

# How to market to cyclists.

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In 2020.

freeride.

The cycling industry is optimistic. Participation levels are booming and there are real signs of a step change in our collective attitude towards greener modes of transport. Bikes are sold out months in advance and we have never seen such levels of government support for the sport. Exciting times.

Interest over time

Google Trends

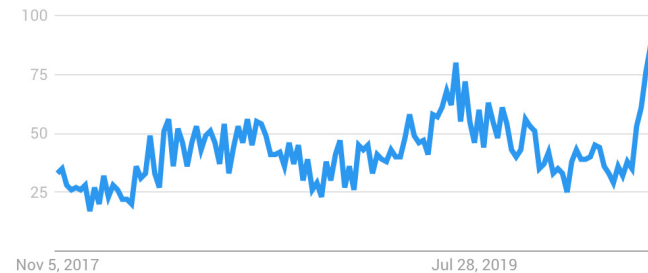
● road bikes



Interest over time

Google Trends

● electric bikes



Interest over time

Google Trends

● bicycle helmet



In this guide, we'll explore some of the fundamental principles and more actionable tactics we think every brand should be aware of when it comes to marketing to cyclists.

Naturally, many of these are applicable to marketing more generally.

We hope you find it useful.

1. Know who you seek to serve.

# Cycling is tribal.

Don't assume all cyclists are the same. The wrong message to the wrong tribe is a waste of time and money, and can impact your credibility as a brand.

Broadly, cyclists can be split into the following tribes:



- **THE COMMUTER** - the commuter cycles to get from A to B, with the bicycle their most favoured mode of transport. Commuters are typically urban dwelling, they appreciate functional, reliable brands and they are unlikely to have an interest in pro cycling.
- **THE OCCASIONALIST** - the occasionalist enjoys cycling from time to time, generally only during summer and only when the weather is fine. Occasionalists take a seasonal interest in cycling products only. Reviews are particularly persuasive for them when they're in the market for a new product.
- **THE ENTHUSIAST** - the enthusiast rides at least 3 times a week. Enthusiasts appreciate form as much as function. Their purchase decisions are informed by performance and trends in equal measure and they take an interest in pro cycling.

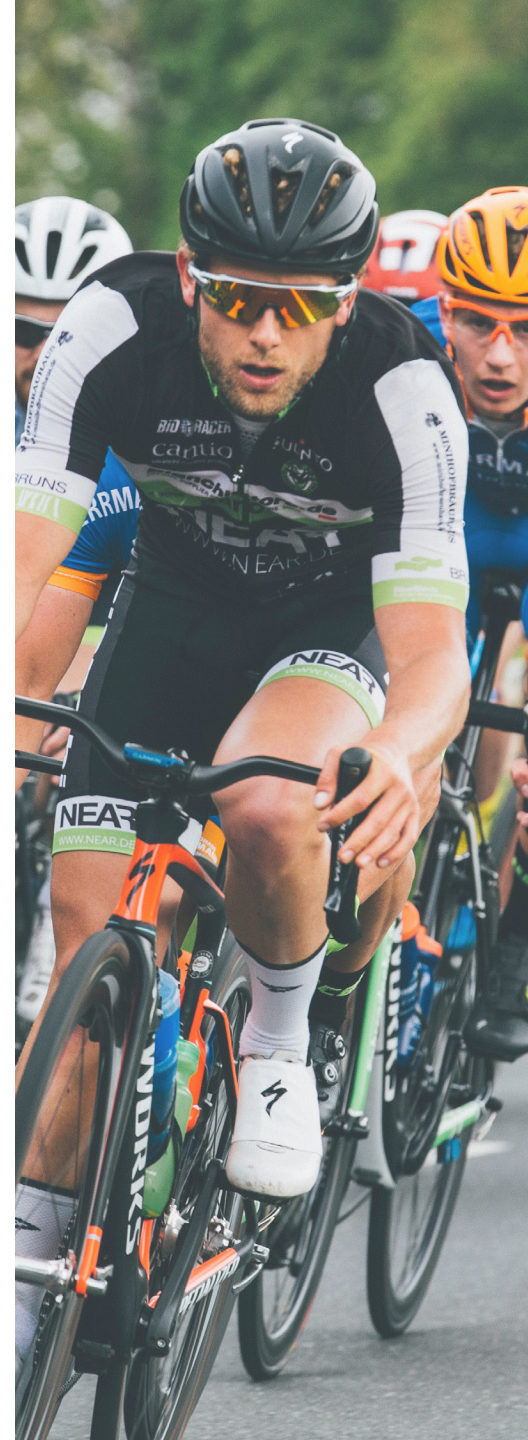


- **THE COMPETITOR** - the competitor is as passionate about cycling as almost anything else in their life. Their profile picture on social media features them cycling, they don't "ride", they "train", and they look for performance gains wherever possible.
- **THE TRIATHLETE** - the triathlete is of a similar mindset to the competitor, but less tribal. Triathletes don't worry about following the latest style trends or keeping abreast of pro cycling news. They have three disciplines to worry about, and speed is their chief concern when it comes to cycling.
- **THE MOUNTAIN BIKER** - the mountain biker has a more open-minded attitude towards the sport than the typical road cyclist. Mountain bikers are less tribal among themselves, more inclusive. They enjoy the high adrenaline thrills of singletrack riding and have a higher risk tolerance than road cyclists.

Clearly identify the tribes you are seeking to target and tailor your communications to those tribes. Sweat the small stuff because it matters.

Don't target the Enthusiast with an image of someone riding a road bike with clip-on aero bars and ankle-length socks. Your credibility in the eyes of that audience will be lost, pretty quickly.

Speak their language. Cyclists don't "cycle", they "ride".



2. Cyclists have an opinion. On everything.

That is all.

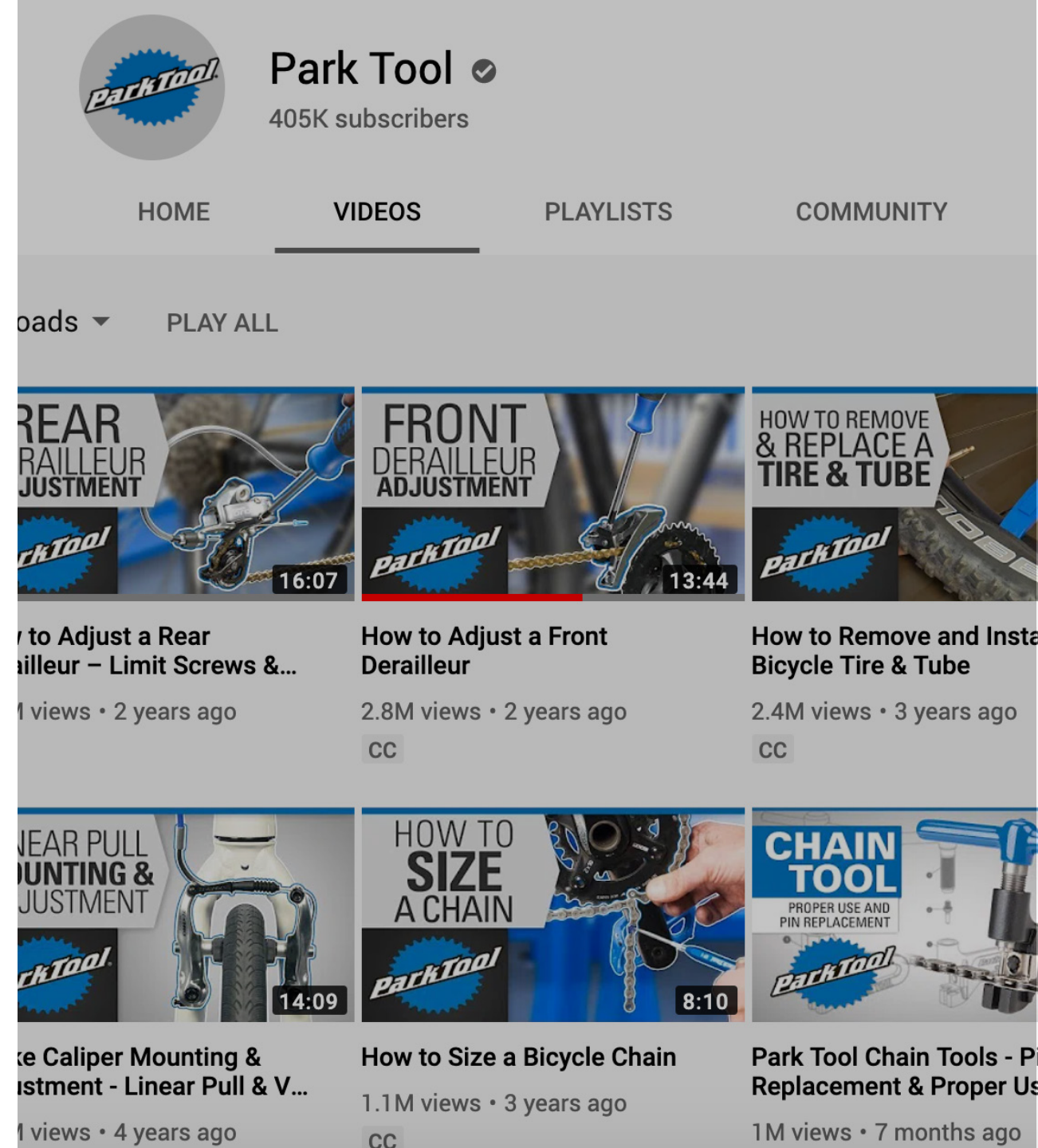
**3. Create relevant content that cyclists find interesting and answers their questions.**

Good content brings credibility: it tells the consumer you understand their needs and wants and that yours is a brand that can be trusted. The best content doesn't sell: it doesn't contain a discount code, an exclusive offer or even a call to action. It informs, educates and/or entertains, just like the [BBC](#) sets out to do.

Park Tool's YouTube channel has more than 400,000 subscribers and has attracted tens of millions of views. It's a great example of good content marketing. The bike tool manufacturer publishes 'how-to' videos giving cyclists step-by-step instructions to help them fix the most common problems we all encounter.

Its mission is solely to educate and ask nothing of the viewer in return. It's a powerful tool of persuasion that plays to the reciprocity principle. We feel obliged to give something back to those who give us something. When we're in the market for our next multi-tool, the idea is we'll be more inclined to repay the favour given to us by the creator of the helpful 'how to replace a chain' video we watched who's earned our trust.

But good content is not just about credibility. It's a highly effective means of awareness-building if it's relevant to your target audience. The objective is to become the authority on your particular segment of the market and get the hugely valuable SEO benefit that comes with it.





Keyword		Volume <sup>i</sup>	KD <sup>i</sup>	CPC <sup>i</sup>	Traffic <sup>i</sup>	Position <sup>i</sup>	URL <sup>i</sup>
size of queen bed	4	19,000	43	1.00	2,518	1	↗ <a href="https://casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/">casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/</a> ▼
mattress sizes	7	112,000	25	4.00	2,472	5	↗ <a href="https://casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/">casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/</a> ▼
queen bed size	5	31,000	47	1.90	2,442	1	↗ <a href="https://casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/">casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/</a> ▼
bed sizes	5	115,000	49	1.60	1,550	2	↗ <a href="https://casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/">casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/</a> ▼
twin bed dimensions	5	37,000	54	1.50	1,293	2	↗ <a href="https://casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/">casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/</a> ▼
dimensions of a queen size bed	5	11,000	43	2.50	1,252	1	↗ <a href="https://casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/">casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/</a> ▼
full bed dimensions	5	24,000	46	1.70	1,126	1	↗ <a href="https://casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/">casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/</a> ▼
full size mattress dimensions	6	28,000	44	1.60	1,018	1	↗ <a href="https://casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/">casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/</a> ▼
queen size bed dimensions	5	51,000	43	2.00	986	3	↗ <a href="https://casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/">casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/</a> ▼
queen mattress size	3	27,000	48	3.00	870	3	↗ <a href="https://casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/">casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/</a> ▼
california king bed size	4	7,300	16	1.90	819	1	↗ <a href="https://casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/">casper.com/mattress-size-comparison-guide/</a> ▼

Casper - one of the growing number of 'bed in a box' brands - is a great example. In the same way Park Tool has become the authority on bike maintenance through its YouTube videos, Casper has become the authority on sleep advice through its blog and on-site resources.

As you might expect, a common question for mattress buyers is 'what size mattress is best for me?'. Casper helps potential buyers with a clean, easy-to-use mattress size comparison guide.

The guide is really simple but the benefits Casper sees from it are quite something.

The guide ranks for hundreds of high volume, super relevant keywords in position #1. Take a look.

There are 115,000 monthly searches in the US for 'bed sizes'. Casper's guide ranks #2.

Is there a go-to comparison resource you could create for your product? Incidentally, some of the biggest cycling retailers do quite a nice job of this when it comes to guides on bike sizing.

Take Evans, for example. Its [guide](#) ranks for hundreds of keywords and many dozen in the top 5 of the search results. ‘What size bike do I need?’ gets 4,400 monthly searches in the UK alone and Evans’ guide ranks #3.

When you visit the guide, it’s perfectly informative, but it’s not quite Casper-level. You’re greeted with blocks of uninviting text to read. The guide could benefit from some easy to understand illustrations to really bring it to life and maximise its potential.

## EVANS CYCLES

Keyword		Volume <sup>i</sup>	KD <sup>i</sup>	CPC <sup>i</sup>	Traffic <sup>i</sup>	Position <sup>i</sup>	URL <sup>i</sup>
<a href="#">what size bike do i need</a>	5	4,400	33	0.70	178	3	<a href="https://www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing">www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing</a> ▼
<a href="#">evans bike size guide</a>	5	200	6	—	158	1	<a href="https://www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing">www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing</a> ▼
<a href="#">how to measure bike size</a>	6	500	19	0.80	83	1	<a href="https://www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing">www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing</a> ▼
<a href="#">bike size calculator</a>	5	1,400	48	0.60	68	7 <span>↓ 3</span>	<a href="https://www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing">www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing</a> ▼
<a href="#">what size bike frame do i need</a>	5	2,300	33	0.70	64	3	<a href="https://www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing">www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing</a> ▼
<a href="#">how to size a bike</a>	5	250	27	1.90	60	1 <span>↑ 1</span>	<a href="https://www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing">www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing</a> ▼
<a href="#">how to measure for a bike</a>	4	350	0	0.90	57	1	<a href="https://www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing">www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing</a> ▼
<a href="#">how do you measure the size of a bike</a>	6	100	16	1.10	36	1	<a href="https://www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing">www.evanscycles.com/help/bike-sizing</a> ▼

4. Cyclists love  
competitions  
and giveaways.

N+1 doesn't just apply to bikes. Cycling is an equipment and accessories-heavy sport. The right prize targeted to the right audience can turbocharge your email list or social followings overnight.

Offer something as relevant as possible to those you are trying to target. Road cyclists love technology, for example. Things like GPS computers and power meters will always perform well.



**5. Have a brand-  
building social  
media strategy**

Whether we like it or not, your social media channels will be one of the first touch points between a prospect and your business. An infrequent, ad-hoc posting strategy isn't going to cut it if you're interested in building your brand on social media. If you're going to be on social media, do it properly or not at all.

But what's the best way to go about building a brand on social media?

It's helpful here to consider one of the key takeaways from Byron Sharp's influential book 'How Brands Grow: What Marketers Don't Know':

People don't care much about your well-reasoned messages: Buying is based more on emotion, habit and established 'memory structures'. Distinctive brand names, logos, taglines, symbols, celebrities or ad campaigns all help create these structures that make a brand easier to buy during the snap decisions people make.

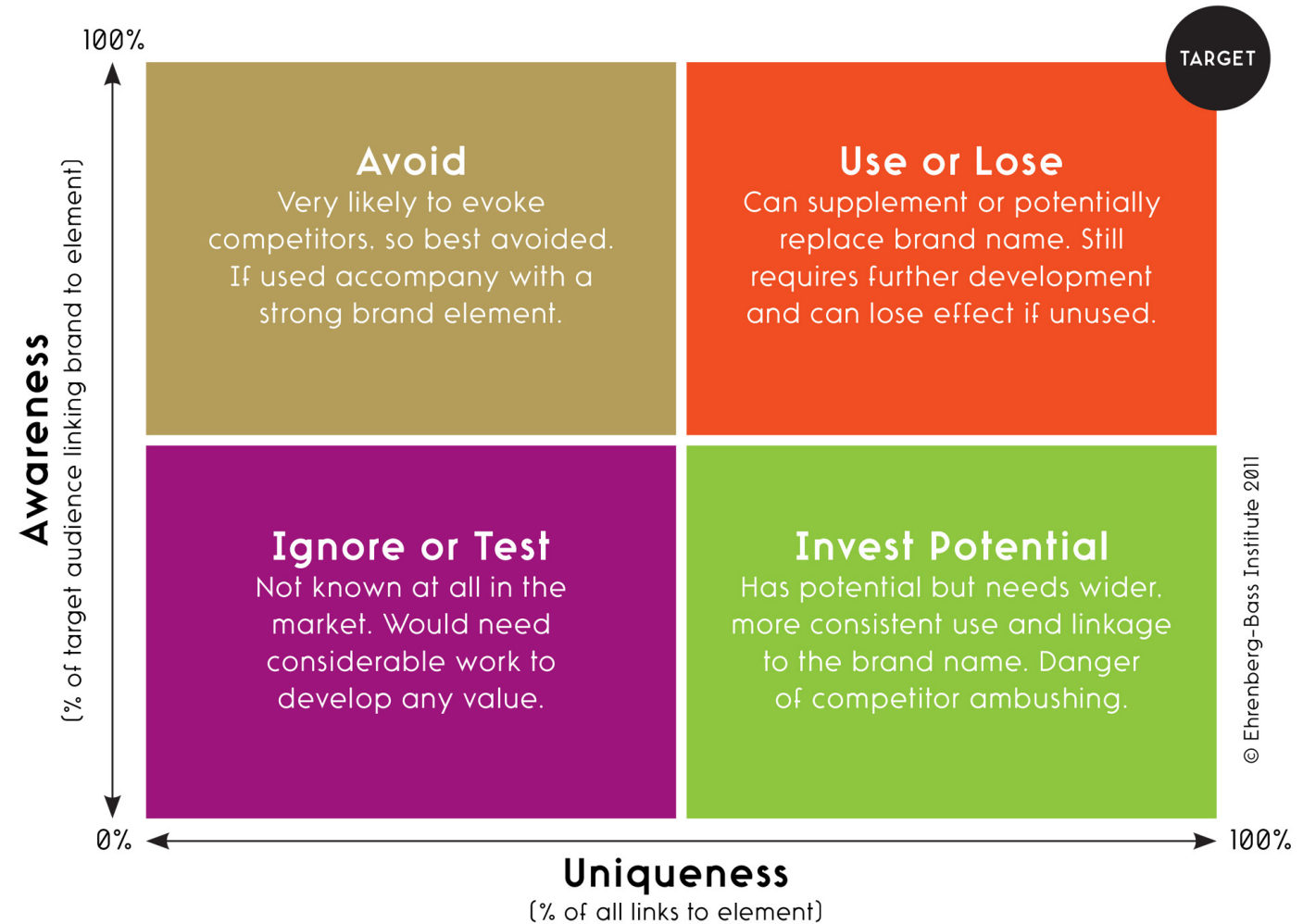
While we think we make perfectly rational purchasing decisions, the truth is we buy on emotion more than anything else and then post-rationalise our decisions after the event. The logical buyer would only ever buy the best thing possible at the lowest possible price. The reality is quite different.

We can play to people's emotions and establish 'memory structures' by creating and using distinctive assets in our social media strategy. According to Sharp and his colleagues at the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, a **distinctive asset** is one that satisfies both of the following:

1. It is **unique**: It evokes the brand, and not competitors; and
2. It is **famous**: Most, if not all, consumers should know it represents the brand name.

Source: [Ehrenberg-Bass Institute](#)

For an asset to be considered **distinctive** it must score highly on both **fame** and **uniqueness**.



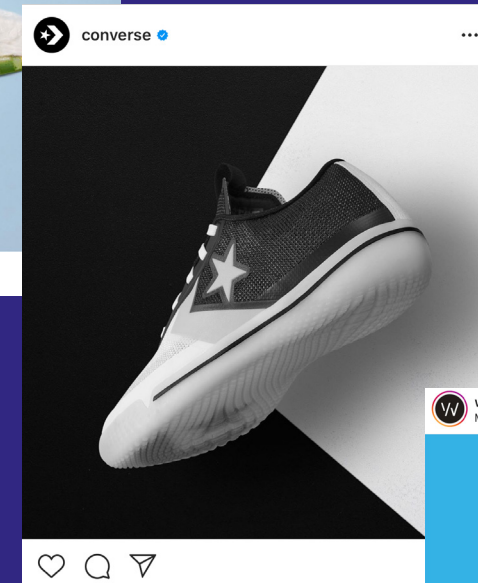
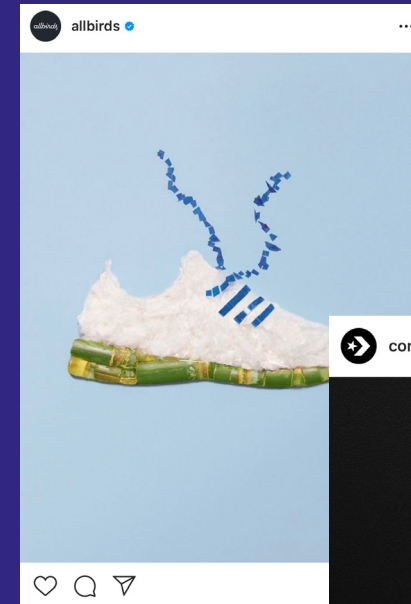
## Using Instagram as your platform of choice, this strategy might be structured as follows:

### In-feed posts

A recognisable and distinctive aesthetic for your account's grid which evokes the brand and which includes regular posting of distinctive assets as social media posts.

In this context, a distinctive asset will be an image, video or graphic which uses your brand's colours and typography in a style which is distinctive and unique to your brand.

At this level, in-feed posts serve to reinforce the distinctiveness of your brand in the eyes of the consumer. These must be consistently delivered over time.



## Stories

Stories (Instagram Stories) should be used for... telling stories. 15-second interactive videos are a fantastic way to engage people with your message and the experience of a full screen vertical video is fast-becoming the medium of choice for content consumption (thanks, TikTok).

Here we can communicate messages at a deeper level than in the feed: perhaps a dive into the research and development behind your latest product, or a quick feature on one of your brand ambassadors.

The aim is to retain the viewer through your Story content through attention-grabbing openings, interactivity and easy to digest information. No one will watch your beautifully put together Stories if they're greeted with a black screen for the first two seconds of your first Story.



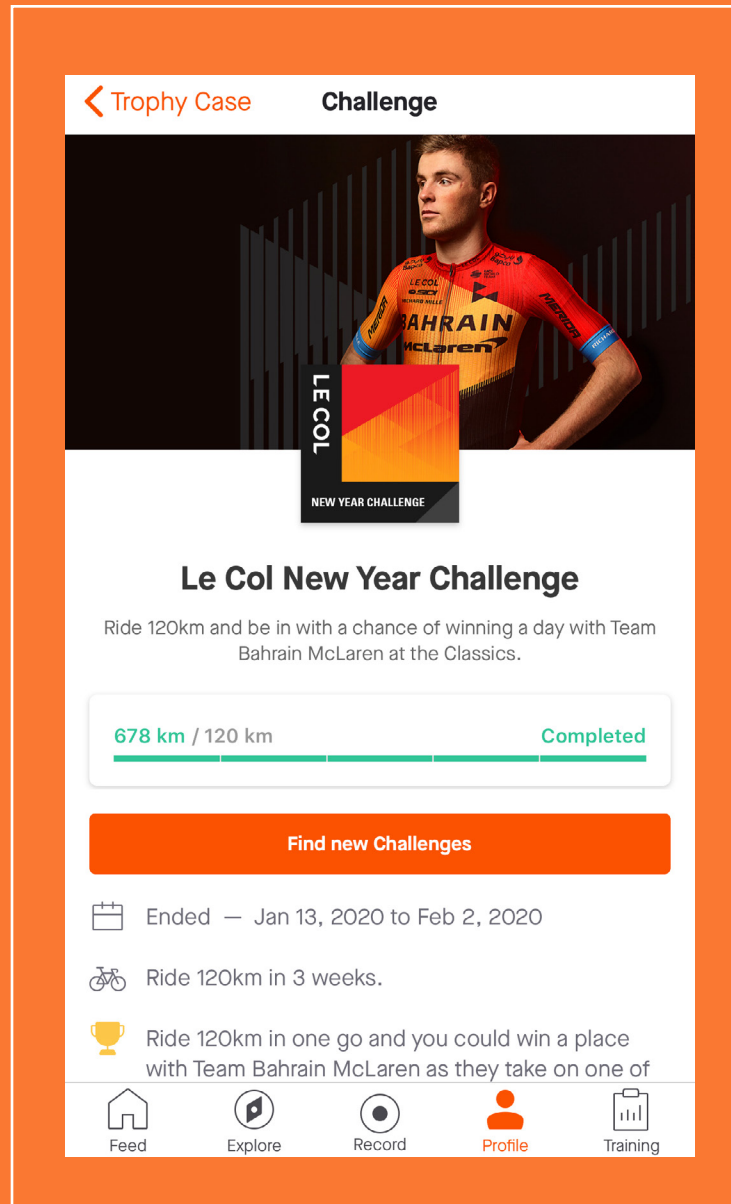
In the round, your social media channels should reflect everything that makes you distinctive as a brand with a mix of content that brings cyclists interesting, valuable information, illustrates the features and benefits of your products and inspires and entertains.

# 6. Use Strava.

There are more than 40 million Strava users. All of them athletes. It's the mother of all databases for anyone looking to target cyclists.

There are two ways to market your brand on Strava: Strava clubs and sponsored challenges.

Strava clubs are (for the time being, at least) what Facebook pages were like five years ago, with super high levels of reach and engagement. Build an audience on the platform through your club and follow the strategy outlined for email and social media above: high quality content, consistently delivered, combined with well-timed sales messages.



Sponsored challenges are highly effective at building your email list and driving direct sales. Participation and completion rates are always high (because cyclists ride their bikes anyway), as are redemption rates for the offer being promoted.

Redemption rates can be increased even further by including a giveaway as part of the promotion: complete the challenge and receive a voucher for [X]% off our product and the chance to win an all-expenses paid trip to the Tour de France. Irresistible.

**7. Have an email strategy.**


Don't overlook email. Social media is important but the caveat is that you'll only ever be building on someone else's land. An effective email strategy is about owning the customer and personalising your messaging to them as best you can. If a subscriber has told you they're a triathlete, don't send them information about mountain biking.

Email marketing is all about moving a subscriber from a position of limited awareness of your brand to one of most awareness. Once again, that's done through good content that informs, educates and/or entertains.

Think about the number of emails from brands in your inbox right now. Which are you most likely to open and actually read? The one pleading you to open it with a 'Mega deals you don't want to miss' subject line seamlessly blends into all the others and looks like spam. The one with the subject line 'The best climbs you've never ridden' looks far more inviting.

Ps.

**What Bike Would You Buy If Money Was No Object?**



**10 Of The Most Expensive Road Bikes Of All Time**

From current race kit to elusive collector classics. What are the world's most expensive bikes and how much do they really cost?

[Read more](#) ➔

An email I want to open

We buy from brands we trust. If we've persuaded a subscriber to our email list that we are an authority in our particular niche - carbon wheels, insurance, jerseys - we're more likely to earn their trust and convert them into a customer the next time that subscriber is in the market to buy a product of the type we offer.

One of the ways to earn that trust is through good content. That means information that's genuinely useful and compelling to the reader. Not a backhanded attempt at a quick sale disguised as a blog post.

One of the advantages of regularly broadcasting high quality content to your email list is that, in exchange, it gives you - the brand - more leverage to ask your subscribers to buy what you sell.

Selling without the high quality content feels like spam, selling with it feels like a fair exchange. We buy from brands we trust.

**8. Use Facebook Ads  
for retargeting only.**

Facebook advertising can be extremely effective. We've seen entire businesses built off the back of Facebook Ads. We've also seen entire marketing budgets squandered on the platform with little to no return.

Performance marketing on Facebook works for impulse purchases (bags of pick and mix) and products which we're actively considering purchasing and which are in the right price bracket. Top of the funnel awareness advertising on Facebook is better suited to brands of more general appeal. We think this is because context matters in relation to message delivery.


When marketing a product in a special interest niche like cycling, Facebook Ads are most effective as a retargeting tool. It is better to place your very first communication to a cyclist who has never come across your brand before in an environment within which the cyclist is actively thinking about cycling and which is supported by other signals of trust and authority. A 300x250 MPU on Bikeradar

is a more powerful brand awareness message than an in-feed Facebook Ad in our view.

Create at least 3 custom audiences in Ads Manager targeting users at various stages of the purchase funnel using your Facebook Pixel (remember to exclude purchasers) and retarget those audiences with messaging that builds authority (e.g. positive user reviews) and reinforces your product's USPs (e.g. free 30-day trial).

**Remember:** you need sufficient volumes of high quality traffic to your website if your retargeting is going to work so make sure your brand-level advertising is working, people are opening and clicking your emails and your traffic from organic search is where it should be.

What's high quality traffic? Look for traffic that actually converts and traffic with a good session duration. If most of your traffic is bouncing after a few seconds it's probably the wrong type of traffic.



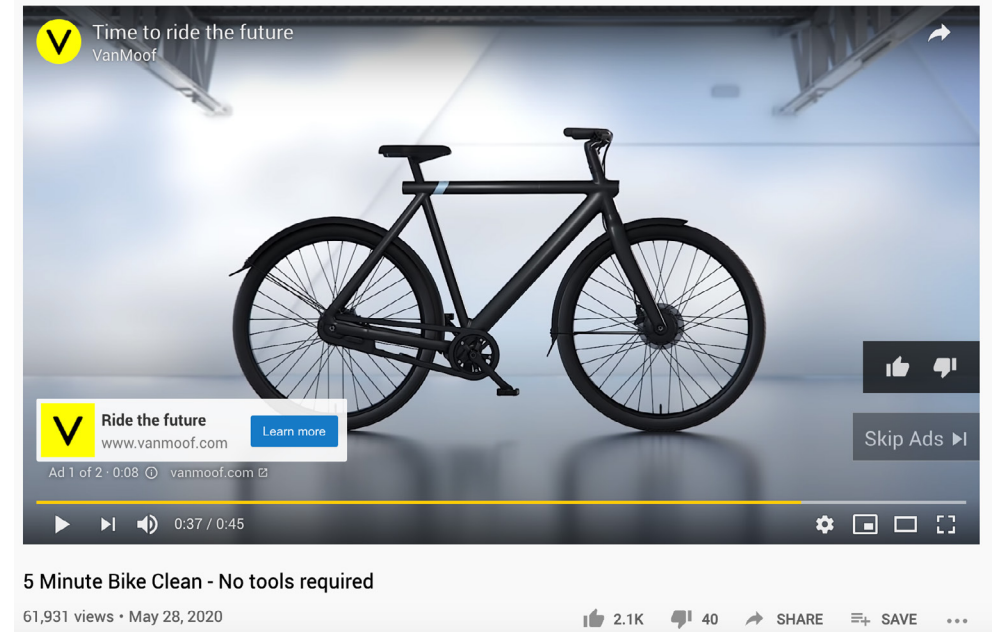
The image shows a Facebook advertisement for DeadHappy, a life insurance company. At the top, it says "DeadHappy Sponsored" with a small profile picture and ID: 283857276326750. Below this is a testimonial: "Rated excellent on Trustpilot. Professional and respected Life Insurance from DeadHappy - as seen on Telly! Apply in less than 5 minutes. Don't take Michael's word for it though - see for yourself." The main visual is a cartoon illustration of a roll of toilet paper. On the toilet paper, there is a Trustpilot logo with five stars and the word "Excellent", and below that, "2 months FREE" in a handwritten style. A play button icon is overlaid on the toilet paper. Below the illustration, the text "DEADHAPPY" is written in large, bold, black letters, followed by "Really easy life insurance" in a smaller, cursive font, and "deadhappy.com" in bold black letters. At the bottom left, it says "GET.DEADHAPPY.COM" and "Really Easy Life Insurance". At the bottom right, there is a "Learn More" button.

9. Use YouTube  
advertising for brand-  
level awareness.

YouTube advertising is a brilliant tool for brand-level awareness for products in special interest niches because the targeting is so strong. In relation to cycling, target your video ads according to placements rather than keywords and place them on the biggest, most-engaged cycling-specific YouTube channels that are most relevant to your product.

We like bumper ads: a 6-second, non-skippable video ad that plays before the video a user has chosen to view. Google found that 90% of 329 bumper campaigns it looked into “[drove a significant lift in ad recall](#)”. We’ve seen great results from bumper ad campaigns.

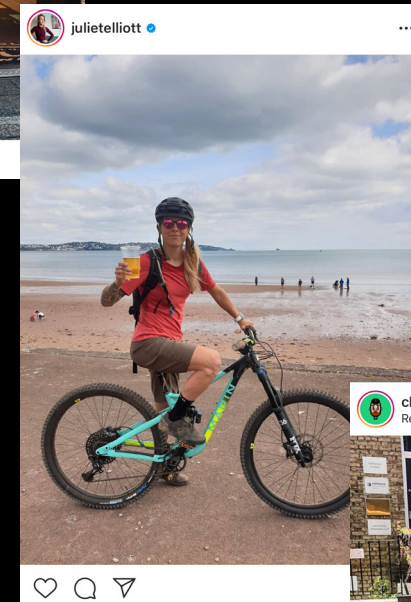
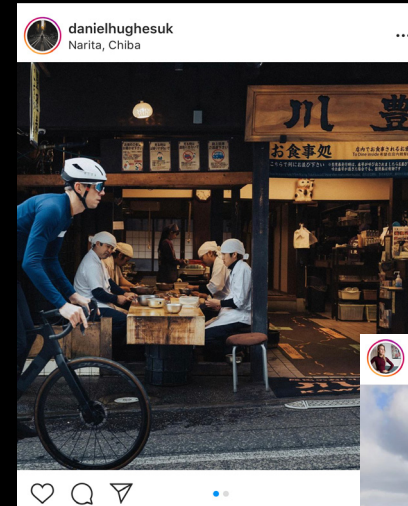
Compare the CPMs you can achieve with a highly targeted bumper ad against those you can achieve advertising directly with the biggest cycling publishers. The difference might surprise you.



**10. Ambassadors bring  
credibility, not sales.**

When it comes to cycling, brand ambassadors bring credibility and trust. They signal to other cyclists that yours is a brand worthy of my consideration. Don't expect dozens of sales each time an ambassador tags your brand in a post.

Identify ambassadors that are most relevant to your brand and target audience, and work with them as partners to tell your story in a genuine and credible way.



**11. Use relevant incentives to increase conversions.**

Get a FREE Hiplok D-lock worth £69.99 with your new policy [Learn more](#)

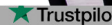
[Dashboard](#) [Log out](#)

Get a FREE gold-rated Hiplok DX D-lock worth £69.99 with your new insurance policy

[Find out more](#)

**HIPLÖK**


T&Cs and exclusions apply. Offer applies to annual policies on bikes valued £500 or more and to new customers only.

 Trustpilot

Excellent rating

[Get a quote](#)

Thank you discount for NHS workers.  
[Click here.](#)



Incentivise cyclists to buy from you with a tangible benefit that is relevant to them. Every brand can offer a 10% discount for new customers. That's easy. Show you understand your customer with something that's genuinely useful and relevant to them.

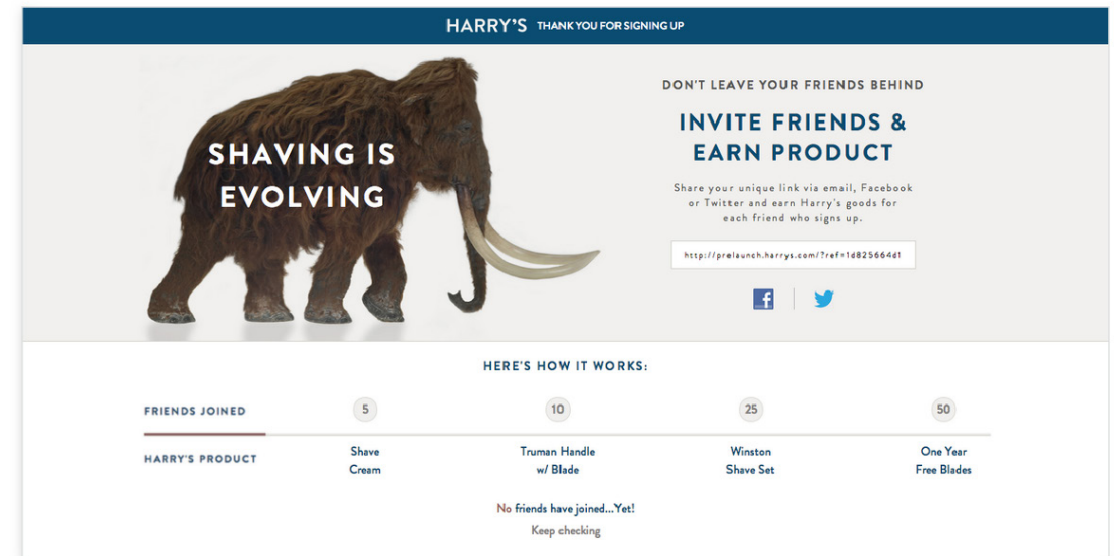
**12. Have a referral programme.**

Ideas spread by word of mouth, not display advertising.

Dropbox famously employed a simple referral strategy to 40x users (to 4 million) in just 15 months. Dropbox gave extra storage space to both the referrer and the referees. The referral incentive should be something of genuine value and relevance to the customer or, better yet, something that enhances the customer's use of the product they just bought.

If you sell bike computers, offer a free mount as a gift if a customer refers four friends. If you sell power meters, offer a free spare battery as a gift if a customer refers four friends.

Bake your referral programme into the purchase funnel, frame it by the benefits to the customer of the referral and make it as easy as possible for your customer to refer their friends.



**13. Have a review strategy.**

We all know the importance of positive customer testimonials. They constitute a powerful tool when it comes to influencing our buying decisions: social proof. It's a natural characteristic of human behaviour that we do what we observe others to be doing. It minimises the likelihood that the action we're about to take is going to be disastrous.

Showcase all your reviews on the homepage of your website and use them in retargeting ads to convert prospective buyers who are at the consideration stage of the purchase funnel.

It shows that you are a brand which is transparent, honest and used by others.

Increase social proof by adding a trust banner to your homepage too by including media badges and press mentions.

Ask new customers to leave a review immediately after the point of purchase and bake it into the purchase process. This is how your customers assume the role of advocates for your brand and help to build awareness.



14. Don't just sell  
the utility, sell the  
experience.



The world's first digital music player.



Every song you've ever owned. In your pocket.

No one cares what you can do.  
Everyone cares what you can do for them.

15. The cost of delivery matters as much as the message.



It's tempting today to allocate our media budgets based on efficiency: where can I achieve the best return on my investment according to the KPIs we've identified for the lowest cost? Gimme clicks, traffic. Now.

A tweak here, a tweak there, and hey presto a 5% increase in click-through rates resulting in a handful of more sales. Hurrah, look how successful this campaign is. The problem with this approach is that it focuses the entire exercise on optimisation often at the expense of long-term effectiveness.

Perceived value is all that matters and if we want to persuade someone that we are offering them something of value (in terms of utility) then the cost of delivering that message to them matters as much as the message.

To quote [Rory Sutherland](#), the meaning and significance we attach to something is felt in direct proportion to the expense with which it is communicated. Imagine receiving two wedding invites containing identical information. One in an email, one on a thick gilt edged card. The message is exactly the same, but the cost of delivery is different. The inference you would make in relation to each invite would be different. The cost of delivery (not just in financial terms, but in effort and creativity) of the message matters.



If we are interested in building a brand and offering products and services of value then marketing effectiveness is as important as efficiency. Consider marketing a premium product (say, a £1,000 wheelset) and two approaches, each with a marketing budget of £10,000:

- Approach A: the budget is deployed solely on Facebook Ads. The campaign delivers great click-through rates and low CPMs.
- Approach B: the budget is spent on a beautifully shot, high-quality hero video for your website.

Approach A is more efficient but which is more effective?

We are served hundreds of display ads every day. The first approach signals that you are interested in getting as many eyeballs on your message for the lowest cost possible and makes you indistinguishable from every other brand doing exactly the same thing through the same medium, selling everything from car insurance to pick and mix.

The second approach is a costly signal. It signals that you have invested effort and money into this piece of video because you have confidence in the product you are selling. It's the gilt-edged card versus the email and it increases the likelihood of the product being perceived as valuable.

We would argue that Approach B is more persuasive to someone we are asking to part with £1,000.

# Want to discuss how we can help?

## Get in touch.

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