

●●● Take it outside ●●●

Why a long-time b-to-b marketing agency wants to get outside – and what's in it for you as a marketer.



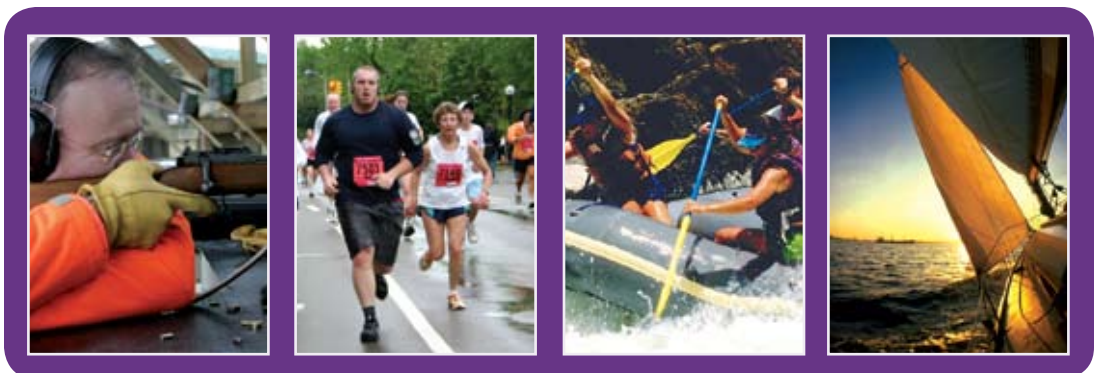
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●●● Overview

People put their money where their passion is – and some of the most passionate of all are Outdoor and Enthusiast consumers. Even in the leanest times, they find reserves for the things that get their blood pumping. This paper will explore the Outdoor and Enthusiast buyer – what gets them excited, how they shop and buy, and what keeps them loyal. Our goal is to help you understand this large and growing market segment and how you can engage them to build your bottom line.

●●● So, who are we talking about anyway?

When we say “Outdoor and Enthusiast” you may think of the hook and bullet crowd. Lots of camo and Skoal®. But it’s broader than that (and we think that’s an old outdated stereotype for hunting and fishing). We’re really talking about anyone who pursues a lifestyle passion, often in the outdoors. You know this person – the one you meet at a party who gets that distant look in their eyes while they tell you about their 6 pound steelhead on the Pere Marquette river, an epic performance at the Western States 100, or skiing double blacks at Alta. Sometimes it’s hunting and fishing, sometimes athletic pursuits like skiing, running, bicycling or golf. Perhaps it’s indicative of a lifestyle – such as canoeing or kayaking, boating, sport shooting, or even extreme sports like snowboarding or kiteboarding.



●●● Complex buyers

The outdoor enthusiast isn't your typical consumer. Most impulse purchases come at the moment the passion is ignited. But as they become engrossed in their chosen pursuit, they are increasingly thorough in their study prior to purchase. Just look at the proliferation of user review websites on virtually any topic - www.shotgunworld.com and www.ski-review.com are a couple of prime examples. Here the enthusiast can learn what others think of the gear they're considering acquiring. And it's not just major purchases like skis – we've seen reviews on items as detailed as gun cleaning supplies, or brands of fly fishing line. Beyond this, the Outdoor and Enthusiast buyer has a myriad of highly targeted magazines, specialized retailers, and even "try before you buy" opportunities.



Our premise is that this buyer behaves more like a purchaser of business-to-business technology – our sweet spot – than a traditional consumer. They think, research, evaluate, and agonize. And to what end? What drives this? We think two factors:

- This stuff ain't cheap, and is a significant investment. A poor decision is costly.
- An adrenaline rush, sense of danger, and pressure for performance is indicative of the category. Pick the wrong ski and that double black diamond at Alta becomes a long slide down.



●●● Brand loyalty is intense

A long-time runner on the PWB team buys only one brand of shoes. Period. Ever. How come? They make a shoe that is comfortable for her very flat feet. And they've had the same model for almost twenty years. Another PWBer who skis swears by a certain boot brand. Have you ever met a Harley-owner? Talk about enthusiasm and commitment – the brand has become a way of life for these bikers. We all know legendary stories, no matter the industry.

I have a friend I hunt with from time to time. I know he's extremely loyal to Ithaca shotguns. At our first hunt, with a number of his family, I found out they ALL are extremely loyal to Ithaca shotguns. Sons, Dads, Uncles, Cousins. Everybody had one. Now that's brand loyalty. And do you want to know why? It seems their family has a preponderance of left-handed shooters. Ithaca pump shotguns have a bottom-eject feature for spent shells – so they don't eject across the shooter's face. A technical feature fuels a brand loyalty.

So how do we leverage this knowledge to connect with this audience and build brands that sell?

●●● Nurture and grow them

The Outdoor and Enthusiast will be loyal to your brand – they will buy more all the time, tell their family and friends, and be your best advocate. But only if you take care of them. One bad warranty experience, a poorly-designed product that was rushed to market, or an offensive ad campaign, and it's all over. Remember, your brand is the sum of the buyer's expectations and experiences – its way more than your marketing.

And, these prospects are your best opportunities for research, new product introductions, line extensions. A built-in test-market. So nurture them. Make them feel special. Relationship marketing efforts will pay off tremendously. Newsletters, magazines, online communities, contests, and local events all will help you strengthen their bond with your brand.

●●● Channel challenges

Although the Internet is rapidly changing things (for the record, we think it's probably here to stay – not just a fad) most Outdoor and Enthusiast products are sold through retailers. Whether it's a highly specialized local fly fishing shop, or a big box store like Cabelas (or even Wal-Mart) most purchases are still made in a store. And this critical interface to the consumer is a significant opportunity for marketers to fall down. So treat retail store owners and staff as another market. Don't just ship them products with a data sheet. Develop integrated marketing programs to help educate and motivate them. Roadshows and demo days for staff are huge. And these folks love swag – hats, t-shirts, whatever. Make it easy for them to get key information and they'll sell your product. Remember, they're dealing with a highly inquisitive and challenging buyer.



●●● Respect your consumer

We alluded to this earlier, but we see a lot of Outdoor and Enthusiast marketers making some assumptions about their buyers that seem to sell them short. One ski company put a buxom blonde in a bikini in their ad with the headline “Fake Twins” next to their new twin-tip ski. Interestingly enough the next month the ad had been revised to eliminate the bikini babe. And a note to outdoor and enthusiast marketers – women buy this stuff, too. If they’re not buying it, they’re influencing over 90% of the purchase decisions of spouses, family and friends.

PWB learned a long time ago that while you need to keep messages simple and direct, don’t dumb it down and insult that intelligent, educated buyer. A close friend is an ardent hunter – he travels Montana and Mexico. He owns a successful publishing company, well-educated, nice home with two new cars in the garage, watches CSPAN religiously – not exactly the hunting Bubba stereotype. If the buyer can afford a \$5,000 shotgun for sporting clays, or a week in Utah to ski, they’re likely not living in a trailer out by the city dump.



●●● Integrate to leverage your dollars



The range of communication channels available to the Outdoor and Enthusiast marketer are exploding. The Internet is tailor-made for this buyer. It's an opportunity to learn, connect, and get excited about your products. A solid effective website with rich, engaging content is a must-have. Remember that brand nurturing we mentioned earlier? It should yield a rich database – make sure you ask for their e-mail address and permission to use it. While spam issues are certainly affecting many marketers, the Outdoor and Enthusiast has a brand loyalty that makes them very receptive. And don't forget direct mail – it's not dead if it combines effective creative, a solid, well-crafted offer, and a good, clean list.

But what about advertising? It's alive and well, but its role has changed. Today's best advertising is more of an interruption to grab consumers attention. High-impact creative with a prominent web address engages the prospective buyer and offers them the opportunity to learn more. Dedicated landing pages are our preferred vehicle – tying creative and messaging to the source that generated the visit.

●●● Just a start

We hope this has been an interesting and insightful view on PWB's thinking and approach to the Outdoor and Enthusiast market. Our knowledge of the educated, curious and informed buyer has positioned us as experts. Want to learn more? Visit our website at www.pwb.com. If you'd like to talk to us, just give us a call at **(734) 995-5000** and ask for **Sean Hickey** or **Marcy Jennings** or email us at dialogue@pwb.com.