

**MANAVGAT MOUNTAIN BIKE MARATHON IN TERMS OF SPORTS TOURISM**

*SPOR TURİZMİ KAPSAMINDA MANAVGAT DAĞ BİSİKLETİ MARATONU*

**Assistant professor Dr. Engin DERMAN**

Akdeniz University Manavgat Tourism Faculty, ederman@akdeniz.edu.tr, Antalya/Turkey

**ABSTRACT**

Tourism sector has been rapidly developing within the global economy. This development causes an intense competition. Destinations aim to increase their own power shots by using their own basic resources. In this respect, each destination has to offer new touristic products. In recent years, sport tourism has attracted the attention of the destinations as a touristic product.

Manavgat has been primarily using sea-sand and sun tourism. It makes the destination dependant on summer season. Sport Tourism can spread tourism to 12 months and other areas in Manavgat destination. In this context, Mountain Bike Marathon which is the fifth time organized in Manavgat was examined. Mainly qualitative research methods have been adopted in this research. Participant observations and interviews were made face to face, brochure and website of Marathon was examined. Additionally, I participated in the race as a researcher.. So data was collected and analyzed. The aim of this study is to find out the strengths and weaknesses of Manavgat Mountain Bike Marathon as a sport tourism event.

**Keywords:** Sports, Tourism, Manavgat, Mountain Bike Marathon

**ÖZ**

Turizm sektörü global ekonomi içerisinde hızla gelişmektedir. Bu hızlı gelişme rekabet ortamını doğurmaktadır. Destinasyonlar temel kaynaklarını kullanarak sahip oldukları rekabet gücünü artırmayı hedeflemektedirler. Bu çerçevede her destinasyon yeni turistik ürünler ortaya koymak zorundadır. Son yıllarda spor turizmi bir turistik ürün olarak destinasyonların dikkatini çekmektedir.

Manavgat öncelikle deniz-kum-güneş turizmini kullanmaktadır. Bu durum destinasyonu yaz sezonuna bağımlı kılmaktadır. Spor turizmi Manavgat'ta turizmi 12 aya ve destinasyonun farklı bölgelerine yayabilir. Bu kapsamda Manavgat'ta beşinci kez düzenlenen Dağ Bisikleti Maratonu incelenmiştir. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Katılımlı gözlem, yüz yüze mülakatlar, Maratonun broşür ve web sayfasının incelenmesi gibi yöntemler izlenmiştir. Ayrıca araştırmacı olarak bizzat yarışa katıldım. Bu şekilde veriler toplandı ve analiz edildi. Çalışmanın amacı; Manavgat Dağ Bisikleti Maratonu'nun bir spor turizmi etkinliği olarak güçlü ve zayıf yönlerini ortaya koymaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Spor, Turizm, Manavgat, Dağ Bisikleti Maratonu

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Manavgat is one of the most important tourism destinations in Turkey. Manavgat destination attracts tourists with trio (sea-sand-sun) as resort tourism. The destination needs product diversification to increase its competitive advantage and to make it sustainable. It also takes attention with its own nature resources. They are able to cater to different branches of nature sports. There have been sea, river, lake and waterfalls. And also mountains and forests are already intertwined with these water resources. From this point mountain biking is a sport to join by the local community and tourists. It is necessary to create awareness with recreational activities such as festivals and races.

Recreational activities support tourism provide benefit for the local community. Sport tourism is a major tourism area of rural and urban communities and has power to redefine economic approaches especially in developing countries. Such as tourism can improve the welfare of the local population also increases the individual quality of life (Honari, 2010).

Sport events designed to attract participants to a destination have become significant elements of tourism marketing (Green, 1998). There are different motivation factors for tourism activity. Sport is an important motivation factor for tourism. People participate to sport activities for doing and watching. These activities can be organized as regional, national and international. All of them are related to tourism.

## 2. INFORMATION ABOUT MANAVGAT DESTINATION

Even though a definite date has not been given regarding the date of foundation of Manavgat, the antique cities of Side (Selimiye Village) and Selge (Altinkaya Village) located within the borders of the province are believed to have been founded in the 6th century B.C. It is the largest district of Antalya with an area of 2283 km<sup>2</sup>. With a population of over 220 thousand and bed capacity of around 250 thousand, it is the district with the most bed capacity in Turkey. It is a large tourist region that 4.5 million tourists come annually and provides a tourism revenue of 4 billion dollars (<http://www.matso.org.tr/manavgat.html>).

Manavgat District was established on fertile plains which are located on the both sides of the Manavgat River with same name. The town center is about 3.5 km to the Mediterranean coast. The district is established in Manavgat delta plain 75 km away from Antalya, and 60 km west of Alanya province. Side Antik city is 5 km away which is located within the boundaries of the district ([www.manavgat.gov.tr](http://www.manavgat.gov.tr)).

The north of Manavgat is surrounded by the Taurus Mountains. It's coastline is covered with unique beaches and seashores. As it goes from the sea to the inner zone, a rugged terrain is observed beside plains. Eynif Plain which is hidden between the Taurus Mountains is famous. On the Taurus Mountains there are plots where the nomads are placed. The Alara Brook and the Karpuz Brook constituting the eastern border of district, and the Manavgat River in the center and the Manavgat Waterfall are famous in our country as well as in the world. There are two hydroelectric power plants named Oymapınar Dam and Manavgat Dam on the Manavgat River in the district boundaries. There are 5 bridges on the river, two of which are open to pedestrians and three of them are open to vehicular traffic.

The natural structure of Manavgat is partly suitable for agriculture and agriculture has developed in these regions. The remaining territories are divided into forests and shrubbery areas and villages developed by animal husbandry. Grains, sesame, watermelon growing and especially olive farming in the last years have become increasingly important along with large and small animal breeding in district villagers. Forestry product workmanship and seasonal agricultural workmanship are the main ways of earning. In recent years, fruit growing such as oregano, cherry and walnut have started to be carried out in limited agricultural fields besides cereals. In recent years cotton and citrus production has decreased. Open field and undergrowth vegetable cultivation have increased. The industry is not developed in the district. However, there are many factories based on agriculture (<http://www.matso.org.tr/manavgat.html>).

Apart from these, tourism is the most important source of income as a natural attraction of the region. Tourism is gaining momentum with the fact that Manavgat has an ancient Side city that has become a brand all over the world. Most of the inhabitants of the city have been making their living from tourism. Manavgat has a strong tourism potential with its natural beauties, historical and cultural riches. It is a great tourism destination that is outstanding with its name at international level as well as in country and in region tourism.

The climate of Manavgat is the Mediterranean climate. The summers are hot and arid, the winters are warm and rainy. The frost is seen throughout the year but only for a few days. In some years it has been observed

that there is no frost. Particularly in the winter months, with the degrees between 15 and 20, Manavgat is more advantageous than many parts of the world in terms of the construction and development of alternative tourism on sports. Due to its geographical position it offers very suitable opportunities for alternative tourism types in terms of sustainable tourism. The rivers, forests, lakes, mountains, plains in district have quite rich natural features for canoe, trekking, orienteering, canyoning, road bike and especially mountain bike. Manavgat is a city opened to the world and in this context continues to be a twin town with Herford city in the North Rhine-Westphalia province of Germany with the theme of sports fellowship since 2009 ([www.manavgat.bel.tr](http://www.manavgat.bel.tr)).

### 3.MOUNTAIN BIKE TOURISM

There has been a change in tourism market. Needs, types and patterns of tourists are more in variety. The "special interest tourism" that has risen from such demands. Environmental and social aspects of travel has effectively given rise. In this context, Bicycle Tourism have been increased in popularity because of its appeal to aging populations and the manner in which it can straddle the boundaries between heritage, adventure and sustainable tourism (Sidall, 1987).

Bicycle tourism is for recreational visits, either overnight or day visits away from home, which involve leisure cycling as a fundamental and significant part of the visit. It includes mountain biking and daytrip cycling. Mountain biking arguably accounts for most bicycle tourism activity. The sport entered the mainstream relatively recently and has experienced immense growth (Morey, 2002).

Bicycle tourism has traditionally been more popular in Europe than North America, and has been a staple in some countries' tourism economies for decades. For example, some European countries see approximately 4 per cent of their total visitation accounted for by touring cyclists. It is expected that cycling could soon account for upwards of 12 per cent of all European holidays. Britain has developed a large bicycle network already consisting of 5600 kilometers which is planned to top out at 16,000 kilometers (Sustrans, 1999). The European bike tourism sector generates 2.3 billion cycle trips in Europe every year, including day trips and overnight trips that take visitors to rural areas that are not often visited by other tourists. This sector generates about 44 billion Euros annually as of 2012 (Lancaster, 2012).

Bike tourism contributes important economic benefit to destinations. Cyclists conduce dramatically to economic revenues of eating, drinking and retail establishments. They spend cumulatively more money at bars, restaurants and convenience stores than do customers who arrive by car (Lesser, 2012). The evidence supporting the conclusion that trails and greenways improve local economies continues to grow. Across the country, trails and greenways are stimulating tourism, recreation-related spending and the housing market. Trail and greenway systems have become the central focus of tourist activities in some communities and an effective force for kick-starting a stagnating economy. Trails can have compounding benefits on economic development, including benefits to travelers, local residents, and the city and region at large. As more travelers become increasingly interested in tourism and sightseeing activities that include physical activity and exercise, trails are a growing attraction for people visiting an area. Communities around the country are increasingly using trails as a tool for economic revitalization. This model places trails as a centerpiece of a tourism-centered strategy for small town revitalization. Well-connected trails between downtown businesses have demonstrated the ability to generate revenue and attract visitors. These visitors come from both near and far and have the potential to substantially stimulate the economy, especially in sectors such as restaurants, local stores, and lodging. trails also have benefits for locals. They contribute to quality of life by preserving open space, and foster a sense of community by providing a public space where people can socialize and interact. They function as a nearby area for exercise, proximal to neighborhoods and connecting residential areas (Lee, 2015).

Bicycling is a method of tourism transportation that is non invasive environment, healthy and sustainable. It allows freedom and sightseeing potential. Thousands of bicycle tourists travel from all over the world. Both domestic and international tourists are increasingly seeking to improve their health and wellbeing and to have experience environmentally sustainable tourism (Lee, 2015). This kind of tourism enables travelers to appreciate the native plants, wildlife, and natural beauty of the area. Especially mountain bike tourists travel in the nature. Destinations has an important power for touristic product to them if its nature is convenient. Locations that offer outdoor recreation and a connection with nature have a competitive advantage over destinations that do not. Travelers are becoming more engaged in rural activities and seek out rural atmospheres. Mountain biking is one of the best activities like these.



#### 4.IMPLEMENTATION

In this study, we researched 5. Manavgat Mountain Bike Fest which was organized at 24-26 March 2017. One of the authors participated to 75 km race. He observed all activities in the Fest. The website of the Fest and news of the Fest were examined. Unstructured interviews were conducted with some of the participants. Data was collected by these implementations and analyzed. The results were presented as the outcome of observation, interviews and document reviews.

#### 5.THE RESULTS OF OBSERVATION

Manavgat Mountain Bike Fest was first experience as mountain bike race for me. It was 75 km on the mountain. I ride a bicycle everyday but I had not raced before. I just wanted to complete the race. Because it was my research. I wanted to feel the feelings of the racers. I wore racing clothes and started racing. I was very excited. My bicycle was not professional. I felt like myself competing for many years. Of course I was left behind but finished the race. Racing was not my job. I was watching fascinating landscape. Race continued along Manavgat River. We passed the antique place of Seleukia. The view of the Oymapınar Dam Lake on the top was great. There were a lot of rural settlements during the race. I saw a lot of animals. Maybe it was the life that many modern world people longed for. I thought that all the tourists in Manavgat should see these beauties. I also assigned 25 students. They waited along the route and showed directions. This organization was very useful for my students. They also earned money.



#### 6.THE RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS

The Mountain Bike World Championship was organized 8 years ago in Manavgat. But there have been any Mountain Bike Championships for 8 years. In this regard, it seems that there are organizational problems related to sport tourism in the destination. The quality of such sports organizations can be improved with good planning.

Ünal Tolun, the former president of the bicycle federation and the festival organization committee chairman declared his opinion about the subject: 'I am in 65th year in bike sport. Mountain Bike World Cup was held in Manavgat before. Eight years later, we returned to this village. we will continue after that. We want Manavgat to be a leader in bicycle sport organizations. Because there is everything here. This year we're doing the first race here. The race immediately caught interest. Our foreign participants are 4 German, 5 Russian, 2 Norwegian and 1 Belgian. The numbers are small, but the calendar is very jammed.'

A cyclist explained his views like this: 'I participated many mountain races in the world. Manavgat is very suitable for mountain bike races. I grew up in these mountains. I was a peasant child. I had been the champion of Turkey. It was great for me. I owe it to these mountains. I have a sport tourism job. I organizes

bicycle tours. There is 250km bicycle track in this mountain. But we should be more organized in these activities. we need to get more participation.'

Sport tourism is useful for local people. They gain sports habit. They can have economic benefit from sport activities. The nature of a region can be used as a nature sporting area both for the people of the region and for sport tourism.

## 7.THE RESULTS OF DOCUMENT REVIEW

Manavgat Mountain Bike Fest was organized with "Adventure and Nature Tourism Infrastructure Development" project by Manavgat Governorate, Manavgat Municipality, Turkey Cycling Federation, Manavgat Side Touristic Hotel Association (MASTOB) and Salcano Bicycle. it is a sports organization aiming to be able to transfuse the love of cycling to the people of the region with many social activities and to perform the natural and cultural presentation to cyclists from various regions of the country and from the world. Using nature-friendly bicycle, sport and tourism combination provide protection of nature and culture. The Fest continued three days and two nights. 87 male and 11 female, in total 98 athletes participated. There were 12' international athletes from Germany, Russia, Belgium and Norway (<http://www.star.com.tr>).

The races were held on Turkey's first World Marathon Cup course, climbing to the middle of the Taurus Valley covered with Oymapınar dam and emerald green forests spread around the Manavgat River. Hundreds of people in Manavgat rode a bicycle during the fest. Cyclists camped in Manavgat estuary region. Some information about Fest explained in this area. Recreative tours were organized around Titreyengöl which is famous in the world. It was entertaining to gather around the camp fire in the evenings. All meals were distributed by the organization. There were 6 sponsors at the organization; Manavgat Municipality, Turkey Cycling Federation, The Governorate of Manavgat, Manavgat Side Touristic Hotel Association, Salcano Cycling, Manavgat Mediterranean Hospital([www.manavgatbikefest.com](http://www.manavgatbikefest.com)).

## 8.CONCLUSION

Manavgat Mountain Bike Fest has also generated positive economic impacts in the community as well as social impacts due to its function as a link between communities. It is important to encourage the use of trails for recreational and other trips by bike. In this way, participation of local people in such sports tourism activities can be increased. Especially female participants should be encouraged to participate in such festivals. Bicycle tourism must be promoted as an important part of the economy. Manavgat has much of the physical infrastructure in place to generate mountain bike tourism. It can be established as an attractive, feasible and recognized for bicycle tourists by adding, retaining and diversifying necessary amenities for bicycle tourism hospitality. The Fest has an important role to improve this kind of tourism. There are several aspects in need of further research. The effectiveness of Manavgat Bike Fest program can also be studied in greater detail. The organization committee of the Fest should connect with mountain bike associations and other bike organizations. The Fest website should be updated and improved with information about services, maps and welcome messages for cyclists. Festivals that play an important role in sport tourism should be planned and coordinated.

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