

Rapha Copywriter case study

Brief:

We're launching an all-rounder riding collection of products for women in 2023. The new collection allows women to express their unique style on the bike and is designed to be combined with garments from our other ranges – Pro Team, Classic, Core and Explore. It's casual clothing with a technical twist, created to work on the bike without looking conspicuous off it.

Task:

Suggest a name for the collection, write 200 words positioning it for our customers and distil this thinking into a single strap line for the collection. Write a further 150 words profiling the hero product; a lightweight t-shirt that can be worn loose or cinched at the waist to adapt to different shapes.

Suggest ways this collection could be communicated to customers and how we might launch it, with a particular focus on riders with little experience of road cycling. Consider all platforms.

Name: The Flex Collection

Strapline: Change Gear [2 words]

Extended web description:

Created to enhance both wardrobe and lifestyle via ingenious design, this versatile collection gives you the change of gear needed for every eventuality, every day. [25 words]

Flex Collection positioning copy [200 words]

The Flex Collection is inspired by a desire to make garments that work for not against you, all day every day. Clothes that can adapt to your needs from one moment to the next so you can live life on your terms. A collection for those who want to do it all, in their own incomparable way.

A versatile range designed to combine and enhance our other collections while expressing a unique style of its own, Flex is the ultimate all-rounder. It's for those that want to breakaway, who relish the diversity life throws at them and who won't compromise on comfort, elegance, or performance.

These casual, innovative staples offer liberation from the limitations of choice while maintaining a superior technical performance to ensure you remain fresh and at your best.

Life constantly requires us to adapt, collaborate, unite, and transform. This capsule collection is for those who want to express themselves confidently and unapologetically, be they seasoned racers or those enjoying their first flush of cycling satisfaction.

It's about enjoying the freedom of the open road in amongst our hectic lives. For that you need flexibility. With your time, your attitude, and your clothes. Time to change gear.

[199 words]

Hero product copy

Name:

Women's Flex Lightweight T-shirt

Extended web description:

A light, technical t-shirt designed with a variable midsection to add style, shape and flexibility on or off the bike. [20 words]

Product description copy [150 words]:

Whether it's a training ride, a leisurely Sunday pedal or a catch up over brunch, the Women's Flex Lightweight T-shirt is the all-rounder for any occasion. Designed with an easily adjustable midsection for variation of shape and fit, this casual garment can be worn loose or fitted at the waist to satisfy both look and comfort. Airy and innovative, it can capably manage a diverse diary solo and with its anti-bacterial treatment remains fresh at days end. A wardrobe-in-one that saves you time and space while maintaining elegance and that doesn't look out of place either on the bike or in the bar.

Created to combine with our Pro team, Classic, Core or Explore Collections, it unites them through collaborative appeal and practical functionality. Its breathable technical fabric, incorporating recycled fibres, is a stalwart in warmer seasons, but with a durable construction which will perform across a range of conditions.

[150 words]

Suggested communication strategy

This is a Hero campaign for me, with a collection which has the potential to be evergreen in the Rapha portfolio if marketed right and with the possibility for expansion. With that in mind I think the communication strategy for this campaign should cover all available platforms with a concerted effort. Ideally, I think the campaign launch would be in the spring, when life is emerging from indoors, 'fair-weather' cyclist, like myself, are starting to go outside and be in the great outdoors, and which fits with the hero product, which is a more light-weight material less suited to cooler conditions.

As this collection is not due for launch till 2023 it would be ideal if there was involvement and feedback from not only female Rapha employees, in regard to product development, but also from our female Rapha customers and ambassadors. From a marketing perspective, this would be essential to connect the collection with real people and real situations and also will be one of the main narrative devices we can use in the video content and social media campaigns to talk about the idea behind the collection and what it seeks to deliver.

In order of preference I would prioritise: SEM/paid ads, Website, social media, video content, email, local marketing and RCC, written content, Maghalie Rochette's podcast, as well as essential functions like retail, press releases and think of how to promote and work on the 'hidden label' element into the campaign. I will address each section individually.

Website

As with previous, this will need a specific collection landing page which contains the positioning copy, strap line and visuals which match with the story. I feel like this collection remit overlaps with a few existing ones a little such as 'city' 'core' and 'explore' collections in style, as is the remit of the new collection anyway—to combine, extend and elevate. Potentially, as this is being sold as a cross-over into a lifestyle and capsule type collection, it would be great if it was possible to adjust the website template to display as more of a magazine style format, with more imagery interspersed with lifestyle content, as well as the obvious and essential collection and individual product landing pages. There can be a banner section on Rapha.cc homepage which points to the collection which can incorporate visuals, highlighted with one of the video content options which I will expand upon later. Website can obviously be linked-to through a number of channels with focus on SEM, paid ads, social and written content.

Paid Social

For me, this is potentially the most important channel to hit and work on, and this is because there is a desire for a particular focus on riders with little experience of road cycling. With paid social we can target both keywords but mainly demographics and a target audience which might fall outside of cycling but will be very active in lifestyle segments. Areas to focus on would be fitness, yoga, running, activewear users and active people – those who take part in hiking or outdoor adventuring of sorts.

It should also cover those who might not be so active but have discovered the simple joys of cycling and being outdoors recently, especially during lockdown when there was a realisation that being outdoors gives you a positive boost and an outlet for both stress and natural energy.

Although the targeting is important, the messaging is key, because this is not a captive Rapha customer audience and so it would be better to dial down the reliance/importance on road racing or 'serious' riding and play up the versatility, the lifestyle and branding element and make it very clear that the flexibility of both the range and the idea is what gives 'Flex' its USP. For this reason, I can see a good uptake of women who might try this range if it appears more 'feminine' or less 'serious' as they can see it will be a versatile piece which would not look out of place socially. Whilst being very careful not to 'speak down' to women and assume they are not interested in 'serious' or hard riding or racing, I think it is a delicate balance and as mentioned, the remit is to try to connect with novice or even completely new riders. It is my perception from both the men's and women's perspective that it can be a little intimidating when entering this area if you are lacking experience, especially if you are not body confident.

We have seen a massive uptick in ath-leisure wear in recent years, so the market can support this style and look, but it is also important to note that those who might not be naturally as athletic or fit might be intimidated by the idea of wearing skin-tight lycra and feel they do not belong with the Rapha brand for this reason. The 'Flex' collection is the perfect bridge to this customer group who can be empowered with a softer introductory approach and enabled because they can see the benefit of a garment, they can wear for more than just cycling if they should choose.

When it comes to paid social, we can use the intro or selected snippets of the video content campaign interspersed with product images. It will need to be kinetic, to reflect Rapha but also the idea of the collection, which is agile, versatile, and dynamic.

Suggested strapline copy:

Change gear
Find your flex
Elevate the everyday
Beyond Categorisation

Paid Ads/ SEM

Paid ads will be a bit trickier but. SEM might be dull and quite mechanical when it comes to firing up a campaign, but for digital channel marketers presents probably the most cost-effective channel for sales, and one which will offer a large % of sales and a very good ROI, even though it is not particularly exciting. On this front it will be important to get the right keywords and there will have to be careful consideration on what fronts to compete and buy, as the collection is actually attempting to straddle some markets outside of Rapha's stronghold of cycling generally and specifically road riding. For that reason paid ads and SEM in particular will only really be able to compete on cycling-specific keywords, it could try to venture into some lifestyle keywords and segments, targeting urban women who had a diverse range of interests and who partake of the cultural milieu which encompasses gallery exhibitions, fashion, craft, and art activities and like to express themselves both physically and through their clothes.

It might be worthwhile to compete on keywords in any associated segments like yoga etc. They will be strong and have a lot of competition, but it might be worth testing to see if there is any cross-over and if customers can be drawn from them. Best segments to pursue would be runners, camping and outdoor enthusiasts, hikers, triathletes.

Social media

For social media this will be one of the main channels to launch and promote the collection (along with video content) and so the primary aim initially on launch is to get the name and visuals of the collection out in a strong and expressive manner. Using the strapline 'Change Gear' this will rely heavily on the product campaign shots and snippets of video content, specifically the 'day in the life' format videos, which will work with the more immediate and bitesize for social media attention. To that end, there could be very short talking heads of brand ambassadors talking about their 'clothing flexs' to keep the chatter high.

Apart from the engagement, Instagram (with reposts to Twitter and Facebook) marketing campaign will be multimedia and can be deployed on the main Rapha channel but will be driven mainly on the Rapha_women channel. This channel will be the bedrock of the campaign and serves as a great opportunity to maximise current user base to make the flex collection as visible as possible.

Other opportunities to enhance cross-segment engagement would be strategic collaborations with prominent industry brands. Not direct competition, but who could expose Rapha to different markets. Potential options could also be an artist or designer. There is an excellent female tattoo artist and print maker who is also an avid cyclist, who would add so engagement through this avenue.

Further engagement

There is a lot of potential for this to create and drive a lot of engagement on social media. My suggested strapline for this would be 'What's your flex?' with a secondary line of 'Elevate the everyday'. Both could pose the question of what riders do in their lives to accentuate and enhance their riding attire or look to give it that unique edge which shows off their true character. This would work really well across Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and potentially LinkedIn. With LinkedIn it could be framed more as a business angle by asking how customers combine riding attire with work and with fitting it around the working day.

While Instagram would normally be the go-to for this type of engagement, Facebook and Twitter would also be excellent. The use of shares and retweets (which is already used strategically) is a great way to engage and empower followers and we could ask them to share their images of their 'flex' solutions. With the best winning a new 'Flex Collection'.

This strategy would also work really well from a local marketing and RCC perspective as it can be really pushed on the local channels and the clubhouse platforms.

Local marketing / RCC

This is another area which can be used to turbo charge the communications strategy and really use their local knowledge and connections to engage on a more intimate level. With the RCC there is definitely scope to arrange a ride for launch week or try to mix it in around the Women's 100 event, although I appreciate this would cramp that campaign and so it probably not advisable. Collection sets could be set out to local ambassadors like @Muzcali etc. which they could wear in the weeks leading up to launch but not mention more than the name 'Flex collection' and then they could possibly invite questions on an instagram/facebook live around launch to talk about and review the items.

From a local marketing perspective the local channels will be able to hit the customer base a little harder with bespoke content feature both campaign material and content but also engaging with local Rapha rides who might not be global ambassadors but might be prominent Rapha users and in the local community.

Video content

There are lots of great ideas for video content which involve collaborations between Rapha ambassadors and Rapha customers which I think could be really fun and engaging. It would be value to have a short video announcing the collection which just highlights the products and introduces them in a versatile way across different activities, possibly in the course of one day. This could then be 'launched' in a similar style to the require Press Release and can be pointed to from Instagram posts and stories across the day and week and also paid media. A link to the collection landing page can be in the YouTube description and anywhere else where the video is available.

The more interesting video content ideas involve using the ambassadors and regular customers. There are potentially four strands which I think could work very well. It might be excessive to use all three for the nature of the campaign. Some of them are quite ambitious!

1. A day in the life—this could be a straight video diary style format which covers a female ambassador across the course of their day and sees how they have to move from one activity to the next. Would work best with one from each discipline, Cross, road racing, downhill, endurance, Crit racing also possible. They could all be presented as individual videos or combined into one if there was a shortened format.

The idea be to illustrate that we have to be flexible in our lives, even when an athlete and that the product collection mirrors what we already do and that it can empower us to realise our own potential whilst still staying resolutely in-tune with who we are and how we want to be portrayed especially with our clothing choice.

Does not need to overtly market the collection but could use these new items in the video.

2. Crossover day—this is similar in format but pairs up an ambassador with a ‘regular’ cyclist. We spend either a half or full day (depending on logistics) focussing on each person’s life and how they weave cycling, and the clothes that they wear into it.

This is more obvious for the professional, involving going out for training rides, workouts, preparation of races or events. But it could involve things like picking up the kids from school, preparing meals, running errands, other professional or work-related activities, social activities etc.

The second half could focus on the ‘regular’ cyclist and show what their day looks like and gets the professional to muck in and try their hand at whatever they do for a living. Obviously, it would be great if this was a kinetic and interesting day but could be more physical activities. Maybe they are a baker, maybe they are a business executive by day but work as a spin instructor or art teacher by night. Maybe they are a student who gets to class by bike and trains in their spare time for amateur races.

This concept can highlight and empower what it is to live in the world we are today and how we have to constantly pivot and flex to fit in our passions and life, in the moments in between our responsibilities. With the focus on women, this can be a really uplifting message which underlines the message that begin flexible and agile is a worthy quality and necessary to succeed these days, but that you can still show your own flair and intention to do things your way—as the flex collection also proves.

3. Find your flex

Definitely the most ambitious but could be a great way to show appeal for those with little or no experience of road cycling. This one would need to be planned far in advance but would be a bit like the TV show ‘faking it’. A cycling newbie could be paired with a professional (could be just road racing or could be across several cycling sports like cross, crit, track etc.) and the professional introduces them to the sport and ‘trains’ them up for an event – an amateur race or something like that, maybe the etape du tour. This is certainly a demanding idea for content and would require commitment from the professionals which might not be possible but could show how you can change and adapt to new scenarios and give it a go to find what you love by being versatile and embracing change.

Strapline: Change gear.

4. What’s your flex?

This is more similar to Rapha’s lifestyle-type video contents. Mixing ambassadors snippets with those of customers and ‘regular’ cyclists, including those new to the sport. It can include talking head moments which focus on how cycling fits in their life, maybe the sacrifices they have to make to fit it in or highlighting the adaptability and busy lives they have and how it can vary from moment to moment.

On a secondary level it can also be a discussion, exploration of how female riders have come up with their own ‘flex’ solutions for what they ride in. For commuting, for social events where they attend by bike etc.

Retail / clubhouses

For window vinyls and lightboxes (if used) I think the use of 'Change Gear' as a primary and 'elevate the everyday' as a secondary can be used and in terms of clubhouse promotions I think it would work to have the collection displayed in an ensemble and mixed in with the core, pro team, classic and explore collections on mannequins to show how it looks. It could be highlighted with spotlights to pick out Flex. A nice reversal of the actual collection, as it stands to unite the other collections rather than operate as a star in itself.

Email

Email will be another vital element of direct communications with our established user base. As this is a captive and known audience it means we can focus the messaging more on the versatility and the interaction between Flex and Core/Classic/Explore/Pro team.

There should be an initial teaser and then a follow-up launch email which talks about what the campaign is and how it is taking a different approach to mainstream performance cycling apparel campaigns and also how it is intended to reach into the lifestyle market with the intent of making life easier and more fun for those that choose to ride, either in the spare time or across their working days. After the initial launch emails we can offer repeat product emails which might solely focus on the entire collection, but once the campaign is more mature and perennial could focus on how it can interact with the other collections and any special editions which might be launched.

Strapline would still use 'Change Gear' as a primary, but 'find you flex' and 'elevate the everyday' would also work well.

Headline options:

- Change gear
- Find your flex
- Elevate the everyday
- Beyond Categorisation
- Bend the rules

Press Release

The press release would be formed from the collection positioning copy but with mention of product specific and with select quotes from brand ambassadors endorsing the products and talking about the ethos and energy of The Flex Collection.

It can be sent to the usual cycling publications, both online and in print, but can also be expanded to send to lifestyle bloggers and influencers and more established lifestyle publications which would be a sensible crossover. If done in enough time and if there is any reach out from bloggers or influencers, it might be possible to have a chat/interview with a Rapha brand ambassador. An example for someone who might be of interest is Keira McVity who makes vlogs and content. I myself am wary of using influencers and it aligns the brand with people you cannot control or be in exact alignment with, but I

am not sure of Rapha's position, I haven't seen it on any channel before. It is worth consideration though.

Podcast

Maghalie Rochette's podcast 'Fever talk' is a really excellent vehicle of soft promotion, because she shows such an inquisitive nature and asks insightful questions on interesting topics. As the podcast is sponsored by Rapha, it would definitely be something to explore, but the key would be to make sure it comes from a place of authenticity and not just like it is a sponsor/athlete required activity.

If Maghalie was involved in the product development and some of the video content in advance, I am sure this would spark her attention and then it would be about approaching her in good time to discuss interview candidates and how it could be framed against the collection launch. There could be one different episode per product in the collection.

Podcast series title: 'Maghalies Fashion Flexes'

Hidden label gimmick

A small idea in using the hidden labels for the t-shirt. With Flex you might be able to provide a double-sided label which incorporates two stories, one cycling related and the other a more general story of women's achievement or success. They would ideally be linked, but it might not need to be the same person to still work.