell brand products serves to continue the sexualised representation for women in the sport or is a means of re-defining femininity where women can be strong and feminine concurrently.

Research (Bennett, et al., 2002; Bennett & Lachowetz, 2004; Pederson & Kelly, 2001) claims that the reason behind the growth and popularity in action sports has been the increased media coverage, additional major tours, increased athlete endorsements, corporate sponsorships and branding which are all connected to the sport consumption habits of Generation Y. Other research (Bennett, et al., 2002; Bennett, Lachowetz, 2004; Bradish, Lathrop & Sedgwick, 2001) highlights the lifestyle habits of many youth in the demographic dubbed Generation Y as being avid Internet surfers, technologically savvy and huge media consumers, including television, magazines and video games. Coakley (2001) adds that action sports such as surfing have been described as providing members of Generation Y with “an enticing alternative to the increasingly exclusive, structured, performance-orientated, and elitist youth sport programs” (p. 118). These factors are all taken into consideration by companies and leading surf brands when choosing appropriate marketing strategies.

**Media Surveillance of Female Surfers**

Historically, the media has had a salient influence on the promotion of individual surf companies and surfers. Researchers (Bennett & Lachowetz, 2004; Ford & Brown, 2006; Stranger, 2011; Thorpe, 2006) argue that the influence and impact of surf magazines on surf culture, and the element of authenticity are important components in the preservation of brand image.
 Reece (2009) states that “surf apparel manufacturers bought advertisement space in surf magazines to define the ‘surfer lifestyle’ and featured local surf heroes to reach the core surfers and perpetuate the surfer lifestyle” (p. 58). Pappu, Quester and Cooksey (2005) view the lifestyle marketing of surfers through sponsorship as a “powerful means of differentiation” (p. 143). Differentiation is a key positioning strategy to developing competitive advantage for surf brands. Reece adds that “surf companies believe these surfers to be authentic representatives of the sport and thus considered them to be appropriate representatives of their brands” (p. 58). In this way, surf magazines are utilising effective images of sponsored surfers to help create strong, unique and favourable associations with the surfing brand. However, to date, these images have been predominantly depicted images of male surfers which indicate that equitable conditions and sponsorship opportunities for female surfers are limited.

During the 1990s the surf media began to realise the potential market of female surfers and produced surfing magazines such as Surfing Girl, Chick and Wahine, devoted entirely to women (Stearns, 2003). Subsequent magazines, such as Chick in Australia and Surfing Girl in the USA, provided a forum for women to highlight their achievements and talents in surfing. Alongside women’s surf magazines, female surf schools, women’s surf shops and women’s clothing lines emerged. Advertising shifted away from the ‘too-thin’ feminine image of a female surfer to a strong, competitive and athletic image that began to reshape women’s surfing. Cori Schumacher, a world champion longboarder, believes this movement of placing ability over image fell short because of the entrenched male dominated perspective that values a woman’s
looks as an indication of her femininity (Schumacher, 2011, para 13). By applying Foucault’s (1991) notion of the panopticon to the surf industry I argue that the surf industry needs to tightly control the image of surfing to ensure its survival. Hence, the level of surveillance being undertaken by the surf companies and media is impacting on the way female surfer’s self examine the way they present themselves for sponsorship. Schumacher indicated that “the major surf brands effectively shut down the women’s surf magazines denying advertising dollars and shifting this money to surfer-girl media newly introduced through the main surf publications where the surf brands could control how female surfers were presented” (para 13). From Schumacher’s perspective, surf companies began to reshape the image of women’s surfing that would be most beneficial to growing their consumer base. This did not necessarily equate to support for more female surfers.

In an ABC-Radio broadcast (1998), Layne Beachley, seven times world surfing champion, agreed that the media’s focus on female surfers should highlight their surfing performance and their marketability rather than a sexualised image. In Layne Beachley’s autobiography Beneath the Waves (Gordon & Beachley, 2008), she highlights the need for female surfers to undergo practices of body maintenance such as dieting and body fitness in order to obtain and sustain sponsorship. In fact, Layne Beachley indicated that due to the pressures she felt from sponsors to meet the ‘feminine’ ideal she had liposuction at age 24.

Similar practices are evident in other sports such as gymnastics and rowing where success in the sport required gymnasts and rowers to have small and thin bodies (Chapman, 1997; Johns & Johns, 2000 as cited in
Markula & Pringle, 2006). Of concern is the fact that some women’s surfing magazines promote sexualised images of female surfers. For example, *Wahine*, a Hawaiian magazine created specifically to highlight female surfer’s achievement, was criticised by Booth (2004) for the inclusion of fashion pages and advertisers’ reliance on one particular female body type in its early issues. The revealing bikinis worn by young slim models, as opposed to active surfers, in the advertisements defeated the purpose of the magazine’s inception and merely reinforced the gendered nature of surfing. An ethnographic study by Mears (2008) based on the work of Foucault investigated the world of women’s fashion modelling. Mears examines how models are made into ‘looks’ and are under intense surveillance. In addition, Mears states that “models undergo self disciplining processes and are a prototypical case of women’s struggle to conform to aesthetic codes of femininity” that serves to “maintain patriarchal power relations” (p. 431). An article in the New Zealand surf magazine for women *Curl* magazine (Curl, 2010), provides an example of how surf companies are using the images and inherent surfing lifestyle of female surfers to promote their brand and sell products (Figure 2.5). In this article (Turning a New Paige, 2010) Paige Hareb, rated 12th on the ASP Women’s World title ranking, is portrayed as a fashion model, successful surfer and athlete living the idyllic surfing lifestyle. Both the images

*Figure 2.5. Turning a New Paige From Curl*, 2010, Retrieved from website: http://www.curlmagazine.com.nz. Reproduced in accordance with the fair dealing exception for criticism and review (Copyright Act, s41).
and story emphasise *Curl* magazine’s (Curl, 2010) interest in promoting Billabong clothing and also highlight Hareb’s surfing performance and lifestyle as a professional surfer. Comer (2010) makes a relevant comment about the leading surf brands and believes that the view that women “are nothing but either bikinis or consumer markets” (p. 207) needs to be challenged.

Even though this denotes a shift in attitude since *Gidget*, Cori Schumacher, world longboarding champion, has a different perspective on this type of advertising. In an article published by *The Inertia* she states:

> The oligarchy established by the largest surf brands also exerts massive control over the content of surf media. Maintaining and directing the image of surfing through the media is of paramount importance. This is obvious, not through those stories and images that are printed, but in the limited amount of content that provides dissident opinions, voices or viewpoints. (Schumacher, 2011, para 13).

Cori Schumacher’s comment supports previous research that claims the media serves to trivialise and minimise the accomplishment of female athletes. Her interpretation of two 2011 print issues of *Surfer* and *Surfing* surf magazines reveals images of predominantly white, risk-taking, athletic, heterosexual men (Schumacher, 2011, para 13). She also mentioned similar sexualised portrayals of women on an online surf site TransWorld Surf (TWS). My examination of this site and the TWS webpage (Figure 2.6) revealed only a single reference to women’s surfing yet the title was *10 Hottest Girls in Surfing 2011 Edition* with the subtext “as the bikinis get smaller and the turns [surfing turns] get bigger, we love where women’s surfing is heading” and a predominance of other male related articles and pictorial representations of men’s surfing (Cote, 2011). The
photo from Figure 2.6 depicts a female in a provocative pose that invites the male gaze but does nothing to highlight women’s surfing prowess.

Thorpe and Rinehart (2010) believe that action sports such as surfing, have advanced from traditional sports which they believe are “often seen as highly regulated, regimented and surveilled” (p. 1270). McGloin (2005) confirms that traditional sports such as tennis, golf and football are receiving much more attention than women’s surfing. Several researchers noted (Booth, 2001a; Corner, 2008; Knijnik et al., 2010) the contradiction in women’s earning capacity in individual traditional sports such as tennis and golf, which compared favourably to men. Yet, despite the rising popularity of women’s surfing, the underrepresentation in the media has contributed to inadequate sponsorship support culminating in a struggle for women to develop a viable professional surfing circuit. The decreased number of ASP World Tour events for women therefore impacts on the amount of sponsorship money that supports women in the sport. These arguments suggest that the surveillance and scrutiny being undertaken by the media and leading sport and surf brands is not helping to raise the profile of women’s surfing. Female surfers are of course able to choose or resist dominant discourse. Examples of female surfers challenging sponsorship by the Big Three is progressively becoming more pronounced as more female surfers are seeking sponsorship from other companies such as Nike, Red Bull, Mountain Dew and Boost Mobile.
In the 1990s, four-time world surfing champion Lisa Anderson’s effortless but aggressive surfing style changed the perception and image of female surfers (Kampion & Brown, 2003) and won credibility among her male counterparts (Booth, 2001a). In 1994, Anderson, then reigning ASP Female World Champion, became the first member of the Roxy-sponsored team. Anderson went on to win three more world titles and both her reputation and profile have been identified as contributing to the success of the Roxy brand (“About Roxy,” n.d., para 5). Anderson’s success was based on her surfing ability although her looks and sex appeal were a significant part of her sponsorship selection, as illustrated in an online biography of Lisa Anderson by surf journalist, Matt Walker (2009). Walker confirms the sentiments expressed by Booth (2001b) and Southerden (2003) who argue that looks are still valued over performance. Walker (2009, para 12) noted that Lisa Anderson’s surfing performance was likened to that of a man and he argued that ‘you can certainly surf like a guy but not look like one’ and believes that the patriarchal attitude towards women’s surfing is one aspect that cannot be changed.

The viewpoint that women may be powerless to change patriarchal attitudes towards female surfers aligns with Foucault’s (1990) notion of technologies of the self and Lessing’s (1991) view on conformity. This implies that competitive surfing for women is not a transformative practice that is free from systems of control and power over individual surfers but rather dictated by societal expectations to conform to what is considered feminine. If viewed from a ‘third wave’ feminist or ‘Generation Y’ perspective, Lisa Anderson’s success based on her sex appeal is seen as a positive attribute. Heywood (2008) believes that by Lisa Anderson achieving both conventionally male and female
ideals “women and girls view this as adding to her championship status therefore relate to her as an example of what girls and women aspire to” (p. 74).

Walker (2009, para 7) claimed that in 1996, Lisa Anderson was featured on the cover of the 1996 edition of Surfer (Figure 2.7) magazine which was only the second cover shot of a woman in the publication’s history. Until this time, all other Surfer magazine covers had featured pictures of male surfers. The inclusion of this type of action shot in surf magazine advertising was the beginning of an improved image and profile for female surfers. Anderson’s physical attributes of ‘surfing like a guy’ while being feminine at the same time contributed to her success in gaining sponsorship from Roxy.

Women from Lisa Anderson’s generation, Generation X, were the first to break down the barriers by participating and competing in the male world of action sports such as snowboarding, skateboarding and surfing (Beal, & Wilson, 2004; Booth, 2001b; Coates, Clayton & Humberstone, 2010, Wheaton, 2004). The profile of the Generation X female surfer was further elevated by the movie Blue Crush (Grazer & Stockwell, 2002). Stearns (2003) in the book Only a Surfers Knows the Feeling, argues that the movie Blue Crush (Grazer & Stockwell, 2002) elevated the profile of women’s surfing resulting in other females viewing the sport as more attractive and accessible. Blue Crush
positively portrays and celebrates the women’s professional surfing circuit in its own right. Ormrod’s (2002) analysis of an earlier film in 1964, *Muscle Beach Party* (Dillon, Nicholson, & Asher, 1964), depicted female surfers as oddities or attachments to male surfers. Another example of devaluing women’s surfing ability was in the 1960s *Gidget* movies. Crawford (2002) believed that the *Gidget* movies depicted a highly romanticised beach atmosphere and created sensual and gendered images of the surfing lifestyle. Hence, these movies did little to provide an understanding of surf culture or promote an equitable role of women within it. Crawford (2002), on the other hand, believed *Blue Crush* (Grazer & Stockwell, 2002) provided an insight into the gendered nature of surf culture in Hawaii and contributed to an awareness and credibility of professional female surfers.

Thus the wave of media attention created by this movie in combination with a party wave of female surfing role models such as Frieda Zamba, Layne Beachley, Keala Kennelly, Jodie Cooper, Rochelle Ballard, Chelsea Hedges, Pauline Menczer, Pam Burridge, Wendy Botha and Megan Abubo promoted the growth of women’s surfing and made it attractive to both sexes. However, no matter how attractive the surfing lifestyle was made out to be, inequitable competitive surfing conditions and limited opportunities for sponsorship of female surfers are still prevalent.

Two current examples of Generation Y female surfers who are involved in professional surfing and assist in promoting healthy lifestyle choices for young people are Sally Fitzgibbons, winner of two ASP World Tour events, and Paige Hareb, presently 12th on the ASP Women’s World title ranking. Sally Fitzgibbon’s sponsors include Roxy, Red Bull and Boost Mobile. She has been
a spokesperson for Roxy’s *Keep Abreast* campaign, an ambassador for the *No Way* campaign, which aims to educate Australian youth about the dangers and consequences of illicit drugs and alcohol, as well as the *Drug Aware* and *Arrive Alive* campaigns (Withycombe, 2011). Paige Hareb’s main sponsor is Billabong and she is involved in the *Smoking Not Our Future* advertising campaign designed to encourage the younger generation not to smoke (Smoking not our future, n. d.). In fact, Comer (2010) believes that the current generation of professional female surfers are taking up opportunities to use their surfing status to go beyond surfing and contribute to other issues concerning “the environment, global health, poverty, women’s wellbeing” (p. 206). An interesting project that demonstrates the scope and future of women’s surfing is a project by Katherine Sikorski (Sikorski, 2011), an artist and Generation Y surfer from California, who is running a free surf camp for Muslim women. Utilising new swimsuit technology, known as a burkini, Muslim women will be able to participate in learning to surf while preserving their modesty. All of these female surfers illustrate the growing trend in Generation Y of women who are endeavouring to take control of their own identities and use their sponsorship opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles, particularly to younger female surfers. Thus, it appears that certain female surfers are taking back their identities from the sponsors and their media-promoted meta-narrative.

Despite the attempts by surfers such as Sally Fitzgibbons and Paige Hareb and reality shows such as *Surf Girl – MTV* and movies to present women’s surfing as an ‘extreme’ sport performed by athletes in peak condition, it still appears that the main reason for their popularity is more about portraying
the surfers in bikinis than highlighting their surfing expertise. Current cultural artefacts of surfing, such as magazines, films, DVDs and websites, continue to illustrate and represent females in a sexualized way within the surfing context as is demonstrated in the Surfergirl magazine cover headline Lust for Life (“Lust for Life cover layout”, 2010) superimposed over a photo of Billabong sponsored female surfer Laura Crane (Figure 2.8). The 'lust' factor contradicts the empowered view of current female surfers being presented as the media continues to use the sexualised images to sell the women's professional surfing circuit. In an article in the New York Times (Higgins, 2007) Layne Beachley, a seven times world surfing champion, described her perceptions of sponsorship from an elite competitor's perspective when she made the following comment:

I agree that sex sells, but what the industry doesn’t seem to truly believe in is that women look up to, and are inspired by, women that achieve and stand up for what they believe in. Of course, the success of a brand comes down to marketing, and unfortunately the boys that run this show still believe that the success of the women's lines is a direct result of the lust factor (Higgins, 2007, para 15).

Heywood and Dworkin (2003) refer to the marketing of female athletes based on their physical appearance as opposed to a focus on their performance as the
‘babe factor’. Devaluing women’s athletic ability serves to reinforce traditional gender roles and highlights the power being exerted over female surfers.

Representation of this type will undoubtedly increase the impetus to promote female surfers and perhaps encourage sponsorship by surf brands and other sport related companies for a select few surfers. However, in a male dominated culture such as surfing, this form of representation could continue to underrate the surfing achievements of female surfers and reinforce existing negative stereotypes of women. For sport and surf brands it is certainly an opportunity to jump on the wave of popularity and continue to use the lifestyle marketing of female surfers to sell brand fashion items to both surfing and mainstream consumers. The data from this thesis will assist in answering the research objective outlining whether the sponsorship arrangements for female surfers are empowering and transforming or restrictive.

**Summary**

In this chapter I have presented a review of literature and critically examined the position of women in the sporting context and particularly women in the sport of surfing. I argue that what constitutes an ‘appropriate’ image in the eyes of sponsoring companies has been historically problematic for female athletes. The representation of women as sex objects, particularly in the surf media, has created challenges for the promotion and validation of women’s surfing performance and has served to preserve male dominance in the sport. The growth in women’s participation and achievement in surfing has led to a significant rise in lifestyle marketing by a number of surfing companies. This growth has had a follow-on effect for the sponsorship of both amateur and
professional female surfers by the Big Three who are now realising the potential of the female surfer’s image and her marketability. However, the history of women’s competitive surfing has been underscored by a predominantly male orientated industry that has focused on sexualised images of female surfers instead of their surfing performance. This study indicates that women’s surfing still struggles in a world where success is dependent upon sponsorship and media coverage. Major surfing competitions are being organised and controlled by the Big Three. The review of literature suggests that the contemporary discourse about success in professional surfing is still more about the size of the sponsorship contract, amount of media coverage and subsequent profit margins rather than valuing the actual sporting performance, particularly of female surfers. Table 2.2 highlighted the lack of parity in prize money for female surfers compared to their male counterparts even though the potential of female surfers as a viable avenue for improving surf brand marketability is being realised. The literature also emphasises a significant disparity in prize money and number of competitions available for female surfers in comparison to male surfers. The lack of sponsorship of major surfing events for the women has impacted on exposure in the media which in turn affects sponsorship opportunities. The representation of girls and women in surfing has increased in order to improve sales and marketing but little has been put back into women’s surfing. This chapter has identified and confirmed that the relationship between lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers is certainly complex and has identified there is a distinct gap in the literature.
In the next chapter I highlight the issues for female surfers in negotiating the inconsistent swell of sponsorship opportunities. The chapter also investigates literature relating to the marketing and sponsorship of female athletes, and highlights an increase in the production of surf products and fashion designed specifically for women. Furthermore, it establishes the development of the surfing lifestyle brand as a lucrative marketing strategy by the Big Three surf companies and presents an overview of the differing marketing strategies of each company.
Chapter 3: Literature Review
Negotiating an Inconsistent Swell of Lifestyle Marketing and Sponsorship

Introduction

Chapter 2 examined research related to women in the sporting context, particularly in the sport of surfing, in order to provide an understanding of the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship processes. In this chapter I investigate the literature surrounding the impact of marketing and sponsorship on female athletes. I also explore the processes of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship and how they relate to the experiences of female surfers. In what follows, I trace the evolution of surf brands and examine the growth of lifestyle marketing by these companies as a means of enhancing brand image, reputation and authenticity through sponsorship. It also incorporates an examination of the motives behind lifestyle marketing which includes the sponsorship and branding of surfers as a means of offering an appealing way to market goods and services to consumers. The extent to which the Big Three and the media maintain the predominance of power in the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers will be examined. By opening up discussion on the impact of lifestyle marketing of sponsored female surfers through sponsorship and by examining the practices of the Big Three surfing companies, this study provides a more accurate understanding of whether marketing of this type is beneficial and empowering to both parties involved in the sponsorship process.

The chapter begins with a review of literature regarding the marketing of female athletes and the emerging popularity of sport and surfing sponsorship. Although women in sport are challenging the associations between masculinity
and sport, the media representations of female athletes still confirm gender differences through an emphasis on femininity. I therefore explore some of the ways female athletes are being marketed and represented in the media.

**Marketing of Female Athletes**

As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, female athletes have historically been marketed in a sexualised fashion by the media and sporting corporations to draw in the male consumer. In other words, the female body has been used as a marketing tool to sell products. Research (Crolley & Teso, 2007; Shaw & Amis, 2001; Stone & Horne, 2008; Wensing & Bruce, 2003; Wheaton & Beal, 2003) has demonstrated that it is this objectification of the female body that serves to trivialise women’s performances and achievements. Other research (Grau et al., 2007; Wensing & Bruce, 2003) as previously discussed indicates that the labels and images of physically attractive female athletes perpetuated through the media sanctions the sexualisation of women and consolidation of male dominance in sport. It is important to analyse the trend of using female athletes as product endorsers in the context of surfing sponsorship agreements with female surfers to highlight the underlying difficulties facing female athletes in a male orientated field. It is also important to identify that sponsorship in sport is an umbrella term used to encompass a range of activities and duties that an athlete has to participate in as a part of their contract agreement in either a paid or unpaid capacity. These responsibilities can include activities such as product endorsement, public appearances, media interviews and advertising campaigns.
The continued struggle for female athletes to meet both the demands of their sports and the pressure of maintaining a balance between femininity and strength is well documented (Bower, & Barnes, 2004; Harris, 2005; Miller & Heinrich, 2001; Thorpe, 2007). Various terms have been used to describe the sexualising of athletes, the most common being ‘sexploitation’. Several researchers (Harris & Clayton, 2002; Messner, Duncan & Cooky, 2003; Scrogum, 2005; Stevenson, 2002; Thorpe, 2008) have included the concept of sexploitation in their work and the term is described in a report on women’s media coverage in sport by Phillips (1996), and an online article by the Australian Sport Commission as a “form of marketing, promotion or attempts to gain media coverage which focuses attention on the sexual attributes of female athletes, especially the visibility of their bodies” (Australian Sports Commission, 2007). The notion of sexploitation creates a paradoxical situation for female surfers who in order to attract sponsorship may conform and accept (Lessing, 1991) the conditions of major corporate sponsorship that requires them to be marketed for their ‘voyeuristic potential’ rather than the qualities that define them as athletes.

Anderson (1999) argues that women who have excelled in sports especially non-traditional sports such as snowboarding, skiing, windsurfing, wakeboarding and surfing, have often been labelled masculine. The label has the potential to denigrate the individual female both as an athlete and as a woman. Thus, the gendered images of sport portrayed by the media and the underlying inequalities of power that are part of the sponsorship process explain why the structures of domination and exploitation have reinforced passivity and deterred some women from participating in sport altogether (Chase, 2006;
Cooky, 2006; Slack & Amis, 2004). From a Foucauldian perspective, the current coverage of female athletes could be viewed as surveillance and a method of control over women's bodies. Female athletes also employ technologies of the self (Markula & Pringle, 2006) and self-surveillance (Foucault, 1979) to analyse how their actions and appearance could influence their sponsorship opportunities. Markula (2003) argues that a critical component of the technologies of the self is the concept of “practices of freedom” (p. 101). Markula questions whether individual women athletes “who speak from a relatively ‘powerless’ position can ever initiate change or bend the dominating ‘outside’ into themselves so they can see differently and be seen differently” (p. 100). This has implications for female athletes who seek sponsorship to make the financial obligation of their sport easier.

According to Geissler (2001), the use of women's sexualised images as a marketing strategy is currently not the only motivation for the direction of corporate marketing. The growth in the female sport market and the stagnation and saturation of the men's market has brought about a trend in the use of female athletes as product endorsers. Cole (2000) and Heywood (2000) both confirm that the current motivation for corporations is to create and align with profitable new markets and popular trends, through lifestyle marketing of female athletes. The result is that a number of multinational corporations have announced their allegiance to girls and women by using sportswomen as advertising models in an attempt to increase product image, sales and loyalty (Cole, 2000). In an examination of the impact of Nike's advertising on women's and girls' participation in sport, Lucas (2000) concludes that corporations such
as Nike, Reebok and Adidas have created new brands specifically for women and aligned the popularity and potential of the women’s sport market.

Multinational companies such as Reebok and Nike were the first to become aware that women were becoming a core consumer and target market. Lucas (2000) estimates that Nike increased its total profits from 20% in 1997 to 40% by 2002 because of the change in direction in the female footwear market. Lucas claimed that two commercials used by Nike in particular, *If you let me play sports* and *There’s a girl being born in America*, designed explicitly to encourage and increase women’s and girl’s participation in sport, also increased their growth in sales. She noted that retailers believed Nike’s success was due to the fact that the company understood the women’s market. The advertising for the latest surf film released by Nike 6.0, *Leave a Message – A Women’s Surf Film* (Kenworthy & Lieber, 2011) promotes the film as contesting previously stereotypical films that emphasised female surfer’s femininity and sex appeal. This film depicts a story of six top professional female surfers and is probably the first film of its kind to emphasise their surfing performance and prowess. It could be argued that because Nike is concentrating its marketing strategies on women, the company is now positioning itself to infiltrate the surf industry market through the use of professional female surfers. Yet while the Nike film discussed above demonstrates excellence in female surfing performance, it creates a continuing paradigm of marginalisation for female surfers who do not fit the image required. The film certainly depicted a strong ‘new generation’ of skilled female surfers and on face value appeared to be complimentary and promoting women’s surfing. However, my interpretation of
the film’s commentary was that there were still underlying messages and
references to the surfer’s sex appeal and fewer about their surfing performance.

Nike’s marketing strategy parallels a shift in focus within the board sport
industry as companies realise the potential power in marketing female athletes
to promote their lifestyle image and create greater association and authenticity
with their individual brand names. This has brought about a shift in perception
regarding the value in marketing female athletes particularly through
sponsorship. Thorpe (2008) and Heywood (2008) agree that a third-wave
interpretation of sexualised images of female athletes could be viewed as
individually powerful for the athlete as it displays their willingness to embrace,
rather than mask, their sexuality.

In the surfing sponsorship context, female surfers who advertise and
wear products such as fashion clothing and surf-related accessories as part of
their sponsorship requirements could be viewed as conveying an impression of
confidence, assertiveness and strength. In addition, from a Foucauldian
perspective, the participation of certain female surfers in films such as Nike
6.0’s, Leave a Message – A Women’s Surf Film (Kenworthy & Lieber, 2011) or
in advertising could be seen as engaging in practices of freedom. However, the
‘freedom’ experienced by the surfers in Leave a Message – A Women’s Surf
Film (Kenworthy & Lieber, 2011) may only serve to mask the fact that not just
anyone can achieve success and that this lifestyle is limited to very few surfers.
In addition, following Lessing’s (1991) argument about the need to challenge
conformity, athletes may choose to conform rather than lose a valuable
sponsorship opportunity. Likewise, Thorpe (2008) argues that some athletes are
opposed to being used in a sexualised manner and believes that “the ability to
develop a critical awareness of the discourses of femininity depends on the individual's experiences and position within the power-discourse nexus" (p. 217). In the context of this surf film, Thorpe's view implies that these female surfers may be in a position of power to exercise the technology of self as they have the experience to take advantage of their looks and surfing ability as top professional surfers. However, the inexperienced younger surfers may be more inclined to conform to the sponsorship requirements rather than resist by going against the status quo and miss the opportunity.

Several scholars (Chase, 2006; Johns & Johns, 2000; Markula; 2003, 2004) have used Foucault's (1990) notion of technologies of the self to frame women's involvement in sport as a practice of freedom that includes the possibility of resistance and transformation. Chase uses Foucault's understandings of power, discipline and docile bodies in examining the experiences of female rugby players. These women resisted notions of ideal feminine bodies but at the same time conformed to the disciplinary processes of competitive mainstream sport. Chase argues that "the highly disciplined athletic body very often becomes docile body as it is shaped by disciplinary processes associated with high performance sport" (p. 233). This means that the multiple ways a female athlete's body is disciplined through surveillance is complex. In his analysis of contemporary society, Foucault (1977) suggests that "a body that is docile may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved" (p. 136). For the purpose of this study the body, particularly the female surfing body, is a target of subtle disciplinary practices surveillance that seeks to regulate its representation. Foucault (1978) considers modern society a panoptic structure that forces individuals to "continually reflect upon themselves and their
behaviours and to comply through dominant discourses and practices” (p 231).

Different disciplinary practices that Foucault ties to modern forms such as the army, school, hospital and the prison, produce “docile bodies” (p. 136) ready to obey the regimes of power in society. Individual citizens are therefore governed not by visible and openly repressive power sources, but by themselves. Lessing’s (1991) concept of the prison is comparable in that her representation of the prison is not a physical structure, but a mental barrier in the mind created through external pressures and forces causing changes in behaviour.

For women, especially young female athletes in male orientated and dominated sports like surfing, resistance is difficult. Many resistance theorists (Aggelton, 1987; Scott, 1990; Willis, 1977; Young, 1983) noted that the participant’s behaviour they observed as part their research may have contested dominant structures and social relations, but there was no guarantee that it created social change. Beal’s (2003) interpretation of these researchers was that resistance can often be full of contradictions in that it can lead to behaviour within a culture or subculture that either guides social change or reproduces the dominant norms and values. Research about the concept of subculture (Atkinson & Young, 2008; Atkinson & Wilson, 2001; Donnelly, 1988; McGuire, 1999; Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2004) suggests that social resistance is a marker of what constitutes a sub-cultural group. Lessing (1991) writes about the misconception that people in a democratic society tend to believe that they are free to make their own choices when in fact people live and work in groups that coerce them to conform in many ways. Lessing describes that the problem is not belonging to a group, but rather understanding the social laws that drives the group thinking. Beal (2003) identifies two most common categories of
resistance behaviours as “challenges and accommodations” (p. 55). Challenges are the behaviours that effectively change dominant relations, whereas accommodations are behaviours full of contradiction that do not effectively change dominant relations.

An example of contradiction in the sporting context is in a study about skateboarders by Beal (2003) where male skateboarders who espoused resistance against the values and norms of elite competition by encouraging participation and cooperation displayed sexist behaviour towards female participants and their female partners. Similarly, a study by Young (1983) found that rugby players resisted mainstream values that emphasised winning but reproduced sexist values through their behaviour at social functions. As such, the transformative benefits of resistance in these studies were limited to male participants.

An historical example of contradiction in the subculture of women’s surfing was illustrated when female surfers challenged the way competitions were being organised by the surfing association at the time and as a result instigated their own competitions. However, this resistant behaviour by female surfers did not overtly alter the competitive surfing conditions for women or effectively change the dominant structure or organisation of surfing. Ultimately, the decision was made to revert back to having their competitions incorporated alongside the men’s competition. A current example of accommodation would be where a female surfer resists the mainstream values and embraces the original philosophy behind surfing such as being a free spirit, non-conformist, non-materialistic yet reproduces or represents herself as linked to brand, conforming to company expectations of appearance and dress. Female surfers
have spoken out against the media representation of female surfers. However, competitive surfing for women does not offer an opportunity to resist the patriarchal body ideal if they want to be successful and attract sponsorship to travel to competitions.

The competing and complex discourses that shape women’s experiences of their own sporting bodies can also influence the actions of others. As a result, high profile female athletes are being viewed as role models for other young women (Thorpe, 2007). Harris (2004) views the growing potential in the female market as “a possible shortcut to power for female athletes” (p. 90). Even though inequities exist within the surfing culture there has still been a noticeable increase in the numbers of girls (Generation Y) and women taking up the sport (Sweeney Report, 2009/1010) with a parallel increase in the number of surf schools and camps designed especially for girls. Surf companies are also using the opportunity to employ high profile female surfers to assist with schools and coaching of particularly younger female surfers. According to Comer (2004), one of the underlying reasons for the growing numbers of female surfers is the support being given by the family and community members. Comer’s work identifies that the current generation of female surfers appears to be more self-confident engaging in alternate sports like surfing and, as a result, does not have the traditionally gendered views about females surfing alongside the men.

The important point here is that female surfers can use their popularity to their advantage as bargaining power with corporations to take control of how they are marketed. Research (Beal & Wilson, 2004; Rinehart, 2008; Thorpe, 2007; Wheaton, 2004) has validated the similarities being drawn between women’s participation in sports that have been labelled ‘extreme’, ‘alternate’ or
‘lifestyle’ such as snowboarding, surfing and skateboarding and extensive public and media attention and corporate sponsorship. Even though female athletes in these lifestyle sports receive media attention, it is not the type of coverage that provides them with the bargaining power to challenge or change traditional hegemonic notions of sport. With the introduction of lifestyle marketing in these non-traditional sports, a niche opportunity has emerged for companies to incorporate their brand through the sponsorship of athletes as a tool to create and sustain competitive advantage. However, the physical nature of these action sports has implications for female athletes, especially surfers, as the strength and aggressiveness required has been viewed as unfeminine (Lenskyi, 1998; Lewis, 2003). According to Markula, Grant and Dennison (2001), even though a toned muscular body has now become an important part of the ideal feminine body, magazines still discourage extreme musculature. Female athletes may therefore consider changing their image to conform (Lessing, 1991) to suit company expectations.

In a study of female body image in aerobics, Markula et al. (2001) emphasises that “well-toned legs are sought after because men notice them” (p. 245). She adds that “the preferences of this gaze often contradict the exerciser’s own will, but they feel pressured to please the gaze” (p. 245). This view has contributed to the fact that female professional athletes are still well behind professional male athletes when it comes to lifestyle marketing and sponsorship opportunities.
Sport Sponsorship

Slack and Amis (2004) believe that “for most researchers sport sponsorship is seen as a neutral harmless task in which sponsors provide money to sport and in turn get to link their product to an athlete, team or event” (p. 13). To highlight the underlying inequalities of power that are part of the sponsorship process it is important to critically analyse the tenets of sponsorship in relation to my topic of female surfers and sponsorship.

The history of sport sponsorship can be traced back to its origins as a form of donation to support sporting activities from businesses and commerce sectors (Cornwell et al., 2005; Slack & Amis, 2004). The 1970s saw a change as companies required a return for their investment (Parvez & Pervis, 2006). A primary objective of many sponsors is to increase brand awareness and enhance brand and/or corporate image through sponsorship of sporting teams or individual athletes (Cornwell & Maighan, 1998; Cornwell, Roy & Steinard, 2001; Roy & Cornwell, 2003). A flow-on effect from sponsorship can be increased media and public interest and exposure, resulting in ‘free’ publicity, which in turn reinforces the sport brand. Sponsorship is also popular as a marketing strategy because it exposes the company’s products and services to participants and spectators and provides opportunities for association with popular sports identities (Dolphin, 2003; Ferrand & Pages, 1999; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Sweeney, 2006). The conceptual understanding of the sponsorship process is based on the notion that these types of transactions and marketing practices involve an exchange relationship between the sponsoring company and the sponsored athlete. This notion ignores the underlying inequalities that are inherent in the sponsorship process and disregards the
possible structures of domination and sexploitation that may shape and direct these relationships.

Certain researchers (Dolphin, 2003; Olkkonen, Tikkanen & Alajoutsijarvi, 2000; Quester & Thompson, 2001; Tripodi, 2001) maintain that sponsorship of individual male and female athletes, as well as sporting events, enables companies to target their promotional advertising to specific lifestyle groups whose consumption behaviours can be linked to the particular sport. Furthermore, Quester and Thompson (2001) conclude that there is some evidence to support a direct relationship between sponsorship effectiveness and the size of the overall sponsorship promotional budget. This has implications for females who compete for valuable and necessary sponsorship funding particularly against male athletes. Another factor noted by a number of researchers (Anderson, 2009; Brown, 2007; Cunningham, Doherty & Gregg, 2007; Pfister & Radtke, 2006) that impacts upon sponsorship decision-making is a company or organisation that has predominately male corporate management or administrators. Historically the Big Three surf brands have been the leading sponsors of both events and surfers and predominantly male-orientated and managed which could impact on the sponsorship decisions made about female surfers (Heywood, 2008). The Big Three have been responsible for creating the surfing lifestyle image and have taken advantage of the growing niche market of lifestyle sports to sell their products to both mainstream and surfing consumers. The following discussion focuses on providing an understanding of the varying aspects involved in lifestyle marketing.
**Lifestyle Marketing**

Investigations into the motives behind lifestyle marketing and branding strategies employed by companies reveal it to be a means of offering an appealing way to market goods and services to consumers (Cahill, 2006; Reece, 2009). The marketing strategy of linking individual brands with a desired consumer lifestyle forms a level of emotional rapport necessary to create long-lasting brand/customer relationships that encourage repeat purchasing (Brannon, 2005; Hill, 2008). Furthermore, lifestyle marketing and branding is about creating a personality and image that is unique and authentic and is able to connect with the lifestyle of their existing and potential new customers (Murphy et al., 2007). Binkley (2003) has traced the trajectory of consumption and marketing and observes a movement “away from an impersonal, mass-minded approach into a newer era of ‘personal niche’ or lifestyle marketing where individual authenticity is sought after and valued” (p. 231). One successful strategy that has been taken on by sport companies, to branch into the lifestyle-branded product category, has been to become involved in lifestyle marketing through the sponsorship and branding of athletes (Reece, 2009). The marketing of athletes assists the brand to identify with athletes participating in these sports, and with sport enthusiasts who want to engage in the lifestyle.

Research (Boullon, 2001; Rinehart, 2000; Sky, 2001; Wheaton, 2004) has shown that the impact of the term ‘lifestyle sports’ as a marketing tool lies in the meaning of the term and its attraction to a growing market of young consumers. According to Bennett and Lachowetz (2004) there is increasing involvement by female athletes as participants in new lifestyle sports such as “surfing, skateboarding, snowboarding, windsurfing, kiteboarding, BMX biking,
street luge, wakeboarding and motocross” (p. 239). The result is a noticeable increase in the use of females in the marketing of these lifestyle sports and additional sports such as climbing (Kiewa, 2002; Lewis, 2003; Robinson, 2008), adventure racing (Kay & Laberge, 2000) and Ultimate Frisbee (Thornton, 2004). The popularity of these sports that utilise images of female athletes to sell products has led to an increase in the branding and sponsorship of female athletes (Boyd & Shank, 2004) as mentioned in Chapter 2. A marketable image is therefore an advantage for any athlete seeking sponsorship to be successful at a high level in any of these sports, especially for female athletes.

Wheaton (2004) believes that participants in lifestyle sports seek out a lifestyle that is “distinctive and gives them a particular and exclusive identity” (p. 4). For participants in these sports the meaning and experience of ‘lifestyle’ is more important than the competitive nature or label given to the sport (Reece, 2009; Rinehart, 2000; Sky, 2001). The literature (Beal & Wilson, 2004; Rinehart, 2000; Thorpe, 2007; Wheaton, 1997, 2004) suggests that these sports are being labelled ‘lifestyles’ rather than sports and are becoming alternatives to mainstream sports. As such they are ideal targets for corporate sponsorship because the commercial appropriation of lifestyle sports ethos and ideologies such as “risk, freedom, anti-competitiveness and anti regulation” (Wheaton, 2004, p. 14) use the beliefs, values and identities connected to these sports and sell them for mass consumption.

Thorpe’s (2008) study discusses the prevalence of lucrative sponsorships for professional female snowboarders such as Torah Bright who is presently sponsored by Roxy. Thorpe found many female snowboarders had achieved “superstar status within the culture, attracting a range of corporate
sponsors including Nike, Mountain Dew, Campbell’s Soup, Visa, and Boost Mobile, with some earning seven figure salaries” (p. 21). Thorpe argues that the representation of female snowboarders in magazines “challenge traditional discourses of female athletes as passive and heterosexually available for the male viewer” (p. 206). Unlike female snowboarders, the number of female surfers who are presently earning seven figure salaries from marketing and branding opportunities through sponsorship appears limited. This emphasises the potential for some female athletes to be recognised for their excellence in athletic performance as opposed to previous experiences of being predominantly marketed for their sex appeal which has been the case for female surfers.

The commercial success of companies relies on the strategy of lifestyle marketing to strengthen and build up the reputation of the brand name to make it distinguishable from others. This trend has provided scope for sport companies to construct images of an ideal lifestyle that is attractive to consumers to sell products. For consumers, being connected to these lifestyle sports is achieved by buying and wearing lifestyle apparel without even taking part in the sport itself. On the surface, it appears that the lifestyle marketing and branding process are beneficial to both males and females involved yet there appears to be an inconsistent swell of disadvantage to female surfers. In short, female surfers may be missing the wave of commercial success. The following discussion focuses on the evolution of surfing sponsorship and the growth of lifestyle marketing by the Big Three surf brands.
Evolution of Surfing Sponsorship

The inception of surfing sponsorship is believed to have commenced around the 1970s through the introduction of naming rights, which in the surfing context is a transaction whereby a corporation purchases the rights to name a specific surfing event or surfing competition (Arthur, 2003; Young, 1994). Ampol Petroleum is considered to be the first corporate supporter of the surfing industry. In 1964, it sponsored the first World Surfboard Titles at Manly in Sydney Australia, which attracted the world’s best surfers, 40,000 spectators and wide media coverage (Arthur, 2003; Booth, 1994; Gliddons, 2002; Young, 1994). Female surfers were allowed to compete in this competition and as mentioned in Chapter 2, Phyllis O’Donnell became the first women’s world champion. Arthur cites other early examples of surfing sponsorship by companies such as Coca-Cola, Smirnoff, 2SM Radio and Stubbies. Arthur (2003) maintains that these brands were already familiar to the public and proved to be an appropriate platform for them to achieve brand recognition.

In 1976 the International Professional Surfers (IPS) organisation was formed to provide effective management of the sport. The IPS also ensured that the judging of competitions became more objective. Arthur (2003) identified the IPS as “the catalyst that propelled both the sport and its commercialisation to a higher level” (p 160). Developments such as these led to an increase in sponsorship dollars for surfing contests, and in 1977 the Stubbies Classic took place at Burleigh Heads in Queensland, Australia. Professionalism in surfing brought with it exposure and financial support but it has subjected the sport to the forces and constraints of the commercialisation process. Instead of being an alternate sport with its philosophy immersed in being in the moment and at one
with the ocean, which was the original impetus to engage in surfing, the commercialisation of the industry introduced commodification of both surfing products and surfers (Lanagan, 2003). The change of focus to commercialisation was not welcomed by the surfing community because it competed with the original surfing ethos that promoted a lifestyle that was healthy, carefree and connected to nature (Booth, 2001b).

Wheaton (1997) describes professional surfing as surfing in its most “commodified form” (p. 93). The transformation from surfing as an individual and free activity into a competitive sport appealing to the masses required some fundamental changes. The most obvious effect of commodification of surfing and the introduction of professional surfing and growth of the surfwear industry was the necessity for sponsorship that would attract mass appeal. Competitive surfing involved those elements most associated with mainstream sport, such as aggression, an emphasis on masculinity and strength, which marginalises their athletic performance.

The commodification of surfing led to pressure being placed on surfers by the dominant forces, such as the leading surf brands and the media to perform. For a female surfer to acquire sponsorship there is a need to create a marketable image that will enhance the sporting brand and sell brand products. Wheaton (2010) singled out action sports as providing values that are essential to the global economy. Likewise, Heywood (2007) argues that the ‘surfing girl’ is an important figure in the global economy and is constructed as being self-reliant, in control of their life and maintaining a healthy body for health and success which is consistent with the third wave feminist view portrayed by Harris (2001) in Chapter 2. A global economy discourse that promotes today’s
female surfers as autonomous is contradictory because on one hand it enables these surfers to be “self-made and flexible consumers” (Heywood, 2007, p. 104), while on the other they are commodified by an economy that idealises women and turns them into products. Heywood (2007) also claims that the same ‘ideal’ female surfers are “trained to blame their inevitable failures on themselves rather than on the system that their lives are structured within” (p. 113). She also argues that the notion of “‘love yourself/reject the system’ is empty rhetoric in a culture that is continually evaluating, judging, and presenting ideal images that girls have to measure themselves against” (p. 112). This aligns with Lessing’s (1991) belief that individuals are kept under varying degrees of surveillance by the dominant powers within society. I agree that individuals such as female surfers are “still able to choose or resist dominant discourse” (Lessing, 1991, p. 19). However, resisting dominant discourse comes at a cost when seeking sponsorship to engage in competitive surfing at a high level. In order to be able to afford the travel and equipment necessary to be successful in high level surfing competition, sponsorship is essential. Therefore, the paradox is that the pressure on female professional surfers to conform to company expectations, find adequate sponsorship, maintain a suitable image to secure media coverage and preserve their sponsorship may indicate that the ‘lifestyle’ being presented is not so desirable or ideal.

A factor that impacted on surfing sponsorship in the early 1990s was an apparent lack of media and television profile which caused a rift between surfing’s commercial image and the industry. One reason for the rift noted by Lee (2001) was the ASP’s refusal to a broadcast deal reported to be worth US$50 million over five years. Lee argues that the lack of support for television
coverage by the surfing industry was due to “a fear that control of the sport would be lost” (p. 1). However, the ensuing loss of media profile, coverage and mainstream appeal caused a decline in sponsorship and surfing became marginalised from ‘mainstream’ sport (Arthur, 2003). This impacted even further on the sponsorship opportunities for not only female surfers but for male surfers as well for several years.

To present a balanced view of female surfer sponsorship of female surfers it is important to examine the philosophy and marketing practices of the Big Three that sponsor surfing events and individual surfers. The next section provides a profile of the Big Three and outlines the historical beginnings and corporate image being currently represented and its relevance to lifestyle and authenticity.

**The Big Three – The Impact of Authenticity on Consumption**

Today, the surfing industry in Australia is controlled by three large companies, Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy, all of which are ranked amongst the top five international surfing companies (Stranger, 2010). These three traditional surfing brands control professional surfing both in Australia and internationally. The Big Three surf companies have sponsorship agreements with both male and female surfers to endorse and advertise their products, competitions and events. The premier ASP World Tour events are dominated by the Big Three sponsoring companies with naming rights and franchises being selectively distributed to other companies (Arthur, 2003; Boullon, 2001; Masters, 2010). The development of the surfing lifestyle brand as a lucrative marketing strategy by leading surf companies such as Roxy, Billabong and Rip
Curl provides opportunities for both male and female professional surfers to become part of a surf brand. Both the male and female ASP World Tour surfing events aim at specifically promoting these highly competitive surf brands worldwide. The incorporation of female surfers into the lifestyle marketing process has provided a niche strategy for companies to increase the image of their surf brand.

The fact that distribution of Billabong, Rip Curl and Roxy products are exclusive to particular surfwear shops, and not available through mass-market retail chains, also creates a link to their authenticity. The suggestion that many surf-related brands, such as the Big Three, are considered authentic came about because these brands originated as cottage industries and supplied local surfers with boardshorts, wetsuits, surfboards, leg ropes and other surfing hardware. Boullon (2001) confirmed that “the concept and perception of being ‘core’ or authentic was seen as an important element in the marketing and growth of the surfwear industry” (p. 122). Thus, the Big Three surf brands have been considered authentic because of their historical and cultural backgrounds in the sport and this has resulted in credibility that translates into increased revenue and sales.

Some researchers contend that being authentic implies something in its pure original form as opposed to replication and a fake representation (Joseph, 2008; Postrel, 2003; Lindholm, 2008). Other research argues that being authentic is about creating a personality and image that is unique, and is able to connect with the lifestyle of the company’s existing and potential new customers (Murphy, et al., 2007). This notion aligns with Binkley’s (2003) observation that the current marketing trend has “moved away from an impersonal, mass-
minded approach into a newer era of ‘personal niche’ or lifestyle marketing where individual authenticity is sought after and valued” (p. 231). Beverland (2005) believes that both sponsorship and branding are “in conflict with the recent trend towards positioning brands as authentic” and contends that being ‘authentic’ means “emphasizing the timeless values desired by consumers while downplaying apparent commercial motives” (p. 460). In the surfing context this view means that for surf brands to be considered ‘authentic’ they must appear to be more involved in the needs of the surfing community than the tenets of commercialism such as making money from the images of sponsored surfers and product sales.

With the increase in alternative sports such as surfing being harnessed for financial gain, labelling a sport, or in this case a surf brand as ‘authentic’ is considered desirable (Joseph, 2008; Free & Hughson, 2006). Seargeant (2005) argues that one of the reasons why authenticity is so important is because it “taps into the contemporary desire for counterbalance to the perceived ‘artificiality’ of modern life” (p. 331). However, as Wheaton and Beal (2003) argue “it is misleading to think of a ‘pure’, ‘authentic’ participant perspective, outside of the commercialisation process” (p. 158). Ritzer and Stillman (2001) suggest that companies are developing strategies to “re-engage the consumer by creating ‘enchanting’ experiences by incorporating idiosyncratic symbols of local and ‘authentic’ identity” (p. 1106). This suggests that the notion of authenticity and the principles of commercialisation are connected when in fact they are opposed to one another. The shift from surfing being a pleasurable, healthy lifestyle to being a global business that depends on a lucrative and popular market based on the sale of lifestyle apparel has meant surfing
companies may have lost some of their authentic appeal, particularly to core surfers. It seems that the notion of authenticity is critical to the concept of lifestyle marketing and branding particularly in the surfing industry. Moreover, Ritzer and Stillman claim that strategies to create enchanting experiences that bring about authenticity by a company could be perceived as superficial in the context of surf brands considering that the consumption of their products is being driven by media and commercial interests. This means that surf companies have had to recreate a marketing strategy that would bring back their aura of authenticity, and the lifestyle marketing of both male and female surfers has been a means to achieve this. In other words, the lifestyles of surfers are being used to sell products.

The current challenge for companies and corporations in the surfing industry is to “build awareness and presence both economically and efficiently” (Aaker, 1997, p. 174). The extent of product and brand positioning and amount of customer loyalty could impact upon the decisions and activities in which a company decides to invest its resources especially sponsorship. In 2002 the annual estimated global sales for Quiksilver, Billabong and Rip Curl were AUD$1.5 billion, AUD$460 million and AUD$300 million respectively (Stewart, Skinner & Edwards, 2008). Later figures reported Billabong as having 11% of the global market with its annual turnover in 2003 estimated to be AUD$490 million. In 2003 Quiksilver was reported to be the world’s largest surfwear company with an annual turnover of AUD$1.7 billion (Hoy, 2003). LaFrenz (2009) claimed that Rip Curl was the third largest company in the AUD$8 billion ‘board sports’ market and in 2003 it was reported that it had 8% of the global surfwear market with an annual turnover of AUD$34 million. Despite the size of
these companies, they now face the challenge of a shrinking market. A recent example is demonstrated in Billabong’s 34% drop in international shares, the largest fall since 2000 (Rough waters ahead for Billabong as shares dive and sales slump, 2011). With the other companies facing equally difficult trading times the opportunities for sponsorship are diminishing and may become even more challenging.

Arthur (2003) concurs that the Big Three companies “account for 52% of the global surf wear market and gained their credibility from the fact that all three were founded by people involved in the sport who had a passion for improving it” (p. 162). The implication is that external companies like Nike and Red Bull, that are beginning to sponsor high profile surfers and surfing events, may be interested only in the pursuit of the corporate dollar as opposed to upholding the traditional, core values of surfing which are described by Pearson (1979) as being “individualistic, unconventional, anti-establishment, and opposed to discipline or control over individual freedoms” (p.118). Ford and Brown (2006) claim that ‘internal’ companies and sponsors such as the Big Three are identified as surf enthusiasts and tend to be more concerned about the future of surfing. Yet, the commercial change in the focus of the Big Three and the downturn in the economic climate may impact on sponsorship opportunities and perhaps even threaten their existence. If so, the surf companies may be in a predicament as they struggle to balance their corporate interests with their desire to maintain brand authenticity within the surfing community.

The following summary of the history and philosophy behind each surf company provides an understanding about their link to authenticity within the
surfing community and how sponsorship and lifestyle marketing of female surfers has emerged as a widespread practice amongst the Big Three.

**Rip Curl**

The first of the Big Three group to be discussed is the Rip Curl surf company. Rip Curl was founded in Torquay, Victoria in 1969 by two surfers, Doug Warbrick and Brian Singer, who made surfboards for the local market (“In the beginning,” n.d.). In 1970 Rip Curl began designing and producing wetsuits which as Stranger (2010) observes, was something that no other company was doing in Australia at the time. By 1973 Rip Curl was the market leader of wetsuits in Australia. Rip Curl was able to use their production position as a strategy to build a marketing slogan that centred on the concept *made BY surfers FOR surfers*. Building on the growing success and reputation of the Rip Curl brand the company sponsored the inaugural Bells Beach surfing contest in Victoria, Australia, in 1973. The women’s division of the competition was not introduced, however, until 1977. The international recognition of this event resulted in a rapid expansion of Rip Curl products at both a domestic and global level (Stewart et al., 2008). Wayne Lynch became Rip Curl’s first sponsored male surfer. In 1980, Rip Curl diversified into a range of surf-related clothing and accessories that were created for a predominantly male market (Young, 1994). The expansion of Rip Curl’s range of products during the 1990s included the integration of snowboards and ski wear and by 2002 Rip Curl was the fifth largest surfwear supplier in the world, with its head office located in Torquay Australia (Stewart et al., 2008). Rip Curl’s current slogan claims it is the *Ultimate Surfing Company* (Figure 3.1) which emphasises the ‘lifestyle’ image being promoted and their ‘authentic’ background within the industry.
When I compared Figure 3.1 to other *Live the Search* banners located on the Rip Curl website, noticeably there were action photos of male surfers. Whereas the emphasis of the female depicted in Figure 3.1, if she is indeed a surfer, is placed on an image displaying her body.

In a comparative study of surf brand image, De Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan (2007) believe that the message behind Rip Curl's slogan was aimed at demonstrating a “visible solidarity with ‘real’ surfers, a company run and managed by surfers and therefore characterised authenticity” (p. 22). This marketing strategy proved to be a driving factor behind the brand's initial longevity. An attempt to introduce a subsidiary brand, *Rip Curl Girl*, was unsuccessful as it was seen as an unsatisfactory addition or “tack-on to the main brand” (De Burgh-Woodman & Brace-Govan, 2007, p. 22). The failure to connect with the target female market came about because Rip Curl frequently utilised images of men on waves in their advertising. Thus, De Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan (2007) argue that the perception of the Rip Curl brand as being predominantly masculine contributed to the alienation of women surfers. The female brand extension was reintegrated under the banner of Rip Curl and it evolved into more of a unisex brand similar to Billabong. It was also De Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan’s belief that “the failure of Rip Curl to apprehend
an emergent female surfing community that stood on equal footing with the
men’s surfing significantly hampered the brand” (p. 23). Therefore, the value of
a brand is not just about its name or logo but also about how it is perceived by
the customers. This is particularly relevant in the case of surf companies where
a primary activity by management is to evaluate the impact of their strategies
based on consumer and market perception to enhance brand equity.

The Rip Curl company currently sponsors female team riders who are ranked in
the top 17 on the ASP World Tour, such as Jessie Miley-Dyer (AUS) Tyler
Wright (AUS), Alana Blanchard (Kuai, Hawaii) and Pauline Ado (France).

However, the website indicates that the number of men sponsored by Rip Curl
still exceeds the number of sponsored females (Mick Fanning, n.d.). The current
emphasis of Rip Curl business is on designing and producing boardshorts,
surfboards, wetsuits, wakeboards, snowboards, t-shirts, shirts, denim shorts,
sunglasses, jewellery, bags and surfing accessories for their core demographic
of customers who are males and females between the ages of 12 and 24.

Similar to Billabong and Roxy, Rip Curl’s marketing focus is on the surfing
lifestyle. A distinct difference of Rip Curl is that unlike the other surf brands that
have brand extensions under other names, Rip Curl produces its products
under one banner, Rip Curl. Figure 3.2 illustrates the Rip Curl brand as being a
central element in the marketing of Rip Curl products and, like Billabong, it has
no separate female brand. The purpose of this marketing approach has been to
maintain an authentic appeal to surfers and not diversify to target the
mainstream consumer.
The Quiksilver surf company was founded in Torquay, Australia in the early 1970s by surfers Alan Green and John Law. Green was initially involved in the Australian surf company Rip Curl but decided to move into surf apparel with Law. The initial focus in 1976 was on the development of a redesigned comfortable boardshort for surfing and proved to be the beginning of the rapid rise of Quiksilver as a global sport brand (Stewart et al., 2008). Quiksilver Europe was initiated in 1984 and more recently the company has begun a venture into the Asian market. Quiksilver went public on the New York Stock Exchange in 1986. This strategy not only produced a significant funding base but also led to a major restructuring in the 1990s with a head office set up in Huntington Beach, USA. A European office was set up in France, which was re-positioned as the head office for Asia and the Pacific (Stewart et al.). Quiksilver expanded its product range and, through exposure in the USA and
Europe, became the dominant global sportswear brand in the late 1990s. As a result of this expansion, Gliddon (2002), claimed that Quiksilver accounted for 37% of total global surfwear sales.

The Quiksilver logo, consisting of a cresting wave and snow-capped mountain, represents Quiksilver’s history and connection to the extreme sports culture (Figure 3.3).

Symbols such as these form an important part of the branding of sponsored surfers because they wear company products to signify association with the brand and to maintain sponsorship agreements. Similarly, Quiksilver has used its slogans such as *Superfine Since 69* to enhance its authenticity as a surf brand. Quiksilver’s portfolio includes other lifestyle brands as illustrated in Figure 3.4 and highlights the central company Quiksilver and its breakaway brands for female surfers, Roxy and Quiksilver Women, alongside other brand extensions.

Quiksilver’s marketing strategy includes a separate brand for women and girls. This marketing strategy is relevant because the company recognises the growing female market. In 1978, Quiksilver sponsored its first team riders, Wayne Bartholomew and Bruce Raymond. An interesting point to note is that it wasn’t until 1994, four years after the introduction of the Roxy brand to the female surfing market, that Quiksilver sponsored its first female surfer Lisa Anderson, who wore the first range of boardshorts for girls. The strategic move
by Quiksilver to incorporate high profile female surfers in their marketing strategies saw the beginning of a lucrative market in the sale of surfing and fashion apparel to women and girls.

Another aspect that demonstrates Quiksilver’s interest in the female market was evidenced in 2003 when Quiksilver expanded into television. Quiksilver Entertainment produced numerous action sports programs for Fox Sports, the Surf Girls series for MTV, and it participated in the production of the 2004 documentary *Riding Giants* (Orsi, Kachmer, Marty, Delest & Peralta, 2004) a documentary film tracing the origins of surfing and the art of big wave riding. The move appears to be somewhat of a paradox. On one hand Quiksilver developed a range of products designed specifically for women, and on the other hand excluded big wave riding females in the film *Riding Giants*.
The Quiksilver website claims that the company sponsors many amateur and professional male and female surfers, snowboarders, skiers and skateboarders around the globe (Quiksilver, n. d.). Quiksilver also has the naming rights for the Quiksilver Pro surfing tournament and the Roxy Pro tournament on the Gold Coast, Australia. However, with approximately 30% of Quiksilver sales coming from Roxy (Calhoun, 2010) it is interesting to note that the current number of female surfers sponsored by Roxy, Quiksilver’s female brand, is significantly smaller than those sponsorships offered to men by Quiksilver. As an example, the Quiksilver and Roxy website indicates that at the time of writing this thesis, there are 10 female professional surfers and 13 female snowboarders being sponsored. The number of men and boys being sponsored is double, yet the sales figures for Roxy products continues to grow.

**Growth of Roxy and Quiksilver Women**

It is important to examine the growth of Quiksilver’s female brand Roxy because the majority of female surfers are sponsored under this brand. Stephanie Gilmore, who has recently acquired a multi-million dollar sponsorship by Quiksilver Women which began in 2010, is currently the only female surfer sponsored by this addition to the Quiksilver brand.

In 1991, Quiksilver established a separate female brand, Roxy (Booth, 2001b; Baker, 2002). This brand was developed specifically to target women and girls, and as the Roxy website indicates, Roxy “offers products for every aspect of the active girl’s life” and is “daring, confident, naturally beautiful, fun, alive: Roxy” (“About Roxy,” n.d., para 13). Quiksilver was the first company to move away from a generic brand predominantly aimed at male surfers to a separate brand, Roxy, in order to identify with products for female surfers and
the mainstream women’s market. The Roxy logo (Figure 3.5) is comprised of two Quiksilver logos joined together, to form a heart shaped crest to represent a ‘feminine’ version of the brand (Wahine Surfing, 2010).

![Roxy Logo](http://14clicks.com/famous-logos-hidden-message/)

*Figure 3.5. Roxy [Logo] 2011.*
Reproduced in accordance with the fair dealing exception for criticism and review (Copyright Act, s41).

This could be interpreted as a partnership between men’s and women’s surfing by Quiksilver, or perceived as symbolically maintaining male control over their brand and sport. Either way, the development of the heart-shaped Roxy logo suggests a more feminine connotation, whereas the Quiksilver logo portrayed by a cresting wave and snow-capped mountain, is described on the Quiksilver website as representing “active sports and global excellence” (Quiksilver, n.d.). Therefore, the imagery and symbolism behind the Quiksilver logo suggests men as active surfing participants.

The first Roxy-branded professional event that included female competitors was held in 1995, and the first annual Quiksilver/Roxy women’s pro surfing event at Sunset Beach was in Hawaii. Roxy has sponsored other world-wide competitions including: Roxy Pro Fiji; the Roxy Pro Gold Coast, Australia; the Roxy Jam United Kingdom; all ASP world championship tour events; the Australian Roxy Pro women’s surf festival, Australia and a series of world-wide amateur surf contests for female surfers (Roxy, n.d.). As Comer (2010)
contends “Roxy has been more than just a fashion label. It quickly came to be the global logo associated with the economic and political infrastructure of women’s surfing” (p. 88). Roxy is considered to be one of the largest global corporate sponsors of women’s surfing worldwide. As mentioned earlier, there are currently 10 female surfers sponsored as team riders. Two of these team riders, Sally Fitzgibbons and Sofia Mulanovich, are ranked in the top 20 in the ASP rankings (Roxy, n.d.). The Quiksilver website identifies 20 male surfers being sponsored as team riders. The 50% disparity between the number of sponsored males and females is a common theme amongst the Big Three. The limited sponsorship opportunities available for women, as identified in Chapter 2, indicate that many female surfers in the top twenty are without sponsorship.

Since its inception, Roxy has expanded into the accessories market with jewellery, bags, backpacks, travel accessories and a full line of footwear. In 2003 Roxy introduced a range of snowboards that further increased exposure of females through promotion and sponsorship of all-girls pro-snowboarding events. The latest developments designed to increase the popularity of the Roxy brand consist of a variety of products ranging from bedroom accessories beauty products, a line of clothing for girls aged 7-16; Roxy Teenie Wahine, a Roxy’s children line, Luna Bay, a Roxy Girl series of seven young adult fiction novels; Roxy Ski, a line of skis and boots and Surf Girls, a collaboration of Roxy and MTV networks featuring two Roxy team member riders as host and cast members (“About Roxy,” n.d., para 11). Alongside these developments Roxy opened its first freestanding Roxy store in Hawaii in 1997, followed by another in 2000 in California. Roxy’s expansion into the snowboarding and skateboarding markets and sponsorship of female athletes in these sports
demonstrates its focus on utilising the popularity of a female brand to sell products.

Heywood (2008) explores how the lifestyle-sports promotional imagery of products, such as those developed by Roxy, targets girls as an important consumer market that incorporates the ideal image of Generation Y referred to earlier in Chapter 2. This constructs an ideal or desired image and lifestyle particularly for young girls. Harris (2004) agrees that “today [girls] are supposed to become unique, successful individuals making their own choices and plans to accomplish autonomy....to be girl-powered is to make good choices and to be empowered as an individual” (p. 4). Thorpe and Rinehart (2010) believe that this means that alternative sport participants, including women and girls, have a choice not to “simply become victims of commercialisation but be active agents who continue to negotiate (and sometimes resist) the images being circulated in and by global consumer culture” (p. 1275). However the products endorsed by images of popular, high profile female surfers are compelling and persuasive, and as Heywood (2007) writes “communicate so powerfully on a level that may not even be conscious” (p. 112). This means that there is an element of choice but whether there is consumer motivation or life-experience necessary to resist the marketing strategies of the Roxy brand that targets women and girls is unclear. Female brand extensions such as Roxy are marketed in such a way to promote a way of living that is considered necessary to be cool or fashionable or sophisticated.

A further example of promoting ‘coolness’ through lifestyle marketing is the development of the Quiksilver Women brand, an initiative that targets women in the over 20s age group. The Quiksilver Women’s slogan *Exuding the*
air of a girl who doesn’t try to be cool, she just is Quiksilver Women
demonstrates its recognition of the dynamic growth of the female market and
the subsequent marketing potential of females for other surf companies. The
status of Roxy as a $4 billion brand owes its success to increased interest in
female surfers. In spite of this progress there appears to still be a lack of
funding to increase the number of contests and raise the amount of prize money
available for female surfers.

Billabong

Another member of the Big Three is the Billabong surf company.
Billabong originated on the Gold Coast, Australia, as a clothing surf brand in
1973, highly involved in the surf culture and competitive scene. Unlike
Quiksilver, Billabong does not have a brand that specifically sells to women but
sells a variety of surfwear under the Billabong brand-name and through several
brand extensions (Figure 3.6). As mentioned earlier, similar to other surf
brands, symbols such as these form an important part of the branding of
sponsored surfers as they wear company products to signify association with
the brand and to maintain sponsorship.

During the 1980s Billabong began exporting to California, Japan, New
Zealand and Europe and started trading on the Australian Stock Exchange
under the name of Billabong International. Billabong International’s Financial
Tear Sheet describes its core values as “including a commitment to brand
protection and enhancement, the manufacture of design-relevant and functional
products, marketing in the core boardsport channels, the professional
development of staff and ongoing customer service and relationships
As mentioned in Chapter 3, strategies such as these enhance authenticity of the brand. Billabong’s recent acquisition was Surf, Skate, Snow, a chain of retail outlets that sell wake boards, men’s and women’s fashion clothing, wetsuits, accessories, watches, belts, hats, jewellery and shoes. Similar to Quiksilver, it demonstrates that the growth in the range of products designed and marketed specifically for women is on the increase.

Billabong’s initial slogan *Original Since 1973* and its current slogan *Only a Surfer Knows the Feeling* articulates an atmosphere of authenticity and links to its origins and the feeling of being a surfer. The distinctive Billabong logo is illustrated in Figure 3.7.
Billabong’s brands are marketed and promoted internationally through association with high profile professional surfers, junior surfers and events.

Billabong is involved in many promotions, and the company contends that the respect it enjoys in the sports marketplace is due to its team riders who include both male and female surfers. Murphy, Karimzadeh and Wicks (2007) argue that lifestyle marketing and branding of athletes creates a personality and image for companies that is unique and authentic, and is able to connect with the lifestyle of their existing and potential new customers. In other words, branding sponsored surfers in this way assists companies to connect with surfers and mainstream consumers. In the first instance, the concern here lies in the representation of women on surf company websites and in the media when wearing branded products. During my analysis of individual surf company websites, I found that there were action photos of male surfers, whereas the women’s website page only depicted female surfers, particularly young surfers in bikinis. Another relevant point of interest was that when viewing the surf website there was a notable difference in the number of sponsored male compared to female surfers. For example, on the Billabong website (Billabong, n.d.), under the team rider tab, the names of 67 sponsored males are presented compared to 27 female surfers (Billabong, n.d.). The slogans from all three surf companies indicate the necessity to maintain loyalty with their core surf market,
yet all three companies have large-scale commercial interests that are contradictory to the core beliefs of the surfing community. My analysis of surf company websites also revealed the strategy of using females, regardless of whether or not there were female surfers, to attract the male gaze and there is generally an underrepresentation of women featured as active surfers. As such, my analysis highlights a level of surveillance by both male and female users of surfing websites that could impact upon the image of female surfers.

**Surf Brand Summary**

Each of these three surf companies has an historically inherent interest in perpetuating the surfing culture. All three have similar strategic directions and have expanded their brands worldwide. Their differences lie in the variation between the practices and philosophy of each company and are based around an individualised brand image and identity. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the differences between the Big Three. The summary offers a useful comparison between the companies in reference to their history, philosophy, strategic and international direction, brand extensions, type of products and commitment to sponsored female surfers. The research in Chapter 2 verifies however, that there are still a limited number of sponsorship opportunities, disparity in prize money and an inequitable distribution of funding for female surfers and women’s events generally. The next section examines aspects of lifestyle marketing and branding related to the process of sponsorship and draws conclusions about why this may impact upon the sponsorship opportunities of female surfers.
### Table 3.1.
**Surf Company Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quiksilver/Roxy</th>
<th>Billabong</th>
<th>Rip Curl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background History</strong></td>
<td>Quiksilver Since 1970</td>
<td>Since 1973</td>
<td>Since 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy or Slogan</td>
<td>Exuding the air of a girl who doesn’t try to be cool, she just is Quiksilver Woman</td>
<td>Only a surfer knows the feeling</td>
<td>The Ultimate Surfing Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Direction</strong></td>
<td>Market leaders of the international teen and young adult surf/sports fashion industry and action sports market in general</td>
<td>Commitment to pro boardsports and its teamriders</td>
<td>Rip Curl’s company vision is “to be regarded as the ultimate surfing company in all that we do”, which is an aspiration statement of our long-term ambitions with respect to public and media image.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internationalisation of the Brand</strong></td>
<td>150 stores in major cities across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, Europe, north and south America, Asia and Africa</td>
<td>Trading in over 100 countries around the world, main ones being in California, Japan, New Zealand and Europe</td>
<td>Nine corporate licensees make and sell Rip Curl products in Rip Curl stores in Australia and world wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brands</strong></td>
<td>Roxy, Hawk Clothing, Gotcha, Quiksilver Entertainment, Cue, Pirate Surf, Quiksilver Women and Radio Fiji</td>
<td>Palmers Surf, Honolua Surf, Von Zipper brands, Kustom footwear, Nixon Watches, Element, Xcel, Tigerlilly, sector 9 and DaKine, Surf Skate &amp; Snow</td>
<td>Rip Curl remains in private ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product</strong></td>
<td>Boardshorts, t-shirts, shirts, denim shorts, sunglasses, jewellery bags and surfing accessories</td>
<td>Surf, Skate, Snow and Wake boards and clothing, wetsuits fashion clothing men’s and women’s, accessories, watches, belts, hats, jewellery, shoes</td>
<td>Boardshorts, surfboards, wetsuits, wakeboards, snowboards, t-shirts, shirts, denim shorts, sunglasses, jewellery bags and surfing accessories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sponsored females</strong></td>
<td>20 sponsored females including professional, junior and free surfers, longboarders in all states around Australia and from USA, Brazil, France, 12 snowboarders from Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Canada and the USA, South Africa and Peru.</td>
<td>25 surfers including 3 professional team, 7 pro-junior, 7 grommets, 2 free and 6 lifestyle surfers, 2 skateboarders and 4 domestic and 3 international snowboarders sponsored by Billabong</td>
<td>Sponsor a range of girls from 10 to 30+ year olds, exact number is proprietary information. From the web site Rip Curl sponsors a total of 14 surfers, wakeboarders and snowboarders from Australia, Asia, Europe, New Zealand, North and South America.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marketing the Surfing Lifestyle

The popularity of surfing, particularly in Australia, has resulted in the commercialisation of the surfer lifestyle through the sale of surf apparel. Australia has developed an international reputation for manufacturing quality surfwear, surfboards, and other surfing apparel (Stewart et al., 2008). In relation to the prominence of surfing as a sport in Australia, Reece notes that “surfing is more than a sporting activity, it is a subculture and many consider it a way of life” (p. 1). Surf companies in Australia have helped produce the surfing lifestyle image and taken advantage of a growing niche market of lifestyle sports to sell their products through both mass and niche media as identified in Chapter 1.

As previously mentioned, claims of authenticity by the Big Three surf brands came about as the emphasis was based on their surfing heritage, functional surfing equipment and a genuine relationship with real surfers. Research by Ford and Brown (2006) and a newspaper article by Masters (2010) indicate that surfing is unique because surfing-specific companies still dominate the commercial activities and sponsorship of major surfing events and surfers.

The purpose of this thesis is not to question the authenticity of the Big Three but rather to examine whether the impact of lifestyle marketing through sponsorship has been beneficial to the general advancement of women’s competitive surfing or has been at the expense of sponsored female surfers. The Big Three surf companies have to date been able to dominate the mainstream market of surf culture products because of their historical significance and continuous connection with the subculture. The result is that the Big Three have discouraged competition through infiltration by external (mainstream) companies (Stranger, 2010). The global dominance of Billabong,
Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy, according to Lanagan (2003), has brought about “aggressive competition for market share across a range of surfing products with each company influencing the surfwear revolution through their identification with a lifestyle and commercialisation of the industry” (p. 162). Lanagan argues that “surf wear is being worn for its signage value and signifies a particular attachment to a lifestyle” (p. 177). Thus, while surf company brands and products are linked to a demographic market of surfers, at the same time they appeal to other consumers wanting to identify with a surfing lifestyle. The fact that surf companies are catering to both mainstream and niche surfing consumers indicates that there would be a distinctive marketing approach aimed at each.

Research by Beverland (2005) and Reece (2009) claims that leading surf brands have a distinct advantage over external companies because they have millions of followers who have helped create a niche consumer market. An interesting observation is that surfing is being marketed by surfing companies and surf media as a global lifestyle that can be achieved through the consumption of surf-related or branded commodities. This, in itself, is a conundrum in that it is difficult to understand how wearing or displaying a certain branded product can achieve a surfing lifestyle without participating in the sport. Furthermore, the belief that a person will make themselves more beautiful, desirable, athletic, or connect them to a lifestyle by buying an inanimate sport branded product without participating in the sport itself is an interesting concept.

Table 3.2, represents a number of distinct lifestyle characteristics specific to surfing. These are important because they illustrate how the surfing lifestyle
has become an effective avenue for imparting sales messages to consumers and achieved through the promotion of surfing events and/or high profile surfers through sponsorship.

Table 3.2. Characteristics of Surfing as a Lifestyle Sport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Surfing as a Lifestyle Sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The emphasis is on 'authenticity' of individual surf brands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Surfing is based on the consumption of both new technologies in board design (e.g. the revival of long boards and introduction of tow-in surfing, kite surfing and stand-up paddle boards) and associated surfwear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Commitment of time, and/or money and a style of life and forms of collective expression, attitude and social identity that develop in and around the activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A participatory ideology that promotes a fun, fit and healthy lifestyle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The individualistic nature surfing lifestyle is synonymous with travel, and as such, has been diffused and assimilated across international boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The emphasis is on being at one with the waves and nature, and not being aggressive in competition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from Understanding Lifestyle Sports: Consumption, Identity and Difference (pp. 11-12) by B. Wheaton, 2004, London: Routledge.

Branding and marketing of surfers therefore represents an investment for surf companies. De Chernatony and Dall'Oimo (1998) claim they could be considered "a legal statement of ownership" (p. 418). In the context of this thesis the marketing, branding or ownership of female surfers could be seen as a form power of panoptic control (Foucault, 1990; Johns & Johns, 2000). Using Foucault's (1990) concepts to examine this issue it could be claimed that female surfers are not only participating in self-surveillance to maintain an appropriate media image but are being observed for their surfing ability which draws attention to their sponsored surf brand products.

The success in developing surfwear specifically for women was one of the reasons for an increase in number of girls and women participating in surfing. In addition, the popularity of surf fashion in the mainstream consumer market changed marketing directions for surf companies. In the next section I
discuss the significance of surf fashion and its relevance to its impact on sponsored female surfers.

**The Impact of Surf Fashion**

Surfwear occupies an important role in the development of women’s surfing. According to Langford (2000), a major innovation in women’s surfing was the development of boardshorts designed specifically for women. The fact that non-surfers adopted surfwear as a fashion item meant a shift in the traditional forms of marketing by the Big Three surf brands (Langford, 2000). Roxy, the female surf fashion brand extension of Quiksilver and Billabong were the first to produce a boardshort that was specifically designed for active female surfers (Booth, 2001a; Langford, 2000). The acceptance of female boardshorts rather than bikinis for surfing contestants brought about a significant shift in attitude of younger surfers who quickly discovered that boardshorts provided the physical freedom to perform greater variety of moves in the surf (Booth, 2001a). Booth claimed that the change in fashion not only impacted upon female surfing performance, but changed surfing companies’ perception of the importance and potential of female surfers’ image for marketing purposes as well as surf-specific products for women. Surf companies have recognised the value of including female surfers as marketing tools to enhance sales, brand recognition and popularity.

An analysis of the Surf Industry Manufacturers Association retail study by Endo (2010) indicates that “women were responsible for buying USD$503.8 million worth of surf and skate clothing in 2008, making it the fourth largest surf/skate related market behind shoes, men’s clothes and surfboards” (para 1). Female surfers are an important part of surf culture as they represent a sizeable
portion of the surf economy because they buy brand products. Comments by Layne Beachley during an ABC-Radio broadcast (ABC-Radio, 1998) implied that Billabong, Rip Curl and Roxy see the value in promoting both men’s and women’s fashion lines as some women shop for men as well as for themselves. The increase in sales of surfwear and fashion designed specifically for women has also signified identification and connection to the surfing lifestyle. Another advantage in the development of a range of surfwear and fashion accessories for women has been the signage value for each of the Big Three brands. Despite the increase in marketing and sales of female surfwear and innovations in consumer fashion which has directed attention to women’s surfing, professional female surfers still find difficulty in securing adequate sponsorship.

To gain an understanding of branding as a marketing strategy the following section examines the various aspects of this process and highlights its relevance to the research objectives.

**Branding – A Means to Freedom or the Prison we Choose?**

The concept of branding represents one of the central tenets of marketing but has several implications when considered in the context of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of sporting celebrities and athletes. Historically, branding is an old subject “rooted in the Anglo-Saxon and Egyptian societies” (Zdravkovic, 2008, p. 10). The term ‘brand’ comes from the Old Norse (language of the Vikings) *brandr*, which means to burn (Blackett, 2003). During the Viking times branding was used to claim ownership by placing a burning stamp on livestock. Zdravkovic (2008) states that “there is some evidence to suggest ancient Egyptians placed symbols on their bricks for identification purposes and that members of medieval European trade guilds placed
trademarks on their products to assure their customers of quality and protect production right” (p. 10). Spotts and Weinberger (2010) argue that the importance of branding for products, companies and organisations and its connection to corporate reputation and company value is self evident. This connection is particularly relevant in the context of sport and surf sponsorship where sponsored athletes are wearing branded products to enhance company reputation and profits.

In the more modern context, the brand is a critical component of what a company stands for (Davis, 2000). Zdravkovic (2008) argues that “researchers believe that brands are portrayed as a set of promises” (p. 10). Davis (2000) adds that brands are dependent upon “trust, consistency, and a defined set of expectations” (p. 3). Therefore the process that involves actions to help a brand be recognised is called branding. The purpose of branding is to distinguish a product offering from one brand in comparison to another through the development of a distinctive name, logo, packaging or design (Jobber, 2004). Brand theory is instrumental in telling us how sport and surf brands develop and remain brands. In the context of this thesis it is beneficial to briefly include a discussion about traditional brand theorists such as Aaker (1995, 2004) and Keller (2008) and consumer culture theorists such as McCracken (2005), Holt (2004), and Bevan (2006) to highlight its relevance to surf brands. It is not my intention to go into any depth about these theories but to use them as a means to emphasise their relevance when examining the experiences of female surfers in the sponsorship process.

Branding traditionalists have common beliefs that the brand is comprised of images and associations that exist in the minds of consumers (Aaker, 1995;
Keller, 2008) and argue these associations can be influenced by marketing activity such as advertising. Aaker (1991) defines the term ‘brand’ as:

An identifying feature that distinguishes one product from another; more specifically, any name, term, symbol, sign, or design or a unifying combination of these to identify goods and services of one seller or group of sellers to differentiate them from their competitors (p. 7)

The image of the brand is therefore a symbolic construct created by the company to give the impression that a brand associated with a product has qualities or characteristics that make it special or unique. Keller (2008) defined brand image as “the perception of the brand as reflected by brand association held in the consumer’s memory” (p. 3). Here brand association refers to anything that can link the brand to the consumer’s mind or memory such as a logo, slogan, individual celebrity athlete or advertising campaign such as Nike Just do it that creates brand equity for the company. Brand equity is described by Aaker (1991) as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product to a firm or to that firm’s customers” (p. 15). Through a traditionalist brand theorist’s lens, maintaining a consistent brand strategy that reinforces the original brand associations over time is the key to achieving brand equity.

Conversely, marketing theorists who subscribe to Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) (Holt, 2004; Wipperfurth, 2005) find the branding traditionalist’s approach inadequate. Likewise, Leib (2007) maintains that “brands must and can change over time to remain relevant and accommodate cultural changes” (p. 39). In the CCT tradition, Arnould and Thompson (2005) define the brand more broadly and argue that it “explores how consumers actively rework and transform symbolic meanings encoded in advertisements, brands, retail setting,
or material goods to manifest their particular personal and social circumstances and further identify their identity and lifestyle goals” (p. 871). Riezebos (2002) refers to brand equity as “the combination of the brand name and its related connotations to the consumer’s valuation of the branded article as a whole” (p. 69). In order to enhance brand equity, Roy and Cornwell (2003) suggest that “consumers who identify a link between sponsor, product and event have more positive responses to brand association and image” (p. 378).

Branding in the advertising sense is defined by Kramer (2003) as marketing products or selling a lifestyle or desirable identities in such a way that “consumers have immediate, positive, brand-name recognition and association with a particular company” (p. 302). Simply put, branding means that no matter how good the product, unless it is marketed in a way to enhance consumer belief in that brand and the culture it represents, it will not be successful and attract consumer spending.

Therefore, brands and trademarks linked to high profile athletes as part of their marketing strategy benefit from a communication tool that serves to create a brand personality and reinforce the consumer’s beliefs about that brand (Hoffman & Preble, 2003). A brand personality is a set of human traits or characteristics attributed which generates emotional associations in the consumer’s mind to set it apart from other brands and will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

In the surf brand context, consumers appear to be more attracted to and identify with the Big Three brands in order to be associated with the free and easy lifestyle interests, beliefs, meanings and social practices of the group, namely the surfing community. From the CCT perspective, Arnould and Thompson (2005) believe that “consumers bend advertisements to fit their life
circumstances rather than feel pressure to conform to a specific ideological
representation and are seen as interpretive agents rather than passive dupes”
(p. 875). In other words, the surf brand consumer is seen to be able to resist
and discern in their consumption of surf brand products. Resistance on the part
of the consumer can affect the way in which surf brand managers try to
represent their brand image and can have an impact on sponsorship decisions
especially in today’s challenging economic climate.

The ‘Person Brand’ in the Lifestyle Marketing Mix

Marketing research by Hayes, Alford, Silver and York (2006) has argued
that consumers have no difficulty in consistently assigning human personality
traits to brands. Branding theory, in the traditional sense, views brand
personality as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand”
(Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Other researchers (Hayes, et al., 2006; Sweeney &
Brandon, 2006) have argued that certain dimensions of brand personality are
related to the customer-brand relationship. Wretborn and Äström (2007) believe
that “in order for a brand to be called a true relationship partner, it needs to
actively contribute in some fashion to the relationship” (p. 3). Lieb (2007) claims
that advocates of a consumer culture “have begun to question whether certain
people with certain characteristics can reasonably be regarded as brands” (p.
41). It seems that associating a brand with a popular high profile athlete can
have a persuasive appeal to consumers who live, or would like to live, the
lifestyle they believe the celebrity endorser is enjoying.

A study by Lieb (2007) indicated that pop stars are promoted as a
“person brand, claiming the association of authenticity with his or her audience
and the association of money-making potential with those who manufacture him or her for mass consumption” (p. 43). Similarities can be drawn between pop stars and athletes because, once a sponsored athlete is ‘branded’ by a company, they risk becoming associated with the philosophy and image of that brand. The result for the athlete is an increased public profile and popularity through extensive media coverage. Fournier and Herman’s (2004) notion of a ‘person brand’ suggests that the image and personality, or brand personality of high profile surfers is used by the companies as a marketing tool. Research by Mullin et al. (2007) and Varey (2002) confirms that the incorporation of a company’s message and the sponsored athlete’s (person brand) image, with the lifestyle pursuits of a targeted market, adds immediate credibility to the corporation or sponsor and their products. It is these factors in addition to the popularity of action or lifestyle sports events that have led to commercial successes for sponsors, the media and for those athletes who are fortunate enough to be sponsored (Bennett & Lachowetz, 2004).

The combination of marketing elements used to promote a product or brand is known as the marketing mix. Figure 3.8 illustrates how the lifestyle marketing of sporting corporations through sponsorship and branding of athletes combines in the promotional and marketing mix alongside consumer perception to create both company image and reputation. In order for organisations to create an authentic brand personality and image, an important component is the brand management practices and philosophy of individual companies, particularly when related to opportunities for female athletes (Fullagar & Toohey, 2009; Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2008; Shaw, 2006). Marketing managers of individual companies are then responsible for assessing
the success of their company image and reputation and make appropriate changes in order to increase company popularity and profit.

Figure 3.8. Lifestyle Marketing Mix

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the influence of sport managers in the decision making process of sponsorship is particularly relevant where surf company representatives are responsible for deciding the futures of both male and female surfers. Effective brand management is necessary for surf companies that aspire to develop their brand personality and image through sponsored events, promotions, and sponsorship of both male and female surfers. One approach to link a sport brand with significant sustainable marketing investment is through the coverage of sponsored events and athletes by television, media and the internet (Collins, 2000). This is particularly relevant in the surfing industry where a range of advertising mediums are used extensively to attract consumer attention.

However, in order to attract the attention of consumers, the company must choose to sponsor an event or athlete that fits well with its image. As discussed in Chapter 2, many consumers are attracted to a product that is promoted through the use of female athletes for their sex appeal. As such,
popular female athletes provide sponsoring companies with something unique, namely, their gender. The research (Cole, 2000; Lucas, 2000) suggests that the way a female surfer is represented creates a persuasive story in the minds of consumers and leads to greater brand loyalty towards the sponsor’s product. An example of branding in the sport and surf industry is demonstrated when companies use world champion surfers, such as Carissa Moore, presently the 2011 ASP world champion from Hawaii, and former world champion Stephanie Gilmore, to promote and endorse brand image and association. Research has demonstrated that marketing strategies involving celebrity females or both female and male endorsements provide the following benefits: they make advertisements more believable, and encourage a positive attitude towards the brand (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Whitaker, Lear, & Runyan, 2009); enhance the advertising message recall by consumers (Hyun, 2004; McDaniel, 1999); aid in the recognition of brand names (Derbaix & Lardinoit, 2001; Pegoraro, Ayer, & O'Reilly, 2010) and create a distinct personality for the brand (Arvidsson, 2005; Nobre, Becker, & Brito, 2010; Ward, 2007). These marketing strategies demonstrate the potential success to the surf companies of utilising the ‘person brand’ or images of female surfers.

Brand image is an important aspect in the marketing strategy of surf companies to raise brand awareness in both the surfing and mainstream consumer market. However, according to Sweeney (2006), image is believed to be “based more on a consumer’s perception of a company through its associations” (p. 3). The associations of a brand are developed through the image representations of the high profile surfer and his or her desired lifestyle. Bevan (2006) argues that a “strong brand engenders feelings of trust, reliability,
loyalty, empathy, responsiveness and recognition in the customer’s mind and gives the business or company, a significant edge over the competition” (p. 9). The endorsed brand is therefore viewed by consumers as separate from the functional product it sells and is transformed to a brand with a distinct personality with identifying slogans and logos. The brand personality of each company distinguishes them from their competitors with the assistance of effective advertising, marketing and sponsorship of surfing events and surfers. The images of sponsored surfers are in fact being widely used as a strategy to achieve brand recognition.

Figure 3.9 illustrates how brand image fits into the process of branding and filters down to the sponsorship of individual surfers and surfing events to improve brand awareness and brand equity which ultimately leads to increased sales. In this process the individual surf company develops an appropriate image to represent their brand. In other words, sponsored surfers are taking on or conforming to the constructed images of the companies in order to maintain sponsorship (Lessing, 1991).

Conformity such as this involves a level of surveillance on the part of company managers to ensure that sponsored surfers fulfil their requirements and self-
surveillance is undertaken by surfers to make sure they keep within that brand image. This present study is interested in how female surfers experience this.

Suitable surfers and surfing events are selected to represent and promote the brand which leads to brand awareness by either spectators or consumers. According to Amis Slack and Berrett (1999), this leads to brand equity which is a combination of the brand name, associated image and reputation that adds to a customer’s perceived value of the product or service and leads to increased purchasing. Fournier and Herman (2004) argue that the downside of this arrangement is that once the brand becomes stronger than the person, the brand can “shed its dependence on the person that once gave it life” (p. 43). This situation may be similar to high profile professional female surfers who become the ‘person brand’ then have their sponsorship withdrawn because their image no longer suits the lifestyle marketing strategies of the sponsoring company. The disparity in sponsorship illustrated in Chapter 2 noted that several of the women of the top 17 in the ASP World Tour are without major surf brand sponsors and some have in fact had their sponsorship agreements cancelled.

A case study by Grow (2008) that explored how gender influences branding and the narrative process of Nike’s ‘parent’ brand and the women’s sub-brand, draws similarities to the development of a women’s line of products within the Big Three surf brands. In the case of Nike, “the parent brand is the men’s brand, while the women’s brand represents a single sub-brand” (Grow, 2008, p. 314). Grow defined the Nike parent brand as predominantly patriarchal and shaped by masculine branded Just do it stories. Ind (2004) claims that “Nike is an organisation that lives on stories” (p. 171). The emotional
relationship that Nike has with its strong male-orientated consumer base has resulted from its interaction between the company’s core story, *Just do it*, and the individual ‘hands-on’ stories told through the promotion of popular male athletes, and has been responsible for Nike developing a strong masculine brand (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu, 2005). The Nike women’s sub-brand was launched at a time when women’s professional sport was virtually non-existent and its formation caused a source of tension within the company amongst corporate management.

Consumer Culture theorists view brands as ‘living things’, ‘sacred entities’ (Fog et al., 2005; Ind, 2004; Vincent, 2002) and ‘emotional promises’ (Gobé, 2001; Travis, 2000). Together these three branding characteristics create powerful advertising messages. Grow (2008) argues that “launching and maintaining the Nike women’s sub-brand against this backdrop posed numerous risks to the parent brand” (p. 315). In the patriarchal world of sports which shapes companies like Nike and their sponsorship agreements, female athletes are limited by companies favouring femininity over athleticism (Krane et al., 2001; McCallister et al., 2003). Examples of how sponsorship privileges feminism over athletic ability were described in Chapter 2. These included cases where professional tennis players such as Anna Kournikova and Maria Sharapova earned millions of dollars for their attractiveness without ever winning a major tennis title. Even though Nike created a women’s sub-brand that increased company profits, the existence of skilled and strong women appearing in their advertisements was perceived as a threat to the ‘sacred’ parent brand by Nike management because it implied resistance which challenged men’s leadership and control. Grow points out that this threat
resulted in Nike employing ‘pretty’ models instead of athletic looking women and provided a smaller advertising budget for the women’s sub-brand. In addition, the advertising team were asked to moderate the emphasis on empowered women generally.

The Nike story parallels a similar beginning of the women’s sub-brands within Rip Curl and Quiksilver. Rip Curl’s decision to market female products using male surfers in their company advertisements failed to connect with its target market of female surfers. As a result the female brand extension was re-integrated under the banner of Rip Curl and it became more of a unisex brand similar to Billabong. Quiksilver’s sub-brands Roxy and Quiksilver Women, while being successful in their own right are still dominated by the parent brand Quiksilver. This study focuses on whether the lifestyle marketing though sponsorship of female surfers by the Big Three (the parent brands) is beneficial to all involved. The domination of the parent brand suggests that women’s surfing is insignificant and implies that sponsorship may not be as beneficial to female surfers. The addition of another tier of sponsorship by surf companies, such as lifestyle sponsorship, has meant that females who perhaps cannot even surf are being employed as models to represent the brand. The following section examines what could be considered the hidden meaning behind branding.

**Brand Image – The Hidden Meaning behind Branding**

The primary objective of many sponsors is to increase brand awareness and enhance brand and/or corporate image (Cornwell, et al., 2001; Farrelly, Quester, & Burton, 1997; Roy & Cornwell, 2003). Bevan (2006) claims that “the
product is seen as providing core functional benefits, while the brand is responsible for creating the magnetic human-like aura around the actual product” (p. 9). The notion of a brand taking on human qualities is an interesting concept to consider in this thesis because actual surfers are used to promote inanimate surf brand products. To construct an effective brand image Grow (2008) believes a valuable marketing strategy is “storytelling as a communicative form” (p. 320). Fog et al. (2005) point out that Nike uses branded storytelling “as a tool to support its key message and lies at the heart of creating a strong brand” (p. 54). Likewise, Holt (2003, 2004) agrees that successful brands focus their marketing efforts on composing stories that achieve cultural significance, rather than trying to convince the consumer of the product’s functionality or points of differentiation. As such, The Big Three surf brands are using the lifestyle stories of sponsored surfers to enhance brand popularity as depicted on their company websites.

Other strategies that corporations employ to enhance brand image include logos, marks, nicknames and entertainment packages surrounding an event (Ferrand & Pages, 1999; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Sweeney, 2006). It is recognised that these images also have the power to influence the behaviour of consumers and improve brand popularity (Bennett & Lachowetz, 2004; Ferrand & Pages, 1999; Pegoraro, et al, 2010; Reece, 2009). Sweeney (2006) provides examples of slogans associated with strong brands that have had a significant impact on the brand’s image. Slogans and symbols have been used extensively in the sporting arena to signify authenticity of a product or brand. It is recognised that images have the power to influence the behaviour of consumers as well as affect brand popularity (Lucas, 2005; Sweeney, 2006).
Ferrand and Pages (1999) believe that:

Aligning a slogan with a brand has proven effective and adds to the image of the brand giving it a stronger purpose and holds the potential to positively influence consumers if the slogan is a fit with the brand image. (p. 400)

As indicated by Sweeney (2006), powerful slogans such as, Nike’s *Just Do It* and Adidas’ *Forever Sport* portray a story that not only appeals to the market, but conveys the image they want the brand to possess.

The Nike brand with its *Swoosh* logo, the ubiquitous tick symbol, is “probably amongst the most recognised brands in the world, involving one of the highest advertising budgets amongst multinational companies worldwide” (Bohm & Batta, 2010, p. 353). Bohm and Batta state “today the brand name is not necessary when advertising, as the logo and recognition of the ‘Swoosh’ automatically brings attention to the Nike brand” (p. 353). Roy and Cornwell (2003) cite other slogans such as “Mountain Dew’s *over the edge* and *extreme* as successful examples of brand association through sponsorship of sports such as skateboarding and snowboarding” (p. 379). These powerful images and slogans are then linked with a company symbol and have proven to be influential in the memory of the consumer and have also been associated with what Cliffe and Motion (2005) term as “identification and loyalty to the brand” (p. 1069). Therefore, the combination of sponsorship of celebrity or popular female surfers and slogans and/or logos as a marketing strategy heightens brand personality and denotes loyalty to the company by the sponsored surfer.

Enhanced brand personality and loyalty to the company is definitely a benefit for the sponsoring company.

Pearson (2010) argues that association with certain brand logos and
symbols can “unwittingly promote an ideology of male superiority and sexual difference” (p. 240). Pearson’s statement supports common themes in the lifestyle sport literature which, as Edwards and Corte (2010) confirm, “view commercialisation as typically a top-down process of corporate exploitation and commodification with negative implications for lifestyle sport” (p. 1137).

Research (Cole, 2000; Grau et al., 2007; Stevenson, 2002) confirms that in the quest for increased corporate profits and global media audiences companies are altering their marketing strategies to align with the growth in the female market and their preference to associate with a product that is advertised by female sports figures. In other words, the processes and requirements of a sponsorship arrangement could change female surfers’ behaviour towards their appearance in order to comply with the brand image and personality of individual surf brands.

Although an in-depth analysis of surf logos and symbols is not the purpose of this thesis, it is useful to note that these logos and symbols form part of the branding process of sponsored surfers to sell surf brand products and to maintain their authenticity as a surf brand. Lanagan (2003) argues that the authenticity of surf companies is being questioned as they move away from the “base roots of surfing” (p. 179) to capture the mainstream fashion market. Whether the symbols themselves exude an ideology of male dominance could be argued however, as illustrated previously in this chapter, the Big Three tailor their slogans and logos to cater for the growing popularity of the surfing lifestyle.

The literature (Bennett & Lachowetz, 2004; Reece, 2009; Thorpe, 2007) referred to earlier in this chapter indicates that the surfing lifestyle is being reflected through advertising and is sought after by both surfing and mainstream
consumers, which includes a growing female consumer market. The logos and slogans from the Big Three companies have been developed to promote the brand and accompanying surfing lifestyle.

Successful sponsorship arrangements rely on sponsorship of high profile surfers and major surfing events. As previously discussed, sponsorship in the surfing context is an umbrella term used to encompass a range of activities and duties that the surfer has to participate in as a part of their contract agreement in either a paid or unpaid capacity. These responsibilities can include activities such as product endorsement, public appearances, media interviews and advertising campaigns. Sponsorship by the Big Three in this context can also vary in degree of support and can include just product endorsement to full financial support and possibly an extended long term paid sponsored position with the company. The media coverage of both surfers and events are the antecedents that can lead to brand equity and enhanced reputation. The outcomes of improved brand equity for the surf companies can be local, national and even international media exposure, which in turn creates an atmosphere that impacts upon success in merchandise sales in stores and on the internet. These factors are of specific interest to surf company managers who make decisions about future marketing investments. These decisions which include choosing appropriate surfers and surfing events for sponsorship, impact on opportunities for surfers. Figure 3.10 depicts the factors involved in creating and assessing brand equity from a surf company perspective. This model emphasises the power and level of surveillance exerted by the surf brands and the surf media on sponsored surfers. By interpreting the experiences and stories of sponsored female surfers using Foucault’s (1979)
concept of the panopticon, I explore whether the surveillance being employed by the Big Three is beneficial to female surfers involved in the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship process.

Figure 3.10. Conceptual model for surf company assessment of brand equity

The research by Arnould and Thompson (2005) indicates women represent a portion of the consuming public that companies can’t afford to ignore. The challenge for surf companies will be to maintain the brand’s relationship with previous generations, the current demographic of Generation Y and future generations of female surfers. The success of surf companies is also dependent on important media support and coverage. To complete the discussion about the significant impact that branding can have on sponsorship it is important to outline the influence that the media has on this process.
**Media Influence in the Branding Process**

A widely recognised approach to promote brand image and enhance sponsored athletes’ profiles is through media representation (Amis et al., 1997; Cornwell et al., 2001; Global Exchange, 2006). Media is believed to be a major influential factor that either supports or hinders the creation of brand image (Global Exchange, 2006; Sweeney, 2006), with sponsorship closely linked to brand building and association (Amis, Pant, & Slack, 1997; Cornwell et al., 2005). The extent of media coverage has implications for, and impact upon, the abundance, level and/or type of sponsorship available for individual athletes. From a surfer’s perspective, a sponsorship involves endorsing the company brand by attaining effective media representation and is a viable means of improving their own image, profile, financial stability and career prospects. From a surf company perspective, the image of a sponsored surfer can also help create strong, unique and favourable associations for the brand. As such, Slack and Amis (2004) agree that “the contemporary discourse about sport is no longer about producing the best performance but rather the size of the television contract, the licensing and merchandising of official products and the marketing of goods” (p. 269). This fact has implications for female athletes who want to engage in a sport such as surfing that has, in the past, been considered inappropriate for women. The media has long been recognised for its substantial role in shaping the opinions and attitudes of the surfing fraternity.

As indicated in Chapter 2, researchers (McGinnis, 2002; Messner, Duncan & Cooky, 2003; Vander Kloet, 2005; Scrogum, 2005; Wait, 2008) have argued that women’s sport has become increasingly commodified, and with sponsorship necessary to succeed in sport as a career, the pressure to
construct a socially acceptable and attractive image has also increased.

Research by Bruce (2008), Lucas (2000) and McDonald (2000) indicates that female athletes who appear to fit into the dominant cultural ideals of femininity, namely heterosexual and attractive, receive the most media coverage and gain sponsorship opportunities from leading sports brands. This confirms Wright and Clarke’s (1999) claim that “lesbian athletes have been required not only to hide their sexuality, but to present themselves as models of heterosexual femininity” (p. 228). Markula’s (2001) study of how women encounter and sense the female body ideal in aerobics is relevant to the image of female surfers who seek sponsorship. A strong, thin, muscular and young body is considered ideal in aerobics and results from the fact that women are exposed to “the male gaze that sets the standard of the desirable female form” (p. 245). Markula emphasised that what was expected as an ideal body through the male gaze often contradicted the female participants’ own choice and they “felt pressured to please the gaze” (p. 245). Thus the self identity of these women is being actively shaped by external or ‘outside’ forces that cause an ongoing process of drawing and policing of boundaries (Thornton, 2004). In the case of female surfers I have argued that external forces such as the ‘gaze’ by mainstream and surf media, surf companies and society all have an impact on how they represent themselves for sponsorship.

It is important at this point to emphasise that I do not present all female surfers as a homogenous group as there are many diverse ways of being a female surfer and engaging with surf brands and media representations. The Australian sports Commission (2005) reported that ‘over 50% of current surf school participants are women and young girls’ (ASC, 2005). Yet in the
competitive surfing arena, relatively few female surfers have made a noticeable impact on the subculture of surfing (Ford & Brown, 2006). Therefore, I recognise that a significant number of female surfers do not partake in formal competitive surfing. However, for those female surfers who participate in competitive surfing, a desirable image and success in contests obviously contributes to prestige in the sport and is shaped by the gaze of the media, surf companies and the consuming public. I stress, however, that the lifestyle marketing within the surfing industry is aimed at both female surfers who are interested in deriving benefits from the act of surfing itself and those who are interested in the economic benefits that may be possible through competitive surfing and sponsorship. Therefore, it is important for competitive female surfers to attain and/or maintain an image that will ensure prestige and possible sponsorship opportunities. This includes being able to accept the gaze by media, surf companies seeking representatives for sponsorship, other female surfers and the general surfing community.

I argued in Chapter 2 that the media actively promotes a stereotypical representation of women who engage in sport. In the surfing context, the ideal image includes being attractive and blonde with an emphasis being placed on a ‘feminine’ look rather than on their athletic performance. By using Foucault’s technology of self, the implication for females surfers is that if good-looks are more likely to attract sponsorship then perhaps they are being persuaded to comply to what is considered ‘feminine’ in order to appeal to potential sponsors. Therefore, it could be argued that female surfers are willing to accept what Lessing describes as the ‘prison’, rather than lose an opportunity for sponsorship. If female surfers conform in this way it exemplifies Dworkin and
Messner’s (2002) notion of reproductive agency where women are going along with the wave of compliance to appease individual surf company philosophy and brand image. At the same time, women are engaging in self-surveillance to maintain appearance in order to make themselves more appealing for sponsorship.

Referring back to the ‘branding’ analogy, the marketing, sponsorship, branding or ownership of female surfers could be seen in Foucauldian terms as a form of power or panoptic control (Foucault, 1990; Johns & Johns, 2000). Further in Foucauldian terms, it could be argued that female surfers are not only participating in self-surveillance to maintain an appropriate media image but are being observed by media to draw attention to their sponsored surf brand products. A conceptual overview of Lessing (1991) and Foucault’s (1979) work will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter to illustrate their usefulness in the examination of issues surrounding the lived sponsorship experiences of female surfers. Based on the literature in this chapter I argue that sponsorship appears very beneficial for the sponsoring companies but the extent and range of advantages for female surfers is uncertain. The data from this thesis establishes whether or not this is accurate.

**Summary**

In this chapter I examined literature regarding the marketing of female athletes and the emerging popularity of sport and surfing sponsorship through the lens of Lessing (1991) and Foucault (1979) to guide my study and to determine any knowledge gaps in this area. The surfing scene is still predominantly and identifiably masculine despite relatively recent growth in the
participation and involvement within the surfing culture of female surfers and female enthusiasts. The Big Three companies have capitalised on their historical origins, and while they all produce and sell surf products to the surfing community, a significant percentage of their profits comes from the sale of surf fashion and accessories to non-surfers. It has been identified that each surf company has their own distinctive brand personality with identifying slogans and logos to distinguish them from their competitors. All three companies promote their brand to the public by utilising lifestyle marketing strategies through sponsorship of both male and female surfers. The media has been recognised as playing a role in the success of the Big Three. At the same time, the media has been responsible for undervaluing female surfers through sexploitation in their coverage of women’s surfing events. Coverage of this type has come at the expense of the performance of female surfers. The lack of media coverage and devaluing women’s surfing ability has sanctioned the dominance of males in the industry and reduced opportunities for sponsorship.

Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical lens that has guided my study in more depth and in particular explores the advantages of using an interpretive ethnographic approach. In the next chapter I also outline the data collection and analysis methods that were employed to address the research objectives and discuss validity and reliability, ethical issues and limitations during the research process.
Chapter 4: Theoretical Perspectives and Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I present a conceptual overview of Lessing (1991) and Foucault’s (1979) work to illustrate their usefulness in the examination of female surfers’ sponsorship experiences to understand the impact of lifestyle marketing by the Big Three on sponsored female surfers. The chapter also outlines the research design for the thesis and presents justification for employing an interpretive ethnographic approach to investigate the main research objectives presented in Chapter 1. In this chapter, I consider the factors involved in gaining access to the research sites and outline the data collection and analysis techniques employed, as well as the validity, reliability and ethical considerations of this research. The data collection was conducted over a four-year period from April 2007 until July 2011, during which I conducted a combination of structured and semi-structured interviews and participated in informal conversations. The data collected from interviews was supported by observation, field notes and document analysis, including analysis of both the mass and niche media representations. This mixed method of data collection was used to gain a greater depth of understanding about the issues surrounding the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers and supported an interpretive ethnographic approach. Research (Axinn & Pearce, 2006; Pearce, 2002) has demonstrated that a mixed method approach provides an opportunity to use multiple sources of information from multiple approaches to gain new insights into the culture or environment under investigation.

The research paradigm guiding this study is based on an interpretive approach and uses the concepts of Doris Lessing’s (1991) concept of conformity.
and Michel Foucault’s (1979) notion of panopticism and the technologies of the self and is discussed in the following section.

**Theoretical Perspectives – The Rising Tide of Discontent**

By utilising the concepts of Lessing and Foucault as a theoretical framework and positioning female surfers at the centre of this ethnographic research it allowed me to examine their lived experiences to determine whether competitive surfing for women is an empowering experience. To contextualize my use of Lessing in this thesis, I will give a brief description of some of her work that highlights the relevance of my choice of her as an appropriate theoretical framework for my study and then discuss her (1991) notion of conformity and its relevance to the sponsorship of female surfers.

**Lessing and the Notion of Conformity**

A number of studies (Birrell & Theberge, 1994; Markula, 2003; Rinehart, 2005; Thorpe, 2007; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998) have examined issues of gender with respect to whether sport cultures can offer women a source of empowerment. Examples of empowerment in the sporting context include sports that create opportunities for women and girls to engage in sport in order to enhance self-confidence, leadership and experience a sense of achievement. Empowerment of women through sport also means challenging existing gender norms and roles within communities and societies. Hughes and Randell (2007) believe that sport should provide a space in which women can renegotiate concepts of feminity and masculinity and challenge stereotypes which label women as weak and inferior” (p. 1). Various studies (Blinde, Taube, & Han, 1994; McClung & Blinde, 2002; Shaw & Amis, 2001) suggest that power is used
most often in sport to maintain the status quo. Krane et al. (2001) believe that “engaging in powerful, assertive and competitive movement is considered masculine behaviour and socially acceptable for males but not females” (p. 117). Therefore, women have been conditioned to conform to what is considered ‘feminine’ and acceptable so they not only succeed in their chosen sport but successfully gain sponsorship and support for their careers (Markula, 2003, Markula & Pringle, 2006). Lessing’s view is relevant in an examination of the lived experiences of female surfers who may feel powerless to change traditional patriarchal (male controlled) attitudes that are prevalent in surfing culture.

Doris Lessing is a Zimbabwean-British novelist, poet, playwright, biographer and short story writer who has more than fifty published works to her name (Witherby, 2006). Her earlier novels are autobiographical, many of them emerging from her childhood experiences in a British colony then known as Rhodesia. Her fiction was drawn from her childhood memories and serious engagement with racial and political tensions and social concerns, particularly of women. Lessing published her first novel, *The Grass Is Singing*, in 1950 and went on to become a favourite with feminist literary critics (Turner, 2008). In 2007, at the age of 88, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature and is one of the eleven women to have won the prize in 106 years (Crown, 2007).

Wästberg (2007) a writer, Member of the Swedish Academy and Chairman of the Nobel Committee for Literature, in his speech at the Noble Prize ceremony described Doris Lessing as “part of both the history of literature and living literature. She has contributed to changing the way we see the world”.


Although Lessing cannot be easily categorised, Turner (2008) describes her work as influenced by being “a moralist, an investigator of states of consciousness and forms of fiction, war, history of political and cultural ideas in Britain from the 1960s to the end of the century; the corruption and poverty within Zimbabwe and a portrayer of how individuals function within society” (p. 1). Lessing’s writing also comes from a diverse range of experiences including her stint as a devoted communist; her willingness to breach the boundaries of genre with experimentation; her inter-textual relationship with Virginia Woolf; her changing vision of the role of storyteller in society; her fiction about age and aging; her treatment of motherhood and domestic spaces and her complicated response to the postcolonial era in Africa, as revealed in her thematic attention to race, nation and ethnicity.

Doris Lessing is described and known as an author with a strong sense of feminism (Thompson Corporation, 2005-2006, Witherby, 2006). In an interview with Hermione (2010), Lessing was asked what she thought about being considered a heroine to many women readers and feminists. Lessing’s reply was “feminists….I’ve never ever in my life met a woman who is not a feminist” (p. 22). One of Lessing’s main concerns has always been for the dilemmas and inequities faced by women particularly in Africa. One of her most influential works, *The Golden Notebook* (1962), a study of the struggles of a woman writer, is considered a classic of feminist fiction. Although Lessing was keen to point out later that this was not what she intended, she perceives and observes the operations of sex, power and society in a manner not always comfortable for readers. Kakutani (2007) implied that this could have been one reason why she has troubled the literary and political world so much.
Lessing has been deemed a woman who surveyed and judged mankind in the latter half of the 20th century like no other writer (Turner, 2008). In her later books she mainly focused on efforts by individuals to resist society’s pressures toward marginalization and acculturation. Several researchers have used Lessing’s work to explore varying aspects of the human condition in a literary sense but it appears that her work hasn’t been used to analyse issues in women’s sport. Rapping’s (1975) review of two of Lessing’s novels *The Golden Notebook* (Lessing, 1962) and *Children of Violence* (Lessing, 1964) believes that no other novelist has explored so fully the conflicts and paradoxes of feminine identity and experience, especially within the context of a male dominated society. Javangwe (2009) used Lessing’s book *Under my Skin, Volume 1, 1919-1949* (Lessing, 1994) to explore how self-identity is reconstructed through the narrative act of autobiography. Wang and Wen (2010) used *Room Nineteen* (Lessing, 1978) to reconsider gender relations and the tensions between feminism and patriarchy. Watkins (2007) used a couple of Lessing’s novels to address and reassess questions about national identity and race.

Rubenstein (2001) outlines Lessing’s novel *Love, Again: A novel* (1996) which focuses on the mature, self realised mature woman and the struggles of late-midlife female discovery and expose assumptions about the female body. In his book Rubenstein describes how Lessing, in her book, approaches inner conflict between a person’s inner self-image and what is reflected in the mirror thereby emphasising the struggle between the “outward appearance and the inward self” (p.9). Other researchers (Arlett, 1987; Bazin, 2008; Boehm, 1997; Ingersoll, 2000) also identified certain persistent themes in Lessing’s work, such
as the relationship between the individual and society; the tension between
domicity and freedom; responsibility and independence and human self-
control. I identified that the images being depicted in Lessing’s work and
especially in this book correlated with the struggles being faced by female
athletes as they strive for an appropriate image to acquire sponsorship.

Notebook* is widely considered a feminist classic, and Lessing herself is
frequently cited as a feminist icon. Her book demonstrates Lessing’s theme of
female oppression and the female desire for bodily, intellectual and emotional
freedom. Rich and Lyall (2007) claimed that the book was portrayed as
unfeminine at its publication, however, was identified as a foundational feminist
literary work by the Swedish Academy who claimed Lessing was “that epicist of
the female experience, who with scepticism, fire and visionary power has
subjected a divided civilisation to scrutiny” (para 2) and as such “informed the
20th-century view of the male-female relationship” (para 8).

However, it is important to note that Lessing has had an ambivalent
association with feminism. She has repeatedly disclaimed the idea that she
herself was a feminist, despite being hailed as a feminist pioneer, earning the
scorn of some critics. As indicated by several authors (Crown, 2007; Rich &
Lyall, 2007; Raschke, Perrakis, & Singer, 2010), the term feminism in Lessing’s
view is no more than a confusing derogatory word. Lessing was criticised for
her views on feminism but it did not stop her writing from becoming popular in
feminist circles.

Lessing’s (1978) book, *To Room Nineteen* has certainly been cited as a
work with feminist concerns, or at least, a work of concern to feminists
(Rapping, 1975; Raschke et al., 2010; Rich, & Lyall. 2007; Rubenstein, 2001).

The relevance of the themes in this story to my study are the expectations, pressures and burdens placed on the woman in the story by husband and children, the inability to regain herself as an individual having entered into these institutions. The analogy also lies in Lessing’s view on the destructive results of patriarchy, its definitions and standards, and the consequences of being denied the opportunity to find and promote the fundamental self. Therefore, Lessing’s reference to institutions and the self in both To Room Nineteen (1978) and Prisons We Choose to Live Inside (1991) can be related in a broad sense to other institutions like sporting organisations, companies and even the institution of the individual, the self.

Doris Lessing’s book Prisons We Choose to Live Inside (1991) is a collection of five essays from which I derived certain concepts that have been useful in my analysis of female surfer’s experiences of sponsorship. I chose themes such as conformity, the group mind, resistance, obedience to the group and repetition and control through the use of slogans as themes that can be applied to the context of marketing and used as strategies to promote sport brands and sell products. In this book, Lessing’s analysis of the ways political leaders manipulate society can also be likened to marketing strategies as she states:

It seems to me, more and more, that we are being governed by waves of mass emption, and while they last it is not possible to ask cool, serious questions. These slogans, or these accusations, these claims, these trumpetings, quite soon they will seem to everyone ridiculous and even shameful. Meanwhile, it is not possible to say so (p. 45).
What Lessing (1991) is implying here, that has relevance in the surfing context for women, is that it is possible for a female surfers to stand up “against the prevailing tide of opinion” (p. 54), resist, seek out a group of “like-minded people” (p. 48) and change personal attitudes and thinking. In doing so, Lessing says, others will then “fall in behind” and as such “a new attitude becomes general” (p. 61). Lessing’s notion of conformity and resistance can be used to understand the nature of sponsorship and branding of athletes; the process involved in being sponsored could be considered an obstacle to individual freedom and liberation. For example, Lessing (1991) claims that “every hour of every day you will be deluged with ideas and opinions that are mass produced, and regurgitated, whose only real vitality comes from the power of the mob, slogans, pattern thinking” (p. 74). Marketing strategies include the use of slogans and sponsorship to create a brand personality to sell products and increase revenue for companies. Individual surf brands are promoted through the sponsorship of surfing events and individual surfers to gain media coverage to become commercially and competitively successful. In short, surfers choose a lifestyle in the same way as Lessing argues that we choose our own prisons.

Doris Lessing’s (1991) book, *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside* challenges Western societies’ set of assumptions about the group mentality that influences our ideas about ourselves as individuals. Lessing analyses the “mechanism of obedience” of the group whereby the group mind cannot be resisted and most “give in to the majority opinion and obey the atmosphere” (p. 49). As a society we all live in groups, obtain our livelihood, our meanings, our identities from groups. Lessing believes that when in group situations we tend to take on the group perspective; or may even deliberately seek out a group of
"like-minded people" (p. 48). This can be translated to the surfing community where like-minded people gather to take part in the sport of surfing.

Belonging to a group can also alter our thinking because as Lessing (1991) states, “it is the hardest thing in the world to maintain an individual dissident opinion, as a member of a group” (p. 48). The ideology behind Lessing’s notion of the group mindset means that policies or regulations which govern the group are never challenged. In reference to the group mindset, Lessing claims that “it is a group mind, intensely resistant to change, equipped with sacred assumptions about which there can be no discussion” (p. 50). The ‘group mind’ is also influenced by the representation of female athletes in the media. Research (Elling & Janssens, 2009; Fallon & Jome, 2007; Krane et al., 2001; McGinnis, McQuillan & Chapple, 2005) confirms that portraying a feminine, heterosexual appearance is a survival strategy for many female athletes in all sports. These ‘feminine’ attributes are at times rewarded with benefits such as greater media attention and coverage, endorsements and fan approval. This type of scrutiny or surveillance is particularly prevalent in the surfing culture with a history steeped in male dominance and control (Booth, 2001a; Gabbard, 2000; Southerden, 2003) where ‘feminine’ attributes enhance the sponsorship opportunities. Lessing (1991) suggests that even though individuals are kept under varying degrees of surveillance within society by the dominant powers, they are “still able to choose or resist dominant discourse” (p. 19). As suggested by Beal (2003), surveillance by the majority and its resulting self-surveillance and compliance by those being observed or gazed upon can often be full of contradictions in that it can lead to behaviour within a culture or subculture that either guides social change or reproduces the dominant norms
and values. For the purpose of my thesis I consider the leading surf companies as well as the surf media to represent the dominant powers which influence the identities of individual female surfers, particularly if they are seeking sponsorship. It is their experiences of this influence that I investigate.

According to Ford and Brown (2006), female surfers have had to adhere to prescribed gender norms in the way they dress and surf in order to attract sponsorship. Several women have attempted to stand out against the prevailing tide of opinion, and these instances will be described in more detail in the next chapter. Lessing (1991) maintains that corporations are similar to political parties in that they do not teach citizens or employees to become individuals who are able to resist group pressures. She argues that corporations use hegemonic or dominant approaches through propaganda and manipulation (advertising and sponsorship deals) to persuade the population to be compliant, which aligns with the challenges that female surfers have encountered with sponsorship. In my study, I apply this hegemonic approach to that which is used by surf companies in their relationship with female surfers. Lessing claims that “you will be taught that no matter how much you have to conform outwardly - because the world you are going to live in often punishes unconformity with death – to keep your own being alive inwardly, your own judgement, your own thought” (p. 75). The term ‘death’, when applied to the context of surfing sponsorship, means that female surfers who don’t conform by having an appropriate look and image, or who challenge or disobey the conditions of their sponsorship agreement, will be ignored or discounted. A female surfer who does not have a suitable sponsor and wants to achieve a high level of success in her sport will find survival problematic.
I ascertained that using both Lessing (1991) and Foucault’s (1979) common application of the prison and how it affects their level of conformity or resistance is an advantage when examining the sponsorship experiences of female surfers. Another unifying thread that ties Lessing’s notion of conformity and Foucault’s theory of the technologies of the self together is the concept of identity. Examining how female surfers experience and are influenced by sponsorship by the Big Three, through the lens of Lessing and Foucault, is useful to analyse their struggle to establish, define, defend, conform to, reshape and refine their identity within themselves and to those who seek to have control over it. Within the context of identity, Lessing is also not only interested in the power within relationships but also in its operations in a larger social context. Lessing’s criticisms of the human condition in her writing do not indicate that she has given up or that we are incapable of change, rather she implies that resistance transformation is possible. This aligns with Foucault’s (1990) later work around technologies of self which he views as an “exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one’s self and to attain a certain mode of being” (p. 2). From this view, Foucault considers there is an opportunity for individuals to transform and improve their condition or situation in life.

Apart from the analogies that can be drawn from the combined concepts of Lessing and Foucault, the main motivation behind my inclusion of Lessing and her concepts was the similarity in her beliefs to those which underpin third wave feminism and my claim of not taking a feminist stance but viewing my research from a feminist perspective. The interpretation of one aspect of third wave feminism by Heywood (2008) “I’m not feminist but” (p. 71) highlights the link to myself as the researcher and the current Generation Y of female surfers.
Therefore this study takes on a feminist standpoint and, like Lessing, who gives voice to the silent women, the refugees and homeless of our century, so too can this ethnographic study give voice to female surfers’ experiences of sponsorship.

I now discuss Foucault’s (1979) panopticism and the technologies of the self and how I use these theories to analyse female surfers’ engagement in self-surveillance to ensure they attain or maintain sponsorship.

**Foucault and Power Relations in Sport and Surfing**

A number of researchers (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010; Duncan, 1994; Johns & Johns, 2000; Markula, 2003, 2004; Pringle, 2005; Rail & Harvey, 1995; McGuire, 2002) have applied the theories of Michel Foucault to study gender issues in sport and physical activities. They suggest that a Foucauldian-inspired analysis can inform a discussion about women’s empowerment as Foucault (1983) was particularly interested in forms of dominance and power “which make individuals subjects” (p. 212) and tie them to specific identities. In addition, Foucault (1980) believed that the effects of power produced “certain bodies and interactions of those bodies” (p. 25). As such, I realised that Foucault’s (1979) concepts of the panopticon and technologies of the self are useful to examine the issues surrounding the lived sponsorship experiences of female surfers and the lifestyle marketing practices of the Big Three. Through the lens of Lessing and Foucault, I examine how female surfers are engaging in self-surveillance to ensure that they secure sponsorship from the Big Three surf companies. This study therefore takes into account the dynamics of gender as a dimension of social inequity and difference within the sport of surfing where apparent progress in women’s competitive surfing conditions may be only a
misconception. I use the arguments and analogy of the inner prison and panopticon of Lessing (1991) and Foucault (1979) respectively to analyse surfing sponsorship as well as the experiences of female surfers to understand how they negotiate the power relations evident in a male dominated surf industry. As I have already discussed the application and relevance of Lessing to this study, I will now make a case for using Foucault’s concepts of the panopticon and technologies of the self (Foucault, 1979) to inform my theoretical framework.

Foucault’s theoretical and substantive ideas about surveillance and technologies of the self, implies that resistance becomes difficult when faced with the attitudes of the mainstream majority, namely the surf companies, other surfers, the media, the ASP and consumers. A central theme in Foucault’s concept of panopticism is the systematic ordering and controlling of human populations through subtle and unseen forces of surveillance. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Foucault’s concept of panopticism (Foucault; 1979, 1990) is also useful to my inquiry as it builds on the idea of the prison as a metaphor for modern power operations to illustrate the function of disciplinary mechanisms in everyday society as a means of social control. Because prisoners know they can be seen even though they cannot see their guards, they become self-monitoring. Foucault (1990) suggests that institutions freeze particular relations of power so that only a certain number of people are advantaged. Other sporting institutions or companies can be viewed as working in a similar way, producing docile bodies through a system of internalised surveillance. From Foucault’s analogy I see ‘institutions’ as the surf companies and the ‘people’ referring to female surfers. For example, in the context of surfing, surveillance
could suggest being observed or being under scrutiny by external influences such as the surf companies, consumers of surf products and the media. Foucault’s (1990) concept of surveillance is particularly evident within the surfing industry, with the introduction of modern technologies including social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, surf cams that can stream live footage of surfing competitions and surf-related websites. These technologies have the power to either suppress or communicate an empowered representation of female surfers.

Foucault (1979) argues that the panopticon “induces a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (p. 201). Ultimately, the external application of surveillance becomes unnecessary as the individual “inscribes in himself [sic] the power relation in which he [sic] simultaneously plays both roles, he [sic] becomes the principal of his [sic] own subjection” (p. 202). Surveillance thus could be considered a technique for self-control or self-discipline. However, Foucault (1990) also considers that the technologies of the self “manifests in an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one’s self and to attain a certain mode of being” (p. 2). When this aspect of Foucault’s work is applied to the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers, it can be used to analyse what part, if any, surveillance plays in sponsored female surfers’ decision to alter their appearance to fit the requirements of sponsorship. For female surfers the continual struggle is to maintain a certain image for sponsorship while being considered for their surfing ability. My interest is in the ways these surfers negotiate their feminine images and surfing skill in order to be taken seriously as skilled surfers.
A study by Thorpe (2008) drew upon Foucault’s (1985) theory to evaluate the “sexist discourses prevalent in the media and the effects these had on women’s snowboarding experiences and considered the possibilities of these actions as a foundation for wider social transformation” (p. 200). While Foucault (1985) analysed the technologies of the self through the sexual ethics of the Greek and Roman times, his perspective on the “practices of self” (p. 28) and transformation is relevant for today’s athletes who, at times, have to recreate their identities to obtain or maintain sponsorship within the confines of contractual sponsorship agreements. Foucault believes that “there can be no forming of the ethical subject without modes of subjectification and an ascetics or practices of the self that support them” (p. 28). In other words, there are rules and codes of conduct and image requirements within the surfing industry one must follow in order to be sponsored. However, an individual has the opportunity to make choices through self-reflection and self-examination which necessitates problematisation of one’s behaviour and awareness about what appropriate changes need to be made. Foucault (1980) recognises that not all power relations were equal and therefore not all individuals have equal opportunity to move within these power relations.

However, Foucault does believe that “each individual has at his disposal a certain power, and for that very reason can act as the vehicle for transmitting a wider power” (p. 71). According to Markula and Pringle (2006) some researchers don’t view Foucault’s (1980) technologies of the self as purely resistant practices undertaken by athletes to transform themselves but rather “coping strategies used to succeed within the often contradictory, discursive requirements of their sports” (p. 145). Many examples have been cited where
female athletes reproduce a stereotypically feminine and sexualised appearance through their technologies of the self. However, it is essential that I look beyond this one-dimensional lens. I believe that the inclusion of Foucault and Lessing’s (1991) concepts as a combined theoretical lens assists my understanding to determine whether the sponsorship for female surfers is limited to this one-dimensional view, or instead is a transformative practice that encourages women to be active in their choices about their bodies and identities exemplifying a level of individual resistance and freedom. Foucault’s (1979) analysis suggests that no power/knowledge is entirely dominant or ascendant over other discursive fields. In the context of the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers, the dominant power such as that wielded by the Big Three surf companies, does appear to exert dominance and impact on the sponsorship opportunities of female surfers. However, on a personal level, and in line with the third wave feminist position (Harris, 2004), female surfers do have the option to choose, or not, those sponsors who are not only interested in increasing company profits but also interested in promoting women’s surfing.

In summary, the adoption of Lessing’s (1991) notion of conformity and her aspiration for women’s bodily, intellectual and emotional freedom and Foucault’s (1979, 1990) theoretical perspective provide a framework that enables me to examine the level of contradiction, power and agency at play in the lifestyle marketing of sponsored female surfers by the Big Three. Combining Lessing’s and Foucault’s theories allows me to examine the power as it relates to the privileged, namely The Big Three surf brands, who have the money and influence to select and shape female surfers through their corporate lifestyle marketing and sponsorship requirements. It also provides a framework to
observe how the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship practices, engaged in by the Big Three, serve as a level of self-surveillance and impact on female surfers as they struggle to maintain the image required for sponsorship and to enhance their future prospects in the sport. I decided that an interpretive ethnography was an appropriate research method to give voice to a group of sponsored female surfers to examine their experiences of being lifestyle marketed and sponsored by the Big Three.

**Interpretive Ethnography**

With increasing numbers of high profile, competent female surfers emerging into the historically male dominated sport of surfing, this study aims to transform understandings about the capabilities and potential of women in this sport. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, the world of professional surfing is influenced by the capitalist drive for profit and business success. Several researchers (Chase & Pepin, 2008; Chaston & Mangles, 2001; Collins, 2000; Drennan & Cornwell, 2004) claim that leading surf brands realise the potential of utilising high profile female surfers to improve their company image, enhance sales and align and connect with the new generation of female technology-savvy consumers. The impact of this form of marketing and whether it is beneficial to female surfers is unclear. This section commences with a description and justification of an ethnographic research design and then discusses the advantages of an interpretive approach. The methods of interview and a multiple method approach are expanded so the reader can gain an understanding of how sponsorship by the Big Three impacts on the lived experiences of sponsored female surfers.
According to Chambers (2000), ethnographic research emerged from the discipline of anthropology. Chambers claims the usefulness of ethnographic data is that it grasps what is sometimes called “the native point of view” with an emphasis on the “slice of life approach” (p. 853). Bernard (2006) describes ethnography as “the essence of anthropology in that it allows the researcher to go ‘out and stalk culture’ in the wild” (p. 344). In other words, it involves data gathering by means of involvement in the daily lives of the participants being studied in their natural setting. Flick (2007) claims that the process of ethnography implies being immersed in the culture, observing and talking to the participants in order to discover their interpretations, social meanings and behaviours in their environment.

Tedlock (2000), Wolcott (2002) and Wolf (2010) believe that traditional ethnography is used to understand the culture or subculture of a particular group from the perspective of the group members, in order to understand people in everyday life. Sands (2002) argues that ethnography is concerned with discerning the cultural characteristics of a group and provides “differential access to power, generates different areas of interest to defend, produce differing interpretations of cultural reality in terms of behaviour, practices and institutions” (p. 58). This is particularly relevant in this study as it means ethnography is not just about giving an account of aspects of a particular subculture but produces a wide-angle view of the behaviours and practices within the setting being studied.

Several researchers (Hammersely, 1992; Pedersen, 1998; Tedlock, 2000; Van Maanan, 1988) portray ethnographic fieldwork as being involved in the lives of those being studied and taking part in or being located in a group’s
activities, problems, language, knowledge, rituals and social relations. Tedlock (2000) believes that studying the workings of a particular culture can “place specific encounters, events and understandings into fuller, more meaningful context” (p. 455). This means that ethnography, as recognised by Corner (2008), is a vital tool for documenting a way of life in order to capture the essence of that environment. In this study ethnography is a valuable research method to get closer to the female surfers being investigated by gaining ‘insider’ information through interviews and describing the participants in their own natural setting.

A further aspect of ethnography discussed by Krane and Baird (2005) is that it is “non-positivist” which implies that the research is also “historically and situationally bound and therefore cannot be replicated or generalised” (p. 88). Several researchers (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Harrington, 2003; Warren & Hackney, 2000) have described the complex nature of ethnographic research as it involves the need to gain access, build relationships and establish trust and rapport with participants, use different methods and techniques, gain knowledge about gender issues, interpret data, and possess an awareness of tactical, personal, and ethical issues. Therefore, ethnography as a method of enquiry provides the opportunity for exploration and investigation of the data via progressive focusing (Burns, 1997) and allows for the development of theory (Hammersely & Atkinson, 1995). The process of ethnography also takes into account the influence of the researcher on the research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Considering sport has many cultures, and each sport its own subculture,
(Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009) ethnography is well suited to investigate sport settings, particularly the subculture of women's surfing.

Previous ethnographies in sport (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010; Chase, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2011; Hanis-Martin, 2006; Howe, 2001; Langseth, 2011; Mesnnesson, 2000) have generated numerous insights into the different sporting experiences of men and women and a significant number investigated women's success, or lack of success, in achieving parity in male dominated sports. Examples of ethnographic research are located in sports with a female participant culture, including windsurfing, (2000), skateboarding (Beal, 1996), snowboarding (Anderson, 2001; Thorpe, 2009) and surfing (Butts, 2001; Corner, 2008; Love, 1989). These studies explicitly highlight how ethnographic research can reassert the voices, and in particular the female voices within a predominantly male hegemonic culture.

Love’s (1989) analysis of Tracks surf magazines indicated that “there are a large number of women who regard men as ‘naturally’ superior and see themselves as almost inevitably inferior” (p. 44). Love’s ethnographic study of six female professional surfers revealed that surfing well or aggressively was often seen “as ‘surfing like a man’ or deemed unfeminine” (p. 46). Corner’s (2008) ethnographic study about the gendered experiences in a New Zealand surf culture highlighted the gender relations between men and women in the research setting. Thorpe (2009) drew upon a multi-methodological and ethnographic approach to investigate the interplay of individual and contextual factors involved in understanding the experiences of alternative sport participants. Thorpe believed that an ethnographic approach using multiple data collection methods significantly enhanced her understanding of the
snowboarding culture. Wheaton (1997) used in-depth interviews as the main data collection method to investigate the gender relations, lifestyle identities and activities of a windsurfing community within an ethnographic design. In all of these ethnographic studies the common outcome was to produce further knowledge and understanding about a particular culture and the behaviour of its participants. Hence, viewing this study through an ethnographic lens is appropriate for determining the impact of lifestyle marketing on sponsored female surfers. This design is also appropriate given my previous experience within the surfing culture.

**An Interpretive Approach**

Lincoln and Guba contend that ethnographers may work within a wide array of “new paradigm inquiry” (p. 191). Denzin (1999) argues that “interpretive ethnography is a way of experiencing the world that avoids jargon and huge chunks of data to understand how people enact and construct meaning in their daily lives” (p. 510). Ethnographic research is based on the belief that there are multiple truths and multiple ways of seeing and interpreting things (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000). An interpretive approach relies on naturalistic methods such as interviewing and observation and analysis of existing texts to ensure an adequate dialogue between the researcher and the researched in order to collaboratively construct a meaning reality. Researchers within the interpretive paradigm are naturalistic in that they study real-world situations and tend to be “non-manipulative, unobtrusive and non-controlling” (Tuli, 2010, p. 99). In a study of African Americans, Tillman (2002) argues that “interpretive paradigms offer greater possibilities for the use of alternative frameworks, co-construction...
of multiple realities and experiences, and knowledge that can lead to improved opportunities” (p. 5). Markula and Silk (2011) describe the interpretive paradigm as “founded upon the premise that the social world is complex, that people, including researchers and their research participants, define their own meanings” (p. 31). Geertz’s (1973) understanding of ethnography is that it is, by definition “thick description” (p. 6) about a culture and much more than mere data collection. Thick description is an anthropological method of explaining with as much detail as possible the reason behind human actions. Within an interpretive paradigm, the goal of research is to achieve an insider’s view of the group under study. From Geertz’s perspective, the ethnographer’s role is to grasp and interpret the systems of meanings that produce culture and to understand how and why behaviour within that culture is shaped. Therefore, in this ethnographic study the tenets of an interpretive paradigm, which include the voices of participants in the research and a multi-method approach, are used to examine the multiple ways and truths surrounding the sponsorship experiences of female surfers by the Big Three. This type methodology also enables participants to express their views and make meanings of their own realities, which they may not have had an opportunity to do before. In doing so, this study also considers the values, power, social structures and human agency (Krane & Baird, 2005) connected to sponsorship within the surfing context. In what follows I will discuss gaining entry to the research sites and the permission required to conduct research with sponsored female surfers.
Gaining Entry and Gatekeepers

In an ethnographic study, gaining entry to the research setting and having interaction with participants involves possible ‘gatekeepers’. Reeves contends that “gatekeepers are people who can help or hinder the research depending on their personal thoughts on the validity of the research and its value, as well as their approach to the welfare of the people under their charge” (p. 317). Other researchers (Homan, 2001; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Reeves, 2010) argue that gatekeepers are people who control access to other group members, group activities and sources of information, and who have the power to grant or withhold permission to conduct interviews or enter the research setting.

In the sporting context, Sands (2002) describes examples of gatekeepers as “athletic administrators, coaches and team captains” (p. 65). A certain level of power resides with the gatekeepers. In this study, the representatives from the Big Three surf companies and surf event organisers are considered ‘gatekeepers’ of both the research setting and participants because they hold the power to sponsor and promote female surfers as well as grant or withhold permission to conduct interviews. Reeves (2010) confirms that “the relationships between the different levels of ‘gatekeepers’ can influence the nature of the fieldwork” (p. 317). This is particularly relevant in marketing a surf brand where surf companies sponsor a significant number of women’s events. Once representatives were identified, I made a point of building rapport during informal phone conversations with surf company representatives about the connections I have within the surfing community to make access easier.
Mulhall (2003) argues that “access involves considerable time and effort and constant endeavour to strive for ‘cultural acceptability’ with the gatekeepers and participants in research sites” (p. 310). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that “appropriate tactics for gaining entry to a setting include negotiating and renegotiating with the people being studied and this is true even where the ethnographers are studying settings in which they are already participants” (p. 50). It was suggested by Duke (2002) that access into the research setting can also be easier for researchers who have existing connections with those in power. Therefore, being considered a ‘partial insider’ and known in certain circles within the surfing community, my credibility was already established. This made contact with participants and access to contest sites relatively easier. As multiple entries were required, I never assumed access was automatically available but instead re-established credibility and entered into positive relationships upon each individual entry. As researcher, I also made sure that all gatekeepers (surf company representatives) were informed about the ethical nature of my study before they disclosed information about their company.

Another consideration when communicating with gatekeepers, as indicated by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), is that they are “generally concerned as to the ‘light’ in which the organisation is portrayed and usually have practical interests in seeing themselves presented in a positive and favourable manner” (p. 49). I was conscious at all times that the representatives’ main focus was to preserve the brand reputation of the particular surf company. As surf company representatives essentially have the power to sponsor female surfers, and also grant or withhold permission to
conduct interviews, it was important to make sure that any dealings with either surfers or the company did not contravene company policy and therefore damage rapport. Permission was always requested in any contact made throughout the research process, either from company representatives, surf contest organisers or sponsored surfers. In my analysis I took into consideration the fact that the sponsored female surfers had loyalty to, and contractual agreements with, their surfing sponsors and that any comments made could impact upon future arrangements. As such, it was important to consider the gatekeepers who influence not only my access to the research setting but affect the future opportunities for sponsorship of female surfers.

**Interpretive Ethnography from a Female Perspective**

Ethnographic research from the perspective of a female researcher is as Olesen (2000) and Tedlock (2000) contend, based upon not only the active participation of the researcher in the production of knowledge but who also pays attention to the significance of gender and the contribution that this method makes to an understanding of the social position of women, particularly in the sporting context. Humberstone (2009) concurs and views the researcher as “the ‘research instrument’ drawing upon their empathy and concerns for the participants in the research process” and active participation as “paramount for ethnographers” (p. 256). It has also been argued that ethnographers, particularly female ethnographers studying women, are better able to study their own community than ethnographers from outside (Cooky, 2006; Scrogum, 2005; Thorpe, 2007). In my study, I offer the reader a deeper understanding of the stories and voices of the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship experiences of
female surfers through the interpretation of data by the researcher. From my analysis the truth and meaning about the impact lifestyle marketing has on the sponsored female surfer’s image and identity, and ultimate opportunity for success in the sport, can be considered.

**Research Participants**

To address the research objectives, I collected data from sponsored female surfers who had a wide range of surfing experience and ability. The nationality of participants was predominantly Australian, with the inclusion of a representative from America, Hawaii and Peru. Interviews were conducted with fifteen sponsored female surfers who ranged in age from 13 to 39. Initially I interviewed relatively inexperienced or early career female surfers. However, I quickly noticed that the responses tended to be similar as most young female surfers were generally satisfied with just being sponsored. I found the high profile surfers, especially at the Roxy Pro event on the Gold Coast in Queensland, better suited to obtain more detailed information about their sponsorship arrangements. Even then the responses tended to be uniform and favour sponsorship by Big Three because of their loyalty to their respective company. I decided to actively seek out surfers through my surfing contacts who had not managed to obtain sponsorship, had their sponsorship terminated or who established sponsorship outside of the surfing industry. The selection of surfers Table 4.1 provides a profile of each female surfer interviewed to demonstrate the level and calibre of surfer being interviewed.
Table 4.1. *Profile of Sponsored Female Surfers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Profile of interviewed female surfers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dana</td>
<td>One of the pioneers of women’s surfing and surfed at a time when little or no sponsorship available for female surfers. She won a world surfing title and was inducted into the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame. No longer surfing competitively but still involved in surfing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tina</td>
<td>Multiple world champion surfer. Came through the ranks at an early age at a time when surfing was more male dominated. Has a major sponsor but outside the surfing industry and smaller sponsors from within the surfing industry. Inducted into the Huntington Beach Surfers Hall of Fame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Jodi</td>
<td>World champion surfer. Came through the ranks at an early age and at a time when surfing was more male dominated. Has a major sponsor but has changed over the years. Inducted into the Huntington Beach Surfers Hall of Fame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Alice</td>
<td>Won a world championship and has more than a dozen world tour victories to her name. Never had a major sponsor only several smaller ones within the industry. Inducted into the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame. Not presently rated on the ASP ranking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Bette</td>
<td>Has been ranked in the world top 15 surfers for many years. Has won the Women’s triple crown surfing title and has no major sponsor but has several sponsorships in the surf and skate industry. Previously in the world top ten surfers. Triple Crown winner. No major sponsor but sponsored by local surf industry sponsors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Helena</td>
<td>Multiple world champion surfer. Came through the ranks at an early age and at a time when surfing was more male dominated. Has a major sponsor but has changed over the years. Inducted into the Huntington Beach Surfers Hall of Fame and the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Jenny</td>
<td>Has won a world junior surfing championship and several world ASP events. Found obtaining sponsorship by any of the Big Three problematic but had several surf-related sponsors. No longer surfing competitively but still involved in surfing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Eva</td>
<td>First competed in the ASP Women’s World Tour in the early 1990s, has won many ASP events and was ranked in the top 5 for many years. Never sponsored by one of the Big Three but managed to always be supported by companies outside of surfing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Kit</td>
<td>An experienced ASP competitor and presently ranked within the top 30. Has no major surf industry sponsor but several others within the industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Tasha</td>
<td>Has been ranked previously in the world top ten female surfers. She has won an Australian Junior surfing championship, won a Women’s Pipeline Pro event and has more than a dozen world tour victories to her name. Has a major surf sponsor, same one for a long time and a couple of smaller surf industry sponsors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Carmen</td>
<td>In the world top 25 surfers. Won a world championship and has more than a dozen ASP World Tour victories to her name. She has two major sponsors, one major surf company, several smaller sponsorships and one outside the surf industry. Inducted into the Surfers Hall of Fame, Huntington Beach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Nicky</td>
<td>Presently ranked in the top world 25 surfers and sponsored by a major surf company and other smaller companies outside the industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Jade</td>
<td>Multiple ASP World Tour surfing champion, presently ranked in the top 10. Inducted into the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame and the Huntington Beach Surfers Hall of Fame. Sponsorship with one of the Big Three, a large company outside of the surf industry and other non-surf-related companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Alisha</td>
<td>Pro junior surfer and presently within the top 30 in the ASP World Tour ranking. Major sponsor is one of the Big Three and has several smaller sponsors in the surf industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Krystal</td>
<td>Young surfer presently ranked in the top 10 and at the time of interview was coming up through the junior ranks. Was then sponsored by one of the Big Three as well as a couple of minor surf-related sponsors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I was mindful throughout this process to keep the description of each participant as general as possible to protect their identity, maintain confidentiality and not compromise their position with their sponsoring company. Each interviewed female surfer was additionally allocated a corresponding pseudonym to protect their identity. In Table 4.1, surfers 1-6 have been involved in competitive surfing since the early beginnings of women’s involvement. Three of these surfers managed to obtain sponsorship from one of the Big Three during their early surfing career while the other three found securing a major sponsorship difficult. Surfers 7, 8 and 9 all maintained a high level ASP ranking as a result of competing and being successful in numerous surfing events, yet never managed to obtain a major surf company sponsorship. Surfers 10 – 15 are all young, up-and-coming surfers either still competing on the ASP circuit or working towards it.

The process of participant selection in ethnographic research is to identify appropriate knowledgeable personnel to take part in the interview process to ensure quality and reliability of data collection. Researchers (Bruce, 2001; Hoeber, 2007; Kelly, Hickey, & Tinning, 2000; Strathmann, 2001; Zwick, 2001) have argued that this form of ‘expert sampling’ strengthens the consistency of results. Kitayama and Cohen (2007) believe expert sampling brings a cultural system into focus by “studying cultural ‘experts’, where ‘experts’ are not scholars but rather people most immersed in, most competent in, or who most embody a culture in its more pure form” (p. 212). For the purpose of my research, surf company marketing and team managers from each of the Big Three participating surf companies were nominated as ‘expert’ based on their management position, experience and involvement in the
decision making process with regards to the sponsorship selection of female surfers.

A further source of data was derived from questions posed to a panel of female surfers at *The Divas of Surfing* event held in March 2010 at the Surf World Museum at Currumbin on the Gold Coast. This event will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. The final data source emerged from the many informal conversations undertaken with members of the surfing community including spectators, organisers at major surfing competitions, like the Quiksilver Roxy Pro on the Gold Coast, and at ‘learn to surf’ days organised by the Big Three such as the *Billabong Girls Get Out There Day*, *Rip Curl Girls Go Surfing* and the *Roxy Surf Jam*. These informal conversations had a very clear and specific research agenda. I used this informal approach to discover what spectators and onlookers thought and how one person’s perspective compared with others. These conversations provided me with some very useful additional information about the organisation of the surfing events, including funding, external sponsorship, opinions about the female surfers and various companies. I made field notes on all of these conversations to help me identify shared values among members of the cultural group and to compare these perspectives with data collected from interviews conducted with sponsored surfers and company representatives.

The following sections discuss the data collection methods and analysis used in this study.
Data Collection Methods and Analysis

The data collection was completed through observations, field notes and interviews which were the source of data collection, and it was supplemented by the analysis of relevant documents and cultural visual surfing material represented in magazines, newspapers, surf company websites and DVDs.

Table 4.2 outlines the sequence of data collection and identifies each method’s relevance in helping to answer the three research objectives.

Table 4.2. Sequence of Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time frame</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Research Objective Relevance</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over the period from 2007 – 2010</td>
<td>Preliminary Observations</td>
<td>Research Objective 1, 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Provided insight and sensitivity to the organisational and procedural structures of surf companies and sponsored competitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over the period from 2007-2010</td>
<td>Field Notes</td>
<td>Research Objective 1, 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Taken throughout the fieldwork to clarify observations and interviews at events and surfing competitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over the period from 2007-2010</td>
<td>Documents &amp; Visual Data</td>
<td>Research Objective 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Collection and initial analysis of newspaper articles, surfing magazine articles and photos to gain background information and understanding about research topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January &amp; June 2009 &amp; 2010</td>
<td>Preliminary Discussion</td>
<td>Research Objective 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Conducted with female surfers at competition sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January &amp; June 2009 &amp; 2010</td>
<td>Consent Package &amp; Questionnaire Sponsored Female Surfers</td>
<td>Research Objective 1, 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Given out to each female surfer at the competition sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2010</td>
<td>Email to Surf Company Representatives</td>
<td>Research Objective 1, 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Initial email to introduce myself as researcher, provide consent package and suggested interview questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2010 April 2010 May 2010</td>
<td>Semi-Structured Interviews with Sponsored Surfers</td>
<td>Research Objective 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Conducted semi-structured and in-depth interviews with selected sponsored female surfers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2010</td>
<td>Informal Interviews &amp; Conversations at Divas of Surfing Night</td>
<td>Research Objective 1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Questions about sponsorship posed at Divas of Surfing Night. Informal conversations with participants at the event.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following section outlines the methods utilised to collect and analyse the research data and identifies each method’s relevance to the study and my role of ethnographic researcher as observer, partial insider and interpreter.

**Observation**

Observations of female surfers, the organisation and promotion of individual surf brands were made throughout the study in natural settings, either at competition sites on the beach or at surf-related events. The observation component of the research is described as taking mental pictures with a wide-angle lens and is fundamental to ethnographic research. As Krane and Baird (2005) claim, observation is “the backbone of ethnographic research” (p. 94). The literature (Hoeber, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2001; Rinehart, 1992) suggests that the researcher’s role during observations can vary from complete observer as a non-participant to complete participant irrespective of whether or
not the individuals know how they are being studied and the extent to which the researcher participates in the activities being studied. Androsino and Mays de Perez (2000) argue that “the more invisible or transparent the researcher is, the more likely the participants are to act naturally” (p. 285). My surfing background and position, as what Labaree (2002) describes as ‘cultural insider’, gave me a distinct advantage in my observations of the participants and surfing competition sites being studied. The concept of ‘cultural insider’ is particularly relevant to my study because as the researcher, I already had knowledge about the surf industry and a range of valuable connections within it. My insider status assisted in discerning relevant sources of data collection and, as Thorpe (2007) points out, assisted me to recognise “significant issues and sensitising themes and concepts” (p. 47).

In my role as ‘cultural insider’ or as Kirk (1986) expresses as ‘being in the situation’, I spent time intermittently over a four-year period attending surfing competitions, local surfing club round competitions, visiting surf board shops and surf-related events. Being a cultural insider in this instance allowed me, as Cooky (2006) states, to become “encapsulated in the research and filter the understandings gained through various lenses” (p. 67). This means that because I already had that basic knowledge and understanding of the surf industry I was able to gain deeper insights and could determine themes more clearly than someone who was not already familiar with it. There are potential consequences in having ‘insider knowledge’. Studies by Wheaton (2003) and Thorpe (2007) both verify the difficulty in understanding and acknowledging the participants’ perceptions of their culture, while maintaining a critical distance to be able to effectively interpret those views and actions. I found it difficult at first
to alter my perspective from that of a surfer, particularly a baby boomer surfer who had been involved with women’s surfing at an organisational level which helped construct my ideas and philosophy about women’s position in the sport. I therefore had to consider how my identity and surfing background fitted in with the methodological consequences of my positioning. However, in this study, I did not find maintaining a critical distance an issue because, although considered an ‘insider’ with my long involvement in the surfing community, it had been several years since my involvement with competitive surfing and, as such, I considered myself only a partial ‘insider’ which allowed me to stand back and observe in a more objective way.

Observations as a Partial ‘Insider’

My personal biography of experience and networks within the surfing community and time spent as cultural insider endorsed my familiarity with the surfing genre over a thirty-five year time span. Krane and Baird (2005) maintain that an ethnographic outsider is “a researcher not originally a member of the culture whereas an ethnographic insider has been a member of the culture under study” (p. 93). As I have never been sponsored by a major surfing company and have only been a participant in amateur surfing competitions, I am not an absolute ‘insider’ in the realm of professional surfing. I only consider myself a ‘partial insider’. As a partial insider, I spent time observing the organisation and general atmosphere during professional surfing competitions and surf-related events. As Labaree (2002) argues “the concept of ‘insiderness’ or ‘being part of a society’ facilitates greater access at the start of one’s research to special groups within the community and to critical information” (p. 104). In this study, my data collection was made easier by my range of contacts
and networks within the surf industry. The established connections reduced the need for preliminary negotiations that anyone outside the surf industry may have found difficult, especially in gaining access to the surf community and participants. Hsiung (1996) confirms that being considered a partial insider contributes to the establishment of initial levels of trust and leads to more open interactions with participants. I was consciously aware of my constantly shifting position as both female researcher and active surfer, and how these roles could impact upon my observations and the analysis. In this case, being a partial insider allowed me to understand and acknowledge possible themes that emerged throughout the course of the research.

My observations of female surfers, as well as the organisation and promotion of individual surf brands, occurred whilst attending surfing competitions and surfing events. As previously mentioned, informal conversations took place at these sites with members of the surfing community and participants at ‘learn to surf’ days such as the Billabong Girls Get Out There Day, Rip Curl Girls Go Surfing and the Roxy Surf Jam organised by the Big Three. These ‘learn to surf’ days are organised by each company to teach surfing and water safety to female surfers of all age groups at beach locations all around Australia and New Zealand. For example, in 2010 the Rip Curl Girls Go Surfing day was organised at 60 beaches around Australia with over 4,000 participants (“Rip Curl Girls Go Surfing Day,” n.d.). Sponsored professional female surfers from each company are used to instruct the participants while at the same time assist in the promotion of the surf brand. During the period of my research I attended the Billabong and Rip Curl ‘learn to surf ‘days on the Gold Coast, and the Roxy Surf Jam on Phillip Island in Victoria and a single event in
Bryon Bay, Australia. The members of the surfing community I observed consisted of spectators, parents of competitors and organisers at the surfing competitions such as the Roxy Pro on the Gold Coast and other surf-related events.

Observations and discussions with these other members of the surfing community, apart from the female surfing competitors, helped me develop a more informed and balanced view about whether sponsored surfing competitions and other promotional events, such as the company sponsored ‘learn to surf’ days, were an effective means of promoting female surfers to the public, or if they just served to promote the commercial purposes of surf brands. For example, at one of the ‘learn to surf ‘days I attended, the surf company incorporated live entertainment, competitions, prizes, exercise classes set up on the beach and even a cosmetic company-sponsored booth gave away free products. These organised days were certainly popular for many females who wanted to learn to how to surf.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the use of sponsorship banners and the provision of surf brand wear to participants at the Roxy Surf Jam at Phillip Island, Victoria, in March 2006. Brightly coloured surf shirts were provided as illustrated in Figure 4.1 to easily identify all participants and to impart a sun safety message. This type of promotion by each of the surf companies was a typical occurrence at...
each ‘learn to surf’ day. The wearing of branded surf shirts implies a sense of
loyalty and identity with the organising surf brand and amongst the participants,
which assist in the promotion and popularity of the brand. For example, during
one informal conversation with a spectator at the Roxy Pro surfing competition
in 2010 they stated that:

Surfing competitions are becoming more about the promotion of products
and image than about the performance of the actual surfers. (Comment
from spectator at Roxy Pro, Gold Coast in March, 2010).

Conversely, when I engaged in informal conversations with female
surfing competitors, they maintained that competitive surfing events were
primarily more about the performance and competition rather than promotion of
products. The time spent at surfing competitions and events also gave me
insight into the sponsored promotional activities that were included alongside
the surfing competitions. I was able to observe the daily operational issues
connected to these events. As my research progressed, the observations
assisted me to narrow the focus of my study and recognise any emerging
themes.

Field Notes

The observation process in this ethnographic fieldwork involved
systematic and analytical field note taking during competitions, events and
immediately after interviews. According to Loftland (2006), it is important for
ethnographers to take as many field notes as inconspicuously and concisely as
possible to capture details that may be relevant later in the analysis. I wrote field
notes after individual conversations and observations and used them to check
the congruence of the data shared by participants at the surfing competitions
and events. These field notes were used to support the themes and concepts developed from interview data.

During the data collection and analysis, I kept four types of field notes, as described by Richardson and Lockridge (2004). These included:

1. methodological notes on issues and decisions pertaining to the research process, such as coding labels and participant criteria;
2. observational notes collected during observations made while attending the above mentioned events and interviews;
3. analytical notes that recorded assumptions and the process of data analysis and interpretation and
4. general field notes that included anecdotal information such as contacts made for future reference.

Field notes were recorded in a research notebook which gave me the opportunity to record any ideas, thoughts, possible questions, recent information or contact details as they emerged. These recordings added depth to the data and were kept in an undisclosed and secure location for confidentiality purposes. The field notes were typed into word documents and due to the relatively small volume of notes, ideas and possible themes were coded manually. I was then able to check understandings about information collected and compare them to responses made in the interview process. I regularly checked the notes for patterns and connections with other sources of data. Field notes were also useful to check congruence (Marshall & Rossman, 2001) given they were taken during the process of data collection.

The concepts and themes from the interview data were then developed using manual coding. I then used the computer software program Leximancer to
help confirm and expand on these themes. The use of Leximancer as a data analysis tool is described in detail later in this chapter.

**Content analysis of Documents, Magazines, Movies and Media**

Another means of observation used to create an ethnographic record and contribute to my understanding of the surfing culture was to include cultural sources such as magazines, films, websites and DVDs. Based on Atkinson’s (2005) understanding of ‘classic’ ethnography, which is observational in principle and follows Geertz’s (1973) treatment of culture as ‘readable’ text, I wanted to include other relevant surf-related sources to enhance the reader’s understanding of the culture of surfing. I therefore investigated the types of literature best suited to understand the social context of female surfer’s experience of sponsorship and wanted to include other aspects and meaningful data that could be analysed and included to enhance understanding. My intention is to shift the focus of just looking at and collecting data, to being in, and engaged in, ways of knowing about the sponsorship experiences of female surfers and to enhance the reader’s perception of the culture under investigation.

Hodder (2000) supports the view that various texts or documents enhance understanding of a social group. Several researchers (Krane & Baird, 2005; McGloin, 2005; Thorpe, 2007) have integrated cultural artefacts such as pictorial images, into research to emphasise the representation of females in sport. Following from this I supplemented interviews, observation and field notes with an analysis of relevant documents and pictorial representations of female surfers in surfing magazines, DVDs and on surf-related websites. These were especially useful early in the observational phase to assist in information
gathering. Harper (2000) claims that supplementing interview data with other sources helps to ‘concretize’, or make explicit the data and then, towards the end of the study, to validate interpretations and conclusions.

Several researchers (Clarke & Rowsell, Dicks, Flewitt, Lancaster & Pahl, 2011; Dicks, Soninka & Coffey, 2006; Harris, 2010; Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002; Kress, 2005; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001) have explored alternative approaches to ethnography and developed bodies of work to raise the profile of multi-method approaches such as multimodality and ethnomethodology together with ethnography as an alternative method of research among qualitative researchers. An ethnographic study by Kress (2005) on the attainment of literacy involved studying participants engaged in multimedia such as books, games, art, video, objects and drawings within the natural setting to study meaning (semiotics) and the social context (ethnography). A conference paper presented by Backstrom (2009) illustrated the use of sensory ethnography as a method to investigate the experiences of Swedish skateboarders. It is not my intention to incorporate multimodality, ethnomethodology or sensory ethnography as methods in this thesis but rather cite them to justify the use of alternate data sources as a legitimate approach in this ethnographic study.

The use of multiple methods, particularly information from internet websites, is being increasingly used by researchers in various forms and across academic disciplines (Booth, 2005; Howell, 2005; Irving, 2007; Myers, 2010; O’Neill & Hubbard, 2010; Scrogum, 2003). With the advent of new technologies comes a variety of research tools that would be appropriate for ethnographic study such as digital equipment to film and video research sites and record
interviews and observational notes, programs to analyse data, blogs and social networking sites and online or emailed research questionnaires. Murthy (2008) believes that the infiltration of digital technologies is still limited to sociological research methods, such as ethnography, compared to the insatiable uptake of online scholarly research portals. Research by Wilson (2006) illustrates that the integration of traditional and technological ethnographic methods can assist in developing understandings of relationships and cultural life both online and offline. Murthy concludes that “a balanced combination of physical and digital ethnography not only gives researchers a larger more exciting array of methods to tell stories, but also enables them to demarginalize the voice of respondents in these accounts” (p. 839).

The selection of specialist media for analysis in this thesis has also needs to be ‘purposeful’ (Patton, 2002; Markula & Silk, 2011). The information on surf-related websites is purposeful as it represents the company and includes information about sponsored male and female surfers, competitions and a range of company-specific data. The surf company-specific websites are particularly relevant as they could be considered a bridge that connects the brand with its internal and external audiences and consuming public. Therefore, to gain a sense of the meaning and truth about the experiences of female surfers, I felt it important to go beyond just observation and interview data collection and utilise other surf-related literature to enrich the data.

Wilson (2006) argues that this area of research, which specifically considers relationships between online and offline ethnographic methods, remains especially rich for development because “there is a lack of work that includes detailed reflections on ways that these techniques can be integrated to
aid research focused on an understanding of cultural groups” (p. 309). The study by Wilson (2006) is also relevant in the context of this research because it offers suggestions for outlining a rationale for examining the ways young people interact through internet technology, and that social issues are sometime translated into resistance or social action. Wilson argues that “interpretations of media text (e.g. webpages) made by media analysts/researchers can be useful in shedding light on how these texts might be used by audiences/users” (p. 311). Particular reference is made in Wilson’s study to the theoretical work of Appaduri (2000). Appaduri focused on theorising the dynamics of global cultural transmission through five dimensions, or “scapes” - ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes and ideoscapes. Of particular interest in this study are “technoscapes, which refers to the flow of technology around the world via digital technology and mediascapes, which refers to the modes of global distribution of images” (p. 314). An example of the rising popularity of digital technologies in a study by Wilson and Sparkes (2001) exemplifies how athletes like Michael Jordan, who demonstrate how the corporate values associated with his sponsor Nike, project images and messages to connect with consumers through technoscapes and mediascapes.

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), Marshall and Rossman (2001), and Mason (1996), the analysis of documentary and visual data (secondary sources) is a meaningful approach to generate knowledge and context surrounding a specific research phenomenon. Marshall and Rossman (2001) suggest that “the review of documents is an unobtrusive method, rich in portraying values and beliefs of participants in a setting” (p. 116). The distinction between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ sources of information and data is defined by
Finnegan (2006) in terms of “contemporaneity” of the source and “closeness to the origin of data” (p. 142). This means that data considered to be closest to its original and most recent source is determined a primary source. Difficulties arise in the selection and interpretation of primary and secondary sources of information and assessing what is being represented in them. According to Finnegan (2006), “a source purporting to represent generally held views or an ‘objective assessment’ of the situation sometimes expresses only the views of a minority or of a particular interest group” (p. 146). In other words, attention needs to be given to the selection of any data source to be aware that it may contain a hidden agenda to fit a specific purpose. It is important in my study to be mindful that all human communications are shaped by social and cultural contexts that are open to bias and therefore require interpretation particularly data sourced surfing websites. The implication for me, as the researcher, is to be aware of the way I interpret the various data sources to ensure they are relevant and appropriate for my study.

Primary documents such as the Australian Sports Commission Report (2008/2009), Sweeney Sport Report (2004-2005, 2009-2010), and Surfing Australia Annual Report (2010) were examined to gain initial insight into the participation, growth and representation of females in the sport of surfing. I used content analysis to analyse documents and other sources of mass media data sources such as magazines, newspapers and internet websites. These sources allowed me to gain information about the values, beliefs and cultural discourses being portrayed about women participating and involved in surfing. Examples of niche media sources of data included are photographs from surfing magazines, DVDs, surfing video productions, promotional material (Appendix B), surf-
related websites such as the Big Three surf company sites, the ASP website and other surf-related social media sites (Appendix A) and pictorial representations of female surfers in history at the Divas of the Surf night. These niche media sources helped to deepen my understanding and be more conversant with the way female surfers and women are being represented within contemporary surfing culture. These sources also assisted me to confirm my argument that there is an inadequate number of sponsorship opportunities available and that inequity exists in prize money for female surfers in comparison to male surfers. I decided to consider secondary data prior to the interviews because it gave me ideas about questions that could prove helpful during the interview process. I also engaged with surf-related websites during and after the interview process. This proved helpful in terms of clarification of themes and uncovering meanings that could not have occurred using a singular data source. These alternate media sources in some instances indicated inconsistencies with interview responses or highlighted events that were not mentioned in the interview for various reasons, as will be illustrated in the analysis chapter.

My use of photographs and representations of female surfers in published materials obtained from a variety of sources was influenced by Krane and Baird (2005) who conclude that the “use of photography and pictorial representation in research captures details that may be unnoticed or forgotten in observations and provide valuable visual representation of the culture” (p. 98). Other research (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Sands, 2002; Szto, Furman, & Langer, 2005; Stranger, 2010) concludes that the use of photographs, particularly in ethnographic research, is an advantage in generating themes and
ideas including historical, social and cultural data. Another reason for selecting this medium is that it assists in either organising, interpreting or validating qualitative inquiry (Szto et al., 2005). Rinehart (2005) argues that “photographs tell a story” (p. 242) particularly in print media where conflicting messages can be presented. I argued in Chapter 2 that the historical representation of female surfers was based on their sexual attractiveness rather than their sporting performance. Therefore, throughout the text of the thesis I have incorporated photographs and images of female surfers to visually provide the media’s representation of female surfers. An example of research by Pink (2011) illustrates the use of photographs and images alongside text to enhance meaning as a means of engagement within the social environment of the participants. This approach offers the ethnographic researcher the opportunity to consider the relationship between words and images to produce knowledge and as Pink (2011) states “becomes a form of ethnographic note taking” (p. 272) that adds richness to the interpretation of the experience being investigated, described and presented.

As previously mentioned, it cannot be assumed that those who create any data source necessarily portray fair coverage or unbiased representation of the subject at hand. I acknowledge that not all information obtained via the internet is authentic, nor may it suit my research purpose. Therefore, I took careful consideration in choosing appropriate material and reflected on the ethics involved in this process before drawing upon any material that was internet based. This is the same in a traditional ethnography where the researcher is responsible for the selection of participants, and analysing and interpreting the data. I made sure I took additional field notes about any visual
material that appeared to correspond with emerging themes developed from other data sources and then filed them for later review. In this way, the secondary data served to provide me not only with an initial understanding about the historical visual representation of female surfers, but it allowed familiarisation with the context through provision of current material.

The Interview Process

The primary data collected in this thesis was from interviews. According to Ely (1991), interviews are “at the heart of doing ethnography because they seek the words of people to understand their situation with increasing clarity” (p. 58). Interviews also attempt to access the opinions or beliefs of the informant (Smith & Stewart, 2001). Foucault (1978) suggests some specific techniques in the analysis process:

It is this distribution that we must reconstruct, with the things said and those concealed, the enunciations required and those forbidden, that it comprises: with the variants and different effects – according to who is speaking, his [sic] position of power, the institutional context in which he happens to be situated that it implies; and with the shifts and reutilizations of identical formulas for contrary objectives that it also includes (p. 100).

Considering Foucault’s broad suggestions I analyse the interview data to identify how the participants in this study, both female surfers and surf company representatives, strategically position themselves and others in the sponsorship process. Drawing from Foucault’s work, I examine how sponsored female surfers view their position within the surfing subculture to determine if it is improving the competitive conditions for women. Two types of interviews were used in this thesis: semi-structured and informal interviews. Each interview type
is described in the following section with examples of how they were conducted. The interview approach I employed with the sponsored female surfers and surf company representatives varied slightly to enhance the interview process and suit individual situations. A focus on detailed transcription through the use of audio-recording of the interview data represents an interpretive approach that aims for a ‘full’ and ‘final’ transcription (Silverman, 2001). These variations are discussed in the subsequent sections.

**Interviews with Sponsored Female Surfers**

As previously mentioned, I collected data from sponsored female surfers with a wide range of surfing experience and ability. Interviews were conducted mostly on a one-to-one basis with fifteen sponsored female surfers who ranged in age from 13 to 39. Eight of these surfers were sponsored by one of the Big Three surf companies and seven were sponsored by other non-surf-related companies. The style of interview was semi-structured and interactive and incorporated a combination of the Stewart and Cash (1994) topical sequence method and the Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991) funnel principle. Stewart and Cash (1994) define a topical sequence as a technique that uses the natural discussion of interviews to develop themes for discussion. Edwards and Skinner (2009) believe that “semi-structured interviews are more appropriate than formal or structured interviews in sport management research because questions do not necessarily have to be replicated and in the same sequence for each informant” (p. 107). Other research supports the use of face-to-face semi-structured interviews (Briggs & Coleman, 2002; Patton, 2002) as this format allows free-flow of information and openness of the social context.
while allowing the interviewer to freely explore and probe questions to clarify the particular subject.

With this method, I was able to direct the interview rather than lead the interview and participants were encouraged to be spontaneous and interactive while focusing on their own experiences. Judd et al. (1991) argue that the interview should initially start with general questions and issues that are easy and unchallenging for the participant. Some examples of preliminary questions with sponsored female surfers were:

- Who are your surf company sponsors?
- How long have you been sponsored by them?
- What do you see as the major advantages in sponsorship by your surf company?

As the interview progressed, questions became more probing to focus on, and gather, opinions and beliefs regarding lifestyle marketing and sponsorship. Krane and Baird (2005) contend that this flexible style of interviewing provides an open communication environment to discuss themes of interest, yet allows the participant to lead an interview in various directions, possibly providing relevant information previously undetected by the researcher. The semi-structured format was deemed most appropriate as it allowed me to be focus directly on the issues of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship within the surfing industry.

I chose a number of major female surfing events held in Queensland, Australia in order to question sponsored surfers and collect data. These events were chosen as data collection sites because they are acknowledged by the surfing community as the most popular and well attended by a number of
sponsored female surfers. The events used for data collection are identified below:

- Lizzy Girls Surf Series (a series of State title rounds during 2008 for female surfers to advance to the Australian Surfing Titles, two based on the Gold Coast, Australia in March and November and one on the Sunshine Coast, Australia in June);
- Queensland School Surfing Titles held in May 2008 and 2009 on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast, Australia;
- Na Papa Australian Masters Surfing Titles at Port Macquarie in Australia in September 2008 and
- Quiksilver and Roxy Pro on the Gold Coast, Australia in March 2009 and 2010.

The strategy at each event was to make myself known to the contest organisers, discuss the objectives of the thesis, request permission to use the competition site and to disseminate any information and consent package (Appendix C) that outlined the objectives of the research and a brief questionnaire to gain the following information:

- Background about each surfer to determine whether they were a non-sponsored or sponsored surfer and
- If sponsored, whether these surfers came under the amateur or professional surfer category and by which company or other sporting brand/s.

During the introductory discussions with female surfers, I briefly introduced myself so the participants understood that, in addition to my work as researcher, I was also an experienced competitive surfer and involved in the surfing community. I already knew some of the surfers personally through participation in surfing competitions. This helped establish a level of trust and common understanding. The contest organisers at each event expressed interest in the
project and readily welcomed my presence. The average time spent in
discussion with individuals ranged from 30 to 40 minutes. My line of questioning
changed over the course of the study, especially when a pattern emerged
based on the female surfer’s experiences. I paid particular attention to how
these surfers described their sponsorship experiences and located these within
the broader understandings of women within sport. Since the sponsorship
experiences of these surfers occurs within a larger structural context of a male
dominated surfing industry, laden with dynamics of power and inequality, I
considered these aspects in my analysis of their lived experiences. In addition, I
remained conscious of the ways my previous experiences in surfing, especially
the era from which my experiences came from might influence the research and
my interpretations.

At the Lizzy Girls Surf Series, the contest organisers (Surfing
Queensland) assisted me by being the point of return for all questionnaire data.
The data collected from the questionnaire assisted me in selecting suitable
surfers for a follow-up interview. However, follow-up interviews in most cases
proved problematic because most female surfers on the ASP tour were very
busy and travelled extensively. I managed to contact a couple of the
respondents who were not on tour to clarify certain points and this was usually
done by phone. The main criteria for selection included the surfer’s sponsorship
history and whether they were currently, or had previously, been sponsored by
one of the Big Three surf companies. I also took into consideration the surfer’s
years of experience in competitive surfing. A suitable time for the interview was
also decided on so that it did not interfere with each surfer’s competition
schedule. A typical line of approach was:
Hi, I met X at the last surfing series and he/she said you might be interested in helping me by taking part in an interview to talk about your surf sponsors. I work at Griffith University and am doing some research about the sponsorship of female surfers. It would be great if you could help.

In some cases the surfers wanted to have the interview immediately after completing the questionnaire, as the conversation seemed to flow straight into the topic about their sponsorship arrangements. Thus, having the digital recorder handy at all times with spare batteries was certainly an advantage.

I found that after some of my initial interviews, a few of the younger sponsored surfers had similar opinions about their sponsorship arrangements and received similar product endorsements from the sponsoring company. The responses from these interviews were valuable in that they highlighted my initial perceptions about how a brand name can impact upon younger children. I wanted to understand in more depth what sponsorship meant to more experienced females surfers. I therefore decided to use my contact and network base to locate more experienced sponsored female surfers who could possibly demonstrate greater understanding about the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship process, especially surfers who had more experience with the ASP World Tour events.

Through my personal contacts I identified a number of experienced female ASP World Tour competitors and made phone calls to arrange a suitable time for these additional interviews. There were six interviews in total and two were with female surfers who had lost their previous sponsorship with one of the Big Three, four who had sponsorship both in and outside the surfing industry and two of these had been previous world surfing champions. One
interview was conducted at a coffee shop, one at a private home and four via phone. Although the coffee shop proved a different place to conduct an interview because of the noise, all of the interview methods allowed a free flow of discussion without interruption or too much distraction.

All interviews were digitally recorded with a Zoom H2 Handy Digital recorder with permission from the participants. Two advantages of using this method of recording were, firstly, that I was able to fully participate in the interview process without continually having to take notes that could have detracted from the personal nature of the interview and, secondly, it reduced any chance for bias on my part. These two points are supported in the literature by Fontana and Frey (1994) who claim that “one way to reduce the researcher’s influence is through ‘polyphonic interviewing’ where the aim is to record the voice of the subject with minimal bias” (p. 368). In this way they argue that “the voices of participants are audio-taped with minimal influence from the generic researcher, and not collapsed together and reported as one through the interpretation of the researcher” (p. 369). Hamersley and Atkinson (2007) agree that “just note taking leads to the loss of much detailed verbal information that contributes to the content of the conversation and total content of responses” (p. 142). Thomas, Nelson and Silverman (2005) also refer to obvious advantages associated with the audio-taping of interviews for future analysis which allows the researcher to “concentrate more fully on the interview procedure and communication process with attention being directed solely upon the content of the interview providing increased dedicated time to develop and maintain genuine rapport with the participants” (p. 351). After recording, each individual interview file was downloaded onto my laptop and transcribed verbatim.
Interviews with Surf Company Representatives

To gain insight into the lifestyle marketing strategies, perceptions, and management practices of the Big Three surf companies, I utilised a predominantly semi-structured interview approach to initiate conversation with representatives from each surf company. The representatives, also named as marketing and/or team managers in charge of women’s surfing within the selected companies, were targeted because of their assumed experience and understanding of the area to be researched. An initial phone call was made to each surf company and served to introduce the research topic and ascertain which person would be best suited to provide information about the marketing and management practices of the company. Once identified, the representatives were contacted by phone and a meeting time or phone interview was set up.

It was important to make sure that any dealings with either surfers or surf companies did not contravene company policy. Before each interview and at the request of the company representatives, an information and consent package (Appendix D) was sent via email to each participating surf company representative outlining the nature and purpose of the research, confidentiality issues, University Ethics Agreement and expectations of them as participants. At the request of the representatives, the information and consent package also included a copy of suggested interview questions. I adhered to the company representatives’ request to have prior knowledge about suggested questions to ensure the purpose of the interview was not going to adversely impact upon or contravene company reputation or policy. This structured format was valuable to start off initial conversations with surf company representatives but a more
semi-structured format was used when talking to the company representatives personally during the face-to-face or telephone interviews.

One surf company had two representatives who were described as marketing team managers and they both participated in a face-to-face interview at the surf company head office. The second surf company representative I had met and spoken to initially at one of the surfing competitions mentioned previously. However, this representative preferred to participate in a phone interview rather than face-to-face due to the busy nature of the team manager position. In both cases, an information and consent package, including copies of suggested questions, were sent via email prior the interview to facilitate discussion. Due to distance and time restrictions, the third surf company representative answered the questions via email. Any further queries were dealt with by phone to clarify my understanding about their role within the company.

Each interview began by making initial conversation about their background and role within their surf company and two typical questions were asked:

- How long have you been involved with this company?
- What is your main role with regard to female surfers?

As the interview progressed and initial rapport had been established the semi-structured approach allowed company representatives to feel more at ease and more inclined to disclose information about company practice in relation to sponsored female surfers. A general discussion about their surfing experience, time spent and their role in the company led to more probing questions requiring specific information aimed at extending developing themes as follows:

- Does your company believe female lifestyle marketing and sponsorship is becoming a more valuable investment?
- Does your company have a main strategic direction with regard to public
and media image for your sponsored female surfers?

I subsequently initiated discussion but did not ask questions in any set order and generally followed the flow of conversation. The interview process acknowledges Edwards and Skinner’s (2009) argument that this type of strategy encourages the production of richer information. At all times I respected and was aware of the company representative’s right to withhold any information they felt would not benefit the company’s reputation or image.

Following these interviews, an individual company profile for each of the Big Three was developed using relevant surf websites. This provided initial background information about the individual surf company and marketing strategies. This assisted me in the data analysis as it provided a point of comparison between each company. Once completed, an individual company profile was sent to each representative for verification and to allow them to append any additional information they felt necessary.

**Informal Interviews at the Divas of Surfing Night**

Krane and Baird (2005) describe informal interviews as “casual conversations initiated by the participant-observer when an opportunity arises” (p. 97). I conducted informal interviews in a number of settings and with a variety of male and female members from the surfing community. Berg (2001) claims this type of ‘informal’ interview proves helpful in gaining background information at a specific moment, as well as building rapport with prospective participants. Berg (2001) and Ely (1991) describe informal interviews as typically taking place in the field to elaborate or gain clarification on
observational data. The following discussion describes the informal interviews that took place at the *Divas of Surfing* night.

The event was held in March 2010 at the Surf World Museum at Currumbin on the Gold Coast. It provided me with an opportunity to mix personally with many members of the local and international surfing fraternity. The Surf World Museum houses exhibits and displays of surfing memorabilia including surfboards, artwork, movie posters and historic photos as well as hosting a variety of surfing events. This event showcased an historical exhibition of women’s surfing, and focused on four women who had pivotal places in female surfing history: Kathy Zuckerman, whose father wrote the original *Gidget* (Kohner, 2001) based on her experiences of beginning surfing at the age of fifteen in the surfing culture of Malibu in the United States of America; Phyllis O’Donnell, the first Australian women’s world champion; Stephanie Gilmore, the world surfing champion from 2007-2010 and Layne Beachley, seven times world surfing champion (1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006). All four women were invited to the *Divas of Surfing* night to participate in a forum relating to their experiences of being a female surfer. In the opening address Surf World Chairman Mal Sutherland stated:

> Women’s surfing often does not get the recognition it deserves and the *Divas of Surfing* exhibition and evening will focus attention on some fantastic female surfing achievements by these four female surfers.

With four influential women in the history of surfing together in one place, it was an opportunity to gain first-hand insight into the development and promotion of women’s surfing, particularly with regard to lifestyle marketing through sponsorship.
On arrival, I made myself known to the Surf World Museum chairman Mal Sutherland, we talked about the research topic and I requested permission to interview the invited guests. During the event, an opportunity arose for anyone from the audience to informally ask the Divas questions. I asked the panel of four the following questions:

Where do you think women’s surfing is going generally with regards sponsorship, considering the women’s tennis and golf is pretty much on par with the men?

Do you think women’s surfing will ever get up to a level where it will be considered equal to the men’s tour?

The questions instigated much discussion between the four speakers regarding sponsorship in general. The responses, which will be fully explored in Chapter 6, proved to be an important and relevant part of the data collection and analysis.

At the end of the evening I approached each of the female invited speakers and engaged in an informal discussion about sponsorship including the recent developments and the future of women’s surfing. The details of these conversations were recorded as field notes at a later stage and kept for use in the data analysis. I also gained permission from the female invited speakers to include any responses obtained during the panel session in the data analysis for the study. All four expressed interest and enthusiasm in my research and verbally gave me permission to use the information they provided. The forum discussion was recorded by a professional film company Optimal and Logical. With permission from the Surf World chairman, Mal Sutherland, I borrowed the DVD that contained footage of the evening’s events and recorded the relevant section using a digital recorder and then transcribed it verbatim.
Data Analysis

The following section outlines the methods used to analyse the research data. In order to organise and analyse the transcribed interview data, I chose the technique of open coding and content analysis as a method to study the content of relevant surf-related documents. In addition, I used Leximancer as an analysis tool to verify and to triangulate the themes derived through open coding of interview data, and the data derived from content analysis of surf-related sources. The process of triangulation substantiates data from multiple perspectives to clarify meaning, enhance depth of understanding of a particular theme and to provide verification of an observation or interpretation, and will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Coding of Data

In ethnographic research, the researcher usually tries to not anticipate themes but instead allows them to emerge from the data. However, I was always aware that my theoretical lens of Lessing and Foucault would influence my search for themes with the data. In order to capture initial themes and analyse interview data, I used the technique of open coding employed by Polgar and Thomas (1991) to identify themes and gain understanding about the impact of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship on female surfers. Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1990) argue that coding goes beyond labelling issues or themes, and is a way of organising data retrieval, of recognising, discovering, developing, reorganising, and making sense of the data. Bernard succinctly states that analysis “is the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place” (p. 452). Saldaña (2009)
argues that coding is an effective method to “organise and group similarly coded data into categories or ‘families because they share the same characteristic” (p. 8). In ethnography, analysis of data is usually undertaken by manual sorting of concepts inferred from the transcripts into descriptive categories. Akerlind (2005) believes this process is “a strongly iterative and comparative one, involving the continual sorting and resorting of data, plus ongoing comparisons between data” (p. 324). This process was time consuming but it allowed me an opportunity to be immersed in the data and to better order and understand the categories and themes being developed.

Therefore, once interview data had been transcribed, each interview was read independently and in its entirety multiple times, then data was placed into categories and colour coded using a highlighter pen. Following this, I searched for concepts, ideas, themes and topics from the multiple sources of data that led to common themes. In order to achieve initial labels from the data, Minichiello et al. (1990) claim that it necessitates observing the “expression of ideas, reading between the lines and going beyond what was said into a wider context” (p. 252). I used field notes initially to categorise the data and provide a framework for comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Writing field notes also served as a catalyst to initiate ideas and enable me to identify connections that may have not been obvious in my initial analysis.

I then used axial coding, recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990), to make connections between categories. Whereas open coding is about identifying and naming themes, axial coding is about creating themes or categories by grouping codes or labels given to words or phrases. After multiple revisions of data placement, the categories emerged into themes. The concept
maps obtained through Leximancer helped to suggest any possible links between the derived from manual coding. It was during this process that the range of concepts and ideas were grouped and colour coded with a highlighter pen to identify major categories. Each colour represented a different theme. The field notes were also reviewed and themes were colour coded in a similar fashion until I was satisfied that all the relevant pieces of data had been examined.

Finally, selective coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was undertaken in order to validate the relationships that existed between the categories and main themes. This was a process of selecting core themes and systematically finding meaningful and relevant quotes as examples of each theme. This type of refinement process links the participant’s responses to the themes that formed the structure for discussing the interview data in Chapters 5 and 6 of this study. Hamersley and Atkinson (1995) indicate that data organisation techniques play an important role in facilitating reflexivity – a core element of this research that is discussed later in this chapter. In the next section I describe the use of Leximancer as a means of adding to, and verifying themes gained through manual coding.

**Leximancer as a Data Analysis Tool**

When considering the general increase in usage of technological sources of information (Ford & Brown, 2006) and new technologies in qualitative research to assist in data analysis, I used Leximancer, a computer-assisted analysis tool, as a method of data analysis to enhance my understanding of the sponsorship experiences of female surfers, and to assist me in confirming my
analysis through manual coding. Ethnographic data analysis is usually undertaken by the manual sorting and coding of concepts inferred from transcripts into descriptive categories (Burns, 1997; Hodson, 2004; Skinner, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Akerlind (2005) claims this process is “a strongly iterative and comparative one, involving the continual sorting and resorting of data, plus ongoing comparisons between the data and the developing categories of description, as well as between the categories themselves” (p. 324). The importance of using manual coding as a primary method of analysis is highlighted by Penn-Edwards (2010), who conclude that manual coding is “a time-consuming process but initially necessary in order to be reiterative and comparative and provides an opportunity to become immersed in the data to order and identify categories of description” (p. 253). Therefore, I used Leximancer as the supplementary means of analysis to support manual coding, which was utilised in both the preliminary stages of this thesis to become familiar with the data, and in the final stages to enhance validity and confirm the findings.

Crofts and Bisman (2010) believe the key capabilities of the Leximancer software provides “a means for generating and recognising themes, including themes which might otherwise have been missed or overlooked had the data been manually coded” (p. 187). Using the themes derived by the software, I was able to engage directly with the data in order to further explore and interpret the meanings of the text and cross-check this information with the themes already derived from manual coding.

Researchers such as Scott and Smith (2005), Smith and Humphreys (2006), Travagia, Westbrook, and Braithwaite (2009) demonstrate that analysis,
using Leximancer has proven to illicit high levels of reliability, stability and face validity. Other researchers (Dann, 2010; Isakhan, 2005; Michael, Fusco, & Michael, 2008; Smith, 2003) support the use of Leximancer as it uncovers core associations within a body of text whilst reducing expectation bias which may arise in manually coded analysis. Crofts and Bisman (2010) claim that the program includes “an interactive concept-mapping facility, which provides an overview of the conceptual structure of the data set that assists the researcher in interpretation” (p. 319). The concept maps generated through Leximancer demonstrate a range of relationships, including the strength of each relationship which enabled me to gain an overview of the main themes within the data.

In summary, Leximancer is a tool that has proven to be used for the analysis of data to enhance validity, reliability and to clearly define links between themes and concepts derived from manual coding. Leximancer was also useful to determine relevant quotes within the main themes derived from interviews with all participants. The following section briefly discusses the phases of data analysis.

**Phases of Analysis**

Data were organised into two individual sets. One set developed for the responses from interviews with sponsored female surfers, and the other from interviews with surf company representatives. The analysis of data from interviews with sponsored female surfers (SFS) and surf company representatives (SCR) is divided into five phases, adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006), as presented in Table 4.3.
### Table 4.3. Phases of Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Familiarisation with the data</td>
<td>Immersion in the raw data e.g. analyse female surfer profiles and internet websites, listen to audio recordings and transcribe interviews, review the observations and field notes, note initial ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>SCR</td>
<td>Immersion in the raw data e.g. analyse company profiles and internet websites, listen to audio recordings and transcribe interviews, review the observations and field notes, note initial ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Searching for overall themes</td>
<td>Manually code all interview data and colour code for relevant themes and quotes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>Review themes</td>
<td>Check themes relative to observations, field notes and content analysis of other material and name and identify main themes from interview data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 4</td>
<td>Define and name themes</td>
<td>Upload all transcribed interview data from SFS into Leximancer to identify key concepts and themes and compare to manually coded data. Ongoing analysis to refine themes; review data to extract relevant quotes and literature, identify links. Analysis of surf-related documents, mass and niche media sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 4</td>
<td>SCR</td>
<td>Upload the combined surf company files into Leximancer and compare key concepts to themes identified in manually coded data. Ongoing analysis to refine themes; review data to extract relevant quotes and literature, identify links. Analysis of surf-related documents, mass and niche media sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 5</td>
<td>Define and produce the findings</td>
<td>The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, and relate these to the research objectives and literature. Produce findings of the analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from “Using thematic analysis in psychology,” (p. 87), by V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006, *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2).

The following section highlights the various phases of analysis and its relevance to engaging effectively with the data.

**Phase 1 – Familiarisation with the Data**

During Phase 1 of this analysis I was immersed in the data through familiarisation with surf company websites (Appendix A), listening to audio
recordings and transcribing interviews, reviewing the observations and field notes, reading relevant surfing magazines, attending relevant surfing events such as *Divas of Surfing* night and noting initial ideas. My immersion in the data facilitated the formation of ideas about possible surf company philosophy and marketing strategies.

At the same time, I previewed all the data collected from initial contact with sponsored female surfers at various surfing competitions in order to uncover any additional relevant themes and quotes for later reference. I mentioned earlier that initial contact with sponsored surfers assisted the selection of appropriate surfers for interview, based on their years of experience and relevant company sponsorship. The results of the questionnaire provided me with background information and initial themes that implied various types of sponsorship available for female surfers. The questionnaire data and informal discussions with sponsored female surfers also provided me with a variety of opinions about their surfing sponsorship and a diverse understanding about these experiences. Seven initial themes emerged from the questionnaire data, namely: surfing as a lifestyle sport for girls; different types of sponsorship; surfing lifestyle and the ‘look’; evolution of the surfer girl image; media influence on surfing sponsorship; being a role model and the ‘look’ and the impact of the ASP on women’s surfing.

Data from individual interviews were transcribed verbatim into filed word documents. Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest that transcripts be examined and each response classified into broad and inclusive categories to enable familiarity with the material and reduce the volume of data into a more condensed form. This meant all raw data in this
thesis was primarily analysed by reading each transcript to gain an understanding and then reread in an attempt to identify frequently occurring keywords and phrases. Dasborough (2006) suggests that keywords and phrases from the transcripts are compared with each other, and then grouped based on their similarities and differences. For example, in my study key words such as *look, girls, money, sponsorship, lifestyle marketing, media exposure, events, level, image* and *brand* were common and prominent throughout the observations, field notes and interview transcript data. This provided a basis to compare what emerged from the data analysis through manual coding.

**Phase 2 & 3 – Searching and Reviewing for Overall Themes**

Phases 2 and 3 involved reading the transcribed observations, field notes and interview data multiple times, and colour coding each theme in order to categorise the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Categories provided a framework for the comparison of information between the concept maps and allowed me to see connections, common themes and differences regarding the lifestyle marketing of female surfers. The observations and field notes were useful to capture meaningful statements and points to follow up on during the interview process.

**Phases 4 & 5 – Define and Produce the Findings**

Phases 4 and 5 involved comparing the colour-coded themes developed from written observations, field notes and interview data to define and produce the major themes. Each theme was reviewed to determine the relationship between relevant groupings of concepts and incorporating supporting evidence from both interview extracts and the review of literature and surf-related
sources. This phase also involved uploading all the interview transcripts from the fifteen sponsored female surfers and each surf company into the Leximancer program. This procedure, recommended by Smith (2005), allows the strength or weightings of concept relationships to be determined. This enabled me to extract meaningful data elements that contained the frequency of each keyword or phrase, represented by a variation in the size of the concept dots contained within the concept maps. At this stage, Leximancer assisted me to quantify the keywords and phrases to allow easier exploration of both the connections to the themes developed through manual coding and the research objectives. Combining the analysis of transcripts from all fifteen female surfers using Leximancer allowed the overall responses to be represented in one concept map. Similarly, combining the analysis of transcripts from the Big Three using Leximancer allowed the overall responses to be represented in one concept map as well. I assessed the relative importance of each concept in relation to what had been defined through manual coding. The concepts that emerged through Leximancer also provided insight into common surf company themes regarding the role of female surfers in their marketing strategies.

The Leximancer output was also useful in that it provided key quotes related to each concept and theme, as demonstrated in Figure 4.2. This assisted in the selection of appropriate quotes to use in the results and discussion chapter. The specific example illustrated in Figure 4.2 was generated by Leximancer from data collected from this thesis. This format allowed easier access to specific quotes and information provided by the participants for use in the analysis in Chapters 5 and 6. Meaningful and relevant quotes were then noted as examples of the overall themes.
One area of concern in employing ethnography as a research design is determining whose cultural reality is being represented in the final analysis – the cultural participant’s, the researcher’s or a mixture of the two. In any ethnographic study the researcher does not approach the research setting from an objective position without a degree of bias. Krane and Baird (2005) argue that the researcher brings into the setting “personal histories, conceptual dispositions, and epistemological perspectives and socially construct the data” (p. 100). However, the ethnographer ultimately plays a central role in the production of the fieldwork and the text (Sands, 2002). As described by Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong (2000) and Sparkes (2002), reflexivity is used to understand the ethnographer’s behaviour in terms of his or her cultural reality and history within the surfing culture in the way the data is interpreted.
Engaging in an interpretive ethnography means that the ethnographer becomes deeply immersed in the culture under investigation and can therefore interpret symbols and meanings to gain a better understanding of both the culture and his or her own reality within that culture.

Reflexivity, as defined by Lincoln and Guba (2000), is “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher” (p. 183). For Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) reflexivity implies explicit recognition of the extent to which the researcher shapes the phenomena under investigation. This means that as a female researcher in a setting with sponsored female surfers it is my responsibility to represent the lived experiences of these surfers and be aware of, and reflect upon, the way my interpretation of the data shapes the knowledge being constructed. Given this, my construction of the lifestyle marketing process of female surfers has two sequential aspects. First, my previous experiences and connections in the surfing industry constitute an immediate interpretive reconstruction. Second, as the research progressed and I removed myself from the research setting I was able to narrow the focus on the research objectives in my analysis and reflect on the data collected. Removing myself from the research setting helped me to reflect and gain understanding and insights about the processes and practices involved in lifestyle marketing and sponsorship.

With regard to the issue of representation, ethnography focuses on the construction of the text’s authority (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Tedlock, 2000; Woolgar, 1988). The concept of authority has two meanings. First, authority refers to the way in which a text is reconstructed (Pratt, 1986). This implies the necessity to explicitly question my position as the researcher and the impact
that interpretation on the data collection and analysis could have on the overall findings. Because a Foucauldian perspective is used, consideration needs to be given to not just reproducing the authority of the observer. In other words, by acknowledging Foucault’s (1979) notion of surveillance, I needed to be aware of my role as researcher and the observations and interpretations I was producing within the research setting. Rather, my observations should serve as an avenue to develop rapport and trust between me and the participants so they are more inclined to disclose beliefs and opinions not ordinarily discussed. This relationship between the participant and researcher can lead to a richer source of data. Second, authority relates to the authenticity of representation. Here the concern is about the extent to which the text is an accurate representation of the participants and surf companies under investigation, rather than being merely representative of my interpretation (Rosaldo, 1989). Accurate representation can be achieved by confirming my interpretations with the participants, and being aware that the reader is responsible for their own interpretation of the ethnographer’s reflexivity.

In this study, my interpretation of the process of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers includes both the experiences of female surfers and the representatives from the Big Three surf companies. Failure to include both sides of the sponsorship process would not produce an accurate representation. Furthermore, as a participant-observer (Stranger, 2011) within the surfing culture, I was aware of my possible biases or past experiences that may influence my interpretive reconstruction of the impact of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship by the Big Three on fifteen sponsored surfers. Therefore, the representation provided in this thesis does not take into account the viewpoints
of any other surf or sport brands involved in the sponsorship of female surfers or the opinions of other female surfers.

In this thesis, the theoretical underpinnings of Lessing (1991) and Foucault (1979) provide a framework that facilitates the examination of the extent of contradiction, power and agency at play in the lifestyle marketing of sponsored female surfers by the Big Three. In the context of this research, viewing the subculture of surfing and particularly the implications for female surfers through an ethnographic lens via my interpretation as female researcher allows individual sponsored female surfers to tell their stories and lived experiences. In this way, ethnography is an effective means to examine the impact of lifestyle marketing on female surfers through sponsorship and their opportunity for future success in the sport.

**Validity and Reliability**

In this section the validity and reliability of procedures most appropriate to my study are examined. Oliver-Bennetts (2009) confirms that one of the key strengths of qualitative data is “its capability to reveal deep and hidden meanings” (p. 74). Hoeber (2005) implies however, that this criterion is dependent upon “the role and impact of the researcher in interpreting the results” (p. 75). From an interpretive paradigm, Markula and Silk (2011) believe that “each researcher’s own subjective experiences [sic] is openly acknowledged to influence the production of knowledge” (p. 204). In order to consider the validity of qualitative data it is important to be sensitive to the fact that they are likely to contain a variety of meanings and therefore be subject to different interpretations.
Pedersen (1998) agrees there is “no position from which ethnographic research can be conducted in an unbiased manner” (p. 399). It is difficult to remain completely objective, so I was aware of keeping my influence on the research findings to a minimum, even though taking sides is difficult to avoid. According to Angrosino and Mays de Perez (2000) ethnographic research has, “multiple ways of seeing and interpreting events” (p. 690). The use of multiple data collection methods provided the opportunity for a more complete understanding of the data (Cooky, 2006; Eisenhardt, 1989). I always tried to be consciously aware of the impact that my own personal beliefs, values and biases may have in shaping the interpretation of data throughout the research process.

Earlier attempts to address issues of reliability and validity in the context of ethnographic analysis by Lincoln and Guba (1985) involved “judgment based upon credibility and confirmability” (p. 323). Lincoln and Guba claimed that confirmability emphasises the importance of findings that “are grounded in the data, and that the inferences based on the data are logical” (p. 323). There are several strategies that can be employed to improve the credibility of the results while confirming the findings. Strauss and Corbin (1998) believe that identifying correct themes and cross-checking participants’ descriptions during interviews in the coding process is important. To assist this process I kept analytical and general field notes of assumptions and ongoing interpretations, and reflected on data to check for congruence. I offered a supportive environment during the interview period including further support and debriefing after the interview if required. I further confirmed interpretations throughout the interview, asking the participants if my understandings reflected their interpretations.
Lincoln and Guba (1985) agree that member checks are "crucial techniques for establishing credibility and authenticity and useful in situations whereby data, analytic, categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholder groups from where the data was originally collected" (p. 314). Member checks in this study involved reaffirming developed company profiles and interview responses with company representatives and sponsored female surfers as a form of validity. Additionally, confirmability was verified by emailing individual interpreted company profiles to the surf company representatives to validate the information before inclusion in the thesis. This form of validation, described by Kvale (2006) as member checking, attempts to "reduce the researcher’s dominance over the research subjects and obtain consensual knowledge" (p. 485). Reconfirming the interpretation of interview data with surf representatives was undertaken by means of sending back the transcribed data for checking, although the use of audio recordings assisted in an accurate representation of the interview. Member checking was more difficult with the female surfers because of their overseas surfing commitments. However, I was fortunate enough to speak again with three of the surfers at another surfing venue to clarify a couple of points and ask additional questions.

In later work by Lincoln and Guba (2000) and Denzin and Lincoln (2000), they suggest that the fundamental criterion for qualitative research is trustworthiness. For research to be considered authentic and credible, Tuli (2010) confirms that "investigations should be based on a sound rationale that justifies the use of chosen methodology and the processes involved in data collection and analysis" (p. 101). This chapter has provided such a rationale and to ensure the data collected from this study was valid, triangulation was
considered the most effective lens to systematically sort through the data. Triangulation also assisted to clarify and confirm the most common themes for the chosen collection methods and was essential to this study.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue that “triangulation arises from the traditions of navigation in which a point in space can be located precisely through three directions” (p. 15). Research (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005; Creswell & Miller, 2000, Stavros & Westberg, 2009) highlights that the process of triangulation involves substantiating data from multiple perspectives to clarify meaning, enhance depth of understanding of a particular theme and to provide verification of an observation or interpretation. Denzin (1978) identifies four types of triangulation: across data sources, (i.e. the participants), theories, methods (i.e. interviews, observations, and document, magazine and website analysis), and the researcher’s interpretation. Therefore, data-source triangulation involves the comparison of data relating to the same phenomenon but derived from different phases of field work and the accounts of participants. I incorporated all four types of triangulation to examine the diversity of perceptions about the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers and drew upon multiple sources and methods of data to find common themes or categories to describe their lived experiences.

In relation to the participants’ accounts or experiences of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship, I continuously crosschecked the various data sources to consolidate or disconfirm their degree of validity and reliability. An example of triangulation in the context of this thesis is exemplified when the interview responses of female surfers are compared and crosschecked with surf
company representative interviews and observations made at surfing competition sites and on surf-related websites.

Triangulation between the multiple data sources and analysis tools assisted in determining if the inferences being drawn about sponsorship were consistent. Observations proved valuable in validating the statements and responses made during the various interviews. The observations and subsequent field notes were used to check the congruence of the findings and confirm themes relevant to the thesis topic. Using Leximancer as an analysis tool in combination with manual coding also confirmed the themes elicited from interview data. Thus, triangulation of the multiple sources of data and data collection methods validated the findings, ensuring the messages, themes and experiences of sponsored female surfers were consistent. Flick (2007) and Rinehart (1992) emphasise the importance of the researcher being self-aware and reflective, so that whatever occurs in the research setting is useful data. Ethical considerations and trust will now be discussed.

**Ethical Considerations and Trust**

Access to participants in this study was subject to ethical clearance by Griffith University prior the commencement of fieldwork. After obtaining ethical clearance from Griffith University, all participants taking part in the interview process received consent packages consisting of an information sheet that outlined the project and their ethical rights, and a consent form to safeguard confidentiality and build trust and credibility (Appendix C & D). All interviewees had the choice to remain anonymous (full confidentiality), to be partially identified (e.g. name, occupation) or to be fully identified (full name, address
Individuals signed the consent forms accordingly. Permission was requested from parents of the sponsored female surfers who were under 18 to participate in the interview. All interview participants agreed to a follow-up interview if required. In the write-up process, participants’ anonymity was maintained through the use of pseudonyms, especially in all quotes for identifying information in the transcripts. Pseudonyms were used to highlight direct quotes, and references to specific companies were replaced by either Company A, B or C. This allowed the identity of the individual to be protected throughout the research process.

As a partial insider in the surfing community, I was aware of the fact that the sponsored female surfers had loyalty and contractual agreements with surfing sponsors and any comments made could impact upon future arrangements. On one hand, this could be perceived as a negative and on the other, could be considered a demonstration of corporate responsibility towards their sponsoring company and brand. Likewise, company representatives had to be cautious with information given to maintain reputation and confidentiality. Hence, I was aware of being sensitive especially throughout all phases of the interview process. Woodruffe-Burton (1998) argues that “in order to let the reader interpret and judge the findings, the need to reproduce the informants’ stories as natural and trustworthy as possible is important” (p. 9). According to Woodruffe-Burton, “it would be naive of the researcher to believe that their interpretation would be the only right one to be made and it should be the reader’s right to judge its value” (p. 8). Accordingly, all participants were given the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview and agreed to follow-up questions if required and only my supervisors and I had access to
non-identified information for research and analysis. Informed consent included permission to use anonymous verbatim transcript in publications. MP3 interview recordings were securely stored at Griffith University and labelled with a code known by me as the researcher, and my university supervisor.

**Summary**

My use of an interpretive ethnographic perspective with its focus on the complex relationships between sponsored female surfers and the Big Three opens the discussion about the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of a selection of surfers and the sponsorship practices of Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy. The data collection for my study employed a mixed methods approach. These methods included observation, field notes and content analysis of secondary sources of data such as documents and cultural visual data found in surfing magazines, DVDs, surfing video productions, promotional material and surf-related web sites. Pictorial representations of female surfers in history at the *Divas of Surfing* night supported by interviews with four well-known female surfers enhanced my understanding of the representation of female surfers within the current surfing culture.

I included company representatives from Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy as the primary source for semi-structured interviews to determine the philosophy and management practices of each company and their impact on female surfers. I interviewed fifteen sponsored female surfers to gather data related to their experience of lifestyle marketing through sponsorship by Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy.

Manual coding was used as the primary data analysis tool supported by
Leximancer and was viewed as an essential step towards triangulating the central issues and themes to be presented and discussed in the Chapters 5 and 6. Finally, access and procedural issues were reviewed. They included a discussion about gaining entry, gatekeepers, trust and protecting anonymity within the research. As I reviewed all of the validity procedures, I acknowledged the importance of triangulation as a lens to navigate and interpret the varying data collection methods and the significance of the inseparableness of the researcher from the process of inquiry.

Chapter 5 presents an analysis and discussion of the data of female surfer’s experiences of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship by the Big Three.
Chapter 5: Results and Discussion
Sponsorship Experiences of Female Surfers - Empowerment or Acceptance

Introduction

The purpose of my research is to examine the impact of lifestyle marketing by Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy, on sponsored female surfers. To achieve this, I use an interpretive ethnographic approach as a method to understand the experiences of fifteen sponsored female surfers who are lifestyle marketed and sponsored. This chapter presents the experiences of sponsored female surfers and highlights the impact of lifestyle marketing by the Big Three through sponsorship which assists in my response to research objectives 1 and 3 respectively:

- Explore the lifestyle marketing experiences of sponsored female surfers and
- Examine the impact of lifestyle marketing through sponsorship by the Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy on sponsored female surfers to determine whether it is beneficial to the general advancement of women’s competitive surfing.

To do this I will report on the data collected from interviews with fifteen sponsored female surfers and apply the concepts of Lessing and Foucault to understand their experiences of being lifestyle marketed. To support the analysis of data from interviews with sponsored female surfers, I have interwoven reflections drawn from my observations, field notes, surf-related documents, magazines and websites to illuminate my experience in the field of study. My primary method of analysis will be achieved through manual coding and supported by the use of Leximancer. The analysis of data derived from the sources mentioned is divided into five phases to provide structure and a means
of organising the data (Newman, 2006; Stewart, 2010) as described in Chapter 4. In order to protect the confidentiality of each female surfer, pseudonyms have been used throughout.

I will now describe how I analysed the data collected from the fifteen sponsored female surfers. I discuss each of the nine themes derived from the analysis of these interviews using manual coding and Leximancer and intersperse them with relevant quotes from these surfers. In my discussion I take into consideration my epistemological and ontological positioning as a female researcher. I also use the theoretical underpinnings of Foucault (1979) and Lessing (1991) to guide my understanding and interpretation of the data to allow the concepts and themes to emerge and be considered. In my analysis of female surfer’s experiences I apply both Lessing (1991) and Foucault’s (1979) common application of the prison analogy and its impact on self-identity to determine whether they engage in a level of conformity in order to obtain sponsorship. Examining how female surfers experience and are influenced by sponsorship by the Big Three, through the lens of Lessing and Foucault, is useful for me to analyse their struggle to establish, define and reshape their identity in the surfing context. From Lessing and Foucault’s perspectives, there is an opportunity for individuals to resist, transform and improve their condition or situation in life. Lessing’s work, and especially her concerns about a person’s inner conflict and external self-image, correlates with the struggles being faced by female athletes as they strive for an appropriate image to acquire sponsorship. This insight will provide me with the lens to critically analyse the impact that surf companies have on sponsored female surfers.
Data Analysis of Sponsored Female Surfers

In Phase 1, I immersed myself in the data through familiarisation with several mediums: the profiles of several professional female surfers on surf-related websites (Appendix A); listening to audio recordings and transcription of interview data; observations; field notes and attending relevant surfing competitions and events such as Divas of Surfing night. Phase 2 of the data analysis involved manually coding the transcribed interview data. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, in order to capture initial themes and analyse interview data I used the technique of open coding to identify themes and gain understanding about the impact of lifestyle marketing and sponsorship on female surfers. From the information obtained from questionnaire data handed initially to surfers at the contest sites, seven initial themes emerged, namely: surfing as a lifestyle sport for girls; different types of sponsorship; surfing lifestyle and the ‘look’; evolution of the surfer girl image; media influence on surfing sponsorship; being a role model and the ‘look’ and finally the impact of the ASP on women’s surfing.

After determining these initial themes I then uploaded the complete transcripts of all fifteen sponsored female surfers and put them through Leximancer to generate an initial concept map. Figure 5.1 presents an overall concept map illustrating thirty-two concept words and eight main concepts. The concept words are represented in italics throughout the discussion of the concept map and I use them occasionally throughout to highlight their significance to the interview data.
Figure 5.1. Combined themes and concepts from sponsored female surfers

Uploading all the interview transcripts together provided an overall understanding of common words used by female surfers throughout the interview process. As indicated by the thematic position of each circle, it was possible to determine the closeness of their semantic relationship to other concepts and the key words identified within each circle. The prominence of a concept in the data set is indicated by the size of the dot (Figure 5.1). For example, the concept of girls is represented by a large dot whereas the concept of doing is represented by a small dot. Cretchley, Rooney and Gallois (2010) confirm that “the more prominent the concept the larger the dot” (p. 321). The concept words are represented in italics throughout the data discussion to highlight their significance.
In the next two phases of analysis I compared the themes derived through manual coding and the concepts derived from Leximancer. Triangulating or comparing the data with the literature and interview extracts assisted in substantiating common themes or categories to describe the lived experiences of sponsored female surfers. The most frequently occurring concepts from Leximancer were time, surf, sponsorship, girls, year, role, best and tour. The co-occurrence of the concept words clothes and look throughout the responses, and in close proximity to sponsorship, was a noticeable occurrence and corresponded with the fact that sponsorship commitment by surf companies involves the provision of free surf brand clothing and products, with the look referring to the image required to obtain sponsorship, and confirmed the analysis of the transcribed interview data.

The concept of girls was the central feature in the Leximancer concept map and was strongly linked with, and intersected by, sponsorship, surf and year, with time and best on the periphery and tour and role completely separate from the main grouping. Within the concept of girls, three concept words stood out money, girls and surfing. Men, companies and world were also significant concept words and implied that women on the World Tour are valuable assets in aiding surf companies to acquire funds. As such, the company in certain instances provides support for female surfers in the form of money through sponsorship. The cluster of concepts such as top, level, clothes, look, sponsor, remember, win and events in close proximity to the intersection, emphasised the importance of sponsorship to enable success at a high level in the sport of surfing.

Based on a combination of the initial themes obtained from the
questionnaire, the interview data, the content analysis of surf-related material and the Leximancer concept map, I chose nine predominant themes to represent and describe the experiences of sponsored female surfers. The chosen themes will now be discussed and quotes from the transcripts linked to relevant literature and surf-related media sources.

**Theme 1 – Girls and Surfing as a Lifestyle Sport**

The majority of females interviewed described surfing as a ‘fun’ sport and reported starting surfing at a young age and being influenced, supported and encouraged by family and friends who led them to apply for sponsorship. Most respondents said that the main family members who encouraged them to pursue surfing were predominantly fathers, uncles or brothers. Several surfers indicated encouragement from peers and friends. The following comment was typical:

> I always love to surf with my mates, it’s so much fun. My school lets me have time off to compete. My family is all extremely supportive and we travel and compete together (Alisha).

The responses from several female surfers describe the characteristics of surfing as a sport that incorporates a combination of fun and the seriousness of competitive surfing as a business. Alisha is a pro junior surfer and the emphasis on the need for support is illustrated in her comment:

> I get to travel with the girls to the pro juniors and stuff, which is a really good atmosphere and it’s really good to travel with everyone in a supported environment and maybe further down the track maybe I will learn how to cook and do everything for myself, become independent which I will need to do in the future (Alisha).
Although the surfer’s description of sponsorship depicted the comradeship and fun of competitive surfing, two responses also indicated the expectation of sponsors and the type of conformity that sponsors demanded in return for continued sponsorship:

> We have to go in comps, participate in company activities, wear the clothes they give you, try as much as possible to promote the company brand (Krystal).

Similarly, Alisha indicated:

> I think to keep the sponsorship you just have to go in lots of competitions, lots of exposure and results so like if you were in the paper heaps and getting your name out in magazines it's what they like to see (Alisha).

One of my interview questions referred to participants’ feelings about, and experiences of, competing with and against male surfers in order to raise the profile of women’s professional surfing. This question elicited a mixed response with only a few participants agreeing they should have mixed competition. The younger inexperienced surfers indicated that surfing against the men would be fun. However, the majority of female surfers interviewed were opposed to mixed surfing competition as they felt it undermined the value of women’s surfing performance. Tasha, another successful junior competitor, made a comment that is indicative of the majority response:

> Better for girls’ own identity, hype and own promotion to have separate competitions (Tasha).

Research by Cooky (2006), Dworkin and Messner (2002), McCallister et al. (2003) and Theberge (2000) frequently refers to the inequity of women in sport. Despite the optimism surrounding the increased participation of girls and women in sport, particularly in surfing, the traditional beliefs about female
participation still remains. This point was highlighted by comments made by Dana, Tina and Bette who were pioneers in women’s surfing. Their comments suggest an on-going inequity in competitive surfing conditions for women and express their desire to maintain some sort of autonomy in the competitive nature of women’s surfing:

Separate because when you compete together in a comp situation they [male surfers] usually get the priority waves and we always get the worst conditions (Dana).

We have fought so hard for stand-alone contests we just need to make our own mark and stick with it (Tina).

Women can surf as well as men. They might not out-paddle them, but they can surf as well as men. It’s just that they got to have the confidence to do it and one of the biggest things I had was one guy turned around and said, “I betcha a female can’t beat Kelly Slater” and I just turned around and hit him with “there’s not many men that can” (Bette).

These surfer’s comments indicate the desire to remain autonomous within the male dominated surf culture.

The next concept different is associated with the levels of sponsorship engaged in by the individual companies.

**Theme 2 – Different Types of Sponsorship**

As indicated by Ford and Brown (2006) and Masters (2010) in Chapter 3, surfing sponsorship is unique in comparison to other sports because surfing-specific companies still dominate the commercial activities and sponsorship of major surfing events and surfers. Surfing has been transformed from a ‘sub-culture’ of core surfers identified by Pearson (1979), to what Lanagan (2003)
argues are surfing images and associated lifestyle used in marketing campaigns to sell surf brand products.

Research by Cole (2000) and Lucas (2000) confirms that the growth and potential of the women’s sport market, particularly in surfing has led to a number of multinational corporations announcing their allegiances and creating powerful brands specifically for women. A discrepancy around creating powerful sport brands for women occurs where the research (Anderson, 2009; Carty, 2005; Cole, 2000; McGinnis, McQuillan, & Chapple, 2005; Messner, Duncan, & Cooky, 2003; Pringle, 2005; Shaw, 2007; Stevenson, 2002; Thorpe, 2010) and the data from sponsored female surfers both indicate that inequities still exist in the different levels of support and sponsorship in comparison to male athletes. Comments about how the different types of sponsorship are used as a strategy by surf companies to attract the target market appeared frequently in the interview responses. The meaning behind different included different types of sponsorship and its relationship to money including the different opportunities and beliefs about support for female surfers on the World Tour compared to the men. In an article in Curl magazine by Dickinson (2008, Spring #17), a prominent surfer provided her views about the inequities in the sponsorship of females on the ASP World Tour compared to male surfers:

Well, if you look at the women’s tour there are actually about seven girls without a major sponsor. It amuses me that it was such a big thing in the surfing industry that X was without a sponsor for a short time, it’s like welcome to the history of the women’s tour. I think in general women’s surfing is being held back so much and dictated by the industry. What I would like to do is create a change and bring about awareness that there are a lot of beautiful women surfers out there that don’t necessarily have that look but have so much to offer. (p. 23)
I argue that comments such as this indicate that female surfers have to carefully position themselves and develop strategies to present themselves in a way to encourage lifestyle marketing opportunities and to maintain sponsorship with lucrative sponsors. Based on Thorpe’s (2008) analysis of Foucault’s work an “engagement in technologies of the self does not necessarily lead to transformation of power relations or discourses” (p. 209). This highlights an understanding that although female surfers may implicitly gain a sense of empowerment the conditions of sponsorship still limit their freedom of choice. Overall the process of sponsorship remains unchallenged and the intent of gender equality is diminished. Using Lessing’s analogy of the prison and Foucault’s (1979) concept of technologies of the self, the findings indicate that female surfers engage in their own surveillance, extending the knowledge/understanding of certain behaviours in their lives and disciplining their bodies in accordance with that understanding.

Carmen, who has a surf company sponsorship and ranked in the top twenty five, and Tina and Eva, who have both at one time been in the top ten and have sponsorships outside of the industry, describe some of the inconsistencies and difficulties being faced by a number of the top female surfers:

Of course there are always a couple at the top who have success and make the money and the rest don’t make much money at all. That’s a fine line with just so few at the top, a lot just can’t afford to stay on the tour especially if they do not have a major sponsor (Carmen).

There are the ones like Steph Gilmore and a few of the top girls who have some brilliant sponsors and they are killing it, they can own properties and they can travel without stress and there are others like
Marina who have nothing or doing it on the cheap. I think it’s very split still (Tina).

I mean these girls are expected to travel all around the world Peru, South Africa, South America, Hawaii, California and most of them aren’t sponsored so they’re living on their prize money and it’s really challenging for these girls who are in the top ten in the world and they don’t have enough money to travel the tour (Eva).

Research by Kellett and Russell (2009) indicates that lifestyle sports such as surfing use the popularity of sponsored surfers to sell lifestyle-related products such as video games, clothing, music and DVDs that reflect the culture. This widens the target market for companies, but the impact on opportunities for sponsorship for female surfers appears less than favourable. Helena, who is a multiple world champion surfer and therefore had a lot of experience with the ASP World Tour, does suggest that the disparity between the prize money for female compared to male surfers has improved in her following comment:

There is a disparity yes but percentage-wise it’s not that large anymore. I mean there are 48 guys competing for $300000 and there’s 18 girls competing for $100000 per contest so it’s definitely narrowing down considering when I was surfing for $30000 when the guys were surfing for $200000. Of course the earning potential for the guys is different but that’s where the importance of women having an identity outside of the surfing industry as well so they can attract that mainstream income. I remember in the 80s when it was $500 bucks (Helena).

Yet, I found it interesting that this comment contradicts the disparity in prize money indicated in table 2.2 which confirms that the possible earning capacity of a professional female surfer is still only one-fifth of that of their male counterparts. Through my use of Foucault’s (1990) concept of the panopticon, I
conclude that Helena’s comment indicates that the panoptic nature of a sponsorship agreement serves as a form of surveillance over female surfers and is part of the marketing strategies by the Big Three. Foucault (1977) argues that “surveillance and disciplinary power produce reality and knowledge about individuals” (p. 194). For surf companies, surveillance is an advantage and necessary in the business sense as it monitors the impact of sponsorship arrangements with surfers to determine whether future support will be provided. In the digital age this type of surveillance is made easier by the use of company websites, social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and the live broadcasting or live-streaming of surfing events via the internet. It is also beneficial as surf companies can use these technologies to collect data for marketing purposes. Fuchs (2010) argues that “due to the availability of digital networks, surveillance operates with the help of global decentralised networks and can in practice be exerted by many actors” (p. 9). For sponsored female surfers this means that they are now being surveilled by the surf companies, the media and the crowds that attend a surfing competition on the beach, but can be viewed by anyone anywhere around the world with the use of technology. My data suggests that technology places even more pressure on these surfers to not only perform well but to make sure their physical image is appropriate for the gaze.

Similarly, Eva, who has won many ASP events, agreed that even though the number of women taking up surfing has increased, the opportunity to take part in competitions and the level of prize money in comparison to men has not really improved:

There has been a lot of ASP Women’s tour events cancelled due to lack of sponsorship which is really disappointing. You don’t seem to see that
happening with the men’s tour. Also the number of competitions available for men to enter is ridiculous, doesn’t give us girls much of a go (Eva).

Sponsored female surfers commented that support from surf company sponsorship generally included: equipment, clothing, products, money, coaching, wetsuits and in some cases, gym membership. There were two main types or categories of sponsorship for female surfers, namely: sponsorship as a team rider and as a life style surfer. Jade, who is ranked in the top ten female surfers, describes a team rider as follows:

A specific female surfer chosen for sponsorship for her potential and promise in surfing style or who is or has potential to compete well in surfing competitions (Jade).

The process of obtaining a sponsorship was described as being via two methods, either by interview to ensure the applicant was suitable enough to endorse and represent the sponsoring company, or through talent scouting at various junior surfing competitions. Informal discussions with female surfers also revealed sub-levels of sponsorship within these categories. An example of this is where some sponsored female surfers said they not only receive surf brand products but also obtain funding to pay for contest entry fees, international or domestic flights and accommodation. To receive this category of sponsorship, female surfers are required to achieve a high ranking at surfing competitions and represent the sponsoring company appropriately in the media or have a relatively high media profile as demonstrated in the following comment by a surfer who ranked in the top ten:

We take part in product photo shoots, surf camps and functions especially at the contests there would be something on nearly every night whether it be a signing or where the retailers come to view the products, photo shoots overseas, or interviews for magazine (Jade).
Another level of sponsorship is described by one female surfer as an allocation of a certain amount of sponsorship money or a contract whose conditions and terms are dependent upon the surfer’s ranking or position in ASP Women’s World Surfing Tour or junior circuits. This relates to the periphery concept of best. Tina, who has been a multiple world champion surfer, describes how being the best female surfer on the World Tour requires adequate funding, yet some surfers struggle to obtain it:

I remember when I didn’t have a major sponsor until I won my first world title and before that it was oh you know we can give you a couple of thousand dollars and some free clothes and a few wetties (wetsuits) and you know a thousand bucks doesn’t get you very far (Tina).

As Cornwell et al. (2005) and Srisiri (2008) point out, to be successful in sport the reality today is that athletes need financial support for equipment, coaching, travel and the latest sport technology. Srisiri argues that if the driving force determined by corporate market research is to embrace, create and encourage fresh new markets – the new market in this case being female surfers – equitable funding is required to support them. With female surfers’ reliance on sponsors for clothing, equipment and funding for travel, the sponsor as well as the media, maintain the surveillance and control over the surfer.

Foucault’s (1990) concept of panopticism suggests that the systematic ordering and controlling of human populations is achieved through subtle and unseen forces via surveillance. In relation to my study, I argue that the concept of panopticism can be applied to the nexus between lifestyle marketing and sponsorship. For example, the surf companies (institutions) exert power over female surfers to ensure that only those female surfers who agree to represent a certain image are advantaged by sponsorship. There is a continual struggle to
maintain a certain image for sponsorship by female surfers and still be considered for their surfing ability. However, my data indicates that professional female surfers are beginning to challenge this control by designing clothing and equipment to establish their own lines as illustrated in this comment by Tasha who has been ranked in the top ten on the ASP tour:

A few of the top girls like Layne Beachley are now starting to break out and develop their own surf brand products (Tasha).

In this instance, surfers who are empowering themselves by developing their own surf brand products align with Lessing’s (1991) notion of like-minded people who resist the majority opinion by going against the patriarchal attitudes that are prevalent in surfing culture. The Layne Beachley Classic, one of the richest events on the women’s ASP Tour, is another example of resistance where Beachley’s aim was to see women compete for the same prize money and receive the same amount of recognition for their surfing skills as the men. When Jade, a multiple world surfing champion, was asked about what the most gratifying part of her career was so far she suggests that it was the great lifestyle, rivalry and increased surfing performance by the current generation of female surfers. These factors all had a part to play in their popularity and success as demonstrated in the following comment:

Every day is gratifying because I get to lead this wonderful routine-free lifestyle as a result of my surfing. Also the standard of the girls now is so much higher and the rivalry between us is the great part and keeps us striving to be even better (Jade).

Another positive comment by Stephanie Gilmore in an interview on YouTube describes the shift in attitude generally regarding the increase of female surfers in the water:
I think a lot of the guys are enjoying seeing the improvements in the girls and I think a lot of men in sport are realising that we are all doing it [surfing] for the same reason because we love being active and healthy and we love being competitive but not challenging the guys we're doing it our own way with own feminine twist on it (Stephanie Gilmore, 2011).

I argue that these positive practices and attitudes don't necessarily transform or free female surfers from the domination embedded within the surfing culture, or create dramatic change in societal conditions. In fact, as I indicated in the literature review, many initiatives to develop female surfing magazines, surfboards and clothing have been discouraged by the leading surf brands, which emphasises the continuing pressure on female surfers to accept and adhere to prescribed gender norms in the way they dress, surf and what is offered in terms of support and sponsorship.

However, even though these attempts to improve women’s surfing has not been completely transformative, the significance lies, as Beal (2003) states, in the fact that these participants have been “empowered to act in their best interests” and “created and experienced alternative types of relations that met their needs” (p. 56). From my application of a Foucauldian perspective and by applying the technologies of the self to understand how sponsorship impacts on female surfers, it can be concluded that Jade's comment illustrates that some professional surfers, like Layne Beachley, are participating in transformative practices and behaviours. Similar to Lessing and myself, Layne Beachley does not claim to make a ‘feminist’ stance, nor is she from Generation Y or the third wave feminism era, yet she still engages in third wave activist behaviour and supports the rights of female surfers. Female surfers, and particularly the current generation of surfers, are starting to challenge dominant practices,
becoming more self-aware and creating alternative practices and potentially creating social change through their resistant cultural practices. I argue that if resistance in competitive surfing for female surfers could be perceived as what Atkinson and Young (2008) describe as “demonstrating identity through acts of countering hegemony” (p. 52), then female surfers are actively resisting hegemonic control and power by developing their own surf brands, initiating their own sponsorship for the ASP tour, participating in big wave riding, self-promoting on websites, choosing and being selective about their sponsors and on a smaller scale just participating in greater numbers in a sport that has been considered a predominantly male domain, gives credence to the idea that there are choices and that they have the ability to create opportunities for themselves.

In the category of lifestyle sponsorship, female surfers are allocated an amount of sponsored product and given the opportunity to travel to surfing destinations for photo shoots and media interviews. These *lifestyle* girls have a different selection criterion than the team riders and it is clearly stated that a certain *look* attracts opportunity for surf company sponsorship for both categories of sponsorship. The required look prevents some talented surfers from being offered the opportunity to obtain sponsorship because they don’t fit the company image or selection criteria. The two different types of sponsorship pathways and the personal and performance-based attributes required to be sponsored either as a team rider or lifestyle surfer, are exemplified in Figure 5.2. The figure highlights the preference by the Big Three for a desired look and personality when seeking suitable representation for their surf brands.

Women’s sport, and particularly women’s surfing, has a history of being represented in the media in a sexualised manner. Researchers including Higgs
et al. (2003); Lucas (2000); McDonald (2000); Thomsen, Bower, and Barnes (2004) and Tuggle and Owen (1999) have argued that the media attention usually focuses on female athlete’s emotions and appearance rather than athletic ability, perpetuating male hegemony in sport.

Figure 5.2. Lifestyle marketing and sponsorship attributes for female surfers

The reader may recall that the literature review referred to instances where female athletes have had to adopt ‘sexy outfits’ in an effort to attract media attention and sponsorship. The literature (Booth, 2001a; Knijnik et al., 2010; McGloin, 2005) also indicates that female surfers are being utilised for their image and marketability, yet the lack of media attention and support has contributed to inadequate administrative structures, particularly within surfing, culminating in the struggle for women to develop a viable professional surfing circuit. Two team riders, Helena who has won multiple world championships, and Kit, who is an experienced ASP competitor and ranked in the top thirty, confirm this argument:
What I would like to do is create change and bring about awareness to the fact that there are a lot of beautiful women surfers out there that don’t necessarily have that look but have so much to offer. I think in general women’s professional surfing is being held back so much and dictated by the industry (Helena).

I think in general they (the surf companies) like ‘hot’ girls to represent them and it is not always about surfing as it should be. There are women who are in the top ten in the world and they struggle to get sponsorship because they are not attractive and I think that is very wrong (Kit).

Helena and Kit’s point emphasises that female surfers are engaging in self-surveillance to ensure they acquire sponsorship from the companies. Following Lessing’s (1991) theory, the level of conformity being engaged in by surfers to maintain sponsorship impacts on female surfer’s freedom and perpetuates control and power by the surf brands. An example cited in Chapter 3 that I consider to be a demonstration of the contradictions involved in the representation of female surfers, was the much anticipated Nike 6.0 film *Leave a Message – A Women’s Surf Film* (Kenworthy & Lieber, 2011). As mentioned in Chapter 3, this film promised to highlight a ‘new generation’ of female surfers who were pushing the boundaries of surfing. In my analysis, the film on one hand certainly depicted strong, skilled female surfers, and on face value appeared to be complimentary and promoting women’s surfing. Yet on the other hand, the commentary and the way they commend these surfers femininity created a continuing paradigm of marginalisation. The *look* located within the concept of *surf* was also a significant concept identified through Leximancer (Figure 5.1) and was in close proximity to the concept of *sponsor* which suggests it is an important criterion in the selection of female surfers for
sponsorship. Jenny, who won a world junior ASP event and yet found obtaining sponsorship from one of the Big Three indicates:

The industry pick a few select girls that they think are a marketable product and if they don’t carry that certain image then they won’t get selected. It doesn’t seem that way so much with the men because you don’t have to have the blonde hair, blue eyes and all this sort of stuff. If you’re a girl and you’re a little bit different you know you have a bit of a different look or a bit of attitude. It’s almost like you’re stepping outside the box and you don’t get picked (Jenny).

From the female surfer’s perspective, if a female surfer does not possess the look the surf company requires, obtaining a sponsorship can be problematic. So being different in this context does not refer to the type of sponsorship but to the surfer who has the different look, which is viewed by the sponsoring companies as unacceptable and disadvantages those who are different or outside the square. A competitor from one of the surfing competitions who was not sponsored commented:

Surfing is getting too political now. It’s not about how you surf it’s how you look (Female surf competitor, 2010).

This competitor’s comment corroborates previous work about sports sponsorship by Slack and Amis (2004). They claim that the contemporary discourse about sport is no longer about producing the best performance but rather the size of the television contract, the licensing and merchandising of official products and the marketing of goods. Surf brand status is achieved through the lifestyle marketing of popular female surfers to enhance their brand personality and reputation, reinforcing a positive belief about the brand to consumers. In the surf brand context, female surfers who want to be successful in their sponsorship endeavours have to “give in to the majority opinion and
obey the atmosphere” (Lessing, 1991, p. 49). The position female surfers are placed in to attract sponsorship maintains Lessing’s ‘group mindset' meaning that policies or regulations that govern women’s surfing remain unchallenged.

Research by Thorpe (2007) indicates that the sponsorship difficulties being faced by female surfers are similar to female athletes in other lifestyle sports such as snowboarding. However, female athletes participating in snowboarding are now attracting large corporate sponsors including Nike, Mountain Dew, Campbell’s Soup, Visa, and Boost Mobile with some earning seven figure salaries. In contrast, only one female surfer to date, Steph Gilmore, has achieved a similar level of sponsorship with her recent sponsorship arrangement of a seven-figure salary with Quiksilver Women. The fact that Quiksilver is sponsoring females from all lifestyle sports, and not just surfing suggests they are realising the growing potential of using females in their marketing strategies. Hence, companies take advantage of the lifestyle images of these women and the inherent freedom attached with that image to market products. My study indicates that Quiksilver’s new marketing strategy of sponsoring a variety of lifestyle sports women not necessarily from surfing, may further limit sponsorship opportunities for female surfers.

Theme 3 – Sponsorship and Non-Surf-Related Companies

Another aspect of the concept different that emerged from the data analysis refers to other non-surf-related sponsors involved in the lifestyle marketing of female surfers. Lucas (2000) argues that corporations such as Nike, Reebok and Adidas have created new brands specifically for women, especially female surfers, in acknowledgement of the popularity and potential of
the women’s sport market. The surfing journalist Gault-Williams (2003), as well as several researchers, (Booth, 2001a; Boullon, 2001; Lanagan, 2002; Langford, 2000) agree that the development of women’s surfing and subsequent interest by surfing companies predominantly grew as a result of their sexual attractiveness, appeal and marketability rather than their surfing performance. This may have led to several female surfers seeking alternate sponsorship outside the surf industry because they believed that without sponsorship they would be disadvantaged. Thus Helena and Eva’s comments below challenge the notion of major surfing brands being considered as the sole benefactor of women’s surfing:

I always intended to seek sponsors outside the surf industry, with all due respect, I feel the surfwear industry has suffocated women’s surfing for too long, they simply fail to realise how big a draw card we can be, and what a massive untapped market we represent (Helena).

All of my sponsors were outside of the surf industry I found it better that way and was worth a lot more in terms of financial support. I was given travel money accommodation and also given a yearly wage. I was sponsored and got a car (Eva).

Tina, whose main sponsorship did not come from one of the Big Three, confirmed that historically in women’s surfing there has always been a perception that there is more opportunity and financial advantage in securing sponsorship with companies outside the surfing industry:

I have been pretty lucky because I have really good management. We went outside of surfing because the surf companies didn’t want anything to do with the women and if they did they would give us free clothes or free wetsuits or accessories but no money to travel, so my management went outside of surfing (Tina).
Tina’s comment provides another example of resistance and self-initiative to enhance their commercial opportunities. Tina and Eva who have both ranked highly in the ASP ranking and both have survived financially though outside sponsorship, agreed that this is still the case in today’s current market:

Yeah you know several surfers get paid more by Red Bull than they do by [surf company name] and it’s just how it is (Eva).

If we had someone say like Toyota or Red Bull sponsoring the tour they are a mainstream company and they are going to advertise in the mainstream media and you know they have connections everywhere and they’ve got the kind of money to do that for the sport so surf companies are probably worried (Tina).

Researchers such as Beal and Wilson (2004), Rinehart (2008), Thorpe (2007), and Wheaton (2004) suggest that the challenge for sport companies is to maintain customer loyalty, product and brand positioning, while making appropriate economic decisions regarding allocation of funding for promotion through sponsorship and lifestyle marketing. The comments indicate that pressure is being placed on surf companies to modify their emphasis from traditional sponsorship if they are to compete with non-surf-related industries such as Nike and Red Bull. My data suggests that large sponsorship funding available by these non-surf-related promoters has enticed female surfers to engage in these different types of sponsorship arrangements. There is a level of appreciation for the progress the Big Three have brought to the surfing industry. While female surfers acknowledge that the Big Three have contributed to women’s surfing, at the same time many female surfers argue the need for a significant shift in attitude to progress women’s surfing to a higher level. This argument is supported by Alice. I found Alice’s comment interesting because
she could not obtain a significant sponsorship and yet was a world
campionship and eventually inducted into the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame:

You can’t say Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy haven’t done great
things for the sport because if it wasn’t for them surfing wouldn’t be
where it is now. But there has got to be a change soon or otherwise it’s
going to stay the way it is so yeah you have to look at those other sports
like women’s golf and tennis and say why are they on TV and in the
mainstream so much. They’ve got those sorts of big sponsors backing
them and there is structure to it (Alice).

By using Foucault’s (1979) notion of surveillance this comment indicates that
the surveillance being undertaken by the surf companies and the media still has
a major influence on the promotion and success of individual female surfers.

Theme 4 – Media Relations and the Sponsorship Process

Brookes (2002) argues that the influence of media in the representation
of women in sport continues to play a key role in legitimising ideologies around
masculinity and femininity and supporting the domination of men over women.
Other studies by Capranica and Aversa (2002) and Vincent et al. (2002) have
proven that the power of the sport media should not be underestimated and is
responsible for utilising the images of female athletes to promote sporting
companies. The media influence over female athletes serves to maintain their
power and surveillance and perpetuates male dominance and control in sport.
McGloin (2005) suggests that surfing is rarely covered by news media, unless a
world title is won. The discrepancy in amount and nature of coverage described
in the literature also substantiates claims that media plays a powerful role in
either empowering or marginalising the position of women in surfing. This
position is highlighted by comments by Alice and Tina who have both won world
titles and haven’t had a major sponsor:

Sponsorship has everything to do with money. The media basically
whoever sponsors the event in the tour controls pretty much what
happens whoever is putting the money into it they are having the
outcome (Alice).

We hardly had any photos or articles published in the magazines you
know and the girls are so lucky now although it’s still not enough no not
at all if you look at your main magazines there are very few shots of the
girls (Tina).

If surf companies do not receive sufficient media coverage it places them in a
compromising position to select suitable surfers to enhance their brand image
and they remain accountable to their stakeholders to make a profit (Lanagan,
2003; Stranger, 2010). It also places sponsored female surfers in a position
where they are disciplined through their own awareness of the gaze of others,
namely surf companies and the media, and are influenced by the impact it can
have on their opportunities for maintaining or obtaining sponsorship. As
previously mentioned in the Chapter 1, drawing upon Foucault (1979) and
Lessing’s (1991) analogy of the Panopticon and inner prison respectively, these
comments illustrate the difficulties being experienced by female surfers in
successfully negotiating the power relations evident in both mass and niche
surf-related media.

Alice believes that the current economic climate could be responsible for
the decrease in the number of sponsorship opportunities for female surfers:

Well yeah it’s just the companies are just finding it hard to make money
off girls surfing and the marketing. From what I can see too they [the surf
company] don’t believe women’s surfing sells their product. It’s sad but
that's the truth. They have obviously done their market research and they have found that women's surfing isn't what sells it (Alice).

Alice’s comment suggests that surf companies are not making money out of sponsoring female surf events and surfers. Her opinion could be one way to understand why surf companies keep female sponsorship to a minimum. Bette, who has been ranked in the world top fifteen surfers, suggests that the changing technology may impact on the way female surfers are promoted:

No I don’t think they [the ASP] are doing much to promote surfing generally and we’ve gone through a phase where surfing was really popular in the 80s and 90s but I now think young people are into lots of different other stuff especially technology and whatever else (Bette).

Bette’s comment emphasises the pressure being placed on the ASP and surf companies to compete with technology and maintain the interest of prospective surfing participants and consumers of surf-related products. The other compounding factor is that there are only a limited number of opportunities to make surfing a successful career path. My analysis of surf-related websites and magazines, which is included in Chapter 5 and 6, revealed that the representation of female surfers demonstrating personal competency and strength, and depicted in action surfing shots were still limited to the high-performing and popular sponsored competitive surfers. Other images of females were portrayed in sexualised poses to promote a branded product.

Eva’s comment illustrates her awareness of surveillance by surf companies and the necessity to perhaps look outside of surfing for sponsorship:

I think female professional surfing is a great career path but it’s true that just a select few girls make a lot of money doing that. You know you’ve either got to be a real standout competitor like a Stephanie Gilmore, just winning everything or you need to be able to market yourself in some
way that’s outside of the box and be very savvy with always being in the media (Eva).

In addition, Eva added that the surf industry does not adequately support women’s surfing. However, the growing interest by the mainstream spectator and consumer market may cause a change in strategy and thinking as indicated in her following comment:

I feel that the general public enjoy all media coverage of the girls as much as the guys, more recently because the Australian girls are doing so well, the media is emphasising that with more great coverage (Eva).

On the one hand, Eva’s comments indicate that the lifestyle marketing campaigns by the Big Three has bought about a greater level of recognition of both women’s events and individual female surfers who are popular and ranked highly on the ASP ratings. On the other hand, as illustrated in Table 4.1, some surfers who have worked hard to earn their way into the top ten did not manage to obtain sponsorship, perhaps because they did not possess the appropriate image requirements. I had previously thought that professional female surfers have not been adequately supported financially before my study but had not realised to what extent.

Another dimension in the introduction of lifestyle marketing introduced by surf companies are additional new technologies to profile and promote both male and female surfers. Magazines, that were once the main source of advertising, and not well represented by female surfers, have been replaced by websites and social media sites. Jodi and Jenny referred to this in their comments:
As for magazines, I never bother buying them you know it’s the same way it was 20 years ago you know you pick up a magazine and is there any shot of a girl - no (Jodi).

Yeah definitely the live streaming is great you are getting everything immediately even print media you can get updates straight away and it’s not like you have to wait three months to see it in a magazine. That side of surfing is definitely where it is going in the future the technology is amazing now (Jenny).

Jenny’s comment demonstrates the need for surf companies to attract their target markets more effectively. Indeed, niche media sources, such as surf-related magazines, films, and websites, play a decisive role in the lives of sponsored female surfers by spreading and establishing their profile in order to strengthen sponsorship opportunities. Unfortunately, judging by Jodi’s comment, the representation of female surfers even on websites is limited. The surf company’s perspective regarding this will be explored in Chapter 6.

An interesting observation by Eva is where once surfing competitions once had to take place in locations that could draw a large crowd, sponsors are now able to stream live surf events. This provides the companies with recognition and advertising space on these surf-related internet sites:

Surfing competitions no longer need the crowd factor they can find a great wave to have a contest and just stream it live. Some places like Snapper still have the crowd factor to promote the brand (Eva).

Eva’s comment indicates how technology has changed the way people engage in viewing sport. Before the arrival of the technology that sends live images and footage of surfing competitions and other sporting activities around the world, surf companies relied on advertising to attract crowds to an actual surfing location. The Big Three now incorporate these new technologies and utilise top
professional surfers to promote their brand to potential consumers. Foucault’s (1979) work around surveillance has been used to understand that this new technology adds another dimension to the level of surveillance being undertaken by the media and surf companies to promote their individual brands. Considering Foucault’s (1979) notion of the panopticon, I found that surfers are constantly being surveilled or gazed upon by consumers, the media and the Big Three surf companies. In this surfing context, new technologies such as live streaming and surf company websites place female surfers in a constant state of self-examination and self-policing to ensure they comply with the image requirements of the Big Three to attain or maintain sponsorship opportunities.

**Theme 5 – Surf Lifestyle and the Look**

The marketing of women’s surfing has become increasingly lifestyle orientated and sponsorship money is an essential element to the survival and careers of elite female surfers. The Sweeney Report (2009-2010) confirmed that women’s surfing has doubled in the last 10 years and is the fastest growing sector of the sport/lifestyle market. The report emphasises that marketing surfing as a ‘cool’ sport for girls with the prominence on wearing surf and street wear has had a lot to do with the expansion of women’s surfing. Lessing’s (1991) view on conformity and maintaining the group mindset is reiterated in the connection between young women’s desire to look ‘cool’ and wearing a branded product. Arvidsson (2005), Belch and Belch (2001), Solomon (2000) and Sweeney (2006) suggest that to convey and communicate an effective message in marketing, the credibility and attractiveness of the source, namely the product or sponsored athlete, is paramount. Surf company representatives
suggest that the credibility and attractiveness of sponsored female surfers appears to be an important decisive factor in the surf company selection process when deciding on lifestyle marketing opportunities through sponsorship. When female surfers were asked whether surfing companies require a certain image to be projected as part of their sponsorship agreements, several responses were similar. The emphasis on health and fitness as part of the surfing lifestyle was evident in the majority of responses. Alisha, currently one of the up-and-coming professional juniors, exemplifies the majority view in this comment:

Yes. I think [name of surf company] wants to project a certain image. It's an image of healthy lifestyle, fit, happy and have a positive attitude. I feel I do fit this image as I love surfing and exercise, I’m happy where my life is at the moment and I love to crack a joke to make people laugh. I am comfortable with this image. I think it’s just what the new age of women’s and girl’s surfing is all about! (Alisha).

Fitness and being healthy can be considered a positive message that encourages young girls to look after their bodies, but considering Lessing’s (1991) notion of conformity this view could be linked to other meanings such as the representations of a body type that signifies an ideal shape in today’s society. Therefore, based on Dworkin and Messner’s (2002) view about sport and gender noted in Chapter 2, professional female surfers are engaging in traditional body paradigms while concurrently exhibiting signs of resistant agency and empowerment through their level of fitness and surfing ability. Kit believed that the marketing of female surfers especially by the Big Three has been limited for some time. However, being situated in the current generation of female surfers and with no major sponsor as yet, Kit feels content with her lifestyle choices:
Yes. Female surfing image should be seen as a fun and healthy sport also projecting healthy body image too. I feel like I do fit the image and I am very comfortable with the image of ‘female surfing’ being projected to the public (Kit).

Kit’s comment aligns with the third wave feminist view mentioned in Chapter 3, and highlights that the images of successful female surfers could be in some way challenging the historical exclusion of women in the media. Her comment also implies that using their sex appeal to their advantage could be viewed as a positive attribute when used in a conscious way. In light of Lessing’s view (1991) on conformity, this choice may involve exercising their right to opt for ‘girly’ or traditionally gendered types of dress, behaviour or occupations as opposed to doing just what is expected of them. In other words, the current generation of female surfers could be engaging in freedom of choice. Therefore, by engaging in freedom of choice, female surfers are using their sexuality to gain control and a sense of empowerment rather than feeling exploited by the media and surf brands. The following comment by Eva’s confirms this view:

The surf company sponsors are rich in surfing history but I think they now understand the power in using girls to market their products and that is the lifestyle component. It’s more achievable having brand ambassadors that vary from artists to musicians to photographers and using the best media outlets creating interest on a global level (Eva).

This form of marketing is being used by the surf companies who are realising the power of utilising enthusiastic, charismatic female surfers and other women involved in alluring lifestyle choices such as artists, musicians and DJs to enhance the lifestyle appeal of the company. The diverse nature of this type of marketing will decrease the number of available opportunities for female surfers
even further. An example of this type of change in marketing focus amongst the surf brands is illustrated on the Quiksilver Women website (Quiksilver Women, 2010) where the company now sponsors Stephanie Gilmore, former world champion. Other sponsorships include female singer/songwriters, photographers, actresses, an environmentalist, a fashion stylist, and a chef. Gabbard (2000) and Kampion and Brown (2003) argue that this type of marketing constructs women’s surfing as progressive but the contradiction still lies in the fact that the prize money and sponsorship support for the women is still well below that of men. The lack of sustained sponsorship for professional female surfers has recently reduced the number of women’s events. Jenny, who no longer surfs competitively but is heavily involved in women’s surfing, believed that there was a definite disparity in the lifestyle marketing of the male as compared to the female surfers, as suggested in the following comment:

The attitude towards the image of the men doesn’t really cross over to women’s surfing. They want the girls that fit a certain mould. It’s limiting and one-dimensional which I don’t think it should be. We’re all different. It would be boring if all the girls were exactly the same. I think that the surfing world could definitely learn from the rest of the world and other sports and the reality of what is…which is that we’re not all exactly the same blonde-haired, stereotyped surfer girl. We have a lot of characteristics that make us unique (Jenny).

Jenny’s comment is not surprising to me because even though she did really well in the ASP world junior events, she is not a stereotypical blonde-haired surfer. Therefore in my opinion, Jenny was disadvantaged in her attempt to obtain a major sponsorship from one of the Big Three because of her appearance.
Foucault’s (1979) notion of surveillance and Lessing’s (1991) concept of the group mind provides an understanding about the constraints being placed on female surfers to conform to the blue-eyed, blonde-haired stereotype in order to attract media attention. In terms of Jenny’s statement, the meaning of being different complements previous comments made in Chapter 2 by Cori Schumacher who remains sceptical about the level of support being given to women’s surfing and surfers who do not fit the surf girl image.

Two other key concept words from the Leximancer concept map were *surf* and *look*. The *look* in this instance referred to being *looked* up to or the *look* as sponsored surfers are encouraged to be *role* models for their individual companies especially while on tour travelling to the various competitions. The *look* or image of sponsored surfers was linked to the companies, and the implication was about being at the *top* and being the *best* and was intersected by *girls* and *money*. Work by various researchers including Slack and Amis (2004), Carty (2005), Crolley and Teso (2007), and Thorpe (2007) identified that traditionally any media attention on female athletes was focused on individual sports such as tennis, gymnastics and figure skating with the emphasis on the feminine grace and beauty of the athletes rather than masculine attributes of strength and aggression usually attributed to lifestyle sports such as surfing. Other research by Brennan (2000), Capranica and Aversa (2002), Stevenson (2002), and Vincent et al. (2002) identified that the sexualisation of female surfers as a marketing strategy to enhance brand popularity is closely related to the importance of conveying femininity. In most cases this only served to perpetuate propagated stereotypical attitudes and problematised keeping up with the demands of their sport and maintaining a
balance between being feminine and physically attractive to attract sponsorship. Bette identifies a sponsorship requirement while on a photo shoot that was actually detrimental to the female surfer’s health:

We did go through phases where they tried to tell us that we couldn’t wear sunscreen while we were on an Indo boat trip because the magazine didn’t want there to be any zinc or sunscreen in the photos. We were like, "Pffft! Fine, don’t take the photos then. Hello, we’re surfing on the equator. As if we’re not going to wear zinc". That’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard. So that didn’t last long. (Bette).

Bette’s comment highlights what lengths some companies will go to in order to achieve the required image or look. Her comment also confirms a required level of conformity by the sponsored female surfer to fulfil the company expectations and requirements.

Tina, Eva and Alice’s comments construct the company expectations with regards to look. These respondents believe that the companies see the top girls as viable prospects to increase the amount of media exposure for the company. This implied more revenue for the company in the form of consumer spending, which in turn implies increased sponsorship funding for female surfers. The following comments also reject the notion that more funding is put back into women’s surfing and confirm that the image is more important to the companies:

There would be a hundred really good female surfers wanting to get on the WQS and they can’t because there is no depth in the money. The money stops at only 5 or 10 top girls in the world and you know it’s really hard for the young girls that want to get to those contests because it’s really only the top 10 that can afford to travel (Tina).

Some companies look for a particular image and that’s why a lot of girls don’t get sponsored by the major surf companies. Yeah those companies
have their stereotypes and I think they are imaged pretty well. I mean I fitted that image fairly well but still a lot don’t and they miss out (Eva).

I know a lot of girls struggle and try to be a part of those three brands Billabong, Roxy or Rip Curl and you know Company A has a use-by date a lot of the girls turn like 21 and they get rid of them you know about 10 girls they did that to even when they qualified for the tour (Alice).

The interviews with Tina, Eva and Alice, who all could not obtain a major surfing sponsor, also revealed that one of the main reasons that female surfers have had to retire from the ASP tour has been due to the lack of a significant sponsor. Research by Booth (2001a), Boullon (2001), and Lanagan (2002) confirms that despite the growth in female surf apparel in both the surfing and mainstream market, sponsorship support for female surfers is still limited. So even with all the media hype around women’s surfing, I was disappointed to discover that this was the case as the data from this study suggests that women’s surfing has contributed to lifting the profile of surfing generally. The stories and narratives from interviews with sponsored female surfers and from surf-related websites and magazines continually underscored the ongoing equity issues through lack of sponsorship and sufficient events. This is supported by the figures illustrated in Table 2.2. This table exemplifies the comparison between prize money available for the ASP Women’s Tour and the ASP World Men’s Tour and clearly defines the difference in financial benefits between the sexes. Table 2.2 serves to highlight the purpose of this thesis to thoroughly examine the impact of lifestyle marketing by Quiksilver/Roxy, Billabong and Rip Curl on sponsored female surfers.
Theme 6 – Being a Role Model and the Look

All respondents believed the main expectation of sponsorship by a surf company included *surfing well in contests, doing your best, and being a good role model*. The concept of being a good *role* model seemed to correspond with the responses from all sponsored surfers. The expectations of sponsorship as expressed by Kit, was typical of the responses from other surfers:

Team riders are expected to always conduct themselves with the highest level of professionalism. We should perform at our highest standard in order to attain the best possible contest results not only for ourselves but also for the company and be available for photo sessions, video shoots, trips, use only the company clothing, wetsuits, accessories at events and contests (Kit).

The younger more inexperienced surfers found the question about identifying as role models who influenced younger girls confronting and said they were unsure or they did not believe they were in fact role models. Foucault's (1997) notion of technologies of the self is helpful in understanding why young people would take up or resist being sponsored, or in this case, being a role model, which involves the media and surf companies promoting body ideals that are sometimes unattainable. For example, the desire to attain a particular body shape or appearance to attain sponsorship draws attention to the ways young female surfers may interact in constituting themselves. Much younger female surfers would not generally have developed the capacities necessary to regulate their practices and processes of surveillance and self-discipline to have control over their freedom of choice or identity. Conversely, most mature and more experienced surfers responded differently, as illustrated here:
Confidence is gained by surfing, which translates into other aspects of my life. I am glad to be a role model and encourage other girls to get active (Jodi).

Yes, I feel good about it (the expected look) – it’s a healthy lifestyle – keeps you fit – body and mind (Jenny).

Alisha and Nicky, two Generation Y surfers and ranked highly in the pro junior circuit, emphasised the importance of being effective role models particularly for younger girls:

Yes, I babysit two young girls on a regular basis and they try and dress the same as me and they want to surf like me. I enjoy being a role model for younger girls (Alisha).

Yes, I consider myself a role model to younger girls because I involve myself in the company event days and other programs involving girls surfing and self-image. It makes me feel great as I am projecting a happy and positive image to these girls to be themselves (Nicky).

Given Foucault’s (1979) technologies of the self, both Jodi and Jenny gain a sense of empowerment from the lifestyle of surfing itself. Alisha and Nicky’s responses emphasise the level of surveillance by younger surfers, who look up to these high profile surfers, which in turn gives them a certain level of personal satisfaction. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the fact that the impact of competitive surfing cannot be generalised for all surfers, because for some, it’s more about fitting in with their philosophy, alternative lifestyle choices and identities (Atkinson & Young, 2008). Wheaton (2004) builds upon Atkinson and Young’s (2008) argument and believes that “just being there and doing it” (p. 8) in everyday life is just as satisfying for some participants. The extent of their resistance or contentment, however, is still limited if they are to be competitively successful, as their sponsorship is still determined by external
powers such as the surf companies and the media who in turn are driven by consumer expectation and needs.

Another component of the role of being a sponsored surfer is to enter surfing competitions and achieve good results at an elite level to maintain ranking in the ASP World Tour. Some of the larger surfing events are sponsored by specific surf companies and during these events sponsored female surfers are required to wear sponsor's clothing at all times, especially during competition and media interviews at the competition site.

All sponsored surfers that were interviewed mentioned that their endorsing company expected them to be good role models at all times and project an appropriate image that aligns with the company slogan and philosophy. This included undertaking team signings at competitions and launches, attending trips away for photo shoots and generally being involved in promotion for the company. The female surfers commented that their involvement contributed to raising their own profiles in addition to that of their company sponsor. All respondents indicated that being an effective role model was advantageous and enhanced their long-term prospects with the company. I made previous reference to the use of models in niche surf media, which tends to focus on heterosexually attractive female surfers and promotes surfing as a fashion for consumption. The lifestyle level of sponsorship offered by surf companies has meant that females who perhaps cannot even surf are being employed as models to represent the brand. Research by Mears (2008) examines how models are made into ‘looks’ and are under intense surveillance. Mears’s study highlights that surveillance in the modelling industry is a part of the job and the “quest for recognition in a very competitive fashion market” (p.
Applying Lessing’s notion of conformity and Foucault’s concept of technologies of the self and using the analogy of models as described by Mears, I understand how non-surfer and/or female surfers used as models may not consider themselves prisoners caught under the scrutiny of surf companies and consumers. Some sponsored surfers or lifestyle surfers may see themselves as personally or collectively invested in the job of finding, providing and then redefining the floating norms of desirable looks in the promotion and marketing of the surfing lifestyle. As indicated by Thorpe (2009), some women are “profiting from their investments in femininity in the snowboarding field”, however she notes that “feminine capital is limited currency” (p. 496). I argue that surfers or non-surfers employed as models undergo self-disciplining processes and in the struggle to conform to aesthetic codes of femininity may in fact be contributing to the continuation of patriarchal control within surfing. In order for female surfers to transform their thinking they need to create opportunities and as Lessing (1991) argues “question the limitations of one’s freedom” (p. 101) rather than merely coping with the current unequal competitive conditions, especially in comparison to male surfers.

The Big Three companies organise promotion days including the *Billabong Girls Get Out There Day* or the *Roxy Surf Jam* and *Rip Curl Girls Go Surfing*. Through my observations, I determined that the main purpose of these events was not only to promote the company brand to the public, but to promote surfing as a healthy *lifestyle* choice for girls and women. At these special events sponsored female surfers were required to participate in media interviews and assist in running surfing sessions for all participants. Part of this *role* required sponsored surfers to maintain their *look* in keeping with the company *lifestyle*.
The importance of the look or image as a marketing strategy supported by research by Bevan (2006), Opoku (2006) and Spencer and McClung (2001), and the preference for a more feminine appearance by the Big Three was reiterated in the following comments by Carmen, Tina and Nicky who all are sponsored by one of the major surf companies:

If the sport of surfing is seen as predominantly masculine, female surfers need to work exceptionally hard at maintaining that feminine image to preserve their sponsorship opportunities (Carmen).

I supposed I was blonde-haired and blue-eyed and I know some [other female surfers] got a bit disgruntled because all the sponsors were giving the money to the likes of me because I looked like a surfer and thought I was a good role model (Tina).

The industry pick a few select girls that they think are a marketable product and if you don’t carry that certain image then you won’t get selected. It doesn’t seem that way so much with the men you don’t have to have the blonde hair, blue eyes and all that sort of stuff (Nicky).

Comments such as Nicky’s depict a level of inequity in the selection process of female surfers by surf companies. In the context of this thesis the surf company and media’s preference for a more sexualised image creates a paradoxical situation for female surfers. On the one hand, the female surfer’s body and the training it takes to achieve success in competition does provide increased health and fitness, and requires a certain amount of discipline and a set of physical skills that are necessary to achieve a high level of success in the sport. It could be argued that the participation in serious training and the dedication required to generate an income that enables participation at a high competitive level in surfing initiates, as Heywood describes (2007), a “sense of power and control” (p. 115) by the surfer. On the other hand, these practices
make the female surfer a participant in a stereotypical set of behaviours. Using Lessing’s (1991) theoretical lens, in order for female surfers to attract sponsorship they may have to conform and accept the conditions of major corporate sponsorship. These conditions may include being marketed for their ‘voyeuristic potential’ rather than the qualities that define them as athletes.

By using Lessing’s (1991) notion of conformity I found that the training and image requirements necessary to succeed may be considered a form of obedience to the sponsoring company, which then negates the apparent sense of autonomy and control by the sponsored surfer. From a female surfer’s perspective, the underlying message denotes traditional patriarchal control over competitive surfing. This is not to say that female surfers should not actively search for sponsorship opportunities. If female surfers are to challenge dominant discourse around sponsorship and transform the practices of the Big Three, they may need to gain awareness about the cultural forces that shape and control sponsorship agreements within the surfing industry and make their own informed choices and decisions.

When surfers were asked whether they had known someone who had experienced a cancellation of their sponsorship, the response was varied. Most surfers commented that a sponsorship was usually cancelled as a result of misbehaviour at a contest, or being disrespectful to judges or organisers of an event whilst on tour. Other breeches of sponsorship contract included: wearing non-sponsored company clothing, drug related issues, or consistently failing to make the cut into major competitions such as the WQS (World Qualifying Series). Alice, an experienced ASP competitor, revealed that one company
relinquished sponsorship from one female surfer and gave it to a younger, better-looking girl:

She was getting too old, she was 20 and they were looking for younger more attractive girls to sponsor (Alice).

Markula (2001) described a similar attitude towards youth in her study about women’s body image and aerobics. Women participating in aerobics felt under pressure to continue aerobics in some instances to stay young by maintaining a youthful figure. Alice’s comment also aligns with Featherstone (1991) who argues that through consumerism the need to be young, physically beautiful and healthy also makes women more marketable. Therefore, the selection criteria for an individual surf company are influenced accordingly.

I found the following comment by Eva surprising as she never managed to obtain a major sponsorship yet appeared to agree more with the surf company perspective. Eva’s comment confirms her belief that in reality the surf company has to look after its interests:

The company just said they didn’t have it in their budget to support them anymore, or they weren’t really performing well enough on the tour to be worth the sponsorship (Eva).

This comment affirms Lessing’s (1991) notion of the prisons in which we choose to live, when female surfers decide to accept the conditions of sponsorship even if it is to their disadvantage. The concept of look was repeatedly emphasised as an important criteria for selection by surf companies to improve the female surfer’s image and marketing potential. Unlike Eva, Alice, who had won a major world surfing title but was not able to obtain sponsorship by the Big Three disagreed with the acquiescence of other female surfers who were satisfied to
go comply with the expectations and requirements of their sponsorship agreement:

I guess with the girls, they don’t want to say too much because they are sponsored and are in a bit of a position like their sponsorship is on the line. Obviously if they say too much it reflects on them which is fair enough because you don’t want to bite the hand that feeds you, yeah so when I was sponsored I was this is great but then you see the girls that aren’t sponsored and winning because of how they look then that is not fair (Alice).

It appears that surf companies are after the look or an image that adds to their ‘authenticity’ as a surf brand and their lifestyle marketing approach. Bennett and Lachowetz (2004) and Thorpe (2007) emphasise that authenticity is an important component in the preservation of brand image. Opoku (2006) and Yasmin, Noor and Mohamad (2007) also believe sponsorship is a powerful means of differentiation that leads to an increase in brand equity. Alice firmly believed that the main emphasis for surf companies to utilise the images of sponsored surfers was profit:

A young girl might not even go in competitions but might just free surf and might be an amazing free surfer and get lots of exposure in the media and magazines she will probably sell ten times the amount of boardshorts than if she was winning the event. I guess the expectation is what works for the company what sells their products and I guess that is the biggest picture for them is what makes them money (Alice).

In summary, the responses from female surfers indicated that surf companies either focused on the elite competitive aspect of sponsorship, or were more interested in promoting an image that appeals to both the mainstream and core surfer market. In order to survive the ASP Tour and become an elite ranked surfer, the general consensus amongst all sponsored
female surfers was that sponsorship was essential. To be selected for lifestyle marketing through sponsorship by a major surf company necessitates being a good role model and having the required look and personality.

**Theme 7 – Relationship Building in the Sponsorship Process**

Another significant component of sponsorship is the relationship between sponsored female surfers and their company representatives or team manager. Amis et al. (1999) and Reece (2009) describe the impact that surf company management and the evaluation of their marketing strategies, based on consumer and market perception, have on sponsorship opportunities, which increases brand equity. Successful sponsorship arrangements with surfers that include media coverage of both surfers and events are the antecedents that can lead to brand equity and enhanced reputation.

By utilising Lessing’s (1991) notion of conformity, I observed that the marketing practices and philosophies of surf company representatives and team managers, who determine and decide upon sponsorship opportunities, do impact on the way in which female surfers present themselves or comply to obtain sponsorship. The limited number of surfers who have been sponsored expressed that they have a good relationship with their sponsoring company. Female surfers, especially younger ones, believe that having a good working relationship was an important factor, especially when travelling overseas to competitions. Nicky and Kit, two of the younger surfers I interviewed, deemed that one of the features most important by female surfers was that competitions and sponsorship had to be ‘fun’ otherwise they believed it was not worth the effort as demonstrated in the following comments:
They aren’t too strict at a young age as they [name of surf company] just want you to be having fun but you still should get good results and be a good role model for the company. Also good sponsorship means you need to get on with others in your team and being able to improve your surfing (Nicky).

Surfing provides a chance to not only compete but meet new friends, travel and in general have experiences that otherwise would not have happened, without sponsorship this would not have been possible (Kit).

Nicky’s comment emphasises the importance of the certain look required to maintain the company image. While interpreting these types of comments it was important for me to reflect on the fact that the younger, more inexperienced female surfers would be content with any type of sponsorship arrangement.

Research (Dolphin, 2003; Lucas, 2000; Olkkonen et al., 2000; Quester & Thompson, 2001; Tripodi, 2001) confirms that an accepted marketing strategy is the use of high profile female athletes to make the brand seem ‘cool’ and to encourage other females to take up the lifestyle it promotes.

My other consideration was to reflect on the sponsorship of younger surfers from a ‘third wave’ or ‘Generation Y’ perspective where sex appeal could be viewed by them as a positive attribute and used in a conscious way. Heywood (2008), as mentioned previously in the literature review, claimed that “women and girls view this [their sex appeal] as adding to their championship status having achieved both conventionally male and female ideals” (p. 74). This means that by applying Lessing’s (1991) concepts of resistance and Foucault’s (1979) notion of technologies of the self, my data suggests that the Generation Y professional surfers are experiencing a sense of empowerment by gaining recognition through their surfing performance while demonstrating
feminine attributes. Paige Hareb and Sally Fitzgibbons were cited previously in the literature review as examples of high profile female surfers who are endeavouring to take control of their own identities and use their sponsorship opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles, particularly to younger female surfers.

However, despite the attempts by surfers such as these to present women’s surfing as an ‘extreme’ sport performed by athletes in peak condition it still appears that the main reason for their popularity is more about these sexualised images. In addition, both research (Booth, 2004) and niche media (Schumacher, 2011, para 13; Southerden, 2003) confirms examples of female surfers who are continually being represented in a sexualized manner in surfing magazines, films, DVDs and websites. Therefore, the impression of empowerment of the current generation of female surfers being depicted by the media contradicts the sexualised images, which serve to sell the women’s professional surfing circuit, surf brand products and concurrently diminishes their surfing performance.

Solomon (2007) argues that the growth of lifestyle marketing has arrived as a result of “an understanding that people sort themselves into groups on the basis of the things they like to do, how they like to spend their time, and how they choose to spend their disposable income” (p. 29). This means that lifestyle brands, such as the Big Three, aim to sell products by convincing consumers that by public association with the brand they will identify with the desired group or culture. This in turn aligns with Lessing’s (1991) notion that, when in group situations, we tend to take on the group perspective or we may even, as she notes, feel powerless to change attitudes that are prevalent in that particular
culture. In the surfing culture, it could be argued that within the surfing culture these young female surfers may even be unaware of the influence that advertising and marketing is having on their choices.

Because of their contribution to the growth of women’s surfing, Tina, Dana and Bette had definite beliefs about the direction that women’s surfing should take to assist in the future progress and improvement of the sport. The following comments by three pioneers in women's surfing, describe a perceived necessity to increase the number of women in the hierarchy of surfing through structural changes in the ASP:

Maybe they need some more women involved in management and in higher positions within the ASP maybe that will help it’s the only thing I can think of because the guys are always going to be one-eyed. It’s got to be someone who is a little bit more proactive you know the men’s tour comes first and the women’s come second (Tina).

The ASP it’s a boys club you know the ASP definitely just focus on the men’s events. The ASP would need to get a team of people that would just be dedicated and focused on the women and marketing the women and going out there and pursuing sponsorship and events for the women (Dana).

The ASP is very male dominated and orientated you know they look out for the men first and if we happen to get something out of it it’s a bonus (Bette).

These comments make it quite obvious that the more experienced participants had definite ideas about how to improve and promote women’s surfing.

Research by Arthur (2003) supports my analysis of the ASP website (Association of Surfing Professionals, 2010) and indicates that the Big Three surf companies demonstrate an inconsistent ability to support the Women’s World Tour to the same extent as the Men’s World Tour. Moreover, other
researchers such as Anderson (2009), Brown (2007), Cunningham et al. (2007), and Pfister and Radtke (2006) argue that a predominately male corporate management structure, similar to the management structure of the ASP, would have implications for female athletes who seek quality endorsements and sponsorship. These factors are relevant in the surfing industry where historically the Big Three surf brands have been the leading sponsors of both events and surfers. Alice's long history and experience surfing in the ASP events confirms that the ASP influences and controls major surfing events as evident in the following comment:

Oh yeah totally sponsorship has everything to do with money the media basically whoever sponsors the event in the tour controls pretty much what happens (Alice).

According to Eva, membership on the Board of the ASP is predominantly elicited from the various surf companies:

The ASP has been basically been run by the big companies you know they are on the Board they have the majority of the votes (Eva).

The fact that the ASP Board members consist of predominately surf company personnel makes it difficult for any non-surf-related company to contend for sponsorship rights to any of the larger surfing competitions. This is in light of the fact that these alternate companies may have the resources and media influence to improve the status quo for women in the sport. Foucault's (1990) claim that no power or knowledge is entirely dominant or ascendant over other discursive fields is not evident when women's surfing competitions are controlled by the Big Three, and the ASP.
Theme 8 – Time and Evolution of the Surfer Girl Image

The concept of *time*, relative to *sponsorship*, has three different connotations. The first reference to the concept of time is where surfing sponsorship is viewed as a form of employment and has been cited by surfers as being either on a full-*time* or part-*time* basis depending on the type of agreement. *Time* also referred to the female surfer’s *time* spent competing, on tour and travelling to surf locations. The third inference to *time* was indicated in some cases as a historical moment in an individual female surfer’s career.

Some of the mature surfers like Bette, who has been ranked in the top fifteen, provided experiences about the extent and lack of support and surfing competitions available for female surfers in previous years as highlighted in Bette’s comments:

> In my time there weren’t a lot of other events to prepare you for international competition. They [the surf companies] seem to have so many events now to prepare the girls for careers (Bette).

Tina emphasised the previous level of dissatisfaction with the conditions female surfers had to endure:

> If they are starting to do the right thing by running it (women’s competitions) in awesome conditions that’s great, and it’s certainly better than what they did to us at times when they stuck us in towns and times of year for crowds and couldn’t give a rats bum if it was 1 foot and onshore. They knew it was going to be like that but we would go oh “why are we surfing in this?” and they would go “because there are more people because then there was no coverage” so they had to go where the crowds were for maximum exposure (Tina).
Bette, a mature professional surfer, believed that some of the male surfers on the tour in her time (early 1990s) took advantage of their ‘superior’ public profile compared to the women:

I used to have this saying on tour “the bigger the legend the bigger the arsehole” (laughs). It used to be a little saying amongst the girls and friends on tour (Bette).

Alice and Tina talked about one rare occasion where women had an opportunity to compete for the same prize money as the men. This opportunity was sponsored by the Medical Benefits Fund (MBF), an Australian health insurance company, and provided some interesting comments by these surfers:

I remember one time MBF sponsored an event for us at Manly for the men and women and they decided to give the women equal prize money and the men at that stage were US$10,000 and they gave us US$10,000 and some of the guys blew up and said that’s ridiculous. But you know why would they feel like that, why wouldn’t they feel… wow good on you and go for it girls instead they were all devo’d because of the money (Alice).

If they had money but not enough, the women would get dropped like a hot potato but one year we had more events than the men did. We had twelve events and it was great but the men were stinky you know (laughs) (Tina).

The MBF competition highlights previous arguments in the literature review that competitive surfing for men is more important than for the women, which confirms the previous notions of inequity in the sport. Eva believes that a change in attitude is possible but it will take *time*:

We saw it happen in tennis and the women only have to win two sets but the men have to win three, so I don’t believe that because there is less of us and we surf less amounts of heats then our prize money should have this great of a difference to the guys but I think it will take a fair amount of
time and also for the industry brands to allow room for the non endemics to come in and splash around some money (Eva).

Another interesting observation relating to the concept of time was a noticeable difference in attitude about competitive surfing especially by the younger Generation Y female surfers. Tasha, a Generation Y sponsored surfer, indicated that the lifestyle marketing of the current generation of female surfers has the potential to push women’s surfing to a higher level. Tasha, previously ranked as one of the top ten junior surfers, indicates a difference in the attitudes of the younger generation of sponsored female surfer:

The current generation of girls are really marketable and determined competitive machines programmed to do as many turns to the beach they can in the small waves the tour usually provides. The skill level and big bag of new tricks is what sets them apart. A lot of the best young girls are complete packages hopefully they can be the generation that takes our sport to the levels of recognition it deserves (Tasha).

Tasha’s attitude corresponds with Heywood’s (2008) remarks earlier in this chapter that alluded to the belief that women and girls from a ‘third wave’ or ‘Generation Y’ perspective have achieved both conventionally male and female ideals, using their sex appeal to add to their championship status. This means that high performing professional surfers, who consciously use their sex appeal to their advantage to gain sponsorship, view it as a positive attribute. This accounts for the differing experiences and opinions about the sponsorship experience between second and ‘third wave’ or ‘Generation Y’ of female surfers. This positive view also negates the fact that some sponsored female surfers continue to engage in stereotypical behaviours and resist what is considered ‘feminine’ in order to maintain and acquire sponsorship. The key point here is that even though female surfers are gaining greater control over
their representation in niche magazines and media, there are still constraints in the limited number of sponsorships available. Similar to female snowboarders, even though niche magazine and websites are representing female surfers as active participants, another constraint that they continue to face is that “the same sources also reinforce traditional discourses of heterosexual femininity by including advertisement that feature models in sexually suggestive poses” (Thorpe, 2008, p. 207). In order to raise the profile of women’s surfing to a higher level, more equitable distribution of funding and support from the surf companies, media and the ASP is necessary.

**Theme 9 – The ASP World Tour**

The concept *tour*, although independent and small in comparison to the other larger themes, emerged as a significant reflection about the impact of the ASP *tour* on the *level* of support for female surfers. Ford and Brown (2006) and surf journalist Stearns (2003) indicate that the history of male domination within surfing media and the ASP has impacted on the progress of women’s surfing. Data from interviews with female surfers suggest that the predominantly male influence within the ASP is still affecting the future progress or lack of advancement of females in competitive surfing.

Sponsored surfers’ responses indicate that the *tour* was the central focus in the higher *levels* of professional competitive surfing. Sponsored female surfers felt somewhat ‘used’ in the way they have been treated by the ASP generally. They believed that competition for female surfers consisted of the *look* and how frequently they could *win* and not necessarily about getting the *best* support for them as top performing female surfers. Being competitive was
about managing to stay on the tour and succeeding to maintain or attract further sponsorship. This point was confirmed in the following comment:

The WCT system didn’t suit my style of surfing and I fell off to pursue more free-surfing activities. One year on WCT I had Steph Gilmore one-on-one in every single 3rd round heat I did. The setup of the tour wasn’t very fair or realistic to me and the best surfing wasn’t always being portrayed by the girls, almost every contest was one foot terrible waves in the middle of nowhere far from the dream tour the men see (Tasha).

Tasha’s comment emphasises the lack of organisation and structure of the ASP Women’s Tour. Her thoughts were reaffirmed by Alice who said:

Like surfing is pretty much all over the place it’s not constant there’s a comp here and there and people can’t keep up with it. To try and follow it [the ASP Tour] I think it needs a bit more structure and better organisation from the women’s perspective (Alice).

Likewise, Tina, and experienced ASP competitor, and Krystal, who was just coming up through the ranks of junior surfing, both felt strongly about the impact that the ASP has had on women’s surfing generally:

Yeah absolutely the ASP is very male dominated and orientated you know they look out for the men first and if we happen to get something out of it it’s a bonus (Tina).

Oh absolutely there are far too many old farts in there and they have been there forever mate most of the judges and the administration are mostly the same frigging people you know get rid of them and get some more people more open minded and you can see the women deserve more. They are chauvinists and only concentrate on the men. Also most of the board members are from the big companies so it is a bit of a cycle (Krystal).

No I tell you that the problem starts with the association. The ASP they never would ever look at the full potential of women on the tour. It’s
slowly changing but over the years it’s been run by guys like who were only really interested in the men’s tour (Bette).

Eva’s long-term connection to competitive surfing describes a previous situation where the ASP Women’s Tour was sponsored by Kahlua and funding issues caused an upset, as illustrated in the following comment:

Eight to ten years ago we had a sponsor for the women’s tour. They (Kahlua company representatives) pulled us girls together for a meeting when we first signed a sponsorship deal and said your association of surfing ASP has given you $200000 yet we’re expecting to pay a million and a half for the right to sponsor this comp. So obviously your own association doesn’t even see the value in you and doesn’t publicise you that way and doesn’t even look at you with any value (Eva).

The sponsorship funding was later withdrawn as Kahlua became discontented with the terms and conditions of their sponsorship arrangement as Eva illustrates:

Yeah we were sponsored by Kahlua and the ASP started using the money for the men’s tour so they pulled the pin and there’s all that stuff, same old politics exactly it’s always been around it’s bullshit (Eva).

The belief of interviewed female surfers was that surf companies were certainly making a significant profit through the marketing of female surfers. A respondent in Vlachos’ (2008) thesis about gender inequality in surfing argued that “if it weren’t for women and the surf culture, you wouldn’t have the brand Roxy” (p. 52). Based on Barton Lynch’s comments, surf companies are benefiting and profiting from the growth in women’s surfing, particularly in the development of women-specific surf brands like Roxy and Quiksilver Women. However, the benefits for women’s surfing are generally not evident. Another aspect of the surfing industry where women did not feel supported was by the
Female surfers indicate that the ASP requires restructure to improve the status of women within the surfing culture and industry.

Professional female surfers, including Layne Beachley and local club participants, were among thirty stakeholders who participated in a workshop organised by the Australian Sports Commission in 2009 in Sydney, Australia to discuss the future of women’s surfing. The barriers identified by the participants at this workshop included the lack of financial support, lack of media exposure, the need for better structure for women’s participation and the generally male-dominated officiating, governance and administrative systems. Booth (2004); Ford and Brown (2006) and Kampion and Brown (2003) support the view that female surfers have historically had difficulty in achieving conditions equal to those of the men with regards to the professional circuit. Two surfers who have been involved in women’s competitive surfing for a long time comment on the inequitable conditions:

I don’t think the girls on the tour feel supported by them (the ASP). I would just generally say that’s a no. The ASP it’s a boys club you know the ASP definitely just focuses on the men’s events. I mean they get most of the funding and there wasn’t even a marketing women’s manager until Brooke Farris came along and now she’s gone to Rip Curl. The whole infrastructure of it needs looking at and changing (Tina).

As far as marketing issues the only ones with marketing issues are the tour they can’t seem to put a finger on the pulse to market that tour and that’s a bummer for all those on the tour because they can’t benefit from it especially the women. So I mean as far as individual companies are concerned they are doing a pretty good job of marketing their surfers (Jodi).

Jodi’s reference to surf companies doing a good job in marketing their surfers opposes previous discussion in the literature review about how the Men’s ASP
World Tour events are predominantly sponsored by one of the Big Three and the indication that the women’s events are sponsored primarily by companies from outside the surfing industry. Eva indicated that representatives from the Big Three were on the Board of the ASP which sends conflicting messages about the level of genuine support for female surfers and women’s competitive surfing. Bette and Helena believed that one way to achieve equity was to get more women in positions of power within the ASP:

They are slowly getting rid of all the old wood in there and they need a few more women in the positions of power in there I believe the women’s tour should be run by the women with a couple of guys thrown in there. There are a couple of guys who are generally good blokes but it’s a male dominated sport and most probably always will be yeah but I think some more women in the ranks would be good (laughs) (Bette).

It will be integral that young up-and-coming surfers take control of their futures by remaining conscious and proactive in the direction of their sport and voice their desires and concerns to ASP management and industry if women’s surfing is to keep on progressing (Helena).

Likewise, Eva expressed similar sentiments about the inherent difficulty of promoting women’s competitive surfing:

I think that due to the circumstances at most events we are surfing in bad conditions and of course it becomes a hard sell because it’s unexciting, so at the moment I don’t think ASP can afford to outsource a professional marketing team for the women but they are almost doing damage by not pulling that together. If they are passionate about women’s surfing moving forward, I know there are opportunities out there (Eva).

The surf-related literature revealed that after fifteen years of active service on the ASP Board, Layne Beachley’s induction as a new member on the Board of Surfing Australia could signify a shift in thinking within the ASP. Brooke
Farris (Farris, n.d., para 11), the previous ASP World Tour manager, supports the need for more women within the organisation of competitive surfing and the upgrading of conditions for women on the tour:

I think it [the ASP Tour] can be in a better place. Ideally, I’d like to see ten 100-percent secure events, and then after that it’s increasing the prize money and making sure the athletes are taken care of, getting them as much media exposure as we can. There’s a lot of room for growth in the sport. (Farris, 2010)

As mentioned previously, the fact that the ASP Board members consist of predominantly male surf company personnel would make it difficult for women’s surfing issues to be a priority. Knoppers and Anthonissen (2007) argue that “those who hold the power in the sport world practice gender since they make decisions about funding, programs and services for athletes and the development of strategic change” (p. 94). Other research (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007; Fullagar & Toohey, 2009; Greenhill, Auld, Cuskelley & Hooper, 2009; Shaw, 2006; Skirstad, 2009) about the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in sporting organisations has indicated that less sponsorship and promotional opportunities are available, which contributes to the continuation of male dominance in sport. This leadership and management theme would be an appropriate recommendation for future research.

In summary, the preceding section argues for the necessity of the surfing industry to look at the infrastructure of the ASP to improve the promotional and sponsorship opportunities of female surfers. I proposed in Chapter 1 that Foucault’s concept of technologies of the self would be used to examine if women’s surfing is a transformative practice that encourages individual resistance and freedom. This study has emphasised the rise in numbers of
women participating in surfing. Yet still, their gendered position in competitive surfing is continually under surveillance by other surfers, spectators, leading sport and surfing brands, the media, the ASP and all onlookers.

**Summary**

In this chapter I examined the experiences of fifteen sponsored female surfers and accounts of interviews from surf-related websites to analyse the impact of lifestyle marketing by the Big Three surf companies through sponsorship. I used a research paradigm that drew on a combination of concepts from the work of Michel Foucault and Doris Lessing (1991) to examine their lived experiences to determine whether competitive surfing for women has been empowering and beneficial or just a strategy for surf companies to profit from the marketing and promotion of images and products. Even though certain members of the current generation of female surfers are using their sexuality to their economic advantage, my data indicates that based on the experiences of female surfers in this study, conditions are less than favourable with female surfers having limited number of surfing competitions and opportunities for sponsorship in comparison to male surfers. Furthermore, the responses I gathered from female surfers indicate their reservations about whether a shift in attitude toward equitable promotion and marketing of females by the Big Three has occurred. Foucault’s (1979) and Lessing’s insights about surveillance and conformity were used to inform my understanding that female surfers are under varying degrees of scrutiny by the media, surf companies, the ASP and consumers.
In the following chapter I present a discussion and analysis of the interview data collected from representatives or team managers of the surf companies, Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy.
Chapter 6: Results and Discussion
Lifestyle Marketing and the Big Three

Introduction

Chapter 5 presented an analysis of the sponsorship experiences of fifteen female surfers to determine the impact of lifestyle marketing by Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy on these surfers. This chapter presents the results and analysis of interviews I conducted with representatives from Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy to analyse the motivation, selection criteria and philosophy behind the lifestyle marketing of female surfers through sponsorship. This chapter also examines the impact of the sponsorship relationship between female surfers and the Big Three.

Data was gathered from interviews with representatives from the Big Three surf companies and was predominantly analysed using manual coding. The data from interviews with surf company representatives was supported by observations, field notes and document analysis that included analysis of cultural visual material represented in magazines, newspapers, DVDs and specifically their surf company-related websites, and then verified by the use of the concepts derived from Leximancer. I used data gathered from my interviews with representatives from the Big Three to authenticate and compare the central concepts and themes developed from interviews with sponsored female surfers. This chapter presents the sponsorship perceptions of representatives from the Big Three surf companies to highlight the impact their marketing and sponsorship practices have on female surfers, which assists in my response to research objectives 2 and 3 respectively:
analyse the lifestyle marketing practices of Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy and

examine the impact of lifestyle marketing through sponsorship by the Big Three on sponsored female surfers to determine whether it is beneficial to the general advancement of women’s competitive surfing.

To do this I will report on the data collected from interviews with representatives from the Big Three surf companies and apply the concepts of Lessing and Foucault to understand their experiences of employing and sponsoring female surfers. In my analysis I also apply Foucault’s (1979) theory of panoptic control and surveillance to help me understand and examine the marketing practices of the Big Three, and Lessing’s (1991) notion of conformity to investigate the impact that this type of scrutiny has on female surfers in order to fulfil the obligations of their contractual agreements. Lessing’s theme of female oppression and of the female desire for bodily, intellectual, and emotional freedom will allow me to analytically discuss whether the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship practices of the Big Three adversely affect their sponsored surfers.

The analysis of data from interviews with surf company representatives is divided into five phases, as described in Chapter 4 and is achieved by employing manual coding and verified by the use of Leximancer. In order to protect the confidentiality of these companies, a pseudonym, of Company A, Company B or Company C, was randomly assigned and used throughout the quotation component of the findings. Following a similar organisational structure to Chapter 5, the following sections describe how I analysed the data collected from representatives from the Big Three. I discuss each of the seven themes
derived from the analysis of these interviews and intersperse relevant quotes by the company representatives to support my conclusion.

Data Analysis of Surf Company Representatives

In Chapter 4 I discussed how I immersed myself in the data through familiarisation with surf company internet sites, listening to audio recordings and transcribing interviews, reviewing the observations, reading relevant surfing magazines, attending relevant surfing events such as Divas of Surfing night and previewing field notes to initiate ideas about relevant themes. This helped in the formation of ideas about possible company policies and philosophies regarding the female surfers’ role within each company. In order to capture initial themes and analyse interview data, I used the technique of open coding to identify themes and gain understanding about the surf company representative’s perceptions about sponsoring female surfers. Once interview data had been transcribed, I followed the same format of manual coding as with female surfer data. Following this, I searched for concepts, ideas, themes and topics from the multiple sources of data that led to common themes. The informal discussions I had at surfing competition venues with organisers of the surfing events also provided me with a variety of opinions about sponsored surfers and assisted in my theme development. The final phases of my analysis of interview data involved checking themes in relation to the observations, field notes and content analysis of other material. Seven initial themes emerged from this analysis, namely: types of sponsorship and the look; surfing and living the lifestyle; surfing events and marketing a lifestyle image; influence of media on surfers and company image; marketing and the sponsorship agreement; company
management roles and responsibilities and lifestyle sports as a niche consumer market.

After determining the main themes from the transcribed interview data I then uploaded the surf company data into Leximancer to generate a concept map. A total of seven main concepts and fifty-four concepts emerged from this semantic analysis and are illustrated in Figure 6.1. The concept words are represented in italics throughout the discussion of the concept map and I use them occasionally throughout to highlight their significance to the interview data.

![Concept Map](image)

Figure 6.1. Combined surf company themes and concepts

The most frequently occurring concepts from analysing data through Leximancer (Figure 6.1) were: *surfing, company, girls, surfers, events, different and market*. *Surfing* is by far the largest concept circle and is strongly linked and intersects with *girls, events* and *company*. At the intersection of these three concepts a common concept word is *look*, which also appeared in the concept
circles of girls and events. The concept of look was a common thread in the experiences of sponsored female surfers from Chapter 5. Other concept words generated within this concept include lifestyle, sponsor, year, competitive, surf event, someone, people, team, reason, important, probably and level. These concepts all relate to the company representative’s perspective of marketing female surfers through sponsorship.

In the following sections I discuss each of the seven main themes derived predominantly from interviews with surf company representatives and intersperse them with relevant quotes. I also include a comparison with the analysis of sponsored female surfers’ experiences of sponsorship in Chapter 5. Throughout the analysis I was sensitive to the associations between the data, such as applicable literature and niche media sources and the theoretical underpinnings of Foucault (1979) and Lessing (1991) to allow the themes to emerge and be considered. It is important to examine the practices and philosophy informing the marketing of female surfers to confirm and validate what is being expressed by the female surfers.

**Theme 1 – Types of Surfing Sponsorship and the Look**

The data from interviews with female surfers and surf company representatives agree that sponsorship from all three companies includes equipment, clothing, products, money, coaching, wetsuits and in one case, gym membership. The two main types of sponsorship available for female surfers that are mentioned in the previous chapter and both related to concept of look and used in the lifestyle marketing strategies of the Big Three are sponsored as a team rider or a lifestyle, also known as free surfer. The concept look highlights
an emphasis on the company expectation for sponsored surfers to look good when competing, and the look is used when representing the company brand at surfing events or company-related activities.

The concepts of look and level especially referred to the two different types of sponsorship available for female surfers. The data collected from surf company representatives indicates that the predominant type of sponsorship being offered is as a team rider where a sponsored female surfer is chosen for her potential in surfing style or is competing well in contests. The responses from all three companies indicate that prospective surfers are interviewed to ensure they are appropriate to endorse and represent the brand and are able to contribute to the brand’s authentic image as follows:

Sponsorship of female surfers plays an important role in our branding. It creates a point of difference and supports our authentic surf heritage. However, it is becoming increasingly important to promote girls with depth of character as well as outstanding surfing skill, girls who have the ‘whole package’ are certainly more valuable (Company A).

The comment above confirms that look and personality are important qualities for a female surfer to possess in order to obtain sponsorship. The data identifies that there are sub-levels of sponsorship within this category. Female surfers are allocated an amount of sponsorship or have contractual conditions and terms depending on their ranking or position in the ASP junior circuits or Women’s World Surfing Tour. Certain sponsored females not only receive product but are given financial assistance to pay for contest entry fees, international or domestic flights to competition locations and accommodation. To receive this category of sponsorship, female surfers are required to compete well in surfing competitions and represent the sponsoring company in media events and promotional
activities. In order to receive this level of sponsorship, all company representatives had similar views about potential team riders. For example, the Company A representative stated:

The more elite the girl the higher level of support in terms of financial support and we do have some lifestyle girls as well. The competitive girls, we financially sponsor them, which enable them to have their own coach and train and use some of the money to get to events. We also have the event accommodation that we provide and that’s how the package works at a junior level (Company A).

The type of financial support for female surfers given by Company B was similar to Company A; however Company B’s main emphasis and focus was on the elite surfer which is illustrated in the following comment:

Sponsoring elite-level female surfers has always been a …[surf company name] priority for exactly the same reason that sponsoring elite-level male surfers has always been a …[surf company name] priority – that is, sponsoring elite-level sports people can have a profoundly positive effect on brand image and product sales (Company B).

Company B’s comment confirms the value of sponsoring elite surfers to enhance brand image and product sales. From a Foucauldian perspective it is important to analyse institutions, considered in this study to be the surf companies and the ASP, from a standpoint of power and surveillance to gauge their impact on female surfers. Foucault (1983) argues that “to approach power relations from the point of view of the institution is to study mechanisms that are designed to ensure the survival of the institutions in question” (p. 222). Taking this view into consideration, my data indicates that the surf companies and the ASP are certainly adopting strategies to ensure the survival of their companies and organisation, especially in the present economic climate.
Maintaining a good standard and ranking in surfing contests in addition to effectively representing the company, was also indicated as a key element in acquiring sponsorship by Company A and B representatives:

Team riders are always expected to conduct themselves with the highest level of professionalism. The company expects each sponsored girl to perform at their highest standard in order to attain the best possible contest results not only for themselves but also for the company. There is also an expectation that they be available for photo sessions, video shoots, trips and use only the company clothing, wetsuits and accessories at events and contests. (Company A).

Performance indicators we use in making decisions about competition surfers maintaining sponsorship are a compilation of competition results, end-of-year ratings on the various established competition circuits, volume of self-generated editorial exposure, performance of duties for the company, plus a few other measures available to us (i.e. anecdotal research, various media polls and awards). For free surfers, performance indicators are as above, excluding competition results and end-of-year ratings (Company B).

Of concern here is the fact that the expectations of female and male surfers are similar, yet the amount of prize money and sponsorship available for female surfers is much less that that available for men. This type of inequity in prize monies was a common criticism in the responses of female surfers and is supported in niche surf media by Schumacher (2011) and Endo (2010) as previously discussed in Chapter 5.

Applying the analogy of the inner prison and panopticon of Lessing (1991) and Foucault (1979) respectively to understand how female surfers negotiate the power relations evident in a male dominated surf industry, especially with regards to distribution of prize money, my research suggests
that the dominant powers are still controlling the advancement and promotion of women in the sport.

The representative from Company C described the differences in support for competitive surfers and free surfers. It was suggested that competitive surfers’ earning potential is significantly greater than that of free surfers:

The differences in sponsorship arrangements between free surfers versus competition surfers are most significant in earning potential and career longevity, with competition surfers generally enjoying much higher endorsement/sponsorship earnings and much longer careers/sponsorship relationships (Company C).

This comment suggests differences between the types of sponsorship available for female surfers, with the girls concept (Figure 6.1) acting as an important consideration of the marketing strategy. The data I obtained from female surfers implies that the earning potential of competitive surfers is dependent on their level of success in the junior circuits or ASP World Tour. Some female surfers indicated that because prize money was limited, female lifestyle surfers had the potential to earn more based on their looks. I use Lessing’s concept of conformity and the mind set to interpret the requirements by the Big Three to maintain a specific image to obtain and retain sponsorship. I argue that female surfers have no choice but to “give in to the majority opinion and obey the atmosphere” (Lessing, 1991, p. 49) or the rules involved in a sponsorship agreement. Lessing’s notion of conformity and resistance and the third wave perspective imply that surfers can choose to engage in practices of individual freedom and liberation. However, my study indicates that sponsorship could be considered an obstacle to resistance.
A recurring concept within the concept of *surfing* was the *look* versus performance as selection criteria for sponsorship. The concept of look or image is supported in the research (Anderson, 1999; Laurendeau, 2004; Lucas, 2000; McDonald, 2000; Rinehart, 2005; Shaw & Amis, 2001; Stevenson, 2002; Thorpe, 2007) which indicated the need for female action sport competitors to adopt sexy outfits either as teams or individuals to attract media attention to enhance or maintain sponsorship. It was evident that credibility and attractiveness were considered important features for surf companies when choosing female surfers for marketing or sponsorship. Applying Lessing’s work on female image and identity and Foucault’s (1990) perspective on the technologies of the self, my research identifies that in the context of a male dominated surfing industry women are being conditioned to conform to what is considered ‘feminine’ and acceptable so they can gain sponsorship and financially support their careers.

Another common feature of sponsorship was for surfers to wear brand clothing and products at all times, especially during competitions or events and when participating in any media appearances. When the surf company representatives were asked if their company aspires to project a gendered image in relation to what female surfers wear in the water while competing at contests, the response was:

*We encourage them to be themselves without a doubt there is no pigeonholing that you are a team girl not a girly girl or you’re an athlete therefore you must be a tomboy. There is none of that, we really encourage the girls to be who they are and we know we have some girls at the very elite level who don’t want to wear boardshorts. They surf in bikinis... that’s what they do no matter how cold it is (Company A).*
Company A’s comments contradicted some statements by female surfers presented in Chapter 5, especially those who had sponsorships terminated. These surfers believed that to be successful, Company B’s main requirement was to wear clothing from the current season’s surf brand range:

The only specific requirement our company makes of sponsored female surfers is that the products they choose to wear are from a season/range of clothing either available in retail stores at the time of the respective competition or set to be available in retail stores soon after the respective competition. Whether they wear bikinis, boardshorts or wetsuits is entirely their decision (Company B).

Company C agreed with Company A and B in that female surfers could choose their attire provided it was branded. Company A’s following comment suggests that what female surfers choose to wear is individually decided:

Some companies used to make the female surfers wear bikinis. Now it seems to be they can wear anything, as long it is the company brand, what is comfortable for them (Company C).

However, two companies required female team riders to conform to a style of surf wear as demonstrated in the following comment by Company C representative:

Our company promotes individualism; however, in the back of the female surfers’ minds is the fact that they are being photographed and they do want to look good (Company C).

Company A also described the development of a team bikini and advocated that female team riders wear it because they have created what they feel is a great fashion bikini as well as something practical and functional. This athletic bikini was reported as part of a global program for Company A. It seems female surfers are more likely to get global coverage from a photo in the ‘right
bikini’. Company A representatives highlighted the importance of wearing country-specific branded products as illustrated in the following comment:

For female surfers competing in the USA the requirement is to promote the USA product not an Australian product, therefore wearing the incorrect product could lead to limited global exposure for that female surfer (Company A).

This comment contradicts Company A’s previous position and aligns with Lessing’s (1991) notion of conformity, in this case, conformity is related to wearing the ‘correct’ product to ensure expose. Alternatively it could have implications for female surfer’s sponsorship position and level of media exposure. When company representatives were asked about the expectation for sponsored female surfers regarding promotional wear and activities to maintain their sponsorship the following two companies had similar responses:

The sponsored girls have clothing packages each season so they’re expected to wear the latest stuff. At interviews they know they are to wear a shirt with a good logo and a cap and when they are on the podium they have to make sure they wear a company hat (Company A).

Company B emphasised that the brand image was not limited to a gendered look but was included in the personality of the sponsored surfer as illustrated by this comment:

With history showing that great surfers have come in a broad range of physical shapes and sizes, and with an extremely diverse range of personal characteristics also evident among history’s great surfers, we do not actively look for any specific physical or personal characteristics when deciding on female surfers for sponsorship. (Company B).

This comment contradicted comments made by some of the sponsored surfers who reported a lack of sponsorship opportunities compared to those for male surfers. It was to be expected that surf companies would not acknowledge this
type of inequity however, Company A’s comment indicates that more sponsorship opportunities are available for men compared to women:

The selection criteria for the girls is very similar for the [Company A] guys particularly at that junior level and I think in the guys’ side of the business they tend to sponsor a lot in the hope that if they sponsor ten, five will make it to the WCT (Company A).

This comment exemplifies the different opportunities available for male surfers in comparison to females. It also verifies Beal’s (2003) assumption mentioned in Chapter 2, that surveillance by the majority, and its resulting self-surveillance and compliance by those being observed or gazed upon, can often be full of contradictions in that it can lead to behaviour within a culture or subculture that either guides social change or reproduces the dominant norms and values. My data suggests the latter. Company B confirmed that the expectations for the men and women were equal:

Our female sponsored surfers are required to undertake the same promotional activities as our sponsored male surfers – that is, wear our latest products, display our stickers on their surfboards, attend autograph signings, make themselves available for media opportunities, participate in magazine/film/website editorial trips and participate in company-organised photography and film shoots (Company B).

On the other hand, data from sponsored surfers, the surf company website and the literature (Baldauf, Craven & Binder, 2003; Bevan, 2006; Roy & Cornwell, 2003) reveal that companies are predominantly interested in promoting the brand and a preference for more sponsorship opportunities available for men. Company B and C also believe in the value and potential of marketing female surfers to maintain brand authenticity and integrity:
With increasing numbers of females around the world either keen to experience surfing first-hand themselves or who aspire to feel a part of the surfing/beach lifestyle, we believe ‘real’ sponsored female surfers are definitely an advantage in terms of image for the company, giving us high-profile and appealing representatives in our promotional communications who help reinforce our authenticity and integrity as a surfing company (Company B).

We generally like to sit down our selected sponsored female surfers and determine their goals and what they want to achieve for the year. We want them to expand and grow with the company and see if we think there is a lot of potential there (Company C).

We think it is great if they fit all the categories of being a good surfer, have a good style, nice little, bubbly outgoing personality. Also the girls basically just have to love surfing and love the lifestyle (Company C).

The comment about having a ‘nice little bubbly outgoing personality’ by Company C representative, could be perceived as demeaning to female surfers as it places an emphasis on the ‘girlie’, feminine look and persona rather than concentrating on their skilled surfing performance. From Foucault’s (1983) perspective “to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations”, for example "opposition to the power of men over women” which he terms "immediate struggles" (p. 211). The comments by Company B and Company C suggest the ‘struggles’ that some female surfers may face when seeking sponsorship in complying with company requirements. Most importantly, these struggles question the status of their individuality, impacts on their self-identity and the right to be different and, as Foucault states, “underlines everything which makes individuals truly individual, and attacking everything which separates the individual from others and communal
participation, that is, struggles against the ‘government of individualisation’” (p. 212). The implication is that surfers who may not fit the stereotypical mould will not be successful in obtaining sponsorship.

Another comment by Company A suggests that it is supportive of women and men’s surfing:

Our primary objective of sponsorship is obviously to raise brand awareness but the secondary objective is to ‘give back’ to the sport that has made the brand so successful and that includes supporting women’s surfing (Company A).

The ‘giving back’ aspect described by Company A is seen as being an important strategy in maintaining authenticity, which leads to longevity of the brand name and image. For surf companies, it appears they have realised the need to get away from the competitive ideal and a return to an emphasis on the lifestyle aspects of surfing. For them lifestyle marketing is a strategy to transcend the industry away from this commercialistic image and using female surfers has been a significant part of that strategy. To date, both the literature review and responses from female surfers indicate that giving back to the sport is beneficial for the surf companies but there does not appear to be a significant ‘giving back’ in terms of financial support for women’s surfing. Hence, there is inconsistency between the surf company’s and the female surfer’s view of sponsorship.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the two types of sponsorship available are team rider and lifestyle sponsorship. I now discuss aspects of lifestyle sponsorship. Lifestyle sponsorship was considered an important aspect in the marketing strategy of all three companies to enhance brand image and reputation. The literature (Brannon, 2005; Cahill, 2006; Hill, 2008; Pappu et al.,
2005; Reece, 2009) suggests that a fundamental strategy to build a strong brand identity by surf companies now involves creating a lifestyle image that will attract a target audience of consumers from both the surfing and mainstream target markets. De Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan (2007) and Wheaton (2010) note that the lifestyle marketing strategy used by surfing companies is similar to other action sports such as snowboarding and skateboarding but significantly different from mainstream sport advertising. For instance, a number of researchers (Boyd & Shank, 2004; Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005; Cornwell et al., 2005; Kellett & Russell, 2009; Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou & Dounis, 2008) confirm that mainstream companies seek popular athletes or major sporting events from a variety of sports not necessarily related to the company to represent both their sport and non-sport related products. Sony Ericsson Mobile Communications has been the Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) Tour title sponsor for the last six years in a landmark AUD$88 million deal and is the largest sponsor in the history of tennis and women’s professional sport (“About WTA,” n.d., para 30). This type of sponsorship is not specifically related to the sport of tennis but is an example of the type of sponsorship mainstream sports are acquiring.

Until recently, the Big Three surf brands were the main contenders for sponsorship rights to the ASP World Tour women’s and men’s events. However, as previously mentioned in the literature review, with the current difficulties in the economic climate and the latest devaluation in the share price of Billabong, the sponsorship rights will be expanding to include other non-surf-related companies. The literature (Arthur, 2003; Boullon, 2001; Masters, 2010) confirms that at present the premier ASP World Tour events are dominated by
the Big Three sponsoring companies, with naming rights and franchises being selectively distributed to other companies. The development of the surfing lifestyle brand as a lucrative marketing strategy by leading surf companies such as Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy has meant that both the male and female ASP World Tour surfing events and the sponsorship of surfers aim to specifically promote these highly competitive surf brands worldwide. The popularity of using female surfers in the lifestyle marketing process to promote surf brands has provided a niche strategy for companies to improve the image of their brands. In my comparison of prize money between male and female surfers in the 2011 ASP World Tour (Figure 2.2), a significant point to note is that the men’s tour is predominantly sponsored by one of the Big Three, whereas the women’s tour is sponsored more by non-surf-related companies. The information in Figure 2.2 suggests that the Big Three are putting more money back into the men’s competition whilst sponsorship of female surfers is proving beneficial for surf brands.

The categories of sponsorship also operate like a Foucauldian gaze or panopticon. That is, in the context of sponsorship by the Big Three, the gaze is everywhere and on every sponsored surfer, both male and female. In the case of female surfers, the stated purpose of the various sponsorship agreements renders each female surfer permanently visible, and under scrutiny in regards to achieving company marketing objectives. The gaze therefore serves as an “automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1979, p. 201), rendering changes to the sponsorship process unnecessary. The link between the gaze and self-surveillance undertaken by sponsored female surfers becomes apparent as they consciously aim to uphold the specific image criteria of the sponsor.
Theme 2 - Surfing and ‘Living the Lifestyle’

The ideology of lifestyle marketing was emphasised in the comments by two surf company representatives who described the value of developing personal relationships with their sponsored surfers and described it as having a ‘family-type’ feel about the arrangement. Company representatives emphasised introducing the notion of fun in surfing as a sport with the seriousness involved in the competitive side of surfing, particularly if surfers were to maintain their sponsorship. All surf company representatives viewed the value in supporting surfers through sponsorship as a means to improve brand reputation. Company A’s awareness about the importance of the look and role of lifestyle marketing of female surfers in today’s economic climate was:

In today’s market more than ever it is necessary to be authentic. It’s important we promote girls we believe are good role models for our target audience, girls that lead fun, healthy, active lives (Company A).

Reece (2009) and Wheaton (2004) argue that many surf companies have become aware of the prospective power resulting from lifestyle branding particularly with the rise in popularity of surfing by women who convey a lifestyle that is distinctive, often alternative, and that gives them a particular and exclusive identity. Surf company representatives assert that they look for the type of representative or sponsored surfer who will promote the healthy surfing lifestyle:

It’s about identifying girls that are just fantastic role models and not just the best surfers. They need to absolutely live, breathe, eat, swim and surf the lifestyle so we do put a big emphasis on our lifestyle girls (Company A).
The data from interviews with surf company representatives also revealed that sponsored female surfers in the *lifestyle* category are allocated an amount of sponsored product and are generally given the opportunity to travel to surfing destinations for photo shoots and *media* interviews. Lifestyle sponsored female surfers have a *different* selection criterion to the female *team* riders, although a particular *look* attracts sponsors when choosing surfers for either category. The following comment confirmed sponsored female surfer's remarks in Chapter 5 and emphasised the requirement to represent the brand appropriately in public as stated:

> Our company is definitely supportive of all girls but there is probably an expectation to respect their public image. It's not about being skinny but about being responsible about your body and respectful of being healthy as well as respecting the sponsoring company image (Company A).

The expectation to be available for photo shoots and media interviews suggests that the principles of panopticism and self-surveillance are being employed in the marketing strategies of the Big Three because female surfers are under examination to ensure they fulfil company requirements. Thus it can be argued that sponsorship agreements serve, according to Foucauldian thought (1990), as a technology of control.

Company A's idea about having an appropriate body type, particularly one based on a gendered body image, confirmed comments made by sponsored female surfers. Surf companies consider a gendered ‘surfer image’ necessary to maintain the surf brand’s authenticity for an outside audience, whether it be spectator or consumer. Therefore, both team rider and lifestyle sponsored surfers have to adhere to the surf company’s desired gendered
image in order to obtain sponsorship. Although Company B reaffirmed their stance with regard to the support of elite ‘champion’ surfers to enhance their brand image, the view of adhering to a gendered image to maintain sponsorship and the difficulty of going against the group mindset is consistent with Lessing’s (1991) notion of conformity:

We do, however, sponsor a small number of surfers whose focus is ‘free surfing’ and whose sponsorship is more image-based than performance-based (Company B).

In summary, it can be argued that although there were some inherent differences between the companies in the selection criteria for a team rider and a lifestyle sponsored surfer, as identified in Chapter 5, the look still is an important element in the overall sponsorship process. The next theme identifies how the sponsorship requirements of the Big Three can be viewed as mechanisms of surveillance that are utilized to achieve marketing goals.

**Theme 3 – Surfing Events and Marketing a Lifestyle Image**

Central to the concept of *events* in the concept map (Figure 6.1) is the concept of *team* surrounded by *doing, things, someone, people* and *look*. The literature (Bennett et al., 2002; Cousens et al., 2006; Hoffman & Preble, 2003) supports the data by illustrating that *events* are a means for the company to promote their *brand* and *image*, which reinforces the consumers’ beliefs about the particular brand. Likewise, researchers such as (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Sweeney & Brandon, 2006) support the view that *events* have been seen as an advantage in assisting with sponsor and brand recognition and image transfer from event to sponsor. According to Roy and Cornwell (2003), marketing strategies, such as sponsoring events positively
influence brand identification and association with the follow-on effect of improving marketing and sales. The Company A representative mentioned that their surfing events incorporate the following lifestyle aspects:

Some of our large events have a festival type of atmosphere with music, fashion and art drawing huge crowds and provides a point of difference to our target youth market (Company A).

The benefits of sponsoring large surfing events, demonstrates the increasing use of lifestyle marketing as a tool to gain competitive advantage over other companies. Event in this analysis also refers to the funding required by surfers to travel to the specific surfing locations. One company specifically referred to the provision of an event house in one competition location where their sponsored surfers can stay free for the duration of the competition:

Financially we sponsor competitive girls and that enables them to travel to surf locations for competitive events and then we also have the event accommodation that we provide and that’s how the package works at a junior level (Company A).

Company representatives believed that the supportive aspect of any sponsorship arrangement was important especially when dealing with young girls who have to travel away from home to compete as shown in the following comment:

We choose those girls for the package that they are not the look they are not the size they are not how good they can surf it’s the package for us and that is something that we take a lot of pride in those types of girls. It is important to support them especially when they are young and travel away from home. (Company A).
The concepts of *doing, team* and *events* all had a connection with each individual company description of their role as *team* manager, which signifies being responsible for both the team and lifestyle sponsored surfer:

My role as team manager involves going out into the marketplace, following trends, getting feedback, taking photos and doing whatever they need me to do here and there and different at different events (Company C).

Company B and C’s main motivation behind sponsorship of *events* was illustrated in the following comments:

Company B’s main motivations behind sponsoring big surfing events are tied directly to the company’s vision. Different types of marketing and advertising serve different purposes for us, with sponsorship of big events one of the company’s foundation promotional vehicles, along with sponsorship of individuals and specialist media advertising (Company B).

Sponsoring events is good for brand promotion for sure. The company put a whole lot of money into the event but they also get a lot out of it. People come to the event and love what Company C is doing and buy Company C products (Company C).

The company sees an advantage in sponsoring surfing events as it not only promotes the brand by providing entertainment for spectators to enhance brand image but also increases sales of brand products. With the additional advantage of media attaining media exposure at these events, the companies believe the sponsorship is a lucrative means to improve their credibility and authenticity as a surf brand. The link between sponsorship and gaining credibility and authenticity aligns with the previous literature in Chapter 3 (Bennett & Lachowetz, 2004; De Burgh-Woodman & Brace-Govan, 2007;
Sweeney, 2006; Thorpe, 2007). Sponsorship by surf companies is therefore viewed as beneficial for their brand image and reputation.

The Company B representative refers to the benefits in sponsoring world championship events and the ramifications of positive media exposure:

Certainly the main competitions we sponsor are world championship-level events and their greatest impact for us comes in the mainstream and specialist media exposure generated (Company B).

The comment by Company B representative about impact of sponsorship and media exposure supports literature that considers the media a major influential factor that either supports or hinders the creation of brand image (Amis et al., 1997; Cornwell et al., 2001; Global Exchange, 2006; Sweeney, 2006). Media coverage of events not only improves brand image but helps to define the sought after surfer lifestyle by featured local male and female “surf heroes” (Reece, 2009, p. 58). Reece argues that surf companies consider these surfers to be “authentic representatives of the sport, and thus consider them to be appropriate representatives of their brands” (p. 58). In this way, the media utilises surfing events and sponsored surfers to create the look to generate strong, unique and favourable associations with the surfing brand.

**Theme 4 – Influence of Media on Surfers and Company Image**

The media has been identified in the literature as being a powerful source of manipulation (Amis et al., 1997; Cornwell et al., 2001; Global Exchange, 2006; Sweeney, 2006). A sponsored female surfer from Chapter 5 argued that women’s surfing events are rarely covered by news media unless a world title is won. The lack of coverage impacts on the sponsorship opportunities available and discourages female surfers from participating and
competing in professional surfing events. The research (Bennett et al., 2002; Brown, 2000; Global Exchange, 2006; Pope & Voges, 1997; Sweeney, 2006) identifies that in the absence of media support, the surf brand is not promoted to the appropriate target markets and, as such, continuing sponsorship may not be considered a priority. Despite this evidence, none of the company representatives mentioned any negative effects resulting from lack of media attention. In fact Company B was the only company that specifically mentioned using the *media* as a performance indicator which could impact upon future sponsorship opportunities:

> Performance indicators we use in making decisions about competition surfers maintaining sponsorship are through various media polls and awards (Company B).

The fact that Company B uses the media as an indicator of a company’s marketing performance confirmed the relationship between sponsorship and effective business practices. Kellett and Russel (2009) conclude that lifestyle sports are not just about participation and being a spectator, but include lifestyle-related products such as video games, clothing, music and DVDs that reflect the culture of the action sport genre. The products widen the target market for the surfing industry that consists not only of an identified group of surfing participants but also mainstream consumers.

Leximancer identified the main concept *surfers* from interviews with surf company representatives contained in the concepts of *female* and *media*. One of the functions of Leximancer is to be able to click onto two concepts and a line or pathway appears on the concept map to indicate other connected concepts. In this case, the two concepts I selected to examine the connection between *girls* and *media*. Figure 6.2 identifies the pathway between *girls* and *media* and
conveys an account of how sponsored females can obtain _media coverage_ via _sponsorship_. The concept of girls was significant as it has twelve concepts, _girls, money, things, doing, girl, level, look, surf, probably, event, competition_ and _lifestyle_ with six of those overlapping with the concept of _surfing_. Various pathways to all other concept circles linked the concept _girls_ and was an obvious conclusion considering the context of the research. The _girls_ involved in _surfing_ were _sponsored_ by the _company_ for their _image_ and as a result receive _media_ attention and coverage.

_Figure 6.2. Pathway analysis between girls and media_

The pathway begins with girls who surf for the company and have the image to gain sponsorship which leads to competition opportunities and finally _media coverage_. My data suggest that _surfing_ and mainstream consumers who are constantly exposed to elite and sponsored female surfers in the media could be influenced to have more of a connection to a particular surf brand.
Aspects of media were also discussed during the interviews with surf company representatives in the context of equity between male and female surfers. Yet, the responses of female surfers in Chapter 5 indicated that inappropriate and sexualised images of female surfers were being perpetuated through the media. This type of representation in the media reflects how other female athletes have been portrayed either as ‘masculine’, because of their athletic physiques, or photographed in seductive poses to attract the male audience and gaze. Using Foucault’s (1990) concept of the panopticon I found that level of surveillance or gaze being engaged in by the surf companies and the media instigates self-surveillance by female surfers to maintain an appropriate image for sponsorship. In a television interview, Barton Lynch, former 1988 world champion surfer and winner of 17 world championship events, stated “looks and the whole sexist thing that’s what sells, it’s sad” (ABC-TV, 2012). Some female surfers indicated that the images being portrayed have had an impact upon their profiles and opportunities for sponsorship. Conversely, all company representatives believe their company impartially makes media opportunities available for both sexes and that no discrimination is prevalent when dealing with surfers of either gender, as demonstrated in the comment made by the representative from Company B:

No specific guidelines for surfers of either sex other than to make their best efforts to get the Company B brand logo exposed in any photo or footage captured of the individual by any media representative, and to mention Company B in any media interview or public appearance (Company B).

Barton Lynch, however, argued that sponsorship for women is more about how they look in comparison to the men, and he stated:
There is no doubt it’s [surfing] a sexist environment and I think the women’s industry and the sale of clothing and the women’s side of surf business may have been the cash cow to those [surf] companies and they may not have put back their fair share of the profits that have come out of the industry into women’s surfing (ABC-TV, 2012).

The comments by Jodie, Alice, and Schumacher (2011, para 13) reaffirms previous comments by Lynch. Nevertheless, in discussions relating to media, the company representatives believed that female surfers were on equal terms with the male surfers. In other words, they believe the image requirements of sponsorship were similar for sponsored male and female surfers. Yet, the responses of sponsored female surfers contradict this view as they believe a greater emphasis is placed on their looks and representing the company well in the promotion of surf brands in comparison to male surfers. As indicated by Vlachos (2008) in her thesis about gender inequality in surfing, the exclusion of female surfers from some of the larger televised surfing events has disadvantaged them in terms of exposure to the mainstream media. This has a direct correlation to the amount of prize money earned in competitions because sponsors provide more funding for a televised than for a non-televised competition. Vlachos emphasises the fact that female surfers will always be sponsored based on their sexual attractiveness first and their ability second.

When I thought I was about to end my collection of data for this study, a recent newspaper article with an accompanying photo justified the main reason behind my choice of thesis topic. Figure 6.3 illustrates how women continue to be portrayed in a sexualized manner to attract media and consumer attention. The heading ‘It’s a well rounded Roxy Pro’ is a provocative statement and has no relevance to the surfing ability and high level of surfing performance in this
event. Figure 6.3 confirms my argument that the look and image of female surfers is the predominant influence in the sponsorship selection process and media representation as demonstrated in the following selected example from the contents of the aforementioned newspaper article:

Welcome to the sealed section of this column; Keep your eyes peeled on the sexiest surfer; The tanned Hawaiian with a perfectly shaped posterior; I don’t think anyone knows whether she came first or last, but one thing’s for sure no-one missed her; There’s a chance she will grab more attention than the winner (Costello, 2012).

The claim by the writer of the article that the surfer depicted in Figure 6.3 would gain more attention than the winner is a transparent and an obvious example of the media underrating the surfing achievements of female surfers. This reinforces existing sexualised stereotypes of women in sport. As discussed earlier, Barton Lynch (ABC-TV, 2012) refers to this type of marketing as a ‘cash cow’ for the companies that does little to really promote women’s surfing. Lynch also verified that the share of the profits gained by surf companies was certainly not being put back into women’s surfing.

The media representation of female surfers and the sponsorship opportunities appear to be a cyclical process. If female surfers are regularly featured in broadcasted surfing contests or in newspaper articles as illustrated
in Figure 6.3, they receive fewer sponsorship dollars and, because they receive fewer sponsorship dollars and do not get the same number of opportunities to compete as men, female surfers are not represented for their surfing ability in the mainstream media. This point emphasises the inequity in men’s and women’s competitive surfing, which impacts on the female surfer’s opportunities to maintain or gain sponsorship. It also positions the media and the surf companies as dominant powers that enable scrutiny and surveillance over sponsored female surfers. Figure 6.4 depicts the cyclical process of sponsorship and the surveillance being undertaken by various participants in the lifestyle and sponsorship process.

![Surf Brand](image)

**Figure 6.4. Surveillance in the context of surfing sponsorship**

Figure 6.4 demonstrates how the surf brand is exposed by the media through sponsored surfing events, and the personality and image of individual sponsored surfers. The surfing events and surfers receive either positive or
negative feedback through media and surf-related website coverage. The consumer and/or spectator make decisions about their choice of surf brand based on media attention, or as Foucault (1979) terms ‘surveillance’. An evaluation, or ‘self-surveillance’, is undertaken by the surf brand managers who determine the impact of sponsorship on company sales and the amount of media coverage to be renegotiated. Depending on individual sponsored surfers’ success in achieving surf brand sponsorship goals, these surfers undergo self-surveillance to either readjust their image or performance levels accordingly to fit in with surf brand requirements. The surf company then makes relevant decisions regarding future sponsorship offerings for both male and female surfers. While this process improves the brand building capacity of the Big Three, this level of surveillance significantly influences the image decisions being made, particularly by female surfers, to maintain or acquire future sponsorship. I argue that the commercial aspects of the sponsorship agreement can disempower female surfers, as their marketability is used predominantly to sell products.

The next section identifies the differences in individual sponsorship and marketing strategies used by the Big Three to manage surfing events and surfers.

**Theme 5 – Marketing and the Sponsorship Agreement**

All company representatives claimed that a continuation of sponsorship basically came down to whether the sponsored female surfer fulfilled all the necessary requirements that related to both personal as well as performance-based potential within the company. Only Company A and C reported
negotiating contract arrangements on an individual basis as shown in this comment:

Each of the girls have [sic] different requirements depending on what level they are at. Depends where they want to go some are very ambitious and therefore work individually with them creating opportunities and doing different things with them (Company A).

It was evident that the company representatives and team lifestyle managers have a significant role to play in the selection process because they choose and determine whether the requirements of the sponsorship arrangements are being met. Andreasson and Streling (2007) and Sweeney and Brandon (2006) agree that sports marketing managers have to possess an understanding about a brand's personality to effectively position sponsorship. Moreover, Amis et al. (1999) view a sponsorship and the sponsored athlete as a resource that can be a source of competitive advantage for the participating company. Cornwell et al. (2001) believe the factors mentioned above have assisted in differentiating each brand from their competition and added financial value to individual brands. Therefore, the selection process and criteria for selection plays an important role in the commercial success of a sport or surf brand and has possible implications for sponsorship opportunities.

Data from the Leximancer concept map (Figure 6.1) indicated that one of the smaller yet significant concepts was different, which was comprised of three concepts in the overall examination of marketing strategies by the Big Three namely different, marketing, and wear. Different was also a common concept in the data analysis of sponsored female surfers. The concept of different in this instance refers to each company having different sponsorship goals and slightly different criteria for selection and marketing emphasis in their strategy to
accommodate the company requirements and budget. With regards to the selection criteria of the Big Three, my study indicates that another aspect of different was the variation in how each company managed contractual agreements with individual surfers and how this impacted on their level of individuality. Company C’s comment depicts the principles behind the contractual agreements of this company:

Our budgets are based on the financial year and our contracts are calendar year so that’s always a bit tricky. So if there are any major changes to the contract, say there is a reduction in the money or a reduction in clothing allowance, that’s usually explained in person (Company C).

Changes in the contractual agreement could be of concern to sponsored female surfers, particularly when surf companies are under pressure to comply with limited marketing budgets. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the possible earning capacity of a professional female surfer is still only one-fifth compared to that of male surfers. In relation to this, Eva commented in Chapter 5 that even though the number of women taking up surfing has increased, the opportunity to take part in competitions in comparison to men has not improved. Company A verified previous comments by other surf representatives about the importance of the relationship between team lifestyle managers and sponsored surfers as illustrated in the following comment:

If, for example, they [the surfers] are underperforming then we have to sit down and have a chat about it and why or what went wrong or what happened. They know they have to accept the consequences if that happens (Company A).

Company B cited numerous factors in the sponsorship decision-making process:
Performance indicators we use in making decisions about competition surfers maintaining sponsorship are a compilation of competition results, end-of-year ratings on the various established competition circuits, volume of self-generated editorial exposure, performance of duties for our company, plus a few other measures available to us (i.e. anecdotal research, various media polls and awards). For free surfers, performance indicators are as above, excluding competition results and end-of-year ratings (Company B).

Company C based their contractual agreements upon distinct levels of sponsorship. The agreement was achieved through negotiation between manager and surfer:

Depending on where they are on the tour they get different levels of sponsorship. Every girl is on a different contract. It is negotiated depending on what events they are doing and how much money they will need. Criteria for selecting boys and girls are pretty similar. You want someone who stands out in the crowd, be a bit of a go-getter, someone who stands out in a contest and has a really good style or a lot of potential (Company C).

Each of the comments above highlights the level of surveillance undertaken by each of the surf company representatives to ensure that sponsored surfers conform and fulfil the obligations of their sponsorship agreements. In Chapter 5 sponsored female surfers commented on the importance of staying fit and healthy to enhance their image, especially at competitions and photo shoots. The representatives agreed that this level of involvement contributed to raising female surfer’s own profiles as well as the surf brand, which in turn would enhance long-term prospects for them with the sponsoring company. The representative from Company A confirms that female
surfers believe that without sponsorship many of them would not be able to compete on the international circuit:

It pays off when we take them away on tour because they are loyal and without this sponsorship most of them would not be able to afford to travel (Company A).

In other words, by complying with the requirements of surf company sponsorship, female surfers are provided with an opportunity to travel and compete. The problem arises when a female surfer who has the surfing ability but does not necessarily fit the image requirements, struggles to obtain a sponsorship. This issue was verified by Sterns (2003) who described how Pauline Menczer, who competed in competitive surfing for over 20 years and won a total of twenty WCT events and eight World Qualifying Series (WQS) events including the world championship in 1993, was forced to work side jobs to finance travel to surfing venues and afford contest expenses.

Female surfers expressed some concern about being able to live up to their sponsorship responsibilities and talked about their varied reasons for cancelling or terminating sponsorships. Surf company representatives had similar reasons for ending a sponsorship that usually resulted from misbehaviour at a contest which included being disrespectful to judges or organisers of the event while on tour. Other breaches of sponsorship contract included actions such as wearing other companies' clothing, drug related issues or consistently failing to make the cut in major surfing competitions. Company A stated they would not end a contract because of a poor result in competitions:

We tend to not cut a sponsorship off just because of a result or because of a bad year. There is a definite exit strategy that seems to happen naturally with the girls particularly those who have been quite good competitors but then go on to uni. (Company A).
Company B’s terms and conditions regarding cancellation of a sponsorship agreement were quite specific:

The major reasons for termination of sponsorship contained in our contracts are the individual:

- Breaching material terms of our contract (by not wearing our products, not displaying our stickers on their boards, not attending agreed promotional activities, etc.);
- Being convicted of a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment or involving drugs;
- Being found guilty by a sporting body of a breach or violation of rules that results in the surfer being suspended from any competition or tour;
- Being involved in any major controversy in which it’s proven that the surfer was involved (Company B).

Other reasons for cancellation of contract were not necessarily because of inappropriate behaviour as demonstrated in the following comment:

We don’t like sponsoring kids too young, especially girls. Sometimes their parents put on a lot of pressure on their child to perform and as they get older they realise that is not what they want to. Some even rebel and do not even want to surf (Company C).

This contradicted comments made by one female surfer, Alice, who lost her sponsorship to be replaced by a much younger surfer. Alice’s comment also aligns with Featherstone (1991) who argues that through consumerism the need to be young, physically beautiful and healthy also makes women more marketable. My informal conversation with spectators at some of the surfing contests I attended also confirmed that surf companies were going to junior surf competitions, especially to search for potential champions and suitable representatives for their brands. This matched Company B’s philosophy and focus to develop ‘elite’ surfers from a young age because they believed it was
more beneficial in providing long term effects on brand image and product sales. Company B was also confident that physical and personal characteristics did not enter into the selection criteria for sponsorship. Yet a certain look was preferred alongside maintaining a successful relationship with their sponsored surfers, which suggests that physical characteristics are important as evidenced by the following comment:

We’ve focused on identifying elite-level talent as young as possible and beginning sponsorship in early teen years with a view to developing long-term relationships. Experience has taught us that the best brand representatives are the individuals with whom we’ve worked with since their early teen years. (Company B).

Each company representative highlighted the importance of selecting the appropriate someone to represent the company image to enhance lifestyle marketing and brand promotion. The reason for earlier selection means that companies can achieve competitive advantage if they choose talented young surfers that will mature and enhance their future lifestyle marketing prospects. Applying Lessing’ (1991) concept of the group mind to the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of much younger female surfers, I see that belonging to a group or community of other ‘like-minded’ surfers would make it difficult to maintain an individual dissident opinion. These younger female surfers, seeking to identify with other female professional surfers and looking for sponsorship with one of the Big Three, would be easier to mould to company codes of behaviour and dress than more experienced surfers. Therefore, as my data indicates, surf companies do look for younger female surfers they can shape to suit the requirements of the company brand.
Theme 6 – Company Management Roles and Responsibilities

The general consensus amongst all companies was that for the sponsorship to be worthwhile, selecting the appropriate person was essential. The main person in this decision making process in all companies was the company representative or team manager. From a Foucauldian perspective, the company representative is in a position of power to determine who would appropriately represent the brand. For female surfers there is a continual struggle to maintain a gendered image for sponsorship and still be considered for their surfing ability. In order to attain or maintain sponsorship opportunities, female surfers constantly have to monitor themselves to ensure they comply with the dominant image requirements of the Big Three.

Company was another central concept located between surfing and surfers from analysis through Leximancer and refers to the management styles and role of team managers in the decision-making process regarding the sponsorship of female surfers. The company concept comprises eight concepts, including brand, image, free, company, sponsoring, sponsorship, competition and sponsored with all of these being indicated as of equal importance. Surf companies claim that effective team management is a priority to ensure that the authenticity gained from their historical beginnings as surf brands are maintained. All interviewed representatives were managers of both their company team riders and free or lifestyle female surfers. The role of team manager for each surf company incorporates other aspects of company involvement. Company A only recently employed a female manager to look after female surfers. The following three comments demonstrate the different team manager roles and responsibilities of each company:
This position [team manager] was created because there was a realisation that the girls needed to be handled differently. Also with numbers there was an overload on the men’s team manager to look after both. Competitively men and women need to be managed differently. We also manage a lot of girls who do not make the World Tour (Company A).

When I calculated the number of sponsored male surfers on Company A’s website, it was evident that they outnumbered sponsored females. Therefore not only are sponsored female surfers managed differently, they are also being sponsored differently. Researchers previously mentioned in Chapter 3 (Anderson, 2009; Brown, 2007; Cunningham, Doherty & Gregg, 2007; Pfister & Radtke, 2006) highlighted the fact that sponsorship decision making in a company that has predominately male corporate management or administrators can have implications for equal opportunities for women. Historically, the Big Three surf brands have been the leading sponsors of both events and surfers, and predominantly male-orientated and managed, which could impact on the sponsorship decisions made about female surfers (Heywood, 2008).

Company B had a business-like approach and made sure that both parties in the sponsorship process were considered:

The responsibilities primarily involve overseeing the administration of relationships that the company has with individuals the company financially sponsors. In simple terms, making sure the individuals are doing what they’re paid to do and similarly ensuring that the company is doing what it’s obliged to do (Company B).

Company B views sponsorship as a form of employment and, as such, surfers have responsibilities connected to their role within the company. The Company
C team manager’s role encompasses a variety of job responsibilities, as indicated in the following comment:

I do team managing and look after the girls along with a male member of staff. My job also includes some market research which involves design, marketing and sales, going out into the marketplace, following trends, getting feedback, taking photos and doing whatever the company needs me to do with different events also booking accommodation and flights, looking after contracts, signing up new surfers (Company C).

The central principle advocated by each company representative was that they support their surfers, whether male or female, although Company A did state that male and female surfers were managed differently. The companies all believed that their sponsorship arrangements are equitable and essential to uphold their business and company values. Yet the responses from female surfers suggested that this was not the case. Applying Foucault’s (1990) concept of panoptic control, my data suggests that with female surfers’ reliance on sponsors for clothing, equipment and funding for travel, the sponsoring company as well as the media still maintains the surveillance and control over the surfer.

The concept *free* appears frequently in the context of the *company* concept in the Leximancer concept map which has a couple of different connotations. My research identifies that one type of free refers to the provision of a *free service* to promote young up-and-coming female surfers through events such as *Billabong Girls Get Out There Day*, the *Roxy Surf Jam* and the *Rip Curl Girls Go Surfing Day*, as mentioned previously in Chapter 2. A common thread between each company’s ideologies was the importance of supporting and encouraging young female surfers through promotional days.
While attending these events, I observed notable enthusiasm on the part of company representatives and respective sponsored surfers and the impact these days had on beginner female surfers. I do agree that these events help promote a healthy lifestyle choice for young girls, however, the extensive use of company signage, giving away free products and the timing of these events – just before the Christmas season – suggests a major emphasis on brand promotion. In order to obtain free publicity, the surf companies engage their sponsored surfers as role models and coaches at the beginner surf days.

Another free promotional activity is team signing where professional female surfers sign autographs, pictures and surf branded articles at ‘learn to surf’ days and also at popular venues such as shopping centres to attract young female consumers. My data indicates that all three surf company representatives confirmed that involvement in sponsorship influences brand image and reputation by participating in events to provide free publicity for the company.

The terms and conditions of sponsorship to be a role model and take part in surf company activities has already been established throughout the analysis in Chapter 5. Participation in these activities is considered a responsibility and a normal expectation that comes with a sponsorship arrangement by sponsored surfers. However, in this instance, the Big Three are main beneficiaries of the free media exposure and attention gained by using the profiles of their sponsored female surfers and the opportunity to capture an enthusiastic market of young female surfers. From my observations, the beginner female surfers certainly enjoyed the interaction with high profile female surfers. However, the end result of these events is still about promotion of the surf brand and
influencing the opinion of young female surfers to promote those brands. The vast majority of money and income for competitive surfers come from sponsorship, not from prize money, so the surfers themselves become branded commodities. Applying the concepts of Lessing and Foucault to these young surfers who decide to take up a sponsorship with one of the Big Three, the implication is that in the sponsorship process, these surfers may lose some of their freedom or sense of personal identity as they conform to company requirements.

Another aspect of the concept free applied to the other category of sponsorship, free or lifestyle surfer. Company A has similar attitudes to Company C about the connection between their free or lifestyle surfers and their target market. The Company C representative believes that the lifestyle experiences portrayed through the media closely align with recreational surfer’s experiences, thus maintaining their authenticity as a core surf brand and assisting with their image:

Free surfers have an important role in our company, primarily in that the fact they do not compete affords them far more availability to represent our brand in magazine, film and website editorial exposure opportunities, which tend to focus more on free surfing and travel experiences that are more like the experiences of the vast majority of recreational surfers. As such, our free surfers act as connectors to our core market in different ways to our competition-focused team members (Company C).

Company A confirms the two different types of sponsorship on offer:

I think it’s about identifying qualities in their personality that are the right fit for us. There seems to be a really nice balance between the girls that are having fun and competing as juniors and then they tend to go one of
two ways either as a lifestyle or competitive surfer depending on either their performance or how they look (Company A).

My data confirms that both comments refer to the look required which again suggests the lack of freedom and the conformity undertaken in order to honour the sponsorship agreement. The following comments describe the varied role of individual team managers for these events by Company A and B respectively:

As team coordinator I look after the team on promotional trips, organise all the junior travel to the Pro-Junior events. Each girl has different requirements depending what level they are at. We also manage the image library, updating the profiles on the website (Company A).

Company A’s comments emphasise the value and importance of including female surfers in the marketing strategy to enhance the company image, especially via websites. Company B had very defined duties with regards to the management of sponsorship, and included the following:

- Ensuring that the company maintained a team list of elite-level individual surfers, snow-skiers, snowboarders, wakeboarders, skateboarders, etc., across the world in a range of age groups;
- Ensuring that any individual sponsored by the company understands their contractual obligations and responsibilities;
- Communicating the company annual marketing plans to the individuals they sponsor;
- Ensuring the individuals honour their contractual obligations and responsibilities and
- Providing career guidance/advice (Company B).

These duties accentuate the fact that sponsorship is a significant part of Company B’s business plan. Company C’s responsibilities include looking after a wide range of promotional activities as demonstrated in the following comment:
Part of my job is to look after all the girls’ marketing, budget and allocation of advertising, point of sale, team promotion and general promotions. For me there are quite few levels. We tend to look at the marketing spend as a split between product marketing which is very focused on the fashion product offer and sports marketing which is focused on our events, our athletes and our sponsorship of events or running of the events. We look at it in many ways but I manage all the girls’ marketing budget (Company C).

Responses from some female surfers indicated that the ‘marketing spend split’ mentioned above by Company C has not appeared to improve conditions for women’s surfing. Examples of utilising world champion surfers in the top fifteen such as Paige Hareb (Billabong); Stephanie Gilmore (previously sponsored by Rip Curl, currently sponsored by Quiksilver Women); Tyler Wright (Rip Curl) and Sophia Mulanovich (Roxy) to promote and endorse brand image and to achieve the look has been mentioned previously in the literature review. Unfortunately, the number of female surfers being sponsored by the Big Three is still relatively small in comparison to the men. Yet, high profile professional female surfers have improved the image and brand reputation of the Big Three.

The following comment by Company B provides an insight into the value of female surfers for the sponsoring company. Lifestyle marketing and sponsorship priorities for each surf company are to choose strategies that enhance company reputation and brand image. I argued in Chapter 3 that sport corporations such as Nike, Reebok and Adidas have recognised the popularity and potential of the women’s sport market and created new brands specifically for women. The popularity of using female athletes in company marketing strategies highlights a similar trend in lifestyle marketing by surf companies:
Sponsoring elite-level female surfers has always been this company’s priority for exactly the same reason that sponsoring elite-level male surfers has always been a priority – that is, sponsoring elite-level sports people can have a profoundly positive effect on brand image and product sales (Company B).

All company representatives claimed that the expectations of sponsorship and competitive surfing include an element of comradeship and fun. However, my data suggests that performance and a gendered look realistically have a greater influence on being who is offered the opportunity for, and continuation of, sponsorship agreements.

**Theme 7 – Lifestyle Sports as a Niche Consumer Market**

Reece (2009) confirms that surfing is one of those lifestyle sports that have “millions of enthusiastic followers which has helped create a niche consumer market” (p. 1). One major factor in the advancement of women’s surfing was the creation of women’s surfwear. Previously in Chapter 3, I noted claims by Booth (2001a) and Langford (2000) that surf wear was worn for both its signage value and attachment to a lifestyle. Likewise, research by Lanagan (2002) and Langford (2000) support this view and suggest that with the growing interest in the lifestyle marketing potential of female surfers, the look not only involves marketing to the core market of surfers but also to the mainstream fashion market. The popularity of marketing a look to cater for mainstream market has meant the introduction of lifestyle sponsorship, where recipients are not necessarily part of the surfing culture. Endo (2010), the surf editor of an online lifestyle magazine *The Inertia*, had an interview with Keala Kennelly, whose major sponsor is currently Billabong. Keala Kennelly described how
catering to the mainstream fashion market is impacting on sponsorship for female surfers:

Sometimes, women pro surfers that are more attractive get more sponsor dollars thrown their way over women that are better surfers who are not as physically attractive. What that keeps reinforcing in women is that it is more important to be beautiful than it is to have talent or skill or to be accomplished (Endo, 2010).

This remark confirms other comments by sponsored surfers and demonstrates an emphasis on looks over performance, and also highlights a preference for the stereotypical feminine appearance.

*Market*, the smallest of the concepts in the Leximancer concept map, but connected to *different* and incorporates *marketing and wear*, refers to the *different* consumer *markets*, namely the surfing and mainstream markets being catered for to enhance surf *brand* positioning. Company B believes their brand caters for the fashion market but more specifically, their focus is on the elite competitive market in surfwear and the provision of an authentic market for surfers and people who identify with this lifestyle. Company A and C representatives describe the link between surf culture and fashion in the following comments:

Girls in general their taste in clothes is driven by a combination of things not just being pigeonholed as the surf brand they want a surf fashion alternative. We see ourselves as a fusion of surf culture and fashion that’s what we believe our brand to be (Company A).

Sponsorship of individuals and other forms of advertising that we do allows us to target and reach different sectors of our market (Company C).
Arthur’s (2003) work also confirms that the Big Three have had to compete for media attention and shift away from a narrowly defined market catering to just surfers, and have now moved into a global fashion-based clothing industry. The shift to catering for a mainstream market has had implications on the type of sponsorship opportunities available particularly for female surfers. The data from surf company representatives substantiates previous research around this and identifies a link between the introduction of lifestyle marketing through the sponsorship of female surfers and an increase in brand reputation in the minds of both the surfing and fashion consumer market leading to greater brand loyalty towards the surf company and its products. This was evident in a comment by Company C representative about the necessity to incorporate sponsorship as a means of increasing marketability, image and profit margins:

The marketing is more about lifestyle these days and getting a little more into fashion (Company C).

The extent of product and brand positioning and amount of customer loyalty could therefore impact upon the decisions and activities in which a company decides to invest its resources, especially sponsorship, and highlights the panoptic power being exerted by the Big Three.

**Summary**

In summary, this chapter discussed interview data collected from representatives from Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy and analysed through the manual coding of interview data, verified through Leximancer to the examine the impact of lifestyle marketing by these companies on sponsored female surfers. I drew on a combination of Lessing’s concepts (1991) to analyse
the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship practices of the Big Three to determine whether the motivation behind sponsoring women included promoting them and improving their competitive condition or was just a strategy to profit from the marketing and promotion of images and products. My data suggest that even though conditions have improved over the years, female surfers still conform to what is considered ‘feminine’ and acceptable so they can gain sponsorship and support for their careers. In other words, in the context of a male dominated surfing industry, even though some of the current generation of female surfers are using their sexuality to their economic advantage my data indicates that based on the experiences of female surfers in this study, conditions are less than favourable: female surfers have a limited number of surfing competitions and opportunities for sponsorship compared to male surfers. Foucault’s emphasis on studying the ‘experiences’ of subjects to help understand the construction of individual identities was useful as I examined the lifestyle marketing practices and philosophies of Big Three. In addition, the application of Foucault’s (1983) notion of panopticism and the power implied through surveillance was useful in examining the different forms of power being exerted by the Big Three in the sponsorship process. Foucault’s acknowledgement that the mechanisms of power could not be studied apart from the mechanisms of exploitation and domination provide a lens to determine whether the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers was beneficial to the promotion of women’s surfing.

This chapter presented the results and discussion in relation to the motivation, selection criteria and philosophy behind the sponsorship of female surfers by these three companies. The consistent reference to the ‘look’ in the
concept maps illustrates the significance of individual image and reputation for each company. The close proximity of image, brand and sponsorship to this concept signifies their connection to the opportunity to enhance lifestyle marketing through the use of images of sponsored female surfers. By far the most frequently occurring concepts were: surfing, company, girls, surfers, events, different and market indicating the importance of the girls [female surfers] in the marketing strategies of each company and the connection to the sponsorship of different surfing events.

The sponsorship of surfing events and surfers was indicated by company representatives as a method to enhance consumer interest and spending, which leads to improved brand image and popularity. An emphasis was placed on the importance of strategically managing female surfers, both in terms of media positioning and to choose appropriate representatives of the brand. This analysis reveals the varied differences in management practices between the Big Three. Finally, the frequent presence of the concept word girls in close proximity to terms identified the various differences in the conditions of contractual obligations and responsibilities between the Big Three and sponsored female surfers.

The final chapter reviews the purpose of this thesis and the extent to which the results supported the expectations explicitly contained in the objectives and research findings presented in chapters 5 and 6. It also outlines the practical and theoretical implications of my study. It concludes by providing some direction for future research that will assist in gaining a greater understanding of the position of women in professional surfing, and help to raise the profile and improve conditions for women in the sport.
Chapter 7: Summary and Implications

Introduction

This ethnographic study investigated the impact of lifestyle marketing on female surfers who are currently, or have previously been, sponsored by Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy. In my work, I have used the theories of Foucault (1979) and Lessing (1991) to ‘make waves’ and examine the experiences of sponsorship by the Big Three in the current generation of female surfers. In the surfing context, this study examined whether female surfers constantly undergo self-examination and surveillance, and even self-policing to ensure they comply with the dominant image requirements of the Big Three to obtain and maintain sponsorship opportunities. An interpretive ethnographic approach was used to collect data because it was the most appropriate method to examine and give voice to the subjective experiences of female surfers. The methodology placed women at the centre of the analysis and challenged taken-for-granted values and norms that are perpetuated by surf companies and the media in the male dominated sport of surfing. In summarising my work, I return to the research purpose, which was to: determine the impact of lifestyle marketing by Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy, on sponsored female surfers. I also reiterate the three research objectives, which were to:

1. explore the lifestyle marketing experiences of sponsored female surfers;
2. analyse the lifestyle marketing practices of Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy and
3. examine the impact of lifestyle marketing through sponsorship by the Big Three on sponsored female surfers to determine whether it is
beneficial to the general advancement of women's competitive surfing.

Over the decades, women's surfing has experienced waves of change where female participation has increased yet has been constrained by male domination and a gendered surf media focus. The progress of women's surfing especially at a professional level has certainly improved with the Big Three companies offering young aspiring female surfers opportunities for international exposure and to compete on the ASP World Tour. Yet the continued media focus on sexualised images of female surfers coupled with a sponsored promotion that strongly favours male competitive surfing devalues women's surfing performance and reduces opportunities for equitable sponsorship. In what follows, I discuss how this study addressed each research objective and then outline the practical and theoretical implications and conclude by providing some direction for future research.

**Summary of Key Findings**

**Research Objective 1**

In this study, to address the first objective, I explored the lifestyle marketing experiences of fifteen sponsored female surfers. My data suggested that lifestyle marketing by the Big Three through sponsorship provides a limited number of female surfers with opportunities to compete on the professional surfing circuit. Female surfers who have not been successful in obtaining a major sponsor or have had their sponsorship withdrawn by one of the Big Three, found affordability in maintaining their equipment and travel to varying locations around the world for surfing competitions problematic. A substantial
number of female surfers who are ranked in the top twenty in the world still struggle for financial support through sponsorship.

My study found there was a relationship between the extent of media coverage of female surfers, the type of media representation and sponsorship opportunities. This study highlighted that the media coverage of female surfers continues to represent a sexualised image that diminishes their surfing ability. Furthermore, the inequitable surfing conditions and disparity in prize money available for females, compared to males, suggests that male dominance in the sport prevails. Foucault’s (1988) theoretical and substantive ideas about surveillance and technologies of the self helped to construct an understanding about resistance and how female surfers problematise the discourses of femininity within the surfing culture when faced with the attitudes of the mainstream majority.

By applying Lessing’s (1991) concepts to the surfing context, I found that the terms and conditions of a sponsorship agreement or contract by the Big Three served as a form of surveillance over female surfers. From a Foucauldian perspective, I conclude that the Big Three are in a position of power to determine who would appropriately represent the brand. This places female surfers in a disempowered position as they continue to struggle to maintain an appropriate gendered image to gain sponsorship. In order to fulfil the sponsorship requirements of surf companies, female surfers undergo self-surveillance and compliance as the surfer, per se, becomes ‘the branded’ in terms of endorsing company products. The main point of difference regarding equity between female and male surfers is that the criteria for sponsorship selection is gendered and based on their physical appearance, whereas for
men it is centred more on surfing performance. I argued in Chapter 2 that the shift in media focus to position female surfers as sexual objects devalued their surfing performance and capability. As a result, female surfers are perceived as ‘less skilled’ than their male counterparts, which in turn, continues to hinder a viable female professional circuit. My study revealed that while a select number of female surfers have been able to utilise their physical appearance, sex appeal, personality or a combination of all three to gain financial benefits or been provided with company endorsed products through sponsorship. However, the drawback is that it is sponsorship driven within a male dominated system that continues to construct what is feminine and appealing. The surveillance being undertaken by surf companies and the media necessitates female surfers to scrutinise their appearance, dress and behaviour at surfing competitions and events to secure media attention and maintain sponsorship.

This becomes more problematic when sponsorship of the ASP World Tour surfing events is currently dominated by the Big Three companies. This distinctive difference compared to other sports compels aspiring surfers to seek sponsorship predominantly from one of the Big Three companies. However, this study indicated that the limited opportunities available from these companies have forced female surfers to seek sponsorship from companies outside the surfing industry. When applying Lessing’s (1991) concepts and a third wave perspective to the sponsorship and lifestyle marketing of female surfers, it became apparent that it is possible for them, particularly for the current Generation Y surfers, to stand up “against the prevailing tide of opinion” (p. 54), and resist.
Research Objective 2

To address objective 2, I examined the lifestyle marketing practices of the Big Three. This study emphasised that the lifestyle marketing strategy found to be most effective was to sponsor female surfers who have the attributes that enhance brand image, reputation and authenticity. The four attributes found to be most highly regarded in the sponsorship selection process of female surfers by the Big Three were surfing ability, an appropriate look or image, an engaging personality and an ability to communicate effectively in public. However, an appropriate look or image was clearly the most preferred. The combined analogy of the prison by Foucault (1979) and Lessing (1991) was useful in highlighting the control being engaged in by the Big Three that select surfers and surfing events for sponsorship. The selection criteria for sponsorship and the constant surveillance of female surfers by consumers, the media and the Big Three surf companies in the sponsorship process, places pressure on them to conform to a gendered appearance.

This study found that surfing is unique in comparison to other sports because industry-specific companies still dominate the commercial activities and sponsorship of major surfing events and surfers. Lifestyle marketing in this context is unique because unlike other mainstream sports, sponsorship is primarily dominated by the Big Three. This allows the surf companies to leverage their clothing lines and surfing accessories, not only to the surfing consumer, but to the broader mainstream fashion market. Lifestyle marketing strategies adopted by the Big Three include the use of visual images of surf company logos, slogans and the images of male and female surfers in magazines, on surf company websites and on social networking sites which
enhance brand reputation and engage consumer interest. The marketing characteristics considered common amongst the Big Three were to: maintain authenticity of the brand support the sport of surfing and promote their individual brand and support younger female surfers through promotional activities. Sponsorship was also perceived as a form of work or employment and, as such, surveillance and objectification is part of their job. For surf companies, it is not just surveillance in a derogatory sense but a search for recognition and advantage in a very competitive sport and fashion market.

As a result, the Big Three only sponsor brand ambassadors, both male and female, who represent the values of the company and respect the company image. The Big Three generally saw value in using female surfers in advertising and media advertising because they appealed to the female consumer group. By applying Lessing’s (1991) notion of conformity, it became obvious that the financial benefits of lifestyle marketing for female surfers have been restricted to those who fit the required image as mandated, both explicitly and implicitly, by the surf companies. Furthermore, the commercialisation of the surfing industry has encouraged the continued use of sexualised images of sponsored female surfers to sell products, which has increase profits for the companies. Even though women’s position in professional surfing has improved, I conclude that the sponsorship strategies of the Big Three serve to disempower female surfers as they choose and accept the group mindset which reinforces the gendered nature of surfing.

My initial presumption was that women’s professional surfing had improved, especially in light of all the media attention and compared to what I had experienced when I surfed competitively. My examination of the Sweeney
Report (2009/2010) indicated that women’s surfing has doubled in the last ten years and is the fastest growing sector of the sport/lifestyle market. This encouraged me to believe that conditions must have therefore improved. My study confirmed that the status and recognition of the current generation of professional surfers has certainly improved but female surfers are still being valued more for their marketability. My study revealed that the Big Three believed that using female surfers in their marketing strategies was beneficial to them and the female surfers. Yet, the experiences of surfers who had lost their sponsorship to younger, more attractive female surfers, who were considered more appropriate to represent the surf company image, contradicts this view. It could be argued that attractive female surfers were benefitting from sponsorship. Yet, as Cori Schumacher indicated in Chapter 1, to acquire sponsorship, female surfers have to “have no views and be somebody who is basically a blank billboard upon which a brand can assert their image” (Weisburg, 2011, para 13). Using Lessing’s (1991) concept of conformity and Foucault’s (1990) technologies of the self, this statement indicates that apart from their physical appearance, a female surfer seeking sponsorship would have to be content to conform and take on any image requirements expected. This provided a useful framework to understand that the surf companies only provide a limited number of sponsorship opportunities for female surfers.

The media interest in the lifestyle marketing of female surfers has encouraged the Big Three to use female surfers in their marketing strategy because it impacts favourably on their company image and reputation. In a commercial context, business decisions and equity do not always co-exist when constrained by company budgets. Thus an increase in support for women’s
surfing may not be a top priority. The commercial imperatives of the Big Three have created challenges for those female surfers who have the surfing ability but not the necessary physical attributes that will encourage sponsorship and media attention. Although the Big Three surf companies are attempting to position themselves in the mainstream fashion market through the application of lifestyle marketing practices, it is arguable that the consumption of surf-specific and related products by women constitutes a change in attitude towards support for women in surfing.

**Research Objective 3**

To address objective 3, I analysed whether the impact of lifestyle marketing on female surfers through sponsorship by the Big Three is beneficial to the general advancement of women’s competitive surfing. The information obtained from the female surfers interviewed in this study highlights that the lack of sustained sponsorship by Billabong, Rip Curl and Quiksilver/Roxy has reduced the number of women’s events which has in turn impacted on the earning opportunities of female professional surfers. I have indicated that the strategy of lifestyle marketing used by the Big Three has certainly raised the profile of women’s surfing and given it a stronger public presence. However, the belief by surf companies that they support women’s surfing is in contrast to the barriers that prevent female surfers from obtaining sponsorship. It was evident throughout the study that the introduction and incorporation of female surfers in the lifestyle marketing process provided a niche marketing strategy and opportunity for the Big Three. This study emphasised that the lifestyle marketing of female surfers resulted in benefits for surf companies such as increased product sales, improved image, brand reputation and financial benefits. I found
that the female surfers who obtained sponsorship from any of the Big Three benefitted through exposure and profiling in the media and on surf-related websites. Hence, the important issue here is that only a limited number earn a lucrative living from the sport. While the lifestyle marketing of female surfers, from the perspective of the Big Three surf companies, was seen as a reciprocal process rather than a form of exploitation, female surfers had scant experience of this type of reciprocity. Foucault’s (1977) and Lessing’s concepts of surveillance and conformity used in the context of surfing highlighted the control being exerted by the media and surf companies that focus on a heterosexual, feminine appearance which devalues female surfer’s performance and promotes women’s surfing as a fashion for consumption. In addition, surf companies claim that the current economic conditions have made it difficult to legitimise additional funding being funneled into sponsorship initiatives for women. In my study I found that this view contradicts the significant amount of prize money available for men competing on the ASP World Tour. The unequal lifestyle marketing and sponsorship decisions made by the Big Three impact significantly on the number of opportunities available for female surfers and, at this time in history, negatively affects the general advancement of women’s surfing.

In conclusion, I argue that the level of self-surveillance and compliance being engaged in by female surfers to gain sponsorship highlights a continuation of the gendered image required to maintain or acquire sponsorship. I used the Lessing and Foucault to interpret my data and I concluded that the position of women in the surfing culture continues to be immersed in patriarchal gender-powered relations that are prevalent in many
institutionalised forms of sport. Claims by the sport media that women who engage in extreme sports such as surfing may provide a fertile ground for societal change, personal transformation and a more egalitarian acceptance of women is still to be proven. As argued previously in the literature review, on the one hand the Big Three surf brands have the financial power and influence to select and shape female surfers’ identities to meet their lifestyle marketing objectives. However, on the other hand this type of influence does not equate to improved conditions for women’s surfing. In the following concluding section I discuss the four implications that could be implemented from my study.

**Practical Implications**

I argue that this research has been successful in drawing attention to the lifestyle marketing experiences of sponsored female surfers by the Big Three. My findings, based on the experiences of fifteen sponsored female surfers and supported by observation, field notes and document analysis that included the analysis of visual material represented in magazines, newspapers, surf-related websites and DVDs, confirmed the need for more equitable support from the ASP. A four year study of Fortune 500 companies by the Commission on the Future of Women’s Sport (2008) illustrated that those companies who had a high proportion of women on the Board showed markedly better financial performance than those with the lowest representation. The Fortune 500 study clearly indicated that the issue of better gender balance in senior decision making roles is pertinent to any sector, including sport, where decisions may add value to an organisation or company. Therefore, the first practical implication of my study would be to include a balanced male and female ASP
Board membership and more senior female management staff within the Big Three surf companies to ensure that the advancement of women's surfing is on their agenda.

The International Women's Surfing (IWS) organization has been responsible for lobbying for improved conditions for the women's professional tour through the promotion of stand-alone women's events to enhance sponsorship dollars and media coverage. The IWS was responsible for applying pressure on the ASP to sanction more women-only events instead of combining with the men's competition. The findings in this thesis indicate that competitive surfing conditions and media coverage for women have improved especially with the current generation of surfers like Stephanie Gilmore and Sally Fitzgibbons promoting the skill, finesse and subtle beauty of the women's events. As previously mentioned, the IWS also confirms that stand-alone contests for professional female surfers competing in the World Championship Tour (WCT) provides more media exposure, better surfing conditions and narrows the gap in parity with the men. Therefore, a second implication would be for the IWS to maintain and improve upon its level of support and influence in the decision-making process connected to the women's professional surfing circuit and develop new strategies to legitimise additional funding being funnelled into sponsorship initiatives for women.

Another factor that is impacting on female surfers is the increased interest by other sports brands such as Nike, Red Bull, Mountain Dew and Boost Mobile, who have predominantly sponsored only traditional team sports. These brands are realising the potential in utilising high profile surfers in their marketing strategies to improve their company image, enhance sales and
connect with the new Generation Y group of consumers. This trend has implications for female surfers who may not have realised the possibilities of sponsorship outside the surf industry. Hence, the third implication for the young generation of female surfers is to not limit their opportunities for sponsorship to only the Big Three companies and to be aware and take control of their futures by being proactive in the direction of their sport and voicing their concerns to the ASP and industry.

The biggest future challenge for the Big Three will be to balance their desire to infiltrate the mainstream fashion market whilst maintaining their authenticity to a captive demographic market of core surfers. This challenge requires making appropriate commercial decisions regarding the distribution of sponsorship funding to female surfers and women’s surfing events in order to maintain customer brand loyalty and reputation. The fourth implication for surf companies is to find the right balance between sound commercial business practice and equity, and pursue strategies that capitalise on developing corporate relationships with non-surf-related brands to enhance profits. Perhaps there is a strategy to work closely with female surfers and build stronger relationships and nurture the future development of women in the sport. This strategy will need to encompass a plan that will manage these surfers in terms of positioning in the media, to enhance both company image and reputation and commercial viability, while at the same time supporting women’s surfing. I argue that the difficulty for surf companies, especially in the present economic climate, will be to continue to build brand awareness and presence, both effectively and efficiently so they can remain commercially viable. An implication for female surfers is to be aware of the impact that lifestyle marketing through sponsorship
can have on them personally and of any outcomes that may not improve the conditions for all female surfers.

**Theoretical Implications**

There have been studies written about the sport of surfing and women within the surfing culture. However, this study appears to be the first to examine the emerging and growing phenomenon that is the lifestyle marketing of female surfers by the Big Three using the combined concepts of Lessing and Foucault. In addition, this research contributes to the developing lifestyle marketing and sport literature by identifying that surfing companies like the Big Three, similar to other sporting brands such as Nike and Reebok, have transformed their product-focused company into a lifestyle brand. By engaging in a lifestyle marketing strategy that has taken advantage of the attractiveness and popularity of female surfers, the Big Three have successfully extended their product range beyond their original product category and commanded a larger consumer base not necessarily connected to the subculture of surfing. This study then reinforces the success of lifestyle marketing in the surfing context.

Despite the success of lifestyle marketing campaigns that has resulted in an increase in the sales of female surfwear and innovations in consumer fashion for the Big Three, professional female surfers still find difficulty in securing adequate sponsorship. Lessing’s (1991) concept of conformity and Foucault's (1979) notion of panopticism and technologies of the self has been an ideal analytical tool to problematise the processes of lifestyle marketing through sponsorship of female surfers and to challenge and transform my thinking and understanding about the impact of the Big Three and the media in this process. Foucault's concept of self-surveillance also contributes to an
appreciation that lifestyle marketing and the interplay of power by surf companies and resistance by female surfers is complex. The theoretical perspectives of Lessing and Foucault are also well-suited to this study in that they highlight the paradox between the idealised feminine image required to be selected for sponsorship in surfing – such as young, blonde and tanned compared to the strong, muscular, athlete bodies required to be successful in the sport of surfing. Female surfers are being surveilled or are objects of the gaze by surf companies, the media and both the surfing and mainstream consuming public. Looking through the lens of Lessing and Foucault, I perceive female surfers to hold the least amount of power in the sponsorship relationship as they are considered replaceable commodities. However, even though female surfers are rendered powerless in this regime, surf companies too are faced with difficulties in the selection process of appropriate surfers to represent their brand in an economical way that will enhance brand promotion.

Unlike many other sports, internal, surfing-specific companies still dominate the commercial activities and events connected to surfing and tend to be more concerned about the future of surfing. As described by Ford and Brown (2006), the reality is that surf sponsors may be concerned about the future of surfing, but whether they are internal or external sponsors they do not appear to be having an impact on transforming or creating equitable conditions for female surfers. Therefore any resistance for social change by female surfers has been minimal. Even though women have infiltrated the male-dominated surfing sphere and some structural changes have occurred, it is contradictory to claim that there is equity or significant change to the top down processes of corporate exploitation and commodification (Edwards & Corte, 2010) for female surfers.
Based on the findings of this thesis, it can be argued that there are identified factors in the process of lifestyle marketing that influence female surfer’s decisions about how they represent themselves for sponsorship. Being sponsored and endorsing the latest surfing apparel and actively representing themselves as strong, fit and muscular does not necessarily serve as a practice of freedom from the limitations of current feminine identity within the subculture of surfing. This is not to say that there are several influential female surfers who are challenging the gender order and contesting surfing conditions for women especially the current Generation Y surfers. The findings from this study suggest that Generation Y women are consciously and critically changing and improving their bodies for their own benefit and empowerment rather than just to appease surf company requirements. If this is the case, then they are problematising their own position, which can impact on the way the fit feminine body is being constructed in the surfing subculture. Therefore, Lessing’s notion of conformity and Foucault’s technology of self have been useful to understand that self-awareness and empowerment by female surfers can have an impact on the image being presented to society, and perhaps alter preconceived notions of femininity which may improve competitive surfing conditions and sponsorship for women.

Taking Lessing’s (1991) perspective into account, female surfers have a choice: they can play an active role in producing their own surfing identities and subjectivities or they can choose to live inside the prison they build for themselves. This study can be added to other research about sport and women where the dominant discourse of gender and inequity still exists. In order for female surfers to transform their thinking they need to create opportunities and
as Lessing argues, “question the limitations of one’s freedom” (p. 101) rather than merely coping with the current unequal competitive conditions, especially in comparison to male surfers. This means going against a tide of conformity, which is problematic when sponsorship means opportunity for success. As such, this study has extended and challenged existing knowledge about the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship of female surfers, which may have implications for further research surrounding women in other lifestyle and action sports.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there has been an increase in literature regarding surveillance, especially after the September 11 attacks in the United States of America. This study contributes to the knowledge of surveillance in the surfing and sporting context. It could alter the previously held assumption that female surfers are ‘riding a wave’ of improved surfing conditions, promotion and sponsorship. Moreover, my study increases awareness about the continuing inequities within the surfing culture and could stimulate new discussions and provide a platform for further research into the advancement and potential of women’s surfing. In this way, my study has not only added new knowledge to the lifestyle marketing and sport literature, but will hopefully enlighten female surfers about the fact that they can be empowered to make informed decisions regarding their sponsorship.

There are still many issues regarding gender inequity in surfing and sponsorship that need to be explored so that women’s surfing can reach its fullest potential. The following section discusses the implications for future research.
Recommendations for Future Research

In order to develop a deeper understanding about the complexities surrounding surfing as a competitive sport, three recommendations for future research are made. The findings suggest that the ASP is considered to be a contributing factor in the slow progress of women’s competitive surfing. While the research occupied a substantial period (4 years) and was predominantly based on interviews of sponsored female surfers and industry representatives supported by multiple data sources, it did not examine the opinions of representatives from the main surfing organising body, the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP). The first recommendation would be to investigate the practices and aspirations of the ASP regarding the future promotion and support of female surfers. This could help raise awareness about the issues discussed in this thesis. In the current economic climate there are a number of non-surf-related companies already demonstrating interest in the sponsorship of female surfers. A second recommendation is to investigate the intentions of non-surf-related companies to gauge and determine the extent of their business interests in women’s surfing. Finally, there has been a significant increase in the use of surf-related websites and social networking sites as marketing strategies by surf companies. Future research examining the impact of modern technology would be meaningful as women’s surfing and other action/lifestyle sports continue to source methods for promotion and growth.

Conclusion

The research objectives posed in this study do not lend themselves to straightforward conclusions. An interpretive ethnography that engages in
gaining a deeper understanding of the lifestyle marketing and sponsorship experiences of female surfers will raise many new questions as it provides answers. As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, it was not my intention to try and emancipate, empower or even offer any solutions to the issues surrounding women’s surfing sponsorship, especially by the Big Three. Rather, it was my intent was to create awareness to highlight the continued gendered power differences in the surfing subculture.

Furthermore, in my conclusion I take into consideration that my study is limited to the experiences of fifteen sponsored female surfers, and only three surf companies, and that the sponsorship experiences of female surfers being interviewed may vary considerably depending on their generational views and perspectives. Therefore, similar to other ethnographic research, the views of the participants and the locations used as data collection sites in this study cannot be ultimately generalised to other locations, areas or cultural settings. In addition, I was aware of my constantly shifting position as both female researcher, active surfer, which included my ‘partial insider’ relationship within the surfing industry, and how these roles impacted upon my observations and the analysis. As I have previously stated, the analysis and interpretation of data presented in this study is based on my own epistemological and ontological positioning.

To conclude, lifestyle marketing through sponsorship does impact on the level of self-surveillance and social agency being engaged in by female surfers. The findings have been framed within Lessing’s (1991) concept of conformity and Foucault’s (1979) notion of panopticism and technologies of the self. Using the lens of these theorists, the findings indicate that the position of women in
the surfing culture is still immersed in patriarchal gender-powered relations that are prevalent in nearly all institutional forms of sport. The argument that women engaging in extreme sports, such as surfing, may provide a fertile ground for societal change, personal transformation and for more egalitarian acceptance of women is still to be proven. Female surfers continue to struggle to maintain the image and look required to obtain sponsorship and enhance their future prospects in the sport. The Big Three surf brands have the power and influence to select and shape female surfers’ profiles to meet their lifestyle marketing objectives. In this way, only select surfers who possess the desired ‘look’ and ‘image’ determined by the Big Three will be chosen regardless of performance. I argue that female surfers are feeling pressure to adopt and maintain a certain look to obtain financial support and sponsorship from the Big Three. This presents a conundrum. On one hand there is exploitation of female athletes by sport companies, which can be disempowering, yet on the other hand, it can give women a certain amount of bargaining power depending on how their actions influence their identities. However, despite the Big Three’s marketing strategies to promote surfing for girls and women, the widespread practice of ‘branding’ female surfers or non-surfing models with company product while depicted in sexualised poses to attract the male gaze does little to promote women’s surfing ability.

The findings from this thesis will not ultimately bring about significant change to the nature of sponsorship for women, but it will initiate some awareness about the impact of lifestyle marketing on female surfer’s, and as Heywood (2007) writes, “help girls recognise their embeddedness in the culture, the way it shapes their lives, and what agency they do have to resist it” (p. 112).
There are choices to be made by female surfers. They can be victims of commercialisation and continue to be portrayed as sexual objects, or they can participate in active resistance to deflect more attention to their abilities as professional athletes. If they choose the latter, it will allow women to make waves and ride them into a new era of gender equity in the sport of surfing.
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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Surf-related Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Country of Production</th>
<th>Web Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roxy</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td><a href="http://au.roxy.com/">http://au.roxy.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiksilver Women</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td><a href="http://womens.quiksilver.com/">http://womens.quiksilver.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curl Magazine</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td><a href="http://www.curl.co.nz/">http://www.curl.co.nz/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aspworldtour.com/">http://www.aspworldtour.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfing Queensland</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td><a href="http://www.surfingqueensland.com/">http://www.surfingqueensland.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfing Australia</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td><a href="http://www.surfingaustralia.com/">http://www.surfingaustralia.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and the Waves</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thewomenandthewaves.com">www.thewomenandthewaves.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from *Boarders, Babes and Bad-Asses: Theories of Female Physical Youth Culture* (pp. 50, 51 & 52) by H. Thorpe, 2007, Unpublished Thesis, New Zealand: University of Waikato.
## Appendix B: Surf-related Magazines, Newspapers and DVDs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine Title</th>
<th>Country of Production</th>
<th>Years Analyzed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curl: Girls Lifestyle Magazine</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>2007 - 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfing Life</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2007 - 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Longboarder Magazine</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2007 - 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surf life for Women</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>2006 - 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC Surf</td>
<td>Gold Cast, Australia</td>
<td>2007 - 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper Title</th>
<th>Country of Production</th>
<th>Years Analyzed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Gold Coast Bulletin</td>
<td>Queensland, Australia</td>
<td>2006 - 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Courier Mail</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2006 - 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Australian</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2006 - 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine Coast Daily</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DVD Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Production Company</th>
<th>Country of Production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aqua Dulce</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Bryan Ingraham in association with Bruno Productions</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Women and the Waves</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Graciegirl/Swell Pictures Production</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Surfer's Journal Biographies Greats of Women's Surfing</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Opper Sports productions</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Rip</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>A Burnt toast/Katz Eye Production</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear &amp; Yonder</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Villa Villa Cola Productions Woodshed Films</td>
<td>America, Filmed in Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from *Boarders, Babes and Bad-Asses: Theories of Female Physical Youth Culture* (pp. 50, 51 & 52) by H. Thorpe, 2007, Unpublished Thesis, New Zealand: University of Waikato.
Appendix C: Female Sponsored Surfer Consent Form & Questionnaire

Riding the Crest of a Sponsorship Wave: Lifestyle marketing of sponsored female surfers

PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

Who is conducting the research: Name(s) Roslyn Franklin

School(s) EPS

Contact: Phone 07 55528717

0417789019

Contact Email: r.franklin@griffith.edu.au

Reasons for the research

I am completing a PhD research project for Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus. The general purpose of this research is to generate data that will be used to understand and explore how feminine identity is formed through participation in surfing and how surf companies shape that identity through both sponsorship and surfing company organised events. I am therefore interested in finding out about your experiences in either how you participate in surfboard riding or to what extent you are involved in sponsorship.

What you will be asked to do

I would like you to complete a 15 minute questionnaire concerning your participation experiences and involvement in surfing.

With your permission I would like you to participate in a follow-up interview or teleconference if you are willing and available. The interview would consist of a few questions to add clarity to data already collected and would be conducted at a place convenient to you or perhaps via email or teleconference.

I look forward to having you join in the project

The expected benefits of the research

Data generated from this research will investigate:

historical factors that have shaped female surf culture?

motives behind organised events and promotion of female surfers by the larger surfing companies;

how branding and sponsorship practices by Billabong, Rip Curl and Roxy shape the way female surfers are promoted to the public; and
whether branding and sponsorship by surf companies assists in raising the profile of women’s surfing.

This study will also address the recognised need for raising the profile and promotion of girls in the sport of surfing.

**Risks to you**

I have considered the risk factors involved in your participation in this project and have taken the following steps:

- I will protect your identity. (see “Confidentiality” section below)
- I will offer a supportive environment during the questionnaire, interview and focus group period and can offer further support and debriefing if required.

**Your confidentiality**

All information gathered will be confidential. Your anonymity will be assured. Your name will only be on the questionnaire if you wish to be contacted to participate in a follow up interview or focus group. If you agree to participate in a focus group or interview your name will not be used in any documentation after that point. Only the researcher and PhD supervisor will have access to information for research and analysis.

**Voluntary participation**

All participants are assured that their decision to participate in the project is completely voluntary and your decision will not impact upon their relationship with Griffith University. Participants are also assured that they can withdraw their consent to be interviewed or take part in a focus group at any time without comment or penalty. Obviously it would be problematic for a person to withdraw their consent for research where the data is de-identified and no code key is available to the researchers.

**Questions / further information**

If at any time you would like to contact me to further discuss any issues I am available at:

r.franklin@griffith.edu.au

School of Education and Professional Studies

Griffith University

5552 8717

**The ethical conduct of this research**

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project you can contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3875 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

**Feedback to you**

Later in the project you will be given the option to meet again to discuss the outcomes of the research so far.
Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at www.gu.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 3875 5585.

CONSENT FORM

Research Member

Name   Roslyn Franklin
School   EPS
Contact Phone 07 55528717
Contact Email r.franklin@griffith.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular that:

I understand that my involvement in this research will include asking a short questionnaire and a possible follow up interview or focus group;

I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;

I understand the risks involved;

I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research (this may need to be modified for some projects);

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;

I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research person;

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the interview at any time, without comment or penalty;

I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3875 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and

I agree to participate in the project.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

I would like to participate in an individual interview/teleconference yes/no

I give my permission for excerpts to be used in academic and research situations and I understand my identity will remain anonymous on these excerpts: yes/no

Name

Signature

Date   /   /
Riding the Crest of a Sponsorship Wave: Lifestyle marketing of sponsored female surfers

Name: _______________________
Birthdate: ____________________
Country of birth: _______________
Address: _______________________
Phone: _______________________
Ethnic background: ______________
Email: _________________________

This information is confidential and will only be used to contact participants for follow up interview. You will remain anonymous unless you give permission to use your name later on. You can withdraw from the project at any time by notifying Ros Franklin.

MAIL TO: r.franklin@griffith.edu.au

Or

POST TO: Girls in Surfing PhD, C/- Ros Franklin, School of Education & Professional Studies, Griffith University, PMB 50 GCMC, QLD,9726 OR FAX TO (07) 55528167
Lifestyle Marketing of Female Surfers Questionnaire

1. How old were you when you started surfing?

2. Does anyone else in your family surf?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   If yes who?

3. Who was the person that influenced you the most to start surfing?

4. What age were you when you received your first sponsorship?

5. How did you get your first sponsorship and what were you required to do to keep the sponsorship (your obligations to the company)?

6. Are you still sponsored by the same company?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   If not what happened and who is your major sponsor now?

7. Are you sponsored by anyone else, if so who by?
   □ Yes
   □ No

8. What kind of support do you get from your sponsor/s?

9. What are the expectations of your sponsor/s? For example, do you have to maintain a certain image when at contests, take part in promotional activities, photo shoots etc.

10. Does your sponsor have any specific guidelines or training for their sponsored female surfers eg to effectively help you take part in media interviews and photographic shoots?
    □ Yes
    □ No
    If yes, what type of training do you receive?
11. What are the expectations for you to keep and maintain your sponsorship?

12. Do you know anyone who has had their sponsorship terminated?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   If yes, why did that happen?

13. Do you think your sponsor is committed to promoting and improving the image of women’s surfing? If so, what are their main goals to achieve this?

14. Do the women and girls on the tour generally feel supported and promoted by the surfing industry?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   If no, do you think this is going to improve and how?

15. Do you think women’s surfing is being adequately supported and promoted by the media especially compared to the men’s tour?

16. Do you think the prize money for the women’s tour will ever get to a point where it is equal to the men?

17. Can you give your opinion about how the ASP World Tour needs to change or improve to make it sustainable for both men and women in the future?

18. What do you think is the future for competitive surfing generally?

Thank you very much for participating in this research project!
Appendix D: Surf Company Representative Letter & Initial Questions

Riding the Crest of a Sponsorship Wave: Lifestyle marketing of sponsored female surfers

Dear Surf Company Representative,

I am completing a PhD research project for Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus. At present very little research has been done in the area of surfing and in particular female surfing. The general purpose of this research is to generate data that will be used to understand and explore and describe the experiences of sponsorship on both elite Australian female surfers and surfing companies. Specifically the research addressed one main objective: to examine the relationship between lifestyle marketing by Billabong, Rip Curl and Roxy and sponsored female surfers; and three subsidiary objectives as follows:

1. Gain insight into the lived lifestyle marketing experiences of sponsored female surfers;
2. Explore the lifestyle marketing practices of Billabong, Rip Curl and Roxy; and
3. Examine the relationship between female surfers and lifestyle marketing by the Big Three to determine whether it is beneficial to both parties.

I am therefore interested in finding out about sponsorship arrangements for female surfers within your company. This study will also address the recognised need for raising the profile and promotion of girls in the sport of surfing.

Risks to you

I have considered the risk factors involved in your participation in this project and have taken the following steps:

I will protect your identity. (see “Confidentiality” section below)

I can offer further support and provide the results of research data collected if required.

Your confidentiality

All information gathered will be confidential. Your anonymity will be assured. If you agree to allow participation in the questionnaire your name will not be used, unless permission is given, in any documentation after that point. Only the researcher and PhD supervisor will have access to information for research and analysis.

Voluntary participation

All participants are assured that their decision to participate in the project is completely voluntary and their decision will not impact upon their relationship with Griffith University. Participants are also assured that they can withdraw their consent to participate in the questionnaire or be interviewed at any time without comment or penalty. Obviously it would be problematic for a person to withdraw their consent for
research where the data is de-identified and no code key is available to the researchers.

Questions / further information

If at any time you would like to contact me to further discuss any issues I am available at:

r.franklin@griffith.edu.au

School of Education and Professional Studies

Griffith University

5552 8717

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on the Ethical Conduct of Human Research* (2007). If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project you can contact the Manager, Research Ethics on (07) 3875 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

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**Surfing Company Representative Interview (Rip Curl example)**

1. Your name, position and responsibilities in the Rip Curl company.
2. What are the specific duties you perform in relation to management and/or sponsorship?
3. Is sponsoring female surfers in Rip Curl a priority, if so why?
4. What is your understanding of the place of female surfers within Rip Curl?
5. How many girls does Rip Curl sponsor and what is the age range? Discuss the number of high profile female surfers and their present ranking.
6. What criteria does Rip Curl use to select female surfers for sponsorship?
7. What physical or personal characteristics does Rip Curl look for when deciding on female surfers for sponsorship?
8. Are the selection criteria different for sponsorship boys and men? If so how?
9. What different types of sponsorships do you have? Are they performance or image based or a mixture of both, for example free surfers used in promotion or advertising?
10. What role do free surfers have in your company? What are their attributes and differences in sponsorship arrangements compared to competition surfers?
11. What are the different performance indicators for each of those different types of sponsorships? In other words how do these surfers maintain their sponsorship arrangements?
12. Do these performance indicators change from year to year and if so why?
13. Does Rip Curl have any specific guidelines or training for their sponsored female surfers eg. So they can effectively undertake media photographic shoots or interviews?
14. What type of specific requirements do sponsored female surfers from Rip Curl have with regards what they wear while competing at contests?
15. What promotional activities do sponsored female surfers from Rip Curl have to undertake to maintain their sponsorship?
16. What type of issues or reasons would bring about a termination in a sponsorship arrangement?
17. What is Rip Curl’s main direction with regard public and media image? I notice on the web the great logo…the Ultimate Surf Company.
18. What are Rip Curl’s main motivations behind sponsoring big surfing events?
19. Do you feel these events help promote the company in a big way, or are there more advantages gained through marketing and advertising?
20. In what ways do you think Rip Curl is proactive in the promotion of female surfing?
21. What are the main benefits in organizing and running the Rip Curl Girls Go Surfing days?
22. Do you track or do any market research on the effects and benefits of these Rip Curl events?
23. What effects and impact do female surfers sponsored by Rip Curl have on sales and marketing? Are they an advantage in terms of image for the company?

Thank you very much for participating in this research project!