

# Rapha Cycling Clothing #Festive500 Social Media Campaign on Strava Social Network

Donafeby Widyani, Helen Siuki

Macquarie Business School, School of Marketing, Macquarie University, Australia

## Abstract

The digital age has ushered in a dramatic shift in human health habits. Many companies have begun to promote exercises to foster a healthy lifestyle, recognizing the value of healthy living. Virtual cycling has recently become one of the most popular virtual sports. One of the campaigns is #Festive500 by Rapha that has partnered with Strava. The effectiveness of the cycling competition campaign in fostering a healthy lifestyle is examined in this paper. Based on empirical studies, the goal of this study is to explain the strengths and challenges of a #Festive500 cycling campaign. Existing empirical investigations from online journals and news stories were subjected to document analysis. For the development of the future cycling campaign, some suggestions were made.

**Keywords:** Cycling, Social Media Marketing, Rapha

Date of Submission: 13-09-2021

Date of Acceptance: 29-09-2021

## I. Introduction

Cycling activities have increased because of the national cycling event, and the rise of cycling activities has increased the demand for active sportswear, such as cycling clothes (Venkatraman et al, 2013). Rapha cycling clothing brand understands this phenomenon and creates an annual marketing campaign called “Rapha Festive 500”. Rapha festive 500 was created in South England in 2009 and it has been an 11th-year annual social media campaign (Rapha.cc, 2021). Rapha Festive 500 has been a holiday tradition with thousands of cyclists participating from all over the world (Cyclist.co.uk, 2020). Rapha is a British company and was founded in 2004 (Ferrero, 2018). Rapha was created to develop the most stylish and the best performing cycling clothes (Cox, 2011). This brand also uses garments that can provide breathability, comfort, and warmth (Venkatraman et al, 2013).

**Table 1.** Social media presence of Rapha table

Platform	Followers	Content types	Number of post per months
Instagram	582k	photos, videos	10-12
Twitter	94k	photos, videos	10-12
Facebook	326k	photos, videos	5-7
Youtube	104k	videos	1-2
Strava social media	159k	photos	726 total posts



Figure 1. Rapha Festive 500 Campaign

Rapha Festive 500 challenges cyclists to ride 500 km between Christmas and New Year (Barrat, 2017). This campaign encourages cyclists to ride their bikes for a total of 500 KM and synchronize the rides to Strava mobile application in eight days (Cyclist.co.uk, 2020). So the average is 62 KM per day. If they complete it, they will get many kudos or likes in Strava mobile applications from other cyclists (Barrat, 2017). The Prizes included a special edition Canyon Ultimate featuring Festive 500 decals, Rapha on-bike luggage, a Wahoo Element Bolt bundle, and a Rapha Custom kit (Cycling.co.uk, 2020). The award includes the Best Story, Best Story Runner-Up, Best Group Entry, Most Epic Fail, and Most Adventurous Ride (Cycling.co.uk, 2020). The participant can share their ride content, pictures, and stories with hashtag #festive500 to win the prizes (bicycling.com, 2020).

Rapha has sparked debate among cyclists by producing a high-quality but expensive cycling kit (Kiernan, 2017). Cycling fans that buy Rapha are sometimes perceived as a newbie to sports (Kiernan, 2017). In Berlin, novice riders who ride in high-end clothing are referred to as "Rapha boys" (Hoor, 2020). Rapha boys thus represent the stereotype of inexperienced and often inept riders who simply bought into the lifestyle without fully comprehending it (Hoor, 2020). Rapha then created the strategy which is the Rapha Festive 500 campaign to encourage cyclists to put their commitment to long-distance cycling in a short period of time. Rapha wants to be perceived as a brand that can encourage cyclists to push themselves to the limit, not just an expensive brand (Kiernan, 2017).

## II. Literature Review

Social media marketing (SMM) is defined by Weinberg (2009) as an integrative process aimed at promoting goods and services using social media platforms, which has the potential to reach a far larger consumer base than traditional forms of marketing. Jara et al. (2014) define SMM as a new generation marketing tool that uses social media to encourage customers to pay more attention and participate more actively. In order to sell their products and services, companies need innovative and strategic marketing skills. Every organization in today's world is required to have an online presence. Social media marketing had a high influence on brand trust and brand awareness, which in turn had a strong influence on retention and customer acquisition, according to social media participation (Afolabi, Ojelabi, & Oyeyipo, 2018). Social media, according to Mangold and Faulds (2009), allows businesses to engage with their customers while simultaneously allowing customers to communicate with one another.

## III. Method

The use of social media marketing campaign of #festive500 to promote a healthy lifestyle is described in this study. Meta-Analysis is research from primary data that provides systematic and empirical descriptive data. This study employed a qualitative document analysis or content analysis. The goal of this study is to look into the usage of social media marketing campaign of #festive500 to promote a healthy lifestyle on a more in-depth level. Researchers gathered documents as data to be processed from articles or journals in this

investigation. Research journals, articles, and books are the focus of this data collection. The information was then classified according to the year of publication.

#### **IV. Result And Discussion**

This Rapha festive 500 goal is to promote exercise and health by encouraging cycling to cycle more (Vaghela, Patel, & Perry, 2017). The main objective of the campaign for Rapha is to encourage cyclists to cycle more and push themselves to the limit as well to increase their sales to compete with other luxury cycling clothing brands such as Pas Normal Studios, Attaquer, Cafe du Cyclist, and MAAP.

As their social media strategies and activities, community building has been the engine for Rapha's brand (Cantista & Sadaba, 2020). Rapha has known since this product created a community called Rapha Cycling Club (Rooden, John, and Grit, 2016). Rapha cycling club was created in 2015 and has over 10,000 members and makes them a sports tribe (Cantista & Sadaba, 2020). By emphasizing the sense of community, Rapha experienced tremendous growth (Bernyte, 2018). Rapha festive 500 video campaign advertorial also shows communities that ride together and support others.

Rapha's primary target audience segmentation is professional and amateurs as an urban cyclist who cares about the quality and style (Ferrero, 2018). In England, there is a connotation called MAMIL, or middle-aged man in Lycra, which stands for a middle-aged man who likes road cycling using expensive cycling clothing (Ferrero, 2018). This term is used for men in mid-life crises who prefer to buy a bicycle instead of a fancy car (Williams, 2012). Rapha wanted to facilitate this growing community and provided the cycling community and provided the retail space with the Rapha collection, cafe, and bike workshop (Rooden, John, and Grit, 2016). The place and the community that Rapha provides bring opportunities as a meeting point, group rides, movie night, working opportunities, and sports event live stream (Hoor, 2020). This high-end brand store is like an Apple-like boutique store as an expression of contemporary cycling tribes (Volgger & Demetz, 2021). This Rapha Festive 500 social media campaign is also part of the cycling community activity.

The media plan of Rapha is, Rapha Festive 500 social media activity is mainly on Instagram (Cycling.co.uk, 2020). Rapha created a video for Rapha Festive 500 and mainly spread it on that platform. Rapha also hosts five info sessions on Instagram live about Rapha Festive 500 with cycling athletes like Hannah Barnes and Maghalie Rochette (bicycling.com, 2020). Instagram has attracted more than 700 million active users (Constine, 2017). The popularity of Instagram, along with its ability to share media content, makes it an effective medium to promote Rapha Festive 500 which tells people to share photos and stories during the challenge.

The Rapha Festive 500 social media campaign video duration is 50 seconds. Rapha gave out the message that if we are consistent, push the limit and support others, we can reach the goal. The video shows several people cycling on the road in the mountains, in winter. The end of the video shows 'Sign up now' and a link to sign up for the challenge. Rapha also released the documentary of the challenge in an 18 minutes video on Youtube.

For audience engagement strategies, Rapha Festive 500 is using Strava mobile application as a mobile application partner. Strava mobile application role for Rapha festive 500 is as proof to track the distance in GPS and as an issuer of the digital badge (Cycling.co.uk, 2020). This mobile application can connect users on social media and make them hanging out online and offline (Spotswood, Shankar, and Piwek, 2020). Cyclists can easily share their feed to other social media platforms (Spotswood, Shankar, and Piwek, 2020). Every finisher of Rapha festive 500 will get a complimentary woven badge and the best story submission will win prizes such as an expensive bicycle that is priced the same as a car (Cyclist.co.uk, 2020).

Strava social media include game elements of gamification such as likes or 'kudos' that trigger cyclist motivation (Creany, 2020). With this mobile application, cyclists also can share their achievements on other social media platforms easily (Spotswood, Shankar, and Piwek, 2020). Challenges and profile development help maintain engagement and activity (Barrat, 2017). Competition is a driving force for motivating users for activity in behavioral psychology (Williams, 2013). Competition can result in the productivity of participants (Williams, 2013). Gamification refers to the use of game elements in non-game situations (Seaborn & Fels, 2015). To make play more enjoyable, gamification uses several game mechanics such as rewards, points, a leaderboard, and a progress bar (Hamamari, Koivisto, & Sarsa, 2014).

For content development, Rapha partnering with Strava as a platform and campaign strategies. Strava can connect athletes with social aspects and create an enjoyable environment for riders to challenge themselves (Williams, 2013). Strava offers social networking functions for athletes and amateurs who enjoy sports like cycling (Kissane, 2016). This mobile application provides the medium in which cyclists could compete virtually. Strava also uses the following other systems so the user can see each other's activity (Couture, 2020). This makes cyclists see their personal best and compare it with other cyclists (Olsson, 2017). With all of these aspects, Strava maintains a feeling of connection with cyclists who lack training buddies (Couture, 2020).

Cyclists enjoyed getting virtual trophies and seeing their names on the leaderboard (Barrat, 2017). They also enjoyed sharing their stories and photos as content.

However, there are some ethical considerations. The marketing effort of Rapha Festive 500 can create potential hazards during winter break (bournemouthcyclist.co.uk, 2017). The participants of Rapha Festive 500 face issues such as weather and availability of daylight hours (Barrat, 2017). Thus, the challenge may encourage risky cycling behavior (Williams, 2013, Vaghela, Patel, & Perry, 2017). Furthermore, this challenge increases risk-taking behavior that could lead to injury (West, 2015). William Kom Flint, the Strava cyclist died when obtaining a downhill segment by 10 miles per hour and his family filed a lawsuit against Strava (Williams, 2013). Some other cyclists also overtrain when attempting to perform well in the challenge (Williams, 2013). Cyclists may also experience overexertion and risk-taking (Barrat, 2017).

The campaign is perceived by some people as being between the celebration of cycling and commercial design to sell cycling jerseys (yellowjersey.co.uk, 2019). There is a movement called Festive F\*ck all or a protest which urges cyclists to just stay at home responding to the Rapha Festive 500 campaign (Sportive.com, 2020). This challenge could transform cyclists into egotists and care more about online leaderboards than road safety (Williams, 2013). The participants of the campaign stated that they often rode more for the higher duration to complete Rapha Festive 500 (Barrat, 2017). Cyclists could also forget what a leisure bike ride feels like (West, 2015). The rivalry and the competition become unpleasant and can be an obsession rather than enjoyment (Barrat, 2017). The reason why record cycling is popular is that it emphasizes competition (West, 2015). With the mobile application, cyclists are able to see their time is taken and speed (West, 2015). Cyclists also can follow friends' activities and compare performance (West, 2015). This application also treats cyclists as athletes (Strelnivoka, 2017). Therefore, gamification methods in marketing were found to bring addiction (Hyrnsalmi et al, 2017). Gamification also could turn players to engage in compulsive behavior (Eisingerich et al, 2019).

**Table 2.** Campaign Performance Analysis Table

Platform name	Views	Likes	Dislikes	Comments
Youtube Rapha festive 500, 18 minutes video	179,943	3,2k	45	125
Instagram Rapha festive 500, 50-second video	77,264	-	-	450
Rapha club on Strava social media	152,630 cyclist member	-	-	24,264 all comments
Twitter Rapha festive 500, 50-second video	11,8K	225	-	26

But still, Rapha Festive 500 participants are increasing from time to time. When launched in 2009, the participants were just 84 cyclists (Cyclist.co.uk, 2020). In 2011, the participants were about 3030 cyclists (danielcarruthers.co, 2012). In 2014, the number of participants was 48,000 (uscyclingreport.com, 2015). In 2016 it reached 82,000 participants (Cyclist.co.uk, 2020) cyclists In 2018, the participant is 82,376 cyclists (yellowjersey.co.uk, 2019). In 2019, almost 120,000 people participated in Rapha Festive 500 (Cyclingweekly.com, 2020). However, though thousands register, only half of the participants finish the challenge (Rudy, 2019).

**Implementation & Monitoring Analysis**

Many participants of Rapha Festive 500 said that they were enjoying the challenge and rode more frequently for bigger durations to complete the challenge (Barrat, 2017). To answer the safety issues, Rapha has done several strategies. In 2020, because of many local coronavirus lockdown restrictions and due to the cold weather, Rapha partnered with the Zwift platform, a virtual cycling game to make cyclists virtual distance in indoor training count (Cyclist.co.uk, 2020). Virtual cycling can be an option for cyclists who want to cycle in a safer place. Rapha has also used the route planning app Komoot as a tool to create training routes in major cities across the United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia (bicyclist, 2020). This will provide the guide for cyclists to choose which route is safer than other routes and Rapha can also monitor them.

For tracking, measuring and evaluation, Rapha is using Strava social media. Strava is a mobile application that allows users to review their cycle rides, GPS records, connecting and competing with other users (Williams, 2013). This mobile application provides maximum speed, average speed, and distance of user cycling activity (West, 2015). So it makes users want to record their data voluntarily (Rettberg, 2020). This allowed the company to gather data (Tovar, 2016) . With the ability to analyze cyclists, Rapha can

accommodate their marketing practices (Tovar, 2016). Despite several opinions, Rapha Festive 500 is a successful campaign and held each year as an annual celebration for cyclists around the world.

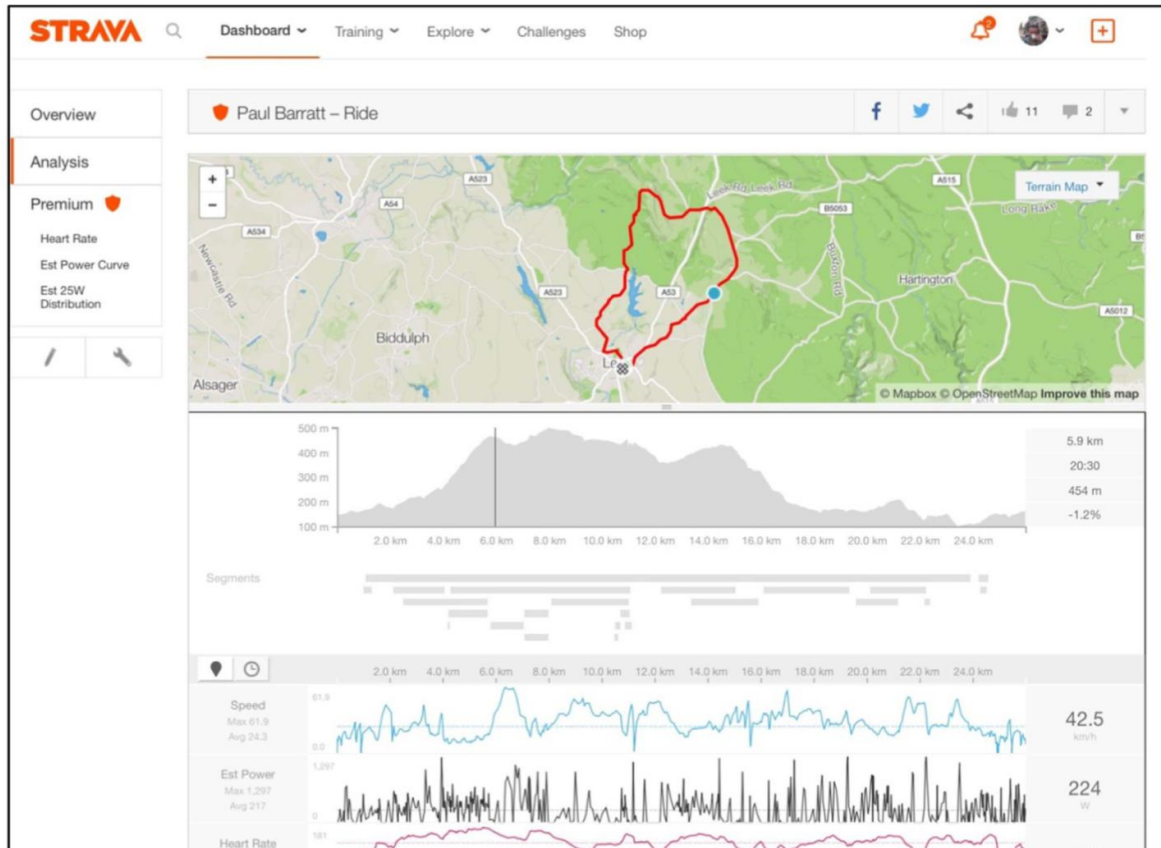


Figure 2. Strava social media dashboard

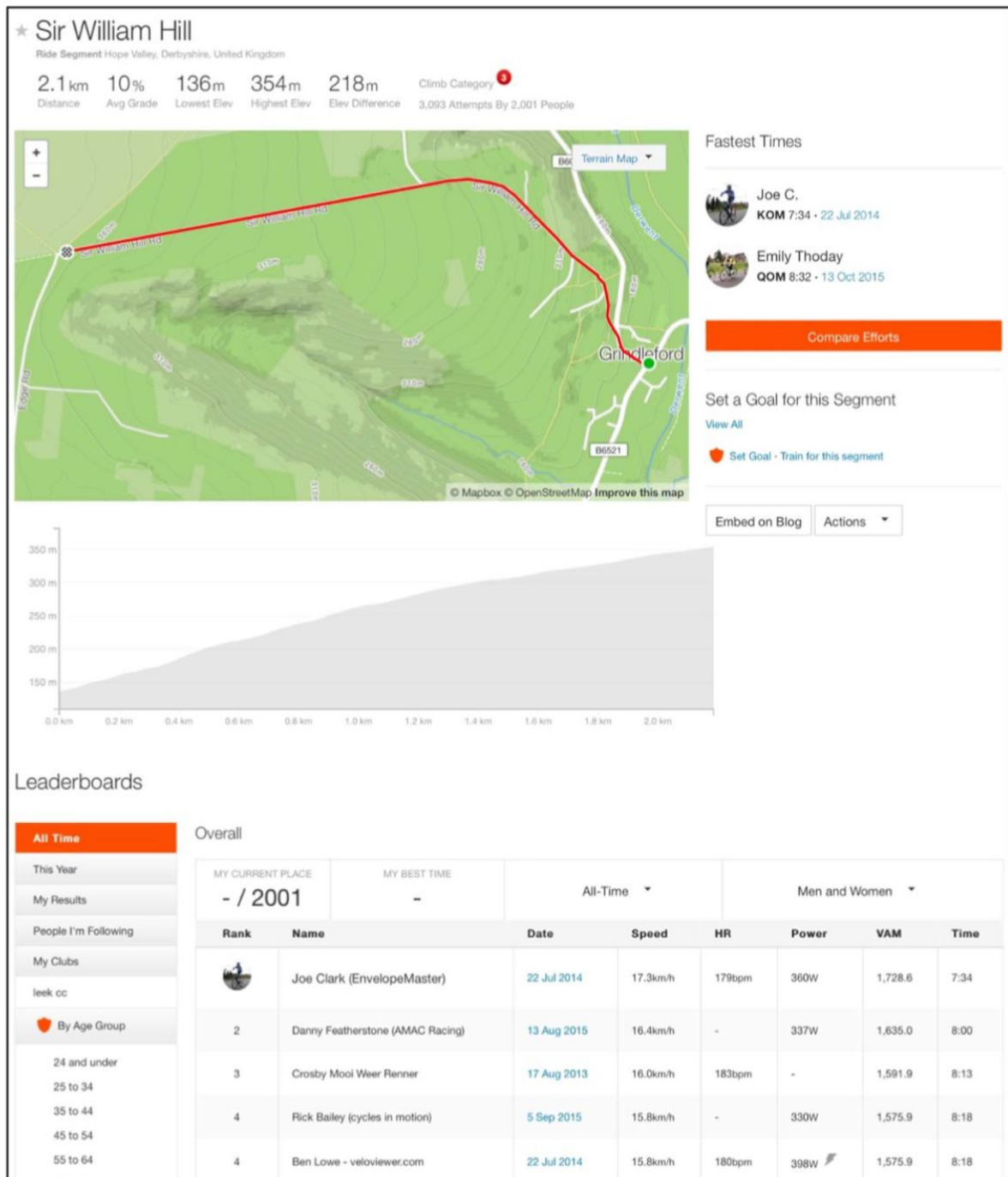


Figure 3. Strava social media leaderboard

### User Generated Insight

The campaign has positive and also negative opinions. Some people felt this campaign made them want to exercise more, and others felt that this campaign can potentially cause injury.





-  Sarah W. 4 months ago ⋮  
Just wanted to say a huge thank you for opening this event to virtual rides. It was a huge challenge and made my Christmas. Much appreciated. All the best and thanks again.
-  Vélocio 🚴. 4 months ago  
Yes I agree. Having the virtual edition certainly allowed a variation in rides to be accomplished. Given the weather in the UK was so cold and icy, it made sense to head indoors to not risk accidents and potential pressure on an already struggling NHS. It made my Christmas too so thanks Rapha for thinking outside the box and adding the virtual rides into the mix this year...
-  Brian T 4 months ago ⋮  
This was my first full year cycling and despite the difficult year it's turned out to be one of the most memorable. Made many new friendship thru the cycling community. What a way to end the year. Looking forward to an even better #festive500 in 2021. Keep riding safe and have a happy and healthy 2021. Cheers 🍷🍷
-  Dan Arra 🇮🇪🇺🇦 4 months ago ⋮  
First time ever riding this much in 8 days! Was a tough challenge but very happy to complete it. #Festive500 kicked my butt, but also kicked a\$\$! Thanks for the inspiration Rapha!

Figure 4. The positive testimony of Rapha Festive 500

 Devian B 4 months ago ⋮  
Man still working on it, not even at 400km yet. I was hoping to finish with a day to spare. Now it looks like this will be my 4th year not finishing.

trevor watts (cyclingplus.com)  
I can't risk catching any germs on the eve of a challenge that will require me to ride 500km between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

ournemouthcyclist.co.uk  
It's not about how tough you are, I follow people on strava who put in far greater efforts all year round, this is about how many people Rapha can get talking about their crazy idea. Fuck the consequences.



MAYBE THIS IS A FITTING BADGE FOR THE FESTIVE 500 TOO.

Figure 5. Negative testimony of Rapha Festive 500

## V. Conclusion

The gamification element in Rapha Festive 500 challenge provides cyclists to create new patterns of cycling and motivate them to improve their performance. Cyclists also appreciated and participated in this challenge. However, there are other opinions that this challenge could drive cyclists by obsession and unpleasantness rather than enjoyment and result in injury, risk-taking, and overtraining. There are recommendations from the author to improve campaign effectiveness, which is that Rapha should promote safe cycling in their campaign. This can be done in three ways: First is Rapha should encourage cyclists to cycle in the street surrounded by residential land or low volume of motor vehicles to make cycling safer (Sun et al, 2017). Second, Rapha also can provide alternative challenges for newbie cyclists, for example, Rapha competitor, Pas Normal Studios, has released “Winter Resolution Challenge - The longest month”. The challenge, the distance, and the medium which is Strava are similar to Rapha Festive 500, but the duration is one month in January, instead of just eight days. Rapha also can encourage cyclists to focus on competing with themselves and cycling together with friends, rather than compete with friends that can lead to risk-taking behavior. An example is from Nike. Nike has Nike+ mobile app to engage sports enthusiasts to work out more often (Brown, 2021). This mobile application allows users to see their achievement to beat themselves so it encourages users to be a better self.

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