



photo: Gopole

&... ACTION!



Whether you're at the beach or in the mountains - every one and their mum seems to have a little device stuck to their heads, chest or board. How big of a trend action and sport cameras have become is no secret anymore, but what are the trends inside the trend? **By Anna Langer**

GENERAL TRENDS

Over the last couple of years, action cameras have established themselves as prime accessories in our industry and other (action) sports, with the trend developing far beyond that. "Nowadays, action cameras appeal to a much wider target group. Grandparents shooting their grandchildren's first steps, dog owners who want to experience their pet's perspective: many people use our camera to shoot their every day adventure," explain Garmin with Ion adding that "video taking is going beyond just the thrill seeker". Rollei even expect up to 25% growth in Germany alone. Especially paired with expansion of social media, as Contour add: "The market is continuing to grow rapidly as more and more people adopt social media and integrate sharing videos of their adventures." Drift predict action cameras to take "market shares from regular camcorders" but warn that this will make the market "very competitive", with "too many actors trying to get a cut of the cake."

Size and quality continue as vital factors, although the "race for more pixels" (Drift) and more compact products (Sony) brings other features into play as well. Like battery life, that is essential to use the camera in the first place. Hence GoPro are not only "constantly innovating to introduce even sharper images, higher frame rates and resolution" but also "improving battery life."

Since cameras have become "more of a fashion accessory" than just a recording device, and HD is offered as standard, looks are becoming important too. Back in the day, "it didn't use to matter how silly someone looked because they were happy to just be able to record. Now that it's mainstream, getting the camera looking good while you are wearing it, and getting them 'out of the way' is key," says Contour.

TECHNICAL FEATURES

Increased connectivity is a feature many brands are experimenting with. With the world being ruled by smartphones and tablets, devices need to be compatible with as many others as possible. "We build Wi-Fi and ANT+ interfaces into our cameras so that they can interact with other devices" state Garmin. Their Elite model even has a GPS module and also Ion expand on their GPS line.

Simplification is another big trend, "since nobody likes to study big

manuals before shooting the first clips" (Garmin). "Let athletes focus on their sport" say Contour and are backed up by Drift's customer feedback: "people prefer a small, easy to use and feature rich camera over top video quality" that is complicated to handle. Hence most brands aim to "strike a balance" between size and quality, which "are both very important aspects" (Rollei).

HD filming has already become a standard and is featured in all models of the brands interviewed. Frame rates vary between 60 and 120 frames per second in different resolutions, with Rollei, Sony and GoPro stocking up to Ultra High Definition (4096x2160 and 2704x1536), the latter offering twice the performance with their new GoPro Hero 4 released this Autumn with a new processor for faster frame rates and improved image quality.

Except for Contour, who just released the world's "easiest to use" camera with their new Roam 3 that is waterproof to 30 feet, "maintaining simplicity", most brands use small, 1.4"-2" displays to preview framing, change settings, check status and maybe even playback footage. With or without, these functions can also be controlled via smartphone and the respective app, which all brands offer for free, some even including a desktop version with editing features (GoPro, Garmin, Sony & Contour). Through the respective app, the phone also turns into a remote control, starting or stopping the recording and changing settings. All brands (excluding Contour) include them or offer as optional extras. Drift work with radio frequency instead of Wi-Fi, to save battery life, and Garmin's little helper is "water resistant for up to 10 meters". Rollei's remotes have a reach of up to 40 meters and Sony packed theirs up in a neat little "waterproof wristwatch-style" device.

OUTLOOK

The market for action cameras is growing strong with no end in sight, as GoPro conclude: "The performance of wearable and gear mountable cameras is constantly improving at a rapid rate." Garmin see a big future for accessories: "There are a number of different usages and adventures that can be recorded - and all users need the right equipment to suit their habits." A first insight into what that might look like can be found (See page 50).





CAMERA ACCESSORIES TREND REPORT

With Action Cameras firmly established on the market, the future for development in this segment seems to be in the accessories. So we took a deeper look into what is available and what we'll be drooling over in the near future. **By Anna Langer**

The market for Action Cameras is still growing (see page 49) and the one for accessories is really only just taking off. Sony sees "a desire for people to capture more of their lives than ever before," and expect "to see more flexibility and ways to record so that any activity can be recorded in ultra-high detail." Ion agree that "video taking is going beyond just the thrill seeker" and SP also think that the future is in creating "handy helpers for your outdoor filming to get the best footage out of any situation!"

MOUNTS

One of the most popular categories are accessories that facilitate "selfies" and let people film themselves doing their stuff. The Drift Monopod, the Rollei Arm extension, the GoPole Reach (that now collapses down to 35cm), the SP POV poles and Remote Poles or the XSeries' Me-Shot Deluxe, "the perfect accessory to take the best selfies, with its telescopic pole combined with a Phone Holder and a Bluetooth remote to take pictures at distance". GoPro introduce a new "3-Way mount that can be used as a camera grip, extension arm or tripod".

Suction mounts are increasingly popular as well, as they can be easily taken on and off (Drift). Contour continue their rail mounting system that allows their cameras "to sit flush against helmets, boards, and pretty much anything else you would want to mount it on and also prevents the camera's from moving or rotating unintentionally."

GEAR

Demand for equipment that is not used for filming but for the camera itself is growing as well, as is the choice of items to meet them. XSeries, who are specialised in this area, have a whole array of new gadgets coming out this winter and next summer, like the U-Float unsinkable camera grip or the Power Capxule soft case with integrated "power bank that eliminates guesswork and ensures you're fully loaded and ready to shoot." SP offer extra power through their "Powerbar Duo" too, a "mobile powerbank which charges two GoPro Hero 3 batteries and also another USB device simultaneously."

CAMERA BAGS

Despite most action cameras already coming in a waterproof housing, cases that improve the durability are in demand as well. Drift mention their case that increases waterproofness to 60m as one of their "must haves", as do SP with their Aqua Case. Carrying cases are increasing as well, like the SP POV or the GoPole Venturecase. Both are specifically tailored to the GoPro, although most mounts and accessories are equipped with universal heads and standard 1/4in x 20mm mounting systems (Drift, Rollei, Xseries, SP). Contour and Sony even use SLR heads on their cameras so you can mount their cams on any classic tripod or other classic photo gear.

DRONES

Probably the most progressive and exciting of accessories have only started developing recently though: drones that take your camera to the sky to film you from a birds-eye view While there are a bunch of helicopter devices available from other segments for example gaming and the model aircraft sector, Airdog have now launched the first auto-follow drone for GoPro cameras that, as the name suggests, follows you on your endeavours autonomously. In turn they're also developing a "software based and community driven obstacle avoidance solution to define a 3 dimensional 'no-fly zone'" to make sure the drone doesn't hit anything while following you. The AirDog app will allow users to upload zone plans they created and also download maps for wake cables, bike trails, MX tracks and snow resorts.

OUTLOOK

There is a lot going on in the accessories sector and there is definitely no end in sight. Besides more and more specialised devices for specific sports, angles or uses, "in App add ons" are a possible development that has barely been touched yet, according to Drift. Xseries also mention that the "tendency in the last two years has been towards increased instant sharing" and see future developments in accessories that facilitate connecting and ability to share with cameras. "We speak about the 'Prosumerisation' of the photo fan."