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EDITORIAL SOURCE#101

COVID-19's effect on the boardsports industry has been seismic and combining its economic devastation with the rapid nature at which news unfolded. our work at SOURCE became pivotal. Working in boardsports media means 'real' journalism is a rarity, but a severe lack in communication running up and down the business ladder meant we had to step in and speak with retailers, brands and manufacturers to fill in the gaps. It's been the most challenging time in my nine years at the magazine, but it also delivered the most rewarding output. To continue delivering this high level of reporting, we need to increase our resources. We want to continue bringing you indepth reports and analysis of trending topics and in order to do this we will be introducing an online paid subscription platform. Our daily news and brand features will remain free to consume, but our unique content (trend analysis, reports and key interviews),

which ultimately help you do your job better, will be behind a paywall.

This issue contains our usual Retail Buyer's Guides to help retailers see what's trending in summer 2020 categories, but we also speak with retailers, distributors and brands from across the continent to present a detailed overview of how the pandemic has disrupted business and also do our best to seek out any potential opportunities.

For this issue we've made the decision to publish a digital-only version of the magazine because coronavirus has seen a downturn in business with brands reducing marketing spend until they have more clarity going forward. As things become clearer, we look forward to resuming our printed issue and returning to business as normal.

Our network at SOURCE
Magazine is our most
valuable asset and in
response to the Black
Lives Matter movement
we've been speaking with
people on both sides of
the Atlantic; media, brands
and retailers to explore
ways that will allow us to
affect real change. We don't
want our commitment to

diversity to be a flash in the pan and while our plan and learnings continue to evolve, we can promise our readership that in the future we will do better at showcasing our industry's people of colour, the brands they work for and the art they do. We'll also be encouraging brands and media to make the boardsports world a more welcoming and accepting community for people of colour. This doesn't mean just one campaign, or one front cover. This doesn't mean just using black models to represent a brand's new 'urban' collection. This means systemic change; change we've not even begun to scrape the surface of and change we cannot be afraid of. To believe boardsports are inclusive is untrue - the lack of people of colour in the line-up and on the mountain proves we must do more. Only by creating a more outwardly welcoming, inviting and diverse offering can we expect to see a more diverse future for boardsports. Please get in touch with me to help further the conversation.

Always Sideways, Forever Listening

Harry Mitchell Thompson Editor-in-Chief

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On the cover On the cover Adidas UK skate/snow Key Account Manager, Chris Chatt at Gravstone Action Sports. Manchester, Photo by James North.

NEWS #101

Thomas Delfino, Sage Kotsenburg & Gabe Ferguson Join K2 Snowboarding K2 Snowboarding welcomes French rider Thomas Delfino to their team along with youngster Gabe Ferguson, who's been known on the competitive scene since he was just 14 years old, and Sage Kotsenburg, US Olympic Snowboard Slopestyle gold medallist.

Arbor Snowboards Enlists Eddie Wall As Product Manager

Arbor's snowboard division adds a new member to its management team, building upon the brand's momentum heading into its 25th year in business, and beyond.

Absolute Snow Acquires Freeze Pro Shop Assets

Managing Director, Matt Pyne-Gilbert from Absolute Snow (The Boarding Company Ltd), announced they will be acquiring assets from Freeze Pro Shop Ltd (Edinburgh), which recently went into administration. TBCL will acquire Freeze's intellectual property and stock which is not subject to retention of title.

Etnies X Trees For The Future Reach 2 Million Trees Goal

etnies X Trees for the Future have reached their goal of planting 2 million trees by 2020 as a result of their 'Buy a Shoe, Plant a Tree' project, launched in 2011. The project is expanding for 2020 and one tree will be donated to Trees for the Future with every shoe purchase.

Surfdome Collabs With Patagonia To Reduce Plastic Use

'Plastic Cutback' is the new initiative launched by Surfdome, in collaboration with Patagonia, to try and find alternatives for the poly bags used in manufacturing, transportation and product-to-customer sales. A 3 month trial is currently taking place.

Boardriders Sells XCEL Wetsuits

Boardriders has sold Xcel wetsuits to Colorado-based ZG Collective, parent company to snowsports glove company Level. Boardriders CEO Dave Tanner says the wetsuit brand constitutes less than 1% of their global sales "so it just made sense to focus our efforts on growing our larger brands and finding a great home for Xcel. We thank the entire Xcel team for their passion and dedication over the years and wish them the best of luck in this next phase."

Antti Autti Joins Jones Snowboards

X-Games halfpipe gold medallist, Olympic finalist and filmmaker, Antti Autti has joined Jones Snowboards. To welcome him to the team, Jones talked to Antti to find out a bit about him and what he's up to.

John Lacy Promoted To CEO Of Burton

After having worked in a huge variety of departments and roles at Burton since 1997, John Lacy has been promoted to CEO, with Donna Carpenter assuming the position of Chair of the Board.

Patagonia Opens Second UK Store In Bristol

Patagonia opened its second brand store in the UK; the new Bristol shop aims to combine retail with community events and promotion.

Manera Wetsuits Expands Into Surf: Adds Dion Agius & Brendon Gibbens To The Team

Manera progresses to a multisport focus after years of primarily working in the kitesurfing business. To support this new business direction, Manera will be partnering with water sport athletes, starting with Brendon Gibbens and Dion Agius.

Hurley EMEA Business Acquired As Sole Entity By Former Nike Employees

Hurley EMEA has been acquired as a sole entity by two former employees of Nike. David Meire previously served in GM & VP roles at Nike for 20+ years and Javier Carrera also served in GM & VP roles but at Quiksilver, Nike SB and Hurley. Carrera was appointed CEO of Hurley EMEA effective immediately.

World Surf League Appoints Erik Logan As CEO

Erik Logan replaced Sophie Goldschmidt as CEO of the World Surf League organisation. Goldschmidt was responsible for many changes at the WSL, such as equal prize money for males and females, and has improved the

global reach of WSL. Logan has served as President of Media and Content for the WSL for one year, formerly serving as President of the Oprah Winfrey Network.

-

HLC Distribution Partners With Plan B HLC Distribution, the owners of the largest skateboard factory in the EMEA

area, has partnered with Plan B as their new producers and distributors across Europe, Middle East and Africa.

-

Reef Partners With Multiple Distributors Across EMEA

Across EMEA, Reef has newly partnered with multiple leading footwear distributors. Brand President at Reef, Mike Jensen says that the partnerships will aid business growth and promote deep consumer connections.

-

Phillipe Gouzes Appointed Head Of Sales And Development At Awayco

Focusing on experiences, Awayco aims to reduce overproduction and waste, remove the stress of travelling with oversized – and lots of – baggage and cut down on household clutter. They do so by ensuring the best equipment is available for renting anywhere. Recently, Awayco appointed industry vet Phillippe Gouzes (formerly Rossignol, Burton, Nixon & Boardriders) as Head of Sales and Development to further grow Awayco's business.

Typhoon International Ltd.
Appoints New Operations Director

James Saunders has been appointed at the new Operations Director at Typhoon International Ltd. Saunders aims to progress the company in customer service, efficiency and aid recovery after COVID-19 passes.

11

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GoPro Announces Accelerated Shift To DTC & Staff Cuts

Due to the uncertainties in the financial market caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, GoPro has announced the need to cut its workforce by 20% as it accelerates its direct-to-consumercentric business. They also withdrew and reissued their Q1 results and removed their predictions for the remaining quarters of 2020.

Tony Hawk Joins Vans

Two massive names from skateboarding past and present look to the future by forming an official brand partnership. Tony Hawk has joined Vans as an official brand partner and global brand ambassador.

Bollé Brands appointments

Bollé BrandsTM (parent company to bollé, Spy, Cébé and more) has appointed Damien Hars as Digital Director and Alexandre Israel as Global Marketing Manager; both bringing years of significant experience. On a national level, Bollé brings on Nicolas Berges as the Sales Director for France.

Wheels And Waves Confirmed For September 2020

Since the cancellation of the Wheels and Waves event in June, the team have been hard at work coming up with a special version for the 9th edition. So far, the event has been announced for September 3-6, 2020 in Biarritz. The full event program has yet to be revealed Pura Vida Now Available In Europe Through Hectic Pura Vida Bracelets ("Pura Vida"), the La Jolla, California-based digitally native jewellery and lifestyle accessories

brand, today announced its partnership with European distributor Hectic Ltd. ("Hectic"). Hectic will be responsible for the sales, marketing, and distribution of Pura Vida products for wholesale accounts throughout Europe.

Dewerstone Achieves Carbon Neutral Certified Status

Through rigorous calculations of carbon footprint in all aspects of their business, efforts and plans to reduce this footprint and the purchase of carbon credits to offset emissions during 2019- dewerstone has achieved Carbon Neutral Certified Status.

Rainbow SAS Acquires Oxbow

After having separated from Eider at the end of 2019, Calida and its subsidiary Lafuma have sold all company shares and the Oxbow brand to Rainbow SAS. This newly formed entity is supported by a pool of private investors and led by the Emmanuel Debruères and Jean-Christophe Chétail. Debruères will serve as President having previously worked for Salomon, Rossignol and Billabong before managing the European branch of Dakine and then piloting Idealp Sport. Chétail is Managing Director and has a background at Reebok and Billabong before meeting Debruères at Dakine and then within the brands of Idealp Sport.

Cool By The Pool New UK Sales Agent For Sun Bum Sunscreen

In April, Sun Bum, a vegan and reef friendly sunscreen company, ventured across the pond and their core SPF line will be available for the summer in UK surf shops through Cool By The Pool.

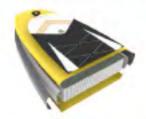


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HOW COVID-19 AFFECTED THE EUROPEAN BOARDSPORTS INDUSTRY By SOURCE Editor.

Harry Mitchell Thompson.

2020 started with news of a flulike virus causing worrying damage in China; walking the halls of ISPO, COVID-19 definitely seemed like a very distant problem. Needless to say, it very soon found itself in Europe where at first it ravaged northern Italy before continuing its spread like wildfire across the whole of the continent and indeed the world.

We'll leave the political discussion of how and why the disease spread and was fought differently from one country to the next and instead we'll focus on just how the pandemic effected our European boardsports industry. Our website readers will have read our coverage of the pandemic, which spanned myriad topics to inform our readers at a time where lines of communication were blocked due to rapid lockdowns, furloughs and overwhelming uncertainty. Here's a detailed summary of our findings.

SKATE

Boardsports' one shining light throughout the lockdown was without doubt the skateboard hardgoods industry. People were able to skate at home, roll round the streets and with fantastic weather gracing large parts of Europe in April and May we've heard fascinating stories of supply shortages. People have returned to skateboarding and with total newbies also taking up the sport, skateboard completes have continued the impressive growth that they've been experiencing for over a year now. The Olympic affect? Jörg Ludewig from German distributor Urban Supplies says yes, sure it's a contributing factor, but he also believes skateboarding booms through trending cycles and that currently we are riding the crest of one of those cycles. Combine this with everyone off school, on furlough and skateboarding has soared during lockdown.

"Small shops organising pickup/ delivery services, Insta-shops while maintaining their support for skateboarding, literally overnight, was probably one of the most impressive things I've ever witnessed." Nils Gebbers, 24/7 Distribution

Circling back to the aforementioned supply issue, while selling out of products is great, an actual shortage of supply due to delayed shipping from China and the US has presented distributors with a real challenge.

Nils Gebbers from 24/7 Distribution told us they sold out of three months' worth of inventory in three weeks. "A lot of shops think placing pre-booking on hardware is unnecessary, but the current situation shows it ain't." So, some lessons to be learnt there in skateboard pre-books, but Nils has nothing but praise for his shops: "Small shops organising pickup/delivery services, Insta-shops while maintaining their support for skateboarding, literally overnight, was probably one of the most impressive things I've ever witnessed."

Very early on during lockdown our Skateboard Editor, Dirk Vogel interviewed OG Skateshop (Germany)'s Pav Lubomir on the fantastic efforts he was going to to keep his customers engaged, active and skating. Pav was releasing regular updates on his Youtube and Instagram channels, reviewing products to create hype and then selling products through his web shop and delivering via mail order. Skaters have

Skaters have always been innovators and Pav set the mould for many other independent skate shops to keep going about their business during lockdown.

always been innovators and Pav set the mould for many other independent skate shops to keep going about their business during lockdown.

SNOW

Although the snowboard industry lost the last six weeks of its winter business, there's a strong sentiment that the lockdown could have definitely come at a worse time in the cycle. Shops, brands and resorts were able to get December, January and February in

the books and although the winter ended early, the snowboard industry can learn socioeconomic lessons from other industries over summer. With communication suffering during lockdown, we soon realised the snowboard industry as a whole needed to know the full manufacturing picture and so we interviewed a number of key snowboard manufacturers and published our snowboard manufacturing report, informing our readers that the production process had actually been largely unaffected by coronavirus - the Chinese New Year holiday was 14 days over the worst hit time, so actually only one week of office hours disruption - something previously unknown to competing brands and to all retailers.

The lockdown hit the European snowboard industry at a crucial time in the ordering cycle, and so we invited the industry to participate in our snowboard industry Zoom conferences where we hosted 35+ brand and retailer representatives to talk openly on how we best move forward. We split the industry in half and hosted two x twohour calls, which we reported on in detail on our website. In summary, snowboard brands agreed on the whole that problems for retailers resulting from the pandemic were also their problems and that wherever possible they would be helping retailers on a case by case basis. Perhaps the hottest topic debated was the carry-over model, something retailers welcomed eagerly, but many brands a) feared it takes away marketing freshness and b) say it's simply too early to decide whether they create carry-over models until they see just how bad next winter is. Watch this space for more Zooms with the industry...

Snowboard shops normally use the final part of the winter season to sell current winter stock at discounted prices to prepare their shop floor for next winter's product.

Perhaps the hottest topic debated was the carry-over model, something retailers welcomed eagerly, but many brands a) feared it takes away marketing freshness and b) say it's simply too early to decide whether they create carry-over models until they see just how bad next winter is.

With this vital part of the winter missing, it's going to be very interesting to see how retailers merchandise new stock with old. An interesting notion conceived by The Riders Lounge (UK distributor for Capita, Union, Deeluxe, 686 and more) was to encourage their clients to promote a preorder system with their consumers to allow both parties to better plan for the winter ahead. TRL were also among a number of distributors who were proactive in reducing pre-order quantities with their clients early on to reflect the potential downturn and ensure retailers wouldn't receive orders they'd be unable to sell.

With Austria closing down their borders early and successfully adhering to a stringent lockdown policy, the country was able to start opening things back up in a much broader and faster fashion than the rest of Europe. This spelt some much-needed good news for European snowboarding on May 29th, when Hintertux and Kaunertal were able to reopen their glaciers. We spoke with representatives from both resorts, who told us of the hygiene and social distancing measures they had to implement with masks and limited numbers of riders in gondolas, but ultimately snowboarding benefits from being, in essence, a self-distanced, solo sport and so its practitioners have been able to enjoy its fruits before those in team and indoor sports.

While it remains to be seen just how international travel will look like next year, we can be sure there is going to be pent-up demand from people with furlough money burning a hole in their pocket next winter. If they're unable to fly abroad, we've also figured that no one in Europe is more than 12 hours drive to their closest mountain range meaning localised shredding could present smaller domestic resorts (Poland, Bulgaria, Pyrenees, Scotland) with a fantastic opportunity.

SURF

Interestingly, during the last two financial crises, European surfboard sales rocketed with surfers out of work and lots of time on their hands. As has been well documented, beaches across Europe were closed to surfers for the majority of lockdown, meaning surfboard sales were relatively flat in March, April and May, however at the time of writing (June 18th) we are hearing that surfboard sales are beginning to build positively. However, the apparel and footwear business has been undeniably hit with retailers expected to take delivery of their Spring/Summer 2020 order without a shop front to sell from, and even with shops now open, there are strict hygiene rules making the trying on of garments quite prohibitive - anything tried on must be left for three days to decontaminate, or steam cleaned. Arguably the surf industry has been hit hardest out of all boardsports by COVID-19; only retailers with an efficient web shop function were able to garner any business at all in April, but those who did operate online reported good sales in leisurewear and basics.

The lockdown has no doubt increased Amazon's share price. Those who had never shopped there before will now be converts, but with small, independent businesses forced to close, we're seeing a resurgence

in their popularity since reopening. Absence makes the heart grow fonder and those businesses who stayed connected to their customers through transparent social messaging and capitalised by selling digital gift vouchers to help their bottom line, are starting to see some green shoots since reopening. Albeit with tentative steps due to social distancing and hygiene protocols, we are hearing reports of good footfall in stores. What with the rigmarole now connected with entering a shop (hand sanitizer, distancing etc), those actually entering are meaningful traffic - people are no longer just going for a browse, these customers are entering shops committed to a purchase. As lockdown has eased across Europe, shops are seeing waves of action, as Steve Daniel from UK distributor Daniel Surf says, "as our European partners emerged from lockdown our export sales picked up very quickly." Steve concluded "surfers are enthusiasts and are resourceful and surfing is a relatively low-ticket sport, so I am confident of our business going forward. The landscape will change, and there will be losers, but the sport of surfing, like the waves, will still be there."

Echoing our aforementioned point on hot furlough money in pockets, Alexei Obolensky from Wasted Talent in Hossegor strikes a direct correlation with sales to countries whose governments looked after its citizens best: "It's been interesting to note that our sales across the EU are pretty much directly aligned with the countries that offered their workforces the most financial support on a personal level (read Germany, UK, France) and where there was less support on offer to the self-employed, or on furlough schemes we saw sales dip (Spain, Portugal, Italy)."

Having rung round SUP brands, we heard that their warehouses were working overtime to ship product and there's a strong feeling that the forced 'staycation' this summer means people are looking for entertainment and equipment to practice nearer to home. Paddling was also allowed across many European markets during lockdown.

"It's been interesting to note that our sales across the EU are pretty much directly aligned with the countries that offered their workforces the most financial support on a personal level (read Germany, UK, France) and where there was less support on offer to the self-employed, or on furlough schemes we saw sales dip (Spain, Portugal, Italy)." Alexei Obolensky, Wasted Talent

CONCLUSION

Coronavirus has hit the world like nothing else in our lifetimes, however we do believe that boardsports have faired reasonably well in comparison to many industries. Those retailers and brands who took advantage of their digital channels were the winners throughout the lockdown and with a summer of staycation in line, we hope retailers can get to know their locals even better. We can be thankful that our sports are practiced outdoors and solo, meaning we've been back at our hobbies quicker than many. And with the delaying of the Olympics by a year, it's given surf and skate brands another year to fine-tune their strategies, so let's ensure when the global spotlight is on next summer, we are ready to receive the influx of participants and customers. And finally, let's give thanks for the momentary respite we were able to give mother nature during lockdown and ensure we continue to push sustainability and green topics to the forefront of our industry.

MARKET INSIGHT

GERMANY

FRANCE AUSTRIA SWISS ITALY UK

After a much too warm and dry winter, snowboard retailers facing were already revenue drops of up to 20-30%. But then the coronavirus spread dramatically in February, infecting vast parts

of Northern Italy and shutting down Tyrolian resorts early on March 15. Only three days later, Germany also entered into shutdown.

The hardest-hit federal states were led by Bavaria, which in turn also enacted the strictest lockdown procedures. The proximity to Austria and close ties to holiday resorts in Italy were responsible for the high infection rates in Bavaria. As of May 6, 2020, Germany counted 170,000 people infected with Covid-19 and 7000 fatalities. What's more, the virus has caused devastating damage to the economy from the shutdown of public life. One in three workers had to switch to short-time hours. with more than 10.1 million applications filed since the start of the crisis. Despite short-time working, the number of unemployed spiked from 308,000 in the previous month to 2.6 million. Unemployment is now at 5.8% in Germany.

In terms of consumer confidence, market research institute GFK predicted a drop on its index to -23.4 points. That is 25.7 points less than in April and a historic low (for perspective, the index dropped to -5 points after the dotcom bubble burst in 2003). Consequently, Germany is bracing for an economic burden similar to reunification. No surprise consumer confidence is down...

On top of everything, it's no secret that the German sports equipment market has been in somewhat of a crisis over the past years. The sale of major retailer SportScheck was just one warning sign. After struggling to stay profitable, the company now belongs to Signa Retail, which already took over Karstadt Sport. Impacted even harder, Planet Sports had to file for bankruptcy before the shutdown on February 20. The online retailer with nine stationary locations and €75 million in sales was unable to remain afloat and post profits. Ultimately, only 62 employees out of 192 will remain and eight of their stores will be closed, with Cologne as the only location to stay open.

On a positive note, the infection rate for Sars-CoV-2 in Germany has dropped to 0.71 in early May, mostly thanks to social curbs across the country. Meanwhile, small and medium-sized retail locations with a store size below 800 square metres have been allowed to reopen since April 20; maintaining social distancing and hygiene guidelines.

Marc Hausen at Boardjunkies store in Braunschweig looks back on 2019 on a positive note: "Winter was much more successful than the year before. For us, the main reason is that we have only been selling at our new location for two years now. So it took some time to become established. But we were definitely able to increase our sales and reported much better results. At the same time, we also attribute this to slight changes in our inventory. For instance, we saw great results for Fred Perry, New Balance and Rip'n Dip. Carhartt WIP is also extremely important to us and continues to sell successfully. And due to the fact that the city of Braunschweig has an indoor skate park, our hardgoods sales remained constant throughout the winter."

Marc continued: "We saw the shutdown as an opportunity and increased our online shop. Plus, we saw great solidarity from our customers. Thanks to our newsletter, which reaches 12,000 people in our region, we could drum up support and sell solidarity gift receipts. These receipts can be redeemed now that we're back open, and participating customers receive 19% discount on their entire purchase. That was a great hit and consumers used it extensively. This led us to invest more into our online store, which we had almost discontinued at that point. We received lots of orders in our region, but also from further away."

Speaking on infrastructure, Marc said: "We have expanded our sales floor upstairs and now want

MARKET **INSIGHT**

here at the store." The government also helped period. "Of course, it's not enough to cover all reopening have been encouraging. And April skateboarding and need a new one. And we have our regional customers." never seen so many girls buying skateboards. I've never experienced anything like it in the past 20 Delving deeper, Tobias said: "Customers bought years!"

tough in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, since these regions were under six weeks of lockdown, instead of four. What's more, negative news from Italy and Austria hurt sales quite early on in the and repeatedly checked on the status. But we corona crisis.

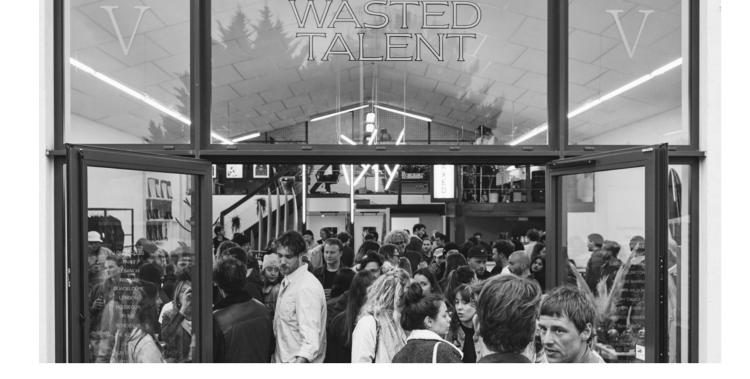
needed a plan: "For us, winter is becoming increasingly insignificant," said owner Sven Eckert. Product segments such as bike and skate are of "In December and January, we actually sold more course stronger than wakeboarding, for instance, skateboards than snowboards. Now due to the shutdown we missed out on two months worth positive!" of revenue! Plus, we have not been able to secure any government support. We had discontinued our online sales entirely on December 31, 2019. So pressed for a solution, we brought the shop back online within three days and were able to creative while expanding their online business. generate about 10-15% of regular sales. After These are positive signs. Let's hope everybody the store reopened, things were off to a good start but after two days, stationary sales flatlined entirely again. Not a good omen, unfortunately!"

to grow our skateboard and graffiti department. Despite relatively low snow fall in the surrounding Plus, phone sales proved a great tool to get mountains, Tobias Hammer at Riders Heaven orders. Customers can pick up their items directly in Sonthofen has no complaints about the past winter. Sales were steady and saw a slight the boardsports retailer, and Marc was able to increase. "Things were actually rather great in the receive €9,000 after a two-and-a-half week wait Allgau until the shutdown. But then we were hit hard, like everyone else! Financials are one thing; operating costs in a prime retail location, but it's the psychological impact is another story. We better than nothing! The first two weeks since were really down and out, as we had no idea how to survive this? After about a week, we decided turned out one of the best months of the year, to fight for it and worked harder than usual. We thanks to Easter business. It became apparent switched to working in shifts and from our home that lots of customers came for skateboards and office to bring items online. We also launched longboards. Team sports are shut down at the remote shopping via social media and fulfilled moment and they can't go to the gym. So many deliveries within a 30-kilometre radius all by people are telling us that they're getting back into ourselves. This was met with great support from

lots of gift cards and ordered products via FaceTime, Instagram or our website chat. That The situation for board shops was especially was a real motivation to keep going and we really believe that together, we will make it through. We still have yet to receive government support. Although we filed our application on the first day are super happy to be able to reopen. And the customers are also amazing. Although the feeling Bavarian retailer TX-Sports in Nuremberg also of wearing a mask and keeping a distance is still alienating, sales have been better than expected. where we lack facilities. Overall, it's really

> There you have it: skateboarding continues to boom, stand up paddling continues to trend for staycation customers and stores are getting makes it through this unpredictable period while remaining healthy.

JOCHEN BAUER



WASTED TALENT

SOORTS-HOSSEGOR, FRANCE

Situated in Soorts-Hossegor, Europe's surfing capitol, Wasted Talent run a magazine, distribution company and retail space complete with on-site coffee shop. For this issue's retailer profile we've spoken with Co-Founder Alexei Obolensky for a gauge on how COVID-19 affected their business and he delivers some real pearls of wisdom on changing consumer habits and how a retail space in 2020 needs to be so much more than product. By Harry Mitchell Thompson

Tell us how the Wasted Talent Boutique came to life.

Wasted Talent was conceived on a midsummer's eve by myself and my business partner Ben Boyd – he was formerly a freelance designer and worked for years at RipCurl designing – and still dips a toe in the design world. I was formerly working in marketing roles at Insight and then Afends under the old distribution structure. I guess we were always fans of good brands and it pained us to see how some of them were being managed so we started Wasted Talent, initially focused in distribution with a retail presence alongside. We do a few different things but

having a retail presence was always key for us. From 2016 to 2019 we had a pretty small space which only really covered the overheads of having an office however it gave us a great community around us and there was definitely moments where it was more of a social place than a store. We loved every moment though

I guess we outgrew that space and now we are in a bigger premises, we have our office on a mezzanine upstairs, some warehousing / stock next door and WAXED coffee downstairs also doing breakfast and lunch which certainly adds a different dimension to the space.

Our team has grown as well, we have Oliver Dorn - formerly the Key Account Manager for Nixon - running our in-house sales, a full time Ecomm wiz Vincent, and our Store Manager, Marion. We take summer interns and it's been cool seeing lots of them grow into full-time roles with us either on the store or magazine side of the business which again has its own crew.

What have been the biggest lessons learnt since opening your retail space in 2016?

Be a destination; we're in our second store now and have never had what would be considered prime footfall positioning. To that extent we always had to battle to draw people to us. In our new space having the guys from WAXED downstairs doing the best coffee in town definitely helps, however we've been pretty proactive with events, especially working closely with the right brands and surfers to throw decent premieres and events in or outside the store. You definitely see some of the same faces coming back and forming a community who we now count ourselves lucky enough to see almost daily.

Part of being a destination is to have an experience when you get there so we try to incorporate little touches to ensure people remember their experience here. We're lucky to travel a bit with other sides of the business so we're always poking our noses into shops that we admire in cities across the world to see how they compare. The high fashion world does an amazing job you can really feel the value of spending money there as you are really made to feel special – it's a really memorable experience with no tills, much like Apple. Even the way some retailers handle payments and little things like presenting a receipt makes a huge impression. As my old boss once said to me in a thick French accent 'Retail is Detail."

Know your customer; it's key to appeal to different people and be inclusive. Yes we appeal to a younger, very surf savvy crowd and hopefully will continue to do so. However, you also have to take into consideration that maybe the buying power isn't right there, or maybe if families come in you have to have product that appeals to everyone without losing your core identity. It can be a difficult balance to juggle sometimes. Since the guys at WAXED opened their café in the store, we suddenly had a different demographic coming in; families for brunch, mums meeting for coffee, people that work in the industry coming for work meetings. To that extent we had to widen our offering to homewares, books and suchlike that we felt sat well with our identity.

What are the best selling items in store and online for you?

It's pretty split between the brands, we try not to have too many brands per category that directly compete with each other. TCSS, AFENDS, Octopus and EPØKHE sell really well for us, as well as certain bits or capsules from Globe & Volcom. There's always a few winning products like the Octopus bags, certain EPØKHE styles and our signature shoe with Globe which are always a battle to keep in stock.

Let's talk COVID-19 - could you briefly explain the effect it had on your biz including any surprised, opportunities arising and trends you've noticed.

At the beginning of COVID we saw our online sales pretty much flatline. We also had to close our shop for two months which obviously wasn't ideal. I think there was just so much uncertainty and initially no one was in the mood for buying online — I certainly wasn't myself. As the monotony of the lockdown kicked in and it became apparent that there was a 'new normal'

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and that people would have support from the government, consumer buying came back on the cards. It's been interesting to note that our sales across the EU are pretty much directly aligned with the countries that offered their workforces the most financial support on a personal level (read Germany, UK, France) and where there was less support on offer to the self-employed, or on furlough schemes we saw sales dip (Spain, Portugal, Italy).

We're again open now physically with social distancing in place with hand sanitizer and masks on offer, though we don't enforce that people wear them - it's at our discretion, we just want the customer to feel comfortable. Having said that, if the shop is full of people wearing masks, our shop floor staff will as well. It's all about common courtesy. How would you want to be treated in a store is forefront of our minds in every engagement.

We've been really humbled by the number of local crew and French community who have a tie with the South West stopping by as the lockdown has been gently restricted and inside France freedom of movement is back to normal now. We were worried that with the borders still effectively closed we would lose out on a lot of tourists who swing by when they are in town but the domestic travel crew have been really supportive.

What measures are you taking to pandemic-proof your business for the future?

Aside from working tirelessly day and night on a vaccine? We're just making sure that we're there for the community, both locally through free local drop-offs or click and collect and further afield through working on getting the best shipping services we can. We've had customers in New York ordering on a Monday afternoon

and having their orders delivered on Tuesday morning which has been pretty exciting for us to angle more globally. It's hard to be 'pandemic proof' though - the government enforces shop closures with a pandemic and there's not much else you can do apart from focus digitally. Just try and adapt and move with the times as fast as possible.

During the 2008 GFC more surfboards were sold with people being unemployed... have you noticed any such trend this time round?

We've noticed people investing more in leisurewear. We saw surf-based sales go up as soon as the beaches began to open — I've heard a lot of retailers and the guys at Pukas have been selling a lot of boards recently which is really cool to hear.

However, I think buying patterns this time around are different, during the GFT, unless you worked for Lehman Brothers, 2008 was a slow burner in consumerism in comparison. In 2020 pretty much overnight suddenly you couldn't travel, eat out, socialise - even leave your house for exercise – that's a huge hit to anyone's psyche – let alone their confidence to buy the most superfluous things in the world such as surf wear. We never expected to see upbeat consumer buying habits during the lockdown, if anything the opposite. I think people became conscious of how much money they were spending on eating, drinking and shopping and became fixated with how much they could save. Having said that, we've been happy on the rebound in core markets with beaches now open and with borders following suit I think the summer could be a good one.

Any final thoughts on what the future of the retail landscape looks like?

I think the retail market is being dragged between two directions of either mass

volume, at a discount of a more bespoke experience - I emphasis the word experience as you want people to be hyped to come in your store even if they don't buy anything. It has to be memorable through product selection, service - for lack of a better word, Vibe. I think the future of retail - stores full of product - are coming to an end. Customers want a more bespoke service. Increasingly customers are voting with their cash and supporting stores that they have a relationship with, looking for a good service, experience or trying out a specific brand to purchase at a later date. Obviously, brands with their direct Ecomm are a threat to that, however then I feel that to remain competitive it's down to the retailers to have built that relationship with their consumer to ensure they are buying from them out of habit.

I can't see a viable future based on a model of huge multi-brand stores where customers walk in and spend considerable amounts because they 'like the brand'. Customers are more savvy, either looking for a deal during sale periods or online, or most crucially they want to vote with their wallets of supporting independents and relationships with community-based stores or a premium buying experience with great service. I think the days of spending 'rent' or a considerable amount of disposable income in a faceless multi-brand store are limited or just not where the smart money is spending it.

Any thoughts on revenge consumerism with furlough money burning holes in pockets?

Revenge consumerism. I like it. The way we have been thinking is that say you have a dream consumer with a disposable income of €1k a month, split between weekends out, travel, eating, drinking, socialising and shopping. We never wanted to be in competition with others shops, even

though we inherently are — I just feel it's short sighted. You have to look at the wider picture of where people are spending money and how to be a part of it. If you spend too much on a Friday night, it's unlikely you'll go shopping on the Saturday.

With COVID, overnight you literally couldn't spend money on travel, eating, drinking or socialising even if you really wanted to. In theory there was only really shopping left – either online or if you were able to be open, instore. I think just being present and not intrusive, supporting your customers through added value through purchasing is the key to ensuring you can be up there as a monthly favourite location to buy from. §



WASTEDTALENT.COM

MARKET INSIGHT

FRANCE

GERMANY AUSTRIA SWISS ITALY UK

At the time of writing. France is sadly in the top 5 most bereaved countries in proportion to its population with around 360 dead per 1 million inhabitants. It takes the 4th place after Belgium, Spain, Italy and

stands right in front of the UK. Faced with such an unprecedented situation, the French government implemented strict confinement measures from March 14. At first, the lockdown was planned to take place for 15 days, then was extended by two additional weeks. Eventually, the government set May 11 as the planned date for the end of the confinement, which rounded up to a total of 8 weeks at home, paralysing the French economy.

As of March 14, all non-essential businesses had been closed. Not only schools and universities, but also cafes and restaurants, including all public establishments had to close their doors. Only the stores with essential products, such as supermarkets and pharmacies, were able to remain open. To stay open the shops had to implement a certain number of barriers and safety measures.

From March 17 strict confinement measures were put in place; travel could be only authorised if one was able to present an according certificate. However France, unlike some of its neighbours, had allowed a 1-hour daily individual sport activity within a radius of 1km around person's home. As regards to employees, if working from home was impossible and the company was not operating in an essential industry, French employees could benefit from partial unemployment subsidy. It allowed them to work a minimum amount of hours and still receive 84% of their net salary. Notably, a lot of parents have gained from having more time to spend with their children at home and, though the opportunity to be involved in their child's education was challenging, it was appreciated by the majority.

In terms of economy, measures have been put in place aimed at limiting corporate bankruptcies and possible layoffs. To name a few established aids: a solidarity fund with € 1,500 per month aid for entrepreneurs and self-employed workers, direct tax rebates, flexible payment terms for invoices and tax deadlines and state-guaranteed cash loans up to 25% of the turnover of the previous year.

But what is the situation for French retailers in the face of this epidemic? Let's first look at the mountain stores. Every year, outdoor and mountain stores, and particularly ski resorts, are extremely dependent on weather and snow conditions. The season in the Alps had been pretty good as Michel Mignot from KIlly Sport (Val D'Isère) explains. Unfortunately, on March 14 any activity was completely stopped overnight with the closure of ski-resorts and hence the local shops. "We, therefore, had to adapt and put almost all of our employees on partial unemployment". Michel estimates a loss of turnover between 35% to 40%. The two-month closure at the end of the winter did away with the time of year usually responsible for clearing the shop floor of product before next season's arrivals.

In the Pyrenees, the season and snow cover were not as good in the Alps. Laurent Descaves from No Limits store in Cauterets told us, "In general, the Pyrenean range suffered from fairly low snowfall this year, and the premature closure of stations and shops on March 14 did not allow us to take the advantage of the late season. We normally close at the end of April and have paid all of our suppliers by March 15. This month and a half, which generally represents the end of season bonus for us, was simply lost this year due to coronavirus." In addition, the summer collections were already received and paid for, unfortunately, with no opportunity of actually selling the products. With the cancellation of all summer events, resorts fear the absence of tourists in the mountains this summer.

For the surf shops and coastal stores, the sudden closure on March 14 put a break on the opening of the summer season. Indeed, the seasonal nautical activities generally start in France with the Easter holidays, however, this year due to the

MARKET **INSIGHT**

Surf Shop in Léon, Sébastien Bou was directly The traditional Braderie at the start of the season stock and makes room for the new collections. With this sudden closure, we were forced to suspend deliveries of our pre-orders pending reopening and sometimes even cancelled part of them."

A similar story happens at "Uncle Zaz" in Mimizan, Alban Causse, who tells us: "without being able to open, we had to postpone the receipt of our goods. Although, most of the suppliers played the game and helped to alleviate the pain by offering us new payment terms and return conditions. However, we remain optimistic and aim for a shift in sales with a very good late season in September/October."

At "The Farm" in Seignosse, Olivier Cuisseau shares his vision: "We tried to take the advantage of the imposed closure period to be more active on social media and we were able to carry out a few orders and sales of technical equipment. We were also able to focus on a big project of ours the launch of our e-commerce website scheduled for May 1." Olivier expects that discounting by the major surf apparel brands will push stores to focus even more on technology.

Cyril at Tamarindo in Ile d'Oleron also bets on hardware: "Our strategy has been to not delay the delivery of technical equipment and to keep burning on the embers of the market." He has also used social media a lot to highlight all his deliveries and to trigger sales: "It is clear that we are far from the usual sales volume, but we have sold surfboards and surf skates. We reached new customers across Europe as our logistics service continued to function well throughout the confinement period." As at Natura in Léon, Cyril has immediately set up a "drive-by system in front of the store to enable easy pick up of goods ordered by phone or on social networks."

Stores with a strong presence on the internet did not have a sharp drop in sales at all. On the **BENOIT BRECQ**

lockdown tourism, which usually brings a lot of contrary, online businesses were very busy. people to the coast of France, died out. At Natura At Swell Addiction in Brest, Mathieu tells us: "We had to brutally close our 3 physical stores affected by this closure. He comments: "this but have kept our e-commerce team, who period is very important for us coastal surf shops. continued to function well over the period. The most complicated part was the management allows us to boost cash by clearing out last year's of transport times, but generally, customers on lockdown are in less of a rush, which helped to limit frustration with delays." Mathieu confirms, that hardware such as boards, leashes, pads, covers, sold well. The confinement undoubtedly allowed customers the time to take stock of their inventory and order the necessary items to reeauip.

> Similarly in Hawaii Surf in Paris where Ghislain confides to us: "The store had to close like everything else in this emergency, but the e-commerce part was maintained and we really focused on putting our products online. Consumption, in general, was slightly down over the first 2 weeks of confinement but resumed quickly from the beginning of April. The whole skateboarding, rollerblading and surfing part has worked super well because people can practice around their home and keep in touch with their passion." Finally, Ghislain adds: "With the May 11 announcement stating we could go back to the water, the surfing party began and we are really eager to return to the coast and the water."

> Regarding the end of the lockdown on May 11, the government decided to reopen all businesses, except restaurants and cafes. Retailers now have a clear date and vision to revive their activity. All stores are therefore able to re-open their doors, while still taking the specific safety measures. The industry is confident that customers will come back for equipment as soon as possible in order to practice their favourite sports. At the time of writing, there is no certainty about future terms. One thing is however certain, all gatherings of more than 5000 people are prohibited until September, so most summer events are cancelled. Although we should probably expect slow tourism this summer that will affect the brick and mortar retailers, it is still very important to take care of yourself and your loved ones.

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SURFBOARDS 2020

In response to the guestion asked by Stab magazine "has surfboard design plateaued?", American surfer Dane Reynolds retorted: "Why would surfboards need to be innovated?", citing a parallel with skateboard design which has been the same for decades. Between tradition and innovation, check out what the surfboards market has in store for us in 2020. By David Bianic.



In times of crisis - at least financial ones like in 2008- the boardsports equipment sector strangely tends to prosper. Less work, more free time and a flourishing leisure market. This time, the economic paralysis brought on by COVID-19 this spring and the consequential lack of freight meant that reverting to nationallevel production was favourable. Have surfboards benefitted from this? While many surf shops had drawn their curtains at the start of spring, the garage shapers were ready and willing to start cutting out their foams while they waited for their customers to be freed from the confinement.

This unusual situation confirmed certain developments already noted by Bernardo Cioni at Holy Sport (Haydenshapes custom by Surftech, Walden x Surftech, Libtech, DHD...) and NSP who reported the presence of a growing market in the south of Europe for reasonably priced "PU and epoxy boards made locally, sometimes delivered to retailers in record time," say Sander Blauw and Caren Forbes. At

"While the market is flooded with garage brands there seems to be a very solid demand for good quality product" Kerry Powell, Surftech

Surftech, this rise is not necessarily seen as a threat: "While the market is flooded with garage brands there seems to be a very solid demand for good quality product," assures Kerry Powell, Brand Manager at distributor Jorcani Sports. Another surprising phenomenon is the appearance of "new, small to mediumsized factories acquiring expensive shaping machines aimed at large-scale production," points out Johnny Cabianca from Cabianca Surfboards. But beware; iust remember the fate of One Kin whose ambitious French manufacturing site had to shut up shop just two years after opening...

SHAPES

At the risk of sounding vague, remember that the trend in design terms is that there is no trend! The "ride anything" mantra is opening the door to every kind of shape and this is especially the case in Europe, states Johnny Cabianca: "A much wider range of surfboards is used here (compared to Australia where 90% of the boards are high-performance types)." Some best sellers do stand out from the crowd nonetheless. The twin, retro or modern, has become a must-have and now takes the number one spot in sales at Hurricane Surf as confirmed by CEO Craig Butcher. Their ultra-short format (5'-6') seems to have lost popularity and we are now seeing more longer fish, like the new one from Venon, the Spectre, "a fish with a lot of volume, available in 6'3" and 6'6"", says Brand Manager, Benoît Brecq.

For Mark Price, CEO of Firewire, this is the continuation of a movement started several years ago: "The average surfer is adding more foam under his or her feet", a trend reflected in the success of their Seaside fish, and he predicts that

"the mid-length category will be cooking this year", surely thanks to their Seaside & Beyond model, a modern long-fish perfectly showcased in the videos by Rob Machado on the usual networks. The boss at Firewire. Slater Designs & Tomo also sees it as a consequence of a population of ageing surfers.

"A much wider range of surfboards is used here (compared to Australia where 90% of the boards are high-performance types)" Johnny Cabianca, Cabianca Surfboards

The performance hybrid shortboard hasn't disappeared from the racks though and Bernardo at Holy Sport reminds us that the Hypto Krypto from Hayden Shapes is still among their top 3 best sellers. This type of shape revives the idea of the "one board quiver" according to Alain Riou from Santocha, European distributor of Chilli, citing the Rare Bird model, "our Swiss army knife, from one to six foot".

Others are refusing, in a certain sense, to submit to seasonal trends, continuing to swear by high-performance shortboards alone. But this is only partly true because the 2020 boards are hiding more generous specs behind the blade-like outline of a shred machine. Most notably, we think of the Flash Point and R2 from Chemistry: the former goes for a rounder but still sporty outline while the latter has a flatter rocker "but is not too flat for the steeper surf", assures Commercial Director Willie Smith. It's the same mindset for 2020's newcomer to Pyzel Surfboards, the Pyzalien 2, halfway between the highperformance and "funformance" ranges. Pro-models continue to drive sales in this

category, notably with Jadson André's board at Matta Surfboards, the J5, just like his Lycra number from the CT. Cleverly, the shapers Nuno Matta and Ricardo Martins offer the option of ordering it "just that little bit shorter and wider" than the stock measurements, which is a way of having a pro board under your arm but staying within reach of the amateur surfer. At their Portuguese neighbours, Semente, it's the Vasco Ribeiro model, the VR-14 that is working for their customers: "Vasco is our Top Gun on the QS at the moment", commends Nick Uricchio, Co-Manager and Shaper. Once again, it comes down to a pro model that can suit average level surfers with "a lot of volume, comfortable width, pronounced concave and nice gentle rocker". Pro, yes, but not too much!

"The mid-length category will be cooking this year." Mark Price, **Firewire**

The biggest surprise comes from the (relative) boom in boards aimed at artificial and static river waves. "This is the first time we have created a special range in our catalogue", states Johnny from Cabianca Surfboards, astonished. So it's not surprising that regional initiatives are seeing light of day to cover this, like at the German label Kanoa Surfboards, sparked into action by "the increasing importance of the river surf segment in Germany and the overall GAS region", as explained by its founder Thilo von Osterhausen. The country is indeed seeing many static and artificial wave projects being launched and even competitions. The other interesting point made by Thilo is "a transition from river surfers becoming faithful clients

of ocean boards". For him, soft boards represent the top choice for 70% of this emerging market, in the same mould as their Foamy Fish. Not to be missed then.

MATERIALS & CONSTRUCTIONS

As Dane Reynolds suggested, why change something that already works? Unsurprisingly, the classic PU/polyester combo boards still come out on top in terms of sales. And for good reason, affirms Nuno Matta: "No technology can beat the flex of a PU/polyester board, especially in good waves. That's why all the best surfers in the world use PU/polyester, like you see on the CT." Manufacturers with a very "epoxy" heavy identity like Surftech are now also catering for this with their new Dual-Core, a mix of "the float and pop of epoxy with the responsiveness of PU on the rails", explains Kerry Powell. The success of PU is another trait of a European market more focussed on pleasure than performance: "the retro and alternative designs are still PU boards", asserts Andy Wirtz from Norden especially since "the polished polyester boards offer good looks" as do "polyester resin tints for the retro classic designs".

To find innovation, you have to turn once again towards epoxy boards. Torq are continuing to refine their ACT technology launched in 2019 and more specifically, an EPS board with stratification that employs a matrix of fabrics that are pre-impregnated with epoxy + hardener, as well as (non-woven) carbon reinforcements. The aim is to better control the quantities of resin used and avoid surplus to obtain a lighter board without "dead weight", with flex and above all, "reflex". At Xhapeland in Portugal, they are also striving to reduce

epoxy consumption for the same goal: "We are using more and more infusion and vacuum techniques", explain the team, while continuing to experiment on EPS blanks combined with carbon, Innegra, bamboo and cork reinforcements. The workshop is also experimenting with tracks of foam produced from algae, like the Algae Technology from Arctic Foam. The use of Bioresins is now widespread, just as moulded cores are no longer only destined for entry-level boards and serve to reduce the foam waste from shaping. We are especially talking about the Takayama models from Surftech labelled Ecoboard and the SecureCell blanks from NSP.

More futuristically, the French shaper Romain Paul from Yuyo Surfboard is using a hollow core created "by 3D printing plastic rubbish, stratified with natural basalt fibres and a vegetable-based bioresin."

DISTRIBUTION

Faced with such diversity, it's impossible for retailers to cover the whole spectrum of designs in their shops. Particularly since the shops are "full of imported boards from big brands, sometimes on consignment sale, often with long payment timeframes," adds Johnny Cabianca. The D2C channel is therefore often a customer favourite and board labels are offering online 'custom board builders', like Matta, where the customer can choose everything, from "logo options, graphics, patches, technologies, and much more". The problem comes



more from the large online shops, marketplace types, regrets Nuno Viegas from Glassing Monkey (Simon Anderson Surfboards Europe), "who don't want to deal with stock but display large amounts of product anyway".

Then there are the in-between ways like those offered by Kanoa: "To bring D2C and retailers closer together, we are offering a 'drop ship' option, so that the board can be ordered and paid for in the shop but delivered directly to the purchaser's home". (§)

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSPORTSOURCE.COM

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Hot: mid-length
- 2 Garage shapers
- 3 "One board guiver"
- 4 More accessible high-perf shortboard
- 5 Underground: Boards for artificial waves.

MARKET **INSIGHT**

UK

We are all in this together!

GERMANY AUSTRIA FRANCE SWISS ITALY

In my last missive wrote about enthusiasm. This time it has to be about optimism. which, given the

current circumstances, is in short supply - but it is there and just has to be uncovered.

Hard though it may be we have to remain optimistic. The good thing is that it's easy to be enthusiastic about boardsports, and usually, enthusiasm leads to optimism.

The world today is so different to a few short weeks back - our own business, like so many in the boardsports industry - has been severely impacted. We are not alone - we are all in this together and we will (hopefully) all come out the other side emerging leaner, certainly fitter and ultimately more likely to be able to cope with the vagaries of future business - many lessons will be learnt. And we really ARE all in this together. Amongst all the doom and gloom there is a real sense of togetherness. Retailers are struggling, distributors are struggling, brands and manufacturers are struggling - and there seems very little we can do except to struggle on together and support each other.

Sometimes it is the way that the support is delivered that makes a difference. Debt collectors need to understand that, whilst money still has to flow, sadly for some it has dried up completely. Creditors need to be patient and to work with their customers on the other hand customers need to be understanding of their suppliers needs. It appears that not everyone understands this.

Almost as soon as the 'crisis' commenced we received letters from two large customers. One basically told us that they would be taking 60 days increased credit - no discussion, no apology - no enthusiasm or optimism. The second letter asked for understanding. apologised for a situation outside their control, said they would be doing their best but requested that we 'please bear with them'. The letter reaffirmed the value they place on supplier relationships and on their own team members.

The big thing for me was that the second letter went on to talk about the future, the boardsports consumers and their inherent enthusiasm, the (hoped for) bounce back. There was a marked difference in approach. One showed signs of optimism and enthusiasm.

So what of the consumers? Will they bounce back? Is there a pot of gold being built up (what can they spend their money on right now) and, if there is such a pot, how quickly will that pot get spent?

I don't think we can kid ourselves that the lost revenue will be regained but it does seem obvious to me that all our consumers are itching to get back on their boards and from our own business (which is still open and still shipping with myself and the family in the warehouse) I can see from the daily orders that things are starting to move... albeit slowly. From a dead stop initially sales are moving in an upward direction.

Some of us are luckier than others and are able to combine their daily exercise and get out on a board. As stepfather to four skateboarding kids (three girls, boy) it was agreed that skating could

MARKET **INSIGHT**

be their daily exercise. Unfortunately bankruptcy. "It's another string to our your skateboard is now acceptable - at trading base." least in our village.

Talking to Ali Chricton from Stateside Skates he was taken by surprise. "When support schemes: Postponing VAT and the first lockdown was announced we prepared emergency cashflow forecasts, got ready to implement the furlough procedures and were ready to batten down the hatches. Then we were taken completely by surprise. Our skate business in the UK is up 50% - we are struggling to cope – the reverse of what I expected. It seems that the necessity to keep fit and to keep the kids busy is driving this business." Fair to say that Ali is both optimistic and enthusiastic. I would be.

I also managed to get hold of Matt from Absolute Snow (working from home). In our pond Absolute are primarily a snowsports retailer: "At this time of year we expect it to be slow on winter sports so nothing new there. The real kick in the pants for us was not getting an end to the season - we lost the last few critical weeks and this means we are carrying more stock through to next year. And there lies the real issue. Are people going to book winter holidays? Are they going to be prepared to travel? I believe that they will, but... there's still a big but!"

Absolute Snow recently purchased the Freeze name from the ashes of GORDON WAY

we caused a local furore on the village bow," said Matt "but it was really touch-Facebook page when the kids were and-go as to whether we went ahead. In spotted together on a quiet country the end we decided that the optimistic lane. It's all calmed down and now and approach was the only way forward Alfie (16) is out on his board every day for our business and we're banking on delivering newspapers to vulnerable getting back on track ASAP and reaping people. It seems that taking exercise on the benefit from the second online

As a board business, big or small, make And it seems that our kids are not alone. sure you take advantage of all that the UK Govt have put in place with various PAYE, supported loans for business (zero interest and capital repayment holiday for the first 12 months), 80% contribution to furloughed staff and, for smaller businesses, there is the 'Bounce Back' loan scheme. Get in there.

> Whilst remaining optimistic about our future it is impossible to ignore these terrible times and the impact it is having on everyone. The impact on business, the additional stress and worry is immense - for owners and employees, for family members - for all of us. However there is one thing I am certain about - our consumers, our riders are enthusiasts. They are optimists. They are looking to getting out on their boards, they are craving the outdoors and when it is safe to do so they will return with a vengeance... and if Ali from Stateside is correct we may well have a few more in our congregation.

Finally we have to put it all in perspective - I hope you are all healthy? We need to remember that some are suffering much more than we are. Some have lost loved ones. This will pass but some things can never be 'put right'. Stay safe, stay well, get back on board as soon as you can.



BIG WIG INTERVIEW HURLEY'S JAVIER CARRERA

SOURCE reported back in January that long-time Nike employees Javier Carrera and David Meire had been successful in their bid for the ownership of Hurley EMEA. The pair had the deal in the pipeline for many months and in doing so had managed to broker a favourable outcome whereby they now have the pick of all Hurley products via their licensees, allowing them to focus their categories according to the needs of the region. With the dust settling on the deal, we caught up with new EMEA CEO Javier to see what developments have been made. In a wide-ranging interview we explore how the company is turning the brand into a 365 surf brand, a new emphasis on their women's line and how Hurley EMEA will take the lead in the brand's wetsuit programme. We also cover Hurley's EMEA athlete programme and how they'll be telling their surf marketing stories through a rock 'n' roll lens in the future.

Interview by SOURCE Publisher Clive Ripley & Editor Harry Mitchell Thompson.

After our last interview you went back to Hurley headquarters at Costa Mesa. Tell us the news from your trip, and indeed since our last talk in January. We went there without really having an idea about what we would find and we were very pleasantly surprised. We met almost every license team, most of whom were based on the campus. For our most important category - men's surf apparel - the licensee has kept most of the team intact so the key people designing, developing and driving the collections have remained in their

"Men's surf apparel - the licensee has kept most of the team intact so the key people designing, developing and driving the collections have remained in their positions. These are the people we were working with before and are the guardians of the brand and so the essence of the brand design has remained as it was before, which is critical to us."

"we have seen an expansion into categories we needed such as accessories and sandals, and a renewed focus on the women's line."

positions. These are the people we were working with before and are the guardians of the brand and so the essence of the brand design has remained as it was before, which is critical to us. So with many of the licensing teams in Costa Mesa and many of the licensees headquartered in Orange County everybody is working together building a common thread across the brand. On top of this brand owner BlueStar has built a central team to coordinate everything, across all the licenses and across all territories. They have hired from a new brand Marketing Director, Erica Ryan, Federico Bellegarde as Business Development Director and a Licensee Director, Jake Shalom. They understand the business and have a lot of experience in each of their own areas and have the sensibility that the business needs to keep on driving it forward in the right direction maintaining the value proposition that Hurley offers. We are in regular communication with this team and provide input on what we believe the market wants.

"In terms of athlete pay, firstly companies that sponsor them need to protect their long-term future or they will not be around to sponsor the athletes in the future. This will probably mean that athletes pay will be cut in the short term to a level that enables the athlete to survive but at the same time with all the restrictions on travel, demands placed on the athletes by their sponsors are somewhat diminished."

How's the product looking?

We have seen most of the spring summer product line and we are very happy with it as it's a continuation of the existing Hurley design direction. At the same time, we have seen an expansion into categories we needed such as accessories and sandals, and a renewed focus on the women's line. In fact, as we now have specialist licensees in many of our smaller categories, we are now able

to offer much more than in the past because these specialists have greater resources dedicated to each of these markets. From a product standpoint everything we had hoped for has started to happen and in general as a licensee we have the right to produce products that we feel we need in the

"80% of sales previously came from the men's market. However now we will have a dedicated business plan for women."

European market but that are not part of the global line.

Tell us what's happening with your men's collection.

In men's one of our key priorities is to build the brand's winter offering so we have product to suit conditions for all 365 days of the year. The winter outerwear collection has been designed by Thread Collective based in Montreal, Canada so they know all about cold weather gear. It has two lines one focused around the urban look and the other a really technical offer for the cold-water surfing environment. Both are technically excellent with a twist to give them the Hurley look.

And what are the focuses with the women's line?

We had really good meetings with the woman's licensees. It's great to have such a focus on the women's program, as traditionally Hurley has had a very male focus, with 80% of sales previously coming from the men's market. However now we will have a dedicated business plan for women. For swimwear the women's licensee is Inmocean who are super specialists in the category and for women's apparel it's Hybrid who is a producer of premium women's products and has a very strong design team. Both are located close to the Hurley Costa Mesa offices and as the USA and European women's markets are so similar we are expecting great things from these relationships.

And I understand the wetsuit programme is going to be run globally

 \Box 33

"Competition surfing is much less accessible to this mainstream audience. Story telling takes us back to the romanticism of surfing. We also see the importance of the surf/rock 'n' roll connection in the future of the brand."

by you here in Europe?

For wetsuits we will lead the global wetsuit's program as it's a key category for us in Europe. Wetsuit manufacturing will remain at the same factories in China and Japan and we will continue to evolve the wetsuit line little by little as we see the results of hardcore testing. For example, we moved the stripes to the arm where there is less stretch than the leg to give the graphic a longer life.

How key is sustainability in your product development?

Sustainability is obviously a super important topic for us in Europe. We feel the Hurley brand has long been committed via programs such as the Waves for Water. Sustainability needs to remain a core essence of the brand and not just for marketing, it needs to be designed into the product. You will see more from us on this.

What's the latest on the athlete program at Hurley?

Hurley have re-signed some of their key athletes and BlueStar are aware of how important that program is for the brand. We are still waiting to see the long-term plan but obviously a lot of negotiations are now on hold but the first steps with Kai Lenny and Carissa Moore have been taken. Athletes will definitely remain a key part of the Hurley marketing mix. In EMEA we have a short-term agreement with Nic Von Rupp and will be working on securing him after the COVID-19 situation clears up.

In terms of athletes pay, firstly companies that sponsor them need to protect their long-term future or they will not be around to sponsor the athletes in the future. This will probably mean that athletes pay will be cut in the short term to a level that enables the athlete to survive but at the same time with all the restrictions on travel, demands placed on the athletes by their sponsors are somewhat diminished. We all need to take the hit together now in order that we can all survive the crisis.

How do you see communication with the consumer changing?

We are seeing an emphasis on content creation and less on performance competition now the big Wave Tour has been cancelled. The story telling of the whole journey on how you get to riding the wave helps the general audience understand surfing. Competition surfing is much less accessible to this mainstream audience. Story telling takes us back to the romanticism of surfing. We also see the importance of the surf/rock 'n' roll connection in the future of the brand.

When do you see surfing events restarting?

First of all, our events are outside and, on the beach, and so should be easier and earlier to resume then many other sports. This could create a real opportunity for us because broadcasters around the world are running out of content and if we are one of the first sports to restart our competitions then there could be a great deal of demand from the mainstream broadcasters for our content.

Have you moved into your new offices in Barcelona?

The office move was completed the day before the lockdown in Spain. So, while we were working from home everything was in place and ready for the restart. We now have plenty of space to expand the business and we have also increased the size of the showroom. The new office is 10 minutes walk from

"Our events are outside and, on the beach, and so should be easier and earlier to resume then many other sports. This could create a real opportunity for us"

where we were based before at the Nike Barcelona office. Yes, you've guessed correctly it's 10 minutes closer to the beach than it was before.

Who is on the management team?

On top of the arrival of myself and David Meire we have made a number of changes to the management team and this has involved elevating the young guns in the team, most of whom are surfers. Jose Pascual is now in charge of both our retail and wholesale, Carlos Fernandez is Merchandising and Digital Platforms manager,

"For wetsuits we will lead the global wetsuits program as it's a key category for us in Europe. We moved the stripes to the arm where there is less stretch than the leg to give the graphic a longer life."

Valentine Grandamme is Marketing Manager, Marion Velten runs our supply chain and Manon Jouanine is Product and Design Manager. I'm leading the e-commerce with David at the moment but we are looking for someone to take this role

How is the brand dealing with the current retailer environment?

Obviously everything stopped except for digital so we invested heavily to get this right. We have been developing our own e-commerce site for Europe, and we're super excited to announce the launch of our new Hurley website for the EMEA region. It's a completely new platform that has been developed purely with the consumer in mind and aims to deliver the best of Hurley on every level. We have a very strong assortment with several of our collaborations shown, as well as info on our surfers and brand ambassadors. We're already working on a loyalty program that will bring exclusive benefits for the Hurley community. For us the survival of retailers is key as wholesale is 70% of our business. We made no shipments to retailers for a number of weeks throughout the lockdown. Some stores have cash reserves, and some don't so we helped them on a case by case basis. We understand when accounts say "don't send us any product until we can reopen our store". We proactively have done some cancellation as retailers won't be able to take all the inventory, but we will hold it in our warehouse in case business goes better than expected for some.

As June, July and August are the key months for Hurley we are super prepared to meet demand as it picks up. Fall is a big question mark; a lot of the brands are cutting orders to shops by 40% but I think it won't be as bad as that and we need to take some risk. We will see what happens with back-toschool, for sure consumers will have become much more attuned to buying online and will be more experienced online shoppers, which will change the dynamics between consumer and the brand. But I think consumers will want to be out and about as soon as they can and feel that shopping experience. So, I think fall/holiday will be okay.

b**igwig** interview

How else are you helping retailers? Is there anything you can do on your socials regionally to direct customers to your partner stores?

Social media at Hurley is currently run globally so it's not a tool we can use locally in Europe but obviously this will change in the future. So, what we are trying to do is activate local community events such as those through the Hurley Surf Clubs, for example wetsuit testing at retailers. Obviously, what each brand does will depend on which tools it has available. With us we see it very much as a DIY program, we supply the toolkit and each retailer can choose the tools which will work with their own specific community, as the local shop knows much better than the brand what will move their local scene, this is particularly true in Europe. The plan is to continue to expand the Hurley Surf Club network.

"I think after the lockdown everyone will be looking for an outdoor summer, so this should help our business. Tourism will also be much more localized, and people will only drive around inside their own countries."

Can you give an overall assessment of how COVID-19 affected your business.

We have been far more focused on what we can do, than on the things we can't control, but economically it seems to me to be a worse situation than anything since the second world war. It's hard to predict what will happen but I think after the lockdown everyone will be looking for an outdoor summer, so this should help our business. Tourism will also be much more localized, and people will only drive around inside their own countries. I also think after the virus most people will return to what they did before, some habits may stay longer like washing your hands, but from a consumption view I think younger people will want to live the day even more than before. But right now, we focus on the next nine months rather than any long-term planning. (S)



RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SUP 2020

With the closure of the beaches and a halt to sport in general across Europe amidst the pandemic, the impending return to freedom represents a significant additional lever for SUP as a sport, with the most accessible boardsport continuing to increase in popularity and participation. 2020 retail buyer's guide and trends. **By David Bianic.**



Apart from clothing, SUP is perhaps the most universal product in the boardsports industry and it was hit by the full force of the COVID-19 pandemic as many of its players manufacture on Chinese territory. Production, supply, distribution, the whole chain found itself at a dead loss just as the summer season was starting to look promising, confirms Anthony Scaturro,

Global Brand Manager for SIC Maui who "had very strong 2020 retailer bookings".
As 'luck' would have it, many of the market

"It's no secret that the double digit growth in the market is gone." William Doornekamp, Jobe Sports International "I see all of the technologies as a co-dependent / symbiotic necessity." Anthony Scaturro, SIC Maui

players had already taken precautions, figures Neal Albaz from Poolstar (Coasto, Skiffo, WattSUP, ZRay), and after a disappointing 2019 due to the weather, had stocked up at the source from "European brands who had stock available, finance offers and offering limited risk" after having resorted to importation the previous year.

Overall the feeling is optimistic for the future of the market, even though "it's no secret that the double-digit growth in the market is gone", as pointed out by William Doornekamp, B2B Marketer for Jobe Sports International. Accessibility to recreational SUP also makes it an appealing product for emerging touristic nations such as China for example, says Renwen Lu, Marketing Director at Agua Marina (based in Shanghai), while in countries with a strong boardsports culture like in France, "the market looks slower than last year", evaluates Patrice Remoiville, Founder of 3 Bay Paddle SUP, highlighting the disappearance of a few big brands from France. It's the same tone in Germany, Anja Scheuermann, Marketing Manager for Yolo Board is expecting "to hit the ceiling in 2020". For the team at JP Australia (Sören Siebeck, Division Manager Europe and Philip Mackenbrock in Marketing), it's about gaining perspective: "the market in total is still growing. It is differentiating more though", in the sense that the number of sales points has increased but "all this might result in smaller market shares for different brands and shops although the total number of sold SUPs might still be growing."

TRENDS 2020

There's little chance of the dominance

of inflatable SUPs falling by the wayside; representing around 95% of the sector according to most of the brands we asked. The future of rigid composite models seems to be quite limited beyond core participants because "you can hardly make a consumer who lives in an apartment buy a 12 foot long hardboard," as Renwen Lu from Aqua Marina clarifies. The logistical constraints of rigid boards begin much further up the chain than that, as Stuart Poynter from Tiki points out: "Courier costs are increasing year on year and most couriers now charging volumetric rather than by carton quantities."

The future of rigids will depend on loyalty built with the sport's participants who might turn towards composite models if "for a second SUP they want a rigid/training/touring board" (Jan Strindler, Kona Sports), or even for their third acquisition (Tony Yeung, Aztron). For Anthony from SIC Maui, you have to see the relationship between inflatable SUPs and rigids like a pyramid with inflatables and thermo-plastic rigids at the base of the building and at the very top are the rigid race boards. The more the base grows, the more the summit enlarges proportionally: "I see all of the technologies as a co-dependent /symbiotic necessity."

Indeed, the figures seem to translate to a transition from all-round boards to touring models (further, longer), like at Ari'i Nui where the category represents the largest part of the market, reveals Benoît Brecg, Brand Manager. It's the same touring element driving Mistral, Naish, Agua Marina, Aztron, Jobe, Sroka, Yolo, Indiana, Infinity, JP Australia, Kona, Norden, NSP, Poolstar and Red Paddle Co. A good example is Starboard who are introducing two models in this category, the Waterline (flat-water touring) and the Generation, a board "which offers a 3in1 for Surf, Race and Cruising", aimed at participants looking for narrower touring SUPs, explains Ping Lekdee, Communication

Manager. Commercially speaking, touring represents a really big sector, assures the team from JP Australia, "being in the medium to high price level."

But it has to be said that beyond this trend, the other main traditional SUP disciplines (waves, racing, rivers) are relatively moribund, unless you opt for ultra-specialisation like Hala Gear who are dedicated to whitewater and are predominantly counting on a population "of former kayakers and rafters really expanding the whitewater SUP market", assures Victoria Ohegyi, Marketing Director. A small comeback for wave models should be mentioned, encouraged by the arrival of all-round models, "combo boards that can SUP surf, SUP foil and also be used for wing-surfing", explains Scott Trudon, Brand Manager for Naish, mentioning their Hover Crossover "4-in-1". Starboard were the first to draw guns with their Hyper Nut model that became the brand's "best-selling single model",

"Combo boards that can SUP surf, SUP foil and also be used for wing-surfing."
Scott Trudon, Naish

reveals Ping Lekdee, just like JP Australia's solid success with their Foil Slate, a Swiss army knife, at ease as an SUP surf, SUP foil, wingsurf, wingfoil, windsurf and windfoil! Suffice to say that some are going this way with their inflatable foilboards, which is the case at Indiana and Naish: "We have also just added 2 models that are meant for use with our wing-surfer and a foil", reveals Scott Trudon.

Starboard and Airush have been working together to develop the recently launched FreeWing which fuses the innovation and



ideology of Kite, SUP and Windsurf into a single flying experience optimising both light wind and high wind performance. Of course, foil may represent a certain dynamism, but the furore should not hide the overall anecdotal market share when it comes to the SUP sector. Steve West, Brand Manager at Mistral sums up the situation with a pretty funny analogy: "It's a creative distraction in an otherwise immature market in respect of SUP. It's a bit like asking the average driver to invest in F1 car performance when most end-users are still figuring out how to paddle properly and are just as happy with a Morris Minor as long as it's the right colour." Then there's the fitness/yoga category that continues its ascent



but only concerns a small few boardsports retailers, the board here being a piece of equipment rather than a "vehicle". More surprisingly, Surftech are reporting a proximity between the market of prone paddleboarding and that of SUP. Kerry Powell, Brand Manager for Jorcani Sports (European distributor of Surftech) says that "many SUP races and tours are now putting a prone element inside their races to help support the growing market segment." Well-placed in this niche, Surftech are leaning on the expertise of Bark boards (Commander and Sprinter

INNOVATIONS 2020

even an inflatable version.

Let's start with rigid models as the new designs and constructions are scarce! Patrice Remoiville from 3 Bay delivers a unique 14' racer named the Squid, "inspired by whitewater kayak designs". The result is an outline whose pronounced wide point is located in the rear guarter while underneath the board, the width at the waterline remains 21.5". At Infinity it's the Whiplash (flat water) and Blackfish (all-round race) models that inherit a new construction option, Team Elite Carbon, "a new carbon-moulded technology" reveals Andrea Di Sante from European importer JLID Distribution. This costly construction made in the Kinetic factory requires a mould to be made for each board size, "but the payoff is incredible".

models) with their Tuflite Fusion V-Tech

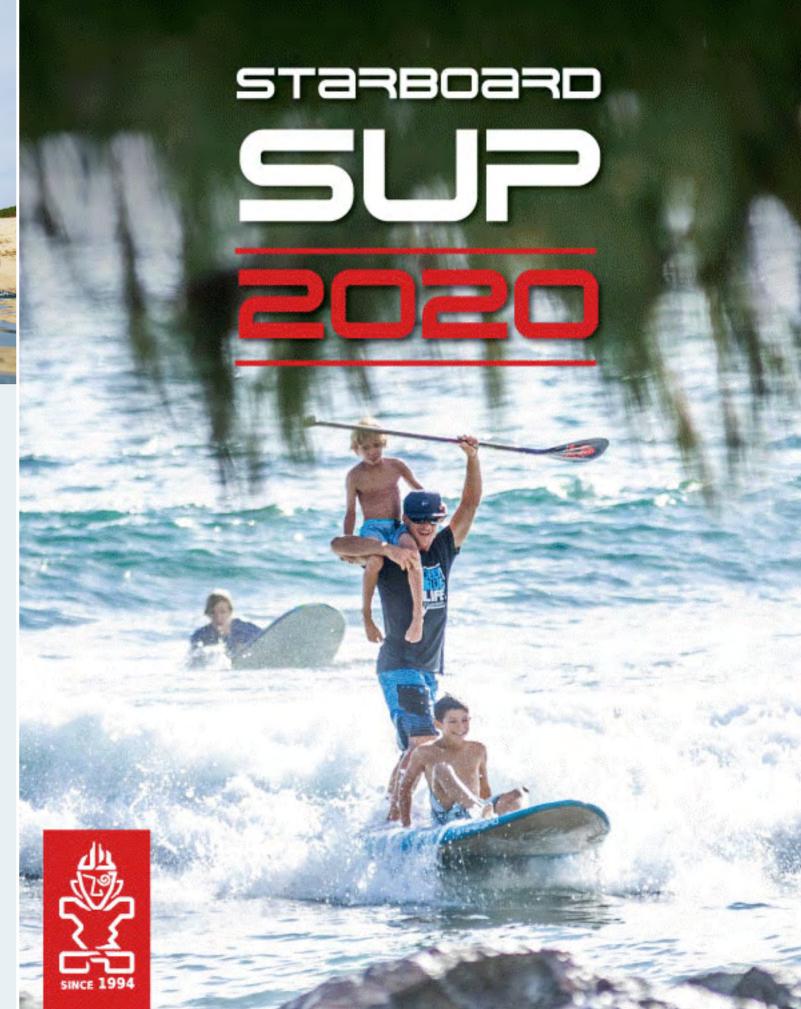
(entry-level), C-Tech, Ghost Carbon and

At the other end of the spectrum of the discipline, the NSP Cruisers with their HIT (High Impact Technology) construction



are aimed at schools and rental facilities thanks to their indestructible build. The EPS SecureCell core is stratified with a carbon fibre used by the army, then wrapped in an ultra-durable styrene-acrylonitrile "bullet skin" layer. Launched in 2019, these HIT Cruisers "are a big part of our 2020 growth", assures Caren Forbes. Apart from race boards, whose constructions continue to refine the weight/durability ratio by using carbon and new cores, composite models seem to have reached a development plateau.

When it comes to inflatables, the advent of multi chamber constructions is feeding the ideas machine. At the beginning, multiple air compartments served as a backup in case of a leak or puncture. In the end, this constraint has morphed into an asset. Mistral are using double chamber technology with their Twin Air Inflatable Technology with two compartments - right-left- separated by "a unique narrow centre hollow void, constrained by an outer compression band", explains Steve West. Another example comes from Aztron whose Compact Double Chamber LITE



technology features on their 10' NOVA. The second "back up" 60-litre chamber allows a reinforcement "i-beam" to be inserted underfoot "to increase the board stiffness by up to 20%" promises Renwen Lu.

This board, as well as the Fly Air Pocket from Fanatic, are surfing on the "compact" concept introduced two years ago by Red Paddle Co, who have just added an 11' model with a resolute touring vocation to the Compact 9'6" they initially launched, "that still packs down to half the size of a standard inflatable board", reminds CEO John Hibbard. At Coasto, the boards are "designed in 3 vertical parts with EVA thickness developed accordingly to the folding lines" for a 40% space-saving gain, assures Neal Elbaz. Also not a bad idea is the split fin-box from Indiana, a fin-box divided in two which means that "folding the board is faster, more easy, more compact and with less risk of breaking the fin-box when you fold the board," explains Maurus Strobel, Founder of the Swiss brand.

Dropstitch technology has been gaining traction at many different brands since last year. Starboard introduced a new technology in 2020 called Woven, "which is both lighter, stiffer and stronger", assures Ping Lekdee. The weight is reduced by 1.5kg on the All-Star Airline and the rigidity is improved by 25% for a feel that's more like a rigid board with less wasted paddling energy.

One of the most important innovations is equally as invisible to the naked eye and concerns the lack of glue used to assemble the layers of PVC. Over time, the glue hardens and eventually cracks and "UV radiation and high temperatures accelerate this effect", explain the team at JP Australia, letting the air escape gradually.

The brand has therefore gone on to use heat-welding technology throughout their inflatable range (apart from the Superlight range).

HELP FOR RETAILERS

Well aware of the constraints of storing SUPs in shops (especially rigid models), brands are offering retailers solutions in order to get the most out of their investment. Victoria at Hala Gear recommends "to pick 3-4 models to display and take brands up on their offers to dropship" (orders made at the retailer, delivery carried out by the brand). This is a commercial option also on offer at Infinity for example. As for William at Jobe, he suggests that shops return to





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an omnichannel strategy to offer a quality of service that's consistent between the physical and online sides: "Shops can stock a lot of products in their warehouse, while showcasing just a few models in the showroom. When consumers look online and see something is in stock, they can go to the shop and an employee can pick it out of their warehouse to show the physical product." To ensure more margin though, it's better to go for pre-orders rather than last-minuters, assures Andy

"To pick 3-4 models to display and take brands up on their offers to dropship." Victoria Ohegyi, **Hala Gear**

Wirtz from Norden. Ping from Starboard

advises small shops to concentrate on

two brands, no more, and to carefully

consider if these brands offer a guarantee

or restocks. This is exactly what JP Australia are highlighting: "Take some basic stock for the start of the season and re-order quickly with the supplier when his stock is getting low" because "in this business model the supplier/distributor (...) takes a big part of the dealer's risk." Likewise, Red Paddle has such confidence in the quality of their iSUPs- "We have a return rate of less than 0.5%"- that all 2020 models come with a 5-year guarantee. After gathering all this



information, it's clear that the SUP market is showing great vitality, even if it does mainly concern an audience of casual participants. It is perhaps the only boardsport to not be dragged upwards by an elite of SUPers. So it's not so much the stars of the sport or the aesthetic dimension of the boards that make the difference but their pure technical/practical characteristics, which are much more tangible points for retailers to defend than hype is. Something to ponder. ⑤

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 From all-round to touring
- 2 Multi-discipline boards
- 3 Prone paddleboards
- 4 iSUP compact
- 5 Dropstitch (woven and X-stitching)
- 6 Dropshipping sales





Retail Expertise

BLUE TOMATO

SOURCE Editor Harry Mitchell Thompson spoke with Blue Tomato CEO Adam Ellis to find out how the European snowboard retail behemoth faired over the COVID-19 crisis.

Tell us how BT was affected by the lockdown, from announcement date, to store closures and online performance.

The impact to our business has been profound and by that I mean it has obviously impacted our results, however it has also impacted the way we serve customers, work together organizationally and with our vendor partners.

First in terms of sales and results, the closure of stores was significant for us financially and the communities around our locations. We have 50 shops in five countries, so obviously the closure of physical was a hit to sales. Our focus on deciding when to close was a function of

employee safety and local mandates, but throughout the process we focused on the health of our employees and customers and let that guide our decision-making progress.

As we closed our physical stores we did see customers engage more with us digitally including transactions for goods, but more importantly to me we saw a big increase in social engagement and other touchpoints with our customers and communities. Our fulfilment and store teams continued to engage and serve customers throughout the cycle. The increase in digital engagement was supported by our marketing teams and they did a great job

of interacting with customers and tried new ways to really engage with customers. I think the notion of digital experiences and what those opportunities may look like are clearer to us now than they were before the crisis. Digitally we saw a shift of some of our existing store customers, but we also attracted new customers through the cycle.

One of the keys was that we had started planning for many potential outcomes in late February as we saw the emergence of the pandemic. As far as our organizational work, the teams pivoted quickly to

I think as we move forward it is clear that both the retailer and brand have to partner on behalf of the customer and for the long-term health of the industry.

home office setups, we had some fun internally with office setups and home office. Our IT team helped us maximize the technology tools we have used to continue to collaborate and work to improve customer experience even with the circumstances. Our HR team really did a great job of helping us navigate the transition while prioritizing the well-being of our employees. I think an opportunity we see is leveraging what we have learned about remote work to continue to evolve with the times relative to office setups and practices.

Our buying and planning teams have worked hard to reforecast our business during and post crisis and then have really worked to be transparent and cooperate with our vendor partners. This crisis is a challenge for us to work through with brands and vendors. I think as we move forward it is clear that both the retailer and brand have to partner on behalf of the customer and for the long-term health of the industry.

As we have returned to store operations, the store teams gave our teams the tools to be safe along with operational guidelines. As we have returned we have seen less traffic, but higher conversion. In general, many people are looking online and coming in more informed than ever about what they want. This trend of highly informed and shoppers with high intent was true pre-crisis but has continued to accelerate. One of the keys for retailers is being able to connect all the inventory, points of contact, and deliver on brand and provide a great experience for customers. We will continue to refine these practices and opportunities based on what we have learned during the crisis.

What were the key performing categories in your eComm biz over the lockdown? And what categories/products have been trending since opening?

Obviously, the cycle started with about 30 days left in the winter season. As resorts closed, the snow portion of the business decelerated pretty quickly. Like many retailers, we have seen a positive trend in skate that has been building for

As we have returned we have seen less traffic, but higher conversion. In general, many people are looking online and coming in more informed than ever about what they want. This trend of highly informed and shoppers with high intent was true pre-crisis but has continued to accelerate.

the last year. The acceleration of this cycle continued during the trend and is performing well. We've also seen an increase in interest in balance boards and surf throughout the cycle. The river surf scene seems to be growing and increasing in popularity as there is less opportunity to travel to surf.

Tell us about the operational changes you had to implement in-store on reopening. Have you spotted any interesting consumer buying habits?

Stores have re-opened with less traffic but higher conversion. The shopper is coming with more intention around their visit and is typically looking for a particular item(s). In general there is less browsing and more buying. We have seen our units per transaction go up post-closure which I think is indicative of the customer coming less, but buying more items when they do.

As you can imagine spending all day in a mask is challenging for the store teams. We all appreciate their willingness to be there for our customers and for the company.

We have also seen an increase since reopening in customers' desire to both pick up in store and to return to store. We continue to encourage these options to customers in order to increase our contact and engagement with the customer.

As we have seen the active cases decline, markets we have begun to see the traffic return in relation to the decline in the presence of the pandemic.

What are the biggest opportunities you're spotting out there in the retail landscape at present?

It would appear that the current cycle will include partnerships, acquisitions, and reorganizations as evidenced by some recent activity. Due to the fragmented nature of the broader market, I think we will see different outcomes and possibilities on a by market basis.

In terms of infrastructure, it appears everyone is thinking about their shops and their role within the broader context of their business.

As we think about events moving through the rest of the year and in the future we are really trying to think through the integration of digital. For instance, how can we support premiers, winter kickoffs, brand interactions digitally. Typically, we have really tried to create powerful experiences for our customers at events and we will continue to focus our efforts on impact more than reach as a function of our events while integrating digital.

What's your take on the upcoming winter season? How will you be tackling old stock issues and insuring you inject newness into the market should things come back firing?

We are working hard on continuing to move our business forward relative to the winter season. Blue Tomato was born out of a passion for snowboarding and we are committed to the experience for our customers. We are looking at ways of really being more holistic in our approach to the season and to what it means for our customers. We want to be part of the experience more broadly than just the retail portion of winter. We have a school in Obertauern, we have supported women's riding days, kids riding days, our team riders and we are looking at these models and other ideas to extend experiences for customers to connect to the experience of winter. I am hopeful in the next few months we will have some cool new things to announce as we kick off the season.

We have remained committed to the stock that we had ordered prior to the pandemic and we are confident that within the assortment we have with our brand partners there is a lot of new exciting product and some exclusive products to Blue Tomato in Europe that will excite customers.

As it relates to aged inventory and old stock we will work with our vendors and be promotional where necessary on seasonal non-carryover to manage our inventory. As noted earlier, the season ended 30 days

The openings the last few weeks haven't had a big impact in terms of business. With the way the season ended, I think it's a chance to get out and either get your last season's last ride which was stolen by the pandemic or to get an early start on this season.

early for all the winter retailers so we are sure there is a fair amount of stock that is sitting idle and will likely be aggressively priced to start this winter.

The real key is to have a compelling assortment that is less about price and more about strong storytelling, exclusivity and a strong brand or technical component behind it. I am confident we will have a strong assortment for this winter that has these critical elements.

Are you looking to any foreign markets or different markets in general for inspiration or lessons on how to go forward?

I don't think we have found one playbook so far that is really one to rely on. We are always surveying the markets to see what is happening as we think about how to operate and how to react going forward. Obviously, we have looked at what has happened in South Korea, Singapore, and locally in the markets of Europe to see what practices are working.

Finally, with Kaunertal and Hintertux reopening have you seen a general uptick from this? Does it give confidence for next winter?

The openings the last few weeks haven't had a big impact in terms of business. With the way the season ended, I think it's a chance to get out and either get your last

season's last ride which was stolen by the pandemic or to get an early start on this season. We always get a kick out seeing friends and co-workers out there.

As it relates to the season, I am confident in our employees and the company. We have learnt a lot in the last ten weeks, I have been really impressed with everyone's ability to adapt, learn in the moment and apply those learnings to move us forward. I am also confident that our brand partners are going to deliver on great campaigns and products that are going to inspire our customers. I am also confident the customer is going to be out on the mountain this year. We believe more than ever that our customers will want to engage even more around their passions after living through the pandemic. We think peoples' interest in engaging with others and having powerful experiences isn't something that will disappear and those are things we feel we are well positioned to service. ©



SUNGLASSES 2020

Here comes the sun! Find all essential 2020 sunglasses styles in our Retail Buyers Guide by SOURCE Skateboard Editor **Dirk Vogel.**



As consumers weigh staycation over the possibility of vacation, nothing is the same in summer 2020. But people still need sun protection. "In the current society where more and more people get health conscious and look for good quality protection for their eyes, sunglasses are a huge growing category," said Marie Azam, European Brand Manager at Carve. Asking around among brands, authenticity and purpose emerge as common themes for the season. "Brands need to understand themselves and their customers more than ever. This is a time where core values matter more than before." said Rory Atton, founder of dewerstone, an outdoor brand based in Dartmoor National Park, England.

This return to core values is already transforming the brand landscape. "The market will further bifurcate: To price point styles meaning good shades at super affordable pricing and to high end product

built with quality like our purpose-built Cross Performance Collection and a solid feature base. In conjunction, proper marketing, distribution, and brand awareness will play a role," said Shay Williams, Product Development Specialist at Dragon Alliance. "The market is maturing and where we mainly had high- and low-end fashion sunglasses a few years ago there is now a

"The market will further bifurcate: To price point styles meaning good shades at super affordable pricing and to high end product built with quality like our purpose-built Cross Performance Collection and a solid feature base. In conjunction, proper marketing, distribution, and brand awareness will play a role." Shay Williams, Product Development Specialist, **Dragon Alliance**.

more widespread market. We see a lot of mid-range alternatives and niche brands coming and the sport segment is on the rise with performance styles being adopted by the fashion scene as well," said Robert Olsson, Co-Founder of Spektrum. The focus on performance takes centre stage in sunglasses collections from boardsports brands this season, informing everything from frame shapes to lens tints and materials.

Looking at price points, brands respond to consumer demand for functionality even at the entry level, where labels such as Carve and Sinner stake their claim. As Dirty Dog's Sales Operations Manager Tom Lazarus puts it: "Our Eyewear range centres around affordability at €44.99 to €64.99 whilst still providing the technology and functionality you would expect at higher price points. With acetate and Grilamid TR90 in our plastic options and Polycarbonate polarized lenses, our sunglasses are punching well above their weight." Performance brands position their sports-specific styles between €130 to €150, but the ceiling is high for premium models including Dragon's XP Collection at €245. Experience is key in finding the perfect pair of shades, so Maddy Smith, Marketing Director at SPY+, encourages retailers: "Take the doors off your eyewear displays! Open cases encourage engagement, engagement equals sales."

THE 3 MAJOR SUNGLASSES TRENDS TO WATCH IN 2020 COLLECTIONS

equivalent of 'ugly tech sneakers' is having its moment this summer. "We are seeing the return of high wrap glasses gaining popularity again with younger consumers. All over the globe, big cylindrical shields are winning in 2020," said Will Conk, Director of Sun Product at Oakley, who historically started the trend with their Blades line. Look for shields and wraprounds from brands such as SPY+ (Flynn model), Melon (Alleycat), Bliz (Nordic Light), Red Bull SPECT (Pace), Smith (Flywheel), Bollé

(Falco), and of course Oakley (Sutro). At Red Bull SPECT, Head of Brand Marius Cadalbert confirmed their, "focus on wrap-around styles to guarantee best protection and secure fit," pointing out the special requirements of skydive and motocross athletes as inspiration.

r**etail buyer's** guide

- 2. Oversized women's styles. This summer's shapes are more diverse than ever, but Oakley's Will Conk has a finger on the pulse: "Right now we are seeing a trend towards oversized frames for females and boxier styles continue to be a hit for the modern man." Look for generously proportioned panto-style frames that look flattering on a wide variety of faces, as well as surprise hits such as modern interpretations of classic cat eye shapes as well as feminine aviators true to the 'go big, or stay home' credo.
- **3. Colour explosion.** From front sections to temples to lens tints, this summer's sunglasses are all about colour pops. Shay Williams at Dragon Alliance, confirms that "Dragon's Seaglass collection has seen a rise in both pink and copper mirrored lenses, proving there's a market for fun and outwardly flashy colours." SPY+ is stoking consumers with the Glowed Up Series, "glowing with supernova-like intensity, these sensational colour combinations fuse bright neon with soft matte black for an electrifying look. Classic black didn't just grow up, it Glowed Up." Melon has added colour splashes to the Alleycat model, "a high performance MTB focused model made in Italy with ZEISS trail performance lenses, a whole new category for us but it is flying off the shelves as we still undercut the big boys," said Melon's Neil Slinger.

FRAME SHAPES

As boardsports brands realign their collections around sports performance, last season's fashion-forward round frames take a backseat. Taking the wheel are rugged, square frames equipped with performance lenses and packed with sturdy tech to withstand some impact. Watch out for sports-approved styles from brands such as

Oakley (Wheel House model), SPY+ (Discord), Spektrum (Kall), dewerstone (Tambora MK2s), Dirty Dog (Volcano), Bliz (Luna), Carve (Volley), Dragon (Renew), Electric (Knoxville), Sinner (Lemmon), Smith (Lowdown), Spect (Bow), CHPO (Bruce), Melon (Layback 2), Azr (3746), Bollé (Vulture), Cébé (Hipe), Quiksilver (Crusader), Shred (Stomp), Otis (Rambler), and Zeal (Campo). Of course, this season's mix also includes fresh new flavours like Electric's cool Elsinore aviator style or Sinner's glacier-ready Andes model, while Spektrum ships every pair of sunnies with, "two different size nose pads for customization and adjustable, rubberized temples for ultimate fit and comfort."

FRAME COLOURS

Here's a surprise: While colour pops are all the rage this season, black frames are dominant bestseller across brands. Colour is added by ways of lens tints or contrasting panels, while Marie Azam at Carve notes: "Graphics are not so 'hot' anymore, we

"Take the doors off your eyewear displays! Open cases encourage engagement, engagement equals sales." Maddy Smith, Marketing Director at SPY+

do not present many graphics. Colours are introduced in the frame mainly in the branches and in our translucid frames." Speaking of translucid, tinted acetate frames continue their successful run, with pink champagne and yellow shades looking hot this season.

LENS TINTS

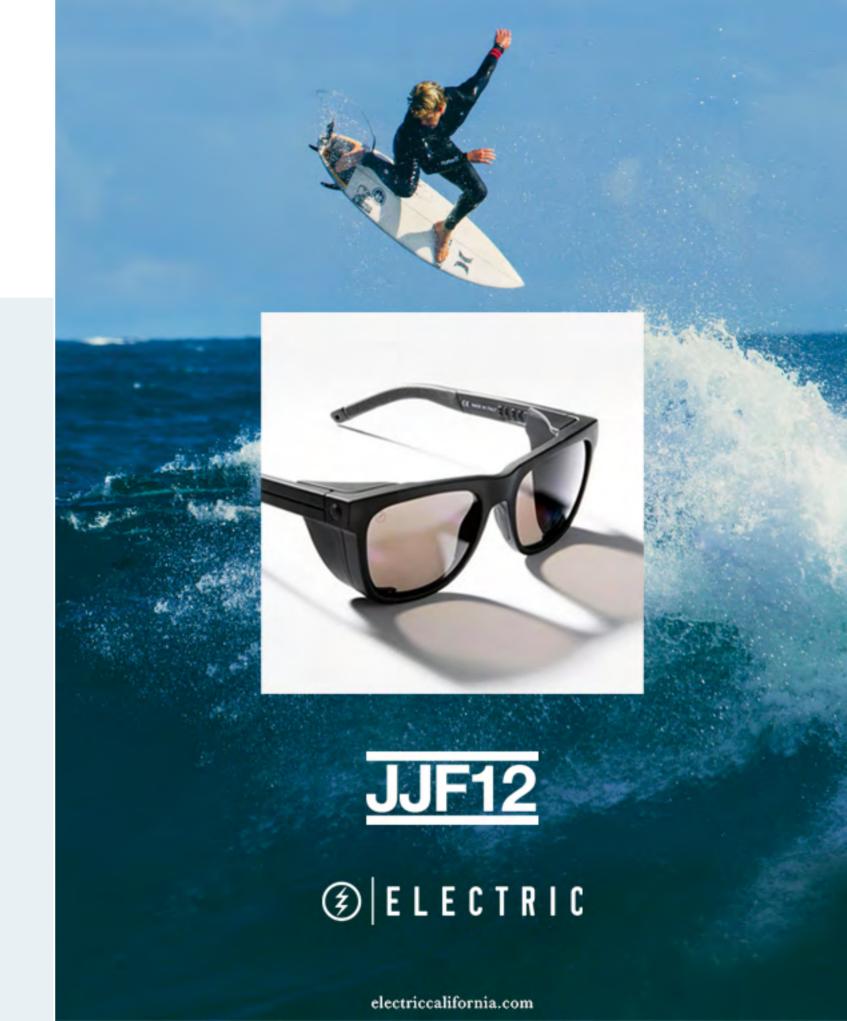
In terms of tints, last season's trend towards reflective lenses remains in full force. According to Tom at Dirty Dog, "lens Mirrors remain a key element of our offering based off our Core Mirrors of Red Fusion, Blue Fusion and Green Fusion." But don't sleep on summer 2020's hot ticket: icy blue lens

tints that have been making a splash across brands. Bliz combines the trend towards shield eyewear and this hot colourway in the Nordic Light black mask with a blue lens: "It is a high-tech lens that provides significantly better contrasts and enhanced colours in poorer lighting conditions and flat light."

LENS TECHNOLOGIES

Again, lens tech serves the season trend for enhanced performance, for instance with new evolutions of Prizm lenses at Oakley, at Quiksilver with the new Quiksilver Adapt photochromic lenses and at Smith: "ChromaPop filters two specific wavelengths of light that cause colour confusion. It delivers greater definition, more natural colour, and unmatched clarity," said Lisa Osti, PR & Communication Manager EMEA at Smith. On the same note, Boukje Bontenbal, Product manager at Sinner is stoked on the brand-new Sinner Sintrast lens, "specially made for different type of sports, such as water sports, golf, cycling and running. This special colour-filter technology enhances the important colour that is important in your sport, for example the green colour when you play golf." At SHRED. Global Marketing Manager Matthieu Perez points out: "Contrast Boosting Lens technology, which enhances clarity, image definition, and the vividness of colours", developed with MIT.

At Electric California, top-shelf styles are equipped with, "Polarized Pro lenses that combines all the benefits of polarized lens with premium coatings like hydrophobic, mirror, oleophobic, anti-reflective," said Arnaud Gaillard Founder and CEO of Pilot Fish EMEA, distributor for Electric. Also look forward to something new from Carve: "In 2021, Carve will introduce transition lenses, 'smart' lens with photochromic technology which enable the lens to adapt to the lighting and a range of blue screen protection glasses." Brands such as dewerstone and Melon trust in German precision ZEISS lenses and add their own performance twist.



MATERIALS AND SUSTAINABILITY

In terms of materials, brands are split between time-honoured evewear staples such as acetate on one hand, and high-tech blends including grilamid. Brands with well-stocked R&D departments continue pushing the boundaries, including Oakley: "Our performance materials remain strong for 2020, including O-Matter, Unobtainium and Plutonite lenses, which are innovations and materials that have helped define the Oakley brand." At gloryfy, Head of Marketing Claudio Blassnig said: "NBFX, an unbreakable plastic with highest optical quality, is used throughout the whole collection." Meanwhile, dewerstone fuses a sustainability focus with progressive tech: "The Tamboras Mk2 with compressed layered wood have a super light feel and low-profile form and the Sumbawas Zebra Wood makes every individual pair unique."

Amid the current change in consumer behaviour, the focus on sustainability is emerging as a key differentiator. Johanna Åkerström, Marketing Coordinator at CHPO announced that, "Starting this season, all of our sunglasses are made out of 100% recycled plastic. The pouch that comes along with our sunglasses is made out of recycled PET-bottles." Shay at Dragon said that "all of the sunwear in the Lifestyle collection are made from injected plant based-resin. For March 2020, Dragon released the Upcycled collection, a small capsule collection of sunwear and optical frames that are created solely from water bottles, or recycled PET plastics. Dragon is the first brand in the space to have converted a majority of their line to plant based resin, as well as first to market with multiple, fully recycled frames in the eyewear space." Spektrum uses "Swiss made bio-based Grilamid with a substantially lower environmental footprint than petroleum-based materials" and Otis is



proud of the "Eco Acetate Collection made from renewable resources widely present in nature." At Zeal Optics, this summer is all about "More Colour. Less Pollution" and Roxy implements a new special grilamid BTR 600 LS which is ecologically produced, based on castor plants and energy from bio-mass. "Both consumers and retailers demand brands use their influence to lead on global issues like climate change. This isn't a stylistic or marketing choice - it has to run to the core of how you operate as a business," said Rory Atton at dewerstone, supporters of 1% For the Planet. (§)

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Sports performance trending
- 2 Square frame shapes
- 3 Plain frames, colourful lenses
- 4 Shields and wraparounds
- 5 Mirrored lenses
- 6 HOT: Blue lens tints!
- 7 Focus on sustainability



BOW-002P
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SUNGLASSES

2 0 2 0

PICTORIAL



AZR - Beverly



AZR - Clark



AZR - Jack



Bliz - Fusion



Bliz - Luna



Bliz - Matrix



Bolle - Baron



Bolle - Falco



Bolle - Vulture



Carve - Havana



Carve - Vandetta



Carve - Volley



Cebe - Hipe



Cebe - Iron



Cebe - Sunrise



CHPO - Bodhi



CHPO - Vanessa



CHPO - Vik



Dewerstone - Sumbawa



Dewerstone - Tambora



Dewerstone - Orton 2.0



Dirty Dog - Banger



Dirty Dog - Stray



Dirty Dog - Volcano



Dragon - Baile H20



Dragon - Meridien



Dragon - Renew



Electric - Elsinore



Electric - JJF12



Electric - Knoxville



Gloryfy - Bon Voyage



Gloryfy - Kingstone



Gloryfy - Panto Irie Daily



Melon - Alleycat



Melon - Echo



Melon - Layback



Sinner - Andes



Sinner - Lemmon



Sinner - Stelhead



Oakley - Portal X



Oakley - Sutro



Oakley - Wheel House



Smith - Flywheel



Smith - Lowdown



Smith - Wildcat



Otis - Omar



Otis - Rambler



Otis - Vixon



Spect - Bow



Spect - Drift



Spect - Pace



Quiksilver - Cruisader



Quiksilver - Jericho



Quiksilver - Wayback



Spektrum - Anjan



Spektrum - Blankster



Spektrum - Kall



Roxy - Madcat



Roxy - Minoaka



Roxy - Moana



Spy - Cyrus

Zeal - Campo



Spy - Discord



Spy - Flynn



Shred - Belushki



Shred - Provocator Airflow



Shred - Stomp



Zeal - Crowley



Zeal - Palisade

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MARKET **INSIGHT**

2020 has been quite a surprising and genuinely tough year so far. It started with a steady January sales period and a relatively calm February. Taken by surprise, in mid-February Italy heard about the first serious Coronavirus cases occur in Milan. Later the virus spread and the infection cases were rising in numbers day after day until the beginning of March, when the government eventually announced the lockdown of the country.

Most stores closed their doors by March 10 and were shut until May 18. This was also the case for bars, restaurants, hotels, barber shops and other industries where staff have a lot of physical contact with customers. This situation caused a fair amount of problems to retailers, distributors, agents and brands.

The end of the snow pre-book season was interrupted and many agents could not see their customers in person as they had to stay home. As confirmed by the sales representatives from all Italian regions, the shop closure resulted in lower pre-book numbers compared to the industry estimates for the year. Generally, sales done by e-mail or Skype do not drive the customer to order the product in the same way. A purchase often requires the buyer to see the technical product in person.

The ski areas closed early and had to organise travel home for many tourists earlier than expected. The confinement has resulted in an even bigger problem for summer tourism as we are still not sure if international tourists will be allowed to travel to Italy this summer. Italy heavily relies on the tourism business and the absence of such national income can drastically reduce the country's budget and the ability to help our citizens cope with difficulties. A long with the food and beverages industry and the hotel industry, boardsport retailers see the big percentage of their turnover from sales to tourists.

The government is currently helping companies with cheap bank credit and other benefits. For example, every business with a valid VAT number received 600 Eur for inability to work in March 2020. Rent can be partly, around 60%, deducted from future tax payments. Admittedly, it does not

completely cover the losses and often is not enough to save businesses from closure. Many shop owners are already facing and try to fight against bankruptcy. Stores have been out of cash with invoices still coming at the end of each month, whilst the entire spring stock is still unsold.

ITALY

GERMANY AUSTRIA FRANCE SWISS UK

The lucky ones, who had set up a good online store before the Covid-19 crisis began, are, for sure, the winners. Online figures do show good growth, as nearly every Italian online store confirms. Unfortunately, this is only a small achievement for many shops, as most of the smaller independent stores get most of their turnover from their physical store.

Skate hardgoods, however, suffered less and were stable with great increases in sales online, which means that many kids still went out to skate in front of their houses or in their backyards to kill time.

What will the future bring, how many customers will come shopping after the lockdown, how will discounts affect our market? These and many more questions are in the retailers' heads right now and nobody knows how the situation will unfold. What is clear though, is that many retailers, agents and distributors always wished, and now can hope, that the industry is going to slow down.

Lukas from Sub Skateshop and Sublime streetwear stores puts it like this: "Going more for quality than quantity, having longer seasons, postponing sales periods and being able to sell summer goods during the summer (July - August) and winter goods during winter (December - January) would be my wishlist for the upcoming seasons and years."

Stay healthy and hopefully, cheerful Italians will see you again very soon, since we really want to give everyone a big lovely hug.

FRANZ JOSEF HOLLER











PLAY SNOWBOARD

Hand-made in Switzerland, PLAY Snowboards are all about fun and sustainability. Chris Spoerri talks about how together with Co-Founder Phillipp Gossweiler, they manage a flexible, eco-oriented custom production and are about to launch a new 'country-flag' range of boards.

Please give an overview on how and why the brand began.

It was in 1988 when I (Chris Spoerri) and my school mate built our first snowboard in the garage. We were convinced that we could make better boards than the ones that were on the market at the time. We succeeded in making lighter and more playful boards and started to sell them to friends and family. In the late nineties, I started to make customised boards professionally and called the brand Pumpkin Snowboards. When Philipp Gossweiler joined me in 2004, everything became



even more professional. Since then, we've worked out many new shapes and technologies which made many snowboarders very happy. Pro riders, companies, and customers from all over the world trust in our know-how and workmanship. Our snowboards regularly hit the top of the podiums in allimportant snowboard events around the globe. Three years ago, we decided to change the name from Pumpkin to PLAY Snowboards. A dedicated snowboard brand - made in Switzerland.

Who are the people behind Play, and what are their backgrounds?

Chris Spoerri – Founder of Cloud 9 Distribution – "I left my studies as an Electronic Engineer to manage the snowboard section of a big winter sports store. Three years and a trip around the world later, I founded the company Cloud 9 Distribution which is runs b2c and b2b business in Switzerland. Philipp Gossweiler – started to work with Cloud 9 in 2004 – "I





was Cloud 9's first employee and started as a sales person in the store. Later, I got involved with designs and production of the snowboards together with Chris."

What is the brand ethos?

Snowboarding is fun! PLAY
Snowboards are all about fun
and sustainability. Of course,
we want every customer to be
happy with the product but it
is also vital that our ecological
footprint is as small as possible.
We reduce production waste to
a minimum, use as eco-friendly
materials as possible and keep
the shipping means as short as
we can. Most importantly, our
boards are hand-made at our
local factory (the Factory 9), here
in Switzerland. Yet, the price





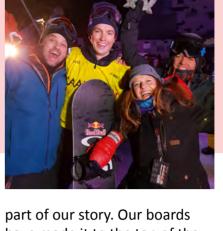
range doesn't exceed that of the high-end boards from bigger snowboard brands.

What's new from the brand for the 20/21 season?

We updated a few shapes and came up with more sizes for some models. As an eye-catcher, we created the new 'country flag' range for pro rider Queralt Castellet which is available on our Halloween Model.

How are you marketing the brand?

As we are work with many pro riders on the world tour (Scotty James, Pat Burgener, Toby Miller, Iouri Podladtchikov, Queralt Castellet, Dave Habluetzel, etc.), it is our focus to point out this



part of our story. Our boards have made it to the top of the most important podiums – Olympic Games, X-Games, World Championships and many more. To spread the word, we mostly use social media, support local events (competitions, demo days) and some print media. Snowboarding is fun! That's our policy with Play Snowboards. Our name is a programme and if you are open to it, we guarantee you will have unlimited fun on our snowboards.

Where are you manufacturing your snowboards?

We build our snowboards in our little factory called 'Factory 9' (www.factory9.ch) that's based in Winterthur, Switzerland. We proudly stamp the 'made in Switzerland' label on all those snowboards. At the same factory, we also make custom boards for several pro riders, shops, companies, and end consumers who want to have their own 'pro model' made. This has been the best solution, because we are super flexible and can change production steps very quickly if needed. Plus, the quality



management is 100% in our hands.

Why should retailers stock your brand?

Our know-how that we have from working at World Cup level. We use the best materials only. Our snowboard graphics are very easy to sell.

We have boards for every taste and skill level.

All our boards are made in Switzerland.

Where are you currently distributed and what is your most successful territory and why?

We focus on the Swiss market. We also sell directly to shops outside Switzerland but we're not looking for international distributors for now.

What are the plans for the future of Play?

The idea is to steadily grow within our domestic market. Once we reach a level where we think we could take a step outside Switzerland, we'll take it. But we're not in a hurry. We always prefer quality to quantity. §

PLAYSNOWBOARDS.COM

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

LONGBOARDS 2020

Coronavirus or not, the wheels keep spinning in the longboard biz. Get the details in our 2020 Longboards Retail Buyer's Guide – COVID-19 Edition by SOURCE Skateboard Editor **Dirk Vogel.**



2020 was going to be a banner year for our industry with skateboarding making its official debut as an Olympic discipline and mainstream interest at a new high. Then COVID-19 hit – and cancelled everyone's plans (and the Olympics). Nevertheless, folks in the longboard business remain optimistic, including Lowri Holness at SHINER Distribution/Arbor Longboards: "The Olympics would have definitely boosted the skateboard market in general. Now, with the delay, the public is focusing more on the pursuits they can do when they are again able to go outside, and skateboarding will be one of those staple pursuits."

Since social distancing measures appear destined to become the 'new normal' when economies across Europe end their COVID-19 lockdown measures, the future of team sports remains uncertain. But skateboarding, on the other hand, can be enjoyed alone and longboarding in particular offers a relatively

safe mode of enjoying the outdoors, which has led to somewhat of a paradox in retail. "During this time locked up at home we've seen the demand for skateboards go up for sure... Our online retailers, which are still open and operating have been keeping busy!" said Josh Barrow, EU Marketing Manager at Globe. At Landyachtz, International Accounts Manager David Price confirmed: "With all kids being out of school and parents trying to

"The Olympics would have definitely boosted the skateboard market in general. Now, with the delay, the public is focusing more on the pursuits they can do when they are again able to go outside, and skateboarding will be one of those staple pursuits." Lowri Holness, SHINER Distribution/Arbor Longboards

find ways to keep them busy in their house or neighbourhood, online skateboard sales are up in Europe. The situation in the USA is similar."

Another factor working in longboarding's favour: COVID-19 is not the first crisis in recent years. The industry weathered 2008's Great Recession and only recently climbed out of a downward cycle of overstock and imposter brands from the mid-2010s. Dave at Landyachtz said: "We started off Q1 of 2020 in a good position. Pre-books with

"During this time locked up at home we've seen the demand for skateboards go up for sure... Our online retailers, which are still open and operating have been keeping busy!" josh barrow, Globe

European accounts were up 15% on average." At Jucker Hawaii, head honcho Mike Jucker concluded: "It appears that the consolidation of brands has tapered off and only the good ones remain. At least in Europe." Sharing this sentiment, Andreas 'Maui' Maurmeir, Retail and Marketing Manager at Sector 9 said: "It's back to a real level. The trashy cheap stuff is finally out of the stores or the stores do not exist anymore. That being said there are still so many people out there practising and for sure they want and need excellent hardware."

Here at the major longboard hardware trends retailers need to watch in 2020 as the world emerges from COVID-19 lockdown:



1. RIDING STYLES: SURFING AND COMMUTING

Summing up the main riding styles for the season, Benoit Brecg at HOFF Distribution (Flying Wheels) said that, "the market in Europe is more centred on Surf Skate and cruising." His brand caters to surf skate with three technologies, including the Lombard baseplate that turns any conventional truck into a surf set-up, plus the Capitol singlepivot truck and STR closed-angle surf truck. Maui at Sector 9 has seen great demand for, "Gullwing Sidewinder Trucks that allow to carve at higher speed to really get yourself from point A to point B surfing." This season, **Z-FLEX** introduces Waterborne Surfskate Adapters to give existing boards that 'surfy' edge, while all brands mentioned in this report also offer Surf Skate completes starting at €139. Meanwhile, product developer Iciar Sánchez, creator of the Slide by Sancheski series, sees alternative transportation as a hot trend: "We believe cruiser demand has risen over longboarding due to the fact that they are easier to carry and more versatile than a 40-inch board. Timothy Mackey at DB Longboard also said that, "compact commuting platforms are gaining traction. Drop through twin tips 38-40 inches still slay."

2. SHAPES: SHORTER LONGBOARDS

The trend towards shorter rides is universal, reaching even performance segments like downhill. "Performance downhill boards are steadily getting smaller to be more manoeuvrable, relying on improved trucks, wheels, and bushings to provide stability," said Shane Maloney, Brand Manager at Madrid Skateboards, pointing out the brandnew signature board shape for IDF World Champion Harry Clarke, the Snitch, Speaking of shapes, current line-ups crystallize around wide-bellied surf-style decks and elongated drop-through longboards. At Z-Flex, Jay Baikie, Head of Marketing & Ecommerce, is hyped on the 37-inch Log-roll Surfskate that is "based off the popular Z-Flex Chipper shape and utilizes the patented Waterborne technology as a market first. Don't mistake this for just another reverse kingpin truck on another cruiser. Our Surfskates use asymmetrical design to allow for 3x more turning than an ordinary skate truck."

Miller Division's product manager Ivan Garcia Arozamena sums up 2020's shapes as follows: "As for surfskates and cruisers, they vary between 29 "and 32.5" Always with extra widths for better foot position and comfort. The shapes of all kinds, from pintails, swallow tails... The important thing is that in the area where you put your feet you have enough size to ride at ease." At Landyachtz, Dave Price reported: "Mini-Cruisers are gaining in popularity and continue to be our best sellers. I would define 'mini-cruiser' as under 32 inches length, 8-inch or narrower with narrow trucks and smaller, under 65mm wheels in new shapes like our Dinghy Coffin and Dinghy Blunt."

3. CONSTRUCTIONS: TECH VS. CLASSICS

The level of tech and finesse in board constructions has never been higher.
Leading the way, Pablo Castro at Loaded Boards highlighted the "biscuits and gravy construction for the Icarus. The five-part core allows us to create dramatic contouring to achieve our best soulful carving experience to date. As of 2019 we've moved most of our production over to Entropy Super Sap



resin. We've also been using an increasing amount of basalt fabric instead of fiberglass or carbon." While most brands, including Arbor, Globe, and Madrid to name but a few, rely on premium maple and bamboo in their boards, Sector 9 is bringing back a classic: "We are happy that we will bring back some fibreglass boards into our line with the SPLASH SNAPBACK. Fibreglass production became ridiculously expensive in the States, almost impossible to bring something up for a reasonable price."

4. NEW BEGINNERS NEED BOARDS

Blame it on the lockdown, but a new wave of beginners – including older riders rediscovering their groove – are picking up longboards. Asked about appropriate boards, Shane at Madrid suggests: "Dropthru longboards with large riding platforms are holding on to popularity in the beginner



and casual market due to their ease of use."
Retailers need to stock completes from high-end brands to make sure that newbies have a positive experience from day one.
Lowri Holness is proud that, "all of Arbor's Certified Completes are built with the best components, including Paris and Ace Trucks and Arbor Wheels." Timothy at Origin Distribution (DB, Rayne, Flow Surfskates) said: "We predict our short cruisers will continue to be popular as people who haven't done much longboarding will pick boards that are budget-friendly and have popular shapes and sizes."

5. ACCESSORIES: TIME TO UPGRADE

The accessories segment is also rife with upgrades and innovations. Another potential advantage, as consumers may avoid large purchases because of COVID-19, but still want to enhance their ride with new trucks or wheels. Here's where Landyachtz comes in with new precision 120mm Grizzly race trucks and dual durometer race wheels (Cheetahs) that are the result of over one year of R&D. Shane at Madrid swears by the combo of Caliber II 50° 184mm Trucks and 89a bushings. Jucker is still riding high on the success of the new P1 longboard truck, while Miller Division has upgraded the Surfskate Truck (xrkpII) to achieve 12 percent better turn with eight-hole baseplates to expand the wheelbase by 2.5 centimetres.

Speaking of turning, Iciar Sánchez at Slide said that their "new third-generation front truck makes wheel bite (almost) impossible." In terms of wheel trends, Timothy at Origin Distro sees the impact of commuting (see 1.): "We think that big wheels will follow this trend. Our 90mm Hurricanes by Cloudride make sidewalk cracks and general debris easy to roll over." Pablo at Loaded Boards confirmed that "big and beautiful continues to work well for Orangatang. Our 85mm Caguama continues to do excellent for us." Benoit at HOFF suggests Black Arrows bearings and Frowars wheels as must-haves,

particularly the Gyro (76mm), Climax (65mm) and Bumper (60mm) models.

6. SUSTAINABILITY? CERTIFIED!

Due to the widespread lockdown, 2020 may go down in history as the first year in which CO2-emmissions are actually declining. Perhaps consumers will emerge from the crisis with a new vigour for sustainability and transparent practices. In that case, major longboard brands have the advantage: "We are working on decreasing production and post-consumer landfill waste in terms of packaging and one-time use plastic. Also new materials that are eco-friendlier. It's too early to share our secrets, but our #1 goal this year is to become more sustainable and be more aligned with the UN Sustainability Goals," said Desiree Moore, Marketing Director at Dusters California. Arbor crafts all boars from FSC Certified Canadian Maple. while The Bamboo Collection is built with a sustainable Bamboo Finish Ply. Ivan at Miller Division announced: "All our skateboards carry the FSC seal, which guarantees that they come from sustainable forests that are reinforced at the same time." Certified or not. longboards offer a clean option for urban transportation in the 'new normal' after COVID-19 and have never been more evolved and diverse than today. (\$)

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSPORTSOURCE.COM

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Demand for carving and commuting
- 2 Surfskate truck kits
- 3 Fibreglass deck renaissance
- 4 Certified sustainability
- 5 Short drop-through completes
- 6 Optimized truck geometries
- 7 Bigger wheels



Landyachtz.com @landyachtzlongboards

Riders: Alex Hannigan, Steven Vera, Dillon Stephens and Stephen Vaugn Location: Santa Barbara, California Photographer: Jacob Lambert





BARK PADDLEBOARDS

Bark Paddleboards have a storied history in the category and with the likes of John John Florence spotted cross training on their shapes in recent vears, both the brand and prone paddleboarding are on the up. Already well established in the USA & Australia, prone is now on the rise in Europe and Bark's partnership with SurfTech provides retailers with a hype new product category.

Please give an overview of how and why the brand began.

Joe Bark loves the ocean.
Everything flows from
there. Born and raised in Los
Angeles, a place teeming with
surf and ocean history, Joe took
his cues from surfing's "Greatest
Generation" of boardbuilders,
paddlers and shapers, salt-ofthe-earth pioneer types from the
50s and 60s who cut the example
the rest of us should follow.



He made himself his first paddleboard in 1976, and today, Bark Paddleboards is widely recognized as the leading brand in the burgeoning ocean endurance community. He has a long and storied history as a surfer, riding big days at coveted and historic spots in Los Angeles, as well as heavy water Hawaiian breaks during his years living on the islands in his early 20s. When he's not paddling or surfing, he's diving for lobster, designing the newest, fastest craft in the shaping bay, spearfishing off Catalina, or raising his own children to embrace the

Surftech partner with the best names in the industry – providing them with advanced technology and pushing material technical limitations. So it's a perfect fit with Joe, who is as passionate about Surf, SUP and Prone as Surftech is about creating great products. The collaboration with Joe is exciting - exploding the sport of prone paddle boarding and bringing the boards to the

waterman ethos.





European market is something we're extremely proud of.

Why should retailers stock prone paddle boards?

Prone paddle boarding is rocketing in Europe right now. Already well-established scenes in Australia and USA, the European market is starting to rapidly grow not only in the Surf Life Saving market but also long-distance prone racing and ocean endurance. Many Surfers and SUP paddlers are seeing the benefit of prone for fitness as well as rounding out their Ocean Man or Woman status with a complete package.





With the ISA Worlds including prone Long Distance and Technical races at their SUP events it has opened a category for homegrown talent to be involved in; not only the Surf Lifesaving competitions but also the Surfing Federation families. Local SUP competitions are welcoming prone categories into their events, increasing participation numbers and allowing athletes the chance to show their metal.

From the surfer's aspect it's a fantastic way to keep paddle fit as well as opening up new frontiers that they may not have considered before; such as down-wind ocean paddling,





following athletes such as John John Florence who are seen cross training on Bark boards. Prone sits well between both sports as well as opens a new customer opportunity from CrossFit to Triathletes and beyond.

What sets you apart from your competitors?

"Bark Paddleboards. Fastest boards on the water." More races have been won on Bark paddle boards than any other brand. Why? Because no surf/paddleboard designer has logged more time on the water than Joe Bark. Joe works with the best athletes on the best shapes. Races all over the world from the pinnacle Molokai to Oahu and beyond are won on Bark boards. Crossed with Surftech's technology making durable, light products that stay true to Joe's vision it's an unbeatable combination.

What's new from the brand for the 20/21 season?

We're really seeing an interest in the inflatable prone offering.





This, the same with SUP (when it was growing), opens up the sport to those who may not have space to store or transport a hardboard. Coupled with a new entry level price product for those looking to begin the sport – the offering from Bark x Surftech is really a complete option with something for everyone.

How and where is the brand distributed in Europe and what is your most successful territory?

The brand is distributed through Jorcani Sports in Europe. France is seeing a large commitment from some of our key stores but all markets are waking up to the sport of prone, from Sweden to Italy, Norway, Germany, Spain and Greece. Don't be surprised to see a Bark in the water somewhere near you!

How do you see the future for prone paddle boards?

The future is extremely bright for this growing sport. We can't wait to get back out on the water paddling our prone! §

JOEBARK.COM

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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

IMPACT VESTS 2020

The balancing act between functionality, style and tech while delivering safety in impact vests is what sets brands apart from each other in the market. In this retail buyer's guide we look at where the focus has been put for 2020. **By Dana Miskulnig.**



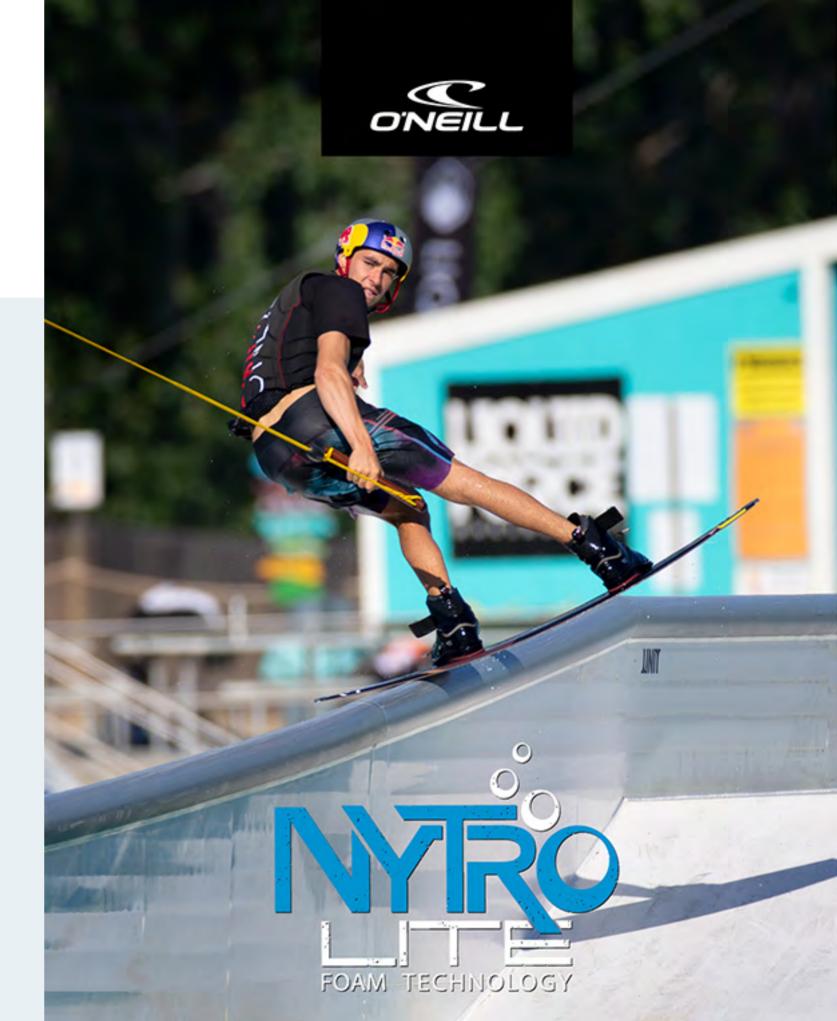
MARKET

It's natural that brands cater to various disciplines to cover their bases, but Slingshot have found their strength in the cable market and are staying put with one design, "our 2020 wake impact vest is one simple design being sold across all segments of the market from boat to cable, and wherever else you feel the need for a little extra protection and floatation. The cable market is undoubtedly a strongpoint for Slingshot, but our vest is built for all waters," claims Brand Manager, Jeff McKee. On the other end of the spectrum, Follow Wake's line up of impact vests for 2020 covers all aspects of wake and doesn't leave any

rider without a choice that's just right for them. There aren't just cross overs in vests for different wakeboarding styles but also watersports that see the need for impact vests. ION continue to offer impact vests for wakeboard as well as kitesurf enthusiasts and Jet Pilot are hard after the jet ski market. Söoruz is going all out and offering impact vests tailored to wakeboarding, kitesurfing, windsurf, foil as well as surf with their 'Rich' vest, meaning a huge array on offer for all watersports.

DESIGN

It's no news that wakeboarders, especially the park riders, put a lot of importance



on freedom of movement without compromising on protection so designs are slicker than ever, but special attention is going to upping the game in terms of safety and functional design. Jobe Sports' vests are now 50 Newtons and have added a D ring to all of their vests to improve safety standards and continue to design their products with a cohesive design so you can mix and match products to offer better sell through for retailers. O'Neill prioritizes performance with NytroLite Foam Technology in their impact vests, "which is stronger, absorbs 20% less water and is 3x lighter than conventional PVC foam. This allows for a super light, minimal bulk design with maximum impact protection," states Product Manager, Tom Copsey.

TECH

Impact vests are going back to basics in terms of design, but not when it comes to sustainability and tech. Brands are avoiding PVC as much as possible and rightly so as it is a plastic that is uniquely toxic because of its ingredients migrating into the environment during production, use and disposal. Marc Burhans, Product Manager at ION, says they, "only use the best neoprene available on the market from our supplier Sheico, one of the worlds biggest neoprene suppliers. The foam that we use is a PVC free foam." Freedom of movement is a key element in wakeboarding, so Liquid Force are coming in hot with the Spector Vest offering extra padding for the hard senders in the park without compromising on flexibility with their exclusive Bio-Spine pattern that creates more space for shoulders to flex while keeping a close fit around the rider's waist. "Liquid Force vests are unique in the way we combine different materials into purpose-built patterns, the styling

is purely functional," says Wade Motawi, Director of Product Development at Liquid Force.

NEW RELEASES

Brands are continuing to get feedback from team riders to improve their product offering, so what are the highlights for 2020?

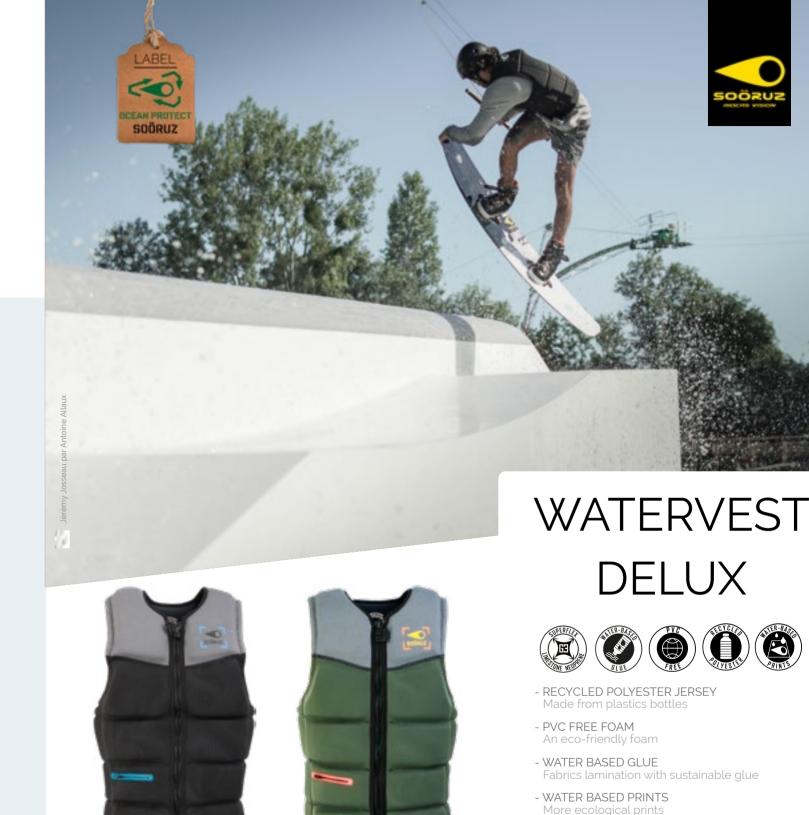
We've already mentioned the Spector Vest from Liquid Force but they are bringing back the Ghost Vest better than ever with more foam padding and a ribbed flex panel design that forms to your body, wider arm openings and a tapered waist for a better fit. If keeping your phone close while on the water is important, the Fresco from Follow Wake will be of interest as they've added an oversized pocket to keep your phone safe and dry. In terms of functionality the Fresco is made with the TrueFit internal liner to ensure minimal movement for a consistent ride. If a pro model is more your vibe, Soöruz have collaborated with Jules Charraud to create a PVC-free impact vest made from recycled polyester. Soöruz have also made sure to get their female rider, Anne Freyer involved to further develop the female range. Whether you're looking to stock all-rounders or segment specific impact vests, there's a vest for everyone from the

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSPORTSOURCE.COM

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Vests for many watersports
- 2 Tool staff with correct knowledge per sport
- 3 PVC a no no



SOÖRUZ

SOÖRUZ label, to reduce OCEAN PROTECT our environmental footprint and promote our most eco-responsible products.

- 4 Flex more important than ever

We always develop our products keeping in mind the idea of performance,

durability and eco-conception. The new DELUX 2020 wake vest has been

designed so that you forget you're wearing it whilst insuring a perfect

and balanced fit.

MARKET INSIGHT

SWISS

GERMANY AUSTRIA FRANCE ITALY UK During this period of unprecedented planetary upheaval, the Swiss government took slightly different action from most of its neighbours when it came to confinement measures to combat the Covid-19 epidemic. In Switzerland, the so-called semi-confinement meant the following: from March 16, schools, leisure spaces, restaurant, bars

and "non-essential" businesses were closed, citizens were asked to stay at home but were not forced to. Working from home was strongly advised to all companies able to put that in place but, again, without legal obligation. The Swiss retained the right to go outdoors but they were asked to do so as little as possible. Gatherings of over five people were forbidden and a physical distance of two metres had to be observed. The solution was therefore to count on a civic sense of responsibility rather than to prohibit and punish infringements, which seems to have worked pretty well compared to total confinement. Sporty people could still go out and do certain individual sports in the open air, as long as it didn't require special infrastructure. while trying to limit the number of injuries, mindful of the critical situation unfolding in hospital emergency rooms. So walking, running, cycling or climbing were the escape routes for a small part of the population. With winter sport resorts closed, some people took advantage by going splitboarding and although this activity wasn't formally prohibited, it was frowned upon. It's understandable that this would be openly criticised given that we were enduring such a huge sanitary and economic crisis and when the government is asking the population to use their common sense and you have people doing sports that require you to make a journey, with the possibility of crossing paths with others and even getting injured. The end of the Swiss lockdown will be staggered over three phases, first on April 27 with some services reopening (personal services and certain businesses), then on May 11 with schools and other businesses opening and finally on June 8 with some leisure facilities reopening.

On the whole, the Swiss population stayed at home, did some online yoga and binged on Netflix, eating a lot and better and they drank a lot... but not necessarily better! They bought more locally and also more online... All this while some were waiting for a return to normal, while others anticipated a truly massive change of consciousness amongst the population. In general, when it comes to boardsports, snowboarders were left wanting with the season being cut really short, with the small exception of the most dedicated of splitboarders. Surfers had never been so land-locked with the borders being closed (let's hope for a private wavegarden for the next epidemic...) while skateboarders should have been able to make the most of it, finding quiet spots or working on their flatland.

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An extraordinary situation with extraordinary measures and like in a lot of countries, Switzerland has helped its citizens tackle the crisis through aid, loans and partial unemployment. But it's also interesting to note the surges of solidarity that this crisis has brought out, from a sanitary and social point of view on one side (volunteers for elderly people for example) and economically on the other. For this we have seen many fundraisers and supportive aid of all kinds. In our world we saw donation platforms set up for the most affected businesses as well as innovative projects and collaborations. The first of two examples of this is a commendable gesture from Soerfi Schweingruber, owner of SKATE.CH/illUMATE, online shop and skateboarding distributor, who committed to sharing all the contribution margins of sales from SKATE.CH with the skateboard shops who were forced to close during physical shop closures. Well done Soerfi! Another example is the collaboration of QOQA.ch with the insurance companies Vaudoise Assurance and the Groupe Mutuel who teamed up to help small businesses. Qoga.ch is the leader of flash sales in Switzerland, their network and exposure is immense and their participation means you can reach a lot of people through the platform. This partnership offers a chance for small businesses to register on the Diregt.ch site set up for the occasion and to put vouchers and coupons for their services and products up for sale. This concerns products or services that are either to be collected or used as soon as the businesses reopen or to be fetched/have delivered as soon as they can be. The system is set up so that for a voucher worth 100CHF, consumers only pay 90CHF but the shop receives 120CHF with the difference being provided by the aforementioned insurance companies. Qoga.ch doesn't take any commission for these transactions. At the end of April, over 4000 businesses, a large number being sports shops, registered on the site to sell their vouchers. A clever initiative!

To conclude, we can say that overall despite the situation, participants of our favourite sports haven't been stopped completely and we have even seen people skating in deserted streets as well as a decent number of splitboarders touring in our mountains. When it comes to sales, skateboarding is holding up OK, if not well, and after the closure of physical shops, online sales have increased, which has also faced criticism since it leads to more journeys from delivery companies and postal workers, which in turn increases risk. For the moment it is obviously too early to draw any conclusions but this crisis is sure to carry heavy consequences. The next important date in Switzerland is on May 11 when the shops reopen.

Stay safe!

FABIEN GRISEL

MARKET **INSIGHT**

What a way to start a new decade! The world and Austria are in the clutches of a virus. Who would have thought that a pandemic could transform public and business life so dramatically? It's safe to say that any type of economic predictions made earlier this year can be tossed aside. Every single one of us is affected directly or indirectly. The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic is having effects that no one could have anticipated, in Austria and worldwide. By Björn Bettermann.

But it's worth pointing out that elected politicians in Austria responded earlier than elsewhere and sent our country into lockdown mode at an early time. By mid-March, shutdown was in place and Austria switched to emergency mode. Only essential institutions made to maintain public life such as grocery stores and pharmacies were allowed to stay open. Citizens were ordered to shelter in place and only venture into public to go to work, run essential errands, assist others or get some fresh air. All while maintaining a few feet in safety distance to others. A few weeks into social curbs, the government asked people to work from home as much as possible. The economy responded with an outcry as the country braced for high unemployment numbers: In early May, the unemployment rate was already 60% higher than before the crisis in early March. Many businesses and restaurants had to close shop overnight, shattering their economic foundation. Another industry directly impacted is tourism. Ski resorts were closed, so were hotels, and tourists were asked to leave as soon as possible. This, of course, spells bad news for a country as dependent on tourism as Austria.

The government responded by issuing several financial aid initiatives, including 100% secured loans for businesses, short-term work schemes, direct aid and distress funds for freelancers and small companies. Austria also launched stimulus packages to keep the economy going. But although measures were more or less unbureaucratic, much of the support missed those in need the most. The first aid measures were mostly just a sizzle in the pan. It remains to be seen, whether government support initiatives will move the needle. Overall, everyone expects an economic decline, the first waves of which can already be felt my many businesses. Since the middle of April, social curbs have been loosened and small stores are allowed to open; naturally with guidelines in place such as a limited number of customers and mandatory face coverings. Further easing of restrictions followed in May, and by the end of the month, hotels were allowed to open again. However, in light of current travel restrictions, the prospects of the upcoming summer and winter holiday seasons remain uncertain.

But let's move into the boardsports market. The early end of the winter season had a strong impact on sales of winter equipment. Retailers were missing out on a solid four les. Stores in re among the as confirmed GERMANY

FRANCE SWISS ITALY UK

to six weeks of sales. Stores in tourist hotbeds were among the strongest impacted, as confirmed by Patrick at Greenroom in Mayrhofen. Inevitably, this situation also affected pre-orders. Uncertainty is a major factor. Nobody knows what will happen next. When it comes to operating a business during shutdown, stores with a strong community

on Instagram or those with online storefronts were able to generate sales. Hannes at Connys Sport, reports that business was great around Easter due to social media posts and Instagram stories. "People in the region needed equipment and the weather was excellent." Although sales were not on par with regular opened stores, they made some sales. Ever since reopening measures, customer footfall has been on the rise but overall remains reluctant. It remains to be seen how the situation pans out.

Adam Ellis, Blue Tomato CEO summed up the company's experience during the lockdown period and tells of how they've returned to business since lockdown restrictions eased: "Currently, in Austria our customers have responded to the re-opening of stores positively. While we have seen lower traffic across the period, we have seen strong gains in store conversion as shoppers are coming in with high intent and in many instances have done online browsing in advance of their visit. Our online business in the market has also continued to perform well and holistically we are very pleased with the way that the integration across channels has worked for us. Our customers don't see channels and our mentality supports our customers — we try our best to serve customers how and where they want to be served."

Naturally, it's always easy to ask in hindsight: were government measures justified? But the low number of infections and the relatively mild course of the crisis seems to support social curbs, especially since compared to other countries, Austrian ever hit bottlenecks in medical support or catastrophic situations in health care. But the economic situation tells a different story. The high unemployment rate and number of businesses on the fringes of collapsing also posed the question whether measures were legally justified. As for myself as a sales agent, I'm having a hard time arriving at a final opinion about coronavirus and official measures. But I know one thing for certain: our clients, we as sales reps and our brands are facing enormous challenges. I hope that we can master them together as every crisis also opens up opportunities. This crisis will go down as one of the greatest in history and will continue to confront us for a long time.

BJÖRN BETTERMANN





LANDYACHTZ

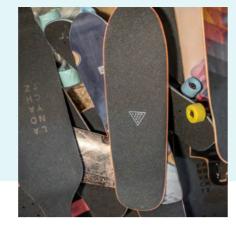
Planting a tree for each skateboard sold. Landyachtz can't wait for summer's arrival to release a new line of Surf Cruisers for power slides and concrete surfing. Confidently coping with tough times through the pandemic, this Canadian brand stresses the importance of an online presence and predicts skateboarding will see a solid influx of new and returning practitioners very soon after the end of the lockdown.

What's new with Landyachtz?

We're now working from home! But seriously, we launched our 2020 line on March 1 and expanded our product offering with new dinghy shapes, new dance boards, a race series, new trucks and new wheels. We launched everything and two weeks later, North America



went into lockdown. It's been an interesting transition for the business, but we've been able to adapt our marketing message and shift our structure to align with the global issues we're facing. We changed our spring release strategy and decided to focus on contests that people could participate in from the safety of their homes. We launched a Youtube trivia contest which people seem to love! We just launched a photo remix contest where we provide a photo and let people completely re-edit it any way they see fit. We're reposting the submissions and giving away prizes to our favourites. Our goal here is to engage with our customers while providing some laughs and entertainment during this time. Skating is a great way to just unplug, have some fun, get exercise and enjoy fresh air. It's important to not take added risks, so we've been encouraging people to grab a cruiser board or longboard and go for a mellow safe skate around their neighbourhood.





What are your biggest marketing pushes in the coming 12 months?

We've been building boards for over 20 years and firmly believe that we make the perfect complete skateboard. We design all our own components and pair them with our decks so they ride perfectly together. This season we've revamped the RKP Bear Gen 6 Trucks that come on most of our completes. We've made improvements to how they handle and feel which is really important to the overall quality of the completes we design. We'll also be releasing a line of Surf Cruisers this summer that have a surf-like carving feeling but are still stable enough to ollie and comfortable to push around.





We're excited for these to hit this summer because they're a blast to ride and are a great blend of both skating and surfing.

What have been the biggest influencers on the skate hardgoods market in the past 3 years?

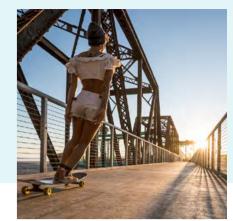
The growth of dance in Europe and Asia over the past three years has started to trickle into the North American market. I'd also say that interest in longboarding has begun to grow again. Cruisers have always been strong for us and it's exciting to see a slow and steady increase in Longboard (36' plus) sales. I feel like one reason for this is that people who have cruisers, and skate them regularly, are adding different styles of boards to their



quiver. They are realizing that one style of board is good for certain terrain and another style is good for the other.

Tell us about your One Board One Tree campaign.

It's hard to believe we've been planting for over 5 years now! The decision to plant one tree for each board we sell came because we realized we could do something that would have a long-lasting positive effect on the planet. On average, we can make 60 boards per tree harvested, meaning that every tree we use to produce skateboards results in 60 new trees being planted. We've partnered with some great organizations that ensure trees are being planted in areas that need them. The Eden Project plants in countries where deforestation is a real problem, Tree Canada plants maple trees in regions where we source our wood and Priceless Farms teaches sustainable farming practices that combat deforestation. You can learn more about each of these organizations at landyachtz.com/ one-board-one-tree.



What do you see affecting the market the most in the upcoming 12 months?

This year is going to be an interesting year as retailers have been forced to change their business models on the spot. It's clear that online sales are driving business right now. If you had a solid online component to your store, then you are seeing the benefits of people staying at home and shopping online. If you didn't have an online store, chances are you're creating one. A lot of our accounts have adapted and are focusing on growing online business or using social media to arrange store pickups. Retailers need to act fast and look at what retail will be like in a post COVID-19 market. People want to skate right now, because it's something they can safely enjoy. I expect we'll be seeing a lot of first-time board buyers or "I skated as a kid, time to pick it up again" customers and this could be a really great thing for retailers and for skateboarding. ©

LANDYACHTZ.COM

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

KITE 2020

Constant product innovation and newly invented riding disciplines are feeding off each other as kiteboarding continues its upward tack in popularity. Hardly surprising, considering it was the same outside of the box thinking that gave birth to kiteboarding in the first place. **By Rocio Enriquez.**

Editor's note: At the time brands were interviewed for this article, the pandemic had not been declared yet and global social distancing measures were not in place.



And at the heart of the sport's growth are the kite brands themselves. By making sure their product offering lures experienced kiteboarders and newcomers equally, they are the makers of their own good fortune. Solid proof of this growth is the sales increase reported in school segments. Growing numbers of young people and inexperienced riders are approaching schools,

"Foils and wings are great alternatives in low wind conditions and great additions to the quiver of any kite surfer".

Robert Bratz, Eleveight

"There's a lot of hype for a big air and freeride blend of riding, where riders are able to jump higher and be in the air longer". Cherée Thomson, Airush

eager to learn kiteboarding. Each of them is securing the long-term, steady, overall growth of the sport. Eleveight and Goodboards celebrate the steady increase in this category as a great indication of the health of the sport. Brands have responded with a careful look at safety and ease of use in their product designs, helping to consolidate the market.

TRENDS

Key to the rising popularity of the sport is the fact that you can now spend many more hours in the water. Knowing that you won't have to accumulate lay days looking at the forecast on your screen, waiting to get out, is a great motivator. Brands have now made it possible to practice in any conditions with their product innovations. This means that kiters of all sorts visit the beach - and the shops - way more often and use their gear much more. The fastest growing segment of kiteboarding at the moment is foiling, precisely for this reason. "Foiling is conquering new territories and gathering new fans. It simply allows the rider to enjoy riding in new previously unavailable wind conditions," affirms Jan Korycki, in charge of marketing at Nobile. Cherée Thomson, from Airush, says: "There are loads of products that allow for those lighter wind days, allowing you to ride as much as possible." The revolutionary Wing is claiming its slot in most kiters' quivers. "Wing Foiling is definitely creating a new sensation of freedom and a new way of having fun both on flat water and in the waves," explains Alex Fox, Kite Brand Manager at Slingshot. Robert Bratz from Eleveight says: "Foils and wings are great alternatives in low wind conditions and great additions to the quiver of any kite surfer".

The constant generation of new riding disciplines seems to benefit stores with a multi-sport reach. Thanks to the ongoing R&D efforts by brands, they are able to offer the perfect gear for every sort of wind sport fan. Some brands opt for versatility and others for specificness, but they are all committed to developing the perfect product for every sort of riding. "The scope of kiteboarding is broadening constantly, with different riding styles as well as different conditions. We are working diligently as a brand to create more products to appease the consumers of the world", says Alex Fox. Nobile and Naish focus on the versatility of key products. Jan Korycki explains: "The NHP family is our top of the line. They are easy to ride boards in all conditions and a fun tool for all levels of riding. Plus, the Split version allows for friendly travel". Naish Brand Manager, Scott Trudon, states: "The sport has gone in so many directions that gear that works for different disciplines, like our Hover Wake or the Pivot, is the most popular". It is indeed a sweet moment for designers and product developers, who are engaging in innovation processes according to their own perspectives. North, who have redesigned its entire kite range, reveals: "We had the opportunity to look at everything from another angle, a new perspective and a new approach".



Another riding discipline driving the rising popularity of kiteboarding is Big Air. Eleveight's Robert Bratz says: "Riders enjoy again flying high and doing some crazy tricks. This discipline brings back a lot of old elements and reflects the initial fascination for kiteboarding". All brands interviewed report good sales in this category. "A lot of storms came across the Atlantic this winter, and experienced and advanced riders went out in these rough conditions to chase their personal height record. So, our kites for this kind of conditions were well requested", reports Gaastra. Airush states: "There's a lot of hype for a big air and freeride blend of riding, where riders are able to jump higher and be in the air longer".

KITES

Kites represent the biggest growth within kiteboarding product categories. This is probably due to the ongoing research for new materials, that generates a lot of innovation in design and construction. Every season, kites are getting lighter, stronger, longer lasting and with a significantly improved tear resistance. Liquid Force explains: "What lighter materials do is allow for new kite designs to be developed. New shapes ultimately lead to better performance in light wind." Cabrinha reports that the non-stop R&D of new materials has been a success. "The new nano ripstop canopy material has worked very well. In design, we applied some changes to the bridles that were well-received", says EU Sales Manager, Christian May. Airush found a way to provide lighter kites without compromising durability by incorporating the new Airush Load Frame onto all of its premium kites. "This allows the kite to be lighter and retain its shape under serious load", describes Cherée Thomson. Liquid Force opted for a reduced bladder thickness combined with Teijin ripstop and Dacron to achieve a strong, lighter kite.

The rise in foil has generated this demand for lighter, easier to handle kites with a big wind range. Naish's Scott Trudon explains: "The one-strut category is seeing growth because it works well for all ability levels, as well as foiling, waves and allround riding". Liquid Force's Brand Manager, Rich Sabo, informs: "With the rise of foiling, our Solo 2020 has been one of our top sellers. A lighter, refined, single-strut weapon that is dedicated to making kiteboarding easy."



The trending simplified designs can only help attract new fans to the sport. The easier the kite is to handle, the faster you learn, making your time in the water much more rewarding. Naish highlights its new single-point inflation system and its easier to use new flush valve on the leading edge as well-received innovations in its 2020 collection. North has engaged in a whole redesign of its kite range, with simplicity as a key feature. "We have completely simplified our kites ensuring they perform their purpose perfectly. We found that the more bells and whistles you have, the more there is to go wrong. Backed by North Sails, we utilised our own tech and cut away everything we felt the kites didn't need. All of our kites use fixed cascade bridles with no pulleys. What we are left with is a range of kites with less drag, more accuracy and a more direct feeling", announces Ollie Murray, UK distributor for North. For Airush, one of the most exciting releases in its 2020 collection is the IQR, a completely redesigned single hand activation and quick release safety mechanism.



THE NEW LIFT

is all about boosting, hangtime, and taking performance freeride to new heights. Designed for the rider looking for stability in the wildest conditions, exceptional hangtime and explosive power.

The steady popularity of the Big Air category demands stronger kites that offer powerful hang time. Crazy Fly and Gaastra introduced reinforcements in the construction of their 2020 range that were very well-received. "Definitely, the stronger leading edge on the Hyper has helped on the smaller sizes. It gives extra performance and confidence in strong wind conditions", savs Jurai Bukovcak. Head of Sales and Marketing at Crazy Fly. Konstantin Weier, Marketing Director at Gaastra, states: "We focused on including exactly the right reinforcements at the correct positions to keep our kites light, but also extend their lifespan". Cabrinha and Liquid Force also report significant growth on the sales of their 2020 Big Air specific kites.

BOARDS

The explosion of foil came to pass as expected. The possibility of getting out in lighter wind conditions is too irresistible for most wind sports fans. This has motivated brands to expand their foil range and set-ups. Crazy Fly's 2020 Cruz Foil board has done so well, that they are planning an extended Cruz Foil range with multiple front wing options. Slingshot's Alex Fox announces: "There is a lot of progression in foil and wing foiling, in terms of riding and product. Our foil board range offers a good amount of versatile shapes for every single discipline inside the foil category. We look to that category to continue to grow for the next couple of years, as people are excited to try these new disciplines". Airush's Cherée Thomson reveals: "we offer a good range of foils and foil boards that are able to accommodate this growth spurt. Last Summer we introduced the Team Foil Board in our Reflex carbon Innegra, which is super lightweight, durable and performance oriented". Naish and Nobile have found success in their most versatile pieces. "Our Hover Wake lets foilers do it all and with ease. It has the ideal outline, volume and rocker for performance riding. Attach any of the Naish jet foils to a board and add a whole new level of riding", claims Scott Trudon. Nobile's Jan Korycki affirms: "Our NHP Foil is an all-in-one



board that covers all conditions and all riding options. For light wind it is a great foiling machine; once the wind picks up, or you feel like boosting airs, simply convert this board into a regular twin tip and enjoy it in every way".

The increasing demand for foil boards has not impacted negatively on the sales of twin tips, though. The constant growth of entry level and, especially, the strong come back of Big Air, keeps the sale of twin tips steady. Big Air riding has seen a significant level increase in the last two to three years. New constructions with lighter materials are sought after by kiters pursuing new heights. Crazy Fly's brand-new carbon-weave construction Raptor Extreme, aimed at Big Air enthusiasts, has become its best-selling board in its first year. Gaastra also reports a Big Air board as its number one in sales: "The Watt is easy to ride, but you can do some true freestyle with it or go for massive airs". When it comes to entry level boards, brands have figured out that safety and affordability are the key combination to break entry barriers and welcome new fans. Rich Sabo at Liquid Force reveals: "Creating entry level twin tips that can make the entry price of kiteboarding attractive has always been a good seller for us. Cost-engineering twin tips allows us to make cuts easily and get the complete package down". Goodboards, for whom kids' boards have been one of their biggest growing categories, has implemented its Anti Chop Technology (ACT) in its board production. This provides a very smooth riding, reducing splashing and easing the effect of the chop on the kiter's body. "Boards with ACT are the most knee-friendly boards on the market", claims Goodboards VP, Maik Friese.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is still a challenge for makers of such performance-oriented products as kiteboarding equipment. Variables such as lightness, strength, flexibility or resistance must remain reliable ones when you are out there facing the elements. But it is a challenge all brands have accepted and continuously work on to improve.

In general, longevity is the key. Making durable products means that each kite and board will have a second life, therefore reducing waste. It is also a selling point for customers happy to invest in gear that will have a good resale value. Cabrinha reported a good response to its new nano ripstop canopy and ultraviolet high tenacity Dacron introduced in his 2020 kites.

Another common practice with most brands is eliminating plastic from their packaging. Slingshot obtained a very good response to their Hex packaging introduced last Summer. Goodboards is working on a new paper packaging for its 2021 range. Airush uses recycled PET for its kite bags, which are also vacuum packed to ship less air. Naish uses recycled materials in kites and bags. Eleveight is moving towards a decrease in plastic packaging too. Liquid Force is aiming for zero plastic in 2021, by repurposing materials and creating plastic replacements. They also repurpose fabric waste into new kites.

"Creating entry level twin tips that can make the entry price of kiteboarding attractive has always been a good seller for us. Costengineering twin tips allows us to make cuts easily and get the complete package down."

Rich Sabo, Liquid Force

Production processes and factory practices are also seeing great sustainability efforts. Naish is shifting towards more environmental printing techniques for kites. It also claims to be implementing some sustainable processes in board construction that will revolutionise the industry. Wood used in the construction of Slingshot's and Liquid Force's boards is sustainably sourced. Eleveight is moving towards production mainly in the EU and the resin used in their surfboards is registered with Sustainable Surf.

RETAILER SUPPORT

The constant launch of new products for all the riding disciplines requires great support for retailers in the form of education and testing. Brands are well aware of this and have developed many tools and programmes to help stores reap the benefits of having a much wider product offering. Eleveight reports grass root support as its most successful method. Goodboards offers test boards to all retailers for customers to try, plus it



carries out test tours throughout Europe. Liquid Force implemented its "stoke sessions" and North organises beach demos all over the world. Educational videos and indepth animations are also available from brands such as Liquid Force and North. Gaastra has redesigned its whole B2B system for its retailers.

FUTURE INNOVATIONS

In the kite category, Crazy Fly and
Cabrinha will launch foil specific
kites. Naish will offer lighter and
more durable kites. Liquid Force
saw its lead kite designer of
thirteen years leave. The new one
has carried out a total redesign
of the range with new shapes along with lighter
materials.

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Regarding boards, Naish will launch a new one, the Traverse, that is fun, smooth and easy to ride. Nobile will offer larger split boards, a new pocket skim foil board and a new wake style machine for bindings and obstacle riding. Goodboards will add its ACT tech to its popular Amnesia board and offer a Pro variant. This will be a robust strapless board, durable but light, with sandwich construction and ABS edge. We will also see sustainability practices and materials increase in the 2021 collections.



At the time brands were interviewed for this article, the pandemic had not been declared yet and global social distancing measures were not in place. The incidence of this will surely alter the positive growth forecast expected for this year, but not for the long term. When the situation goes back to normal, the pull for some ocean time will still be there. With a wide range of products to suit any riding style and conditions, any weather can be perfect weather, and we will be able to enjoy our ocean time without wait. Customers will very likely invest in the new toys that will make this happen. (§)

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSPORTSOURCE.COM

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Kites for all wind strengths
- 2 Foils take centre stage
- 3 Wings on the rise
- 4 Innovation key to popularity
- 5 Beginners a big part of biz



NEW PRODUCTS

01 / THE STARBOARD X AIRUSH FREEWING

The FreeWing shares the stoke of Kite, SUP and Windsurf into a single flying experience. Working with the design team from both Airush and Starboard, the FreeWing fuses the innovation and ideology of the different sports into groundbreaking designs with refined performance. With development between Thailand, Bali, Tarifa, Cape Town, and Maui, they have been able to optimize both light wind and high wind performance to suit your local conditions.

STAR-BOARD.COM

02 / PALLY-HI MASK

Two-layer reusable mouth and nose mask made of breathable, natural merino bamboo fabric. Anatomical cut (3D) with elastic straps for comfortable fixation. The mask completely covers mouth and nose and is suitable for wearers of glasses and hearing aids. Comes in different colours and graphical prints.

PALLYHI.COM

03 / DAKINE KAIMANA SURF LEASH

The Kaimana surf leash uses Dura-Cord for reduced drag without compromising on strength. The low-profile ankle cuff conforms to the shape of your ankle. The Kaimana Team with ½" cord for surfing peaks up to a couple feet overhead, and the Kaimana Pro Comp with 3/16" cord for use in shoulder-high surf.

DAKINE.EU

04 / O'NEIL SLASHER KITE VEST

The O'Neill Slasher Kite Vest sets a new industry standard. The closed cell Nytrolite foam technology makes it 3x lighter than PVC foam, 15-20% less water absorbent and approximately 10% more buoyant, meaning they can use less foam in each vest and it will still float the same.

ONEILL.COM



02



03





05 / VANS SURF TRUNK 2

Shattering the traditional moulds of surf apparel and design, the Vans Surf Trunk 2 is a purpose-driven piece of equipment made for surfers for one sole intention: Surfing. Crafted from top to bottom, inside and out to improve surf performance, the second-generation Surf Trunk 2 is designed to deliver without sacrificing on style.

VANS.COM

06 / 686'S WFH-INSPIRED EVERYWHERE SNAP-UP SHIRT

The 686 Everywhere Snap-Up Shirt is available now at 686.com. It is a versatile, stretchable and breathable daily piece that is comfy enough to look great on zoom calls and will come in handy as more outdoor activities open up in the coming days and weeks.

686.COM

07 / FALLEN CHRIS COLE RIPPER

The "Ripper" is a classic Chris Cole signature Fallen Footwear design that we brought back for the most obvious of reasons, it's just a great skate shoe with a ton of features. The Natural Suede + Cotton upper, mixed with the superior cushioning Impact Foam insole support creates maximum comfort, durability, and overall function.

FALLENFOOTWEAR.EU

08 / STANCE BUTTERBLEND FACEMASKS

These non-medical grade face masks are made with Stance's premium ButterBlend™ fabric to maximise your comfort, while mitigating the spread of infectious diseases like Covid-19. One size fits all, washable and reversible (please clean between each wear). For each mask purchased, Stance will gift a pair of socks to medical frontline workers through their 'Stance for Scrubs' Initiative. They'll be selling through their website and retail stores.

STANCE.EU.COM

05



06



07



80







Small is beautiful... and also very resilient. Sen No Sen Founder Mathieu Desaphie has disproved the 'bigger the better' philosophy, carving out a niche for his brand driven by passion and a strong eco ethos. Matheiu embraces the current crisis as an opportunity for an in-depth revamp of the industry; a word to the wise.

What is the idea and ethos behind the brand?

Sen no Sen (SNS) is a French brand that makes surfing wetsuits and clothes that make your life better. Small, indie and alive for 20 years.

Please give an overview on how and why the company began.

I started when I turned 19 years old. I printed t-shirts and sweaters for my friends and community, who were (already at that time) fed up with existing surfing major companies. At the



very beginning, 20 years ago, we were a 100% bodyboarding label, then surfers started to buy the brand for different reasons: wetsuit quality, our responsible process or just because the brand looked different from other surfing companies. Finally, 15 years ago, I opened the flagship store. Today our motto "People from the Ocean" defines very well what we are.

Who is on the management team, and what are their backgrounds?

Just myself and our store manager Mehdi. Then we also have a super team of friends and indie collaborators.

Where is your store and HQ and how do you operate across the globe?

We have a flagship store in SW France, in Arcachon, located in Le Moulleau near the famous "Dune du Pilat". There are very good surf spots of Biscarrosse and La Salie nearby. Such a lovely place! We make our clothes in Portugal and our





wetsuits in Thailand, all factories are family-run business facilities focused on quality in the making. We've had very strong relationships for many years and we always work together to improve the brand, season after season. Logistics-wise we are based in Hossegor, very close to where I live now.

Please explain the eco considerations being made.

I try to do my best, using organic cotton for clothes. We use Yulex natural rubber for wetsuits. A lot of energy is put into quality, in order to have products that last longer than the classic ones on the market. We embrace the slow fashion process. Everything





is more about "buy less, but better". As we are a small indie label, I don't have any shareholders to satisfy. So, no pressure to always sell more.

Please explain your distribution strategy.

At the moment we are selling pretty exclusively in our flagship store and e-store. Although, we have a few selected stockists. As a stockist myself, I love working with multi-brand shops managed by people driven by passion. Basically, a place where customers can find our products and listen to our story.



Why should retailers sell your brand?

To have a brand with good products and a story to tell. A brand their customers can't find discounted on the Net.

How do you support athletes and boardsports?

We have a few ambassadors that I'm super proud to see wearing the brand.
Bodyboarding legend Pierre-Louis Costes is one of the best wave riders in the world, French shortboard ripper Charly Martin and longboarding World Champ Alice Lemoigne. Sometimes we do quick-strike collabs with surfers like Jared Mell.

What other marketing are you running?

Most of the money is invested in products. Less communication and marketing allow us to have better products at a fair price. Then customers spread the word. We are making our own content such as videos, events, prints, but most of the time inhouse projects.





How are you coping with the COVID-19 shutdown?

It's super tough to have our flagship store closed but it is also amazing to witness the support from customers who ordered more on the website and wait for the re-opening. It will be hard but our business model is structured to survive this crisis. For our retailers we offered a pre-order "Surfing Is Not A Crime" t-shirts with extra margin to help them re-start business.

What do you see for the future of the boardsports industry?

I think the COVID-19 crisis is going to accelerate the trend of people buying brands that are connected to the modern world. Paying millions of dollars for marketing is not enough anymore. Sustainability, brand values, production... Customers want to know where their product comes from and where their money's going. It's pretty exciting to see this new way of doing business evolve.

Output

Description:

SENNOSEN.COM

93

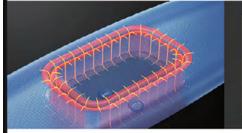


DISTRIBUTOR WANTED/

"Paddle, Surf and More" - These three words define us as a company and keep us excited and inspired to start every journey on the water. As a brand, we'll always stay true to our foundation: True to the sport.

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SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER BOARDSPORTS

Are you passionate about all things Surf and Skate? Looking to impact the global Surf & Skate community with quality storytelling? Are you a savvy social media expert with a creative eye and big ideas?

If all this excites you - look no further. We are looking for a Boardsports Social Media Manager to join the team in our HQ to oversee the global @redbull_surfing and @redbullskate Social Media presence across all accounts.

AREAS THAT PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS

LONG STORY SHORT

You'll be responsible for Red Bull's Boardsports Social Media properties, specifically @RedBull_Surfing and @RedBullSkate.

Your key focus is to ensure that the company's Boardsports priorities are communicated across our social channels and curate a strategy for Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and any new platforms that arise.

SOCIAL CONTENT

✓ With an eye for a good story and an editorial approach, you'll ensure that our channels have ample content to promote around your key projects, athletes and events. Additionally, you'll monitor the performance of our content, collaborating closely with our analytics team to ensure that we are optimizing reach potential.

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

You'll work cross platform to create and release new content while ensuring that we speak credibly to endemic audiences. Your goal is to grow audiences and engage users within Surf and Skate audiences. Don't worry, you're not on your own. You'll manage and develop a network of internal and external support.

YOUR AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE

- 4+ years of experience publishing content to big brand Social Media channels and Social Content optimisation
- 2. Deep knowledge of Social Media, digital products, video consumption patterns, and Social Media platform algorithms
- 3. Deep understanding, experience & interest in Surf & Skate
- 4. Video production/editing experience
- 5. Editorial, design and photography experience
- 6. Familiarity of internet trends, content formats, and language
- 7. Structured and well-organized person with passion for a good story
- 8. Connections in the Southern California surf/skate scene are a plus
- 9. Fluency in English, Spanish or Portuguese language skills a plus

Travel up to: 10%

We are looking forward receiving your online application!

WE'RE HIRING! CONTENT CREATOR





Remuneration: R14 000 - R20 000 per Month - Negotiable Basic Salary.

Location: Cape Town, Muizenberg.

Education level:Diploma.Job level:Junior/Mid.Own transport required:Yes.

Travel requirement: International

Type: Full Time / Permanent / In House.

Company: Solar Station Design.

Job Description:

Are you an aspiring content creator, passionate about brand building and storytelling, while technical enough to communicate the finer details of a new product? Airush Kiteboarding and AK Durable Supply Co. are looking for a kiteboarding and surf enthusiast to fill the role of content creator in our Cape Town office, situated in Muizenberg.

Our ideal candidate has strong photo, video, and/ or writing skills (ideally a combination), as you will be tasked to develop engaging content across digital and print media. You will require good social skills, as you will need to collaborate with other creatives, team riders, and our community, with the ability to moderate online and offline conversations.

Working with the marketing team, your primary role will be to create and assist in the distribution of media, along with technical product information to support product and sales.

- Content creation: Professional photography and/or videography and editing abilities.
- Must have an active interest in kiteboarding, surfing, and/or foiling, with an interest in emerging sports.
- Must be legally eligible to work in South Africa with the ability to travel nationally and internationally three to four times per year.
- · Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Organised, paying attention to detail, with the ability to multitask.

Company Description:

Solar Station Design - home of airush kiteboarding and AK durable supply Co.

Responsibilities:

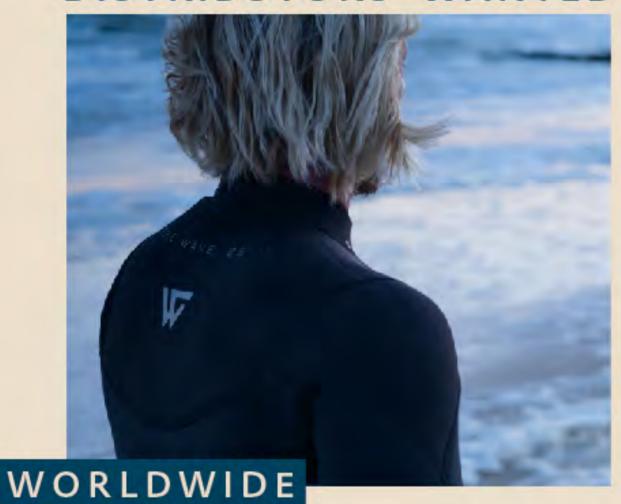
- Working autonomously, or with external media resources, to create and co-ordinate engaging photo, text, and video content across digital and print media.
- Implement social media and print campaigns to align with the marketing strategy.
- Monitor and respond to comments and customer queries on social media.
- Monitor and report on feedback and online reviews.
- Coordinate with the marketing team and brand network to ensure media consistency.
- Liaise with the product and sales departments to stay up-to-date on new products and features.
- Build relationships with industry professionals and journalists, customers, and potential customers.
- Stay up-to-date with digital technology trends.
- Media library archiving and content distribution.

Advantageou

- Experience launching community initiatives. e.g. building an online platform, launching a campaign, creating an event series, or writing an e-mail newsletter.
- Digital Strategy: Ability to research and interpret keywords, website traffic, and online metrics to set measurable objectives and improve the overall customer conversion rate.



DISTRIBUTORS WANTED



General Requirements:

- English fluent + other languages a bonus
- Knowledge of surfing and wetsuit market
- Business minded and results driven
- Passionate and dynamic
- Environmentally responsible

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