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Identity, History and Sport: Genesis of Surfing Magazines in Spain

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Abstract

This paper focuses on a topic hitherto ignored in the interdisciplinary framework of the social history of sport and the history of social communication: the forerunners and the genesis of surfing magazines in Spain. It involved intensive research in both public and private archives, uncovering the forerunners of the first surfing magazines in Spain (1972-1976) within the federative communication of the former *Delegación Nacional de Educación Física y Deportes* (1941-1977). Similarly, the birth of the first surfing magazines between 1987 and 1990, when the surfing industry in Spain began to develop further, was determined, dated and described. Magazines were essential in constructing identities in the pre-Internet world. The images that these magazines disseminated among surfers first generated and subsequently reinforced a sense of belonging to a sport and a lifestyle.

Keywords: surfing identity, history of sport, sports magazines

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Introduction

The birth of a sports magazine specialising in a specific sport is a relevant and significant event in the history of the sport, especially when it is the first publication in that field. It signals the consolidation of the sport, the existence of a significant number of practitioners and sympathisers, and a developed industry. Moreover, it generates and reinforces the sense of belonging to a group and/or an activity, which is fundamental in forming identities. Furthermore, over the years, specialised sports magazines eventually become documentary archives to study the history of the sport.

The birth of a specialised title in a specific sport is also important in the history of social communication in that it heralds the launch and development of a group of professional communicators specialised in a specific sport and consequently the universe surrounding it. Depending on the characteristics of the sport, this may even mean the introduction of specific technology and techniques. In the case of surfing, it was the use of water cameras and the specialisation of a kind of professional photographer different from others because they have to enter a dangerous, moving sea, which requires a kind of technique and expertise different to that of other sports photographers.

The first sports publications in the Spanish press can be traced back to the 19th century. The origins of Spanish sports magazines are related to the local bourgeoisie's positive identification with their English and French counterparts. In England and France, the beginnings of sports magazines date back to the first half of the 19th century. The study by Torreadella-Flix and Olivera-Betrán (2013) reveals that the first publications or titles specialising in specific sports in Spain appeared in the second half of the 19th century: magazines on hunting (1865), horseback riding (1878), cycling (1892), pelota (1893), sailing and rowing (1893), chess (1895) and motoring (1899). But sports truly became a mass phenomenon in the 20th century (Pujadas & Santacana, 2012), leading to a considerable increase in the number of generalist sports titles and publications specialising in specific fields or sports (López de Aguilera, 2008; Simón Sanjurjo, 2012). In the 21st century, with the consolidation of the Internet, the phenomenon of sports blogs appeared (Romeo Bejarano, 2014), and technological advances also generated an adaptation of specific digital magazines for tablets and mobile phones (Rojas Torrijos, 2015).

Objectives and sources

Football is the sport that has received most attention in the Spanish media. According to Sainz de Baranda (2017, p. 139), it accounts for 61% of the coverage compared

to the other sports, with basketball coming in second at 10.2%. This study is aimed at exploring another kind of ball-less sport, less related to competition and associated, instead, with nature, while also embodying a philosophy of life. It is a heretofore unexplored segment: the birth of surfing magazines before the advent of the Internet.

The documentary heuristic methodology was used for this study, and the exploration was conducted in public and private archives. The public centres include the National Library of Spain, the National Historical Archive, the General Administrative Archive and the collections of the National Sports Council. The private archives include those ceded by the presidents, leaders and delegates of the first federated surfing organisation in Spain: the National Surfing Section (Sección Nacional de Surf or SNS, 1969-1985).

The primary and most urgent objective was to identify the forerunners and the first magazines in this field, the date they were founded, the composition of their editorial team and contributors, the sports they included and their general topics, as well as to trace the evolution of the magazines. Finally, the second objective was to explain the founding of the first surfing magazines within the historical and evolutionary context of surfing in Spain.

Historical context of surfing

As of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, surfing will be an Olympic sport. Pociello (1991, pp. 172-173) classified it as a "California sport". Based on the observations of Joel de Rosnay, one of the pioneers of this board sport in France, Pociello also showed that surfing was the parent of other sports, like windsurfing and skateboarding, all of them currently Olympic sports as well. In Spain, there are more than 27,000 federation members (Surfing Spanish Federation, 2019), and the total number of practitioners is estimated to be ten times higher (Esparza, 2015, p. 48). There are more than 150 surfing clubs and 300 surfing schools (Esparza 2015, p. 48). This sport generates major revenues from tourism in numerous towns in Spain and Portugal (Rivera Mateos, 2016).

It is an activity that was born in Polynesia (Finney & Houston, 1996; Nendel, 2009) but adopted in the USA, from where it spread to the rest of the world in the 20th century (Westwick & Neushul, 2013). It reached Spain in the mid-1960s, just as the first reports on this board sport started to appear in the press, films and television (Esparza, 2016). It emerged spontaneously at different spots in different regions along Spain's coastline, oblivious to each other's existence and without any contact with each other for months or even years (Esparza, 2011, 2013). The first federative surfing structure in the history of Spain, the National Surfing Section (SNS), was founded in late 1969, only to disappear in 1985.

Results

The first cover of a sports magazine featuring surfing

The first sports magazine cover to feature surfing in the history of Spain was in the magazine *Deporte 2000* (issue 31, August 1971); it was a report on Pedro Martínez-Albornoz Bonet, president of the SNS. *Deporte 2000* was a popular sports magazine founded by the National Physical Education and Sports Delegation in 1969 and which lasted until 1981.

The magazine cover showed a surfer descending a wave of some four metres high with the headline: "Surfing: Audacity on the Waves". The report consisted of seven colour pages, text and eight photographs of large waves in Hawaii and California. The text provides a detailed description of different facets of surfing: its origins and evolution, an instructional part on how to practise it, another section on the equipment (what the boards were made of, rubber suits), a description of the best surfers at the time, where the best waves in the world were, championships in the USA and finally a section on the status of surfing in Spain: "a fondness for this dynamic, thrilling and spectacular sport has already taken root in Spain", where it provides details on all the progress made in such little time (Martínez de Albornoz, 1971, p. 29).

SNS 'Notas Informativas'

Before the first surfing magazines reached Spain, the international benchmark was *Surfer Magazine*, a California-based title introduced in Spain by foreign surfers. Those faraway magazines ignited the imaginations of young Spanish surfers and generated a universe of idealised referents with remote places and legendary surfers that turned California, Hawaii and Australia into the Mecca of surfing: places of reverence, and desirable yet inaccessible brands at the time.

This American magazine (and other less renowned counterparts) also served as referents when the forerunner of a surfing magazine was developed in Spain: the *Nota Informativa* published by the SNS between 1972 and 1975 (the last issue came out in 1976 with the title *Surf*). This federated publication improved communication with federated surfers. Fourteen issues were released, along with a summary report of the activity of the first president between March 1972 and June 1976, with a print run of 450 copies. It was only distributed internally, posted to the clubs, regional delegates and federation members who paid on delivery. The newsletters, which were exclusively meant for the small community of federated surfers, covered

different topics, such as instructions for clubs, federation matters, dates and organisers of championships, results of championships, funding for championships or equipment purchases, equipment prices, complaints and suggestions, information to register or renew membership, information on medical insurance, information on assemblies and publication of the minutes. The free topics introduced, inspired by the American surfing magazines, included Spanish translations of articles from *Surfer* magazine and contributions from surfers who recounted their travels and described places with good waves.

The first surfing magazines appeared in Spain more than a decade later; there were three of them between 1987 and 1990: *Tres 60* (1987), *Surfer Rule* (1990) and *Marejada Surf* (1990). After 1992, other regional magazines appeared, such as *Rompeolas* in the Canary Islands and *Surfari* in Galicia, although this article only addresses publications with national readerships. In this section, in order to organise and structure the information, the following categories have been created: 1) Genesis, frequency of publication, editorial team and contributors; 2) Content of the sports included in the magazine; 3) General content of the topics; and 4) Evolution of the magazine.

Study of the publications

Tres 60

Genesis, frequency of publication, editorial team and contributors. The *Tres 60* magazine was founded in July 1987 and was published in Santurce (Biscay). Initial frequency of publication: quarterly. After issue 11, July 1989, it started to appear bimonthly. The editorial team was made up of the editor, Roge Blasco; editorial director and graphic design: Jakue Andikoetxea; editorial advisor: Mikel Noya; photography and texts: Javier Amezaga; and administration: Borja Peñenori. We can count 17 text contributors, including Willy Uribe (who went on to found the magazine *Marejada* in 1990) and up to 14 contributing photographers, in addition to two international agencies.

Sports. Primarily surfing, but also skating, wind-surfing and hang-gliding. In the first issue, bodyboards were not yet included (this sport was still incipient in Spain).

Surfing content. The cover consisted of a full-page photo of a surfer inside a curl. There was also a small photo inserted towards the bottom (windsurfing regatta). The headlines mentioned reports on Mundaka, Peniche, Tarifa, Lanzarote and Cantabria. In addition to these magazine contents, there were also letters to the editor,

results of championships (3 pages), a comic, a music section, a section where readers could buy or sell equipment and a part on technical information (how to make a surfboard, physical preparation and sports medicine).

Evolution of the magazine. It started with the title *Tres60* but changed headlines several times, with minor modifications, the most significant ones being in July 1995 (issue 38) when it started to be called *TRES60*. In February 2001 (issue 76), its name was changed to *3SESENTA*, and starting in November 2007 (issue 124), it was called *3sesenta*. As this chapter was being written (September 2017), the magazine *3sesenta* had published a total of 192 issues in its 30 years of life.

The windsurfing topic was dropped permanently in 1991 (windsurfing had its own magazines). In January 1990, the skating version of the magazine appeared (*Tres 60 Skate*); in November 1991, the bodyboarding version appeared (*Tres 60 Bodyboard*); and in January 1993, a version of the magazine that only covered snowboarding appeared. These magazines with different specialities disappeared after just a few years, and only the magazine on surfing remained. The editorial team of the magazine today has hardly changed since its beginnings. Roge Blasco has departed, but Jakue Andikoetxea, Javier Amezaga and Borja Peñeñori remain, in addition to other newer members.

Surfer Rule

Genesis, frequency of publication, editorial team and contributors. This magazine was founded in April 1990. It was published in Irún (Guipúzcoa). The initial frequency was every month and a half, although in 1991 and 1992 it became monthly, and that same year it switched to being bimonthly until it folded. The editorial team that brought this magazine to life was comprised of editor, Marisa Beunza; editorial director, Jon Beunza; and chief photographer: Fernando Muñoz. Furthermore, in the first issue, John Gardner, Marta Molera, Jon Beunza, Carlos Bremón and Yaiza contributed photographs, and Andrés Vega de Seoane, Carlos Bremón, Zalo Campa, Yaiza, Manuel Fernández, Santi del Campo and Kike Fernández contributed texts.

Sports-related content. In its first issue, it only covered surfing and did not include windsurfing, skating or bodyboarding. However, it did report on the results of several bodyboarding championships (within the surfing championships).

Surfing content. Cover of the first issue: Bryce Ellis in Anglet (France), photo: Fernando Muñoz. The contents of the magazine include brief regional reports from contributors in different parts of Spain; a report on the history of the SNS; a report on a professional, Bryce Ellis; a report on Somo (Cantabria); a report on the sea as a

source of health; a report on Puerto Escondido (Mexico); a free poster; a report on Asís Fernández (Spanish surfer); a report on a Spanish beach: Lafitena; an article on surfing techniques; the results of the regional championships in Spain (up to 7 pages of different championships along Spain's entire coastline); and an opinion section (letters to the editor).

Evolution of the magazine. It retained its name throughout its lifetime. In 2014, it disappeared or was discontinued after 148 issues. In 2016, a new digital version came out along with the publication of two paper issues that year (issues 149 and 150). In 1996, the magazine *Surfer Rule Bodyboard* was created for a period, but publication ceased some years later, although the exact year cannot be determined.

Marejada

Genesis, frequency of publication, editorial team and contributors. It was founded in November 1990. Bimonthly publication. It was the brainchild and creation of Willy Uribe and Salvador Artaza (editors). In the first issue, the contributors of texts and photographs were Ángel Losada, Ana Gutiérrez, Martha Molera, J.A. Rodríguez, Iñaki Mintegui, Alex Meabe, Jorge Gómez, Iñaki Inunciaga, Ignacio Suárez, Mikel Eskauriaza, Iñigo Jiménez, Borja Romero, Álvaro Andoin, J. L. Uranga, Félix Morales, Guillermo Almagia and Alberto Urrutia.

Sports-related content. In addition to surfing, the last pages of the magazine included bodyboarding (two pages) and skateboarding (three pages).

Thematic content. It did not include an editorial. The first two pages were dedicated to an ecological cause, the creation of the Planet Surf Initiative (Bio Wave 90). The following pages spoke about the exhibition and description of several prominent surfers, each one accompanied by a photo, including 13-year old Eneko Acero from the Quicksilver team, the future professional star of Basque and Spanish surfing. It also included interviews with José Luis Elejoste (a pioneer in Biscay) and other surfers of the day like Jupa Soler. It covered a trip to Morocco and also featured a report about different waves on Spain's northern coast. It also included an ecological critique of the then-polluted estuary of Bilbao and the results of several local and international championships.

Evolution of the magazine: The magazine never took root. Only two issues appeared and the third one, already laid out and ready to release, was suspended. The project fell through because it was not believed to be economically feasible, perhaps because the market and demand were saturated with a consolidated magazine (*Tres 60*) and another one that had been released that same year (*Surfer Rule*). (Table 1)

Table 1
First surfing magazines in Spain: Genesis and evolution

Magazine	Date created	Date closed	Issues published (until September 2017)	Place of publication	Other sports in issue 1 (in addition to surfing)
<i>Tres 60</i>	June 1987	Still in circulation	192	Santurce (Biscay)	Skating, Hang-gliding, Windsurfing
<i>Surfer Rule</i>	April 1990	Until 2014, relaunched in 2016	150	Irún (Guipúzcoa)	Only surfing
<i>Marejada Surf</i>	November 1990	February 1991	2	Algorta (Biscay)	Bodyboarding, Skating.

Source: prepared by authors.

Discussion

The main objective of this study was to identify the first surfing magazines, the date they were founded, the composition of their editorial team and contributors, the sports they included, the general topics they covered and the evolution of the magazines. Finally, the aim was to explain the founding of the first surfing magazines within a twofold context: the historical and evolutionary context of surfing in Spain.

Between 1987 and 1990, the magazines that subsequently went on to lead the information on surfing in Spain in the 1990s and 21st century were founded. The magazines emerged because there was a large enough audience (and shops) and an increasingly growing number of surfers, to which the successive creation of regional federations (Basque Country, 1989; Cantabria, 1991; Canary Islands, 1992; as well as the Spanish Surfing Federation, 1997) attests. There was a need to fill a communication gap on surfing, although one limitation must be acknowledged: surfing was not a widespread sport and reality showed that the ideal frequency was every two months. Furthermore, the three surfing magazines at the time proved to be too many. *Marejada Surf* disappeared, but *Tres Sesenta* (3sesenta) and *Surfer Rule* still survive, although only *3sesenta* still exists on paper.

The Cantabrian coast pioneered the promotion and development of surfing in the country (albeit along with the Canary Islands to a lesser extent). The first three surfing magazines in Spain were Basque, two from Biscay (*Tres 60* and *Marejada Surf*) and one from Guipúzcoa (*Surfer Rule*). Several factors explain this, although there are also particularities that are outside the scope of this study. On the one hand, the Basque Country was a very economically prosperous autonomous community. By the 1980s, it had a clearly-defined surfing industry with cutting-edge brands like Pukas that organised famous international championships in Mundaka or Zarautz. It is no coincidence that following the demise of the SNS, the Basque Surfing Federation was the first

regional federation to be organised (1989). Generally speaking, since the beginning of this sport in the 1960s, the Cantabrian coast had been the epicentre of surfing in Spain in terms of organising clubs and championships. Certainly, in the 1980s, the Basque Country had the edge over all of them due to its proximity to France (as a border region), because surfing was more developed in France and the influence was more direct.

The SNS *Nota Informativa* (1972-1976) was the forerunner of the first surfing magazines in Spain. For historical research, this publication is an essential source of documentation in order to reconstruct the beginnings and the consolidation of surfing in Spain. The SNS reported on federation matters but also served as a testing ground for applying some ideas, which never gained traction, from foreign magazines on surfing. For example, it presented the first attempts at reporting on trips abroad, a report on the Canary Islands (with two photos), a story on championships and a space to sell equipment and showcase the leading local brands, given that there were still no surf shops (the first one opened in Zarautz in 1976) and the lack of a consolidated industry.

A new generation of young people created the first surfing magazines. An examination of the editorial teams and the contributors to the first magazines allows us to conclude that they were founded not by the surfing pioneers (those who had had experience with the SNS's *Nota Informativa*) but rather by a younger generation who began to surf towards the end of the 1970s and early 1980s. Only in the first issue of *Surfer Rule* are there outside contributions from two pioneers: Gonzalo Campa (Cantabria), who had experience in the defunct *Nota Informativa*, and Carlos Bremón (Galicia), both of whom were by then associated with the federated and business world of surfing.

Conclusions

Before the advent of the Internet, surfing magazines were read and perused by the majority of surfers. It

was the only means available to them to get information and stay abreast of the happenings in their sport and lifestyle. The dissemination of images and referents (places, people, championships, shops, brands and opinions) in those magazines was shared by the majority of surfers back then. Those images helped to shape a surfing identity in Spain in the 1980s and 1990s, although the meanings and identifications of those images depended on many circumstances. This overall ensemble of images generated the idea of a group which while it may not have been homogeneous did concur on the idea of a surfing identity which fostered the expression of shared, positive feelings and sensitivities towards the forces of nature, and therefore a sense of protection and conservation of nature, even leading to political and social mobilisation in defence of the waves and the coast.

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