

## BENEFITS OF SLOW TOURISM FOR LOCAL ECONOMIES

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**Abstract:** *Slow tourism or slow travel has traditional and modern forms being an alternative to classic tourism and partially overlaps with ecotourism, scientific tourism in protected areas, sustainable tourism and sustainable rural tourism with its niche forms as well as slow food tourism and slow tourism, play a decisive role, although still difficult to quantify, in sustainable rural development, because incomes remain in the destination economy for a longer time than in other types of tourism. Slow tourism is partly dependent on communication and information technologies because the Internet helps tourism consumers to interact with other slow tourists, to locate products/services and to provide information about this form of tourism. Practicing this form of tourism requires for consumers' rules whose observance implies benefits for everyone, environmental, centrality, conservation, development, sensory and economic-social use, involvement, jobs and satisfaction of the destination visitor. The main benefits of practicing slow tourism are the personal development of the tourism consumer, the improvement of the economic situation of the destination and the sustainable development of urban and rural destinations.*

**Keywords:** *rural area, sustainable development, slow tourism, slow travel, benefits*

### INTRODUCTION

Slow tourism or slow travel (2.25), are in tourist literature, "relatively ambiguous" concepts (11) or contested (8), and are based on the concept of "speed" (7), which explains the logos or advertising materials of travel agencies practicing this form of niche tourism in rural areas (19) and have chosen as an illustration of this concept animals known for their slowness (hedgehogs, water buffalo, turtle, elephant, snail) or the symbol spiral, which mimics the pattern on the snail shell (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Promotional logos of travel agencies who practice slow tourism

Slow tourism is usually associated in researches made by some researchers (7,8) with sustainable practices that take into account the impact of tourism in general and rural tourism in particular, on the economy, environment, society, authenticity of rural space (22, 24) thus opposing mass tourism (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Table tourism vs. Slow tourism

<b>Table tourism</b>	<b>Slow tourism</b>
Quantitative character	Qualitative character
Accommodation in resorts and high capacity hotel units	Accommodation in boarding houses, accommodation units with reduced capacity
The journey coincides with the movement	Movement is part of the journey
Continuous contact with the workplace	No contact with the workplace
Reduced contact with residents and place visited	Substantial contact with the place visited and real communication with the residents
Standardized experiences	Authentic experiences (23)
Dominant transport, air transport (20)	Dominant transport, rail transport, road transport (20)
Fast-moving destinations (20)	Slow motion (20)
The ubiquity of communication technologies	Getting rid of communication technologies
Group options at destinations	Individual options at destinations
Catering services	Traditional local diet
Passive tourists	Active tourists
Fast pace, speed	Slow pace
Visiting many tourist attractions	Authentic, local character of destination (21)
High flexibility of movement	Reduced flexibility

Source: (13, 18, 20, 21, 23)

Some authors, however, question the possibility of the real practice of slow tourism in our age so dominated by extremely fast lifestyles (12) but this form of tourism can be practiced in any urban or rural destination with a tourist vocation (18) but is especially popular on traditional routes, agrotourism farms, spas such as hiking tourism, equestrian tourism, cycling, in Central America, North America (26), Southeast Asia or Australia. In the last ten years, it has also developed in Europe, in countries such as Finland, France, Italy (26.28), Romania (19.20), Serbia (3), Slovenia (28) or Sweden (26).

According to some researchers (9), slow tourism was preceded by slow food tourism (6), a phrase in which slow food means food produced or prepared according to local culinary traditions, usually using high quality local ingredients, an element common to agrotourism also. Cittáslow is an example of a network of cities, or small agro-industrial towns, with thermal waters, which aims at qualitative local urban development on the same principles as the slow food movement (14). These forms of niche tourism, difficult to quantify at the moment, contribute substantially to the sustainable development of tourist destinations, both urban and rural.

## **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

Because slow tourism involves traveling to destinations with an urban or rural vocation, for an extended period of time at a slow rhythm, allowing the tourist a deep authentic cultural experience, in this study we analyzed the benefits of practicing in local communities, with the aim of proposing the replacement of the slow tourism phrase with the phrase - temporalities of tourism - understood as a new approach focused on moments lived or an alternative and niche form of tourism associated with sustainable practices, which is based on the impact of this form of tourism on local economies, the natural environment, society and the authenticity of the destination. The authenticity of the tourist product is given by the capacity of the promoted destination to offer non-standardized services/products that make a difference and that are not found elsewhere.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Practiced in different places or urban or rural destinations, slow tourism has traditional forms, such as ecumenical tourism, pilgrimage tourism and modern forms such as yoga tourism (5) but as an alternative form of classical tourism (1), it overlaps:

- a. partially, over ecotourism and scientific tourism in protected areas;
- b. sustainable tourism due to its sustainability component (13,15);
- c. sustainable rural tourism, with its niche forms, agrotourism, farm tourism, forestry tourism, because it contributes to the sustainable development of small isolated communities.

Moreover, some researchers consider (10,19) that slow tourism is the "umbrella" of several types of tourism with which it shares its characteristics: cultural tourism, rural tourism, agrotourism, farm tourism,

forestry, ecotourism, wine tourism, culinary tourism, nature tourism, industrial heritage tourism, religious/spiritual tourism, volunteer tourism. Some authors (11) even propose to replace the phrase slow tourism with the phrase "temporalities of tourism" as a tourist phenomenon that deals with "lived moments", considering it a form of:

- alternative tourism (1);
- niche tourism (25);
- sustainable tourism, associated with sustainable practices that take into account the impact of tourism on the economy, environment, society and authenticity;
- the opposite of mass tourism.

We consider that slow tourism is "slow" from the following points of view (2, 28):

1. Approach: the tourist experience is not a "touch-and-go" holiday in which the stamps on the passport or the largest number of places visited are collected, but responds to the concepts of:

- a. knowledge of the destination;
- b. deep understanding of the place;
- c. relaxation, meaning few places to discover and experience;
- d. authenticity, involvement, slowness.
- e. sustainability (15);
- f. time of stay (8,18);

2. Accommodation: tourists are increasingly aware of the effect that their holidays have on the natural environment and the practice of slow tourism means that accommodation spaces meet:

- a. environmental certification standards;
- b. environmental protection;
- c. to preserve local authenticity.

3. Food. From this perspective, slow tourism emphasizes:

- gastronomic tourism;
- farm tourism;
- wine tourism (17);
- historical cultural tourism as an expression of the way of discovering and knowing the history of the destination and the authenticity of the gastronomic traditions and customs.

4. Marketing of products/services offered at the destination;

5. Promoting on the basis of slogans the products/services offered by the travel agencies "Think green!" or "Speak green!", given the needs of customers and talking to them, for their satisfaction and loyalty from this perspective, slow tourism means communication;

6. Movement (natural and mechanical): the means of transport determine the character of the trip, with its adventures, life emotions, experiences and different rhythms. From this perspective, slow tourism means:

- a. natural movement - equestrian tourism, cycling, hiking;
- b. mechanical movement, by bus, by plane, by car, by train, by ship, provided that the movement is:
  - eco-sustainable;
  - slow
  - green.

Some researchers (4,20) note that mass cycling, as a form of slow tourism is a form of mobility, with low carbon dioxide, which indirectly contributes to a higher degree of sustainability through the influence of everyday practices and, directly, as a tourist option, for a certain destination.

7. Lifestyle. Slow tourism aims to cultivate passions, a difficult goal to achieve, rather than meeting needs and from this perspective, slow tourism operators must be able to incite slow tourists and not simply satisfy a temporary need.

8. Communication and information technologies. There are different types of "techno-slow" tourists, which can be defined by their attitude towards technology and its concrete use. "Techno-slow" operators need to provide the right answers to certain customer niches by communicating product/service offerings through the most appropriate communication and information technology channels. From this perspective, in slow tourism the distinction is made between slow tourism:

- a. extreme anti-technological;
- b. moderate anti-technological;
- c. extreme pro-technological

Slow tourism is partly dependent on communication and information technologies because today the Internet helps tourism consumers:

- to interact with other slow tourists;
- to locate the products/services;
- provides information on 'slow motion' (13);

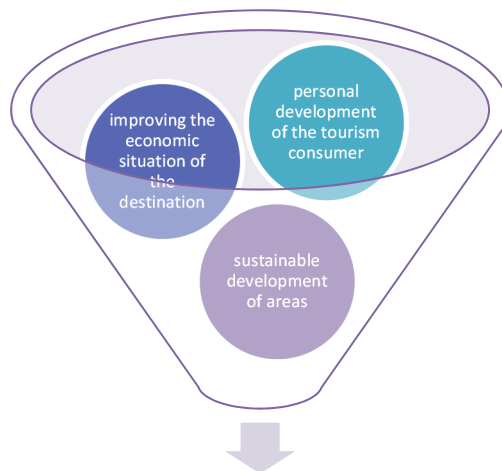
10. The consumer of tourism. The fast tourist is always on the run and makes noise with the rest of the group, while the slow tourist is driven by curiosity about the world and the need to "take it slower" and from this perspective, to choose or be forced to be a slowly tourist, aspect requiring rules that benefit everyone:

- a. environment - centrality, conservation, development, sensory use;
- b. economic - atmosphere/predominant character of the place, crafts, natural products, specificity of the area, traditions;
- c. social - involvement, jobs, visitor satisfaction, health.

At the intersection between environmental and economic benefits is sustainable development, at the intersection between economic and social benefits, equitable development and at the intersection between social and environmental benefits, qualitative development (7,28).

We consider that the main benefits of practicing slow tourism can be summarized as follows (Figure 2):

- personal development of the tourism consumer;
- improving the economic situation of the destination;
- sustainable development of areas.



The benefits of slow tourism

**Figure 2.** The benefits of slow tourism

These benefits of slow tourism or slow travel, for the sustainable development of urban and rural tourist destinations include:

- attracting certain market segments;
- strengthening the sense of identity and pride of the destination due to agriculture, traditional occupations and local gastronomic products;
- practicing activities that involve rather enjoying the tourist experience (16);

- protection of the natural environment (27);
- focusing on quality, rather than quantity, and spending money on a destination over a longer period of time;
- reducing financial outflows to foreign suppliers, generating jobs and additional income for residents.

We consider that most of the benefits claimed for the practice of slow tourism belong to the tourists themselves:

- a. a clearer awareness of the residents' environment and the social impact of their visit on them;
- b. a broader and deeper knowledge and perspective on the places they visit and on the residents;
- c. daily escape;
- d. more satisfying holiday experiences;
- e. relaxation.

Practicing this form of tourism, slow tourism we learn to take:

- everything that the urban or rural tourist destination offers us - gastronomy, hospitality, natural landscapes, local traditions and customs;
- to get involved in local activities living as residents, participating in country life, farm;
- to live slowly, because daily life stresses us physically and mentally and depends on us how we protect ourselves;
- communicate and make friends with residents;
- to give the necessary time to the place visited because you cannot get acquainted with that place until after you have spent a long time there (7,8);
- to make memories, because the only thing we take home are the experiences, feelings and memories of life from tourist destinations.

To enjoy the benefits of slow tourism, the tourist should, that before making a decision on how he wants to spend his vacation to be careful on the following issues:

- to make organic options (food purchased from local farms and shops) and ecological (agrotourism) options close to the place of accommodation;
- to start by exploring the areas closest to the accommodation, then visit the places of interest around, asking for information from the locals;
- to meditate in order to be constantly in shape;
- don't forget that new places help you learn new things better;
- to choose to live in rented spaces, affordable and allowing them to bathe in the local culture;



- to take an extended vacation, in order to be able to attach to the place/destination. For this tourist must respect the following rules: (28):
- to allow time to return home, to reconsider the lived experience;
- to choose the destination according to his expectations;
- obtain credible information about the destination (8);
- to purchase products and souvenirs that support the local economy and contribute to the sustainable development of the destination (15,18);
- to be interested in the ecological policy of the destination;
- to be open to all the experiences offered by the place visited;
- to respect the traditional circuits of the destination;
- to adapt to local customs and traditions;
- follow local rules without offending or conflicting with residents;
- to establish contacts with those who produce tourist products/services;
- obtain information on the regulations regarding the protected areas;
- to plan their holiday at certified travel agencies;
- to stay in accommodation units and choose services that are close to the environment and the concerns of residents.

We believe that well-managed slow tourism can offer new ways of thinking through the relationship that connects:

- a. concern for the non-degraded natural environment;
- b. pleasant experiences that can support lifestyle change;
- c. good communication practices with residents;
- d. good environmental management practices.

Those who develop tourism products for slow tourism must keep in mind that:

- the slow tourist wants to know and experience the reality of the destination, which must be - authentic;
- the slow tourist must get in touch with the local reality - contact with the residents;
- the slow tourist must have deep experiences and desires - emotions;
- the slow tourist must exploit the destination calmly and outside the traditional circuits, examining the services offered;
- to know the ways of environmental quality management - sustainability;
- to go at his own pace and look for relevant information - travel time, information.

## CONCLUSIONS

Slow tourism or slow travel was preceded by the following forms, slow food tourism in which this notion means, food or culinary preparations obtained in accordance with local traditions, using high quality local ingredients, a common element and agrotourism and cittáslow is an example of a network of small agro-industrial towns, which have thermal waters, landscapes, natural parks, which aims at qualitative local development on the same principles of sustainability as the slow food movement.

The main benefits of slow tourism for the sustainable development of urban and rural tourist destinations are, attracting certain market segments, strengthening the sense of identity and pride of the destination due to agriculture, animal husbandry, traditional occupations and gastronomic products, practicing activities that involve enjoying the tourist experience, protection of the natural environment, the best management practices of the quality of the products/services offered, generation of new jobs and additional income for residents of alternative activities. Slow tourism, well managed by the actors on the tourism market, can offer new ways of thinking through the relationship that connect the concern for a non-degraded environment, pleasant experiences that can support lifestyle change, good communication practices with residents and good practices of environmental management.

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