

WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR REST AREA SERVICES IN THE CONTEXT OF BICYCLE TOURISM

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Abstract: *Bicycle tourism is an increasingly popular form of tourism, characterized by the usage of bicycles as the primary form of transportation used to travel towards tourist destinations. In this context, the development of bicycle infrastructure is important for improving accessibility, increasing safety outcomes for road users, health and environmental benefits, as well as positive economic influences. As such, this study examines the willingness to pay (WTP) of bicycle users for the usage of services provided by specialized rest areas located on bicycle paths: food and beverage, secure storage of bikes and short-term rest and relaxation amenities. The research method utilized to measure willingness to pay for the aforementioned services was contingent valuation.*

Key words: *willingness to pay, bicycle tourism, contingent valuation, WTP*

INTRODUCTION

The bicycle is a relatively cheap and fast vehicle, healthy, non-polluting and favorable to mobility, tourism and economic growth in general, being an essential factor for sustainable transport [11]. The use of the bicycle is booming, both as a daily means of transport and for recreational, cycle tourism purposes. The increasingly frequent use of the bicycle led to its evolution from a simple mode of transport to a means of recreation and sport [15].

To improve the safety of cyclists, a concept for a stopping area has been developed [10]. The intention of the stop is to provide a safe space for cyclists to stop temporarily for repairs or rest [12]. Design considerations include location, construction, maintenance, and cost [7]. It is hoped that this design concept can be tested in the near future to determine the effectiveness of such a treatment in improving road safety for cyclists [13].

Sustainable tourism can be understood as the type of tourism that takes into consideration and reduce the negative effects it generates on the environment, society and economy [2]. Therefore, economic, ecological, social and ethical considerations are taken into account, from both a short-term approach (for example, the needs of the tourists) and a long-term approach (further opportunities for development) [1].

Education is in turn influenced by the openness and dynamism that the bicycle generates; a cyclist is much more attentive to what is going on around him because his environment is much wider and not enclosed in a metal box. Studies show that students and children who travel throughout the day by bicycle achieve better learning results [9].

The motivational factors of cycling tourists. Cyclists are motivated in their sports journey by factors related to physical health, the desire to actively relax, as well as the desire to know new places [14]. The second category of motivational factors is related to the fact that bicycle trips are less expensive financially, they offer you the opportunity to see areas with special landscapes, as well as emotional comfort [5][8]. As far as the concerns regarding the routes for bicycles, the most important factors are those related to safety (because bicycle routes have a low traffic intensity), orientation facilitated by signs and markings, and the variety of routes and accommodation services [3].

Cycle touring is the taking of autonomous bicycle trips for pleasure, adventure or autonomy, rather than sport, commuting or exercise [6]. Cycle touring can range from

single-day trips to extended trips lasting weeks or months. Tours may be planned by the participant or organized by a tourism business, local club, organization or fundraising [4].



Figure 1. Rest area on the Coll de Rates bicycle path in Spain. Services include a restaurant and live music [17]

Rest areas consist of rest benches, information panels, "smart" benches where you can charge your mobile phones and tablets via solar panels, a box with safety locks and tools for bike repairment, spare cameras, first aid kits, a service with integrated pumps, five bicycle parking stands and a fountain, gazebo, terrace, games (ping pong).



Figure 2. Scenic views are an important attractor for bicycle tourism [16]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

With the help of the contingent valuation method, we analyzed the willingness to pay for the services offered at the bicycle stop. We have created a questionnaire that analyzes the willingness to pay for these services.

The questionnaire starts with a filter question, "do you know how to ride a bike" and two more warm-up questions (how old are you, what kind of environment do you live

in). The key questions are the following: what type of cycling is preferred; the desire for more places to rest; the availability of payment for the services offered (menu of the day, drinks, snacks and relaxation). we ended the questionnaire with a question related to people's experience with the designed stops they were at.

Through this method, we collected respondents' preferences regarding prices and the variety of facilities.

RESEARCH RESULTS

It should be noted that if the respondents answered the question regarding their ability to ride a bicycle with a positive answer, then other answers were not recorded. As such, we consider that the research results represent the actual desires of bicyclists in the sample (n = 32 valid respondents), while more advanced studies can address a larger sample size.

The majority of respondents to the questionnaire are aged between 18-25 years (Figure 3), live in the urban environment (Figure 4), travel by bicycle for recreational purposes (Figure 5) and would prefer to have more rest areas for cyclists (Figure 6).

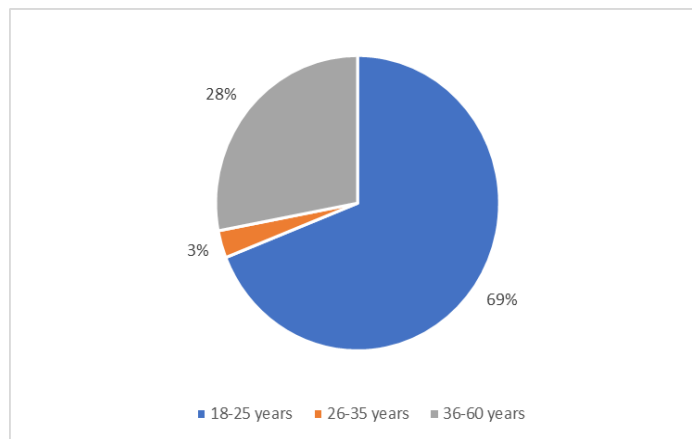


Figure 3. The age of the respondents

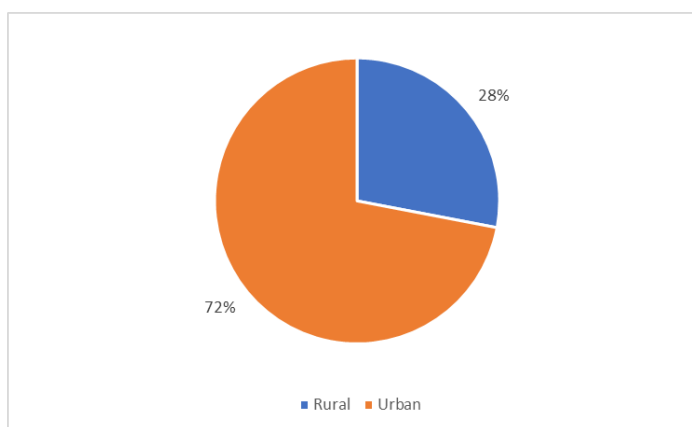


Figure 4. Distribution of respondents by place of living

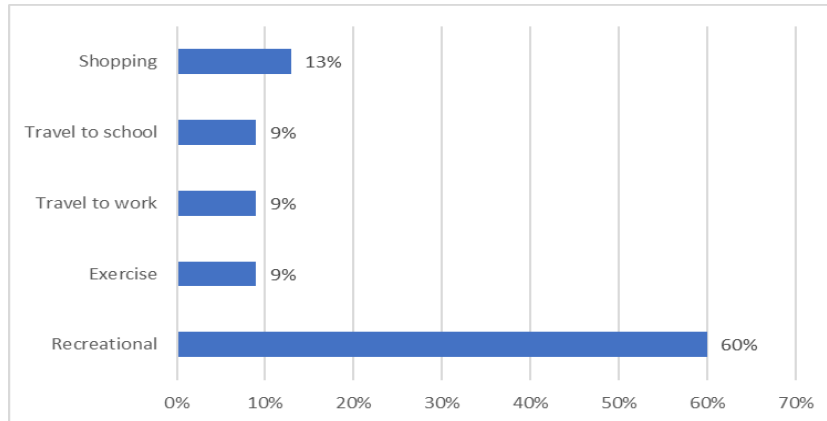


Figure 5. Bike usage of respondents

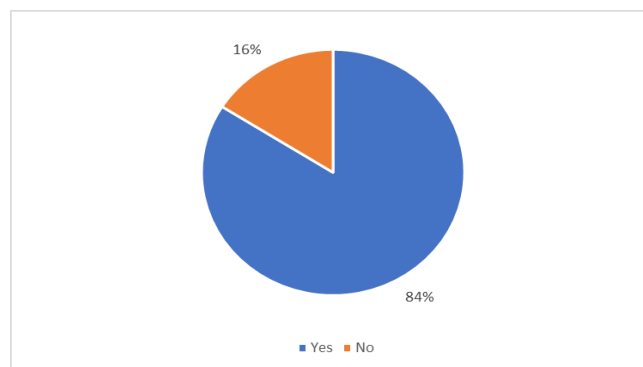


Figure 6. Willingness to accept new bicycle rest areas

Based on the questionnaire, it turned out that people who practice bicycle tourism want a menu of the day at an average price (Figure 7), drinks at the lowest possible price (Figure 8), and snacks at an average price (Figure 9). Those results can suggest that the respondents understand that the drinks offered come from a standardized range and are not willing to pay for more upmarket goods, while the food provided is individualized, with the possibility that a somewhat higher price can lead to better quality. To the question "What was your experience at the stops you visited?" most of them had a good experience (figure 10).

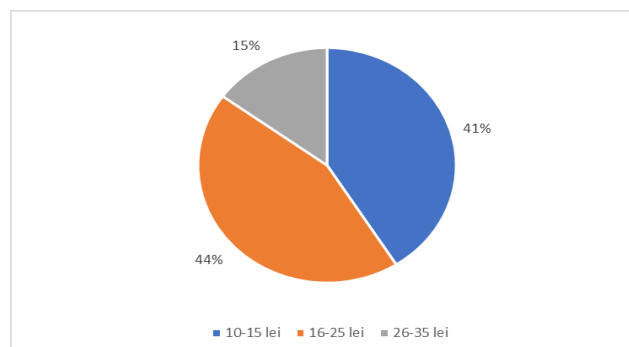


Figure 7. Willingness to pay for the "daily menu" food item at the rest area

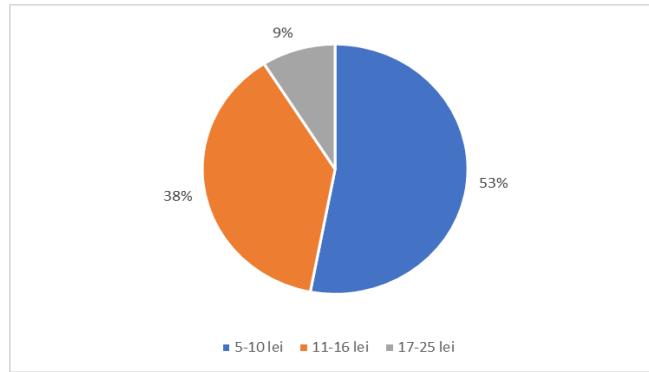


Figure 8. Willingness to pay for soft drinks at the rest area

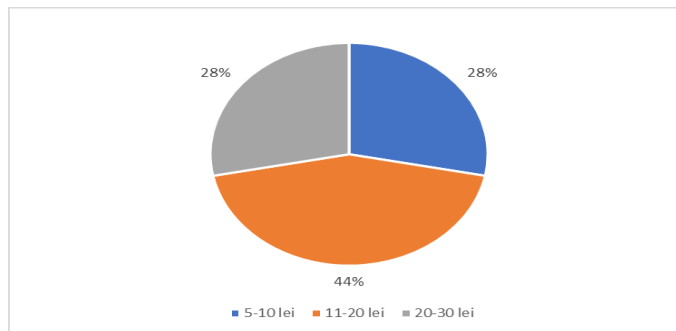


Figure 9. Willingness to pay for snacks at rest area

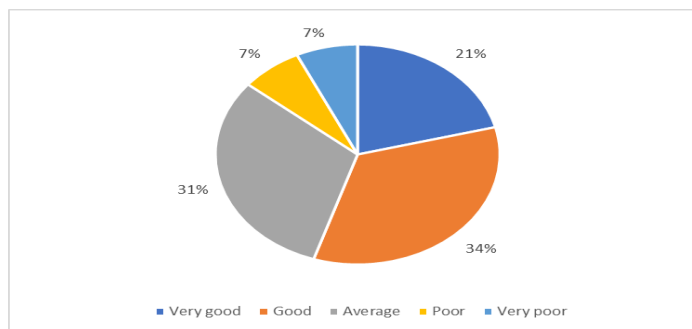


Figure 10. Previous experiences at rest areas

People were questioned about and at what time they rode a bike for the first time, 47% of respondents reporting that they did so between the ages of 7 and 10 and 37% between the ages of 3 and 6. Another question of interest was regarding the type of bicycle they currently use, a majority of the respondents reported that they own and use a city bike. This suggests that bicycle paths should be suitable for access with those types of bikes, as only 22% of the respondents own a mountain bike.

CONCLUSIONS

Cycling tourism is more and more used because it does not pollute, and it is beneficial for people's physical and mental health. The bicycle as a means of transport is cheap, the costs are low, easy to store, easy to park. This is an effective way of developing sustainable tourism.

Thanks to the existing rest areas, bicycle paths, overall infrastructure and interest in physical fitness, cycling tourism is increasing year by year and thus can be an opportunity that attracts foreign tourists.

According to the data above, people are willing to pay what we consider a medium amount for the services offered in a stopover, and most of them wish there were more areas like this. This should be of interest to entrepreneurs in rural and urban areas, as this information can help them market the bicycle stop and rest area as a moderately priced establishment, rather than a low-end or a luxury one.

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