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First name: Larry

Last name: Conger

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Forget, for the moment, the commuting draw of the growing e-bike market. Also forget the burgeoning interest in e-bikes as a mountain bike option to help riders get up the mountain faster so they can traverse down more often. While all bikes are having a moment in 2020 and e-bikes more so than every category, experts see a key adoption in the space as the e-bike for exercise. Yes, that pedal-assist device is actually pushing people to work harder.

"E-bikes do some pretty interesting and counterintuitive things," says Ian Kenny, Specialized global marketing leader and former program manager for Tesla. "On average, people who ride an e-bike are getting more exercise, they are riding more often and farther. For new riders, e-bikes have this incredible effect of leaving you with a positive impression of your ride right away."

This is the case across the board with these pedal-assist models that use electric motors to give riders added boosts up to 20 miles per hour when pedaling. "We're definitely seeing people get an e-bike for exercise," says Isabelle Portilla, REI Co-op Brands divisional vice president of product strategy and design, "and the research supports this. Folks with e-bikes tend to ride more often and still get their heart rate going."

Morgan Lommele, PeopleForBikes director of state and local policy, says that she's seeing a broadening demographic riding e-bikes, from the well-documented rise of people who want to commute to work, but also for exercise. She says that even just a couple of years ago the demographic turning to an e-bike was likely those who were limited in riding by health or injuries. While those folks certainly still ride, the demographic has continued to grow.

"People aren't necessarily looking for a real endurance experience, but they want the ability to be outside and recreate," Lommele says. "I think this trend is only going to grow and people riding now will ride later in life."

Data from the NPD Group shows that year-to-date, e-bike sales have grown 142 percent, topping \$330 million and outpacing the percentage growth of traditional bike sales. Led by major makers Specialized and Trek, including Trek's Electra line, the e-bike advancement creates equity across the sport.

"In speaking with both e-bike manufacturers and retailers, two consumer groups are most often discussed," says Dirk Sorenson, NPD Group's sports practice executive director and industry analyst. "Older riders seem to be enjoying e-bikes as they mitigate their concerns about potential challenges associated with bike riding. Issues like big hills or simply getting tired are minimized with an e-bike. It is this group that really created strong initial growth in the category. Now, e-bikes are being considered by a broader consumer group. This group of e-bike purchasers is really the traditional bike buyer. They recognize the e-bike pedal assist as a nice feature on a bike and decide to upgrade their purchase to a bike with this technology. This new group has really driven growth in e-bikes that are specific to mountain biking, road riding and other specific bike riding experiences."

And that's why we're seeing a growing diversity in the market. Transportation-oriented e-bikes will always be a part of the equation, but mountain biking, gravel riding, trail riding and exercise have taken on a new focus. "As these specific designs become more elegant," Sorenson says, "I expect that e-bike sales will continue to gain momentum in the market."

To that end, Co-op Cycles in September launched the brand's first e-bike the CTY e2.1 and CTY e2.2. This new e-bike option from the REI house brand opens up road and trail options, allowing people to ride even if their body doesn't allow for traditional biking and ensures people can keep up with spouses or more-fit friends. "At Co-op

Cycles we create bikes for the people and e-bike technology allows more people to get out on two wheels, going further, carrying more or just enjoying the fun of a boost on their ride," Portilla says. "We love that folks across all ages and abilities are excited about e-bikes and it's because e-bikes are just simply fun to ride. These bikes can help speed up a commute, tackle a longer trail or allow folks of different abilities to ride together."

In the Co-op Cycles CTY line, the REI brand partnered with Shimano for the motor and battery and included an integrated rack, front suspension and built-in lights. Portilla says she expects to continue to evolve the line based on what resonates with the co-op community. "To determine whether e-bikes fit into the Co-op Cycles line, we first met with hundreds of our members and employees about their thoughts on e-bikes, as well as what they expect should go into an e-bike," she says. "Much of that feedback is then integrated into our design process."

With most states having laws defining e-bikes as bikes, it makes it easier for users to know where they can ride and increases acceptance. And as battery and motor technology continues to improve and get integrated seamlessly into the bike so many aren't distinguishable as e-bikes, Lommele sees a "fast and furious" technological growth.

Sorenson says that with gyms and health clubs closed for months in many areas, consumers may have been more willing to invest in higher-priced, performance-oriented bikes as a fitness option.

The integration of uses will only continue, carrying over further into recreation, Lommele says. "Every single year new models are coming out with new capabilities," she says. "You can simply explore farther on any bike, get out and ride all day and can do more and see more on a bike and not be as worried about range and battery life because of the technology changing every year."

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/timnewcomb/2020/10/01/the-counterintuitive-nature-of-e-bikes-a-growing-exercise-resource/#660e7792dda5>