

7 DEADLY SINS OF MOUNTAIN BIKING TOURISM

WHITE PAPER

Analysis of the most common mistakes
that destinations make when developing
mountain biking tourism

7 Deadly Sins of mountain biking tourism

Mountain biking is proven to create economic, environmental, health and social benefits for local communities. Nevertheless there are too many unsuccessful cases where the implementation of mountain biking tourism fails due to the misunderstanding of this relatively new development. Even though it sounds obvious, this is where many destinations fail to implement mountain biking in their offer.

In this white paper we have analyzed most common mistakes that we have named the 7 Deadly Sins of Mountain Biking Tourism.

These mistakes are:

7. MOUNTAIN BIKING IS IN THE DOMAIN OF MEN

When developing or managing mountain biking tourism products, women are often neglected. Instead of recognizing the growth potential of this less developed segment, most mountain biking destinations rather overlook the opportunity and focus solely on men.

Women have become an important part of the mountain biking scene and a profitable market segment. Nowadays, women on average represent 25 % of bike park users and 10-15 % of race registrants, while these numbers are rapidly increasing.

Years ago, the bike industry has spotted this trend and helped it to grow. The number of women-specific bike products is countless and the leading destinations have already started to offer women-specific camps and events. Be sure to encourage the visit of women to your bike park or trail system with adapted services and products. It will pay off!

6. WE WANT TO ATTRACT ALL MOUNTAIN BIKERS

Indeed there are some of the most developed mountain biking destinations that can provide trails and services for almost any mountain biker. But the

chances that this is your destination are minimal. Consequently, the destinations should carefully study the available resources at their location, existing offer, market trends, etc. and select the most suitable target segments.

With dozens of mountain biking disciplines, skill levels and styles, it takes sufficient resources, experience and appropriate terrain to satisfy the needs of every mountain biker. Focus on one or a few segments will enable the destination to develop a favorable/attractive/tempting offer that would result in an increased visit and high return rates.

5. MOUNTAIN BIKERS ARE YOUNG AND CRAZY

Mountain bikers are still perceived as young and crazy freaks who perform breath-taking and dangerous stunts. Well, the reality is completely different. On average, mountain bikers in Europe and Northern America are well educated, affluent, have above-average incomes and the majority of them is over 30 years of age. Consequently the destinations should adequately adapt their mountain biking products, marketing efforts and communication.

4 LENGTH IS IMPORTANT

Mountain biking destinations promote their mountain biking offer and compete based on the number of trails and their overall length. Many of trails are poorly developed or are not even mountain bike trails but are usually hiking trails or even forest roads with little or no adaptations for mountain bikers.

There is still a misperception that mountain bikers do not need specific infrastructure as they can ride more or less on any kind of terrain. But why do we build football fields when football can be played on any kind of field or even on the street? Why do we make slopes for Nordic skiing when one can ski on any snow-covered surface? In order to provide the best experience and establish a safe and controlled environment. Rather than dozens of trails, destinations should focus on a few, well-developed and maintained mountain bike-specific trails that suit their target segments. In this case the mountain bikers will not come only once, but will return.

3. EVERYONE CAN BUILD TRAILS

In many cases the destinations that want to develop mountain biking tourism products hire local mountain bikers to develop the trails. This can result in a perfect trail system, but on average, the results are not that promising. Local mountain bikers usually develop trails to not suit the target segments but their riding style and skills. As they are, in most cases, expert riders, most of the trails are very demanding and attract only a limited number of visitors.

Furthermore, due to the lack of experience and limited resources, such trails are often prone to erosion, may include dangerous objects and may represent a liability risk for owners. The quality of the riding experience is consequently limited, which results in a small number of visitors, a high number of injuries and low return rates. Trail building is not rocket science, but it takes some special knowledge to develop outstanding riding skills for the right target segment.

2. TRAILS ARE ENOUGH

Trails are the core component and resource base of the mountain bike tourism product; the more significant the trails, the more desirable the destination. Having the best trails in the world without other mountain biking specific services such as bike shops and service, rental, mountain biker friendly accommodation and public transport, will for sure attract

some visitors, but due to the lack of these services, they will not be able to have an outstanding experience. Mountain biking is not about the infrastructure, it is all about experience. That is why the destinations should focus on the development of the unique story, based on a regional theme – a brand impression that would create an emotional connection with visitors. At the end this story should be presented in the right way – through the right channel to the right target segment.

1. OTHER DESTINATIONS ARE OUR ENEMIES

It is in the nature of mountain biking to be curious about what is on the other side of the mountain or forest thus mountain bikers are always on search for new experience and trails/locations. When they visit a bike park or special average-sized trail system, they will get satisfied for a couple of days and then they will start to look for new locations. Strategic cooperation on the regional level will enable the development of complementary mountain biking destinations that would be able to entertain mountain bikers for the whole week or even longer. Consequently, the destinations should find ways to improve their mountain biking tourism products, promote and offer complete packages based on the regional level rather than compete against each other.

Omitting these seven factors will not only help you put the smile on every mountain biker that will visit your destination, but will also enable you to get the most out of this rapidly growing market segment.

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