

Review paper

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QUALITY DIMENSIONS IN SLOW TOURISM: TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES FROM A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Tourism faces challenges from today's fast-paced lifestyles, in response to which slow tourism is gaining traction, promoting fewer but richer, more sustainable travel experiences focused on quality over quantity. This study reviews 47 research articles from the Web of Science and Scopus to analyze slow tourism's impact on the sustainability and perceptions of tourism and service quality. It identifies six key quality dimensions: spatial quality, product and service quality, the local quality of life, travel experience quality, perceived service quality, and transport quality. The originality of the study stems from the synthesis of the findings from various sources which enrich the insight into the dynamics and consequences of soft tourism for both travelers and destinations.

Keywords: slow tourism, slow travel, quality, tourist destination, quality dimensions, sustainability

JEL Classification: Q56, Z30, Z32

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, destinations have faced growing challenges in achieving and sustaining competitive advantage, largely due to rapid technological, social, political, and environmental changes. Today's consumers are better informed, with shifting preferences and heightened demands that reshape market landscapes. Additionally, the growing awareness of environmental protection, sustainable development, and socially responsible behavior has

led to a paradigm shift in tourism research. Although sustainable development has long been a focal point, a question arises: Is sustainability truly the future of tourism?

As defined by M. Davenport, M. Delpont, J. N. Blignaut, T. Hichert and G. Van der Burgh (2019), sustainable management emphasizes minimizing harm to society and the environment, particularly by conserving non-renewable resources. J. Abbas (2020) extends this by asserting that sustainable management aims to integrate environmental, social, and economic sustainability within organizational decision-making. Rooted in J. Elkington's (1988) framework, social responsibility has the key role

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requiring organizations to assess success not only through financial outcomes but also by considering the wellbeing of people and the planet (Jaccard, 2013). Given the range of environmental and social challenges faced by tourism, sustainable practices are now critical to sector development (Grizane, 2023), requiring a balance between tourism demands and resource use (Nguyen, Kuo, Lu & Nhan, 2024). The rise of soft tourism, which emphasizes community-led development, offers a model for promoting sustainability by involving local stakeholders in tourism planning and decision-making (Walker & Lee, 2021).

Recently, the public awareness of social and environmental issues has spurred demand for tourism products that align with ethical values. Slow tourism is one such approach, encouraging locally sourced consumption, sustainable energy use, local employment, and the quality-of-life improvements for residents. A review of the relevant literature on slow tourism reveals multiple dimensions of quality as crucial responses to the negative impacts of mass tourism in an accelerated world. The existing research gap regarding quality in slow tourism presents a significant challenge, as the lack of comprehensive quality assessment standards could limit the potential for consistent and scalable improvements across destinations. Following the identified research gap, the motivation for this review is methodologically in line with J. Paul, W. M. Lim, A. O'Cass, A. W. Hao and S. Bresciani (2021) and Y. Joshi, W. M. Lim, K. Jagani and S. Kumar (2023) in order to create an updated and more comprehensive literature review that addresses the limitations of earlier studies. Based on that, this paper seeks to fill that gap by systematically analyzing the quality dimensions of slow tourism and highlighting the key authors and journals in the field, thereby contributing to a clearer and more refined direction for future research. The research questions in this study are as follows:

RQ1: How has the concept of slow tourism evolved over time?

RQ2: In what ways does slow tourism differ from conventional tourism models and/or mass tourism?

RQ3: What are the key quality dimensions of slow tourism according to the existing literature?

RQ4: Who are the most influential authors, and which are the leading journals in the field of slow tourism?

RQ5: Where should slow tourism research be heading in the future?

Using a systematic literature review of the research articles indexed by the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus, this study contributes to a better understanding of slow tourism. The 47 articles were analyzed and summarized so as to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing knowledge and research findings related to quality aspects in slow tourism. The studies reviewed in this paper explore various drivers of slow tourism, examining the factors influencing tourist satisfaction and behavior, with a strong focus on authentic, locally engaging experiences. By synthesizing these insights, this paper provides a comprehensive understanding of quality in slow tourism, offering destination managers, policymakers, and stakeholders valuable guidelines to enhance the quality and experience of slow tourism destinations.

This study begins with an introduction, which is followed by a theoretical overview of slow tourism, explaining the concept and the research methodology. The main section presents the results and discussion, including a summary table of 47 papers with the key findings, quality dimensions, and citations. The paper ends with a conclusion and the references.

THE THEORETICAL DETERMINANTS OF SLOW TOURISM

Slow tourism is a form of niche tourism. P. Bac Dorin (2014) hypothesizes the development of slow tourism through four steps, considering the evolution of the concept and its development, starting with fast food, transitioning to slow food, then slow city or "*Cittaslow*", and finally embracing slow tourism. Originating from the slow food movement that emphasizes local, sustainable food and community engagement (Jung,

Ineson & Miller, 2014), slow tourism opposes mass tourism by focusing on meaningful, immersive experiences (Heitmann, Robinson & Povey, 2011). In this paradigm, tourists become active participants, choosing depth over breadth in their travel activities (Gürsoy, 2021). Slow tourism prioritizes quality over quantity by encouraging fewer, yet richer, activities, fostering a qualitative approach that aligns closely with sustainable and socially responsible practices.

Mass tourism and slow tourism represent two opposing paradigms within the travel industry, each offering travelers different experiences and characteristics. I. M. Petroman, L. Văduva and D. Marin (2021) define mass tourism as quantitative and emphasize large-scale accommodation in high-capacity resorts and hotels, standardized and fast-paced activities, reduced interaction with locals and reliance on air travel and modern communication technologies. In contrast, slow tourism takes a qualitative approach and favors accommodation in guesthouses or smaller units with limited capacity.

A core element that distinguishes slow tourism from mass tourism is its emphasis on quality. The success of slow tourism destinations relies on their ability to deliver high-quality experiences that align with tourists' expectations for authenticity, community engagement, and environmental responsibility (Heitmann *et al.*, 2011; UNWTO Think Tank, 2016; Fusté-Forné & Jamal, 2020; Gürsoy, 2021). H. Mustafa, B. Omar and S. N. S. Mukhiar (2020) emphasize that creating and providing perceived value for tourists is essential for the strategic development of destinations. Perceived value is the key factor that gives destinations competitive advantage in meeting customer needs (Lu, Geng & Zhuang, 2017). S. Marković (2004) adds that service quality is categorized as low when expectations are not met, and high when they are exceeded, which shows that service quality is directly linked to customer expectations. In today's dynamic environment, internet technologies have transformed traditional marketing, shifting the focus to modern methods, such as electronic interpersonal communication (Kocić & Radaković, 2019), which in slow tourism shapes travelers' pursuit of meaningful, sustainable experiences. Therefore, slow tourism must

consistently meet or exceed expectations in order to provide perceived value.

The Slow City movement emphasizes the authenticity of a location, celebrates local culture and tradition, and enhances spatial quality by retaining distinctive local characteristics of a tourist attraction (Cicek, Ulu & Uslay, 2019). Destination authenticity has a crucial role in the Slow City movement as it contributes to regional economic and cultural development and ultimately improves the quality of life (Chao, 2015). M. Emmendoerfer, T. C. de Almeida, G. Richards and L. Marques (2023) argue that the movement enhances the tourism offer by co-creating local gastronomy, promoting regional identity and encouraging community participation in sustainable tourism. Even in global tourist destinations where they are not the main attraction, agricultural and food products remain essential in enriching the tourism experience (Ristić, Bošković & Despotović, 2019). This is especially true for slow tourism and "green products" (Filipović & Šapić, 2025) which value authentic, local, and sustainable experiences. Increased tourist spending boosts food production, supporting the development of the agricultural sector. Slow tourism creates opportunities for entrepreneurs, especially small producers and service providers, who can innovate and quickly adapt to tourists' specific needs. Entrepreneurship has risen to a pivotal role, becoming essential for market competitiveness and survival (Milohnić & Licul, 2025). Slow tourism creates further possibilities for small businesses to thrive by offering unique, personalized services that align with slow tourism's values compared to mass tourism.

As W. Tu, L. Zhou, B. Y. Haobin and Q. Yan (2022) states, slow tourism destinations emphasize service quality through a blend of local ambience, resource management and cultural integration, which ultimately enhances perceived values and influences tourists' attitudes, emotions and intentions. Based on the previously mentioned literature on slow tourism, quality remains limited, especially in the field of the quality of the products, services, destination, or life of the local people.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the previous review was to identify which quality dimensions are most frequently analyzed in connection with slow tourism and where further research is needed. This was done by applying a systematic review of the scientific literature within a specific field essential for identifying relevant research questions and providing a solid foundation for future studies (Swartz, 2011).

To ensure the transparency of the literature review, the SPAR-4-SLR protocol by J. Paul *et al* (2021) and later on Y. Joshi *et al* (2023) was followed. This protocol comprises three main phases: assembling, arranging, and assessing, which are further divided into six substages: identification, acquisition, organization, purification, evaluation, and reporting. This approach closely parallels the method proposed by B. Kitchenham (2004) and later adopted by J. Bacca, S. Baldiris, R. Fabregat, S. Graf and Kinshuk (2014) and P. V. Torres-Carrión, C. S. González-González, S. Aciar and G. Rodríguez-Morales (2018), which also structures the review into three core stages: planning, conducting, and reporting results. Both methodologies emphasize a systematic and rigorous process that guides researchers from the initial literature gathering through critical analysis to the final presentation of the findings, ensuring clarity, replicability, and methodological rigor. Following these defined stages in creating a literature review helps researchers minimize bias, improve reproducibility and clarity of their research, and synthesizes the existing knowledge. The results are presented based on the approach proposed by T. Blommerde (2023), while some sections were further added to reflect the research goals of this paper.

Assembling

The first assembling phase included the articles indexed in the WoS and Scopus bases. In the first phase, the peer-reviewed early access and published research articles indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases were selected, following the recommendation of B. Mavric, M. Öğretmenoğlu and

O. Akova (2021), who had conducted a bibliometric analysis on slow tourism and highlighted the need for further research based on these databases. These databases were selected because, according to S. Kraus, M. Breier, W. M. Lim, M. Dabić, S. Kumar, D. Kanbach, D. Mukherjee, V. Corvello, J. Piñeiro-Chousa, E. Liguori, D. Palacios-Marqués, F. Schiavone, A. Ferraris, C. Fernandes and J. J. Ferreira (2022), they represent the largest repositories of scientific articles. It is only articles that were selected for the analysis, whereas books, book chapters, conference papers, and working papers were not considered, as suggested by T. Blommerde (2023). When examining all the fields in the two databases, the Boolean operators “or” and “and” were used to identify the articles written in English, spanning the period from January 2008 to March 2024. Only articles in the fields of social sciences; economics, management and accounting; econometrics and finance were considered. After a thorough review of the literature, the following terms were used: “slow tourism,” “service* quality and slow tourism,” “entrepreneurship and slow tourism,” “slow tourism and destination*,” “slow tourism and quality*,” “slow travel,” sustainability*.” The asterisks (*) denote any character, including the possibility of none.

Arranging

The next phase involves the organization and purification of the synthesized literature (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019; Paul *et al*, 2021; Blommerde, 2023). In the cleaning phase, 34 duplicate articles were discarded, and the remaining 133 articles were screened based on their title, abstract, and full text. Subsequently, 39 articles were excluded because they did not fulfil the research objective. The final analysis resulted in the 47 articles that had met the inclusion criteria, 30 from the WoS and 17 from the Scopus database. In the third, assessing phase, a content analysis was carried out, which included the evaluation and reporting of the articles included in the analysis.

Assessing

In the assessing phase, a content analysis was carried out, which included the evaluation and reporting of the articles included in the analysis. This phase was structured according to the TTCM framework (Kraus *et al*, 2022) so as to structure the assessment and analysis of the themes in the literature. The identification of the research gaps was conducted according to the method of T. Blommerde (2023). The results in this section are presented in Table 1, which lists the journals, the main findings, the quality dimensions, and the number of the citations based on Google Scholar in February 2025.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through a thorough search of relevant databases, 47 articles were selected, analyzed and summarized to provide a comprehensive overview of existing knowledge and research findings. This approach allows consideration of a wide range of quality dimensions and not limit the authors to those that affect the satisfaction of guests, the local population and the local economy, but to examine quality in a broader context that supports sustainable goals in tourism.

Table 1 The quality dimensions of slow tourism

No.	Authors	Findings	The dominant quality dimension of the study	Citations
1	A. Klarin, E. Park and S. Kim (2024)	Slowness has extended to most dimensions of our everyday life, such as the slow city, slow management, slow fashion, slow philosophy in general, and slow tourism.	The quality of life	19
2	J. Wu, X. Wang and C. Zhang (2024)	Slow tourists' existential journey is fundamentally an emotional quest.	The quality of life	7
3	F. Baghirov, Z. Bozbay and Y. Zhang (2023)	Individual factors, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intentions to develop an extended model for better understanding slow tourists' decision-making.	Perceived quality	13
4	X. Matteucci and T. R. Tiller (2023)	Controlling the pace is essential to being a slow traveler.	Perceived quality	7
5	F. Fusté-Forné (2023)	Slow tourism motivation factors are accentuated when viewed from the perspective of a geo-tourism destination.	The quality of life	15
6	A. Klarin, E. Park, Q. Xiao and S. Kim (2023)	Slow travel aims to promote tourists' consumption-oriented enjoyment of experience through various travel patterns.	Perceived quality	25
7	O. Kosykh, H. Roh and R. Hart (2023)	The Siberian train tourists' experiences of flow, self-realization, authenticity, and enjoyment positively influenced their self-expression and overall life satisfaction.	Spatial quality	5
8	M. Ladu, S. Battino, G. Balletto and A. Amaro García (2023)	The development of the FI (Feasibility Index) to assess the viability of the Stop Places (SPs) project along a horse trail, integrating the current slow mobility methods for bicycles and pedestrians in the bioregion.	The quality of products and services	16
9	M. E. Menconi, R. Abbate, G. Ceccarelli, A. Grassi, and D. Grohmann (2023)	Rural stakeholders see collaborative maps as effective for promoting tourism and fostering respect for rural place identities.	Spatial quality	4
10	A. C. Moreira, Pereira, C. R., Lopes, C. A. R. Calisto and V. T. Vale (2023)	The <i>Cittaslow</i> perspective leans towards sustainability over environmentalism.	The quality of products and services	14

11	T. Y. Huang, J. S. Chen and W. D. Ramos (2023)	Authenticity and slowness significantly affect tourists' slow food experience.	The quality of products and services	30
12	M. Darvishmotevali, K. Tajeddini and L. Altinay (2023)	Cultural exploration moderates the relationships among experiential festival attributes, perceived value, and behavioral intentions.	The quality of life	28
13	D. D'Uva and A. Rolando (2022)	Developing a strategy to identify the most suitable routes based on spatial quality and walkability/cyclability.	The quality of life	5
14	W. Tu, L. Zhou, B. Y. Haobin and Q. Yan (2022)	Perceived value positively influences attitude, consumption emotion, and behavioral intentions in slow tourism.	Spatial quality	8
15	D. Krešić and M. Gjurašić (2022)	Research interest in slow tourism is rapidly growing, focusing on slow travel, food, sustainability, and immersive travel experiences.	Spatial quality	16
16	A. Manthiou, P. Klaus and V. H. Luong (2022)	This research highlights the gaps in the concepts and practices of slow tourism.	The quality of products and services	62
17	K. Kostilnikova, K. Matlovicova, M. Demkova, P. Mocak, P. K. Mishra, Z. Bujdosó, R. Matlovic and B. Zawilinska (2022)	From the socio-cultural perspective, slow tourism aims to support local communities, especially vulnerable groups facing poverty.	The quality of products and services	6
18	X. Su and H. Zhang (2022)	Understanding wellbeing in tourism involves the dynamic interplay of tourists, tea, and environments over time and space.	The quality of the transportation mode	62
19	T. Božović, M. D. Vujičić, S. Kovačić, T. Jovanović and T. Pivac (2022)	Leisure and research were identified as the main driving motives for travelers' decisions to engage in slow tourism.	The quality of life	2
20	J. H. Kim, B. E. M. King and S. Kim (2022)	The proposed index serves as a practical guide for local government officials to implement slow city principles and policies.	The quality of the transportation mode	38
21	Y. Kebete (2021)	Slow tourism as a unique approach augments the overall tourism activities, mainly within emerging destinations.	Spatial quality	6
22	T. B. Walker and T. J. Lee (2021)	The quality of life and the value of tourism experience complement the <i>Cittaslow</i> approach.	The quality of life	48
23	D. Dimitrovski, S. Starčević and V. Marinković (2021)	The locality, taste and quality of food were found to be the main triggers of visitor satisfaction in slow tourism.	The quality of life	21
24	T. B. Walker, T. J. Lee and X. Li (2021)	The dynamic nature of the tourism industry presents opportunities for promoting sustainability in regions.	The quality of products and services	88
25	L. P. Lin, S. C. Huang and Y. C. Ho (2020)	Virtual reality is a very useful tool for encouraging slow tourism.	Spatial quality	215
26	Z. Serdane (2020)	The implementation of slow tourism relies on individual suppliers without public sector oversight.	The quality of products and services	34
27	F. N. Kucukergin and Y. Ozturk (2020)	The perception of local people related to social change differs according to their gender and duration of stay.	Spatial quality	14
28	S. C. Oliveira (2020)	Slow travel blogs serve as both an informative source and a creator of this travel mode, forming a dialectic process.	Spatial quality	25

29	M. Cicek et al (2019)	Slow City membership has a positive effect on perceived entrepreneurial opportunities and economic development.	The quality of travel experience	41
30	H. J. Park and T. J. Lee (2019)	Eliciting positive feelings and brand associations are effective marketing strategies that boost tourist visits.	Spatial quality	70
31	J. H. Han, J. S. Kim, C. K. Lee and N. Kim (2019)	Place attachment significantly influences attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, thereby impacting behavioral intention.	The quality of products and services	148
32	M. Ahlawat, P. Sharma and P. K. Gautam (2019)	The study identifies the five key factors for developing slow food tourism: government support, improved infrastructure, inter-industry cooperation, local awareness, and marketing.	Spatial quality	33
33	M. B. Duignan, S. I. Kirby, D. O'Brien and S. Everett (2018)	Event legacies that boost local sustainability foster authentic connections with communities and create a more leisurely visitor experience.	The quality of the travel experience	34
34	I. Sigurdardottir (2018)	Integrating slow adventure, wellness, and outdoor recreation in equestrian tourism offers significant support to small entrepreneurs in developing their products.	The quality of products and services	42
35	L. P. Lin (2018)	Onsite tourism program design significantly influenced visitors' intentions for slow travel.	The quality of the travel experience	23
36	A. Brown and B. Jeong (2018)	Specific standards are needed for Slow City branded products, and local residents should receive quality assessment training.	The quality of the travel experience	13
37	Y. Y. Sun and Z. W. Lin (2018)	The "slowness" at the destination enhances valuable experiences and memories through engaging with people.	The quality of life	73
38	C. Foley (2017)	Friendship and community flourish more easily in environments where people prioritize genuine connections over the pursuit of the status and saving time.	The quality of the travel experience	42
39	L. P. Lin (2017)	To promote a meaningful slow pace and enhance the happiness of potential slow travelers, dynamic partnerships should be established between tour operators and destination managers.	Service quality	76
40	H. Oh, A. G. Assaf and S. Baloglu (2016)	This study contributes to a new understanding of speed, mobility, temporality, pace, tourists' time practices, and the influences of fast and slow travel modes on the literature.	The quality of the travel experience	350
41	R. F. Chao (2015)	Slow tourism promotes sustainable development through tourism campaigns.	The quality of life	10
42	B. Hatipoglu (2015)	The residents are supportive of the initiatives and are becoming more involved in the <i>Cittaslow</i> activities.	The quality of the travel experience	115
43	A. Presenza, T. Abbate and R. Micera (2015)	The impact of <i>Cittaslow</i> certifications on the destination policy, planning, and management.	The quality of the travel experience	112
44	J. E. Dickinson, L. M. Lumsdon and D. Robbins (2011)	Slow travel involves the holiday style and travel mode choices, with walking, cycling, buses, coaches, and trains supporting slow travel, unlike air and car travel.	The quality of the travel experience	464
45	L. M. Lumsdon and P. McGrath (2011)	Slow travel is viewed as a travel mindset rather than a tangible product, focusing on reduced speed rather than slowness itself.	Spatial quality	438
46	D. Conway and B. F. Timms (2010)	Slow tourism complements various alternative tourism types, such as sports tourism, heritage tourism, agrotourism, and ecotourism derivatives.	The quality of products and services	262
47	J. G. Molz (2009)	Paying attention to pace and the way pace is socially encoded in media contexts reveals a more complicated narrative of mobility and modernity.	The quality of the travel experience	239

Results

Based on the analysis of 47 studies in the systematic literature review, it was found that 12 of them employed a quantitative methodology and conducted empirical research. Additionally, 11 studies applied a qualitative methodology, while 10 studies employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Finally, eight of the analyzed studies used a literature review approach to investigate the research topic. The studies were carried out in the context of slow tourism, Slow Tourists' experiences and motivations, Slow Food experiences and festivals, the Slow City movement and its influence on the environment, and Slow Travel and its influence on the future.

The systematic literature analysis identified several significant quality criteria that are commonly examined in the slow tourism domain. The literature emphasizes the dominant dimensions of quality: spatial quality (11 articles), product and service quality (10 articles), the quality of life of the locals (10 articles), the quality of the travel experience (10 articles), perceived service quality (4 articles) and the quality of transport (2 articles).

Discussion

This research has shown that the body of the literature on slow tourism is experiencing significant growth, which is in line with the findings of B. Mavric *et al* (2021). The research highlights the beneficial effects of slow tourism on the quality of life for both visitors and local populations (Walker & Lee, 2021; Su & Zhang, 2022; Huang *et al*, 2023). Slow tourism fosters social ties, sustainable tourism development, provider satisfaction, and emotional enrichment by emphasizing authentic tourist experiences (Park & Lee, 2019; Kucukergin & Ozturk, 2020). Moreover, studies indicate that slow tourism enhances life happiness and fosters interaction with the locals and cultural involvement (Hatipoglu, 2015; Presenza *et al*, 2015; Foley, 2017; Klarin *et al*, 2023).

The quality dimension of perceived quality in slow tourism primarily refers to the fulfilment of tourists'

expectations of quality experiences in all dimensions of the value chain in a destination (Baghirova *et al*, 2023; Wu *et al*, 2024). The research shows that slow tourism's focus on the authenticity of a destination may significantly influence tourist satisfaction, which ultimately increases perceived value and strengthens return intentions and recommendations (Darvishmotevali *et al*, 2023; Wu *et al*, 2024).

The quality of products and services in slow tourism focuses on an offer that emphasizes the products and services offered at the quality level that guests expect and are willing to pay for, while being sustainable and authentic (Lin *et al*, 2020; Dimitrovski *et al*, 2021). Products and services should fulfil, and even exceed, guests' needs, simultaneously also supporting the local community (Conway & Timms, 2010; Ahlawat *et al*, 2019; Klarin *et al*, 2023).

The quality of travel experiences in slow tourism focuses on promoting meaningful and comprehensive interactions with the local culture, environment and people (Božović *et al*, 2022; Kosykh *et al*, 2023). According to H. J. Park and T. J. Lee (2019) and H. Oh *et al* (2016), it is important to achieve an emotional connection with a tourist destination, as that will encourage repeat visits and recommendations by the guest, which in turn contributes to the success of the destination itself (Oh *et al*, 2016; Park & Lee, 2019).

The final quality factor of transport is essential to slow tourism, emphasizing the sustainable and leisurely travel methods that enhance tourists' wellbeing, environmental consciousness, and the sustainable advancement of tourism (Kucukergin & Ozturk, 2020; Su & Zhang, 2022). Transport modes such as bicycles, walking trails and public transport are in line with the values of slow tourism and support the environmentally friendly travel that enriches the travel experience and enables a more responsible approach to mobility (Kim *et al*, 2022; D'Uva & Rolando, 2022).

In contrast, in the study by B. Mavric *et al* (2021), the concepts of tourist experience and connection to a place were identified as the most frequently studied themes in slow tourism from 2018 to 2020. In addition, the findings of D. Krešić and M. Gjurašić (2022) indicate

an increasing focus on slow food, sustainability and immersive travel experiences in slow tourism. By expanding on these underrepresented areas, this study contributes to the understanding of the quality dimensions in slow tourism and supports future research and development in this area.

The annual scientific production shows that the most productive year was 2023, in which 10 articles were published, followed by 2022, in which 8 articles were published, showing an increasing interest in the quality dimensions of slow tourism in the literature. The most frequently cited articles in the analysis are J. G. Molz (2009) (239 citations), D. Conway and B. F. Timms (2010) (262 citations), J. E. Dickinson *et al* (2011) (464 citations), L. M. Lumsdon and P. McGrath (2011) (438 citations) and H. Oh *et al* (2016) (350 citations). The articles with more than 200 citations were published at least seven years ago.

The analysis of all the authors shows that only two authors contributed a total of three articles on the topic of slow traffic. The authors H. J. Park and T. J. Lee (2019) were cited 194 times, mainly dealing with sustainable tourism and the quality of life in relation to non-motorized transport. The author L. P. Lin (2018) collected 258 citations focusing on service quality, transport quality and the quality of life. Apart from Lumsdon and Walker, who published two articles each, all the other authors contributed only one article. Among the journals, the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* stands out as the most cited, with more than six articles published on this topic. The journal *Sustainability* follows closely behind with four articles, while *Tourism Planning and Development* ranks third with three published articles.

CONCLUSION

Research into slow tourism as a form of alternative travelling is a current topic in tourism research. The results show that this type of tourism needs to be researched further. This review consists of an analysis of 47 relevant scientific articles published in the period from 2008 to 2024 that deal with the

topic of “slow tourism,” focusing on various quality dimensions researched in this area. The systematic SPAR-4-SLR protocol was used to analyze the articles and summarize the results, allowing the identification of critical categories in the research to date.

Based on the comprehensive review, it was determined that a significant research gap exists, which forms the basis for actionable recommendations for future research in the field of slow tourism. Previous research has not adequately considered important quality dimensions, such as the quality of space, the quality of products and services, the quality of life of local communities, the quality of the travel experience, the perceived quality of service and the quality of transport. This omission points to the gap between the conceptual framework and the practical reality of slow tourism, where these dimensions have an important role in shaping both visitor satisfaction and destination sustainability. Among the analyzed studies, spatial quality appears as the most frequently addressed dimension, featuring in 11 papers. This highlights the centrality of physical setting, accessibility, and the character of a place in shaping slow tourism experiences and distinguishing destinations that support such forms of travel. By contrast, service quality is notably underrepresented, suggesting that future research should more closely examine the experiential and operational aspects of service delivery in slow tourism contexts. As academic and practitioner interest in slow tourism continues to grow, the development of more robust frameworks for assessing quality across multiple dimensions, such as guest satisfaction and community impact, is becoming increasingly important. Notably, service quality remains an underexplored area, indicating a clear opportunity for further investigation.

The studies reviewed offer a range of practical insights for tourism stakeholders, emphasizing that slow tourism enhances the travel experience by fostering meaningful connections with local communities, promoting sustainable practices and increasing holistic wellbeing. The increasing academic focus on this topic reflects growing public and institutional

awareness and suggests that destinations should proactively adapt to this emerging market segment.

Tourist boards and local governments are encouraged to promote slow travel experiences, such as longer stays, immersive cultural experiences and ecofriendly practices as distinctive assets in an increasingly competitive tourism landscape. Incorporating local produce and traditions into tourism offerings can be a timely response to the fast pace of modern life. Slow tourism offers a counterbalance and invites travelers to connect with a place, time and culture in a more conscious and enriching way.

Destination management organizations should therefore prioritize the development of locally rooted, sustainable tourism experiences in their strategic planning. Not only does this reflect travelers' changing preferences but also promotes more resilient and community-oriented tourism models.

In addition, soft tourism's thematic focus on spatial quality, product and service quality, the quality of life for the locals and the overall experience of the trip emphasizes its potential to deliver emotionally engaging and high-quality visitor experiences. Destinations can capitalize on these attributes by offering authentic experiences rooted in the community that strengthen attachment to a place and contribute to both visitor satisfaction and the wellbeing of the locals.

Although this review offers a comprehensive overview of the quality dimensions explored in the literature on slow tourism, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study is limited to the publications indexed in the selected academic databases, which may have excluded the relevant grey literature or industry reports that provide practical insights into the implementation of slow tourism principles. Second, the interpretation of the dominant quality dimensions remains partly subjective, particularly in cases where multiple themes were present within a single study.

Furthermore, future research should examine how spatial quality and perceived quality influence the success of slow tourism destinations. A deeper

understanding of the factors that shape traveler perceptions and satisfaction could support more effective destination management and enable local stakeholders to refine and strengthen their tourism offerings. In addition, future research should examine how distinctive products and services developed in slow tourism contexts (often deeply embedded in local culture and sustainable practices) could be selectively adapted and offered in other destinations. This raises the following question of how to engage tourists that do not initially self-identify as slow travelers. Building on the recommendations of the previous studies analyzed in this paper, which are largely focused on the further development of slow tourism destinations, research should explore the potential of these offerings to attract a broader visitor base. It should also examine the possible deterrents that might prevent such travelers from choosing slow tourism destinations.

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