MOUNTAIN BIKE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE MIDNIGHT SUN: CAPITALIZING ON DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES TO MAXIMIZE TOURISM POTENTIAL IN THE YUKON TERRITORY, CANADA

by

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Abstract

The Yukon Territory, in Canada's Arctic, has tremendous potential for mountain bike tourism development. The territory has abundant natural beauty; an excellent trail system; committed advocates at the small business, municipal, and territorial levels; and a mystique that naturally draws people there.

The Yukon has already established itself as an adventure tourism destination for activities such as paddling and dog-sledding. However, the mountain bike segment of the Yukon tourism industry remains very small. By investigating the destination attributes that draw riders to the Yukon, the local mountain bike tour operator industry and the broader mountain bike tourism community will be able to capitalize on an ever-expanding tourist market as other destinations have done. Destination attributes are defined as the natural and physically constructed characteristics of a specific location that would draw a tourist to travel to an area.

The main findings of the study were that the three attributes that were highlighted in previous studies—scenery, trail quality, and trail variety—were also the three most desired attributes in this study. In addition, participants indicated that they would like to experience a different trail each day that they are on a vacation. Finally, throughout the study it was highlighted that the uniqueness of a destination is very important to trip satisfaction.

The underlying question is how the mountain bike tourism "product"—and its perception by the tourists that visit—can be better understood; the answer can provide insight to be capitalized on in order to grow the industry effectively.

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Figure A.1. Blake and Jennie at the top of Mountain Hero, Carcross, YT. (Photo courtesy: S. Turcotte)

Figure A.2 Yukon River Trail, Whitehorse, YT.
(Photo courtesy: A. Campbell)

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Mountain biking is one of the most popular recreational activities worldwide (Leberman & Mason, 2000; Taylor, 2010); over 700,000 Canadians participate in cycling and mountain biking on a regular basis (MBTA, 2010). Its popularity has grown substantially over the last 30 years, and it continues to grow (Chiu & Kriwoken, 2003). Since the sport's inception in the 1970s, it has developed and grown to a point where there is now a wide variety of riding styles and experiences, ranging from cross-country endurance races to helicopter-accessed downhill riding (Freeman, 2011).

The Outdoor Industry Association funded the 2010 Outdoor Foundation Study, which ranked road biking, mountain biking, and BMX biking together as the fourth most popular outdoor recreation activity. The study also found that 15% of Americans aged six and older participate in cycling, for a total of 43.3 million participants (Outdoor Foundation, 2010).

As the sport has grown, so has its economic impact. The Sea-to-Sky Corridor (Vancouver North Shore, Squamish, and Whistler) is one of the few areas where the economic effects of mountain biking has been measured. In 2006, the economic impact from community mountain bike trails in the area between Vancouver and Whistler, British Columbia, was $10.3 million over the summer season (MBTA, 2010). When lift-accessed mountain biking at Whistler–Blackcomb was included, the impact increased to $38 million over the summer (MBTA, 2010). Even with a growing number of participants and demonstrated economic impacts, mountain bike–related research is lacking. When compared with other outdoor recreational activities, "there is a relative dearth of understanding and peer-reviewed scientific papers" (Quinn & Chernoff, 2010, p.1).

1.2 Summary of Chapters

The purpose of this study is to understand how destination attributes affect the motivations of mountain bike tourists. Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the background information for this study, and includes a description of the rationale for significance. A brief overview of the qualitative methodology used in this study is also outlined.

Chapter 2 introduces the sport of mountain biking, its demographics, and the state of the limited mountain bike research that has been conducted over the last 30 years. It provides a synthesis and analysis of the current literature of mountain biking and adventure tourism, and what the current state of mountain bike research is as it relates to both the industry products and services and the development of tourism. The dimensions of the problem area and the limited extent to which answers exist through the examination of previous research are given. In addition, this chapter begins to suggest how destinations can capitalize on existing and develop new destination attributes.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the methods used and the methodology that provides the underlying basis for the research design. The qualitative research design is explained, the justification for this research design is given, and the criteria for selecting research participants is given. The use of semistructured in-depth interviews for collecting data and the analysis techniques used are outlined in this chapter.

The results of the study are presented in Chapter 4, including descriptive information, and an analysis of the interviews and participant observation research. Fourteen separate themes are identified and explained.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the study as they relate to the existing knowledge about mountain bike tourism. This chapter includes an analysis of the participants of the study as

they relate to pervious studies. Implications and recommendations are drawn from the results presented in the previous chapter.

Chapter 6 offers conclusions, and includes the study's limitations and value. The research questions are restated and answered. Finally, further research topics and next steps are provided, including new research questions and new areas for future studies.

1.3 Purpose of the Study and Overview of Methods and Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate mountain bike tourism in the Yukon Territory in Canada's Arctic. The Yukon is in the early stages of developing its mountain bike tourism industry, which holds great potential for the area. The territory has the beginnings of a mountain bike infrastructure, including abundant, excellent trails, committed advocates, and a mystique that naturally draws people there (IMBA, 2005).

Conducting a study using qualitative research allows participants (in this case, mountain bike tourists) to openly and freely discuss their thoughts, and provides rich and detailed findings (Taylor, 2010). This study used qualitative methods and was completed by conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with mountain bike tourists in Whitehorse, Yukon. To ensure a rigorous study, a purposive criterion sampling method was used to guarantee the selection of information-rich cases.

This study was approached from the theoretical framework of critical realism. A critical realist approach allows for the context-laden meaning of concepts, categories, and relationships to be established and causal narratives constructed (Downward & Mearman, 2004).

1.4 Statement of Research Problem

This project is based on the following query: Why do mountain bike tourists select certain destinations? The research questions to be addressed by this study are the following:

1. What draws people to travel to the Yukon for mountain biking?
2. How do destination attributes influence mountain bike tourists in determining travel destinations?
3. How can destination attributes assist in destination planning and design decisions?

The intended outcome of this project is to support the Yukon mountain bike industry and global tourism community by developing an understanding of why mountain bikers choose to travel to certain destinations. Such information is invaluable because obtaining information on rider preferences can help managers and planners establish and manage bike trails (Goeft & Alder, 2000).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Mountain Bike Literature Introduction

The sport of mountain biking started in Marin County, California, in the mid-1970s (Buensdorf, 2003) but is a relatively new activity compared with other types of outdoor recreation (Fix & Looms, 1998). The popularity of mountain biking has grown substantially over the last 30 years and is now one of the fastest-growing outdoor recreation activities worldwide (Leberman & Mason, 2000). This growth continues (Chiu & Kriwoken, 2003), highlighted by the fact that mountain biking became an Olympic sport in 1996 (IOC, 2012). Academic research into mountain biking dates back to the late 1980s, but to date is still sparse (Leberman & Mason, 2000).

Mountain biking is a sport with a wide membership that allows for diverse subcategories that fall under the term mountain biking (Dodson, 1996). Surveys in the United States reveal that since 1998, about 50 million people have participated in mountain biking activities each year (Newsome & Davies, 2009; Outdoor Foundation 2006). This activity can be a source of fitness, fun, mental activity, technical challenge, recreation, and entertainment, all within a natural environment (Delpy, 1998; Newsome & Davies, 2009).

Partially as a result of these high participation rates, issues of social conflict and questions about the environmental effects of mountain biking have been raised (Cessford, 1995a). However, there is little solid evidence to suggest that mountain bikes are any more damaging than hikers' feet or horses' hoofs (Hasenauer, 1999; Ruff & Mellors, 1993). Studying the ecology of recreational mountain biking, White, Waskey, Bordehl, and Foti (2006) indicated that the activity is sustainable when it occurs on properly managed trails. Coughlan (1996) explained that in most cases, both mountain bikers and hikers appreciate and wish to conserve the natural

environment. Ruff and Mellors (1993) also indicated that conflicts between hikers and bikers arise not because of evidence of environmental damage done by bikers, but because hikers perceive mountain bikers as being different and thus assume they are irresponsible.

2.2 Demographics of Mountain Biking

There is little recent demographic research on mountain bike participants or mountain bike tourists—most likely, the demographics of participants would not match the demographics of tourists. Bowker and English (2002) suggested that the popularization of mountain biking has been so rapid that little information about its participants has been gathered. To fully understand the motivations of tourists, the participants need to be understood. This includes the riders' age, gender, preferences, income level, and rider ability.

The limited and out-dated demographic information implied that the majority of mountain bikers were middle-aged. Ruff and Mellors (1993) suggested that 58% were in the 25–45 age group. In comparison, Bowker and English (2002) suggested that the average age was 34.1 years, and 80% of riders surveyed were between 20 and 49 years of age. Symmonds, Hammitt, and Quisenberry (2000) found that the average age of mountain bikers was 33 years. A 2008 study in British Columbia indicated that 50% of mountain bikers were between the ages of 25 and 44 (MBTA, 2010).

Demographic shifts (namely, baby boomers increasing in age, having more leisure time) may have changed the age of the mountain biking population (Sung, 2004). It was noted by Leberman and Mason (2000) that age is not a barrier to mountain biking participation; thus, as the population increases in age, the demographics of mountain bikers may shift. Freeman (2011) suggested that the demographics of mountain bikers have evolved to encompass a broader age group of riders.

Traditionally, mountain biking has been a male-dominated sport. In 1997, 90% of Symmonds, Hammitt, and Quisenberry's (2000) mountain biker population sample was male. Bowker and English's (2002) data collected in 1998 and 1999 had a sample biker population that was 72% male. Data from MBTA (2010) indicate that as much as 76% of mountain bikers are male.

The income levels of mountain bikers are relatively high. Bowker and English's (2002) sample had an average household income of approximately $70,000 per year, and almost 40% reported household incomes of over $75,000 per year. Data from 2008 showed that more than 30% of mountain bikers had an annual income of greater than $100,000 per year (MBTA, 2010).

There is very little information about the ability levels of mountain bikers. Bowker and English's (2002) sample indicated that 44.2% of riders were "above average" (p. 5). However, it is difficult to gather a clear picture because the ability levels of the mountain bike population have not been thoroughly investigated.

A review of the literature suggests that most mountain bikers are intermediate-level bikers, and are males in their mid-20s to mid-40s with relatively high levels of income and education. It should be restated that there is very little current research into demographics, and there are discrepancies in the information. The discrepancies demonstrate that it is sometimes not safe to generalize about a population based on summary statistics (Symmonds, Hammitt & Quisenberry, 2000).

2.3 Categories of Mountain Biking

Mountain bike technology has changed rapidly during the sports' popularization (Chavez, Winter, & Bass, 1993; Gajda, 2008) and is influenced by the advent of different riding styles. More recent changes have included the use of strong and light frame materials, such as carbon

fibre, as well as disc brakes and various front and rear suspension systems. Newsome and Davies (2009) identified cross country, downhill, freeriding, and dirt jumping as four categories that have become delineated within the activity since the mid-2000s. These categories have some overlap, as some bikers ride in more than one style. Cross country remains the predominant riding style because it is most accessible to the general public. Downhill, freeriding, and dirt jumping require more expensive and advanced equipment and more specific tracks with jumps and obstacles. This study did not include dirt jumping, as it is a very small component of the sport and does not relate to mountain bike tourism.

Downhill and freeride mountain biking are the gravity-fed disciplines of mountain biking. Riders use "heavy" bikes with 17–20 cm of suspension to ride down hills and over obstacles. This category is focused on technical terrain features (TTFs), including but not exclusive to large jumps. There is also an emerging ski lift–accessed segment of this category, supported by the fact that 65% of the ski resorts in British Columbia have lift-accessed mountain biking (Needham, Wood, & Rollins, 2004). This study did not focus on downhill or freeride mountain biking. Most tourism in the categories of downhill and freeride mountain biking is based around ski resorts operating lift-accessed bike parks in their off season. As a result, it falls outside the parameters of this study.

The predominant mountain bike riding style is cross-country riding. In this category, bikers ride single-track trails that are narrow and wind around obstacles such as trees, so riders experience a highly technical ride at relatively low speeds (Newsome & Davies, 2009). The technology that accompanies this style of riding is most similar to bike technology from the 1980s and '90s. Cross-country riders normally choose front and/or rear suspension systems that are optimized to be lightweight rather than for large bump dissipation or durability (Baltes &

Sutela, 2008). Cross country is the style of riding that this research study included because most mountain bike tourism involves cross-country riding.

All-mountain riding was also investigated in this project. All-mountain riding is the convergence of freeriding and cross country, and it is one of the biggest trends in mountain biking at the moment (MBTA, 2010). New trail design and bike technology have combined to fuel the explosion of all-mountain riders. This study included this new category of riding.

There are differences among these riding-style subcultures; however, like all cultural lines, there are overlaps (Gupa & Ferguson, 1997). Newsome and Davis (2009) indicate that there are similarities and overlap among the categories, with some bikers riding in more than one style. Further investigation of these blurred delineations is needed, but at present it is difficult to truly segment the categories due to the relative dearth of research combined with rapid technological advances in bike technology.

The change in bike technology since the mid-2000s means that much of the research is now outdated, having been completed before this fundamental shift in mountain biking. Some categories of biking were not included in past studies because of their recent emergence. Therefore, further research into the changes in rider preferences needs to be undertaken. See Appendixes C and D for additional information about the categories of mountain biking.

2.4 Mountain Bike Tourism Defined

Cycle tourism is a broad term, describing a variety of cycle-related activities that have links to tourism; mountain-bike tourism falls under the definition of cycle tourism (Lamont & Buultjens, 2010). Research in the United States has shown that cycling contributes $133 billion to the U.S. economy, supports nearly 1.1 million jobs, and provides sustainable growth in rural communities (Newsome & Davies, 2009; Outdoor Industry Foundation, 2006). However, the

size of the mountain bike component of the tourism market is hard to determine because all types of cycling are typically included together (Koepke, 2005). Mosedale (2003) explained that mountain bike ownership has grown in number, with at least one mountain bike in 52% of all Canadian households. The industry would benefit from research specific to mountain biking that is able to determine rates, discern styles, and assess outcomes of participation in order to better position the activity relative to literature on adventure tourism more generally.

Mountain bike tourism has been described as sport tourism (Klaus & Maklan, 2011) and adventure tourism (Ewert & Jamieson, 2003; Weber, 2001). Within alternative tourism, the categories are interrelated: adventure, sport, and health tourism all focus on personal improvement and increased quality of life (Hall, 2003). As a result, it is important to investigate both sport tourism and adventure tourism to see where mountain biking best fits. See Appendix E for a graphical representation.

Sport tourism, being a subcategory of alternative tourism, is defined as travelling to participate in sport, watch sport, and travel to sport attractions (Deery, Jago, & Fredline, 2004; Weaver & Lawton, 2006). Neirotti (2003) supports this by explaining that sport tourism is "travel away from one's primary residence to participate in a sport activity for recreation or competition, travel to observe sport at the grassroots or elite level, and travel to visit a sport attraction such as a sports hall of fame or water park" (p. 2). This type of tourism dates back to the ancient Olympic games in 776 BC when Greeks from rural areas would travel to Athens to watch the events (Delpy, 1998; Neirotti, 2003). Sport-tourism attractions provide the tourist with attractions to see and activities to do that are related to sport (Gibson, 1998; Deery et al., 2004). The attractions can be natural, such as parks, mountains and wildlife; or the attraction can be manufactured, such as museums, stadiums, or stores (Neirotti, 2003). The motivations for sport

tourism are exploration, adventure, fun, relaxation, competition, education, and self-realization (Deery et al., 2004; Gibson, 1998; Neirotti, 2003).

Nature-based tourism is the enjoyment of areas of natural beauty (Ewert & Jamieson, 2003). Nature-based tourism refers to all the forms of tourism that originated as a result of the natural appeal of the area (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). Nature-based tourism has several subcategories: ecotourism, sustainable tourism, and adventure tourism (see Appendix E). A recognizable industry subsector that incorporates nature, eco, and adventure tourism has also emerged (Buckley, 2000). Adventure tourism also falls under the alternative tourism and nature-based tourism framework; it brings together travel, sport, and outdoor recreation (Beedie, 2003; Hudson & Beedie, 2006). Ewert and Jamieson (2003) provided a more specific description of adventure tourism:

> A self-initiated recreational activity, typically involving a travel and overnight stay component, that usually involves a close interaction with the natural environment, structurally contains elements of perceived or real risk and danger, and has an uncertain outcome that can be influenced by the participant and or circumstance. (Ewert & Jamieson, 2003, p. 68)

Elements of real or perceived physical danger to the participant within the context of outcome uncertainty (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989; Robinson, 1992) is what differentiates adventure recreation from non-adventure recreation.

The most common motivating factors for adventure tourism are a sense of accomplishment, the thrill, and the challenge (Beedie, 2003; Ewert, 1994; Neirotti, 2003). Many have hypothesized that risk-seeking is an important part of adventure tourism. Ewert and

Hollenhorst (1994) noted, though, that as adventure recreationists increase in experience, they seek out increasingly difficult and challenging opportunities but not increased levels of risk.

Adventure tourism is different from other categories of tourism because it involves physical effort, practical engagement, and outdoor physical challenge (Beedie, 2003). Priest (1992) suggested that adventure is leisure with uncertainty. Ewert and Jamieson (2003) further noted that the level of expertise required is what separates adventure tourism from traditional or mass tourism. In most cases, training, planning, and sensitivity to environmental issues are required for active participation in adventure tourism (Ewert & Jamieson, 2003). Mountain biking is uncertain and risky because a level of expertise is required and the activity is based around an outdoor physical challenge.

Mountain biking is a rapidly growing recreational and tourism activity (Moran, Tresidder, & McVittie, 2006; Newsome & Davies, 2009). Mountain biking falls under the wide spectrum of activities that make up adventure tourism (Ewert & Jamieson, 2003; Weber, 2001). However, the question of whether mountain bike tourism is a hard- or soft-adventure tourist activity remains. Hill (1995) explained hard adventure as being activities with high levels of risk and requiring advanced skills. Soft adventure refers to activities with a perceived risk, but low levels of actual risk and requiring only basic skills (Hill, 1995). Mountain bike tourism management decisions are made based on activity type and participant characteristics; therefore, a better understanding of where mountain bike tourism fits in the spectrum will assist managers in trail planning and development.

The activity of mountain biking has changed dramatically over the last ten years. Emerging riding styles and new bike technology have transformed the sport. Today, mountain biking spans the spectrum from soft- to hard-adventure tourism. Koepke (2005) noted that the

Travel Industry Association of America found that mountain biking was the third-highest-ranking "hard" adventure tourism activity. Hudson and Beedie (2006) also noted that mountain biking is a hard-adventure activity. On the other hand, Ewert and Jamieson (2003) classified mountain biking as a "soft-adventure activity." In the past, mountain biking was considered soft adventure because it requires less risk, demands a lower level of specialized skills, and places the participant in less challenging environments than hard-adventure activities such as mountaineering (Ewert & Jamieson, 2003).

Today, mountain biking is an activity that can move across the spectrum from soft- to hard-adventure. For example, mountain biking can be offered as a soft-adventure tourism experience when incorporated into part of a non-biking vacation (Finnegan, 1993). Adventure tourism companies offer guided rides that "maximize the exhilaration while minimizing the risk" (Finnegan, 1993, p. 30). Thus, mountain biking could fall under either hard- or soft-adventure tourism, depending on the level of risk and skill involved with the particular ride. Even guided mountain biking has an element of risk, because riders are personally in control of their bike. When participating in riding that demands a higher level of specialized skills and places the participant in challenging environments similar to other hard-adventure activities (Ewert & Jamieson, 2003), it may be classified as hard-adventure tourism. The activity has become more in line with hard-adventure tourism with improvements in mountain bike technology. There is now highly technical equipment requirements, high levels of skill involved, and a high level of dedication on the part of riders and mountain bike tourists.

2.5 Destination Attributes Defined

Destination attributes are the site characteristics important in vacation destination decisions (Weaver, 1994). These attributes include inherent features such as natural landscapes,

and constructed amenities such as bike trails (Freeman, 2011). Destination attributes are the pull factors that make up the attractiveness of a region (Chon, 1990; Devesa, Laguna, & Palacious, 2010), and are the factors by which the person is motivated to want to visit because of the destination attributes (Fluker & Turner, 2000). These factors can also be thought of as the socio-psychological motives that explain the desire to go on a vacation (Goossens, 2000). Potential travellers may have only limited knowledge about the attributes of a destination they have not visited. As such, perceived attributes will influence the destination selection process, regardless of whether they are accurate representations of that place (Um & Crompton, 1990).

Destination attribute terminology has not been used often in the context of adventure tourism. However, there are similar terms used to describe the features that attract tourists to a certain area. Setting characteristics refer to the participant preferences for the type of biophysical and social conditions that comprise the activity environment (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1994). These are the site or environmental attributes that pull people to individual locations (Taylor, 2010).

Destination image is an attribute important to destination selection. It may have a crucial role in travel purchase decision making (Chon, 1990). Mountain bikers may be image-orientated and seek out destinations based on its perceived image (MBTA, 2010). Moab, Utah, has a very positive perceived image and is well known in the mountain bike world as the mecca for mountain bike tourism (Koepke, 2005). As many as half of the mountain bikers living in the western United States have participated in mountain bike tourism in Moab (Green, 2003). The image of a destination in the mind of potential consumers in an important influence on people's purchasing behaviour (Taylor, 2010). Moab has a very iconic image in many rider's minds, even though it may in reality fail to provide a world-class experience (Koepke, 2005). It is likely that a decision maker may act upon their image of the destination as opposed to the reality of the

destination (Chon, 1990). This study aimed to looks beyond the image of a destination and investigated the attributes of a destination that tourists seek.

People choose a particular activity in a particular setting to achieve particular types of experiences that are preferred (Virden & Knopf, 1989). The more experienced the participant, the more developed their range of expectations and motivations (Ewert, 1994; Schreyer & Lime, 1994). Recreation specialization theory suggests that the attributes desired by specialists are different than those desired by novices (Oh & Ditton, 2006; Virden & Schreyer, 1988). In most adventure tourism, the more experienced the individual, the greater the preference for natural and remote settings (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1994; Virden & Knopf, 1989; Virden & Schreyer, 1988). This is because the greater the remoteness and naturalness of the setting, the greater the sense of adventure (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1994). However, this may not be the case for mountain bike tourism in particular. This study investigated the attribute preferences of mountain bike tourists with all experience levels.

After a review of the available literature regarding destination attributes, it became apparent that a new definition specific to mountain bike tourism is required. Destination attributes will be considered to be the natural and constructed characteristics of a specific location. Constructed characteristics are considered to be human-built features that result in a positive travel experience. This may include everything from bike trails to restaurants. It is also important to indicate what is not a destination attribute. They include the reputation of (Green, 2003) or distance to (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1994) the destination. Rather, destination attributes are the "on-the-ground" tangible features of a destination. Destination attributes may *create* destination reputation, but for purposes of this study, reputation was not considered to be an attribute.

2.6 How Destination Attributes Impact Mountain Biking

Even with the growth of the sport, relatively few researchers have focused on the riding or trip preferences of mountain bikers (Symmonds, Hammitt, & Quisenberry, 2000). Moran, Tresidder, and McVittie (2006) indicated that no studies have investigated the values that mountain bikers assign to trip attributes, such as trail difficulty, crowdedness, and vegetation. Some research has been completed on what bikers value in preferred riding locations, but not on tourist destinations (e.g., Bowker & English, 2002; Green, 2003; Taylor, 2010). This research highlighted that for the majority of recreational experiences, riders tend to ride near their place of residence, not necessarily at world-class mountain bike destination trail sites (Goeft & Alder, 2000). Even so, this research is applicable to tourism because the factors that influence decisions on where to ride also help riders to make destination decisions (Taylor, 2010).

There are other attributes that have been mentioned in previous literature. These attributes are less prevalent, but should be included in a list of possible destination attributes. These attributes are the following: lack of crowding, ease of access to the site, evening entertainment, climate, and atmosphere (Bowker & English, 2002; Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1994; Fix & Looms, 1998, Weaver, 1994). Adventure tourism research has demonstrated that as enthusiasts become more specialized, they desire smaller group sizes (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1994). Bowker and English's (2002) study found that 40% of the sample population felt that lack of congestion was the most important attribute. As another example, climatic variables may account for the popularity of Moab, Utah, because the desert conditions allow for an extended bike season (Fix & Looms, 1998). These attributes do have an effect on destination selection; however, they do not seem to be the most important destination attributes because they are only occasionally mentioned in previous studies.

Of the research that has been completed on what bikers value in preferred local or home riding locations, Taylor (2010) has done the most extensive research into location-based recreation, but not tourism-based site attributes; his research was conducted in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Taylor's (2010) study confirmed that quality of trails, variety of trails, and attractive scenery are some of the most important site characteristics for mountain bikers. Green's work (2003) also indicated that the most important attributes are variety and difficulty of terrain, the number of trails, and scenery. Bowker and English's (2002) study conducted in Tsali National Park, North Carolina, found scenery (nature), surface (trail quality), and signage to be the three most important trail attributes. These three studies examined attributes for different reasons. The only study that was tourism focused was Green's (2003) study of the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) members. These studies do indicate that trail variety, trail quality, and nature are important attributes for mountain bikers. There are no studies to date that have translated how preferences in the experience have an effect on destination choice.

Trails are a core component of the mountain bike tourism product (MBTA, 2010). There is a range of trail features that increase trail quality. However, since trail preferences depend on rider ability, it is problematic to generalize whether bikers enjoying specific features. Riders seek different experiences, ranging from an adrenaline-pumping experience to a peaceful ride (Goeft & Alder, 2000). Rider preferences change and become more specific with the level of experience (Symmonds, Hammitt, & Quisenberry, 2000). For many mountain bikers, as their experience increases, so do their desires for technical challenges, obstacles, speed, challenging down hills, jumps, curves, and single-track trails (Goeft & Alder, 2000). Perhaps the best indication of trail quality is its "flow"; a mountain bike–specific term. The concept of this term differs from

Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) concept of flow as being in an optimal psychological state. Taylor (2010) found that a "flowing single-track" was among the most desirable trail attributes. Flowing trails can be defined as tracks that enable riders to find a smooth rhythm (Taylor, 2010). Flow may also be described as trails that utilize the natural line, terrain, and features to manage a rider's speed by connecting one feature or movement to the next.

Previous research has indicated that there are a variety of features that create a high-quality trail. When these features are linked together, they can create flow. Trail quality also relates to difficulty, variation of course, and length (Cessford, 1995a). Leberman and Mason's (2000) research suggested that riders prefer narrow trails, which are commonly known as "single-track." Koepke (2005) supports this finding in her suggestion that an "endless single-track" is a key feature to destination success. Trail quality also includes obstacles and difficulties such as curves, jumps, and logs (Goeft & Alder, 2000). Symmonds, Hammitt, and Quisenberry (2000) suggested that bikers enjoy the challenge of bumps, jumps, and gullies. When constructed properly, these obstacles and challenges add to the flow of the trail and help increase the trail quality.

A wide variety of trails and diversity of opportunities for mountain bikers have been listed as important site attributes (Koepke, 2005; Taylor, 2010). Cessford's (1995b) research indicated that riders prefer opportunities for exploring new areas. This may be because as riders get more experienced and specialized, they seek out situations with smaller groups, which can be accomplished through riding in areas that are less busy (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1994). Goeft and Alder (2000) found that riders overwhelmingly desire longer trail networks. A wide range of trails allows for variety and new experiences in addition to giving riders a choice of trails to meet

their skill level and motivation. In the same way, riders desire longer trails to gain that added variety (Bowker & English, 2002).

Nature or naturalness has been shown to be an important attribute for mountain bikers. Ruff and Mellors' (1993) study found that the preferred locations for mountain bikers were forest and woodland. Cessford's (1995b) research indicated that an important aspect of biking is the "appreciation of scenery," and Taylor's (2010) study showed that attractive scenery was regarded as a positive core characteristic of desirable riding locations. Mountain bikers desire the sense of freedom that is accomplished by riding "surrounded by tremendous scenery and the natural environment" (Dodson, 1996, p. 317). Cessford's (1995b) research confirmed that mountain bikers prefer a nature-based setting. Leberman and Mason's (2000) research noted that riding among "native vegetation" or in forest settings may be important to riders.

Trail information, such as signage and maps, may be an important attribute for mountain bikers. A 1992 report by Sara Gerard and Associates from New Zealand suggested that destinations and trail associations should focus on increased on-site signage and identification of suitable routes for bikers. The importance for trail mapping and marking was supported by Ruff and Mellors' (1993) suggestion that a potential detracting feature of certain riding areas could be difficulty of navigation. Chavez, Winter, and Bass's (1993) study also indicated that riders desired a trail map showing distances at the trailhead. Goeft and Alder (2000) noted that signs at the trailhead should show a map of the trails, indicate length, and display a difficult rating. They also indicated that trail markers should be visible along the trail (Goeft & Alder, 2000). The mountain bike tourism industry would do well by having further research investigate how trail maps and well marked trails influence rider choices and experience.

Food and beverage services, bike shops, and other establishments may be an important destination attribute. Bowker and English's (2002) study indicated that food and beverage services are the second most important local area amenity. This may include coffee shops and pubs. Freeman (2011) suggested that supporting attributes such as bike shops help foster mountain bike culture and lifestyle desired by tourists.

2.7 How to Capitalize on Destination Attributes

Cycle tourism can be a vehicle for economic development (Lamont & Buultjens, 2010). Mountain bike tourists generally focus their vacations around mountain biking (Koepke, 2005). The economic value of mountain biking for destinations can be improved by focusing on and developing certain attributes when planning and developing mountain bike areas that affect the individual experience (Moran, Tresidder, & McVittie, 2006). Destinations such as the Yukon Territory can take advantage of their natural and constructed destination attributes to increase their tourism market share.

As riders get more experienced, their recreation specialization may also increase (Bryan, 1977). This specialization includes increased skill level, more dedicated equipment, and specific value orientation (Virden & Schreyer, 1988). Also, as the level of specialization increases, so does the frequency of participation (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1994). Specialized mountain bikers share similar beliefs, attitudes, and values about their sport (Virden & Schreyer, 1988). Destinations can capitalize on these highly specialized, dedicated tourists by understanding and developing in a way that meets their needs. By developing an understanding of specialized mountain bikers' beliefs, attitudes, and values, destinations may increase the number of visits by specialized mountain bikers who tend to travel and ride more often.

The Yukon is renowned for beautiful scenery, and the lack of development provides an "excess" of nature. Destinations such as the Yukon can capitalize on tourism dollars by developing its trails and by taking advantage of its natural amenities. The capital city, Whitehorse, is currently working on developing existing and new trail infrastructure. Since 2008, the city of Whitehorse has invested $1 million in trail improvements and signage (Stuart, 2012). Mountain bikers' spending patterns are based on the quality of riding experience at a given destination (Koepke, 2005). Currently, there are approximately 800 kilometres of trails in Whitehorse and the surrounding area (Stuart, 2012). Another destination, the Montana Mountain trail network, has undergone a large amount of development, the result of which is achieving the international recognition of an IMBA "Epic" designation (IMBA, 2011). Moran, Tresidder, and McVittie (2006) explained that destination attributes drive visit choice and selection of riding areas.

Destination attributes help to influence where mountain bikers want to ride (Taylor, 2010). Mountain bikers' destination choices are influenced by the reputation of destination, word-of-mouth recommendations, and information gained through mountain bike magazines (Green, 2003; Koepke, 2005), among other sources. By using the information about what site attributes are considered desirable, destinations can employ informed marketing campaigns to attract bikers (Taylor, 2010). If managers integrate information on the features and settings that bikers actually want experience, the mountain bike tourism industry will continue to grow in a sustainable manner (Goeft & Alder, 2000).

2.8 Summary

Mountain biking is a growth area in the adventure-tourism market, and it is an important component of the adventure-tourism industry, gaining popularity globally (Newsome & Davies,

2009; Outdoor Foundation, 2006). It is likely this popularity will continue to grow (Ewert & Jamieson, 2003), and research into key destination attributes will help destinations such as Canada's Yukon Territory better understand the mountain bike tourism market. The Yukon will then be able to develop in a manner that coincides with the desires of mountain bike tourists. A greater understanding of destination attributes will also allow for the creation of strategic marketing campaigns aimed at mountain bike tourists and development of an image and reputation that can capitalize on the sought-after attributes. Through the development of mountain bike–specific resources and strategic marketing, the industry can capitalize on natural and constructed destination attributes, and the Yukon can capture an increasing market share of the growing mountain bike tourism market.

Based on the broader research into mountain bike tourism, the future looks bright for the Yukon Territory. The Yukon is well suited to tourism; however, there may be some elements that detract from this advantageous position. The distance and travel costs may make it a difficult destination for some mountain bike tourists. In addition, the climate makes for a shorter mountain bike season, creating challenges for both users and entrepreneurs.

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The intended outcome of this project is to support the Yukon mountain bike industry and tourism community by developing an understanding of why mountain bikers choose to travel to certain destinations. The research design and rationale of this study are presented first, followed by a discussion of the researcher's objectivity and subjectivity. The theoretical approach to this project is then explained. The research participants and the research site are described, along with the data collection methods and rigour in research methods, followed by a description of the analysis techniques.

This project addresses the following research questions:

1. What draws people to travel to the Yukon for mountain biking?
2. How do mountain bikers value destination attributes?
3. How can attributes assist in destination planning and design decisions?

Many sources of information are available to researchers, and the method chosen to gather it is important. Qualitative research methods have been gaining increasing acceptance as valuable tools for gathering information on attitudes, beliefs, and sociocultural factors (Teufel-Shone & Williams, 2010). Qualitative approaches are particularly beneficial to this research project because the emphasis is placed on studying people in their natural settings, interpreting phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them, and gaining an insider's perspective (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). Qualitative methods also help to reveal the language and concepts that respondents use to discuss and conceptualize issues (Kaplowitz & Hoehn, 2001).

Qualitative studies have been questioned by some social science disciplines and labelled as a poor alternative to "real" and "rigorous" quantitative studies (Decrop, 2004; Phillimore &

Goodson, 2004). Because qualitative methods do not allow for statistical generalization and prediction, the approach has been regarded by some as exploratory and largely unscientific (Decrop, 2004). Babbie (2007) stated that both methods are useful and legitimate in social research. However, Phillimore and Goodson (2004) explained that qualitative research has become increasingly valued, and it may be richer than quantitative data because it can provide a more detailed description (Babbie, 2007).

This project used qualitative research methods to understand the motivations of mountain bike tourists, and the background information for the use of such are given in the following sections, along with the theoretical basis for the research. My personal position is also explained to help ground the research approach.

3.2 Research Design and Rationale

Qualitative research is a way to make sense of information that cannot be understood by quantitative research methods alone (Patton, 2002). Qualitative methods are used to help analyze, interpret, and understand human behaviour (Winchester & Rof, 2010), and this research approach seek to inductively and holistically understand human experience and constructed meanings in context-specific settings (Patton, 2002).

Winchester and Rof (2010) suggested that there are two fundamental questions considered by qualitative researchers; they address social structures and individual experiences. I am concerned with the latter. Throughout this study, I have attempted to embrace my position as a social researcher by inserting personal insights into my work (see Section 3.3 for additional information). My research used oral qualitative research, which is interview-based (Winchester & Rof, 2010). I used semistructured interviews as the specific method of collecting data (Winchester & Rof, 2010). The reason I focused on the oral method of interviews was to capture

the experience of individuals and their meanings (Winchester & Rof, 2010). My focus was to interpret what the participants were telling me and locate these participants within the situational constraints and context of the interview.

The chief strength of qualitative research is the depth of understanding it permits (Babbie, 2007). However, qualitative approaches offer a great deal of potential for deeper knowledge about the motivations of mountain bike tourists, much of which remains largely untapped (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). Qualitative research has been instrumental in developing a holistic perspective on the context and political dynamics of tourism in general (Belsky, 2004). Studies in this area can benefit from qualitative research because it can help to understand the human dimensions of tourism, including the desires of mountain bike tourists (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004).

This research project was guided by initial meetings with key informants in the Yukon mountain bike community. These contacts included the owners of Boréale Mountain Biking, the head of the Whitehorse trail crew, individual members of the trail crew, the executive of the local mountain bike club, and local riders. Community involvement is a tenet of ethical research (Madge, Pavati, & Skelton, 1997). This project took advantage of the active involvement of stakeholders to guide the focus and direction of the research. Kindon, Pain, and Kesby (2007) suggested that even if it is not possible to involve participants in every step of the research project, it is possible to make research more participatory by involving stakeholders and participants in parts of the whole process. In addition to being guided by stakeholder involvement, this research project concluded by conducting feedback sessions and formal meetings to assist with closure and ensure the return of information and dissemination of findings to the community (Kindon et al., 2007).

In addition to using semistructured interviews, this project also used participatory observation. Participant observation helps capture the experience of people—the way they think, feel, and act (Amaratunga, Baldry, Sarshar, & Newton, 2002). Participants were asked permission to allow the researcher to observe their mountain bike tourism experience. By riding along with mountain bike tourists, I was able to watch them experience different destination attributes, and understand what and why they enjoy specific features of this type of holiday. Participant-observation research leads to a deeper "human understanding" via the researcher being able to think, see, and feel like the participant (Tedlock, 1991, p. 70). It is the most truthful, reliable, complete, and simple way of getting information (Amaratunga et al., 2002). Participant observation, though, is rarely the only technique used by a researcher (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011), because this observation is most useful when triangulated with more than one source of data collection (Amaratunga et al., 2002).

The method of participant observation used was ride-alongs. I joined groups of mountain bike tourists for their regularly planned mountain bike ride. The rides lasted from three to six hours and took place around Whitehorse. The goal while on the ride-along was to stay out of the participants' way and allow them to enjoy their ride and fully immerse themselves in the experience. I generally tried to travel at the back of the pack, rode at whatever pace the group set, and worked hard to not initiate discussion about the research while on the ride. However, before any interaction with a group, I explained the project and invited any participants to opt out of the observation. This did not occur, but if it had, I would have not participated in the ride that day.

While on the ride, I engaged in friendly conversation with participants, and quite often they were keen to discuss the project while riding. In these cases, I would attempt to learn a little about the participant's background as a mountain bike tourist. If the situation allowed, I would

lead into a discussion about the features they enjoyed about their previous destinations. When possible, I would attempt to learn about the trail features the participants enjoyed most about the trails we were riding.

Due to the nature of mountain biking, trail-side conversations were usually truncated and cut off by breaks or because of certain sections of the trail made conversing difficult. For example, participants were not keen to talk while riding up steep hills. Participant observation was recorded in a notebook while on breaks and immediately after ride-alongs took place. Every effort was made to record notes in the least obtrusive way. In most cases, notes were made as soon as participants were out of sight, or when I had finished riding with them for the day. Even when conversations were not complete on the trail, they always led nicely into the interview questions. Informal discussions on the trail helped to make the interviews smoother and less formal.

In addition to trail-side discussions, one of the main observational focuses was to look for the sections of trail and trail features that the participants openly enjoyed. Particular attention was paid to the participants' expressions during and after riding different parts of the trail. Many times, participants openly admitted really enjoying something specific about a trail. In addition, participants often indicated a dislike for a feature or section of a trail. Care was taken to note the trail attributes that participants clearly demonstrated they either enjoyed or disliked.

Overall, the most important result from the ride-alongs was that it enhanced my ability to understand the interview responses. Every interview participant at some point of the interview attempted to explain a trail or feature, but was unsure of the name of the trail. In many cases, if I had not been on the ride with them, I would not have been able to decipher what they were

talking about. By experiencing the mountain biking with the participants, I was truly able to understand the destination attributes that they iterated as important to a destination.

Qualitative research allows for mountain bikers to openly and freely discuss their thoughts and provides a richness and detail of meanings (Taylor, 2010). However, there are some weaknesses of qualitative research. As mentioned, qualitative studies have been questioned by some social science disciplines and labelled as a poor alternative to quantitative studies (Philimore & Goodson, 2004; Decrop, 2004). Because qualitative methods do not allow for statistical generalization and prediction, the approach has been regarded by some as unscientific (Decrop, 2004). On the other hand, quantitative research can provide an excellent general overview. Much of the past mountain bike tourism research has been quantitative in nature (see Goeft & Alder, 2000; Green, 2003; Moran, Tresidder, & McVittie 2006; Newsome & Davies, 2009). This study purposely used qualitative methods to dig deeper into the way mountain bike tourists think, feel, and act.

Qualitative research methods were used to understand a larger reality in the context of the trends and patterns occurring in mountain bike tourism in the Yukon. I used the specific method of semistructured interviews (see Section 3.6 for details). I conducted interviews on site at Boréale Biking (see Section 3.5) with the clients of the mountain bike–themed eco-lodge and with other mountain bike tourists in Whitehorse. Participant observation in the form of ride alongs were also conducted with mountain bike tourists in Whitehorse. Carrying out interviews on site and attending ride-alongs allowed for greater insight into motivations and interests that people may be unwilling to talk about or that would have been missed otherwise (Taylor, 2010). In addition, it allowed for an understanding of the context for the research (Patton, 2002). The

reason that I focused on the oral method of interviews is to capture the experiences of individuals and their meanings (Winchester and Rof, 2010).

3.3 Objectivity and Subjectivity

Any researcher's method is informed by who they are as a researcher and where they come from, which helps them understand their position. My position as a researcher is situated within a tension between distanced investigation and close understanding from within. Geertz (1988) suggested that the researcher's position depends on the emotional and intellectual baggage that the researcher takes into the research. I have tried to be transparent and explain where my motivations lie, so the reader can know and understand the meanings I attach to my research findings. In this case, it is important to note that I am an avid mountain biker and want to do research that will benefit the mountain biking industry. As a mountain bike tourist myself, I would like the see the industry and mountain bike destinations grow in a sustainable manner that also supports local businesses and allows local riders to enjoy their trails.

I have tried to be critical of the industry in the hopes of stimulating further development and research but acknowledge that my field, like most, is not free from politics, values, and choices (Madge, Pavati, & Skelton, 1997). I am using personal pronouns in the text to highlight the partial nature of the research (Madge et al., 1997). My research is only part of a larger picture. The participants are not the whole mountain bike tourism industry; rather, they are individuals in a small subset of a larger population.

It is important to note that I have considered the objectivity of my research, even if my findings are in opposition to my goal of improving the mountain bike–tourism industry. England (1994) suggested that the researcher's positionality and biography directly affect their fieldwork. Dowling (2010) suggests that "subjectivity involves the insertion of personal opinions and

characteristics into research practice" (p. 31). England (1994) also indicated that the researcher cannot "conveniently tuck away the personal behind the professional, because fieldwork is personal" (p. 85). I have worked towards embracing my position and background and not hiding behind what Behar (1996) calls a "cloak of academic objectivity" (p. 11).

Dowling (2010) recommended that critical reflexivity is the best strategy for dealing with issues of subjectivity. She further suggested that a researcher can never be entirely independent from the object of research, but being aware of the nature of your involvement and influence will help to identify the implications of subjectivity in research (Dowling, 2010). By acknowledging that I am not independent from my research and that my involvement in the process affects the objectivity, I can begin to explain my position and on the sufficiency of my interpretation. England (1994) also adds that self-conscious analytical scrutiny of yourself as a researcher will allow you to be open to any challenges that present themselves. See Section 3.7 for additional detail regarding reflexive research.

England (1994) and Behar (1996) recommended that participants should be treated like people and not mines of information to be exploited. With that said, it is important to be aware of and understand the power dynamics involved, and respond to them in a critically reflexive manner (Dowling, 2010). Behar (1996) suggested that observers need to develop methods to reduce anxiety and function efficiently. Dowling (2010) suggested that it is impossible to achieve full objectivity due to the social nature of the research. In addition, I have worked to be balanced in my approach to the data due to my personal involvement of spending so much time with the participants of the study (Dowling, 2010).

Anthropologists also struggle with issues of objectivity and the partiality of the observer, and distance are important issues for the researcher to be conscious of (Abu-Lughod, 1991). I

faced a potential conflict with studying my own society or culture; in this case, the mountain bike culture. The alleged issue is whether I gained enough distance from my own culture, as if had I not gained enough distance, I would only be able to present a partial picture (Abu-Lughod, 1991). I worked to create this theoretical distance by creating physical distance with participants. I joined riders for ride-alongs, but I did not stay around during mealtimes or during after-dinner social gatherings. Another complicating factor is related to my perceived partiality. The misconception is that this relates to bias due to my position as an observer. As a researcher, I am outside of the "studied"; however, I realized that even though I am an outsider, I will never totally stand outside (Abu-Lughod, 1991).

Objectivity includes questions of motivations. As a result, I was always conscious to explain the financial support for my fieldwork, because the institutional mechanisms that define areas often define the areas that are available for research (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). As a result of the fact that my funding is based on climate change, I am aware of the choices I make, both personally and through my research. Please see the Acknowledgements section for additional information regarding funding.

I also had to be aware of the effects of this funding motive on my research field. I needed to constantly remind myself and others that a good field site is made not only by considerations of funding and clearance but also by its suitability for addressing issues that matter to the discipline (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). The Yukon was in fact a great field site for addressing issues in mountain bike tourism (see Section 3.5 for additional information on the field site).

3.4 Theoretical Approach

Qualitative researchers do not need to commit to one single epistemology, and the practical side of qualitative methods simply involves asking open-ended questions (Patton, 2002;

Taylor, 2010). This approach is supported by the theoretical framework of critical realism. Critical realism implies that human agency is embedded in an organic social context, and reality is conceptualized into actual events through causal explanation (Downward & Mearman, 2004). It is concerned with the production of knowledge from what exists and works to describe and explain human action (Frauley & Pearce, 2007). Critical realists interpret participant meanings and work toward explaining them (Iosifides, 2011). Critical realism allows for the investigation of the interrelatedness of human activities and the natural world (Frauley & Pearce, 2007). Thus, a critical realist approach allows for the context-laden meaning of concepts from participants and relationships to be established between categories, and causal narratives constructed (Downward & Mearman, 2004).

Critical realism is based in the ontological stance that reality exists, but can never be completely understood (Hollinshead, 2004). Epistemologically, critical realism values participative inquiry that reflects the values of human players (Hollinshead, 2004). A cycle of discovery can be used to develop an explanation of the phenomenon of interest, because the data are not the end point of the process but rather the starting point of a "scientific adventure" (Wuisman, 2005, p. 378).

This study used the framework of critical realism by interpreting the meanings and representations of tourists in order to understand their motives, intentions, aspirations and expectations (Iosifides, 2011). Social scientific research based on critical realist principles uses induction and deduction as basic elements of research (Wuisman, 2005). Critical realism assisted with understanding the organic social context of working with mountain bikers in the Yukon.

3.5 Research Site

The majority of the research was conducted on site at Boréale Mountain Biking, a mountain biking tour company. However, some of the research interviews included independent mountain bike tourists.

3.5.1 Location

The Yukon Territory is located in the Northwest of Canada (see Figure 3.1). The political structure of the mountain bike industry in the Yukon is very different from other bike destinations. World-renowned destinations such as Frutia, Colorado, and Moab, Utah, have so many tourists that locals are forced off the beaten track (Koepke, 2005). Moab in particular is arguably the most popular mountain bike destination in North America (Fix & Loomis, 1998). In these areas tourists are treated with a love-hate relationship. Locals love and rely on the income, but hate tourism as it detracts from their personal mountain biking (Green, 2003). However, the Whitehorse area has an abundance of trails and a dearth of riders. In turn, the community is excited about mountain bike tourism and embraces the industry and my research.

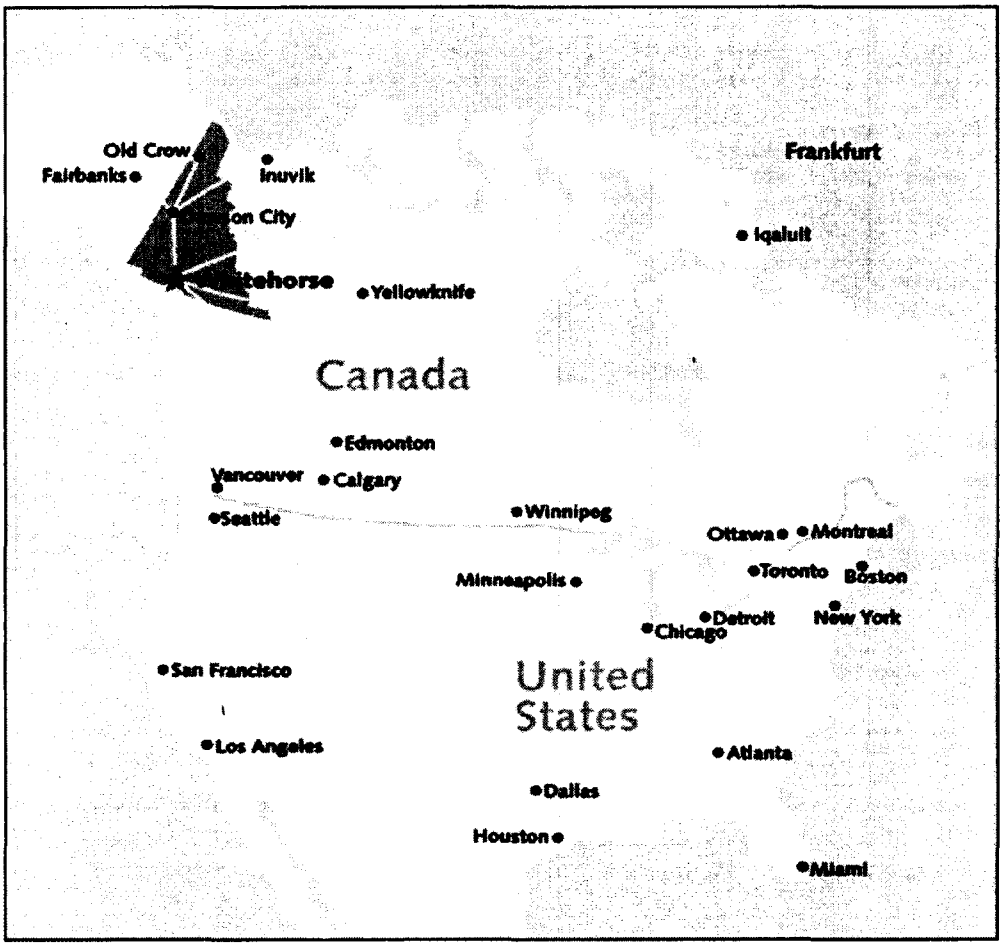

Figure 3.1 Map of Whitehorse flight routes.
(Source: http://travelyukon.com/maps)

3.5.2 Boréale Mountain Biking

The mountain bike industry is still in the growth phase in the Yukon. Currently, Boréale Biking is the most well-known and established mountain bike tourism business in Yukon. In fact, any form of Internet search for "Yukon biking" gives Boréale as the first "hit." All tourism services in the Yukon refer mountain bike tourists to Boréale, and Boréale's owners are a part of every committee, advertising campaign, and tourism development initiative in the Yukon. Through their international advertising efforts and position in the Yukon industry, Boréale

attracts the vast majority of the mountain bike tourists in the Yukon (Yukon Tourism Association, personal communication, May, 2011).

A typical stay at Boréale is three to five days. Clients are picked up at the airport in Whitehorse by Boréale staff and taken directly to "Yurtville" (yurt/tent accommodations). The Boréale compound offers full-service amenities for the clients; everything from meals to bike repairs is taken care of. The head guide generally decides where the group is going to ride for the day. Most rides are a full-day event, with lunch served on the trail. Daily ride times last approximately 3–5 hours, depending on the group speed and rider fitness levels, and travel between 20 to 30 kilometres. Trails are selected based on the riding ability of the group along with their desired style of riding.

There are three main riding areas used by Boréale. The Grey mountain trail network is accessed directly from Yurtville, with trails that connect to the compound. The Mt. McIntyre trail network is a short 15-minute drive across town, and the Montana Mountain trail network is a 45-minute drive from the Boréale compound. During most three-day stays, Boréale clients will ride one area each day.

After riding, clients return to Yurtville for a snack and are given time to clean up before dinner. The evening is spent socializing, eating, and sharing a casual drink with other guests. All meals are served in a communal yurt, and usually last several hours. After dinner and a few drinks, guest usually return to their private yurts between 9:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m., exhausted from a day of mountain biking.

3.5.3 Additional Research Locations

I had also hoped to interview free and independent travellers who were travelling and mountain biking in the Yukon. However, during my 42 days of field research in the Yukon, I met

only one other group of mountain bike tourists who were not associated with Boréale. Signs that I posted on several trailheads throughout Whitehorse soliciting potential interview participants did not generate any responses, either.

I was able to meet with the independent group of mountain bike tourists that I met on the trail. However, they were doing a quick weekend trip from Anchorage, AK, and had driven 14 hours each way to ride in the Yukon for two days. One member of the group agreed to take time out of his short trip to participate in a formal interview.

I was able to meet potential interview participants through the 24 Hours of Light mountain bike race in Whitehorse. However, most racers were exhausted after the endurance race and chose not to be interviewed. One biker from Skagway, AK, agreed to be interviewed; we actually met on the trail during the race. (I have to admit, he actually passed me, but I caught up with him and our discussion led to a formal interview session after the race.)

3.6 Demographic Information

The study participants were mountain bike tourists visiting Whitehorse. According to Clawson and Knetch (1966), the participants would have been in the "onsite phase" of their trip. They completed the "anticipation phase" (where they start thinking about and planning their trip) and the "travel phase" (during which they are getting to the destination) (Clawson & Knetch, 1966). This study focused on their decisions during the anticipation phase and how those decisions played out during their trip. Information gathered from the interviews were used to better understand how the choices and preferences from the anticipation phase linked to trip satisfaction during the trip.

Collecting demographic data was not the purpose of this study. However, demographics help to provide some context to the information the participants shared as well as to the results of

the study. Table 3.1 is a summary of the demographics of the participants of the study. Since the age of the participants was not a question asked in the interview process, the ages are in some cases approximate. In many cases participants volunteered their age, in those instances actual ages are included. In the same way, riding ability level was not an interview question. The riding level of participants was judged by the interviewer, during participant observation during ride alongs. Riding ability was measured based on overall riding speed, and their perceived comfort level on a variety of terrain. The fitness level was based on apparent aerobic capacity. This is only included in cases where riders demonstrated extremely high levels of fitness, above and beyond their overall riding level. The fitness level was based on ability to hold a conversation while riding. In general people that are able to maintain conversation during exercise have a greater aerobic capacity than those who cannot (Tjonna et al., 2008). In addition, the riders desire to ride longer or further than the rest of group was an indicator of high fitness levels.

Table 3.1. Demographic Information of Participants

Participant Pseudonym	**Home Location**	**Gender**	**Age**	**Riding Level**
Andy	Hamilton, ON	M	46	Intermediate, high fitness
Robin	Hamilton, ON	F	38	Low intermediate
Shawn	Skagway, AK	M	30	Advanced
Sara	Calgary, AB	F	40	Intermediate, high fitness
Sterling	Calgary, AB	M	40	Advanced, high fitness
Mason	Anchorage, AK	M	35	Advanced, high fitness
Derek	Penticton, BC	M	55	Intermediate
Ken	Vancouver, BC	M	25	Low intermediate

Participant Pseudonym	Home Location	Gender	Age	Riding Level
Jennifer	Victoria, BC	F	62	Beginner
Sandy	Ottawa, ON	M	40	Advanced
Scott	Vancouver, BC	M	45	High-level advanced
Sasha	Vancouver, BC	F	40	Intermediate
Holly	Israel	F	60	Low intermediate
Yannick	Israel	M	60	Intermediate
Stuart	Boulder, CO	M	40	Advanced, high fitness
Chris	Boulder, CO	M	40	Advanced
Drew	Calgary, AB	M	50	Intermediate

3.7 Data Collection

Careful research design is important to creating rigour in qualitative research (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). In-depth, semistructured interviews were conducted on site at Boréale Biking with the clients of this mountain bike–themed eco-lodge. To be able to fully engage with the clients, I participated in daily activities with them. I also conducted interviews with independent mountain bike tourists that I met while on the trails or at mountain bike events in Whitehorse. Because the overall number of mountain bike tourists in the Yukon is so small, potential study participants were drawn from independent mountain bike travellers and bikers attending mountain bike–related events; for example, the 24 Hours of Light race in Whitehorse. While riding on the trail, I met potential participants and asked them if they would participate in the study. Signs were also posted at trailheads seeking participation, but this did not yield any participants.

To ensure rigour, a purposive criterion sampling method was used in this study to ensure the selection of information-rich cases. Criterion sampling involves picking cases that meet some

criterion (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). The type of sampling used is best described as the opposite of snowball sampling, where a sampling population is created from a series of referrals that are made within a group, and the participants have a linkage with other people in the same population (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). In comparison, using criterion sampling participants were selected based on a set of rules established before the study.

The first criterion for purposive sampling was that the interviewees were unfamiliar to the researcher and did not have academic or professional experience in the field of mountain biking or tourism. The second criterion was that the mountain bikers interviewed were tourists. To gain a perspective of tourist choices and decision making it was important to interview only tourists. Tourists are defined as "persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes" (World Tourism Organization, 1994). Within the Canadian context, this definition was broken down further to define "outside their usual environment" as crossing administrative boundaries (Rogers, 2001). A tourist can be defined as someone who spends a night away from home (Collins, 2008). In using this definition of tourist, length of stay needs clarification. For the purpose of this study, a tourist was defined as a person who has travelled to the Yukon Territory for a period of stay of at least one night. Participants were also required to have not lived in the Yukon in the last five years (because mountain biking has only become popular within that period). Interviewees were located through several research sites (for additional information, see Section 3.5).

The third and final criterion was that there was representation from both male and female mountain bikers. This was difficult due to low female participation in the sport of mountain biking as a whole. However, more than 10% of the participants in this study were

female. Interviewing both male and female participants was important because the majority of demographic studies of mountain bikers were conducted prior to 2002, and Taylor (2010) suggested that the number of female riders has increased dramatically over the last five years. The criteria set out for this study were used to increase validity and ensure that responses pertain to personal feelings, meanings, and motivations (Taylor, 2010).

There are no established rules for determining sampling size (Patton, 2002; Taylor, 2010). Bradshaw and Stratford (2005) suggested that it is preferable to conduct in-depth interviews with a small number of the "right" people to provide more significant insights. As such, I conducted interviews until the findings were saturated and further interviews would not appear to provide any new findings (Miller & Salkind, 2002). Previous qualitative studies on mountain bikers' motivations have shown that saturation can be obtained after fifteen or sixteen interviews, for example (Taylor, 2010).

I completed in-depth, semistructured interviews with the participants. Semistructured interviews involve several predetermined questions and topics (Berg, 1998). Semistructured interviews leave room for the participants to stray from the question to important areas that would have otherwise been unexplored (Taylor, 2010). The questions were asked in a systematic and consistent order, but the participants were encouraged to digress, and probing questions were used to keep the interview flowing (Berg, 1998). Semistructured interviews allow for flexibility and can provide meaningful responses (Taylor, 2010). Please see Appendix A for a copy of the interview questions.

The interviews were recorded by a audio digital recorder, provided the participants agreed. In addition, interview notes were recorded into a notebook during the interview. The notes are not a full transcript of the interview; rather, they consist of interesting comments made

by the participants and my thoughts during the interview. Written notes can help record non-audible occurrences, such as body language and gestures (Dunn, 2005).

The observations of participants were recorded in a notebook while in the field and immediately after ride-alongs took place. DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) explained that recording observation in field notes and including perspective to the information collected is critical to assist with the analysis of information gained from more formal techniques, such as interviews. The field notes collected added context to the information collected through interviews and provided a greater understanding of participants' comments collected through the interviews. I was able to "hang out" and converse, while consciously observing and then recording what I observed (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Every effort was made to record notes in the least obtrusive way. Sometimes records were made on the spot, but many times notes were recorded later, after I had left the social situation (Spradley, 1980).

After the interviews and participant observations, the participants were given pseudonyms to disguise their identities and maintain confidentiality (Dunn, 2005). Confidentiality is the attempt to remove elements that might indicate the identities of participants (Berg, 1998). The tapes were labeled with pseudonyms and interview numbers and locked in the storage facilities of my supervisor at the University of Northern B.C. (Dunn, 2005). They will not be destroyed, but kept on file to be used for future research, if required.

3.8 Rigour

The relative dearth of research into mountain bike tourism may create a general misconception among quantitative researchers that the research I undertook lacked rigour and trustworthiness. As a result, extra effort was made to demonstrate the rigour of my work. To curb the misconceptions about qualitative-based tourism research, it was apparent that "the goal is not

to produce a standardized set of results" (Bailey, White, & Pain, 1999a, p. 170). Rather, my goal was to produce a coherent and illuminating interpretation of the motivations of mountain bike tourists (Bailey, White, & Pain, 1999a; Ward-Schofield, 1993). To reach this goal, my study needed to be conducted in a rigorous manner. Rigour can be defined as the satisfaction of the criteria of reliability and objectivity (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Rigour is also meant to include responsibility, honesty, self-reflection, and believability (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Another definition of rigour is "trustworthiness" (Baxter & Eyles, 1997, p. 506).

Additional techniques beyond multiple data collection and analysis methods were used (see Sections 3.6 and 3.8) to ensure a rigorous study. The first and arguably most important strategy was continued reflexivity. This allowed for deliberation of what I am doing, how I am interpreting and how I am relating to research participants (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). To ensure rigour I was concerned with the understanding and analysis of meanings in specific contexts and included information on respondent selection and the presentation of verbatim quotations (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). The report is "punctuated with rich and vivid participant quotes to illustrate the depth of their feelings on this emotive subject" (Taylor, 2010, p. ii). My thesis includes the use of information and quotes produced during the research process (Kindon et al., 2007).

Throughout the process, I incorporated checking procedures. These include having the research participants check my text, to enhance credibility (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2005). I transcribed the interviews shortly after they took place. After completing an analysis of the data and identifying themes, I determined which quotes I was going to use in my report, and provided a draft of these quotations to the research participants for their comments on the accuracy of their respective contributions (Madge, Pavati, & Skelton, 1997). The draft was emailed to participants for approval (email addresses were collected at the beginning of each interview). This allowed

the participants to check and approve what was to be included, eliminating the extra time it would have taken to review the full transcript. Bailey, White, and Pain (1999b, p. 182) agreed that "member checking" is a cornerstone of qualitative methods, allowing for constant comparison and helping to explain cases.

To participate in daily activities with the participants and also conduct my research using them, I had to engage in critical reflexivity (Dowling, 2010; England, 1994). I also had to involve myself in a process of self-scrutiny as a researcher and of the whole research process in which I was participating (Dowling, 2010).

3.9 Data Analysis

To address the issue of evaluating the design and findings of my research, I established a set of criteria to ensure meaningful inference, and I was concerned with the understanding and analysis of meanings in specific contexts (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). My analysis was characterized by identifying patterns in the responses from the mountain bike tourists (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). I transcribed the information from the interview sessions after each was completed, either from the audio recordings or the notes made during the interviews that were not recorded. Not all transcriptions verbatim—in some cases, interviews were not recorded due to participants' request; in other cases, irrelevant information was not transcribed to allow for clarity (for example, some participants were distracted by their surroundings during parts of the interview. Observations made about participant comments, trail discussions, and participant moods were recorded and included with the transcripts to add context to the interviews.

After transcription, the data were organized and analyzed according to emerging themes and categories relevant to the aims of the study (Boston et al., 1997). To organize the data, several readings of the transcripts were completed in order to identify important codes. Coding is

a way to evaluate, organize, and make sense of data (Cope, 2010). Open coding, where the researcher suggests what the codes will be, was used to classify and create categories for the data (Babbie, 2007). The data were then analyzed and coded to reduce the information into key categories, thus allowing major themes to emerge (Elliot & Gillie, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Taylor, 2010). Recurrent words and ideas were selected as codes. If different words or phases were used to describe the same concept, the sections were coded under the same heading. I used content analysis coding to identify important terms and phrases (Cope, 2010). In content analysis, researchers examine transcriptions of interviews and make interpretations by identifying special characteristics (Berg, 1998).

The identification and understanding of the recurring themes allowed me to analyze participants' experiences (Taylor, 2010). I coded both manifest and latent messages to help in this identification. Manifest content analysis is the assessment of visible content of the text such as messages that are blatant and obvious (Cope, 2010); manifest elements are physically present and countable (Berg, 1998). Latent content analysis is the assessment of implicit themes within a text, such as beliefs (Cope, 2010), and is done through an interpretative reading of the symbolism underlying the physical data (Berg, 1998). To help with deciphering latent symbolic meanings, I incorporated excerpts from relevant statements when I documented my interpretation.

The actual coding process was accomplished using open coding and coding frames. The purpose of open coding is to open up the inquiry and hold off on making early conclusions until all analysis is complete (Berg, 1998). I followed guidelines set out by Strauss (1987) and Berg (1998):

1. Ask the data-specific and consistent questions.

2. Analyse the data exhaustively.

3. Stop frequently to make notes.

4. Never assume analytic relevance of any variable.

After open coding was completed, coding frames were used to organize the data and identify findings through patterns (Berg, 1998). Using coding frames is a multileveled process that requires several successive sorting rounds (Berg, 1998). After the data are organized, the patterns can be interpreted from both the organization and the details offered by the interview question responses (Berg, 1998).

Content analysis was completed by hand. I accomplished this by printing several copies of the transcribed interviews and identified different themes by highlighting sections using different colours. Highlighting can be used to test sub-themes and to indicate quotations that illustrate the meaning of sub-themes (Taylor, 2010). Coding helped me create an organizational structure that aided in analyzing the information gleaned from interviews (Cope, 2010), and the results are presented in Section 4. The findings are separated into themes that consistently appeared in the interview information. These themes are illustrated by using quotes from the interviewees.

3.10 Summary

Within the theoretical framework of a critical realist approach, the qualitative method of semistructured interviews was used in this research project to develop an understanding of the desires and motivations of mountain bike tourists travelling to the Yukon Territory. Critical reflexivity was determined to be the best strategy for dealing with issues of subjectivity.

The research site was Boréale Biking, located in Whitehorse, Yukon. The participants were all on a mountain bike vacation in Whitehorse. Many were clients of Boréale Biking, but

some participants were on independent holidays also. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 62, and 71% of the study participants were male.

Using the methods presented in this chapter for my research, I will be able to advance the understanding of the influence of site characteristics in destination selection for mountain bike tourists. Other studies have investigated the desires of mountain bike tourists (e.g., Bowker & English, 2002; Green, 2003) but none have used qualitative methods to understand what destination attributes motivate mountain bikers to select a specific destination. Through semistructured interviews and investigative participation in the tourism product alongside mountain bike tourists, a greater understanding of the ambitions of mountain bikers on vacation will be gained.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

The preferences of the mountain bike tourists who participated in the research study varied greatly. Participants ranged from "dirtbag" free and independent travellers (see Appendix C for definitions) who were camping or sleeping in their car to make the trip as cheap as possible, to those that had flown thousands of kilometres and desired niceties like steak and champagne on the trail. All participants were asked about their motivations and feelings with respect to mountain bike tourism. The purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations of mountain bike tourists—in particular, the attributes they value in a destination—with the hopes of gaining a better understanding about their travel-planning decisions.

4.2 Results of In-Depth Interviews

This section provides a review of the data collected in the study. In general, the following themes emerged: place attachment, scenic appeal, trail quality, flow, trail variety, crowding, trail information, local services, climate, reputation, importance of destination photos, guided tourism, uniqueness, and domestic destination. Each of these themes represents a concept that the participants paid particular attention to during the interview process and during the ride-alongs.

4.2.1 Place Attachment

All participants interviewed had been involved in mountain bike tourism before their trip to the Yukon. Twelve of the 17 participants had travelled to Moab, Utah, for the purpose of mountain biking. Even though all participants were active mountain bike tourists, most riders discussed how they really enjoyed riding at their home locations. They highlighted the attachment to "their trails" in their own backyard. Riders enjoyed their home recreation site, as Jennifer noted: "[My] favourite place to ride is right where I live, probably because I'm used to

it." It should be noted that the majority of participants live in places that are well known for high-quality mountain bike trails. However, participants indicated that the enjoyment they expressed about riding their home trails is due to the confidence riders have when riding familiar trails. The participants may be more confident riding trails they have been on before, because there is a relationship between confidence and mountain bike ability; participants most likely ride better on their home trails. The confidence felt when riding known trails also enables riders to improve their riding. During guided rides while on their vacation, I noticed that participants rode more tentatively when they did not know the trail, or were unable to see upcoming trail features. The most advanced trail I rode with the participants was Goat trail on Montana Mountain (see Appendix F). This trail has many technical features and sections that are difficult to navigate. This was the only time during the participant observation period that participants walked sections of the trail first, before riding the difficult sections on their bikes. They wanted to experience the trail, know and understand it, before challenging it—much like a white-water paddler scouts rapids before paddling them. The confidence gained by prior experience helped them feel comfortable when riding the tricky parts of the trail. Derek described his home trails as a good place to build a skill set and develop skills. From the participants, that feeling of comfort about riding trails at home seemed to allow riders to push their limits beyond what they would normally do on a new trail. The knowledge and understanding of the trail led riders to a mental place where they were confident enough to move beyond their comfort range and challenge their abilities. However, there is tension between place attachment, which relates to riding trails you know as a rider, and the novelty that is inherent in being a tourist and going to new, unknown places and trails. This tension allows riders to develop skills on their home trails, but also leads

riders to leave their comfortable home trails to explore new areas, which they may choose based on specific characteristics.

4.2.2 Scenic Appeal

The term scenery had different meanings for different participants. However, they all indicated that the overall concept of scenery is very important to rider satisfaction about a destination. Derek explained that "scenery is important; otherwise, I can just stay in my own backyard to ride." Participants indicated that scenic appeal makes for a great riding experience. They highlighted the importance of scenic views of mountains, cities and lakes (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2), and suggested that scenic views help them put their life into perspective within the bigger picture. The participants also indicated the importance of scenic nature, including forests, trees, and flowers. The concept of scenery discussed by interviewees was divided into two thematic categories: views and nature. Views being when trails take riders out of the forest, and allow them a view of the larger surroundings. Figure 4.2 is an example of a view point along the trail that participants highlighted as a desirable attribute in a ride. Nature being the natural things that riders see while in the forest, on the trail.

Figure 4.1 Scenic appeal on the Yukon River Trail.
(Photo courtesy: A. Campbell

Figure 4.2 Scenic appeal on Katimatrail, Mt. McIntyre.
(Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

In North America, the majority of mountain biking takes place on trails surrounded by trees. While participants indicated that they enjoy riding in forest settings, many suggested that views are important to enhancing their riding experience. Participants discussed that scenery is not just trees; they desired to see for miles in front of and behind them while riding. Many of the interviewees explained that they are attracted to mountains. Mountainous regions allow riders to experience scenic views such as mountains, which riders identified as being spectacular to look at. Also, the increase in elevation allowed by mountains permits access to viewpoints with unobstructed views.

Most riders emphasized the appeal of alpine riding above the treeline. Sara and Sterling stated that of all riding places around the world, their favourite mountain bike ride is Mountain Hero in Carcross, Yukon Territory (see Appendix F); they enjoy this ride so much because of the views provided by being in the alpine setting. Because it usually requires mountain bikers to endure several hours of uphill climbing to access trails that have scenic viewpoints, riders see the scenic view as a reward for hard work; they get a sense of accomplishment from scenic views. Scott and Sasha revealed that they look for a "wow factor" in terms of scenery. Scott suggested that the view from the top of Montana Mountain is an example of scenery with a wow factor (see Figure 4.3 and Appendix F).

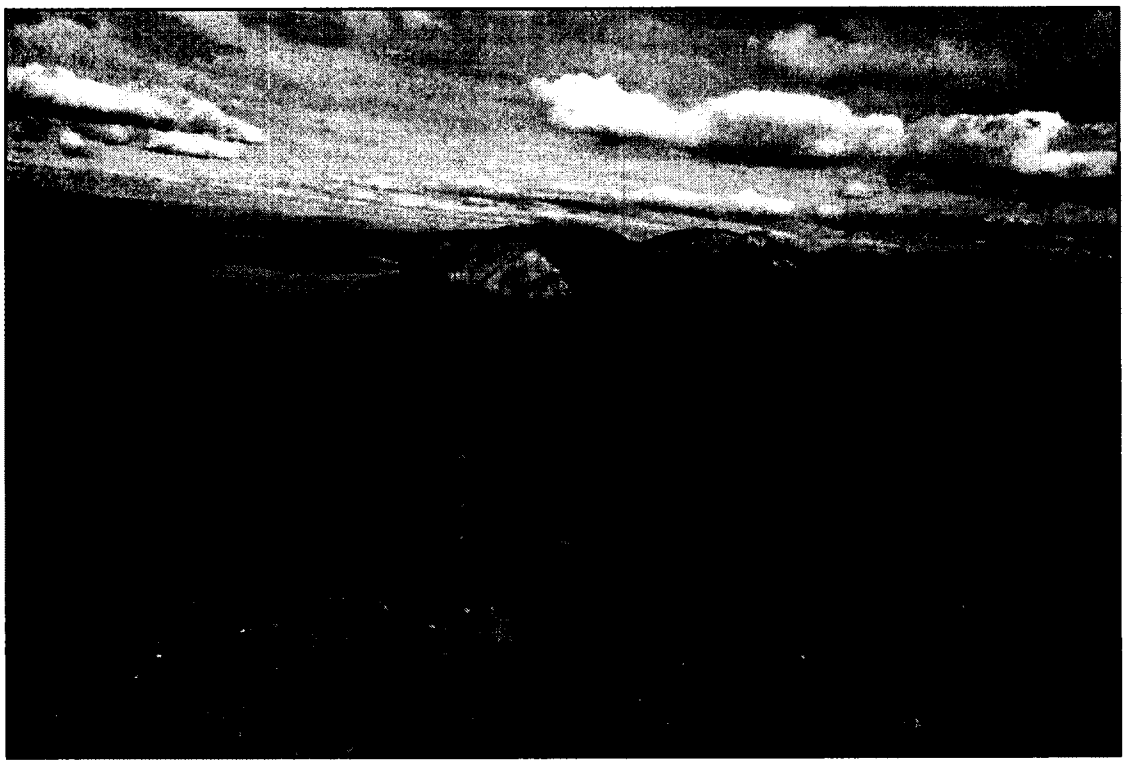

Figure 4.3 The view from the top of Montana Mountain.
(Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

Riders value views of a variety of different features in addition to mountain/alpine ones. Participants stressed that a good scenic view can even be a view of the city. Participants explained that elevated viewpoints allow them to get a sense that they are small in comparison to their surroundings, and helps them put their lives and their place in nature into perspective. Sandy talked about not being able to stop looking at the view while riding down Goat trail on Mt. McIntyre (see Appendix E), as there is a scenic view of Whitehorse.

Figure 4.4 View of Whitehorse from Hospital Ridge Trail.
(Photo courtesy: A. Campbell)

Another vista that many participants discussed as an important part of scenery as a destination attribute was lakes. Participants suggested that the scenic appeal of a lake improved if the lake had the characteristics of appearing pristine with bluish green water. In the Yukon case study, the Yukon River (see Figure 4.1) was also mentioned as an example of beautiful scenery. On the trail, mountain bike tourists revealed the importance of scenery to their experience. Riders expressed awe at the views of several lakes while on the trails. Figure 4.5 is an example of lake scenery that participants expressed enjoyment of.

Figure 4.5 View of Chadburn Lake from Juicy Trail.
(Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

Many participants also discussed a desire for a sense of remoteness. Sandy indicated that one of his favourite characteristics about riding in the Yukon was the feeling of remoteness. It seems that riders prefer perceived remoteness as opposed to actual remoteness. The Grey Mountain trail network (Figures 4.1, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.11, and 4.13) is only minutes away from downtown Whitehorse, but gives riders the feeling that they are removed from civilization because the views are pristine and unobstructed, yet the riders still feel safe knowing they are only a short distance away from the city and the services it provides. The participants indicated that perceived remoteness was a positive by-product of scenery. They pointed out that this sense of remoteness could be accomplished by scenic views, or through forest settings. Inherently, most mountain bike trails are in a forest setting, which riders indicated that they enjoy.

Participants also explained that they desire to see nature as it was meant to be. While on trails, riders in this study were looking for scenery they considered to be pretty, which included forests, trees, nature, and wildflowers. Some tourists mentioned that they enjoy seeing wildlife on trails, and like forests and wooded areas because it increases their chance of seeing wildlife. Participants explained that they enjoy viewing wildlife such as caribou and grizzly bears.

All participants highlighted the importance of scenic appeal as a destination attribute. Even the free and independent travellers and dirtbag (see Appendix C) riders placed a high value on scenery. Some riders even went as far as suggesting that scenery is one of the primary motivating factors for participation in the sport. As an example, Sandy indicated that he got into biking to be able to spend more time in the wilderness, among nature, and in the mountains. However, riders require quality trails as a vehicle to get them to the scenery they desire.

4.2.3 Trail Quality

All of the interviewees indicated the importance of high-quality trails as a destination attribute. There are many factors participants suggested are important to trail quality. However, the most common response to the open-ended questions about trail quality was smooth, flowy single-track. Trail surface and trail width were important trail qualities as well for participants. Riders also said they like trails that are natural feeling with a sense of remoteness or solitude. In addition, participants expressed desire for fast trails with long descents. Also highlighted by the interviewees was that trail difficulty is important to the overall trail quality. Technical trail features (TTFs) were expressed as a valuable factor to increase trail quality. Figures 4.6 and 4.7 are examples of a TTF called a "skinny" that allows riders to challenge their skills by riding down a narrow ramp with a possible consequence of falling two to three feet. This particular feature provides less-experienced or less-confident riders an easier route to the rider's right.

Figure 4.6 Technical trail feature on Goat Trail.
(Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

More experienced riders with more trail knowledge talked about looking for consistency throughout the trail. Riders like Scott and Sasha suggested that trails have discrete sections, like chapters of a book, which create variety yet make sense within the trail. They felt like they could get to know the trail, which allowed them to trust its attributes, and created an enjoyable, unified experience.

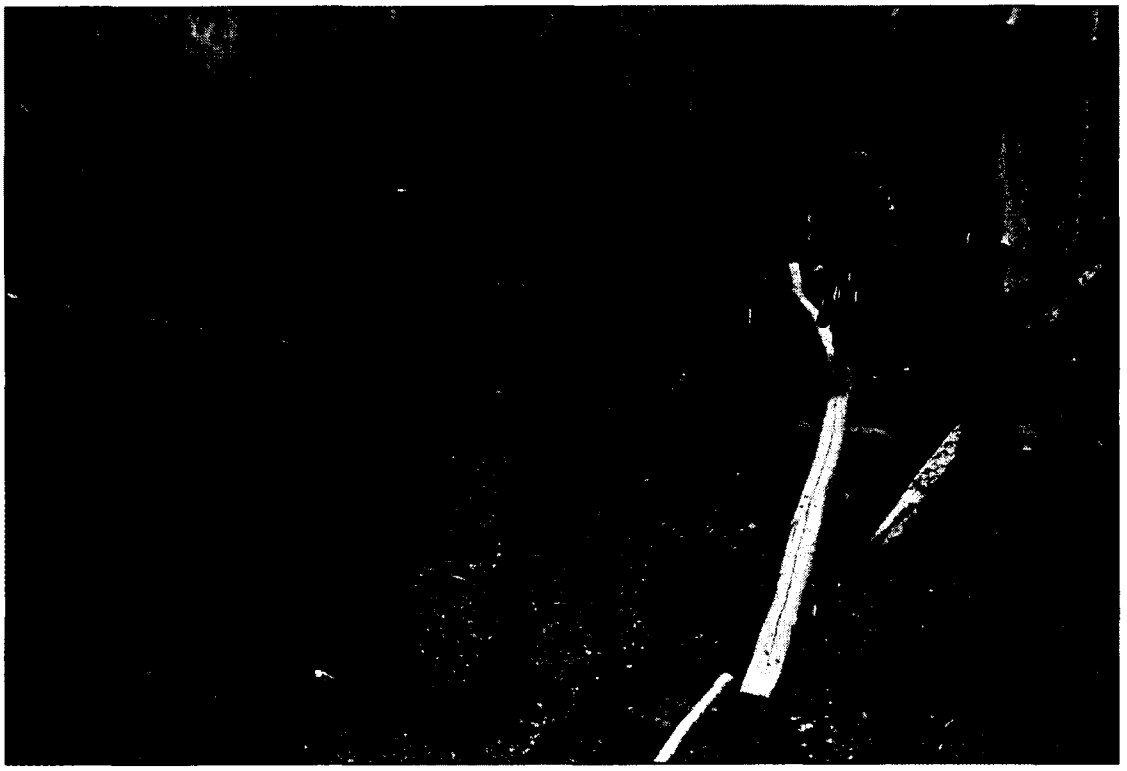

Figure 4.7 "Skinny" TTF on Bugaloo Trail, Grey Mountain.
(Photo courtesy: A. Campbell)

The most discussed trail quality was the trail surface. The predominant feeling was that the trail surface should be smooth. Scott described the ideal trail surface as a "ribbon of gold dirt." Riders emphasized that they are looking for a trail surface that is consistent and allows for rhythm. However, the surface does not necessary have to be dirt. Riders discussed enjoying occasionally riding on a smooth, grippy rock surface, such as the "slickrock" of Moab.

Related to the smoothness of the surface, riders discussed the surface type. Almost all of the interviewees stated that they do not like riding on trails that have a sandy surface. Several participants told stories that concluded riding on sand is not fun. Most riders suggested that they do not enjoy a rough rock surface either. In particular, riders dislike loose rocks, called "baby heads" (see Figure 4.8, Appendix C). All participants expressed their distaste of small boulders

approximately 10–20 cm in diameter (baby heads) and loose rocks on the trail. When discussing riding on a particularly loose and rocky section of Mountain Hero, Chris explained "I don't like this stuff." Participants were most vocal about this feature of trail surface. They expressed that the worst possible trail surface is lose rocks, especially the size of baby heads. The concept of trail surface was take further to suggest that loose and steep trail surfaces, travelling either up or down, were seen as a bad combination. Riders did not enjoy this surface because uphill sections were virtually un-rideable due to the lack of traction, and downhill sections were dangerous because of difficulty steering at high speeds.

Figure 4.8 Loose rocks on Mountain Hero Trail.
(Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

Of the interviewees, the more advanced riders enjoyed occasionally riding on rocky surfaces. Chris explained that this is because mountain bikers consider that aggressive rock surfaces make a trail more technically difficult. However, several of the study participants that fell into the intermediate-rider category felt that rocks simply increased risk of injury. The vast majority of participants also despised a "rooty" trail surface. There was one participant who mentioned that he had some friends who enjoyed tree roots on the trail, as they felt roots increased the difficultly of the trail. However, all participants interviewed did not like rooty trails. In most cases, trails are covered in roots due to overuse or poor trail construction. Several participants expressed that they do not like rooty trails that are "ridden out" by overuse. Sara explained she dislikes trails that were either poorly constructed or overused; she enjoys riding on trails that are "not gutted out by overuse." Participants explained that too many roots ruin the flow of the trail. Mason went further to suggest that roots made his wrists tired and sore. Trails with a surface that has many roots on it make for a very bumpy ride and make it difficult for riders to maintain speed. The combination results in mountain bikers having to work much harder, as opposed to smooth trails that allow riders to carry their speed and ride smoothly.

A related feature to trail surface is the actual width of the trail. All interviewees emphasized the importance of tight single-track trails (see Appendix C for definitions). Others called it narrow single-track. In both cases, riders are referring the width of the trail surface. Scott, who is an experienced trail builder suggested that "it doesn't matter how good double-track is, single-track is better." When asked about an actual width of the track, riders suggested that about 63 cm was the preferred width. Riders did talk about disliking trees along a narrow trail though. They specified that a narrow surface is preferential, but a trail tight with trees makes it difficult to ride through due to the width of the rider's handlebars (see Figure 4.9). Riders

found that this was an obstacle to the flow of the trail, because they had to slow down dramatically to squeeze though narrower parts of the trail. In many cases, the trail is narrower than the rider's handlebars and riders must turn through the tight sections to fit through. This can also be damaging to the environment, as the trees can be affected by handlebars continuously hitting or rubbing against the bark, as is illustrated in Figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9 Tight trees on Mt. McIntyre.
(Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

Trail construction that best takes advantage of elevation was viewed by participants as important to trail quality. Shawn suggested that "quality means cruisey trails that don't require a lot of effort since the elevation is maintained throughout." Many participants discussed the importance of a good grade of climbs and descents. All riders said they do not mind climbing up hills, but only of a short length. In addition, they explained that they do not enjoy uphill sections

that are too steep, as they would have to walk and/or carry up their bike. In addition, riders explained that they do not like when climbs are unexpected. They discussed disliking coming around a corner while descending and being surprised by an uphill section. More experienced riders mentioned that switchbacks are preferential as they limit the visual continuity of a climb. Because riders cannot see to the top of the hill when on a switchback, they feel the climb is easier and more enjoyable. Several participants suggested that climbs should have switchbacks to make the ascent easier. Switchbacks serve to decrease the steepness of an ascent and regulate the grade of trail by increasing the overall length of the trail. Others went further to mention that banked turns (see Figure 4.10, Appendix C) make uphills more enjoyable and climbs easier. An example of this is a trail in Whitehorse called 24 Hours of Light Singletrack. Mason highlighted that "it's shocking, because it doesn't even feel like you're climbing." Riders suggested that they enjoy banked turns while riding uphill, because they felt like they were climbing but not grinding uphill as the turns allowed riders to maintain speed around corners. Banked corners allowed for riders to complete a turn while moving at a decent pace. Regardless of the type of climbs, participants did feel a sense of accomplishment when they completed an uphill section.

Figure 4.10 Banked corner on 24 Hours of Light Singletrack trail. (Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

All respondents said they enjoy long descents; a few explained that they enjoy trails that have defined up and down sections. Participants said they expect a reward for the hard work of climbing uphill. They pointed out that a good descent feels better when it is earned by the hard work of an uphill climb. Many riders expressed that the downhill sections of a trail are the best and most memorable parts of a ride. Almost all participants stated that they enjoyed going fast downhill. They enjoyed a trail when downhill sections were very fast and flowy. The riders expressed enjoyment of the downhill section and the banked turns, but did not enjoy the sections that were very rooty.

Participants of all levels of riding discussed the topic of trail difficulty. Consensus was that the majority of trails should be enjoyable for a range of riding levels. Less experienced riders said that they do not like trails with exposure (see Figure 4.11) because falls in that area

come with a high consequence. In particular, riders did not enjoy sections of the Yukon River Trail because it drops off into the Yukon River. In some cases, the trail is only centimetres from the edge and could result in fall of several metres. The participants preferred trails that are challenging but not too dangerous or risky.

Figure 4.11 Exposure on the Yukon River Trail.
(Photo courtesy: A. Campbell)

Interviewees specified that they enjoy trails that are not so technically challenging that they have to walk or carry their bike over challenging sections. These challenges could be rocks or rock drops, trees that make trails narrow, a grade that is too steep (either up or down), and a loose surface or surface type. Interviewees indicated that they enjoy intermediate-style trails. At Carcross (see Appendix F), riders enjoyed the blue trail called Nares View as it had some

technical features, but none were overly technical. Only a few riders enjoyed the advanced-level trail called Goat. Most found it to be too difficult in sections. Figure 4.12 is an example of advanced trail features on Goat Trail. These features carry high consequences for mistakes—one error can result in falling off the side of the feature and risking an injury.

Figure 4.12 Advanced trail features on Goat Trail.
(Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

Only the very high-level riders expressed that they enjoyed difficult sections; intermediate riders expressed satisfaction when they were able to ride the more technical parts of a trail. Sara explained that she was proud of the fact that "I didn't get off my bike once." Rider satisfaction is important when providing tourists with positive experiences while on vacation.

More advanced riders stated that they enjoy easier trails at the start of the trip to get warmed up. The more knowledgeable riders indicated that well-built trails can be fun for both beginner and advanced riders. This is because more advanced riders ride faster, thus making the trails more technical and challenging for them. Participants again highlighted their preference for single-track trails that are fast and not overly technical. Even riders that considered themselves to be advanced, high-end riders stated that they enjoy intermediate-level trails.

Many participants indicated that TTFs add to trail quality, making the trail more technical but allowing for riders' choice as to how difficult they want the ride to be. Riders felt that there should be features or obstacles mixed into the trail. However, Scott, who is an experienced trail builder, recommended that "features should fit with the trail so they do not disrupt the nature of the trail." Participants discussed that features can include smooth berms or banked turns to keep speed, and little jumps or rock drops that make a trail a lot of fun. Riders enjoyed lower Wolverine trail on Montana Mountain because they liked the technical trail features such as big berms and small table-top jumps.

The participants felt that quality trails should be purpose-built for mountain biking and that the trails should be maintained specifically for biking. They indicated that they look for trails that maximize the use of land, terrain, and features. To do this, participants said that trail builders should spend a lot of time on planning and trail construction, with an attention to detail on sustainability and drainage. Riders felt that once constructed, the trails need to be maintained on a regular basis.

4.2.4 Flow

One of the most common words used in mountain biking is "flow." However, the concept is hard to define. An attempt was made in Section 2.6 to work towards a definition. Participants

were asked about their thoughts about flow, because many of them used the term in their answers to various interview questions. There was a wide range of responses, but the main concepts related to flow were symmetry, speed, and rhythm. To mountain bikers, symmetry means that the trail sections work well together so riders do not have to make drastic adjustments during the ride. For example, if there was very sharp turn on a downhill section of a trail, riders would have to apply the brakes heavily and lose all the momentum they had gained. This would impede the riders' ability to ride smoothly, so they would lose flow. The trail attributes that participants thought would help them achieve flow were the following: turns banked to maintain speed, trails planned with consideration of flow, trails that do not have too much braking or accelerating, no surprises on the trail, and trails with an ability to ride throughout without getting off of the bike. Sterling explained a flowy trail as "nice single-track that is not overly technical; it's fast."

From the participants, the two definitions of flow that stood out were:

Flow: "the natural control of speed"—Sandy

Flow: "continuity of the experience, same character throughout, consistent and well-thought-out trail"—Scott

Figure 4.13 Banked corner creating flow, Grey Mountain.
(Photo courtesy: A. Campbell)

4.2.5 Trail Variety

Trail quantity was discussed in depth with the interview participants. Participants all mentioned that variety is important in a mountain bike holiday. The most prevalent and important point participants raised is that they do not want to ride the same trail twice while on a holiday. Riders indicated that trail length is not a deciding factor in destination selection; rather, they highlighted that destination variety in terms of unique recreational areas is an important destination attribute. By this, they were looking at the bigger picture, so to speak—not just different trails, but rather different riding areas.

Participants also discussed the importance of a variety of levels of trails. They stated that a destination must have trails with a range of difficulty. This is important because riders

expressed a desire to want to challenge themselves while on a vacation, and to be able to ride more difficult trails and terrain to push their personal limits as they get more confident over their holiday.

Trail distances did not seem to be a determining factor for participants. Most riders stated that they normally ride 25–30 km per day during a holiday. A few riders indicated that they seek out destinations that have a high volume of trails. However, the majority of respondents said they are more concerned about riding a different trail each day while on a holiday.

Some participants talked about the fact that variety is more than just the vast number of trails. They desired a vacation where on each day riding, the trails give you a different experience. While riding at Mt. McIntyre Recreation Area, Sandy expressed that the trail variety offered in Whitehorse is amazing. This is because there are three different mountain bike areas where, to the riders, the terrain of each feels totally different. The participants discussed enjoying riding in unique areas with variety in terms of alpine rides, single-track trails, and forest settings. However, some participants suggested that trail quantity is difficult to appreciate until you are on the ground. Scott explained that "[trail quantity] makes a huge difference to the experience of the trip but doesn't go in at the planning level." In a trail-side discussion about some new trails being built in the alpine area close to Whitehorse, Sandy explained that "new trails are another reason to come back." In this way, trail variety links to uniqueness because participants seek things they have not done before.

The majority of participants indicated that trail quantity is important when trip planning, but only to the extent that they would not have to ride the same trail every day. Participants did discuss the desire to travel to a destination that has a good network of trails; they expressed a strong need to have a different trail for each day and a wide enough trail selection for a multiday

trip. Riders said that the trails do not necessarily have to be in a different area with different terrain, just different trails. They explained that on a short vacation, variety is not as much of an issue, but as vacations get longer, more trails must exist to fill this need for variety. It was not explicitly stated by any participants, but the overall feeling was that trips longer than three days require more than just different trails, they need a level of uniqueness to differentiate the trails. Most of Boréale's tour packages include three days of riding; all of the participants were on trips (either guided or not) that were three days or less of riding. To help alleviate this concern, several participants highlighted that it would be nice if different styles of rides were available to them. Stuart indicated a great four-day trip would begin with a big descent/big climb riding day, then a fast and flowy day, followed by a day with some technical riding, finishing off with an easy day.

4.2.6 Crowding

Crowding was not viewed to be as important to participants as the other destination attributes. Some participants suggested that meeting other riders on the trail is not an issue if the other riders are courteous. Many of the riders, though, felt more strongly about the crowding issue when stating that they disliked meeting "angry locals" on the trail. Many participants found crowding to be annoying, and the more well-travelled riders expressed a desire to avoid more crowded and well-known locations such as Moab, UT. Sara discussed her desire to "get away from craziness and busy-ness." Derek also desired to stay away from crowded riding (for example, the "Whistler experience") because the trails are too busy. Jennifer preferred to be in a place "not covered in tourists." The less experienced riders felt pressure from faster riders at crowded destinations. They highlighted that they did not enjoy bumping into people all the time, and preferred not having people riding behind them. More experienced riders felt that crowding

interfered with their riding experience as well. Chris indicated that he "do[es] not want to go somewhere where I run into someone every five minutes." Advanced riders suggested that crowding can slow you down and kill the flow of the ride. In the end, participants agreed that the concept of crowding depends on expectations. If you expect a remote area, the standard of crowding is different versus a place like Moab. In the Yukon, because most participants encountered very few if not any other riders, their expectations were different. Scott stated that it was "cool seeing other riders; [it] validates the area." Participants suggested that when on a nonguided ride, seeing other riders can help confirm that you are on the right trail.

4.2.7 Trail Information

Trail information was seen to be important by mountain bike tourists. Derek echoed the thoughts of many participants by indicating the importance of making the most out of their holidays. Derek indicated that "life is fast; you have small windows of opportunity, so don't muck around." The more information tourists have about the trails, the better decisions they can make, and the better their experiences will be.

Participants highlighted that maps and signs are important to make a mountain bike holiday enjoyable. Once riders are on the ground, trail information is required for planning purposes. Riders expressed the need to be able to plan what type of day they will be having. Because riders are outdoors and exposed while riding, they expressed a desire to know what to expect in order to plan and pack appropriately. If riders were travelling with more than one bike, they also wanted to ensure they selected the correct bike for the type of trail. Also, riders want to know where they are going when they get to the trailhead; they do not want to be guessing where to go throughout the day. It seemed that participants want to experience the desired trail attributes, whether it be trail type, distance, scenery, or length of ride, all of which may be

gleaned from a trail map. For the same reasons, they also indicated that maps are important in the planning stage of their trip. Through understanding the rides they might go on while on a holiday, they can plan, pack, and prepare appropriately.

Maps and signage are important to mountain bike tourists as it can be easy to get lost as a newcomer to an area. Jennifer mentioned that "when you're a newcomer to a place, it's really nice if there is signage and maps." Most stated that one of the first things they do at a new destination is to buy a guide book or map, and talk to people at local bike shops.

Participants expressed that they want to maximize their time on holiday; as such, they do not want to get lost and waste time. Thus, in addition to trail maps, mountain bike tourists like good trail signage, including some type of rating system to inform the riders of trail difficultly. Figure 4.14 is an example of a map at the trailhead on Grey Mountain, Whitehorse. Once on the trail, riders preferred that trails do not have many intersections, and if there are intersections, they requested them to be well marked. Riders also mentioned that they liked being able to access GPS tracks of the trails, or at least have really good signage on the ground. They felt strongly about the need to know they are on the right track. Many stated that if they do not know where they are, it takes away from the experience. As such, maps and good signage on the trail make people more comfortable.

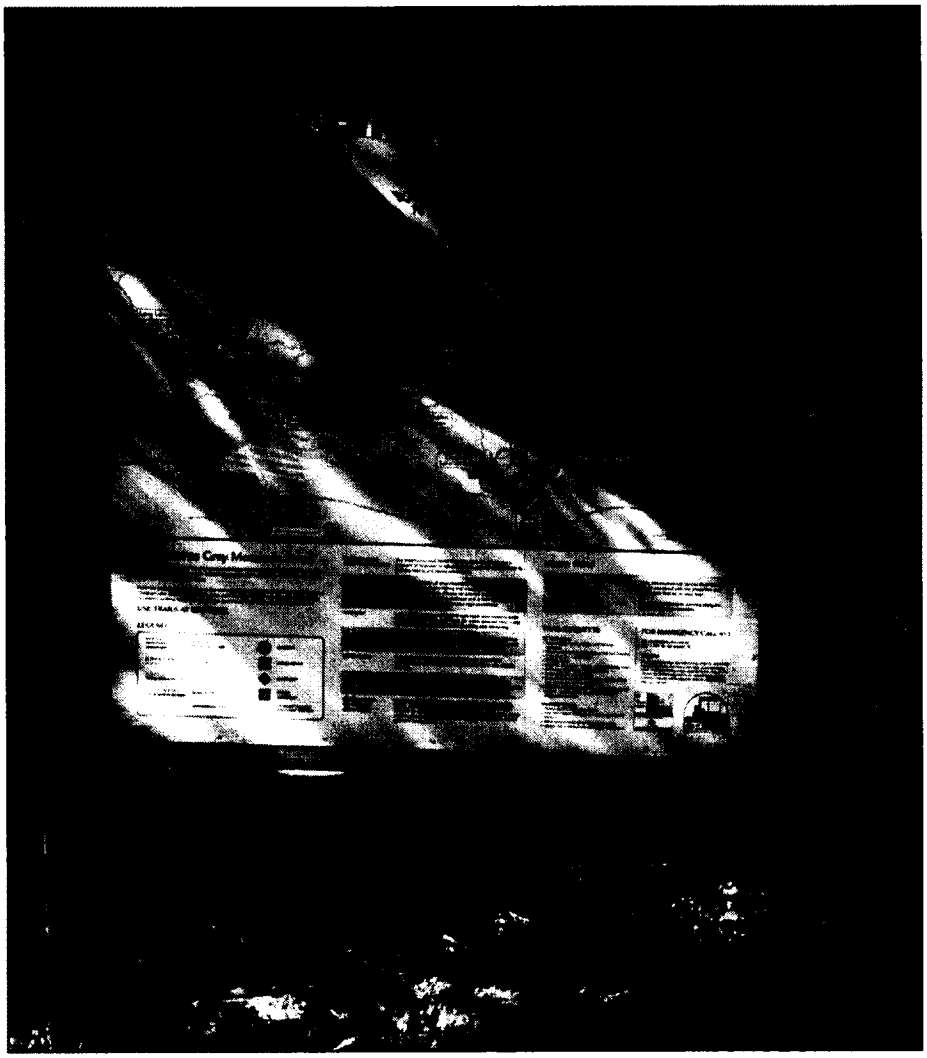

Figure 4.14 Trailhead map, Grey Mountain.
(Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

Maps are really important when choosing a destination. Participants suggested that it does not matter if they get lost on a local ride at their home area because they are happy to explore locally. Because riders desire to make the most of their time at a destination, they do not want to "waste time" learning the trails while on a vacation. Not all mountain bike tourists interviewed said they needed the map for a destination before planning a trip; most indicated that they at least want to know a map exists before travelling to a destination. Some participants stated that they do not necessarily need to see the map or have it in their hands, they just need to

know they can have access to one in the planning stage of the trip. Riders discussed that they would go to a destination on either the recommendation of friend, or go with map knowledge. Participants suggested that the most useful information in planning is an elevation profile if available, as this allows riders to know exactly what type of ride it is. Mountain biking as sport is becoming more technically advanced with the use of smartphones and GPS units that have increased capabilities to map routes and trails, and more websites that disseminate this information for mountain bike tourists. Riders increasingly prefer more information about the trails they are going to ride. For riders who desire to understand how difficult and physically demanding a ride will be, distance and trail difficulty information is no longer enough—elevation profiles are the next level in trail information (see Appendix G for an example).

Section 4.2.1 discussed attachment to a place. In this section, it was suggested that knowledge of trails allowed riders to bike with more confidence and put them into a mental space where they were able to push their limits. Trail information can have the same effect. Because tourists usually do not have the time to ride a trail several times during their vacation to develop trail knowledge and understanding, they need to go into a ride with as much information as possible, and there are several sources of trail information that can lead to increased rider enjoyment. The Mountain Hero trail (Appendices F and G) was an excellent example of how informed trail knowledge improves a ride. The route includes a three- to four-hour ascent that is very physically demanding, with poor trail conditions, loose rocks, and wide trail width (see Section 4.2.2). This section of the trail was very frustrating for participants, especially those that were uninformed about the trail's distance. The riders that had ridden the trail before knew what to expect before they started, so they were not frustrated by the long ascent. However, those riding the trail for the first time did not know what to expect, so they were not able to fully

understand how difficult the ride was going to be. It was noted that when the guide was able to provide participants with trail knowledge that put the ride into perspective, the riders' moods changed; they appeared to be having a more enjoyable experience. The more informed the riders were about the trail, the more confidence and comfort they had, and the better they rode, thus making their overall experience more enjoyable.

4.2.8 Local Services

The availability of local services is important to mountain bike tourists. Participants indicated that they look for a cycle infrastructure in a destination. Sara explained that "a cycle infrastructure makes a destination more attractive." This cycle infrastructure includes food and beverage services, hotels, bike shops, and places to find trail information. Participants stated that these features of a destination are nice to have, but they were not motivating factors of destination selection. They suggested that having local services can improve a tourist's trip, but they are not factors that attract them to a specific destination.

Most participants discussed the importance of local bike shops. They felt that bike shops were a good place to go for local riding information and conditions. Participants felt that this local knowledge was very important to the success of a trip, but not necessarily to destination selection.

The previous section highlighted that trail information is an important factor in trip satisfaction; the best trail knowledge has current and updated information. Drew expressed interest in current and trustworthy trail information. To get this information, he "talk[s] to the locals to get the real deal." Most participants indicated that their main source of trail information is the Internet is (Section 4.2.10). Inherently, the Internet is sometimes anonymous and information can be hard to verify, so participants were not always convinced of the validity of

sources. Talking to a real person who rides a mountain bike is viewed as being a much more legitimate source of trail information, even though the opinions presented (e.g., by shop staff) can be subjective. Riders talked about buying this local knowledge through the purchase of small items from bike shops in exchange for information.

Participants indicated that they would like good local restaurants to be available while on their holiday. Robin discussed usually being "starving after a ride." Many participants made the link between alcohol and riding. There seemed to be a reward system in place where riders felt they deserved a beer at the end of a ride. Most participants indicated that pubs were a local service they desired for enjoying a beer. Several riders went as far as to indicate that having access to a microbrewery would be a huge asset for a destination.

Accommodation preferences varied widely across the participants. The riders preferred everything from camping to five star hotels. Services provided by hotels, such as a bike wash were only mentioned by one participant.

The overwhelming feeling of the participants in this study was that they needed to know what is available in terms of local services. Participants suggested that their trips were improved by the availability of local services, and that local services offer participants a security net. A lack of services at a destination was not a determining factor when choosing where to travel; however, riders felt that they needed to know what is available before they go in order to plan the way they pack. For example, participants indicated that good bike shops are useful for repairs, and many riders stated that the quality and presence of local bike shops determines how many parts and tools they would bring with them on a trip.

4.2.9 Climate

Many participants stated that type of climate is important as a destination attribute. In particular, Moab's climate was discussed by many participants. They indicated that they travel to Moab every spring to kick off their riding season. Sasha travels to Moab yearly, because it "jump-starts our riding season." Participants discussed that they travelled to Moab because the weather there is good during the shoulder season of March and April; they explained that their home locations did not offer good riding conditions during this time. For many participants, travelling to a destination with a warm climate allows them to escape the winter cold and rain.

Participants also talked about the importance of destination weather during the summer months. The explanations differed depending on where the riders were from, but several mentioned that the weather should not be too hot. In fact, several talked about travelling to cooler locations during the summer to escape the heat at home. Overall, riders desired warm and dry weather conditions while on a trip. As discussed previously, tourists usually have a short window to travel and want to make the most out of their trip. Mountain biking is not an activity that works particularly well in wet conditions. Some areas and trails around the world can provide enjoyable wet-weather riding; however, most destinations have trails that are most enjoyable under dry conditions. While it is ideal to ride in warm, dry conditions, riders may still be happy to ride in less than ideal conditions if the rest of the trip package is right. In many cases, tourists may prefer to ride in destinations like the Yukon outside of the main summer season provided that other aspects of the trip compensated for less-than-perfect riding conditions.

4.2.10 Reputation

"Reputation is important since destinations get good reputations for a reason."

—Shawn

It has been highlighted throughout this report that participants indicated they do not have time for a trip that is not enjoyable. Many stated that they want to maximize their vacation time and maximize the enjoyment of the trip. As such, they want to travel to a destination that will provide for an enjoyable trip that has the attributes discussed in this report; particularly, scenic appeal and quality trails with some variety. Participants believed that getting a recommendation from other mountain bikers about a destination will help them have a pleasurable trip. The majority of participants believed in the value of testimonials; they overwhelmingly said that they want to hear real stories from real people. Shawn indicated that "word of mouth is important because it gives you an idea about what the area will be like, and [it] gets you stoked." The participants put a high importance on word of mouth, or testimonials from people with past experience. Jennifer suggested that "if lots of people like to go there, I'm probably going to like it, too." As a less experienced rider, Jennifer takes cues from the most experienced mountain bike population. She trusts other mountain bike tourists to enlighten her about destination travel.

Many participants said that the Internet is their main source of destination information. Before planning a trip, most riders check out websites such as MTBR.com (Mountain Bike Review) and NSMB.com (North Shore Mountain Biking) for information (see Appendix C), because they feel this is a way to access a large group of like-minded people. However, when the participants read destination reviews they are cautious to check out where the writers are from. Participants also stated they talk to local entrepreneurs and local riders to get a feel for the experience at the destination. Others indicated that reviews from pro riders are also a good proxy for a recommendation.

Participants look for information that highlights specific destination attributes that directly relate to an enjoyable mountain bike destination. In particular, they seek out information

about scenic appeal, trail quality, and trail variety. Mason's group of friends drove a total of 28 hours for a two-day ride in Whitehorse based on the reputation of Whitehorse's 700 km of single-track mountain bike trails. In the eyes of the participants, the more credible the source of the information is, the more willing they are to go to great lengths to travel to a specific destination.

4.2.11 Importance of Destination Photographs

The majority of participants indicated that having visual information about a destination visuals is very important in the trip-planning stage. Photos are important because of the value of scenic appeal for the interviewees. Participants indicated that they looked for pictures of scenery and surroundings of potential destinations. Andy and Robin indicated that they place less emphasis on photos about trails and more about the general visual appeal of the destination. Riders were looking for a "wow factor" when seeking out photos of a destination. In many instances, the imagery can illustrate the destination uniqueness (see Section 4.2.13) that participants yearned for.

Because destination uniqueness was such a pervasive theme that emerged from the interviews, images can help make a unique characteristic of a destination real for tourists. Derek and Ken suggested that pictures can close the deal on destination choice. When tourists are looking for a holiday they can "write home about," as Andy and Robin suggested, images may be a strong selling point for a destination.

4.2.12 Guided Tourism

Many of the study participants indicated they do not normally participate in guided mountain bike trips; most had never been on a guided trip. Of the many mountain bike trips participants had been on, most were almost always independent tourism. Of those participants

that were on a guided trip at the time they were interviewed, all enjoyed the guided experience. They discussed enjoying the safety, trail knowledge, and local knowledge provided by the tour guide or company. There was feeling that guided tours are a safe way to guarantee that you are riding the best trails in the region. Scott participated in guided tourism to ride "the stuff locals are proud of, and to avoid failed rides." The idea of not wanting to get lost and wasting time finding trails links back to the idea of tourists desiring to make the most out of a trip. In particular, participants felt that guided tours are good for remote areas that not well documented.

All interviewees that had experienced a guided tour indicated they would participate in guided mountain bike tourism again, and participants agreed that Boréale Mountain Biking sets a high standard for other companies to meet. Some set the caveat that companies must be run by bikers. Some of the interviewees had participated in guided tourism run by large tourism companies that did not understand the needs and desires of mountain bike tourists. Thus, they appreciated the finer details that Boréale provided on their trips. Some riders cautioned that it is important to have riders all be at the same level of ability when on a tour. Beginner riders like Jennifer and Holly felt pressured when on a tour with more advanced riders. While guides did a good job in keeping the group together during a ride, riders at both ends of the spectrum preferred that everyone ride at similar speeds and have a common desire for difficulty of riding trails. Many indicated that they enjoyed the full-service operation that comes with a guided tour, with easy booking of everything required for a trip, including bikes, airport pick up, accommodation, and meals.

4.2.13 Uniqueness

Uniqueness was not an attribute that was specifically asked about when interviewing participants. However, this theme emerged from almost every interview. Participants repeatedly

stated that there has to be characteristics of a destination that are different than they are used to. Participants do not want their mountain bike vacation to be like riding at home; most riders indicated that they have enjoyable trails at home, so when they travel they want to experience something more out of the destination. Scott explained that

> if you travelled miles and miles, and you rode a trail that was as good as one of your local trails but felt like one of your local trails, it would be a disappointing trail. Because, why did I travel all that distance?

Riders expressed a desire for an experience that is different from what they normally have. The uniqueness can come from a variety of different factors or attributes, but something has to be unique.

The concept of a "bucket list," a list of to-do things that riders need to cross off, came up in many of the interviews. Several riders desire to do and see things that they have not experienced yet in their lifetime. Chris explained his feelings: "I don't want to be 70 or 80 years old sitting around saying, Wow, I never went there or did that." It seemed that participants felt that there is a list of things that they need to complete. For several participants, one of the goals of a trip is to check something off their personal list as being done. To complete this, the destination has to be out of the ordinary for them. Chris suggested that "I don't want to do something I've done before. It's gotta be new." Sasha suggested that the "newness" of an area as a whole is most important to her when selecting a destination. Other riders talked about wanting different things in a vacation to make it special. Drew explained that a motivator for travel is seeing "shit you haven't seen before." This characteristic of uniqueness was seen as being a defining factor, or at least a value-added feature, of a destination. In addition to the idea of a personal to-do list, there was also the idea of a competitive list to compare with other mountain

bikers. Participants discussed a desire to go to places that other people do not get to go to. Andy and Robin indicated the importance of the uniqueness of the destination and talked about it being something to write home about. They emphasized that when a destination was unique, they were excited to get home and tell people how great the experience was.

Participants attributed many factors needed to create this uniqueness for them. It could be something as simple as different trees, or a different trail surface than they are used to riding. Scott stated that "riding something new is a thrill." Participants also desired unique technical or physical challenges that they are not used to. Sasha highlighted uniqueness when she said, "it's so different from where we ride." Many participants indicated that different scenery could also differentiate one experience from another. Derek explained that "scenery is important; otherwise, I can just stay in my own backyard to ride."

Participants indicated that uniqueness can also come from the remoteness and mystique of a destination. For many riders, remote areas were also seen as pristine. Mystique could be related to the culture or history of a destination. Participants highlighted, though, that this type of uniqueness does not have to be on or near the trails. Riders indicated that a nearby town could provide the uniqueness if it was rustic, authentic, and as Stuart described, "not super commercial." Edgy destinations also seemed to add to the thrill for participants. In addition to feeling remote and having a different culture, riders said they seek out places that are unrefined, and create what they feel is a true adventure because it feels a little unsafe, giving it an edgy feel. The destination may be outside of their home country or slightly removed from urbanization to give this feeling.

4.2.14 Domestic Destinations

Many Canadian participants suggested that because the Yukon is a domestic destination, it is important to them. Respondents gave several reasons for this—some indicated that being a

domestic destination is important because they did not have to cross the border, and their money stays in Canada. Others suggested that they would like to travel to all parts of their home country. Derek explained that " the Yukon is the last frontier, it is the chance of a lifetime to get here." Many participants expressed that for Canadians, there is a sentiment attached to getting to explore Canada.

4.3 Summary

The quality of a mountain bike–specific holiday can best be determined by the rides that participants take while on their trip. In particular, the quality and variety of trails ridden, and the scenic appeal of the trails add to the quality of the holiday as a whole. However, the participants required more in a trip—they wanted something unique. The uniqueness could be related to the above-mentioned attributes, other factors of the trail, or of the trip itself.

Overall, the results indicate that the mountain bike tourists interviewed generally have adequate means to travel, but they have limited time. As a result, making the most of their trip is of utmost importance. This means avoiding "failed rides" where riders get lost, or rides that are shorter or longer than expected. It also means riding the best trails possible at a given location by considering the recommendations of others, getting local knowledge of a destination, using trail maps, or hiring a guide; it seemed that interviewees did not let the costs associated with having the best trip possible stand in the their way. Their dedication to having a successful trip was motivated by the short timeframes they had for their vacation and their desire to have the most fun possible.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Building upon the research findings introduced in Chapter 4, this chapter discusses how the demographics of the study participants compare to previous academic literature on mountain biking. This comparison is followed by a discussion of how the importance of scenery and of trail quality (including trail variety and crowding) as destination attributes fit into the current literature. Guided mountain tourism is also considered, along with an examination of the importance of uniqueness of a destination in tourist decisions and within the Yukon context. Finally, implications and recommendations are provided, and areas for future research are suggested.

From this research, it is apparent that understanding the motivations of mountain bike tourists is not quite as simple as identifying the attributes that mountain bikers look for in the planning stage. Information from the interviews indicate that mountain bike tourists look for a destination that is unique and different from their home location. Participants did suggest that there are on-the-ground attributes that add to or make the experience better. However, these do not play a large role in the trip-planning phase, where the decision of choosing a destination is made.

Through the interview process, participants demonstrated that the remoteness and scenic attributes of the destination biased their answers to the study questions. Results of the interviews also indicated that the participants themselves were unique in their travel motivations. Because it is not particularly easy to travel to the Yukon for a mountain bike trip, the tourists that made the effort and took the expense to travel there were in search of something specific. This may be the reason that uniqueness was such a prevailing theme throughout the study. The study sample was good, because all participants were active mountain bike tourists and had previously travelled to

a variety of destinations. However, the Yukon as a destination was viewed as being remote. As such, the participants purposely sought that type of experience, and it showed in their responses.

5.2 Participants

The demographic data (Chapter 3) shows the age of the participants to be relatively old by mountain bike research standards. The average age of the study participants was approximately 44 years. Bowker and English's (2002) work suggested that the average age of mountain bikers was 34 years. Similarly, Symmonds, Hammitt, and Quisenberry (2000) found that the average age of mountain bikers was 33 years of age.

The reason why participants' ages in this study are different than that of past research could be because past research is outdated and, as postulated in Chapter 3, the overall age of people participating in mountain bike tourism has increased. This hypothesis will have to be tested in a quantitative study. However, it may be that the demographics of mountain bike tourists are different than the demographics of mountain bikers in general. It is possible that the mountain bike tourists who make the effort to travel to remote places like the Yukon are an part of an older population. However, it is very likely that the mountain bikers that have enough disposable income to travel anywhere for a bike-specific holiday may be older professionals. Cross-country-specific bike tourists are generally more affluent than riders from other mountain bike disciplines, and are willing to pay for quality (MBTA, 2010). This is supported by the fact that most mountain bike tourists in North America have household incomes of more than CAD$60,000 per year (Young, 2008). Two other studies (Bowker & English 2002; Symmonds, Hammitt, & Quisenberry, 2000) were not comparable to this study in terms of participants because the Yukon as a destination is unique in the fact that the location makes it very difficult to travel to via personal vehicle. The latter study was a more general study of all mountain bikers

globally. The age discrepancy might also be compounded by the riding style of the study participants. Cross-country mountain bikers are traditionally older than riders in gravity-fed disciplines due to the increased risk of injury; for example, downhill riding may appeal more to younger riders (MBTA, 2010). Even within this study, younger riders tended to prefer faster, more difficult and challenging terrain than the older riders.

5.3 Scenery

The natural resources of a destination, such as flora and fauna, physiography, scenery, and other physical assets, define the environmental framework within which the visitor enjoys the destination (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). The results of this study illustrated that scenery was very important to trip satisfaction. Generally, mountain bikers experience a feeling of freedom, achievement, and elation from riding when they were surrounded by tremendous scenery and a natural environment (Dodson, 1996). However, scenery did not clearly provide a motivation for destination selection. Scenery was a consideration for most participants in the planning stage, and for some, enough of a factor to sway a destination decision; but it became apparent that scenic appeal alone was not enough to attract the study participants to a destination. Participants indicated that in addition to scenery, the trails also had to meet a certain standard. This standard was not exactly clear, but participants suggested that trails had to possess at least some of the attributes highlighted in Sections 4.2.3 and 5.4.

Taylor's (2010) study results confirmed that the quality of trails, variety of trails, and attractive scenery are some of the most important site characteristics for the mountain bikers who participated in his study. Green's work in 2003 also indicated that the most important attributes were variety and difficult of terrain, the number of trails, and scenery. Bowker and English's (2002) study results found scenery (nature), surface (trail quality), and signage to be the three

most important trail attributes. In all cases, though, scenery is just one of many attributes mentioned. It is possible that scenic appeal actually serves to enhance other attributes like trail variety and quality. As an example, Kluane National Park, near Whitehorse, has struggled to attract mountain bike tourists. The scenic beauty is arguably among the best in Canada; however, the trail quality is very poor and trail variety is very limited. As a result of the inadequate trail quality and quantity offered, mountain bike tourists do not seem to view it as an attractive destination.

5.4 Trail Quality

Bike trails are the core product of a mountain bike destination: the higher the quality of the trails are, the more desirable the destination is (Young, 2008). The participants of the study highlighted trail quality as an important part of the trip experience and specifically mentioned that trail quality was a factor in the destination selection process. Yet again, it was only a piece in the greater puzzle. It seemed that participants did not realize the extent of the quality of trails in the Whitehorse area in the planning stages of their trip; they were very pleasantly surprised by the high-quality, well-maintained trails. This may indicate that participants only require a moderate standard of trail quality in lieu of other exceptional factors in order to make a destination decision. It seemed that, provided the trail quality was decent, other destination attributes could make up for the sub-par trail quality. Study participants did not select the Yukon solely based on trail quality, or perhaps based on trail quality at all. Once they knew that trails existed, the other desirable destination attributes raised the quality of the destination enough to put it at the top of their list of destination choices.

Mountain bike tourists in the cross-country category enjoy technical challenges with a greater emphasis on fitness (MBTA, 2010). Previous research has indicated a variety of TTFs

that create a high-quality trail. Figure 5.1 is an example of a multilevel trail feature on Mt. McIntyre. This feature offers riders three different routes with varying levels of difficulty, or the option to ride around the feature altogether. These types of TTFs can increase the enjoyment of advanced riders without impacting the experience of beginner or intermediate riders. When several technical features are linked together, they can increase the enjoyment of a ride by adding variety and challenging riders at their ability levels. When TTFs are combined with single-track trails, riders can experience technical challenges while still placing emphasis on fitness by virtue of trail length. Koepke (2005) suggested that endless single-track is a key feature to destination success. It was shown through this study that destinations that invest resources into intermediate trails with technical features would help motivate tourists to visit.

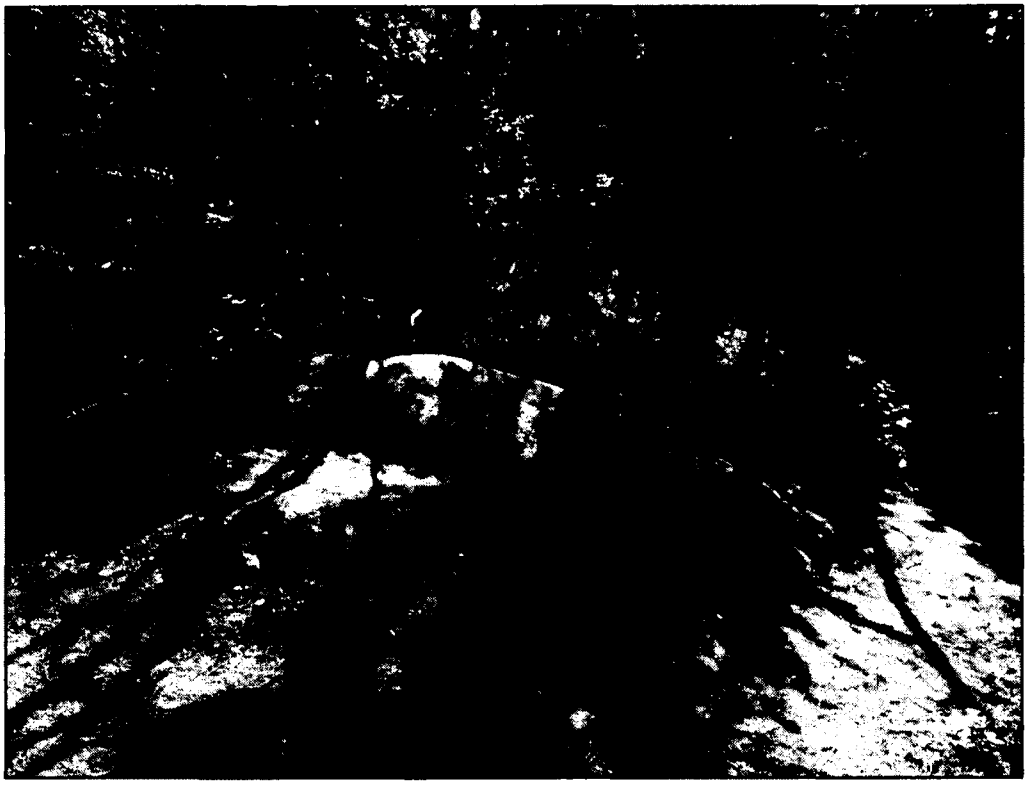

Figure 5.1 Multilevel trail feature on Mt. McIntyre.
(Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

Trail quality is one of the attributes that a destination has influence over, and perhaps one of the easiest to manipulate. Although trail development comes at a financial cost, the results of this study suggest that trail quality can be a major attracting factor for tourists Even though the study participants did not select the Yukon based solely on trail quality, all noted that it is a consideration in the planning phase, at minimum. It may be that the Yukon's image as a destination does not fully highlight trail quality because it is outweighed by other attributes, such as scenery. However, the excitement the participants showed about the quality of the trails they experienced demonstrates that it could be a major pull factor, provided the destination's image helped potential tourists be aware of the prevalence of that attribute.

For trail quality to be a pull factor, results of this study indicate that the focus of trail development has to move away from extremely challenging trails and concentrate on intermediate trails with flow (see Appendix C) that tourists of all riding levels can enjoy. This can be problematic for destinations with trails that are built for high-level riders only; some of the most devoted trail builders are extremely proficient mountain bikers themselves. It is not surprising that riders that devote their free time to trail construction are very avid, experienced riders. Generally, the more time riders spend on bikes, the more confident they are. Thus, trail builders are usually some of the best riders in any given area, as is the case in Whitehorse (see Section 5.12), so the development of intermediate-level trails may not be a priority.

Mountain bike flow, as riders describe it, may align with the characteristics required to enter a psychological realm of flow. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) described the flow experience as an activity where challenge and skills are balanced; the challenges are not greater than the skills and vice versa. When a mountain bike trail is not so easy so that riders feel bored, but not so

challenging that riders feel anxious, it is possible to achieve a flow experience. However, because mountain bike tourists have differing levels of riding ability, a trail that offers an appropriate level of challenge for all abilities was believed to be difficult to achieve. However, what riders now refer to as "flow trails" are trails that all levels of riders can enjoy and be challenged with given their individual skill set. IMBA (2012) describes flow trails: "This style of trail typically contains features like banked turns, rolling terrain, various types of jumps, and consistent and predictable surfaces; conspicuously absent are abrupt corners or obstacles."

Flow trails embody characteristics that enable a psychological experience of flow by allowing riders to match skill level and challenge. The alignment of skill is accomplished by how the technical features of a trail are used, which give riders the option to select a route based on personal skill level. For example, a smooth trail with a moderate grade could have berms located on the corners. Less experienced riders could avoid the berm completely, whereas more advanced riders are able to approach the berm with more speed and ride a higher line to increase the level of challenge. More research should be completed on flow trails because the conditions attributable to flow experiences that are most conducive to having an experience of high enjoyment could be very informative for mountain bike tourist destinations (Clarke & Haworth, 1994).

5.5 Community Trail Crews

Young (2008) cautions that before trails are promoted for tourism purposes, they first need to be authorized and managed to ensure safety and environmental protection. Whitehorse is very fortunate to have a full-time trail crew, the result of implementation of the 2007 Trail Plan. The trail crew is part of a five-year community-funded program, and consists of two to four employees, depending on the stage of the plan. The crew is tasked with building capital (mountain bike trails) and then maintaining the trails. The plan was to start at the ground level by

improving current trails, then building new trails. These upgrades (Figure 5.2) improve the riding experience for participants, but it would have been difficult to implement using volunteers as some of the improvements can be very labour intensive. The second part of the trail improvement strategy was adding signage to and mapping the trails. Other destinations may want to consider the community-funded trail crew model as a development strategy.

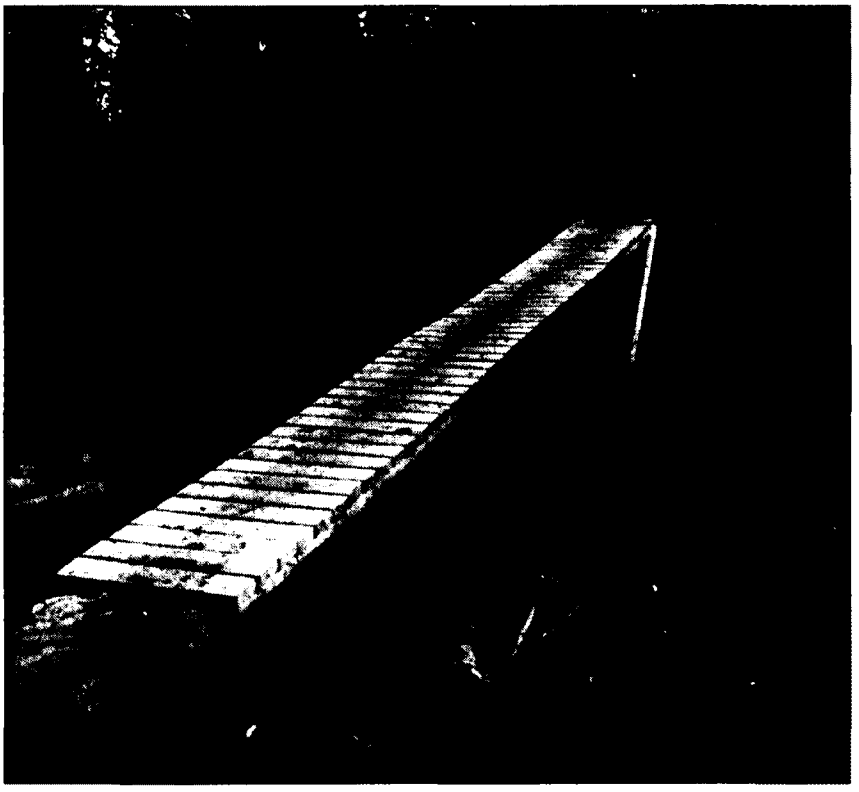

Figure 5.2 Trail improvements by the Whitehorse trail crew.
(Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

The study participants suggested that trail information such as signage and maps may be an important destination attribute for mountain bikers when considering where to go. A 1992 report by Sara Gerard and Associates from New Zealand suggested destinations and trail associations should focus on increasing on-site signage, to allow bikers to identify suitable routes.

The importance of trail mapping and marking was supported by Ruff and Mellors' (1993) suggestion that a potential detracting feature of riding areas could be difficulty of navigation. Trail markers should be visible along the trail (Goeft & Alder, 2000). Further research into how trail maps and well-marked trails influence rider choices and affect their experience would benefit the mountain bike tourism industry.

Professional mountain biker Dylan Sherrard grew up mountain biking in Whitehorse but moved away in 2007. He was surprised to "go back and find out that shady, illegal trails we rode when I was a little kid were now mapped city trails with full trail crew support" (Sherrard, 2011). It was only when the trail crew started work in 2010 that mountain biking really began to flourish in Whitehorse. Many other communities have paid trail crews as well; however, the majority of these crews are compensated by local trail clubs, such as the Fernie Trail Alliance (2012). The number of communities that have funded crews, such as Shuswap Trail Alliance, is increasing. Community-based trail crews are key to developing and maintaining the high-quality trails with variety that mountain bike tourists desire.

5.6 Trail Variety

Trail variety was viewed with as much importance as scenery or trail quality to destination appeal. The number of trails at a destination is very important to mountain bike tourists—in fact, it may be the most important attribute. A destination could have one amazing trail with beautiful scenery, a smooth surface, an intermediate difficulty level with technical terrain features. However, if there is only one trail, it does not matter how good it is. Tourists interviewed in this study suggested that they will not travel to a destination that only has one trail. Ideally, during a tourist's stay there has to be a minimum of one trail route per day. This means that if destinations want tourists to stay longer, then they need to open up more trails.

A wide variety of trails and diversity of riding opportunities for mountain bikers have been listed as important site attributes (Koepke, 2005; Taylor, 2010). Cessford's (1995b) research indicated that riders prefer opportunities to explore new areas. Goeft and Alder (2000) found that riders overwhelmingly desire more trail networks. A wide range of trail types allows for variety and new experiences in addition to allowing riders to choose trails to meet their skill level and motivation. In the same way, riders desire an increased number of trails in order to experience more variety (Bowker & English, 2002).

5.7 Crowding and Trail Information

Study participants had differing views on crowded trails. Their comments were probably influenced by the extremely low numbers of riders on the trails in the Yukon relative to almost every other destination to which participants had travelled. Most participants rode for several days in Whitehorse without seeing another biker on the trails, which was very unusual in participants' experiences. Adventure tourism research has demonstrated that as enthusiasts become more specialized, they may desire smaller group sizes (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1994). Bowker and English's (2002) study results showed that 40% of the sample population felt that lack of congestion was the most important attribute. However, the differing views of study participants regarding crowding may be attributed to some riders desiring to meet other riders in order to reassure that they are on the correct route. While on backcountry rides, participants noted that in terms of navigation, they were reassured to meet other mountain bikers, or even hikers, while on the trail.

Local riders and non-local tourists may not be looking for the same features and difficulty of trails (Young, 2008). Study participants discussed the challenges of meeting local riders on the trails. Many stated that meeting local riders was not preferred because of a few instances where

they met unfriendly locals while visiting other destinations. Many mountain bike communities have purposely limited tourist use of local trails by excluding favourite trails from the map (Young, 2008). This was not the case in the Yukon because the local mountain bike population is so small. However, this may be a possible management issue in the future, based on local/tourist interaction experiences of other destinations. However, proper management of areas by selectively mapping trails, can save some trails for local riders who know where they are. This helps to prevent the angry local discussed by three of the participants since locals are less likely to feel like 'their trails' are overrun by tourists.

5.8 Guided Mountain Bike Tourism

Guided mountain bike tourism can be a sensitive topic with mountain bikers. Some riders adamantly refuse to participate in guided tourism, and only those who have never been on a guided tour that said they would not do it. Study participants indicated that this is because of the high cost of guided tourism. All of the "dirtbag" and free and independent participants said they had never been on a guided tour. The cost was an issue for several participants; some participants that had been on guided tours suggested that the cost was prohibitive because it more than doubled the cost of a mountain bike trip. People who engage in mountain biking activities seem to value and appreciate independence, as was indicated by the study participants; thus, some riders suggested that having a guide can impact their independence. Overall, guided mountain bike tourism may continue to be a niche market that does not cater to the needs of all mountain bike tourists. For destinations to develop a strong mountain bike tourism industry, the infrastructure should be developed to allow for unguided, or independent, mountain bike tourism. It should be noted that all riders with guided tour experience indicated they would participant in guided mountain bike tourism again; none said they would not do it again. Some participants

indicated that there were challenges associated with guided tours, but overall it was something they would do again.

5.9 Uniqueness

Mountain bike tourists seek experiences that provide lasting memories (Young, 2008). The most interesting and unexpected finding of the study was the participants' desire for uniqueness in the destination. Trails that offer historic importance (see Figure 5.4) and ecological diversity are features that add significance for mountain bike tourists (Young, 2008). Figure 5.3 shows an example of landscape diversity that can make a trail ride unique. This particular trail landscape is called "rebirth," and participants suggested that it was the highlight of the ride because this feature was different than what they were used to, both on their Yukon trip and at home. The reason that unique experiences arose as a desire among study participants may be in part due to the case study destination. However, destination uniqueness being a factor in the study findings seems to be very telling about destination selection. Riders desire something different than they have at home. They are investing a lot of time and money into their trip, so it makes sense that they would want to experience something new. Service and hospitality can also provide a uniqueness by exceeding the expectations of the mountain bike tourist (Young, 2008). Uniqueness may also be a result of the remoteness and the wilderness of the destination, as discussed in Section 5.9.

Figure 5.3 Unique trail characteristics.
(Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

In many regions around the world, signature trails have come to define a region's mountain bike culture (Young, 2008). Signature trails help to strengthen a regions' trail network. Typically, signature trails offer unique backcountry experiences, with stunning scenery and offering a sense of physical accomplishment (Young, 2008). Many of these trails have been granted "epic" status by the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA). IMBA claims that "if you are a mountain biker, this is your bucket list. Everyone single one of the mountain bike trails listed on this page will blow your mind. Guaranteed" (IMBA, 2012). Many study participants indicated a clear link between IMBA's bucket list and their personal to-do lists. Mountain Hero was granted epic status in 2011; IMBA states that the trail offers stunning alpine views, historic mining artefacts, and a chance to see caribou and other wildlife (IMBA, 2012). Figure 5.4 is an example of the mining history that is located along the Mountain Hero trail.

Many study participants indicated that riding the Mountain Hero trail was the highlight of their trip. The majority of the participants had heard about the Mountain Hero trail before coming to the Yukon; however, it exceeded everyone's expectations. This was not only due to the uniqueness of the ride, but also the scenery, the high-quality trail on the descent, and the sense of accomplishment felt from a lengthy, challenging ride.

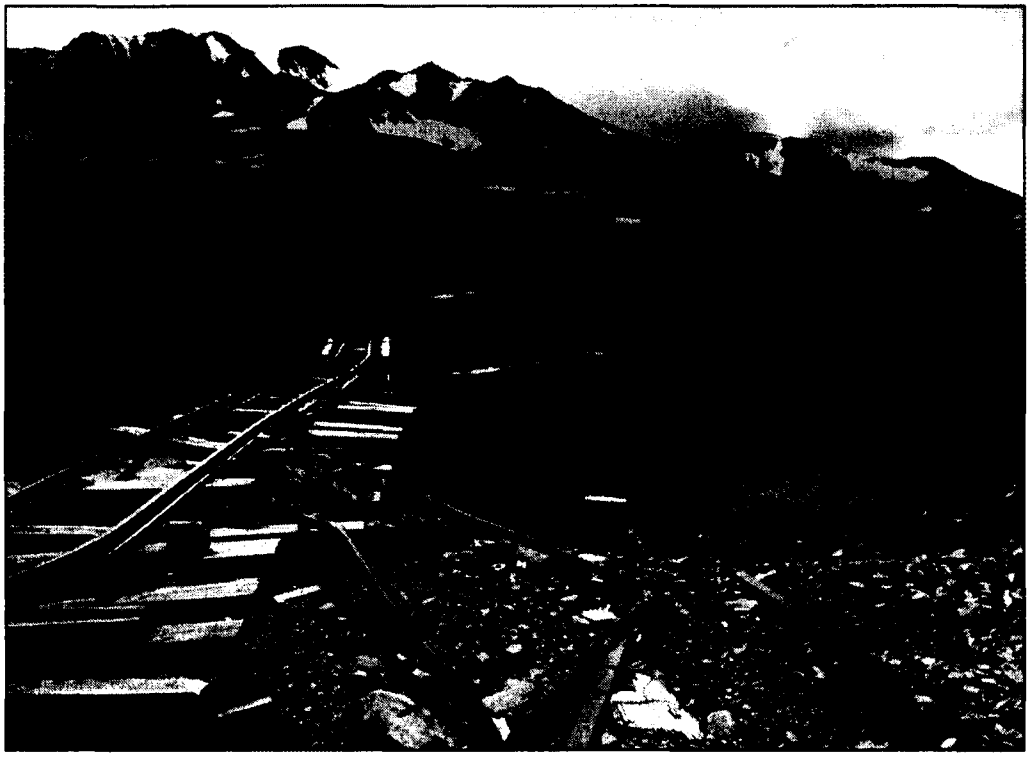

Figure 5.4 Mining history on Mountain Hero Trail.
(Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

The diversity of trails combined with the uniqueness of an epic or signature ride may make for an attractive destination and therefore, a powerful marketing opportunity. The results of this study show that participants were seeking an experience that is different from anything they have done before, but still within their comfort zone. This can be accomplished by taking an

activity that mountain bike tourists already know and feel comfortable with, and using it as a vehicle to see or experience something new. In the case of the Yukon, trail builders have designed a trail based around viewing historic landmarks, while combining scenic views. This links directly to the tourism image marketed by the Yukon as whole. Other destinations may be able to capitalize on existing unique features by designing trails that allow mountain bike tourists to access these features via enjoyable, high-quality trails. Destinations can focus image-specific marketing campaigns on demonstrating the uniqueness of a location that can be most readily accessed through mountain biking. Combinations of unique features can help create an experience and perhaps play on the participants' sense of adventure.

5.10 Perceived Adventure

Guided mountain bike tourism can provide a perceived control over nature and is alluring because it makes tourists feel alive (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). However, there is a definite paradox about control over nature in the responses of the study participants. They indicated wanting a "rough and ready experience," but also desired lots of trail information and wanted to avoid bad rides. Participants indicated that they want their mountain bike holiday to feel like an adventure, but they also stated that they want enough information to ensure that their vacation is "successful" and there are no failed rides. For the participants, success is related to spending as much time as possible enjoying positive destination attributes. All study participants explained that they have less time than they would like for holidays, so they do not want to spend that precious time being lost, or riding trails that are not enjoyable. To accomplish this, the trails must be developed in a way that ensures trail information exists yet is subtle enough not to infringe on the wilderness experience.

Adventure tourism involves physical effort, practical engagement, and outdoor physical challenge (Beedie, 2003). Priest (1992) suggested that adventure is leisure with uncertainty. Perhaps in the case of mountain biking, only certain kinds and degrees of uncertainty are desired; for example, participants wanting to experience new unknown trails in a manner that reduces the chance of getting lost. Tourists may want to experience something that seems thrilling and exciting through travel to new and exhilarating environments (Fluker & Turner, 2000). Figure 5.5 shows a vehicle that created an experience that study participants viewed as adding adventure to their holiday. This vehicle, used to transport riders to the bike trails, also has the visual perception of being very rugged and thus leading to an adventurous sensation, adding to perceived adventure. It is possible to ride up to the trails that this vehicle transports bikers to, but the vehicle's rugged appearance made it seem like much more of an adventure for the participants. It may be that as experienced mountain bikers, the participants do not seek more risky mountain biking experiences, but still seek at least the perception of having an adventure while on holiday.

Figure 5.5 Rugged vehicle transport—creating a feeling of adventure. (Photo courtesy: B. Rowsell)

The feeling of adventure may come from the destination more than the activity. In particular the remoteness and wilderness attributes of the destination can create a perceived sense of adventure and uniqueness for mountain bike tourists. Participants highlighted that they enjoy riding on their home trails. They also suggested that this is because riders feel safe and comfortable on these home trails. Many mountain bikers world wide live and ride near urban centers, thus the trails they ride do not have a wilderness or remoteness element. This is particularly true for riders from the United Kingdom, where many people ride at trail centers that are well managed and maintained (Taylor, 2010). Destinations that are remote and have strong wilderness attributes seem to be well situated to offer adventure experiences for mountain bike tourists.

5.11 The Yukon

During the course of this study, I spent more than 40 days mountain biking in the Yukon. Rides generally lasted from two to six hours and were 10–40 kilometres in length. During that time, I encountered only two groups of mountain bikers that were not local, and that were not already part of the study. Throughout the research, participants inquired why the numbers of mountain bike tourists were so low, considering that the Yukon has all of the attractive attributes desired by the tourists.

Before the study, I believed that travel difficulties would account for low numbers of mountain bike tourists in the Yukon. However, during the summer of 2012 there were three airlines offering direct flights from Vancouver, Calgary, and Edmonton to Whitehorse with several daily departures. The competition between airlines helped to reduce flight costs, and made scheduling flights easy. There was also a once-weekly flight from Germany to make it easy for European travellers to travel to the Yukon. None of the study participants indicated having any difficulty travelling to Whitehorse. In fact, several participants noted that it was easier than travelling to many other world-class mountain bike destinations.

The second factor I believed would cause low numbers of mountain bike tourists would be Yukon's destination reputation. The Yukon is still a relatively unknown mountain bike destination. As such, it may take some time for its reputation to grow as a desirable destination and for the word to get out about the availability of mountain bike tourism there. The Yukon has factors sought after by mountain bike tourists, such as wilderness scenic attributes, high-quality trails, and enough trail variety to entertain riders for several days of riding; these factors make the Yukon stand out as being a great mountain bike destination. The participants in this study expressed extreme satisfaction with Whitehorse as a destination. It is only a matter of time until

the word-of-mouth recommendations from these participants branch out and increase the popularity of the designation.

Overall, the Yukon is still relatively unknown internationally as a travel destination (Hughes, 2012). However, travel writers and travel guides have begun to publicize the potential of the Yukon. In 2013, the Lonely Planet Top 10 regions to visit ranked the Yukon fourth. The justification for the rating was the fact that the Yukon is one of the least densely populated regions on the planet (Lonely Planet, 2012). The article discussed the wilderness having a grandeur and beauty that can only be properly appreciated in person (Lonely Planet, 2012). The uniqueness and culture of the north is the main feature of travel-related promotion. Study participants did not discuss the northern lights specifically. However, participants from my study and as identified by Hughes (2012) often talked about dreaming of seeing the Aurora Borealis lighting up the night sky. Another relatively secret fact is that the trees in the Yukon begin to turn red and gold during the late summer and fall, and it is said that their colours more than rival the fall foliage in eastern parts of Canada and the United States. (Hughes, 2012), a huge tourist attraction for those areas.

Based on the broader research into mountain bike tourism, the future looks bright for the mountain bike tourism in the Yukon Territory. The Yukon is well suited to tourism; however, there may be some elements that detract from this. The distance and travel costs make it a difficult destination for mountain bike tourists. In addition, the climate makes for a shorter mountain bike season, creating difficulties for both users and entrepreneurs. The question remains whether the reputation and the destination image that are beginning to develop will be enough to overcome the negatives of cost a distance.

5.12 Domestic Destinations

The idea of a domestic (Canadian) mountain bike trip developed as an important thread in the research findings. Canadian study participants discussed how great it was to stay in Canada for a mountain bike holiday. This desire (that was included in the participants' bucket list) was the perceived value in exploring within one's own country. For many Canadian study participants, one place they had not been to yet were the territories. There are many great mountain bike destinations in Canada, especially in British Columbia (see Cariboo Mountain Bike Consortium, 2013; Mountain Biking BC, 2012). However, after travelling through Canada several times on mountain bike–specific trips, I believe there are not many destinations as unique as Whitehorse.

However, the value of domestic destinations may be a constraint for Whitehorse as an international mountain bike destination. The Yukon suffers from situational conditions that are beyond the control of the tourism industry; in particular, its location (Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004). A destination's location in proximity to major source markets has a large impact on the destination's ability to attract visitors (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). The locational constraint may be the cause of low visitation numbers by mountain bikers, because accessibility enhances the core attractors and helps establish a successful tourism industry for a destination (Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004). Some previous literature goes as far as considering accessibility to be a destination attribute; this study did not. Dwyer and Kim (2003) highlighted accessibility of a destination and overall affordability as being destination attributes. While the fact that Whitehorse is a domestic destination that may be a draw for Canadians, the perceived cost, effort, and distance severely limits the accessibility and affordability for international mountain bike tourists.

5.13 Study Implications and Recommendations

The overarching aim of the study was to help the authorities in Whitehorse to develop their mountain bike tourism product and attract more mountain bike tourists to the city and territory. Even though study participants did not indicate difficulty of travel as a detracting factor, other mountain bike tourists may still find real or apparent difficulties when travelling to the Yukon. As a result, the Yukon will always be at a disadvantage because nothing can be done about the distance to many markets. Therefore, Yukon as a destination has to offer something unique to draw mountain bike tourists there. The major elements of uniqueness that the Yukon mountain bike tourism industry can capitalize on are wilderness, remoteness, and to a lesser extent, heritage, in order to develop a unique destination for mountain bikers. In order to attract more tourists while taking advantage of the characteristics of the destination, the Yukon should offer a wide variety of trails and a great informational website, and work to develop a stronger reputation and image.

Aspiring mountain biking destinations such as Whitehorse need to take advantage of the uniqueness of the destination. Because many riders have such a strong attachment to their home trails, destinations have to work hard to differentiate themselves and make their destination unique. There is no simple formula for uniqueness, as each location has to capitalize on its own characteristics. However, the information from this study indicates that the Yukon already has characteristics that are desirable by mountain bike tourists. For example, participants suggested that in the Yukon, the mining history on a trail like Mountain Hero is desirable.

Mountain bike trails are the vehicle through which mountain bike tourists can experience the remoteness, wilderness, and Yukon heritage. It is important to offer a wide variety of high-quality trails that are well marked and appeal to a range of users. It was suggested in this study

that mountain bike tourists are not necessarily all hardcore, extremely skilled, advanced riders. Trails should be designed so that all levels of riders can experience several different rides suited to their abilities and skills. For the most part, the Yukon has the trails required to meet and exceed the needs of mountain bike tourists, at least in the Whitehorse area. The trails are ready, but the surrounding tourism infrastructure needs to continue to be developed to ensure high-quality experiences for mountain bike tourists. Many destinations have had success with establishing a trail guide that lists the top five mountain biking routes to ensure that mountain bike tourists are experiencing the top trails, and also to ensure that riders are finding trails that match their riding levels.

Cycle infrastructure, including bike-friendly hotels and support networks for tourists, can help develop and sustain Whitehorse as a mountain bike destination. Surprisingly, the desire for a bike wash was only mentioned by one participant in this study. This could be because the trails in the Yukon are very dry and there was no mud on any of their trips. However, other destinations have had great success with adding value by improving cycle infrastructure. Because the vast majority of study participants were involved in a full-service guided trip with full accommodation, the idea of cycle infrastructure was not developed through the interviews. However, as the number of tourists coming to the Yukon increases, so will the need for increased services for travelling mountain bikers. A destination that is set up and prepared for this need will be very well received by mountain bike tourists.

The majority of study participants indicated that destination information is very important in the trip-planning stage, especially photographic information, which links back to the importance of views, uniqueness, and remoteness. A comprehensive, informational website for the Yukon mountain bike tourism industry would serve as a first port-of-call for information on

trails and supporting infrastructure. Currently, it is almost impossible to find enough information about mountain biking in the Yukon to plan an independent trip. If the destination is to expand beyond offering only guided adventures, the information needed to enable potential visitors to plan a trip to Whitehorse has to be readily available online. The study participants suggested that photos are important because of scenery being a valued attribute. As a result, marketing initiatives and destination websites should capitalize on images that display the scenery and uniqueness of a destination.

Mountain bike tourists want to make the most of their trip. They have short holidays because most are income-rich and time-poor. Destinations should find ways to allow riders to maximize their limited time away from home. This can be accomplished through strong destination website guides and trail guides that provide tourists with enough information to plan successful and enjoyable rides that exceed their expectations. Most riders only want to mountain bike for three or four hours in a day, thus destination guides and information should offer more activities for riders to do beyond mountain biking to maximize the enjoyment of their short vacations.

In order for mountain bike destinations such as the Yukon to increase tourist numbers and develop a thriving industry, a destination image and reputation needs to be developed and strengthened. This can be done through word of mouth, social media, and bike-specific media. Destinations such as Whistler, BC, and the 7stanes in Scotland have developed strong destination reputations and images, recognized internationally. Image and reputation can be developed through increased presence in bike-specific media, which can assist with placing the Yukon on mountain bikers' radar as a bike destination. In the last few years, there has been a slow but

steady stream of Yukon-specific stories in popular bike media; this presence should be further fostered to establish a strong international destination reputation.

Social media and word-of-mouth information sources can also help to develop and reinforce destination image and reputation. Boréale Mountain Biking has a strong social media and popular media presence through Twitter, Facebook, popular mountain bike websites (such as Pink Bike), and web-based videos. Study participants indicated using these sources to learn about mountain biking in the Yukon. However, the reputation of a destination cannot be left to a single tourism operator. A strong, unified approach will help to ensure that mountain bikers will want to travel to the Yukon based on the strength of the reputation and image of the destination as a whole.

5.14 Summary

Mountain bike trails with distinctive geography that offer terrain that challenges participants with a range of technical features are important attributes for attracting riders and developing a mountain bike tourism industry (Young, 2008). This study helped to reinforce the importance of scenery and of trail quality (including trail variety and crowding) as destination attributes. However, to increase the number of mountain bike tourists, the Yukon as a destination has to offer something unique to draw mountain bike tourists there. In addition to uniqueness, the Yukon should offer a wide variety of trails and continue to develop a strong reputation and image as a mountain bike destination.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Summary Overview

The popularity of mountain biking has grown substantially over the last 30 years and continues to grow (Chiu & Kriwoken, 2003). Since its inception in the 1970s, the sport has developed and grown to a point where there is now a wide variety of riding styles, and experiences ranging from cross-country endurance races to helicopter-accessed downhill riding (Freeman, 2011). Even though studies to date have not investigated the growth of mountain bike tourism specifically, the increased number of operators worldwide and the growth of promotional materials about destination travel indicate that the industry has grown over the last 30 years as well. As the study participants suggested, destinations can attract mountain bike tourists from all over the world.

This study was undertaken to attempt to understand the factors that influence mountain bike tourists' decision making with regard to destination selection. Chapter 1 provided a general overview of the background information about mountain biking, which included a description of the purpose of the study—to understand how destination attributes affect the motivations of mountain bike tourists—and a rationale for each attribute's significance.

Chapter 2 reviewed the current literature of mountain biking and adventure tourism, including a synthesis and analysis of research conducted in the last 30 years to define mountain bike tourism. This chapter provided the dimensions of the problem area and the extent to which answers exist. It also explained the focus of this research, which was to examine and identify destination attributes. Destination attributes are the site characteristics important in vacation destination decisions (Weaver, 1994). These attributes include inherent features, such as natural landscapes and constructed amenities, such as bike trails (Freeman, 2011). Chapter 2 also

outlined how these destination attributes specifically relate to mountain bike tourism, and suggested how destinations can benefit from and capitalize on a greater understanding of the motivations of mountain bike tourists by using Whitehorse, Yukon, as an example.

6.2 Purpose of the Study and Methods and Methodology Overview

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the Yukon Territory in Canada's Arctic, which is in the early stages of developing a mountain bike tourism industry. The Yukon has great potential for mountain bike tourism. It has the beginnings of a mountain bike infrastructure, including abundant, excellent trails, committed advocates, and a mystique that naturally draws people to the Yukon (IMBA, 2005).

The study was completed by conducting in-depth, semistructured interviews and participant observation with 12 mountain bike tourists in Whitehorse, Yukon, mainly through the mountain bike tour company Boréale Mountain Biking. The use of qualitative research methods allowed mountain bike tourists to openly and freely discuss their thoughts and provided rich and detailed findings. To ensure a rigorous study, a purposive criterion sampling method was used to assist with the selection of information-rich cases. This study was grounded in the theoretical framework of critical realism.

6.3 Restatement of Research Problem

This paper is based on the question, Why do mountain bike tourists select certain destinations over others? The research questions addressed by this study are the following:

Question 1: What draws people to travel to the Yukon for mountain biking? The answer to this question seemed to be a sense of adventure achieved through a unique destination that is somewhat remote and slightly risky. However, the answer is more complex and varied among the study participants. All participants indicated that scenic appeal was a pull factor that drew them

to the Yukon. In addition, trails were a very important attribute that influenced the destination selection process—in particular, quality trails that offered some variety to users.

Question 2: How do attributes influence mountain bike tourists in determining travel destinations? The answer was not exactly clear; further research that investigates the planning stages of mountain bike trips is required for a definite answer. The most significant answer to this question was trail quantity; even though it was not the most important attribute identified by participants, it was viewed as a determining factor in destination selection. Mountain bike tourists are most definitely looking for a combination of scenic appeal and enough high-quality trails for each day of their stay. This study did further the academic knowledge about what defines a quality trail, as outlined in Section 4.2.3.

Question 3: How can attributes assist in destination planning and design decisions? The most important finding of this study was that destinations need to build and promote enough trails with differing characteristics to entertain riders for multiday trips. Within reason, the more trails that are available, the longer mountain bike tourists will stay at a destination. It is also important that each of the trails is unique enough to provide a different experience when compared to other trails. This is especially true for longer tourist stays because different trails are not enough—extended stays require different experiences to keep riders excited.

6.4 Relevant Literature

With the growth of the sport, the economic impact of mountain bike tourism is beginning to be realized and capitalized on by destinations. The Sea-to Sky-Corridor (Vancouver North Shore–Squamish–Whistler) is one of the few areas where the economic effects of mountain biking has been measured. In 2006, the economic impact attributed to community mountain bike trails in the area between Vancouver and Whistler, BC, was $38 million over a single summer

season (MBTA, 2010). This location is unique, and destinations such as Whitehorse should not expect similar impacts. However, the example illustrates that the economic effects of mountain bike tourism can be important to destinations.

Cycle tourism can be a path toward economic development. Destinations such as the Yukon Territory can capitalize on increased understanding of the importance of destination attributes for mountain bike tourists to increase their tourism market share. Generally, mountain bike tourists are a dedicated group of highly specialized participants. This specialization creates a demand for more dedicated equipment and specific value orientation (Virden & Schreyer, 1988). Through development of destination attributes such as mountain bike–specific trails, destinations can see more visits by specialized mountain bikers who travel specifically for the purpose of mountain bike tourism.

Destination attributes help to influence where mountain bikers want to ride (Taylor, 2010) and drive the tourist's choice of and substitution between destinations (Moran, Tresidder, & McVittie, 2006). Koepke (2005) suggested that endless single-track is a key feature to destination success; the results of this study indicated otherwise—there are many factors that influence destination success, some which are more important to mountain bike tourists than trail length. In addition, trail variety is important to mountain bike tourists—the trails do not have to be endless, but there does have to be enough trails to entertain riders for each day of their trip. Also, the more high-quality trails that exist at a destination, the more different rides mountain bike tourists will be able to complete, which could translate into longer trips or return visits to ride all the different trails a destination has to offer.

Information about the desires of mountain bike tourists is a powerful tool for destination development. By using the information about desirable site attributes, destinations can create

informed marketing campaigns to attract mountain bikers (Taylor, 2010). In addition, if managers integrate information about the features that mountain bikers actually want to ride into their product and infrastructure planning, the mountain bike tourism industry will continue to grow (Goeft & Alder, 2000). As the sport of mountain biking continues to grow, so can mountain biking destinations, provided the growth is planned based on the needs and desires of mountain bike tourists.

6.5 Research Limitations

During the summer of 2012, 17 mountain bike tourists were interviewed and involved in participant observation research in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. Due to time and cost limitations, the scope of the research was limited to mountain bike tourists in Whitehorse. Input from a larger number of participants would have been desirable, but finding mountain bike tourists in the Whitehorse area proved to be difficult. It should be emphasized that this was an exploratory study carried out to illustrate the motivations of mountain bike tourists.

Another limitation was that pre-trip interviews were not conducted, information was collected while participants were on vacation. Collecting information during the planning stage would have helped develop a better understanding of the motivations that drove destination selection. Participants were greatly influenced by their experiences on the ground during the study period, and had trouble relating back to the planning stages of their trip when answering interview questions.

6.6 Value of the Study

This research makes a significant contribution to academic knowledge of mountain bike tourism and mountain biking as an adventure sport in general. This study makes an original contribution by using qualitative methods to examine a range of factors that determine

destination selection and overall trip satisfaction, which are previously unexamined influences using qualitative methods. The results of the study are presented in Chapter 4, including descriptive information, analysis of the interviews, and participant observation research, along with new emerging themes and unexpected results.

This study validated the existing literature on mountain bike tourism and extended the research field. The main three attributes that were highlighted in previous studies—scenery, trail quality, and trail variety—were also the three most desired attributes in this study. Scenery was investigated in greater depth; in particular, looking past wilderness features to include cityscapes as a desirable scenic quality. In addition, the value of alpine biking emerged from this study. Trail quality was further explored—in particular, the concept of flow and flow trails. Specific trail features were discussed and TTFs were investigated. From this study, the data with perhaps the greatest value came from the new information gleaned about trail variety. In previous studies, it was not suggested that riders desire a new trail for each day of a trip, or that these new trails are even more well received by tourists if they are in new areas or have different characteristics. The key findings of this study, that riders would like to experience a different trail each day that are in new areas or with different characteristics, will greatly assist in marketing mountain bike tourism destinations.

6.7 Future Research

This study is a start into understanding the motivations of mountain bike tourists. However, an updated quantitative analysis of mountain biker tourists that includes an analysis of income, age, and gender is required to help better understand who the tourist is. It would be useful to re-create this study to occur at the planning stages of the trip. The answers provided by the study participants were greatly influenced by time already spent at the destination. A

combination of what participants were looking for and what they saw had an influence on their answers. The beautiful scenery participants experienced also influenced their answers—perhaps if the participants were not exposed to such beautiful scenery during the study, they might not have placed such importance on it during the interviews. In search of scenic appeal, the riders interviewed apparently chose the Yukon as a destination, but they also seemed attracted to a sense of adventure or uniqueness in a destination.

It would also be useful to know how far in advance of the trip tourists select their destination. Because mountain bike tourism in Whitehorse is relatively new, tourists may simply have not got to it on their list of destinations they plan to visiting. It is possible that it takes several years from deciding to visit a destination before tourists actually travel there. As indicated in the interviews, participants only have short windows of time to travel, and mountain biking is a seasonal activity. Perhaps several seasons of time pass before mountain bike tourists travel to new destinations. For example, a mountain bike tourist may learn in 2012 of an amazing new destination such as Whitehorse, which has all the attributes they desire. However, they have already planned a trip to Moab in 2013 and have already discussed with their riding group a trip to Fruita the following year. In this case, the mountain bike tourist may not travel to Whitehorse until summer of 2015.

There is little recent demographic research on mountain bike participants or mountain bike tourists. This is because much of the core literature about mountain biking in general and mountain tourism in particular is now at least 15 years old, and the sport has changed dramatically over this period. Most likely, the demographics of general mountain bike participants would not match demographics of tourists. Future research should investigate not only demographics (including income) but also categories of mountain bike riding. There has not

been any academic studies completed to date on the downhill and freeride subcategories of mountain biking, let alone the influence of these categories on tourism. It is likely that cross-country riders are the most well off and spend the most per day while on vacation of any category of mountain bikers, but further research is required in this area. With this quantitative information complete, destinations can begin to establish trail networks that are most attractive and market themselves specifically to a single category of mountain biker.

Finally, research needs to be completed on how destinations can overcome physical distance from major population centres. The results of this study suggest that wilderness and scenic attributes can create a sense of adventure and uniqueness that will draw tourists in from a distance. However, other case studies of a remote destination should be completed to confirm this finding.

6.8 Summary

Destination attributes are the on-the-ground tangible features of a destination. Understanding the attributes that attract mountain bike tourists to a destination can help destinations offer an enjoyable vacation and can assist destinations in capitalizing on the mountain bike tourism market. There are many specific attributes that mountain bike tourists value. However, research needs to be completed in the trip-planning stage to better understand the destination attributes they value. It is apparent that the overall goal for mountain bike tourists is to make the most of their trip. This means riding a variety of well-built and well-designed trails with scenic appeal, and also means avoiding situations where riders get lost or where rides are shorter or longer than expected. In combination with these features, it is also immensely important that destinations provide unique experiences. Great trails alone are not enough to

satisfy mountain bike tourists because there are many great trails worldwide to choose from; destinations have to offer more to give mountain bike tourists something to write home about.

The intended outcome of this project was to support the Yukon mountain bike industry and global mountain bike tourism community by developing an understanding of why mountain bikers choose to travel to certain destinations. This information on rider preferences can help both destinations and trail managers/planners establish and manage sustainable trails that will attract and entertain mountain bike tourists. Hopefully, the experience will be so powerful that mountain bike tourists will return to destinations with their friends and family to enjoy the many amazing attributes the destination has to offer.

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Appendix A: Interview Confidentiality Agreement and Protocols

UNBC UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

How destination attributes impact mountain bike tourism:
Research Information Sheet

Researcher: **Blake Rowsell**
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Supervisor: **Dr. Pat Maher**
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Background:

This study involves both participant observation and interviews. During the interview and participant observation, I (Blake Rowsell) will be focusing on how the attributes or features of a destination impact travel decision making by mountain bike tourists. These interviews and participant observation will help to inform future research and actions on this topic.

The interview format allows for a deep and meaningful conversation to take place between participants and the researcher on the research topic. Participant observation provides context and a greater understanding of the interview, participants and tourist motivations. The information gleaned from this interview and participant observation will then be used to help understand and capitalize on the features that mountain bike tourists desire in a destination. No individual participants will be identified within the assessment, although a general description of some of the comments obtained from the interviews may be used.

This study is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Arctic Chair Project at Finmark University College. The information from this study is not going back to the Norwegian Government directly. However, it will be used to assist with the writing of a book on Destination Development in Arctic Regions.

Participants will be asked to allow the researcher to observe their mountain bike tourism experience. Participants may also be asked to take part in an interview. The interviews will be recorded, some notes taken and then transcribed by the researcher. Once the research has concluded, all of the transcriptions will be securely stored by me and for my use only, and will shredded by a commercial shredding service when they are no longer needed for this or future research projects to a maximum of five years.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation in the interview and participant observation is entirely voluntary and, as such, you may choose not to participate. If you participate, you may choose to not answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and you have the right to end your participation in the interview at any time and have all the information you provided withdrawn from the study.

Potential Risks And Benefits - This project has been assessed by the UNBC Research Ethics Board. I do not consider there to be any risks to participation. I hope that by participating you will have a chance to provide input into better understand mountain bike tourism.

Confidentiality:

- Your participation in the interview and participant is voluntary
- The names of participants in the study will not be used in any reporting, nor will any information be published which may be used to identify individuals.
- All information shared in this interview and participant observation will be held within strict confidence by the researcher.
- All interviews will be recorded unless the interviewee objects. All records will be kept in a locked room at UNBC for a maximum of five years and will be accessible only to the researcher.
- All notes and data will be under the control of this researcher only to maximize the confidentiality of all participants and the information that is provided to the greatest extent possible.

- Please feel free to ask any questions that you may have regarding the research, or the confidentiality of this information at any time.
- The results of this research and the workshop will be made available in report form to each participant prior to the end of December 2012.
- Any complaints about this study can be directed to the Office of Research at the University of Northern British Columbia, 250-960-6735 or reb@unbc.ca

Thank you for your time!

How Destination Attributes Impact Mountain Tourism: Interview Consent Form

Purpose and goals of research: The purpose of my research is to understand how the different features of a location effect destination selection for mountain bike tourists. This interview will help me as a researcher evaluate past actions and to inform future research and management and planning decisions on this topic.

How Participants Were Chosen: Participants are chosen because they are mountain bike tourists, currently on a trip. They must have travelled from outside the Yukon primarily for mountain biking. A ratio of 60% male and 40% female research participants is required for this study. Participants will be asked to allow the researcher to observe their mountain bike tourism experience. Participants may also be asked to take part in an interview. The interview will take approximately one hour.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: The names of those participating in the study will not be used in any reporting, nor will any information be published which may be used to identify individuals. All information shared in this interview will be held within strict confidence by the researcher. Only the researcher and his supervisory committee will have access to the respondents' responses. All interviews will be recorded unless the interviewee objects. All records, recordings and duplicates will be kept in a locked room at UNBC and will be accessible only to the researcher. The information will be kept until it is no longer needed for this or future research projects for a maximum of five years. After this time, all information and materials related to the interview will be destroyed by a commercial service.

Potential Risks And Benefits: This project has been assessed by the UNBC Research Ethics Board. The potential risk is time away from vacation for participants. The benefit of participation is learning about research and reflecting on personal experience and decision making processes. I do not consider there to be any serious risks to participation. I hope that by participating you will have a chance to provide input into better understand mountain bike tourism.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and, as such, you may choose not to participate. If you participate, you may choose to not answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and you have the right to end the interview at any time and have all the information you provided withdrawn from the study.

Research Results: The data of the study will be used in my masters thesis. The thesis will be publicly available to all participants after January 2013 through the UNBC Library.

In case of any questions that may arise from this research, please feel free to contact Blake Rowsell (rowsell@unbc.ca) or his supervisor: Dr. Pat Maher (maherp@unbc.ca).

A summary (excerpts) of the initial research results as well as information on how to access the final project report will be distributed to all interviewees.

Complaints: Any complaints about this project should be directed to the Office of Research, UNBC, (250) 960-6735; email reb@unbc.ca.

I agree to being interviewed. _____ **Y** _____ **N**

I agree to the interview being taped. _____ **Y** _____ **N**

I would like to remain anonymous in this study. _____ **Y**_____ **N**

I have read the above description of the study and I understand the conditions of my participation. My signature indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

(Name—please print) (Signature) (Date)

Appendix B: Interview Script

How destination attributes impact mountain bike tourism

Interviewee Name: _____

Interviewee Contact Information: _____
Email: _____

Interviewer: _____
Date: _____

Interview Time: Start_____
Finish_____

Reviewed study purpose with interviewee: ☐

Reviewed consent form with interviewee: ☐ Copy of signed consent form left with interviewee: ☐

Provided contact information to interviewee: ☐

This interview is being carried out to try to understand how mountain bikers choose destinations for mountain bike destinations.

You have received an information sheet and consent form, which indicates your consent to this interview. The interview is going to be recorded and transcribed, but your identity will remain anonymous.

A. I would like to begin by asking you to describe your last mountain bike holiday

B. Where is your favourite place to mountain bike?

Was there ever a time you didn't enjoy riding at your favourite place?

Can you tell me about your favourite mountain bike trip?

What do you especially like about these places or trails?

What other factors make for a great ride?

Where is your dream place to bike?

What was your worst ride?

Next, I'd like to think about some of these factors that influence where you ride.

C. What are the attributes that attract you to MTB destinations?

What trails or locations do you have a particular attachment to?

Why do you have an attachment to them?

D. When you go away for a mountain biking holiday, what factors affect your choice of location?

Why did you choose the Yukon?

Clarification question: What was the role of friends in your decision to travel to the Yukon for a mountain bike holiday?

Probe: If the destination was selected due to reputation or recommendation, what are the attributes that led to that reputation or recommendation?

Please tell me a story (narrative) about a great ride you had in the Yukon

E. How does scenery (or setting of the ride) as an attribute affect where you ride?

Probe: What importance do you place on scenery or naturalness in deciding where to ride?
Probe: Why is it important?
What types of scenery do you prefer?
Probe: Why are these preferable?

F. What does trail quality mean to you?

How does trail quality as an attribute affect where you ride?

Probe: What importance do you place on the trail in deciding where to ride?
Probe: Why is it important?
What types of trails and trail features do you prefer?
Probe: Why are these preferable?
What does 'flow' mean to you?

G. How does trail variety as an attribute affect where you ride?

Probe: What importance do you place on riding different or unique trails in deciding where to ride?
Probe: Why is it important?
Probe: Why are these preferable?
How many kilometres do you ride in a day while on a mountain bike vacation?

H. What do you think about meeting other riders on the trail?

I. Is trail information important (i.e., maps, signage) when choosing a mountain bike destination?
Probe: Maps, GPS tracks, signage

J. What are important local services when choosing a mountain bike destination?
Probe: Bike shops, coffee shops, beer/ pubs

We have discussed the most important influences for you in deciding where to travel. Finally I'd like you to think about sources of information that you may use in helping you to make these decisions.

K. What is the role of reputation in your travel decision making?

Could you tell me what different sources you use for information about destinations?

L. What are the most important sources of information?

Could you describe how important a word-of-mouth destination recommendation from a friend or peer would be to you?

Probe: What do you think is important about the content of a word-of-mount recommendation?

M. How does seeing photographs of trails or destinations influence a decision to ride there?
Probe: What do you look for photos of specifically?

N. What type of mountain bike tourism do you normally participate in?

Do you normally participate in guided or independent mountain bike tourism?
Why did you choose to ride on a commercial trip?
Probe: Where might you choose to ride on a guided trip that you wouldn't ride otherwise?
Probe: Why might you these not be of interest?

Thank you. That covers everything I wanted to ask you. Is there anything you think I should have asked you that I didn't, or anything you would like to add?

Appendix C: Mountain Bike Terms

all-mountain: Convergence of freeriding and cross-country; bikes have similar weight and easy pedalling of cross-country bikes, but have the handling of a freeride bike. A recent development and currently one of the biggest trends in mountain biking. Riders use lighter suspension bikes that can be peddled up hill, but can still be used going down on TTFs. (MBTA, 2010; Young, 2008)

baby head: Small boulders on the trail about the size of a baby's head. (Ward, 2012)

banked turn: A corner that has a raised outer edge (bank) to allow riders to ride fast into the corner and maintain speed throughout. Also called a berm.

berm: A corner that has a raised outer edge (usually a pile of dirt) to allow riders to ride fast into the corner and maintain speed throughout without sliding. Also called a banked corner. (Young, 2008)

BMX: Bicycle motocross.

cross-country: Riding style focused on fitness with some technically challenging terrain. Generally, riders ride longer distances on lighter bikes. Bikes are light and range from hard tail (no rear suspension) to 12-cm suspension. (MBTA, 2010; Young, 2008)

cross-country riders: Generally older and affluent riders (MBTA, 2010). Greater female representation, aged 20–55 (MBTA, 2010). More likely to travel long distances and invest more in their mountain bike trips (MBTA, 2010).

dirtbag traveller: An extension of a free and independent traveller, but with an emphasis on low-cost adventure. Many adventure sports enthusiasts remove themselves from normal society to focus on participation in their activity. To enable participation without the confines of holding down a job, participants try to live as cheaply as possible. This is usually accomplished by camping or staying with friends, packing their own food and not eating at restaurants, and driving personal cars with as many people to car pool as possible (Weber794, 2011). Study participant Shawn talked about travelling to places that are free or cheap.

double-track: Overgrown road that is similar to two parallel trails (Ward, 2012).

downhill: The category of mountain biking that uses gravity to assist with riding. This discipline is more aggressive than freeride, but takes advantage of similar terrain. Downhill includes mainly steep hills with rock faces, rock drops, or rock gardens. Trails weave down hills, from one rocky section to another. Riders use speed to overcome obstacles. This discipline is considered to have high risk factors (7staines Mountain Biking (n.d.); Young, 2008).

exposure: A trail that has a high risk if the rider were to fall over or off the edge. Usually, the trail is above a cliff or there is a large drop-off next to the trail.

flow trails: The mountain bike community has started to use the word flow as an adjective to modify a noun (trail) by describing and modifying the type of trails discussed (University of Ottawa, 2012). Flow trails are a new style of trail that pushes the limits of single-track by building trails specifically built for mountain bikes (IMBA, 2012). Flow trails "take mountain bikers on a terrain-induced roller-coaster experience with little pedaling and braking necessary. This style of trail typically contains features like banked burned, rolling terrain, various types of jumps, and consistent and predictable surfaces; conspicuously absent are abrupt corners or obstacles" (IMBA, 2012).

free and independent travel: The vacation is independently organized with either formal or informal accommodation (Lamont & Causley, 2010). In the case of mountain-bike tourism, this usually means packing the car with gear and bikes and heading out to a destination.

freeride: Category of mountain biking that fits between downhill and all-mountain. Gravity-fed riding using shuttling or hike-a-bike to get to the trail head. Heavy bikes with 17–20 cm of suspension are used. This category is focused on TTFs, including large jumps, narrow bridges, and rock drops (Young, 2008).

freerider: Predominantly male, aged 15–55. Technically skilled riders who participate for the thrill and bragging rights. Traditionally spend less on accommodations but frequent restaurants and bars (MBTA, 2010).

hard tail: Cross-country bike with no rear suspension; rigid frame in the rear (7staines Mountain Biking, n.d.).

hike-a-bike: Riders whose bikes are too heavy to ride uphill will push their bikes up to the top of the trailhead, either using the downward trail or an alternative road if possible.

lift accessed: Using the ski lift during the summer to access bike trails. In most cases, these are downhill or freeride trails.

mountain bike tourism: Mountain bike tourism includes an array of products and packages that appeal to a broad range of biking interests (MBTA, 2010).

MTB: mountain bike.

MTBR: Mountain Bike Review (MTBR.com) is a consumer review network. Provides reviews (both site-based and independent) and information on products. One the largest and most respected review websites.

NSMB: North Shore Mountain Biking (NSMB.com). This mountain bike e-magazine provides information and reviews. Has a very large following and is popular in Canada for the mountain bike forums section.

out and back ride: A trail that is ridden to a point, then the return is a retracing of the route (Ward, 2012).

shuttling: Using several vehicles, usually trucks or SUVs with multi-bike racks to get riders to higher-elevation trailheads. Generally, one of two systems are used: "odd man out" or "ferrying." In the odd man out scenario, riders use one vehicle and take turns driving and riding to ensure there is always a pick up at the bottom of the trail. In the latter, two vehicles for ferrying are used and all riders ride together. One vehicle is left at the bottom to be used to retrieve the vehicle left at the top.

single-track: Narrow trail or path that allows for single-file riding only (Singletracks, 2012).

switchback: Trail feature that involves a sharp turn, usually on steep hills (Singletracks, 2012).

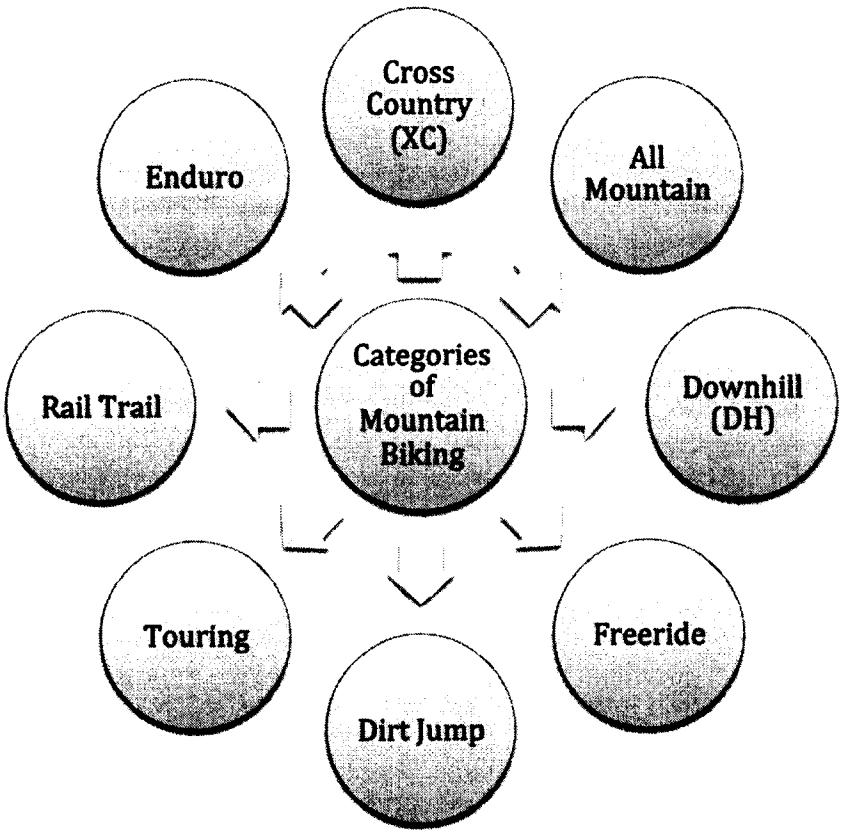
technical: Obstacle and trail features that require added skill to complete. May be unrideable by beginner riders (Singletracks, 2012).

technical trail Features (TTFs): Obstacles, features, or design elements (usually man-made) on a mountain biking trail that improve trail flow or add difficulty in order to challenge the skills of trail users. TTFs are an important part of mountain biking trails and are meant to enhance the mountain biking experience. Normally, a mountain biker has the option to ride or bypass a TTF. Trail elements constructed solely for the purpose of enhancing trail safety or access (e.g., a

bridge crossing a stream) or to ensure ecological or commemorative integrity are not considered TTFs (Parks Canada, 2010; Young, 2008).

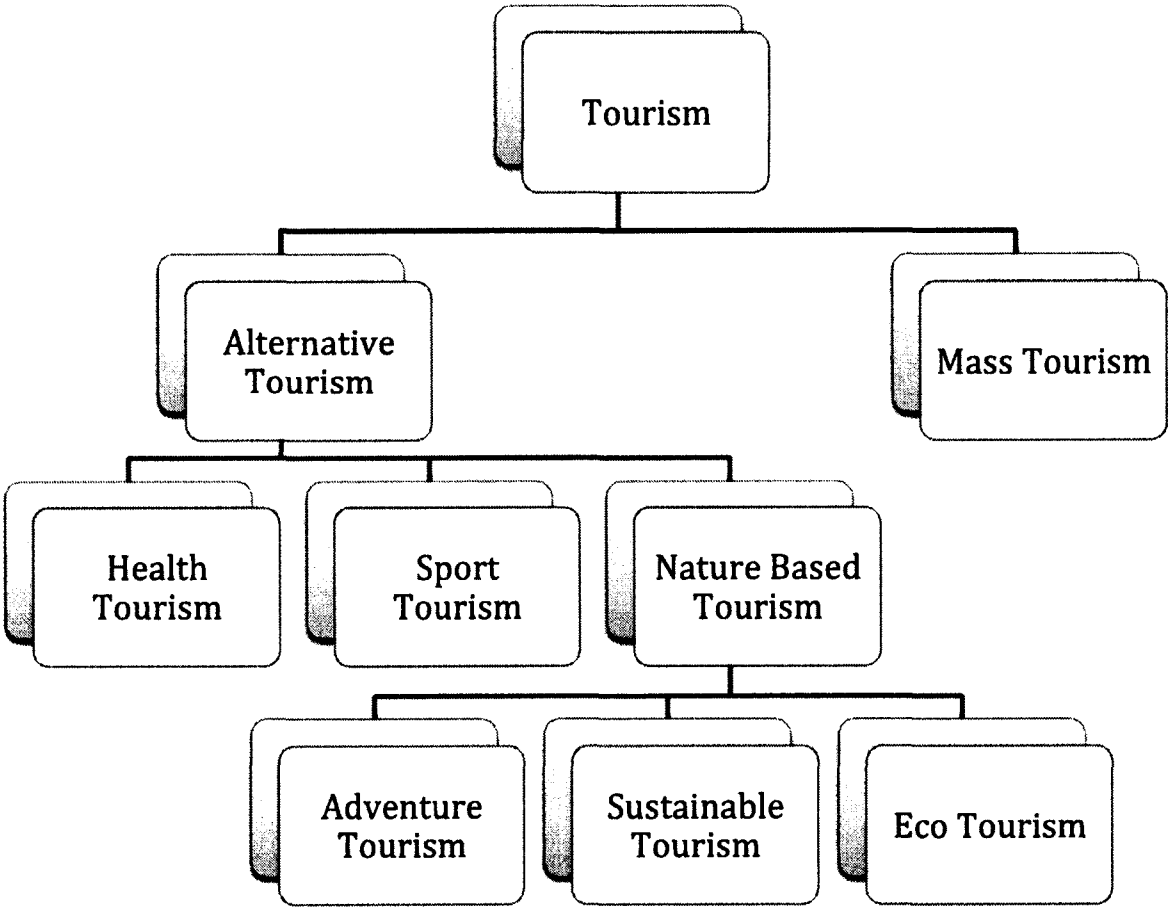
TTFs: See technical trail features.

Appendix D: Categories of Mountain Biking



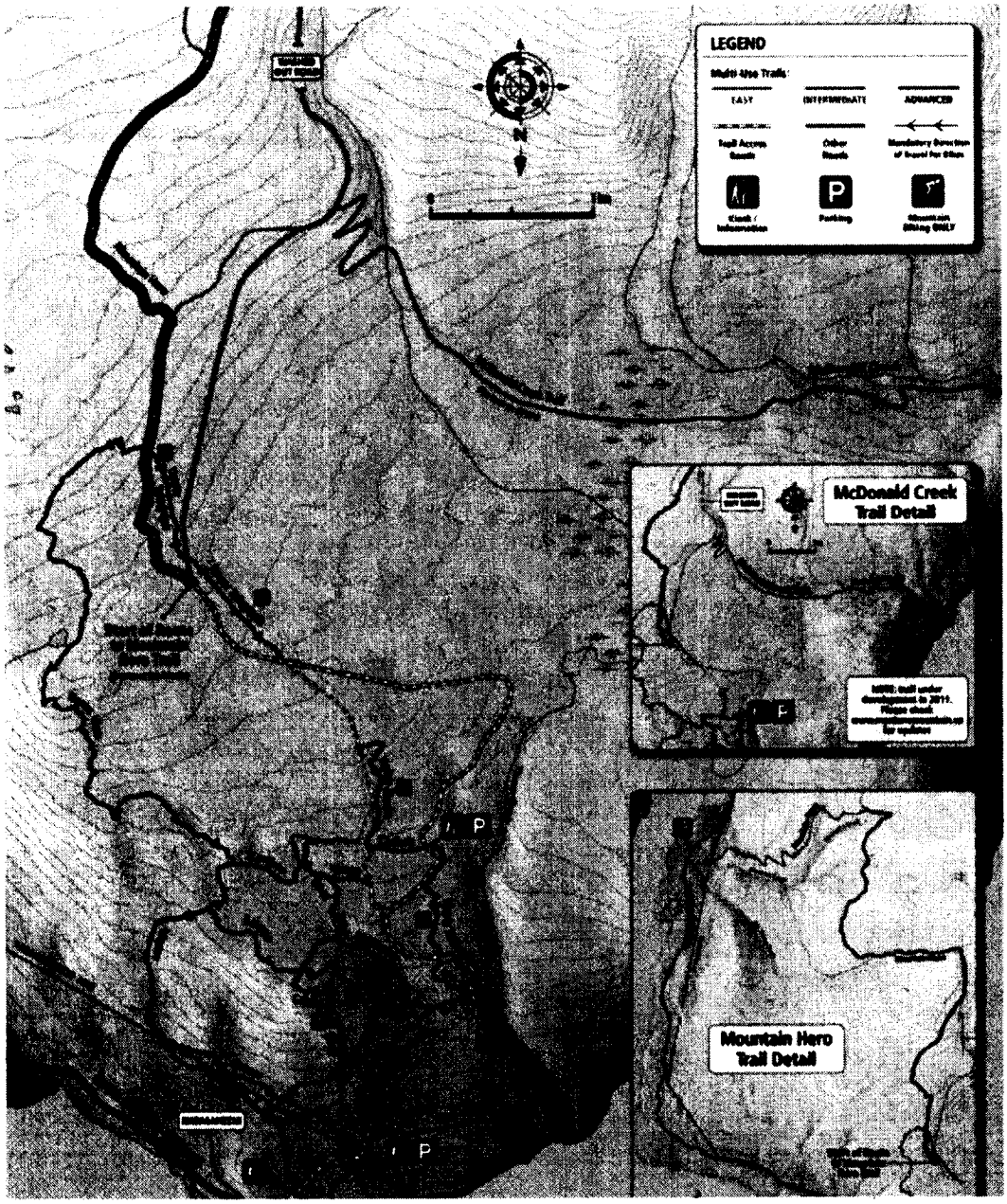
(Adapted from: Freeman, 2011; MBTA, 2010)

Appendix E: Tourism Dimensions

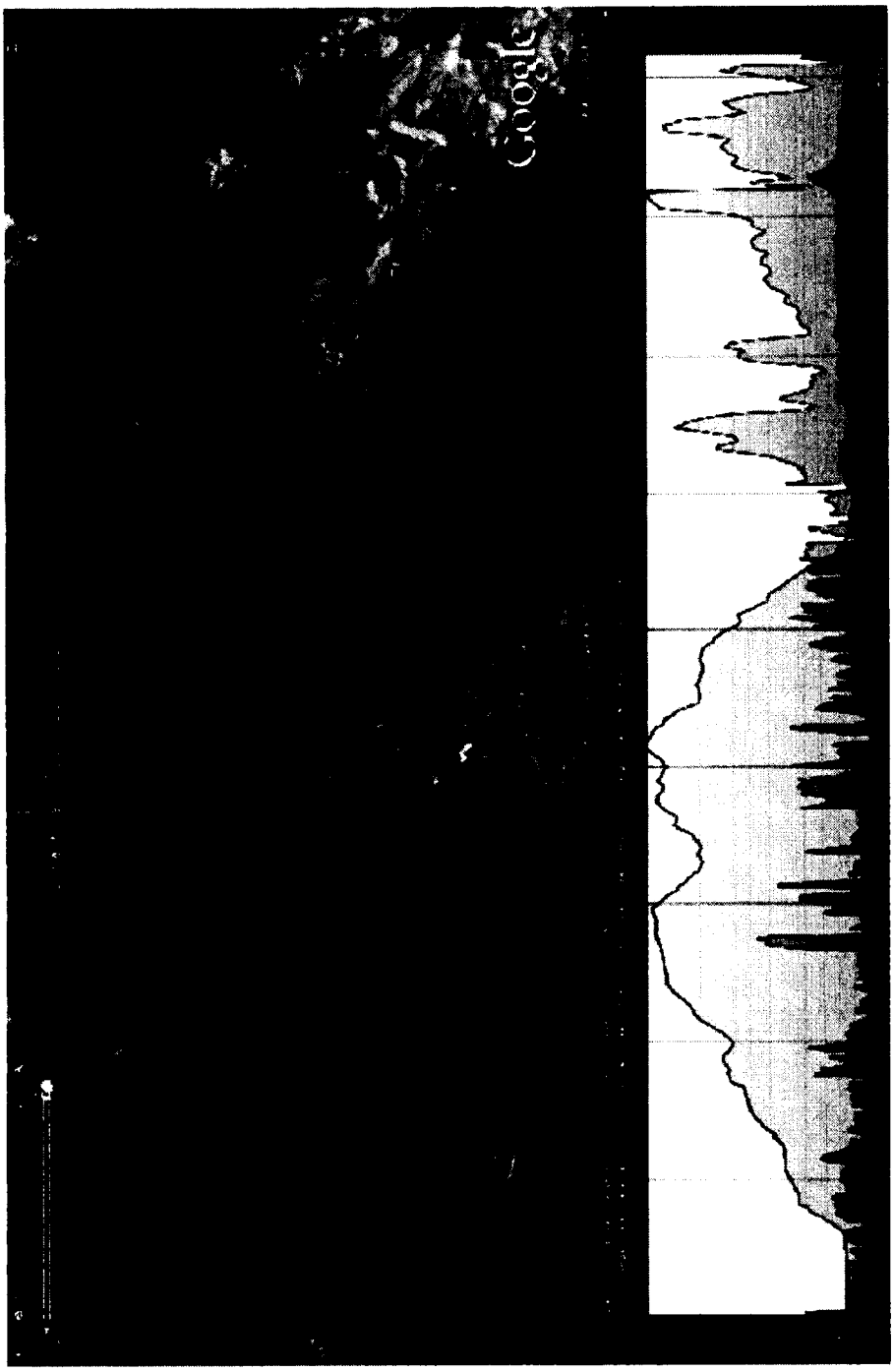


(Adapted from: Buckley, 2000; Hall, 2003; Neirotti, 2003; Weaver & Lawton, 2006)

Appendix F: Montana Mountain Trail Map

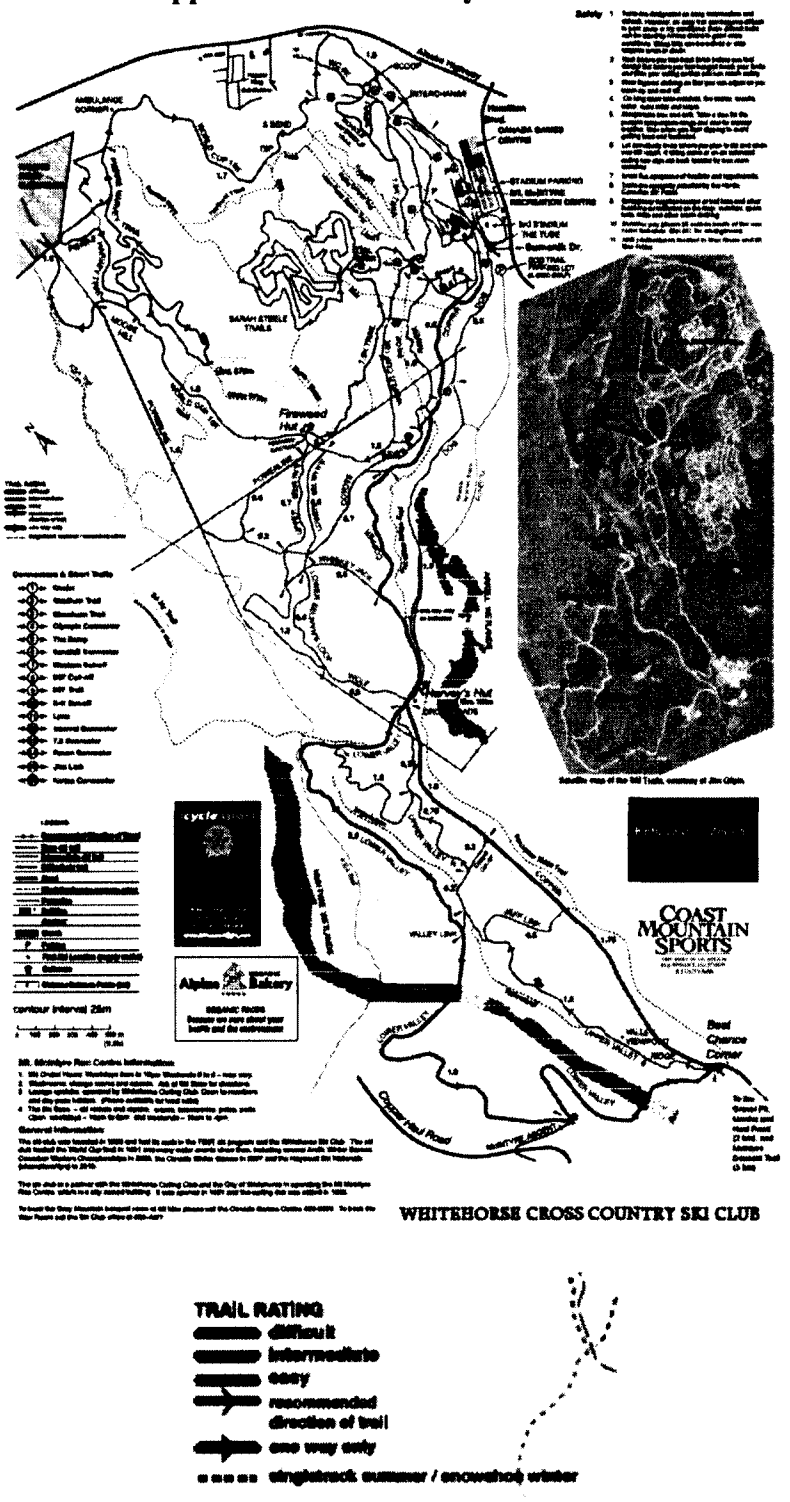


Appendix G: Mountain Hero Trail Details



Legend:
Orange: elevation profile Purple: rider speed

Appendix H: Mt. McIntyre Ski Area



(Source: http://www.xcskiwhitehorse.ca/trailmaps.html)