



# Silver Cyclists: Product Development for Seniors



Co-funded by the COSME programme  
of the European Union

# Who are 'Silver Cyclists'?



Giving up old activities or taking up new (old)

[www.silvercyclists.eu](http://www.silvercyclists.eu)

activities

**SILVER  
CYCLISTS**

# Three questions

- How well received were the Silver Cyclist packages?
- What do Silver Cyclists want/need?
- Is this different from other cycle tourists?

# Our approach

## Review of the cycle tourism market

- Supply side:
  - analysis of websites
  - interviews with cycle tour operators
- Demand side:
  - survey of cycle tourists
  - interviews with cycle tourists

# Analysis of websites

- 50 operator websites from Europe and US analysed for content, imagery, marketing and reference to silver cyclists
- No explicit reference to older age groups – instead phrases such as ‘holidays for all ages’.
- Operators differed in terms of:
  - Number and variety of destinations offered
  - Level of service and support
  - Variety and specialisation – e.g. some focused on more challenging holidays, others talked about relaxing, gentle tours

# Imagery

Images show a mix of seriousness and ages



# Interviews with tour operators

- From Denmark, Germany, Spain and the UK
- Different business models, including:
  - independent bike rental businesses
  - specialist cycle holiday business
  - regional tourism organisation
  - hotel owner
- Some focus on domestic market, others international (mainly German, British, Dutch and Scandinavian)
- Evident that love of cycling/wanting to live in area important motivation for many providers

# Perceptions of tour operators

- Suitable infrastructure really important, especially traffic-free routes
- Type of infrastructure determines types of holidays provided (linear, circuits, days out, etc)
- Older market welcomed: generally pleasant customers, reasonably high spend, often longer in area and repeat visitors
- Luggage transfer important, not only attracts more customers, but allows them to 'become ordinary' tourists when they arrive at accommodation
- Directly targeting older customers not advised, just providing the product they appreciate will attract them (traffic-free, luggage transfer, information about route, relatively short stages, sometimes e-bikes)

# Survey questionnaire

- Two online surveys are currently in operation
  - Survey 'A' for those who have cycled on holiday (Danish, English, German, Italian, and Spanish)
  - Survey 'B' for those in the third-age that haven't (English and Spanish)
- What follows are the interim results from Survey A only and respond to 2nd and 3rd questions
- Analysis will be complete on both surveys by the end of November and will be available on the Silver Cyclists website: [silvercyclists.eu](http://silvercyclists.eu)

# Who has responded?

- 50/50 between the third-age group and the others
- More gents than ladies, especially in the 'other' group
- Third-age more likely to have been on a cycling holiday before
- 56% of both groups class themselves as "an experienced, regular cyclist". A further 30% of the third-age group class themselves as "an experienced, occasional cyclist", whereas 20% of the others class themselves as "an occasional cyclist"
- The third-age group are more likely to be working part-time or retired

# Key findings

Which of the following influenced your decision to book this holiday?

Luggage transfer - Electric bikes - Groups - Guided - Self-guided - Own bike - Breakdown service - Hire bikes - Off road - Good accommodation - Sightseeing - Single rates

# Key findings cont.

How important were the following when you chose this holiday?

	Other	Third-age
Nature/Landscape	Very important/Important	Very important/Important
Fitness/Health	Fairly important/Important	Very important/Important
Joy/Pleasure in cycling	Very important/Important	Very important
Relaxation/Leisure	Very important/Important	Very important/Important
Time with friends or relatives	Very important/Important	Very important/Important
Culture/Visiting attractions	Very important/Important	Very important/Important

## Other bits

- Majority of both groups have been on a cycling or walking holiday in the last five years
- If the holiday was not available
  - 70% would have gone elsewhere (still cycling)
  - 23% of 3rd age would have booked at another time
  - 17% of the others would not have taken a holiday

# Interviews with cycle tourists

- Interviews with people who have recently been on a cycling holiday
- In terms of packaging holidays, interviewees generally:
  - Liked to do their own research and planning
  - Favoured more cycle friendly areas including infrastructure, motorist culture and being able to easily move bikes on trains
  - Would hire bikes rather than take their own if cost suited them

# Interviews with cycle tourists

- Depending on circumstances (experiences sought and sometimes companions) sometimes people chose their destination primarily to go cycling, others would choose the destination and then cycle whilst there:
  - *'It (...) depends on who I'm going with. If I go with my wife....it's more...having something else around the area. She does a bit of cycling, but it's having more warm weather, beaches and things like that. Whereas, if I go with friends...it's the big mountains. (...) What I want to do is pick the area that I want to go cycling in first, and then book the area [whereas with my wife] I pick the area we want to go on holiday to, and then go cycling'*

# Interviews with cycle tourists

- Peoples wants and needs differ on cycling holidays
  - Some are infrequent cyclists who want to combine cycling with other activities
  - Others are looking for challenges.
  - Some people use the holiday to cycle more than they would normally

*'I'm a commuter cyclist. I enjoy cycling. I've not been on any long tours (...) I went round the Isle of Wight, I've done the canal from Bristol back to Reading, I took my bike to the Danube and did a few days along the Danube bike path last year, so I don't know whether I would call myself a cycle tourist as such.'*

*'We were looking to do some longer distances, challenge ourselves distance-wise. There's hills there if you want them. (...) so it was building up fitness, challenging ourselves'*

# Conclusions

- Third-age cyclists are not so different from others - flexibility is the key
- They are already out there
- More experienced cyclists
- Cycling is a great way to experience a destination
- Longer trips, but shorter distances
- More likely to mix-and-match



Experiencing different cultures, cuisine, meeting people from that country, being able to navigate our way, the wonderful hotels that Eurobike had booked for us, socialising with friends and family



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