How to develop cycle tourism?

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1. Introduction

Cycling is among the most sustainable forms of sports, recreation and tourist activities. Bicycle is a popular means to practice sports and recreation, and to use as an everyday alternative means of transport. For many countries facing a low number of everyday cyclists on roads, recreation and tourism cycling might be the thing to open the door to increased cycling out of need. Why not bring cycling closer to people through sports, recreation and tourism? Maybe some of the people cycling in their free time will decide to use a bicycle when running their everyday errands across the town. Undoubtedly, by developing cycle tourism we are promoting the development of cycling mobility. All in all, more cyclists create an increased need for investment into the construction of cycling infrastructure and improvement of the products available.

The aim of the handbook “How to develop cycle tourism?” is to emphasise some important aspects of cycle tourism, thus introducing them to those who might have just entered the field as well as those who have already developed their tourist products, but lack a detail or two. There is no shortage in literature on cycle tourism, standards, products and marketing. This is why the handbook is intended to provide essential information by answering the question: How to tackle the development of cycle tourism in order to ensure benefits for the entire community, and to encourage a long-term use of bicycles also for everyday needs?

The handbook covers the following themes:

1. Types of cycle tourists

Various types of cycling stimulate various experiences. When developing cycle tourism, it is wise to know particular features of different types of cyclists, as well as their needs and expectations. Only then can they be complied with and offered satisfactory tourist services.

2. Infrastructure as the basis

Well-planned, upkept and maintained infrastructure is a prerequisite to attract tourist cyclists. When keeping the infrastructure orderly, the safety and comfort of cyclists have to be considered. Expansion of the network is accompanied by various dilemmas on the siting of cycling lanes. The players have to establish the common interests and turn potential issues into opportunities.

3. Standards of cycle tourist services

There is no other way than having standards to determine the criteria for tourist services. Not every hotel can be labelled cyclist, particularly when the basic conditions to meet the needs and expectations are not fulfilled. To acquire the status of cycle tourist accommodation means to ensure a high-level service, which would make cyclists from near and far be happy to come back at another occasion.
4. Cycling as a tourist product

It is a step forward to have an integrated tourist product based on cycling. What tourists want is the story, not only pedalling. They have to be allured by nature, the taste, secrets and experience that they might find along the way, like pearls. We should not be stopped by borders, let the story be wider.

5. Marketing cycle tourism

Behind each interesting story there is the question of how to bring it to people. Marketing skills can help us present and sell the product to customers. Only when the story is marketed successfully, cycle tourism is ensured to bring economic benefits.

6. Guiding cyclists

Guiding cyclists over the terrain is an important part of cycle tourism, and it requires exceptional responsibility and commitment. The basic requirement is to have a skilled and willing tourist guide. Only through their knowledge, skills and character will cyclists on the road feel to be part of an unforgettable experience.

7. How to attract cycle tourists?

Cycle tourism should not be limited to tourism. A step beyond is provided by the belief that cycling forms an important part of citizen mobility. Why not let the tourist-purpose cycling lanes be used by local inhabitants as well, say to commute to work along the same path by bicycle? Also, it might be interesting for tourists to combine cycling with public transport. At any rate, well-developed cycle tourism can help increase the interest in everyday cycling.

7. Positive synergies of cycle tourism

Well-developed cycle tourism can be an important industry that helps enrich the local environment and ensure employment. The synergies formed as a result are added value and a step beyond. Both as customers and consumers, tourist cyclists are a demanding group. However, they are also among the most grateful groups, as in the long term they give back much more than what have required. The development of cycle tourism is a good basis to develop a sustainable, intelligent, inclusive society.
2. Different types of cycling provide different experience

Cycling is among the most sustainable activities in sports, recreation and tourism. Bicycle is popular as a means of transport in sports-recreation and as an everyday alternative mode of transport. There are several types of cycling separated by the users' intent, the nature of cycling and the type of bicycle.

Types of cycling

- Daily (commuter) cycling
- Sports cycling
- Sports-recreational cycling
- Trip cycling
- Bicycle touring
- Mountain biking
- Tourist cycling
- Family cycling

Daily (commuter) cycling integrates cyclists commuting to work, school or shopping, or running other errands by bike. It is the intention of such cyclists to reach their destination as effortless, fast and safe as possible. The bicycle is used as a means of transport. Experts have calculated that in cities as much as 75% of the distances now made by motorised vehicles could be travelled by bikes or on foot.
**Sports cycling** (road and mountain) comprises various practice and competition types of cycling, such as road cycling and mountain biking of different types (downhill, climb, parallel slalom, stage race, acrobatics, cross-country, adventure orientation race), track cycling of different types, as well as duathlon and triathlon cycling.

**Sports-recreational cycling** is practiced by recreational athletes seeking relaxation and entertainment, as well as wishing to become fit as cyclists and potentially train to participate at various cycling events and sports-recreational races.

**Trip cycling** does not exceed a single day. The intention is to spend time in the natural environment with relatively modest intensity. What matters to cyclists is the experience, comfort and safety on the road. The length of daily recreational cycling ranges between 25 and 50 km, and does not exceed 80 km. Trips can be made in combination with other means of transport (e.g. car, bus, train).

**Bicycle touring** extends over several days. The destination and path are defined by cyclists before the start. When choosing the path, what matters is tourist infrastructure, natural beauties and various attractions and specialties of sites. It is important for cyclists to have rest areas along the road (water supply), lookout spots, tourist information, cycling maps and guides available as well as information about the difficulty of different options, and about cycling-friendly accommodation.

It is typical of **Mountain biking** to take place in forest and hilly area, with cyclists being particularly attracted to unspoilt nature, irregular terrains, increased difficulty and a great choice of possible locations. An interesting option is the so-called single trails, where sometimes you have to hire a local guide. Mountain bikers are usually young men and women, who are interesting for the tourist industry for being sports cyclists, recreational cyclists, trip cyclists, bicycle tourers and adventure cyclists.

**Tourist cycling** is basically a combination of different types of cycling (trip cycling, mountain biking, bike touring, etc.). In this type, cyclists are tourists, either domestic or foreign, experiencing natural beauties, cultural attractions, and ethnological specialities of certain places and tourist regions.

**Family cycling** is an important type of cycling as it enhances internal family ties, mutual understanding and a healthy lifestyle. Families with children look for safe and easy cycling trails. Because of differing wishes, needs and time available, it is reasonable to prepare different programmes for different types of families.

More than 10 % of people, who are now commuting to work by car, would opt to travel by bike if infrastructure was suitable and traffic safety sufficient. In developed European countries, the share of cyclists has been growing with the development of cycling infrastructure.

There are numerous reasons in support of cycling: apart from visiting various cycling destinations, a number of personal motives are important as encouraging cycling:
Those who cycle because of need, do it with a particular intent and aim. The majority of such cyclists is to be found in cities where most of the errands are run in a circle of two, three, four kilometres at most.

Those cycling mostly to release energy and keep fit often cycle daily and along the same routes. They opt for distinct mountainous destinations close to their homes.

For those cycling approximately once per week, cycling is a way to make trips and an opportunity to socialize with their partners (family) or friends. In choosing their destination, this group of riders consider the traffic regulation (safety), as well as the natural, cultural and tourist attractions with regard to each route.

Touring-tourist cyclists embark on longer rides extending over several days or weeks. They usually carry with them all the equipment they might need during the journey (camping equipment and clothes). They mostly opt for short routes with gentle climbs and descends, which have to include as much tourist services, natural beauties and sights as possible. Their destination is normally chosen as part of the route at the beginning of the trip and later changed with regard to the conditions on the road.

**Profile of a cycle tourist**

The profile of a cycle tourist is determined by the type of bicycle on which they spend their cycling holidays.

Cycle tourists are mostly classified as:

- Cross-country mountain bikers (using a mountain XC or all-mountain bicycle)
- Road cyclists (using a road bicycle)
- Touring cyclists (mostly using trekking bicycles)
- Downhill mountain bikers (using downhill and free ride bicycles).

In case of road cycling, side roads might be chosen, which are somewhat narrower but also less busy. Mountain roads are suitable for stronger riders, whereas less demanding routes go through valleys. Cyclists can also combine the routes by including flat parts as well as climbs and descents.

In different European countries, there are different rules for mountain bikers. In some countries they are not allowed to use forest trails and mountain paths, elsewhere special forest trails are marked for cyclists. When riding the so-called single trails, cyclists are sometimes obliged to hire local guides.

**Touring** enables cyclists to discover the landscape in trips extending over several days. Cyclists tend to choose picturesque and differing roads with not much traffic. Cyclist-friendly accommodation provides the services required (food, bicycle and equipment storage, information...).

In family cycling, families with young children can opt for cycling trips and holidays on flat countryside roads where there is not much other traffic.
In 2010, the publishing house Delius Klasing Verlag made a research into profiles of particular cycle tourists. This is the profile of a cross-country mountain biker: an average cross-country cyclist is around 40, with higher or university education, and, above all, is “green” (is part of the forming profile of a tourist living and travelling based on L.O.H.A.S. (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability) principles). Due to their environmentalist awareness as well as sustainable orientation, the impact of such tourists on the tourist destination they visit is minimal.
3. Infrastructure as the basis

In the development of cycle tourism, infrastructure is the basis to attract tourists. We can have exceptionally good tourist guides and the most developed marketing and strategic documents, but if there is no infrastructures for cyclists to be able to ride safely, we might just as well have nothing. Actually, the best way to promote a cycle route is to ensure appropriate infrastructure. If cyclists feel good on the route and experience no noticeable problems, the repute of the trail will spread quickly. Well-planned, quality made and regularly and carefully maintained cycling infrastructure makes an important contribution to the safety and comfort of cyclists. In practice, choosing the best way to regulate cycling traffic is no easy task. The general rule should be: better no infrastructure than inappropriate and dangerous infrastructure.

In their CROW rules, the Dutch state 5 basic conditions of what cycling infrastructure should be like:

- **safe** (mixing with slow traffic or on special, well-designed surfaces),
- **direct** (bringing cyclists to their destination along the slowest and quickest path),
- **connected** (continuous network),
- **comfortable** (smooth surfaces, straightened kerbs and ramps, no obstacles...),
- **attractive** (taking cyclists past sights, avenues, water, benches...).
Dilemma: separate or mixed

When it comes to the dilemma of separating or mixing, the needs of cycle tourists have to be understood. It would be quite unwise to take cyclists far from points of interest where they can stop, look at the sights, buy souvenirs, have lunch, etc. It is therefore advisable to design the route in the way that it also follows local roads through built-up areas, old towns, squares and streets. Such approach also saves money, as it might be easier to slow down traffic on local roads than build completely separate bikeways.

Having infrastructure divided horizontally or by level is not always the best choice by definition for all cases. Paradoxically, more cyclists using the carriageway might mean their greater safety, as well as a reduced number of accidents – not only those involving cyclists, but also other road users. Keeping various types of traffic users separate systematically may have counterproductive effects. Motor vehicle drivers might therefore fail to pay sufficient attention to other road users. Mixed traffic, accompanied by appropriate speed limits and other measures, can therefore mean increased safety.

Coordination and integrativity

When it comes to major projects exceeding the borders of certain communities and competences, many local communities tend to approach them very partially and with much reserve. This is most visible in the case of riverside bikeways, where some communities advocate routes on the left bank, and others on the right. Also possible are complications with regard to agreements regarding the route, some advocating the path to run just beside theshore, others on the embankment, others alongside the old riverbed or canal and so on. Understandably, each local community would want to realise its own idea. The local communities that tend to be even more persistent are those already having sections of bikeways installed in their territory. Despite potential disagreements and views, the common goal has to be a unified continuous bikeway that brings a cycle tourist from the beginning to the end of the route. Even when there is a local community striving for a bikeway on the right bank, a connection can be made with the one striving for a path on the left bank. Maybe the only thing that is needed is a narrow wooden bridge or a connecting road to be constructed.

Expanding the network

When siting cycling connections, the path should not be limited to one possible variant exclusively. Although a route is a uniform tourist product, individual sections can be split into several variants, which also corresponds to different needs of various types of cyclists. Families with children would surely prefer to have bikeways flat and physically separated from other traffic. Fitter cyclists would wish to ride away from asphalt roads and maybe climb a hill. Straight asphalt roads, however, would be interesting for fans of time trials. Various cycling connections and roads should therefore be integrated into a network. Cases of a single variant available might even be off-putting to some cyclists. Being satisfied with a
single route variant, i.e. reductionism, should not be the final solution. A guideline to consider should be a thought about future when the interest of cyclists might increase, thus arousing the need to expand the network.
4. Cycling standards for a quality service

Cycling is a personal experience, particularly in regions where differing terrains enable all types of cycling. In Slovenia, its Alpine part excluded, cycling is possible throughout the year.

This chapter shall look into the cycling standards developed by the Slovenian Tourist Board (STB). These standards are of importance for any specific region that wishes to be identified and promoted as a cycling destination.

An area wishing to present itself as a cycling destination has to fulfil the following criteria:

- Bike Information Point;
- Cycling-friendly accommodation (bike hotel, bike camp, tourist farm);
- At least three marked cycle routes;
- A map or panoramic map of cycle routes and paths;
- Trained cycle tour guides;
- Bicycle rental;
- Bicycle repair.

The standards for Slovenian cycling destinations are currently met by 14 areas from all parts of the country. Five of these destinations are situated in immediate vicinity of the only Slovenian national park – Triglav national park. Two cycling destinations are situated in Pohorje area. Notranjska cycling park is an exciting cycling destination. Also appropriate for cycling is the area alongside the Slovenian Coast. There are excellent destinations to be found in regions of Idrijsko and Cerkljansko and Koroška. Opportunities for nice and interesting cycling trips are also available in the Southwest of Slovenia and in the region surrounding Moravske Toplice in the Southeastern tip of the country.

The preference for cyclists to visit a particular destination depends on:

- The quality of cycling infrastructure: cyclist-friendly roads and paths, adequate signs, access to picturesque paths and natural areas, cultural and historic sights;
- The quality of food and accommodation service as well as additional services available;
- Additional provisions of high quality: relevant and interesting thematic paths available, a wide choice of other sport programmes, various festivals, historical and cultural sights;
- Promotional and presentational materials of high quality: information available online, relevant cycle maps;
- Excellent and diverse natural environment: clean environment, panoramic views, a sense of top organisation and safety.
- Organised guides available.

Cycling marketing standards (CMS) have been formed in order to stimulate an increase in the quality of tourist and additional services for cyclists, in the
differentiation of services of competing providers and better sales of services. The specialisation sign is granted to a group of accommodation providers specialised for cycle tourism services.

Specialised cycling accommodation sign

Specialised cycling accommodation is marked with a sign featuring 1 to 5 bicycles. The number of bicycles in the sign stands for the scope of cyclist-adapted services and infrastructure of the provider. One bicycle means basic cyclist-friendly services, whereas two, three or four bicycles mark an increasing number of services that matter to cyclists, and five marks the providers to whom cycling is the priority product in their hotel, and who “live with cyclists”.

BIKE INFORMATION POINT aimed at cycle tourists can operate as part of Tourist Information Points, cycle stores or repair shops, etc. Such a point has to provide cyclists with all the relevant information on cycling routes, services, reparations, accommodation, transport options and bicycle renting, all at the same spot. Furthermore, it has to be open throughout the cycling season from April to October, with a skilled person being present at all times to provide information. Guests also have to be provided Internet access.

CYCLING HOTELS (hotels, B&Bs, holiday apartments, etc.) are marked with a sign displaying 1 to 5 bicycles. Each hotel that is labelled a cycling hotel and marked with one bicycle (basic level) has to provide cyclists with all the relevant information at a single spot, like a bike information point. Furthermore, it has to ensure safe parking and storage of bicycles, rent tools for bicycle repair, provide the space to wash bicycles, rent bicycles, offer first aid and provide meals suitable for cyclists. A skilled person is required also in case of cycling hotels.

CYCLING CAMP is the most thorough form of cycling services. To acquire the sign and name, a camp has to fulfil all the criteria for a Bike Information Point and include a cycling information area. Further, it has to provide special cycling programmes and accommodation packages with special prices and no surcharges. It also has to provide skilled cycle tourist guides, as well as ensure the possibility of bicycle storage, renting and repair, as is required in case of cycling hotels.

CYCLIST-FRIENDLY FARM has to comply with all the obligatory and three optional criteria to acquire the sign. The obligatory criteria include: the farm situated so as to allow easy access
by bicycle, farm equipment comprising a sufficient amount of bicycles and equipment, as well as sufficient storage space for bicycles, and services offered on the farm, the requirements being similar as is the case with cycling camps and hotels.

**CYCLIST-FRIENDLY RESTAURANT** has to meet the following criteria in order to acquire the title: cyclist-friendly meals, cyclist-friendly infrastructure (cycle stands, safe storage space for bicycles, luggage and equipment), cyclist-friendly services (tourist information for cyclists, support in seeking accommodation, tools for cycle repair, transport services, possibility of drying clothes).

Summarizing the above described cycling accommodation services, the standards to satisfy the desires and needs of cycle tourists are as follows:

- Specialized cyclist accommodation (cyclist hotels, camps, tourist farms...);
- Internet access available to visitors;
- Safe overnight bicycle storage;
- A bicycle stand in front of the facility;
- Storage space for luggage and equipment;
- The possibility to dry clothes and equipment;
- Bicycle repair tools;
- Abundant breakfast;
- Packed lunch;
- Well-marked cycling routes and paths;
- Maps of cycling routes and paths;
- Bike Information Point;
- Schedules for various means of transport (train, bus...).
5. Cycling as a tourist product

Cycling is an activity that is being taken up by an increasing number of people, regardless of age and social position. It is a form of soft recreational tourism that yields many positive results: it is environmentally friendly, promotes a healthy lifestyle and uses a low-cost means of transport. As an important tourist product, cycling is also interesting from the economic perspective. Development a product requires good organisation, incentive, carefully planned marketing and monitoring of results.

A growing number of domestic and foreign tourists opt for active holidays, which results in an increase of demand for cycling-related programmes. Abundant natural sights can serve as additional appeal for various types of cyclists, yet it does not suffice.

A cycle tourist demands certain specifics that have to be taken into account when planning tourist services:

- Planning a cycling network, relevant cycling infrastructure, the number of cycling routes, upkeep, safety, relevant signs...;
- Presentation of cycling destination (webpages, brochures, maps, guides);
- Relevant additional services (bicycle repair, bicycle purchase and rent, information points, rest areas);
- Accommodation facilities adapted to cyclists;
- Organisers of guided cycling tours;
- Attractive additional services (wellness, cultural events);
- Special tourist-cycling events (cycle races);
- A range of specific, targeted programmes – e.g. MTB parks;
- Organisers of education and training;
A relevant body to ensure implementation and monitoring of standardisation.

**What are the advantages of cycling as a tourist product?**

- By offering attractive services, cycling as an additional activity can attract much demand in a short time span, thus enabling additional industries to develop: food service, accommodation facilities, service and information industry;
- Cycle tourism is an ecological form of tourism with minimum impact on the environment and the local community;
- Cycling and cycle tourism promotion and development can take advantage of the existing, but mostly unused infrastructure, such as side and country roads, and unused railroads (e.g. Parenzana in Istria);
- Development of cycle tourism stimulates new investment into diverse infrastructure, including cycling infrastructure, thus bringing major benefits to local communities;
- Cycle tourism also encourages daily cycling;
- Cycle tourism has seen a remarkable growth, thus representing a valuable market – a cycle tourist is ranked in the category of above-average consumer.

In countries where cycling as a tourist product has only began to develop, the majority of services provided depend on amateur or club initiative. The main drawbacks of tourist cycling in such countries are:

- Incomplete networks of cycling connections;
- Incomplete additional cycling infrastructure (rest areas...);
- Incomplete accompanying non-traffic infrastructure (repair shops, safe bicycle storage, bike rentals..);
- No integration between local communities and national authorities to ensure joint financing of cycling infrastructure;
- No cooperation between key providers of cycling and catering-tourist services;
- Providers of other means of transport (train, plane, bus) fail to show sufficient interest to adapt their services to the specifics of a cycle tourist;
- No records of cycle tourists to enable a development analysis and improvement of service.

Providing quality tourist services for cyclists is an opportunity to achieve international competitiveness in the tourist market. Countries where cycle tourism is less developed can rely on examples of good practices and solutions in the development of cycle tourism from Germany, Austria, Canada, Australia and United Kingdom. In Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Germany and in Switzerland, the construction of cycling networks has proven a great potential for the growth of cycling as a tourist product.

In Austria, cycling information is easily accessible, structured and organised, both at the national as well as regional level. Cycling routes are presented at the national tourist portal [http://www.austria.info/](http://www.austria.info/), while there is also a specialised cycling website for the entire country, which is to be found at [www.radtouren.at](http://www.radtouren.at)

In Italy, two associations were formed for the field of tourist cycling: the Italy Bike Hotels
consortium and the Trek&Bike Hotels brand under the consortium Green Italy, which is an association of hotels and companies jointly promoting cycling and trekking tourism in Italy. The aim is product integration of hotels and other accommodation facilities into various associations in order to develop joint marketing and presentations. In 20 years to come, it is expected for the European cycling market to be in the range of 20 million €.
6. Valuable cycle tourist market

Cycling holidays and cycling as an additional activity form a growing and important tourist market, which in the local environment ensures new jobs and increases people's incomes. People differ from each other, therefore our preferences for tourist products and destinations differ as well. We are increasingly avoiding uniform services, seeking other types of travels and experience. We are nurturing different values and lifestyles, on the look for something different and for an authentic tourist experience.

This is why the marketing strategy also depends on our decision about what kind of tourists we wish to attract and preserve. In this case, our basis is cycling as a tourist product related to the destination and its features.

The first thing to prepare when forming the starting points for the marketing of tourist services in the area is a SWOT analysis, helping us make strategic decisions, and know where to focus our activity. A SWOT analysis comprises strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Strengths and weaknesses relate to internal factors, which can be influenced, adapted and developed. Opportunities and threats relate to external factors, which are not within our direct influence, and we have to adapt to them.

Strategic guidelines for marketing tourist routes are based on the following questions:

- What products can we offer?
- What products do we wish to offer?
- What or which tourists do we wish to attract?
- What will be (long-term) environmental implications of the decisions made?

It is therefore of key importance to answer the question about what we wish to offer.

The cycling products available have to emanate dynamism and activity, local features, discovery of new things, widening horizons, integration of guests in the action and integration of feelings.

The basis for marketing is to develop a cycling product that is related to the destination and its features. It is very important to know the target group, its desires and needs. If a product is to succeed, it has to comprise the following:

- A clear name of the product;
- A concept of paths, circular routes, network paths and their combinations;
- The shortest possible path;
- Unobstructed paths and safety on the road;
- Paths have to be resistant to all kind of weather;
- Relevant and uniform signs;
- Paths running close to nature;
- Unobstructed passage throughout the route;
- Appropriate tourist infrastructure, possibility of returning by public transport, relevant accommodation services, etc.;
- Regular maintenance and control of tourist infrastructure.

A strategic marketing concept comprises the following goals: **quantitative** (an increased number of tourists...) and **qualitative** (increased recognisability of the destination...).

In the field of marketing tourist destinations, there are two possibilities of how to tackle the determination of key markets:

- Study tourists in detail and select those segments that are easiest to attract;
- Use the destination features to find out which segment corresponds to our sustainable type.

Marketing segments of cycle tourism can be sorted based on:

- **type of cyclist**: road cyclist, trekking cyclist, mountain biker
- **country of origin**: domestic tourists, foreign tourists
- **number of participants**: an individual cyclist or a couple, a homogenous group of cyclists, large organised groups, an occasional cyclist, a cyclist on a several-day tour with fixed accommodation, a cyclist on a several-day tour of with changing accommodation; a touring cyclist,
- **economic profile**: how much money they spend,
- **demographic profile**: by age groups,
- **motive for coming**: holidays relaxation, pastime, visiting family or friends, business and education related, transit,
• **arrangement of trip**: tourist agency – organised, without a tourist agency – individual,
• **accommodation type**: hotels, B&Bs, camps...
• **level of education**, 
• **season of arrival**: spring, summer, autumn,
• **means of transport**: car, van, camper, bus, train, plane, bicycle.

The destination being marketed can be positioned based on the natural features of a geographical area, its cultural-historical attractions and sociological-demographical particularities.

The target group can be reached via:

• **direct channels**: service providers in tourism who keep their own databases of potential guests and are able to sell services with no intermediaries, and
• **indirect channels**: tourist agencies, trip organisers in the local area specialising in cycle tourism are important for incoming tourism.

Prices are determined by each provider based on the services they provide. The decision on the level of prices has to be in line with the services provided and acceptable to diverse structure of visitors. Each provider has to ensure for their services to comprise added value for guests.

To ensure an efficient plan for promotional activities, it is primarily essential to know whom the product will be presented to, why will it be presented, what the message will be and in what way will it be transferred, how many times will it be transferred and through which channels, and how the success of implementation will be monitored.

Successful communication requires a good plan composed of the following steps:

1 **SPECIFICATION OF THE TARGET GROUP**
2 **SPECIFICATION OF AIMS OF COMMUNICATION**
3 **FORMATION OF MESSAGE**
4 **SELECTION OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**
5 **SPECIFICATION OF MEANS OF PROMOTION**
6 **SELECTION OF RELEVANT COMMUNICATION NETWORK**
7 **MONITORING THE EFFICIENCY OF COMMUNICATION**

**Which tools will be chosen within the promotional network?**

**Advertising** resources are often limited, which makes it all the more obligatory to perform well-planned, targeted and efficient advertising in the local environment and abroad (online advertising, social networks, product ads, posters...).

What matters to develop **public relations** systematically, is both domestic and foreign public. A relevant PR tool has to be chosen accordingly: a press conference, an event organised for a
particular target public, writing and placing articles...

Enabling messages directed precisely at a particular target group, direct marketing activities assist marketing. They are based on a high-quality database, which initially records existing data on visitors – cyclists, while being constantly supplemented and updated using various ways of acquiring the contact data for target groups.

Diverse sales promotion activities have to be targeted with regard to market features, target groups and the aims set. Various tools: promotional videos, attendance at fairs, presentations, events dedicated to cycle tourism, distribution of promotional materials, workshops...

Advantages of personal sales are in its establishment of personal contacts, quick adaptation and the possibility of various relations between those involved.

When marketing a particular destination, it is sensible to prepare various promotional materials: brochures, maps, cycling maps, posters, roll up stands, a web portal, videos, photographs, promotional gifts... which serve the suppliers in marketing their services for cyclists.

This is a list of providers specialising in services for cyclists:

http://www.petzenland.si
http://www.helia.si/kolesarjenja
http://www.mobile-adventures.net
http://www.visitscotland.com/see-do/activities/cycling
http://www.oesterreich-radreisen.at

At the European level, the European Cyclists' Federation (EFC) promotes »Eurovelo«, a network of 13 Trans-European cycling routes.

What has to be taken into account in the development and marketing of a destination, is the internal public, its needs, desires and expectations. This leads to the preservation of the destination's cultural identity, its natural processes, biological diversity – i.e. the systems that serve as a condition of good quality living and working in a tourist area. The results can be seen in the arrival of visitors, their satisfaction, economic effects, sustainable effects, competitive advantage and recognisability of the destination.
7. Guided tours for tourist cyclists

Riding a bike can be a way of seeing the world. Fresh air can be savoured anywhere from Alaska to Spain, Australia or Brazil. Not only an entertaining form of holiday, cycle tours can also be an educative experience. All around the world, cycle tour guides lead cyclists on cycle tours of different lengths – several hours, days, weeks, even months.

The route of a cycle tour is usually determined by tourist agencies or operators having specialised for organised guidance of tourists. Some tours are planned to be relaxed and hedonistic, taking cyclists to luxurious hotels and spoiling them with gourmet specialities. Other tours might be organised as more ascetic, with sleeping bags, tents and an economy budget. Various tours also differ in levels of difficulty. Some groups of tourists wish for excessive strain, which makes it necessary for the cycle tour guide to have an extremely high level of physical fitness. Other tours might only lead through urban centres, past cultural and historical sights. Operators of cycle tours mostly have guided tours, rests, eating, accommodation and other related activities planned in advance.

Cycle tour guides work for the operator, thus being the face of the organisation. They should therefore be very flexible, kind and communicative. They also need to have extreme physical fitness as well as the knowledge of fixing bicycles, of the environment, sights, history, people, language, culture, and so on. In a word, a cycle tour guide also has to be an expert in tourism.
**Major characteristics** of a cycle tour guides could be summarized as follows:

- Physical fitness;
- Knowledge of the terrain;
- Communicativeness;
- Knowledge of foreign languages (if visitors come from abroad);
- Knowledge of basics and bicycle repair skills.

Some of the main differences between a cycle tour guide and tourist agency tour organiser have to be emphasised. As mentioned already, a cycle tour guide has the task of taking cyclists on an organised cycle tour. They are expected to have extremely diverse knowledge and skills: from physical fitness and knowledge of terrain and language, to the knowledge of basic bicycle repair skills.

A tour organiser makes sure that a cycle tour is prepared to the last detail in advance. Their task is to find a local guide in foreign environment, who can take the tourists around, show them the sights and explain the facts. The organiser makes sure that the expectations which the tourists have acquired based on brochures or webpages are fulfilled. And more: that all the important details, from transport, the local guide, accommodation, equipment, meals, tickets, etc. are readily taken care of. It is therefore not required of the tour organiser to know the culture, language, sights and all the tiny details of a specific area, but rather to ensure for the group to get the best guide. And also to take care of all the details related to tour organisation, such as potential cancellations, weather, illness, lost luggage, etc.

**Knowing the group**

Before heading to a tour, it is among the most important tasks for a cycle tour guide to acquire the basic data on their group. Without knowing the number, sex, age as well as the needs of group members, it is much more unpredictable to plan a cycle tour. A cycle tour guide has to keep in mind at all times to get the group to the end. If the group includes elderly and children, guidance has to be adapted to their needs even more.

Being a cycle tour guide is a demanding and responsible job, differing in many respects from the role of a tour organiser. A cycle tour guide is the face of the organisation providing the tourist guidance, and, after all, the face of the cycle tourist destination that promotes cycling as a tourist product. It depends on them to a large extent how the tourists will feel, how they will perceive the tourist services and whether they come back the next time. A cycle tour guide therefore requires appropriate personal features and expert skills to conjure for the tourists an unforgettable experience and turn the tourist route into a pleasant experience.
8. How to attract tourist cyclists?

Cyclists bring money and stimulate the business. And, like it is with other tourists, cyclists are considered potential customers who can bring money into local communities, thus enhancing the entrepreneur industry. And when a certain cycling destination starts luring cyclists to visit from far away, the financial income can be really substantial.

Different cycling destinations with cycle routes have a great potential. They have to be aware, however, that money does not come overnight and that there have to be certain investments into cycle tourism. If cycle infrastructure is constructed, tourists will surely come.

Why to attract tourist cyclists?

Without doubt, cyclists are potential customers who can bring money to the local community. However, certain other features of cyclists have to be considered:

- In average, cyclists are highly educated and well-off;
- Usually, cyclists travel in groups of friends or family members;
- They are interested in local sights and what makes a certain area different from others (historical locations, museums, peculiar shops, wine cellars, farms, art galleries, restaurants, natural features and possibilities of other leisure activities);
- Cyclists are also consumers. Many cyclists bring along as little equipment as possible and prefer to stay in hotels or hostels and eat in restaurants along the route;
- Even those cyclists who bring almost all the equipment for camping and cooking, occasionally have to stop to replenish their supplies;
- Many cyclists also attend guided cycle tours, i.e. they join a group organised by a tourist agency or a company. In longer European tours, e.g. along the Mediterranean coast or the Danube river, which comprise several days of cycling, an individual cyclist can spend even more than 1000 Euro, depending on accommodation and the meals included;
- Cyclists are welcome as guests also due to the fact they leave no visible negative impacts. Unlike motorised vehicles, they enter the built-up area along bikeways, don't increase traffic additionally, do not occupy the limited parking spaces, do not wear the infrastructure, cause neither noise nor pollution.
- Showing an interest in historical, natural and cultural heritage, they are particularly interested in preserving the character of the local community. They are thus making an indirect contribution to the preservation of such peculiarities, as they are ready to pay for sightseeing, purchase of souvenirs, etc. The better the preservation of cultural and natural sights of the community, the higher the probability that tourist cyclist would visit.

What cycle tourists are looking for?

Cycle tourists pick their possible destinations based on three common characteristics:

- Just cycling, including the length, level of difficulty, and type of route.
- Support and services along the route, such as availability of good maps, accommodation and possibility of meals.
- The sights nearby and the very features of the destination.

**Cyclist-friendly community**

Upon reaching the point when various tourist organisations and individual entrepreneurs understand the needs of cycle tourists and start meeting them, another step in the development has to be taken. It's the move of the remaining community who also benefit from cycle tourism. And how can understanding of cyclists' needs be extended to the entire community in order to broaden the efforts for improving the services provided?

For almost a century we have been arranging, transforming and adapting the operation of our local communities and traffic systems to the needs of vehicle rides. This focus has taken roots so strong that even the essential understanding of what barriers cars pose to people travelling with other means of transport is a challenge of its own kind.

![Cyclist-friendly community](image)

**How to become cyclist-friendly?**

**Change the view.** To be able to know cyclists' needs as well as problems, you have to try riding a bicycle. Try to cycle along a path in your surroundings where your visitors would also cycle. Go where the visiting cyclists normally tend to go – restaurants, hotels, shops, historical locations, etc. How do you feel? Do you feel safe? Have you encountered any obstacles?
Invite cyclists. Offer the accommodation and other services they might require. Begin with simple signs, such as a display window sign or a door sticker: “Cyclists welcome.”

Inform. Cycle tourists require information! Particularly so about where they are or will arrive shortly, and where to find what they require. Do not forget about marks and information about kilometres there are to the nearest village.

Help to be found. For people who have just cycled over 60 or 80 km, the method of “missed attempts” is out of the question. Use a map and/or signs to show the way. If there is no bikeway nearby, cooperate with other organisations and try to find the solution together.

Enable safe access. Make sure that the roads leading to tourist locations are cyclist-friendly. If you’re further away from a bikeway, make sure that the road or path is toughened, marked and cleared of any obstacles like glass, branches, holes filled with stagnant water, etc. Signs should also be visible sufficiently to drivers of motor vehicles in order to warn them of the presence of cyclists.

Bicycle parking is also very important. What happens when the cyclists eventually find you? Bicycles need protection from theft and weather. Ensure comfortable and safe bicycle parking. Bicycle stands should be kept well maintained and the surrounding area should be clean. Make sure that at night bicycles are parked in an illuminated area.

Do not keep public goods secret. Make the access to water and public toilets easy. If the latter is not visible clearly form the bikeway, ensure appropriate signs. If public toilets are not open, make sure to provide private facilities. Equally important for cyclists are rest areas and shelters: chairs, benches, covered verandas or pavilions in parks are perfect. Make a list of locations where such goods are available.

To make a change that would impact an increased interest of cycle tourist is not an easy thing to do. This is a task that cannot be let to a few caterers and tourist workers. It would require wider cooperation of the community and anybody making political changes.

Step by step

At the beginning, the local community has to decide whether to develop its environment along the lines of “a cyclist-friendly” community that attracts cycle tourists as well. Such decisions are usually made at sessions of community or municipal councils, public forums, workshops, etc. Each such group that decides to pursue the field further, has to define a way of managing such long-term projects. Project management or initiative can be acquired by an existing or a new team of enthusiasts, or the matter can be arranged within frameworks of greater institutional degree, such as various tourist boards, development chambers, etc. Surely, the decision on the type of management depends on each local environment, the most important factors being devotion and commitment to the goal. To ensure long-time success, all the relevant stakeholders have to participate in the cooperation, while communication channels with the remaining public are being established.
These are some preliminary steps that can be taken with minimum costs, possibly representing certain foundations established for a launch of a cycle-friendly community, which will attract cycle tourists:

- Establish a consultation committee, in which institutional players, as well as representatives of economy, users, the civil society, etc. should also participate;
- Set goals for the promotion and development of cycling in the local community;
- Launch a “cyclist-friendly” programme, thus showing outwards your generosity towards cyclists. Design a logo for establishments offering cyclist-friendly services, such as covered bicycle sheds, repair tools, healthy meals, etc. Also, make a logo for the bikeway and use it in various promotional materials, webpages, signs and inscriptions at shop entrances, etc.;
- Adopt a traffic control plan providing that each road-construction project has to consider the aspect of cycling;
- Create clearly marked, safe and comfortable links to your community;
- Make roads and bikeways cyclist-friendly;
- Integrate the use of bicycles with other traffic systems in your local community (public passenger transport, taxi, tourists boats, etc.);
- Make the cyclists aware of their importance;
- Ensure cleanliness and upkeep of infrastructure by regular maintenance;
- Create additional possibilities, like bathing areas, wineries, forest trails, tourist farms, theme parks and similar attractions;
- Make each member of the local community a cycling ambassador who cycles regularly, helps other cyclists and, of course, has a positive attitude towards foreigners;
- Educate the inhabitants on the potential and importance of cycle tourism for the local economy, and potential forms of their commitment. For example, local inhabitants could contribute by directing cyclists, helping to maintain the upkeep, report on potential dangers, as well as driving carefully when they encounter cyclists. Organise local cycle tours with the locals to introduce the route to them;
- Create the sense of safety by arranging regular patrols of the local police and by placing an emergency phone number on visible spots.

Continue!

So, when cycle tourists begin to arrive and spend money, it does not mean you should stop at this point. Try to listen to guests coming to your community and step in their shoes. Things can be constantly improved, changed, corrected, and taken forward. Some specialities or novelties might attract a new tourist. Don’t forget, a tourist always has to be convinced in order to return at the next occasion. What you particularly have to keep in mind are synergies of various fields. Cycle tourism can also contribute to the development of other major elements in the local community.
9. Positive synergies of cycle tourism

Well-developed cycle tourism can be an important industry that helps enrich the local environment and ensure employment. The synergies formed as a result are added value and a step beyond. Both as customers and consumers, tourist cyclists are a demanding group. However, they are also among the most grateful groups, as in the long term they give back much more than what have required. The development of cycle tourism is a good basis to develop a sustainable, intelligent, inclusive society.

Naturally, developing cycle tourism is no easy task, as it demands the participation of the entire local community, regional integration as well as international cooperation. This handbook was an attempt at summarizing the key parameters that matter in the development of cycle tourism, thereby in the development of sustainable mobility, economy and society.

We began by describing different types of cyclists, as we have to be aware that cyclists have various needs and requirements, meaning that the services offered have to be adapted accordingly. Cycle tourism is difficult to imagine without the basic infrastructure. Users will only come when they can feel safe and comfortable on a certain route. When the local environment decides to become a cycling destination, its fate depends on meeting certain standards. The basic conditions for cyclists also have to be ensured in the case of accommodation and other services.
Cycling can be further upgraded, though, into a tourist product. The story of nice places, food and people has to be brought to potential customers. This was discussed in the chapter on marketing. Undoubtedly, one of the major elements in the story of cycle tourism is guiding cyclists over the terrain. Cycle tour guides are the face of the tourist destination being marketed. Their knowledge, skills and character are therefore of major importance. And what is it that attracts tourist cyclists? Assisting us at all stages of cycle tourism development, brief hints can be a welcome aid to guide our considerations. With their support, it will be much easier to maintain the recurrent theme and make sure once and again about the reasons to persevere.

The entire local community can benefit from the development of a cycle tourist destination: from creating and opening new jobs, increased demand for certain products and services to increased flux of people from elsewhere. Particularly in times of crisis when stable industries have been collapsing and losing impetus, cycle tourism could represent new developments for local communities. It can ensure major support in overcoming economic problems and a focus on cleaner, more sustainable and nature-friendly industries.
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