

From Blog to Business: A Cycling Content Transition

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## ABSTRACT

The following research project discusses the transition from blog to business, when considering the shift for a platform that offers cycling content. Within the cycling industry, there are a vast array of cyclists, ranging from competitive cyclists to casual, lifestyle riders. Additionally, platforms exist for content production and businesses offer custom products; however, this divide is rarely bridged.

From a content perspective, this research project focuses on storytelling for brand promotion, storytelling for personal branding, and storytelling for social interaction. Within the cycling industry, unique content that focuses on people, places, and adventure fares well. For Everjourney, offerings include features, images, videos, routes and reviews.

From a business perspective, there is a steady shift in style, as well as an array of product offerings, within the cycling industry. When expanding from a blog to a complete business, Everjourney aimed to offer an array of custom product offerings, including water bottles, athletic socks, casual t-shirts, and cycling kits. Nestled under the “More Sending, Less Pretending” tagline, Everjourney aims to be a one-stop shop for those influenced by various content pieces, as well as those interested in purchasing custom bits and bobs.

While making the transition from blog to business, within the cycling industry, Everjourney has provided a roadmap, as well as key sources, for beginning the shift. This is information that was not available when Everjourney launched in 2018.

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# Chapter 1

## *Introduction*

### **Statement of the Problem**

Within the realm of cycling content, blogs are popular and businesses are booming, but bridging the divide between content production and business savvy has the ability to capture a missing segment of cycling's audience. Based on personal accounts, the cycling industry has the ability to be both a captivating, as well as a polarizing, force. Between competitive cyclists and casual, lifestyle cyclists, a rift exists, which leads to an interesting dynamic. While appealing to both competitive cyclists and casual, lifestyle cyclists, it is important to consider content attractiveness. By appealing to various niches within a general group, it is possible to exploit a missing target, both in terms of content and business.

When it comes to cycling, especially within the United States of America, it is common to consider individuals, or teams, at the professional level of the sport, prior to delving into casual, lifestyle cyclists. For example, Lance Armstrong is a highly-touted figure of the past. In 2005, Armstrong claimed he would race his last Tour de France, which led to some concern for USA Cycling. "When Lance steps away, we do anticipate there will be some sort of dip in media interest in cycling because he has been such a phenomenal athlete, as well as a great human-interest story," said Andy Lee, director of communications for USA Cycling, which identifies and trains the cyclists that represent the US in international competitions." (Ward, 2005) While there may have been some dip in media coverage, considering the value of Armstrong and the Tour de France, a large-scale cycling event that occurs every July, U.S. cycling remained active. Through USA Cycling, only

35,000 cyclists, within the U.S., are registered to compete in domestic cycling events. However, it is estimated that there are more than eight million active cyclists, as well as millions more casual, lifestyle cyclists. (Ward, 2005). So, when considering U.S. cycling, across a variety of niches within the sport, it is important to consider appeal, both in terms of content attractiveness and business.

In the past, little research has been done in the way of transitioning from a blog to a business platform, as it pertains to cycling content. This aims to be a roadmap, while expanding from blog to business, all while maintaining appeal and content interest. Certainly, both pieces are integral aspects that allow for complete immersion and interest from a wide-spread audience of cyclists in the U.S.

### **Background of the Problem**

In 2018, Everjourney, a project motivated by the adventure and freedom of cycling, was formed. However, when considering how to effectively launch Everjourney, which transitioned from a blog to a business platform, little research existed, as various questions persisted. In terms of continued content production, as well as the beginning of business operations, where would the process begin?

As it pertains to content production on a blog platform, as well as media impact, various segments of the cycling industry need to be fostered. At some point, it may be more important to focus on a singular demographic. However, for Rapha, a high-end cycling apparel brand, the company has effectively catered to multiple groups in the cycling industry. Rapha provides apparel for Team Sky, a professional road cycling team. Additionally, Rapha produces professional replica kits, as well as simplified, quality kits for

the general public of casual, lifestyle cyclists. All the while, Rapha has promoted storytelling in their pieces of kit. (Tesseract, 2014) So, where is a line drawn, and what platforms are used for tracking impact?

When considering launching a business, it is possible for ideas to flow, before being blocked by the inability to effectively launch ideas into production. Platform traffic and business offerings only have the ability to work hand-in-hand if products are ready to be sold in a timely manner to consumers. While transitioning from a blog to business, with a focus on cycling's audience, there are a few established brands that have the ability to swiftly produce product in a timely manner. To properly make this swift transition, a handful of companies will be provided for immediate assistance.

For the cycling industry, the transition from content production to business operations has been overlooked, until this research project that aims to provide a framework.

### **Purpose of the Study**

At the moment, the cycling industry seems to be at a crossroads. Within the sport of cycling, a plethora of prominent niches exist. Yes, there are traditional bits in cycling, which range from competitive cyclists to casual, lifestyle cyclists, as well as road cyclists and mountain bikers. Looking beyond, the cycling scene is growing. Stories are being shared and products are being produced, both in positive forms.

Storytelling, within the sport of cycling, is fascinating. From this perspective, there is money to be made. Oftentimes, characters that are willing to share stories and produce content vary from those interested in making money off of a given concept. The overlap is

slim. Meanwhile, for those producing stylish apparel, custom cycling kit, and attractive accessories, storytelling is subpar and little meaning exists behind the product.

With little overlap having existed in the past, a question exists. Is it possible for storytelling, content production, and media attractiveness to lead to consistent product sales, within the realm of cycling? The purpose of content research, for this research project, revolves around what content is considered attractive for cycling aficionados.

### **Setting for the Study**

As a senior project, at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, this study will be completed with the inclusion of personal data, research collection, and the implementation of discussed pieces, when considering a transition from blog to business within the realm of cycling.

In 2018, Everjourney, a project motivated by the adventure and freedom of cycling, was founded. Forming out of Sean Bird's Cycling Blog, Everjourney is meant to expand on blogging and storytelling, through the inclusion of business aspects and product offerings for cyclists. While operating for the past six months, Everjourney has hosted an array of online content, while populating its web page with custom water bottles, socks, t-shirts, and cycling kit. Everjourney may be found here: [www.everjourneyproject.com](http://www.everjourneyproject.com).

When considering content, Everjourney focuses on a few key areas. A blog tab online allows for the selection of features, images, videos, routes, and reviews. Additionally, a media section offers substantial video projects, as well as the latest happenings of Everjourney, through social networks. Since the beginning of 2018, 44 content pieces have

been produced with the aim of driving traffic online, before consumers make product selections at the Everjourney store.

For custom product offerings, Everjourney has populated its range, all while considering the needs of cyclists. Initially, the first custom Everjourney water bottle sold out, before two additional styles were ordered. This is how it all began. All custom water bottles are meant to be a singular take. Once they have sold, the water bottles will not be reordered. Beyond hydration systems, Everjourney recently produced custom athletic socks, as well as casual t-shirts. In its most interactive bit of production, Everjourney has produced four cycling jerseys, three cycling bib shorts, and one neck buff.

From blog to business, a balance exists. Certainly, it is simple to lean farther in a single direction, prior to reestablishing a base and moving forward. Both content and products need to exist.

### **Research Questions**

For research collection, the following research questions were posed when considering what makes cycling content attractive. As a reader, listener, or viewer, some cycling content is naturally more attractive than other bits and pieces. Then, once ideal content has been produced, there is a need to continuously reel in a consumer.

1. Within the cycling industry, what leads to fresh concept cultivation?
2. When considering the experience of adventure, especially a fleeting feeling by bicycle, how is it possible to separate from the crowd?
3. What new media is attractive to consumers, all while retaining an audience of interested individuals?

4. Presently, what storytelling techniques are attractive, and from what viewpoint are they told, as it pertains to cycling content?
5. What are some current, productive examples for captivating media that is revolutionary to the cycling industry?
6. How is it possible to transition media consumption into product sales?
7. From blog to business, is this a common transition, and is it possible to accurately provide a resourceful roadmap for interested brands?
8. From personal experience, is it possible to consider the steps taken, as well as the platforms utilized, for a transition from blog to business?

### **Organization of the Study**

This research paper offers five chapters for dissection. Chapter 1 includes a statement of the problem, background of the problem, purpose of the study, setting for the study, and research questions. Chapter 2 includes a literature review, which will pinpoint effective content that is being produced and promoted in the cycling industry. Chapter 3 includes methodology, which highlights statistics and personal data from more than six years of producing cycling content. Chapter 4 includes a roadmap, which features an analysis of the tools used by Everjourney, for both content production and business prowess. Chapter 5 includes a final summary, findings, and conclusions for those interested in making the cycling blog to business transition.

## **Chapter 2**

### *Literature Review*

Through reviewing literature online, it is possible to better understand the bits of content that are considered attractive, within the cycling industry. Currently, a wide variety of content exists. However, certain pieces definitely carry considerable weight, when compared to lackluster media attempts. Storytelling that includes characters, real personalities, and exploration tends to fare well when it comes to attracting an audience of readers or viewers.

#### **Storytelling for Brand Promotion**

When considering the sport of cycling, there are a great range of possibilities, as it relates to attempts at powerful content production. From afar, the sport may be told through a competitive or casual, lifestyle lens. Additionally, depending on the viewpoint, it is possible to focus on people, places, or equipment. The possibilities are vast, which causes plenty of difficulties. When completed correctly, prominent storytelling is unique and noticeable, before spreading quickly.

Storytelling for cycling, which tends to stand apart, often involves a brand, interesting characters, and a sense of adventure or exploration. For Rapha, a high-end manufacturer of cycling apparel, combining stories with their brand appeals to a wide audience of individuals, both within and outside the cycling community. Storytelling is used to convey “values, purpose, and passion to its audience.” (Glover, 2018) Rapha’s messages are included on pieces of cycling apparel, through brief phrases and motivational sayings, as



well as online. To boldly market their products, Rapha tracks ridiculous rides in an online road journal, which is meant to highlight the lost art of cycling and the glory of suffering, all while enticing consumers. (Tompkins, 2009) Rapha Continental is the group completing these ridiculous rides. For Rapha, their online road journal has allowed for consumer interaction and interest, which has returned positive sales. “Most of its sales are consumer direct and the Rapha Continental road journal helps drive valuable traffic to its online store. Slate Olson, general manager for Rapha North America, said last year the Rapha Continental Web site got about 10,000 unique views a month; this year it has more than doubled and almost tripled that number in some months.” (Tompkins, 2009) Able to appeal to competitive and casual cyclists, all while sharing stories, promoting characters, and focusing on the lost art of cycling, Rapha has taken their brand essence to another level. Through intertwining storytelling and product sales, their brand has far-reaching appeal.

### **Storytelling for Personal Branding**

Within U.S. professional road cycling, there is no shortage of unique characters gracing roads across the country. In the past, U.S. professional road cycling has had the potential to be bland, while competing with European professional road cycling, which is rather traditional and steadfast in its roots. Now, the U.S. has characters floating around the professional road cycling peloton, all while sharing their personal stories and focusing on personal branding.

Lachlan Morton, a professional road cyclist for Team Dimension Data, is one such character. Australians by nature, Lachlan and his older brother, Gus, attended high school on the south-eastern coast of Australia in Port Macquarie. At an early age, the two brothers took

to cycling, building “Frankenbikes,” through a hodgepodge of parts and pieces, and cruising on Australian adventures. (Dille, 2016) For Lachlan, it was common to wake at 4:30 a.m. to squeeze in a few hours of pedaling before school. This was freedom to him, while resembling competition, family, friends, and adventure. Through these cycling exploits, Lachlan, who avoided drugs in high school, angered his parents with excessive cycling. Beginning at midnight, Lachlan and a friend rode 125 miles on a school night, before getting back to town when the coffee shops were opening. On a dare, Lachlan rode from Sydney to Port Macquarie, a cool 240 miles. (Dille, 2016) As teenagers, Lachlan and Gus were supremely talented and invested in cycling, which led to the need for an outlet.

Since a young age, the Morton brothers were never pushed by their parents; however, they were always supported. The Real Aussie Kids, a cycling team, was formed by the Morton brothers and their parents. The team went on to win four world titles and more than a dozen national championships. (Dille, 2016) Every summer, the team would travel to Breckenridge, Colorado, for six weeks of high-altitude training and racing. With an array of positive results in their favor, Lachlan and Gus were recruited by the top U.S. professional road cycling teams. The brothers were destined for greatness, but their paths strayed from the norm. At 18 years old, Gus quit cycling, after being offered a spot on a top U.S. development road cycling team. Burned on cycling, he studied film in Australia, before directing two national television series by the age of 24. (Dille, 2016) Lachlan signed with Garmin-Sharp, one of the top professional road cycling teams in the world, in 2013. However, he was not set on the lifestyle; Lachlan contemplated quitting. In an attempt to rekindle their love for the sport of cycling, the Morton brothers conducted *Thereabouts*, an original film that traces their journey from Port Macquarie, on the south-eastern coast of

Australia, to Uluru, which lies at the center of the Australian continent. This journey was all about family, friends, and adventure. A true journey, the brothers consistently rode 180-mile days, explored gravel and backcountry roads, met characters of the outback, shot rifles, explored stone cellars, and poured beer from unmanned taps. (Dille, 2016) In the end, with a rekindled passion for the sport of cycling, Gus pieced together *Thereabouts*, a 48-minute documentary that deeply connects with viewers, while showcasing a sense of freedom, discovery, and adventure that comes with riding bicycles. *Thereabouts* has received more than 72,000 online views; also, it has been shown at numerous sold-out film festivals. (Dille, 2016) Since, two additional *Thereabouts* documentaries have been released, and Gus is currently working on *Outskirts*, another Morton-brothers original series. With this form of storytelling, the Morton brothers are not selling product, but they are building their personal brands, while attracting sponsors and being provided with exquisite opportunities.

### **Storytelling for Social Interaction**

Beyond storytelling for brand promotion and storytelling for personal branding, storytelling is common in the cycling world. Strava, a social network for cyclists, among other endurance athletes, allows individuals to share their personal workouts and daily stories with followers. (Montgomery, 2015) By recording information on the Strava application or a GPS unit, which tracks time, distance, and elevation gain, among additional parameters, athletes have the ability to upload workout data to Strava, which displays GPS data and heaps of statistics. “Following its launch, Strava added on features such as a news feed and integrated Instagram photos. Gareth Nettleton, Strava’s director of international marketing, says: ‘People now use it as much as a storytelling platform as they do a training

partner. The storytelling is the sticky thing - the reason people come back to Strava is to keep up with their friends.” (Montgomery, 2015) On a daily basis, both competitive cyclists and casual, lifestyle cyclists have the ability to share their personal workout story with a network of individuals. Both short-term and long-term, this is a form of branding and content recognition.

## **Chapter 3**

### *Methodology*

For this research project, data was drawn from personal sources, including Everjourney's blog platform, which has been utilized since 2013. Content has been analyzed and reach tallied, when considering appealing cycling content.

#### **Data Sources**

The primary source of data for this research project is Everjourney's blog platform, which has existed since 2013. No new data was drawn from individual sources.

#### **Participants**

For this research project, no participants were included as individual sources. Participants were active in the form of individual content consumers.

#### **Interview Design**

Considering the amount of data that is present on Everjourney's blog platform, interviews were not conducted, when considering the appeal of various content. Instead, objective information was tallied.

#### **Data Collection**

Since 2013, data has been collected on Everjourney's blog platform, as it relates to content interest and viewership. All data was collected by Blogger, a Google-hosted platform for blogging.

### **Data Presentation**

Since 2013, Everjourney has produced more than 150 pieces of original content, all focusing on cycling, through features, images, routes, and reviews. During this time period, the three most widely read pieces include "[Ride the Ridge](#)," "[Product Review: Specialized S3 Helmet](#)," and "[The Cub House](#)." As a whole, Everjourney's blog has more than 80,000 pageviews all time. "Ride the Ridge" has captured nearly 2,000 of these pageviews. "Ride the Ridge" is an original adventure piece that traces a morning of riding West Cuesta Ridge, above San Luis Obispo, California. A popular gravel loop rolls out from San Luis Obispo, before dropping into Morro Bay and cruising back to San Luis Obispo. On an early morning in November 2017, Sean Bird and Adam Evard completed this route, before filing a written piece filled with photographs. Sticking with content that highlights people and places, before filing information in a storytelling form has returned positive results for Everjourney.

### **Limitations**

Although an extensive amount of time has been spent producing content for Everjourney, limitations continue to exist, even in this project. With more than 150 pieces of original content and more than 80,000 pageviews, it remains possible to produce additional content that highlights people, places, and adventure. "Ride the Ridge" received a positive

endorsement from readers. Moving forward, it would be interesting to see if additional, similar pieces were to stick, or if readers are interested in consuming varying information.

Additionally, while the Everjourney blog platform has been active since 2013, Everjourney's web page launched in 2018, a brief period of time to gain considerable traction. As this web page continues to settle, it will be interesting to see how content is received online, before linking out to Everjourney's blog platform.

### **Delimitations**

As a personal, small-scale business, delimitations do exist with Everjourney, especially in the financial sphere. When considering a wide variety of online promotions available for Everjourney content, it is not feasible to consistently spend on advertising and paid services. Instead, free services are primarily used, while focusing on word-of-mouth for direct-to-consumer advertising and sales.

Outside of content, similar delimitations exist for Everjourney's product offerings. Due to the finances of a small-scale business, it is important to move through product, prior to ordering additional product. With both financial and time constraints, Everjourney is certainly a long-term project, which will continue to grow, slowly but surely.

## **Chapter 4**

### *Data Analysis*

From blog to business, a proper roadmap is needed for consistent development and forward movement, all in a timely manner. Across multiple platforms, it is imperative to remain consistent, through a specific branded voice, prior to developing content and various products, all with the goal of looping in consumers. Chapter 4 will provide Everjourney's roadmap, after plenty of trials and tribulations, to a successful merge of blog and business.

#### **Description of Participating Respondents**

For Everjourney, there is a primary focus on cycling, as well as the wide-reaching cycling audience. From competitive to casual, lifestyle cyclists, as well as those interested in content that pertains to people, places, and adventure, as well as ideal apparel and accessories, Everjourney has developed a platform that allows consumers to one-stop shop.

#### **Branding**

Now, for any entity, established or fresh, branding is a key element of consistency and interest. Across multiple platforms, it is imperative that a consistent image and message is showcased, all while maintaining the interest of consumers.

For Everjourney, branding became a primary focus in 2018. With the expansion from blog to business, as well as the launch of multiple social-media accounts, it has remained important to be consistent with appearance and messaging.



More than anything, for Everjourney, branding was focused through a simple, sleek logo that showcases an outdoor flair, as well as a sense of adventure. This logo appears on a blog, web page, Facebook profile, Instagram profile, and all custom accessories and apparel. Beyond a simple logo, wording is essential. Everjourney is a project motivated by the adventure and freedom of cycling, all with a tagline of “More Sending, Less Pretending.” Again, across a blog, web page, Facebook profile, Instagram profile, and all custom accessories and apparel, this wording remains the same.

For Everjourney, when a consumer catches a logo or a brief bit of wording, it is essential for consistency to take the guess work out of branding.

### **Blog Development**

In 2013, Everjourney began with Sean Bird’s Cycling Blog, a simple, bland platform. Now, in 2018, Everjourney’s blog, which offers 159 original content pieces, is a fraction of the business development. For Everjourney, it has remained important to offer a blog, as this allows for expression and various takes on happenings in the cycling industry, all while driving traffic to Everjourney’s web page.

For blog usage, Everjourney operates on a Blogger platform (Figure 1), which is hosted by Google. This has been an extremely simple, sleek platform. With few bells and whistles, content is the focus.

### **Business Development**

Beyond blogging, Everjourney jumped into business in 2018. For Everjourney, this included the launch of a new web page, social-media accounts, and interactions with a

variety of pre-existing brands for the production of custom water bottles, socks, t-shirts, and cycling kit. Below, a host of resources have been included. For Everjourney, this was the route taken.

- Web Development:
  - To properly develop a simple, sleek web page, Everjourney worked with Wix, which offers the ability to fully personalize a new website (Figures 2-5). After piecing together a custom website for Everjourney, this was linked to a GoDaddy domain. Again, customization and personality were important pieces of this branding step.
- Social-Media Launch:
  - On pre-existing platforms, Everjourney began to focus on reach, in 2018, with the inclusion of Facebook (Figure 6), Instagram (Figure 7), and Medium (Figure 8) profiles. (Medium is a platform that encourages content sharing. When looking to reach a larger audience, blog articles may be shared on Medium, which offers additional connections.)
  - Across platforms, it is important for branding and messaging to continue to remain similar, all while appearances are in line.
- Brand Interactions:
  - For custom accessories and apparel, Everjourney worked with a variety of established brands in the cycling industry. For water bottles (Figures 9-10), Specialized Bicycles was contacted. For socks (Figure 11), DeFeet was utilized. Custom Ink was used for t-shirts, and Jakroo for cycling kit (Figures 12-14). In bringing a vision to life, it has remained important to stay patient,

all while working in a professional manner. The aforementioned brands have been outstanding.

Nearly halfway through 2018, Everjourney continues to move forward, all while exploring fresh avenues for development. From content production to business development, there is always more to be done, while spreading a positive message and reaching a fresh audience of interested individuals.

## Chapter 5

### *Discussions and Recommendations*

#### **Summary**

This research project was formulated, designed, and completed for a senior project at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. When considering the cycling industry, there is a vast array of both content and products; however, few one-stop shops exist. So, when considering the need to appeal to competitive cyclists, as well as casual, lifestyle cyclists, Everjourney aims to bridge the divide, all while offering an array of content (features, images, videos, routes, reviews) and custom product (water bottles, socks, t-shirts, cycling kit).

Within the cycling industry, there is a need to focus on people, places, and adventure, all while offering custom, simple, sleek product. These two facets interact in a productive manner when completed appropriately. Everjourney is a project motivated by the adventure and freedom of cycling, with a tagline of “More Sending, Less Pretending.” Everjourney may be found online: [www.everjourneyproject.com](http://www.everjourneyproject.com). When considering the transition from cycling blog to business, Everjourney may provide a framework for building a brand and interacting with various pre-existing platforms.

#### **Recommendations for Practice**

Within the cycling industry, when considering the move from blog to business, it is important to remain focused and patient. Certainly, there is the potential for growth, while attracting an array of consumers. However, all good things take time. For Everjourney, this

has not been a simple process. Yes, it has been timely and a substantial undertaking, but this project may serve as a framework for future motivations.

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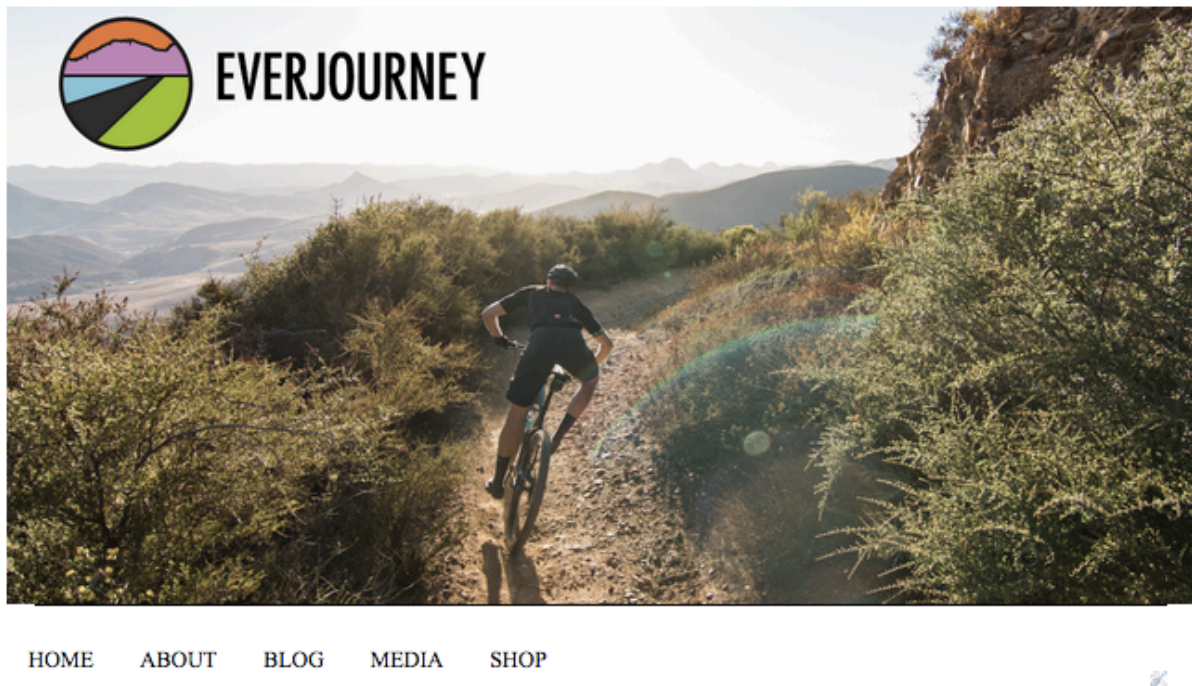
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## FIGURES



Monday, June 4, 2018

### Photo of the Week: June 4-10, 2018

*Everjourney values the art of photography, a next-level craft. While not an original idea, Everjourney is eager to share weekly images that capture the true essence of cycling, be it adventure, freedom, or flair. For additional images, follow along on Instagram, @EverjourneyProject.*



Figure 1: Everjourney blog.



Figure 2: Everjourney website.

## CONTENT

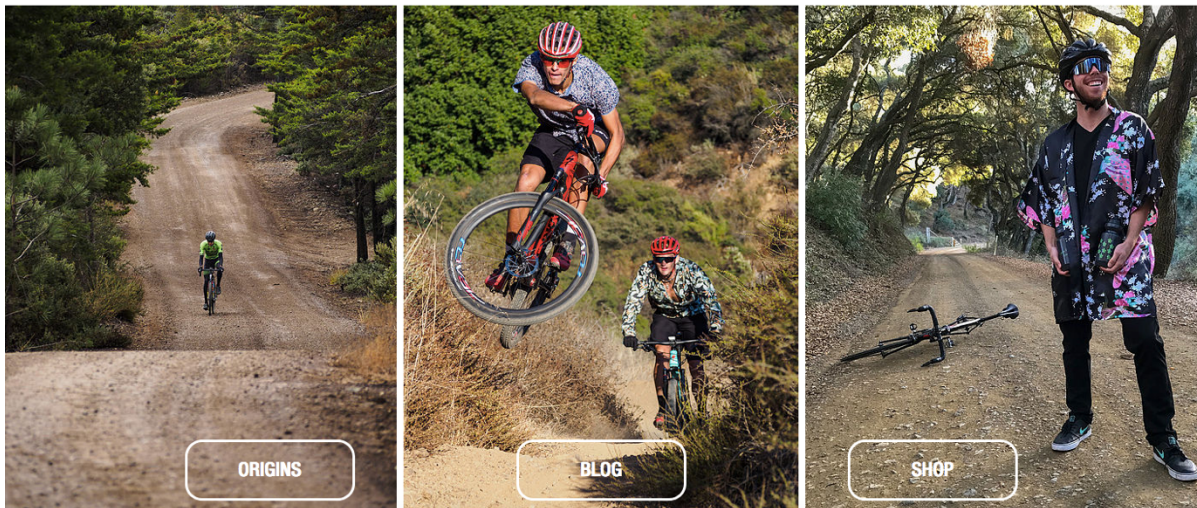


Figure 3: Everjourney website. This is a content section, which appears on the homepage.



## FEATURED PRODUCTS



Figure 4: Everjourney website. This is a featured products section, which appears on the homepage.

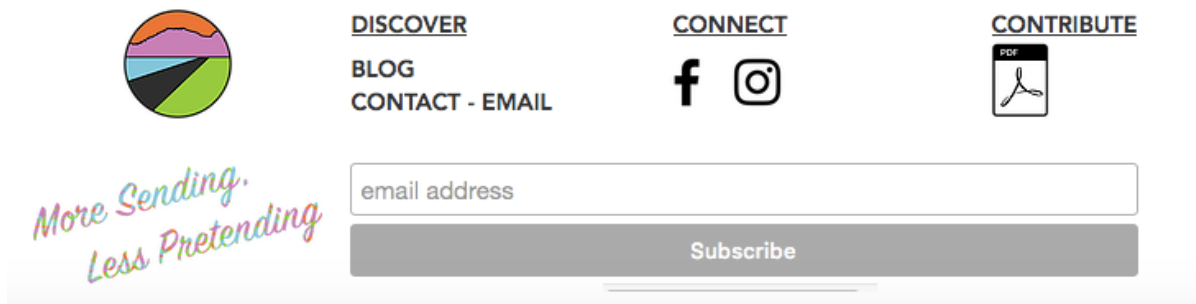


Figure 5: Everjourney website. This is the footer section.

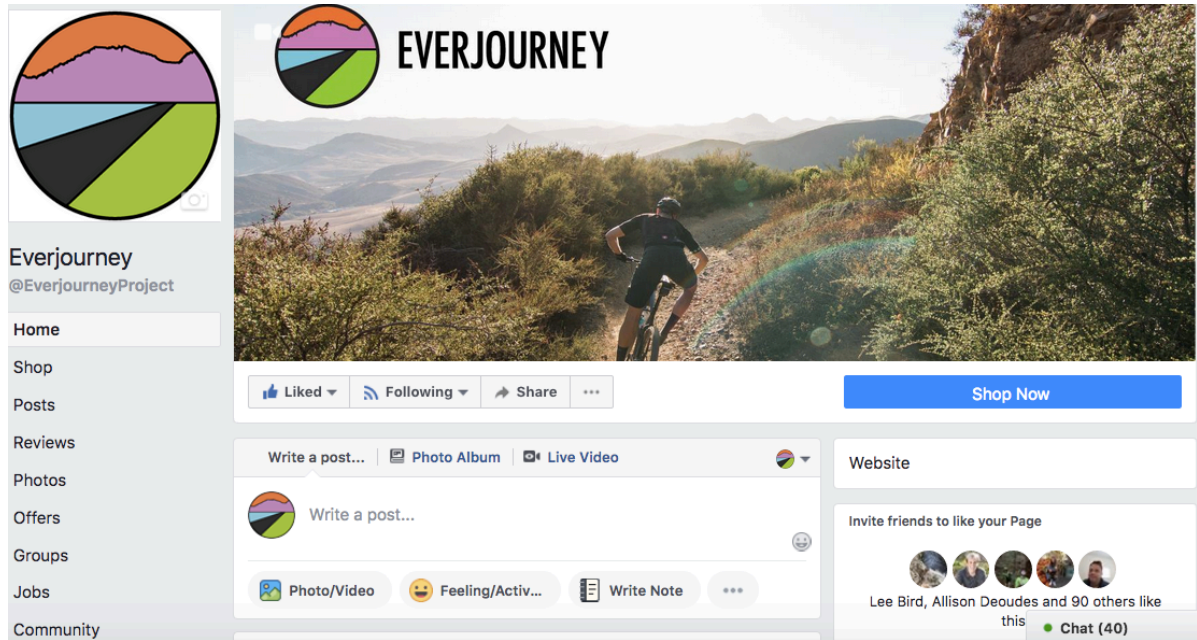


Figure 6: Everjourney Facebook profile.

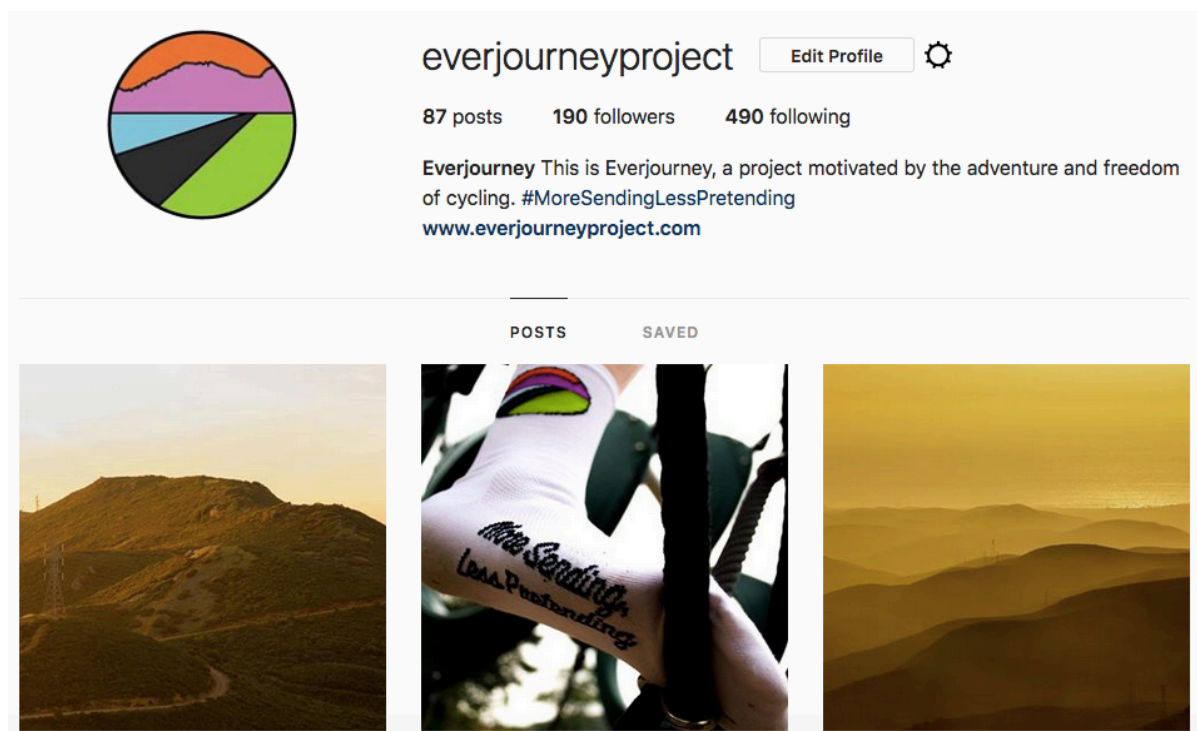


Figure 7: Everjourney Instagram profile.

## Everjourney

This is Everjourney, a project motivated by the adventure and freedom of cycling. Storytelling...wherever, whenever, and however we want to.



3 Following

Edit profile

Profile Latest

### Latest



Everjourney  
May 20 · 1 min

### Photo of the Week: May 21–27, 2018

*Everjourney values the art of photography, a next-level craft. While not an original idea, Everjourney is eager to share weekly images that capture the essence of cycling, be it adventure, freedom, or flair. For additional images, follow along on Instagram...*



Figure 8: Everjourney Medium profile.



*Figure 9: Everjourney water bottle, designed with Specialized Bicycles.*





*Figure 10: Everjourney water bottle, designed with Specialized Bicycles.*





*Figure 11: Everjourney socks, designed with DeFeet.*



*Figure 12: Everjourney cycling kit, designed with Jakroo.*



*Figure 13: Everjourney cycling kit, designed with Jakroo.*





*Figure 14: Everjourney cycling kit, designed with Jakroo.*