

Exploring Slow Tourism in Rural Territories: Insights From the Alentejo Region in Portugal

Marta Amaral

Abstract: **Background:** Slow tourism appeals to competent, independent travelers seeking meaningful and authentic experiences. This umbrella term encompasses responsible and sustainable tourism practices and holds a significant potential for the development of rural territories.

Research objectives: The article offers a deep literature review that addresses slow tourism conceptualization and its importance for rural territories. I also aimed to verify whether accommodation business entrepreneurs in Alentejo (Portugal) engage in slow tourism in their website communication strategies.

Research design and methods: A qualitative methodological approach was adopted based on a literature review. The empirical phase involved a systematic examination of the messages contained in communication slogans and commercial offerings on accommodation websites.

Results: Although many companies do not explicitly identify as part of the slow tourism movement, their practices align with its principles. The latter promote authentic, relaxed, and immersive experiences linked to nature, local cuisine, culture, and sustainability.

Conclusions: The results suggest that adopting the principles of slow tourism in rural territories provides visitors with authentic experiences and encourages the sustainable development of the Alentejo region.

Keywords: slow movement, slow tourism, sustainability, rural territories, accommodations, Baixo Alentejo

JEL Codes: L83, Z32, Q01, M31

Suggested citation:

Amaral, M. (2025). Exploring slow tourism in rural territories: Insights from the Alentejo Region in Portugal. *Social Entrepreneurship Review*, 2, 70–90. <https://doi.org/10.15678/SER.2025.2.05>

1. Introduction

The slow movement has occurred in parallel with several contemporary changes in tourism. The notion of slowness has developed an increasingly strong link to the tourism industry, thereby creating a shift in the prevailing mass tourism and fast tourism paradigm. Also, sustainability turns out to hold greater importance to minimize tourism impacts in overcrowded territories. In fact, concerns related to overtourism in destinations enriched the discussion with the importance of sustainable planning and strategies for tourism development and the significance of alternative tourism forms.

In the 1980s, slow food and slow city movements brought new, alternative fields of tourism, and slow tourism became popular. In this scenario, the characteristics of contemporary and postmodern tourists include their frequent travels, extensive competence, and high expecta-

tions. The quality of tourism experience has enhanced compared with previous periods; tourists are independent and seek new and valuable insights (Moira et al., 2017).

Moreover, authors propose slow tourism as an alternative sustainable approach. This form of tourism displays a distinct set of guidelines, emphasizing interactions with local communities and proximity to cultural and natural attractions. It advocates the consumption of locally produced goods and the utilization of renewable energy sources. Additionally, it promotes an ecological and ethical perspective, highlighting the conservation of the quality of life for both residents and visitors (Valls et al., 2019).

Slow tourism strongly relates to the sustainable tourism market. Both share the ability to assure long-term benefits to the local environment, community, and tourist stakeholders. Slow tourism includes a variety of forms that comply with the slow principles, including slow travel, use of alternative means of transport, and in-depth contact with the natural, social, and cultural environment (Zielińska-Szczepkowska, 2020).

Furthermore, sustainability became an important issue for remote regions or small villages, whose position allows them to benefit from this economic expansion and slow tourism experiences and activities (Serdane, 2017; dall'Aglia et al., 2011). A rural destination with a slow-paced lifestyle could potentially serve as an avenue for slow tourism (Mohamad Noor et al., 2011, 2015).

Despite the growing international research about the slow tourism concept (e.g., Dickinson et al., 2011; Lowry & Lee, 2011; Fullagar et al., 2012), Portugal still lacks studies concerning the relation between sustainability in rural territories and slow tourism products, specifically in the Alentejo region. The shortage of publications mostly concerns the supply side, namely the perceptions of accommodation business entrepreneurs.

Due to the mainly rural nature of its territory, Alentejo frequently associates with the idea of slowness, characterized by a more relaxed pace of life, tranquility, and rural simplicity in terms of its landscapes, culture, heritage, and lifestyle. This makes the region a suitable destination for studying the understanding, perception, and willingness of the supply side, namely the accommodation businesses, regarding the use of commercial strategies linked to slow philosophy – especially slow tourism – in close relation to tourism's sustainable development.

The main objective was to explore the concept and key dimensions of slow tourism, assessing its potential as a form of sustainable tourism in rural territories, with a particular focus on the Alentejo region and its subregion, Baixo Alentejo. Specifically, a deep review of the literature on slow tourism in rural contexts was conducted, considering the socioeconomic changes and the transition from mass tourism to more individualized travel experiences. Moreover, the tourism offer in Alentejo including activities, services, and experiences, and how local entrepreneurs communicate and promote slow tourism were analyzed.

In the future the intention is to provide policymakers and stakeholders with insights and directions about the potential to work for a slow tourism brand in the tourism development strategy for Alentejo.

Accordingly, the article comprises four parts. First, it includes a theoretical overview of contemporary social and economic changes, slow movement philosophy origins, the slow tourism concept with its key dimensions, including tourists' behavior and motivations, and the relation between this type of tourism, rural territories, and sustainability. Second, it outlines the case study of Alentejo and Baixo Alentejo. Third, it describes the methodology used to conduct this research. Fourth, it presents and analyzes the research results. Fifth, offers final considerations, including the study's limitations and proposals for future research.

2. Literature Review

This section presents the conceptual framework of the research, serving as the basis for analyzing the results. It includes a review of the literature on socioeconomic changes and the paradigm shift from mass tourism to alternative and sustainable tourism and new consumer trends. It also examines the evolution of the slow movement and the concept of slow tourism, including its key dimensions as well as the behavior and motivations of slow tourists. Finally, it discusses the idea of slowness in the development of rural tourism and its link to sustainability, with a focus on the characteristics and potential of Alentejo and Baixo Alentejo for slow tourism.

Socioeconomic Changes and Tourism Industry Development

Tourism develops in line with socioeconomic and environmental changes, which influence travel motivations and expectations. Analyzing the different motivations of contemporary consumers may allow us to better understand the needs of those tourists who prefer experiences that differ from traditional standards. The social and demographic trends and the changing values in contemporary society and consumer perceptions promote the development of new products in the hotel, catering, and general tourism industry.

In the early 1970s, economic crises in the West, technological advances, and market liberalization dismantled the Fordist model, giving rise to a post-Fordist and postmodern society characterized by production flexibility, mass customization, and consumer orientation. Accompanying those changes, we have transitioned into a postmodern society where consumer behavior, particularly in the tourism industry, has undergone a profound transformation.

Within this context, the economy displays mainly the dominance and volatility of consumers' preferences, and tourist consumption patterns have also changed considerably. Indeed, contemporary tourists present behavioral patterns that reveal: (a) a clear rejection of traditional forms of mass tourism, such as low-cost package holidays, and looking for more diversified choices; (b) a decline in repeated visits and a growing interest in exploring alternative sites and attractions; (c) a preference for activities aligned with personal lifestyles and self-fulfillment, for example trekking, trucking, sports, or birdwatching; (d) an increasing reliance on digital technologies and media platforms to access information and plan alternative travel experiences; (e) a rapid turnover of preferred destinations and activities, driven by shifting social trends; and (f) a tendency to choose environmentally responsible and personalized accommodation options, such as eco-lodges, consistent with the principles of green tourism (Mowforth & Munt, 2016).

Socioeconomic transformations have driven the evolution of the tourism industry, affecting both consumer trends and supply side adaptation. The demographic changes, for instance population aging, have led businesses to redesign their facilities and services to accommodate senior travelers and to develop tailored cultural experiences. The growing focus on health and well-being has expanded medical and wellness tourism, combining leisure with therapeutic experiences and encouraging demand for more personalized, independent accommodation. Technological progress and social media have further reshaped consumer behavior and impacted the supply side, fostering expectations for highly individualized travel options and greater reliance on digital platforms and virtual reality tools. Climate change has also begun to influence destination preferences, as seasonal shifts and environmental concerns lead travelers to prioritize sustainable and ethical tourism practices. Finally, economic pressures such as

inflation and rising costs have increased demand for direct bookings and loyalty programs, while reducing reliance on traditional travel agencies (Mariano, 2022; International Labor Organization, 2010).

In review, these changes are driving a more flexible, conscious, and digitally connected tourism scenery, where personalization, sustainability, and well-being play central roles.

Postmodernism and a New Paradigm: From Fast to Slow Society

Two paradigms coexist in today's postmodern society. On the one hand, the social model relies on the concept of speed. This framework displays several characteristics, including behavioral ones: (a) a marked tendency to favor a fast-paced life, which makes people rush through tasks and experiences; (b) quantity often valued more highly than quality; (c) a growing dependence on technology, reflecting a general trend toward acceleration; and (d) missing awareness of, or concern for, the planet's identity despite the easy access to information about environment. From this perspective, three fundamental elements outline the current phase of postmodern development: an acceleration of time, an overwhelming expansion of space, and an increased level of individualism (Sari & Lukito, 2017; Khan, 2015).

On the other hand, we identify an emerging paradigm in which slowness is a central value. Although this perspective is not widespread in postmodern society, many individuals reevaluate their priorities, opting for a more intentional way of living, one that fosters harmony with nature, community, friends, and family (Österlund, 2020). In this context, individuals increasingly seek alternative lifestyles that promote deceleration, namely a slower pace of life. They also place a growing emphasis on experiencing quality in all aspects of life, aiming to enhance overall well-being by living according to a personal and sustainable rhythm (Honoré, 2004; Khan, 2015; Sari & Lukito, 2017). This paradigm and the consequent changes in the tourism offer and demand, and in the nature of the tourism product (Dujmović & Vitasović, 2015), usually associate with the post-tourist. This concept presents a different perspective and philosophy of life compatible with the slow paradigm characteristics. According to Pecheniuk and Kiziun (2023), a postmodern tourist avoids the mundane, wants to escape from reality, is perfectly aware of the societal crisis, looks for self-realization, and seeks new experiences. All these characteristics match the slow tourism niche.

Slow movement has thus emerged from cultural reflections on the benefits of engaging in activities that prioritize human-centered values and a more deliberate time (Honoré, 2004). In this sense, "slow" has become a form of countercultural resistance, challenging dominant Western societal structures that promote rapid consumption and relentless efficiency (Clancy, 2018). As part of this broader movement, slow movement and slow living appear as a meaningful alternative – an approach to modern life that embraces slower temporalities to counterbalance the prevailing culture of speed.

The Slow Movement Philosophy and Its Origins

The slow movement philosophy began with the slow food movement, founded in 1989 in Italy by Carlo Petrini as a protest to the spread of the fast-food industry in Europe (Lowry & Lee, 2011). Therefore, the slow movement has roots in ethical forms of production and consumption (Fusté-Forné & Tazim, 2020; Khan, 2015). It relies on the slow principles in several areas of everyday life, such as food, city, travel, transport, work, design, and education (Ferreira et al., 2014; Conway & Timms, 2012). Moreover, this movement acknowledges sustainable development and relates to less waste or zero waste initiatives (Sousa et al., 2021).

The following expressions characterize the slow movement's purposes: (a) slower temporalities – finding the right time in the right situation; (b) locality – the valorization of local potential, which helps to maintain heterogeneity and results in the sustainability of society's identity; (c) social activity orientation – improvement of communities' quality of life and enhancement of the happiness scale within society as a response to the individualism issue; and (d) ecology – improvement of environmental quality and prevention of environmental degradation (Honore, 2004; Sari & Lukito, 2017).

The slow movement philosophy is not a passing phenomenon, a fashion, or an innovative tourism product (Calzati & de Salvo, 2018). It relates to the slow life philosophy and a global social movement that has characterized many socioeconomic elements in local communities in recent years (Honore, 2004; Calzati & de Salvo, 2012). The concept focuses on sustainability, local culture, quality over speed, and avoidance of mass production, presenting a unique framework for business promotion in rural tourism. The philosophy of this movement aims to preserve the unique characteristics of places, people, products, food, and the environment (Walker & Lee, 2021).

Effectively, the slow philosophy brings the opportunity to construct a slow society – one that pays more attention to aspects such as the quality of life, ethical responsibilities, and the value of solidarity between diverse social groups (Salvo, Calzati & Soglia (2019); Calzati & de Salvo, 2019). With slow tourism, this movement quickly adapted to the tourism industry (Balaban & Keller, 2024).

Shortly thereafter, the tourism industry adopted this movement as slow tourism (Balaban & Keller, 2024).

Slow Tourism Concept: Dimensions and Paradigms

Slow tourism research proves well-diversified and multidisciplinary. Several recognized scholars have studied this topic from different perspectives and sustained their studies by trying to present a deep definition of the concept, but the results are not unanimous.

Based on this situation, let me provide a holistic perspective about the concept and its dimensions, to direct attention to its strong relationship with sustainability, the development of rural territories, the already identified social changes, and supply side perspectives, which remain less explored in research.

Authors consider the concept of slow tourism in different ways: as a specific tourist niche or product or as an umbrella (Med Pearls project, 2020); as a form of sustainable tourism (Serdane et al., 2020; Le Busque et al., 2021); as a new trend and tendency on the tourism market (Lazarević et al., 2024); and as a new cultural and behavioral model (Calzati & de Salvo, 2018).

According to Gardner (2009), the concept of slowness in travel and tourism entails conscious choices, with a strong emphasis on deceleration in moments of leisure and rest – a reengineering of time, transformed into a commodity. Gardner adds that slowness in tourism implies a new relation with places and people, including a strong engagement with the communities through which people travel. Travelers spend the time necessary to discover a landscape, interact with local people, and consider transport not only as a simple means of arriving at their destination, but also as an opportunity to experience the place.

Babou and Callot (2009, as cited in de Salvo et al., 2019) defend the view that the perfect convergence of space and time as two fundamental resources of the tourism industry is what defines slow tourism. This means that a new connection between tourism and slowness requires us to redefine the procedures and habits of today's tourists, who prove increasingly

influenced by a new sense of environmental responsibility. They now prioritize activities, destinations, and means of transport that enable them to minimize their travel's environmental and social impact.

People who prefer slow experiences look for quality over quantity. In line with this perspective, Heitmann et al. (2011) argue that the focus has shifted from seeking the quantity and volume of experiences during holidays to seeking quality experiences, usually fewer in number. For these authors, quality in this form of tourism means respecting local cultures, history, and the environment, accepting social responsibility, celebrating diversity, and connecting people – both tourists with each other and tourists with the local community. This attitude displays enjoyment, discovery, learning, and sharing. This enables a more profound exploration of the cultural environment in which the holiday takes place, resulting in a more enriching and memorable experience for the individuals.

Furthermore, according to Heitmann et al. (2011), we can analyze slow tourism from different perspectives: (a) the necessity for transport and travel, with a preference to use alternative forms of mobility and avoid polluting means of transports; (b) sustainability, which needs analysis in the context of tourism development; (c) the product, which requires a discussion on the value that the label “slow” attaches to a product or a service and on the improvement in marketing; and (d) slow tourist motivations and consumption behavior.

Caffyn (2012) gives a deeper definition of the slow tourism concept, considering that it involves making real and meaningful connections with people, places, culture, food, heritage, and the environment. Moreover, Caffyn provides a list of elements that help to better understand the concept as a whole. The list contains the slow travelers' motivations and behaviors (Caffyn, 2012, p.2): (a) minimizing the travel distance, including avoidance of car or plane; (b) maximizing the time available for the trip; (c) relaxing and refreshing the mind and the body; (d) exploring the local area in depth – seeking distinctiveness; (e) contact with local people, culture, heritage, and community; (f) eating at local restaurants, buying on local markets or directly from producers, and trying local drinks such as wine; (g) quality experiences and authenticity; (h) relatively sustainable travel and a modest carbon footprint; and (i) seeking suitability for both the visitor and their companions.

In line with the elements of the slow tourism concept, Caffyn (2012) enumerates five key components: (a) place – locality, distinctiveness, landscape, heritage, environment, and produce; (b) people – community, culture, local enterprise, cuisine, hospitality, and authenticity; (c) time – pace, relaxation, unhurried stay, more in-depth exploration; (d) travel – distance, speed, mode, and low carbon footprint; and (e) the personal – well-being, pleasure, recreation, conviviality, learning, meaning, enjoyment, and understanding. Caffyn concludes that the emphasis on particular aspects depends on the destination or product. The greater the number of elements that one can incorporate, the more sustainable the tourism.

In turn, Pécssek (2014) argues that slow tourism includes four pillars: (a) locality, referring to local gastronomy, business culture, and workforce; (b) sustainability, which entails profitability, lack of leakage, environmentally friendly investments, a small ecological footprint, and a longer stay at the destination; (c) experience focus – that is, nonstandard supply, selective attractions, active programs, and collective experiences; and (d) social well-being, namely consensual decision-making, population retention, growing welfare, and community cohesion.

Pécssek (2018) explains the relevance of those dimensions. The revitalization of local gastronomy – including food, traditions, and cooking methods – can easily draw attention to other cultural values and events, such as architecture or festivals, and vice versa. Moreover, one can

expect that the growing interest in and demand for local products and services will inevitably generate jobs. This category also encompasses local businesses and local workforce since they bring employment and serve as principal factors in the concept's formation process. Concerning sustainability, economic, social, and environmental aspects also link with tourism development, and issues such as environmentally friendly investments on the supply side and slow mobility justly seem prominent. The experience dimension entails the need for authenticity, which requires non-standardized, selective supply and active programs. Importantly, collective activities allow for experiencing the importance of the encounter between locals and tourists. Finally, the well-being dimension represents a synthesis of all the positive impacts a community could gain from slow tourism. It is important to increase the active population with entrepreneurial spirit and to involve those people in decision-making to accomplish this goal.

Based on Pécsek's dimensions approach, Balaban and Keller (2024) add that locality relates to existing demand for local production, which can create the need for new jobs. Sustainability provides experiences with a high degree of authenticity, while social well-being allows tourists to interact with locals, including creating a people-friendly environment. Finally, experience dimension emphasizes the importance of unique activities, which are more accessible through slow tourism than through mass or fast tourism.

To explore the concept of slow tourism, it is also helpful to consider approaches related to slow tourists' consumption habits and their search for authentic experiences. For instance, based on a European study developed in a cooperation between Slovenia and Italy, Zago (2012, 2018) proposes the CASTLE model of slow tourism: (a) Contamination – the promotion of intercultural exchanges and interconnected experiences between visitors, local communities, and the territory; (b) Authenticity – pursuit of genuine, non-staged, and non-standardized experiences; (c) Sustainability – emphasis on environmental and cultural preservation; (d) Time – a pace of visit that encourages appreciation and deeper understanding; (e) Length – sufficient time allocated to allow for a rich and meaningful stay; and (f) Emotion – the ability to generate emotionally engaging and memorable experiences. Zago also describes the behavior of slow tourists, with characteristics such as looking to practice sports, immersing oneself in the local culture, experiencing nature, observing the past, and reclaiming time.

In its broadest sense, slow tourism encompasses the practice of individuals undertaking travel to destinations at a more leisurely pace, characterized by extended stays at the destination, less travel, preference for land transport, travel quality, meaningful experiences, including soaking the beauty of places, taking time to interact with local people, exploring local history and culture at a slower pace, and supporting the environment (Oh et al., 2016; Kumar, 2019; Wen et al., 2021; Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Lazarević et al., 2024). It is evident that these individuals prioritize experiential travel, whereby the act of traveling itself becomes an integral component of the overall experience. Once at the destination, these travelers actively engage with local transport options, culinary traditions, and slow food and drink. They take significant time to explore the local history and culture and demonstrate a commitment to supporting the environment (Oh et al., 2016).

Slow tourism appears as a trend or an alternative type of tourism, with the intention of minimizing mass tourism's environmental impacts and with a strong connection to sustainability and environmental consciousness (Oh et al., 2016; Serdane et al., 2020; Balaman & Keller, 2024). Other authors highlight travelers' behavior to define the concept, referring to extended stays at the destination; cultural immersion, in which travelers establish a deep engagement with the culture and take time to be present in each moment; sustainability, specifically in

terms of behavioral practices; focusing on the process of traveling; flexibility and freedom, which encourages spontaneity; personal growth and reflection to rediscover oneself; as well as patience, serenity, in-depth discoveries, and improvements in knowledge and skills (Musa, 2025; Moira et al., 2017; Babou & Callot, 2009).

In summary, through a deep literature review, Calzati and de Salvo (2018) present three essential dimensions identified in theoretical research approaches to slow tourism: environmental sustainability, modality, and experience. Authors propose three paradigms to explain the perspective view of the concept: (a) experience – slow tourism and consumption; (b) sustainability – slow tourism and territory; and (c) well-being – slow tourism and the quality of life. Considering the first paradigm, they identify the relationship between experience and pace as well as experience and consumption. They also propose that exchange, in relation to responsibility, constitutes the central axis of slow tourism. For the second paradigm, they introduce the territory, including distinctive characteristics such as slowness and quality, and sustainability, in a multidimensional perspective. The third paradigm maintains that sustainability, which includes social, cultural, and ethical aspects, indicates the quality of life and well-being of the local population.

Sustainability, Rural Territories, and Slow Tourism

Although deeply interconnected, the concepts of sustainability, rurality, and slow tourism are not always consensual. Slow tourism is a lifestyle and travel approach that inherently promotes sustainability in rural environments. By encouraging travelers to spend more time in one place, immerse themselves in the local culture, use lower-impact transport, and support local economies, slow tourism provides an opportunity for authentic experiences while minimizing negative environmental and social impacts. Rural tourism, with its focus on nature and local communities, aligns naturally with the principles of slow tourism, resulting in increased economic, social, and cultural benefits for these regions.

According to Le Busque et al. (2021), slow tourism is a holistic tourism concept that promotes sustainability in all aspects of a traveler's journey. It supports positive outcomes for local communities, such as stimulating local economies and minimizing aversive environmental impacts. Other authors (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Caffyn, 2012; Guiver & McGrath, 2016) argue that a straight connection exists between sustainability and slow tourism, since slow tourists are conscious about the negative effects of pollution caused by mass tourism and wish to enhance the quality of their travel experience. Although slow tourism does not play the main role in sustainable development, one can see the latter as a by-product of slow tourism. This type of tourism can take place by offering hospitality while respecting the environment, resulting in the development of sustainable local travel. Therefore, slow tourism fosters deep respect for the visited place, appreciation of its uniqueness, and willingness to adapt to it rather than expecting it to adapt to tourists (Zielińska-Szczepkowska, 2020).

In fact, slow tourism that respects local cultures, histories, and environments. It values social responsibility, celebrates diversity, and fosters connections between tourists and the local community (Walker, 2021). As described above, in addition to promoting self-enrichment, engagement with heritage sites, local cuisine, history, and traditions as qualities of the destination (Caffyn, 2012; Fullagar et al., 2012), slow tourism goes further by giving the opportunity to connect sustainability with personal and social well-being in the community (Walker, 2021).

Within the contemporary consumer changes, slow tourism lends itself to sustainable tourism, as the changing preferences of travelers interested in nature, ecotourism, heritage, agri-

tourism, and other related forms can materialize on the condition of adopting a slower pace. In addition, slow tourism emphasizes deeper experiences via slower transport modes, and this consciousness has received promotion as an alternative to current practice and a more sustainable form of tourism (Lin, 2018). The tourists' preferences, such as staying longer at the destination, exploring local traditions, or connecting with local people, and the more conscious options in travel modes can lead to more economic benefits for those local communities (Walker, 2021).

In their literature review, Hassan and Fayad (2023) conclude that sustainable development is a key pillar of slow tourism, providing opportunities for more green forms of destinations, promoting sustainable practices such as slow modes of transport, eco-friendly activities, and regular accommodations, and contributing to both environmental protection and the strengthening of the tourism industry. Thus, it forms part of the sustainable development concept, which helps protect the environment and the tourism industry. In summary, the slow tourism movement includes a slow development of the environment, which is highly positive, as it allows residents and territories to adjust and adapt to advances.

The search for more sustainable tourism models in destinations has emerged in response to the growing environmental impact of mass tourism (Balaman & Keller, 2024). Indeed, slow tourism helps travelers escape from daily routines, promotes sustainability, enhances local quality of life, and encourages community participation in local development while offering tourists more meaningful and environmentally conscious experiences (Serdane et al., 2020; Balaman & Keller, 2024).

Authors unequivocally state that tourism is an option for developing rural lifestyles and inducing positive changes in income distribution in non-privileged regions. Moreover, tourism helps to give more "energy" to the rural economy, thus playing an important role in creating a value-added commercial channel for local produce (Liu, 2006). Surla et al. (2024) argue that the potential for rural development closely links to the evolving mindsets and behaviors of modern travelers, who increasingly value authenticity, especially regarding food choices. Slow tourism, which has emerged as a response to today's fast-paced lifestyle, represents one such approach. Indeed, rural areas seem to offer great potential for slow tourism, given that the lifestyle there is more peaceful than in urban areas (Canoves et al., 2004, as cited in Mohamad Noor et al., 2015) and includes activities developed for tourists in rural destinations. Rural spaces can offer experiences closer to natural environments and traditional heritage (Liu, 2006).

The research of Mohamad Noor et al. (2011) identified the suitability of pursuing slow tourism activity in a rural destination. According to the authors, we can call some places or areas "slow" – that is, characterized by a pace of life and environment suitable for slow tourism, focusing on sustainability and local quality of life. These destinations avoid the issues linked with mass tourism and promote enjoyment of time, simplicity, and community values. While they are not backward or in crisis, their development centers on preserving the landscape as a shared resource. Rural areas often fit this model due to their natural settings and traditional lifestyles, which attract and engage tourists. The results imply that one can expect rural tourism destinations to contribute to the livelihood of the local residents and simultaneously mitigate environmental impacts by addressing the usage of natural resources.

Focusing their research on rural and slow tourism, Mohamad Noor et al. (2015) highlight the similarities between the two types and propose a working definition of slow tourism in rural destinations. In their opinion, slow tourism is a small-scale form of travel typically found in rural settings, characterized by a mindful and reflective approach that prioritizes authentic

experiences and ecological sustainability, standing in contrast to the fast-paced consumerism of modern society.

Studies report that within the slow tourism modality, the benefits for rural territories relate to the market, characterized by the continuous capacity to create new business such as artisan and zero-kilometer markets; museum spaces; informative, meeting, and exchanging places; transformation of local products; the expansion of visits to places less known by the general public; and the recovery of the local social culture. Authors also mention new accommodation services, restaurant and catering services, guidance, interpretation, transport, and marketing (Valls et al., 2019).

Destinations and most tourism businesses in rural places are incorporating slow elements or options within their offers. These components allow visitors to choose their own pace – for instance, owing to flexible timings for meals or options to extend stays or take a slower paced tour. They also promote the use of slower transport options, for example through discounts for those arriving without a car, information on public transport and bicycle hire, and good knowledge of slow options and routes. Moreover, they provide slower environments, such as tranquil areas, television free or mobile phone free zones, reduced advertising, or the use of local imagery or literature to strengthen the sense of place. Furthermore, such elements promote local food and drink, traditional dishes, tasting events, and fair trade products. Finally, they develop specific slow products, such as relaxation/well-being breaks, learning traditional skills or cuisine, slow tours, chillout holidays, or slow food menus (Caffyn, 2012).

The benefits of slow tourism are under study, and according to Preston and Pasanen (2024), they include: local connection, which brings value to small towns and rural areas; sustainable travel, related to the use of eco-friendly slow mobility transport; well-being benefiting both the local community and the environment; food and culture, which promotes wine, local cuisine, and traditional crafts; and responsible stays, in which travelers prefer sustainable and local accommodation and seek genuine hospitality.

The Rural Region of Alentejo: Potential for Slow Tourism?

Comprising up to a third of the country, Alentejo is the largest NUTS 2 level region in Portugal, where NUTS stands for the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics. It is also the country's most rural part, with the lowest population density and the highest aging rate (INE, 2020). The primary sector of agriculture, farming, hunting, and forestry accounts for 20% of total employment, followed by manufacturing, which is responsible for 19% of jobs. Innovation performance has improved over recent years, but the region remains a moderate innovator (Santos et al., 2020). In 2022, it recorded a gross domestic product of EUR 10.3 billion, making it the second-largest regional economy in Portugal, accounting for around five percent of the national economy (INE, 2023).

Alentejo is one of the nine regions of Portugal, consisting of four subregions: Alto Alentejo, Alentejo Central, Alentejo Litoral, and Baixo Alentejo. As the biggest TL2 region in Portugal, Alentejo's TL3 subregions are also large – and diverse.

Alentejo boasts a rural and natural landscape, warm and dry climate, vineyards, traditional cuisine, and the famous Alentejo hospitality. The region is currently an uncrowded, preserved, and safe place, with a history marked by rich heritage and culture that give it identity and authenticity, and with a potential for competitive, distinctive, and sustainable affirmation, based on consolidated activities and the emergence of new local niches of productive specialization.

night stays by foreign tourists (30%) in Portugal (58% on average). At the same time, it boasts a high number of museums and galleries as well as theatres and two UNESCO cultural and natural heritage sites, meaning that cultural capital forms a regional strength. Regarding land and housing, Alentejo's territory proves vulnerable to climate risks, while its residents face pressures in terms of housing affordability and availability. In the dimension of resident well-being, Alentejo offers relatively low accessibility to health services and education – a key issue in the context of population decline and aging, but it simultaneously shows strengths in social cohesion and attractiveness to international students. Concerning connectedness, Alentejo faces existential challenges in transport and digitalization, with deficiencies in railroad mobility and digital connectivity. Finally, with reference to natural environment, Alentejo's natural capital stands out, boasting the second highest share of protected areas in mainland Portugal.

The region has prodigious potential in tourism concerns, and according to the Alentejo Sustainable Tourism Observatory (ASTO, 2025), in 2024, the tourism contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) reached 9.7% and represented 6.2% of total employment.

Alentejo has a great cultural and visitor appeal, and the main tourist attractions include the two cities classified by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites: Évora (Alentejo Central) and Elvas (Alto Alentejo), as well as Alqueva, Monsaraz, Marvão, Castelo de Vide, Vila Viçosa, the Alentejo Litoral area with Sines and Troia, and countless points of historical and cultural interest, with Beja, Mértola, Marvão, and Castelo de Vide being particularly noteworthy. In 2014, Alentejo won the title of "Best Wine Region to Visit" in a global competition organized by *USA Today*. In the same year, *The Guardian* highlighted the beaches of the Alentejo coast as the best in Europe.

In 2024, the region recorded its best season ever with a notable increase in the number of overnight stays and revenue. According to the Regional Tourism Authority's president, Alentejo exceeded "3.2 million overnight stays" for the first time in 2024, with "130,000 more overnight stays" than in the previous year. The leader noted that Alentejo had "slightly higher growth in external demand" compared to internal demand, highlighting that the region of mainland Portugal "grew the most in revenue, with a rise of 12%" (Agência Lusa, 2025).

Mainly because of its rural territory, Alentejo demonstrates an excellent potential for slow tourism considering characteristics such as: inland towns separated by cork forests, olive groves, vineyards, and wildflower-studded plains; minimal traffic and unhurried pace; silence; clean light sky; medieval strongholds and UNESCO World Heritage Sites; bike trails, beaches, and natural beauty; tapestries, tiles, and other traditional arts and crafts; as well as wine, sea-food, and chestnut pudding.

3. Research Method and Materials

The study relies on exploratory research, whose main objective was to examine whether the tourism entrepreneurs' business strategy aligns with the slow tourism philosophy. Specifically, the purpose was to understand if rural accommodation entrepreneurs communicate and promote messages, commercial activities, and experiences on behalf of the slow tourism movement. In this first phase, the research considered Alentejo's subregion Baixo Alentejo as a case study.

With a qualitative methodological approach, the empirical research initially relied on a literature review as a theoretical framework to explore the main content of the slow movement philosophy, the slow tourism principles, and the key dimensions. The further stage involved a systematic examination of the websites of accommodation businesses in Baixo Alentejo,

selected from a convenience sample on the national registry's online platform (RNT, 2025). The analysis aimed to assess whether they mention the term "slow tourism" and to identify references to its core dimensions and related activities in their discourse.

Data Collection

The examination took place in May 2025 and started with the identification of 248 tourist accommodations in the 13 municipalities of the Baixo Alentejo region. The inclusion of only this region remains justified because this is still an ongoing study, and the region lies in Alentejo's interior, presenting the territory's rural characteristics. To select the sample, I considered the following criteria of inclusion: (a) accommodations classified as tourism establishments by the national legislation – this way, I excluded local premises; (b) accommodations that were open at the time; (c) accommodations with their own website and effectively working during the data collection period.

In addition to deep literature research, the study followed a methodology based on the examination of accommodation websites supported by content analysis of terms and phrases on the home page – the slogan, or the opening phrase – and on the "about us" page. Moreover, I conducted content analysis of the websites to examine the communication of concrete actions related to sustainable products and services – for example bookings, e-commerce, or promotions – as well as activities aligned with the slow tourism principles.

The content analysis started with a manual codification of a website's textual content, basically extracting the slogans identified on the home page. This focus proves justified because slogans are short, memorable, and impactful phrases commonly used in advertising and marketing to promote a brand, product, or service, with the aim of creating a strong identity and a positive association in the consumer's mind. Then, data was collected from the website phrases to identify keywords highlighted by entrepreneurs. The selection of keywords followed the literature, namely the dimensions by Zago (2012, 2018) and the CASTLE model for slow tourism.

This way, I surveyed accommodation services, offers, products, and experiences. After extracting that information, I categorized the data based on Caffyn's framework (2012) which includes several elements and indicators of how tourism businesses can introduce a slow approach in their offers: (a) allow visitors to choose their own pace; (b) promote the use of slower transport options; (c) provide slower environments; (d) promote local cuisine and related participation; (e) develop specific slow products; and (f) define a specific market target.

I employed artificial intelligence (AI), particularly ChatGPT, to support the content analysis of selected accommodation websites. Integrating such tools into scientific research is increasingly common and can ethically align with current academic standards. Since qualitative content analysis is often time-consuming and resource-intensive, AI-based tools such as ChatGPT offer promising potential to streamline certain aspects of the process (Bijker et al., 2024). Additionally, they can prove especially useful in the early phases of research or when handling large volumes of transcribed data by enhancing the efficiency and depth of exploratory analysis (Goyanes et al., 2025).

All the slogan phrases and textual content underwent manual extraction from the website, including the home page or "about us" sections and the descriptions of experiences, activities, and products in the website tabs. I introduced the extracted data into ChatGPT, where I used carefully designed prompts to instruct the model to perform data analysis tasks aligned with the study's objectives. The deductive approach employed the CASTLE dimensions of

Zago (2012, 2018), and I explicitly communicated these instructions to ChatGPT during prompt engineering.

To ensure accuracy and reliability, the AI-generated coding underwent two-step validation. First, I compared a subset of the outputs with human coding to detect inconsistencies and refine the prompts. Second, after generating the full dataset, a manual verification and adjustment of the classifications followed, resulting in a structured matrix linking phrases to the CASTLE slow tourism dimensions, complemented by citations and conclusions indicating the strength and nature of each association. This combination of AI and human approach ensured that the coding was consistent with the conceptual framework and maintained high reliability throughout the analysis. Finally, to share the results and give a better representation of the findings, I used the WordArt word cloud generator.

Study Object: The Baixo Alentejo Subregion

Due to the study's current stage and limited time and resources, the examination of rural accommodation remained limited to Baixo Alentejo. This subregion lies in the south of Portugal, bordering on the Évora district to the north, on Spain to the east, and on the Faro district to the south. This subregion has a population of 114,889 (INE, 2024) and covers an area of 8,544.6 km², corresponding to 10.8% of the national territory, divided into 13 municipalities. The main economic activities include mining (pyrites), forestry, hunting, livestock farming, pastoralism, and the resulting products, such as cork, olive oil, cheeses, sausages, hams, wines, the Medronho brandy, and honey (CIMBAL, 2025).

The subregion boasts strong cultural heritage, reflected in archaeological sites, castles, churches, old mines, museums, and small towns and villages whose traditional buildings display the diversity of cultural influences which has shaped this region. In turn, examples of natural heritage include special protection areas, the Guadiana River, and fauna. Pork and lamb form the basis of traditional gastronomy, and bread, olive oil, and aromatic herbs are key ingredients in this Mediterranean cuisine, flavoring some traditional dishes (CIMBAL, 2025; Rotas de Portugal, 2013).

To the 2023 increase in the number of tourist accommodation establishments in the country, Alentejo contributed 13.5% (+79), and the average number of overnight stays was 1.9 (INE, 2024). Additionally, in 2023, Baixo Alentejo registered 436,000 overnight stays, more than 14% compared with 2022, and it contains 13.9% of Portugal's hotel supply (PORDATA, 2023).

4. Results and Discussion

Sample Characteristics of Accommodation Businesses in Baixo Alentejo

In May 2025, the number of Baixo Alentejo's accommodation businesses registered in RNT was 150. Considering the three criteria – 13 municipalities, accommodations with an identified and effectively working website, tested by direct internet consultation, and the establishment open to the public – the final sample reached 98 enterprises, divided into Aljustrel (3), Almodôvar (7), Alvito (5), Beja (20), Castro Verde (5), Cuba (2), Ferreira do Alentejo (12), Mértola (18), Moura (8), Ourique (4), Serpa (8), and Vidigueira (6).

Concerning the type of accommodation, I distinguished campsites and caravans (7), hotels (22), country houses (68), agritourism facilities (41), rural hotels (5), monument and historical hotels (2), and housing tourism (5).

Among the 98 tourism businesses analyzed, 13 did not provide any slogan, introductory statement, or description of their mission, strategy, or objectives. Therefore, I excluded those businesses from the content analysis.

This analysis shows a strong focus on themes such as tranquility, nature, comfort, tradition, refuge, rurality, and the Alentejo region, as well as the use of affectionate terms such as “home,” “family,” and “well-being.” After identifying the most frequent words, I employed a wordcount application (WordArt), which generated a visual identification of the keywords mentioned in the websites’ slogan phrases.



Source: Own elaboration.

I categorized the slogan phrases based on the CASTLE model, and the number of mentions in each category appears in Table 1.

Table 1. Slogan phrases classified according to the CASTLE model

Category	Frequency	Slogan phrase
Contamination	2	"Comfortable hotel in the city center"; "Come and discover our wonderful city and feel at home."
Authenticity	16	"A farm with tradition"; "Rural tourism in Alentejo"; "A refined touch in a rural setting"; "A unique concept in the heart of Alentejo"; "true Alentejo hospitality"; "a farm of pleasures"; "Of rural life and tranquility"; "On a small farm in Alentejo"; "Culture, tradition and heritage"; "Between farms and traditions"; "Tradition and comfort in the heart of the Baixo Alentejo!"; "Simplicity and authenticity in the heart of Alentejo"; "Our land, our soul"; "secret wine retreat in the heart of Alentejo"; "A wine with tradition"; "Rural setting with comfort."
Sustainability	3	"Come and enjoy nature"; "Feel the pulse of nature"; "The ideal place to be in touch with nature."
Time	12	"A unique experience"; "the past and present meet"; "Life consists of moments"; "here, time seems to stand still"; "Discover the best of Alentejo"; "Spend unforgettable moments with us"; "Calm and time live here"; "Come and enjoy yourself at your leisure"; "This is the time, this is the place"; "Breathe in tranquility and history"; "A place steeped in history"; "Visiting Alentejo means discovering a region full of history, landscapes, and culture."
Length	4	"A family hotel in the heart of Alentejo"; "A children's hotel with lots of entertainment and fun"; "In the heart of Alentejo, there is a refuge waiting for you"; "Rustic retreat in the heart of Alentejo."
Emotion	15	"Harmony, well-being, and comfort"; "An atmosphere of well-being and tranquility"; "Our new home"; "Your place in the heart of Alentejo"; "An open door to your well-being"; "Find the rest you seek in the tranquility of Alentejo"; "Relax, renew, and recharge in our charming retreat"; "Discover peace and quiet"; "A reality made with love!"; "Where dreams come true"; "Recharge your batteries"; "Your home in the village and in Alentejo"; "Peace, space, and freedom"; "Retreat, reconnect, regenerate"; "Your home away from home."

Source: Own elaboration.

The table shows that the emotion and authenticity categories contain a higher number of related slogan phrases. Considering the emotional dimension, most of the phrases strongly appeal to feelings, using terms such as "heart," "home," "tranquility," "well-being," "peace," "quiet," and "freedom." This reflects a clear emotional marketing strategy that seeks to create a feeling-based connection with visitors, which is typical of slow tourism. In the authenticity category, words such as "tradition," "culture," "rurality," "village," "farm," "wine," and "heritage" emphasize the genuine character and identity of Alentejo within the slow tourism values. Time is another important dimension in slow tourism, and the content analysis identified various mentions related to time in the slogan phrases. Indeed, those that highlight the experience of slowing down time – e.g., "moments," "history," "discovery," "time that does not pass" – align strongly with the values of slow tourism, which prioritizes quality time, memory, and the local rhythm.

The other dimensions relating to the phrases display minor importance. For instance, there is a relatively high presence of sustainability themes, such as the reference to "ecological reserves," "landscapes," "nature," and "river beaches." The length category, associated with permanent infrastructure such as hotels, retreats, or campsites, appears frequently in a functional sense. Finally, the contamination category has fewer related mentions, usually only when mentioning the "city," positioning it in contrast to the desired rurality, which significantly relates to the slowness principles of travel.

Accommodation Tourism's Businesses Offer

In order to identify whether accommodation tourism companies have a slow approach to their offerings, including activities and experiences, I examined the websites of 54 accommodation providers. Among those, 17 did not market activities or experiences – even those unrelated to the slow movement – in their business, opening message, or references to booking or promotions. Considering the websites of the identified accommodation businesses, I noticed a variety of offerings and activities, and I classified them according to the slow tourism framework supported by Caffyn's activities/experiences (Table 2).

Table 2. Commercialized activities and their relation to slow tourism dimensions

Dimensions (Caffyn, 2012)	Activities/experiences observed
Choosing one's own pace	"Sunset and wildlife viewing"; "Observation of the natural landscape"; "Gardens and serene landscapes; walks for couples or families."
Promoting the use of slower transport	"Walks," "hikes," "cycling," "trails"; "Bike hire, electric bikes, 'bike friendly' program, horse riding, carriage rides"; "Free bike rides around the property"; "Sustainable accommodation in a rural setting."
Providing slower environments	"Stay in themed accommodation with eclectic décor"; "Relaxation in a natural environment"; "Walks among centuries-old olive trees."
Sourcing and promoting local food and drink; developing a slow product	"Wine and olive oil tasting"; "Cheese and bread tasting"; "Cookery workshop"; "Picnic in the countryside"; "Alentejo cuisine"; "Jam making"; "Carnival program. Guided tours"; "Visits to historical heritage"; "Visits to shepherds and former smugglers"; "Hiking, hunting, fishing, boating, hot air ballooning, animal handling, farming, sunset activities, stargazing"; "Breakfast and dinner with fresh produce from the local vegetable garden."
Targeting specific markets to which slow would especially appeal, e.g., people suffering from stress, older people	"Yoga, Pilates, retreats, massages, SPA, wellness programs."

Source: Own elaboration.

Based on the literature review, it was observed a wide range of product offerings and active experiences aiming to promote green transport – for instance electric cycling, horse riding, or bike-friendly services. Activities related to typical slow tourism products, such as local food and gastronomy, also tend to gain emphasis, particularly in terms of traditional food tasting and learning local culinary skills, for example at cooking classes or wine tasting. Additionally, experiences that promote deeper engagement with local culture, such as visits to heritage sites guided by local farmers, are a common feature, along with workshops, nature-based activities, and relaxation opportunities.

Many of the businesses investigated offer authentic experiences linked to the local area, promoting a strong connection with nature and landscape, rural life, well-being, gastronomy, and cultural heritage, and local contacts with the community. The researched establishments seem to commercialize a variety of complementary tourist experiences, with a particular focus on authenticity, sustainability, emotional connection to the territory, including residents and landscape/nature, and the Alentejo identity. Indeed, the variety in question makes Alentejo – specifically, Baixo Alentejo – an excellent destination for slow, mindful, and diverse tourism.

5. Conclusions

The findings indicate that slow movement strategies have the potential to create deeper tourist connections, foster authentic experiences, and enhance the cultural and natural appeal of the region, which could support sustainable economic growth. These insights offer valuable guidance for tourism businesses seeking to stand out on competitive markets by focusing on authenticity, slowness, sustainability, and community engagement.

It is evident that offering sustainable, local experiences, traditional gastronomy, and tranquility, combined with rural activities, such as wine and olive oil production and tasting, allows visitors to slow down and develop a deeper appreciation for the region's beauty and assets. Still, despite numerous examples of rural tourism activities in Baixo Alentejo that align with the slow tourism principles, businesses lack explicit self-identification as part of this movement.

Although this research remains exploratory and ongoing, some limitations are apparent. First, numerous websites were inactive or contained scattered information. Second, the website examination should encompass not only slogan phrases, but also other descriptions from different sections or tabs, accompanied by the collection of complementary visual data such as images or videos for multimodal interpretation. Third, a triangulated methodology, including interviews, user reviews on digital platforms, and local and regional slow tourism communication, would enhance the robustness of the findings. Fourth, while literature supports the usefulness of AI tools like ChatGPT for content analysis, relying solely on AI remains questionable, underscoring the need to complement such research with manual coding and analysis.

The study reveals that the potential of slow tourism in rural areas is already visible and promising. However, this potential requires strategic coordination and public support to achieve a sustainable and coherent scale. Stakeholders must collaborate to develop a communication strategy that highlights the slow principles and strengthens the Alentejo slow tourism brand. Moreover, local and regional governments need to act as mediators and create conditions for slow tourism to become a model of balanced territorial development rather than just a trend.

Indeed, future research will aim to deepen the perspective on slow tourism, expanding the study area to Alentejo's other subregions and conducting an in-depth content analysis of marketing strategies in the plans and visual campaigns by regional and local entities. This research will also utilize semi-structured interviews with accommodation providers to understand their perceptions of slow tourism's concept and dimensions, future slow business strategies, and willingness to collaborate with other stakeholders to further develop the Alentejo slow tourism brand.

References

- ADRAL: Agência do Desenvolvimento Regional do Alentejo. (2025). <https://www.adral.pt/setoresestrategicos/>
- ASTO: Alentejo Sustainable Tourism Observatory. (2025). <https://www.asto.pt/en/app/index>
- Balaban, E., & Keller, K. (2024). A systematic literature review of slow tourism. *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin*, 73(3), 303–323.
- Bijker, R., Merkouris, S. S., Dowling, N. A., & Rodda, S. N. (2024). ChatGPT for automated qualitative research: Content analysis. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 26, e59050. <https://doi.org/10.2196/59050>
- Caffyn, A. (2012). Advocating and Implementing Slow Tourism. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 37(1), 77–80.
- Calzati, V., & de Salvo, P. (2012). *Le strategie per una valorizzazione sostenibile del territorio. Il valore della lentezza, della qualità e dell'identità per il turismo del futuro*. Franco Angeli.

- Calzati, V. & De Salvo, P. (2018). Slow tourism A theoretical framework, In M. Clancy (Ed.) *Slow tourism, Food and Cities. Pace and the search for the "Good Life."* Routledge.
- CCDR: Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Alentejo. (2025). *Potencialidades estratégicas – um território com reconhecidas potencialidades estratégicas*. <https://www.ccdr-a.gov.pt/potencialidades-estrategicas>
- CIMBAL: Comunidade Intermunicipal do Baixo Alentejo. (2025). <https://www.cimbal.pt>
- Conway, D., & Timms, B. (2012). Slow travel and slow tourism misfits, compadres or different genres? *Tourism Recreation Research*, 37(1), 71–76.
- dall'Aglia, S., Nazzaruolo, A., & Zago, M. (2011). *Guidelines for the development of the Slow Tourism project: Workshop with the stakeholders and the operators*. http://www.slow-tourism.net/contentsite/images/WP_2-3_Slides_English.pdf
- Dickinson, J., Lumsdon, L., & Robins, D. (2011). Slow travel: Issues for tourism and climate change. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(3), 281–300.
- Dickinson, J. & Lumsdon, L. (2010). Slow travel and tourism. Earthscan
- Ferreira, P., Seabra, C., & Paiva, O. (2014). Slow cities (Cittaslow): Os espaços urbanos do movimento slow. *Revista Turismo & Desenvolvimento*, 21/22(5), 191–193.
- Fullagar, S., Markwell, K., & Wilson, E. (2012). *Slow tourism: Experiences and mobilities*. Channel View.
- Gardner, N. (2009). A manifesto for slow travel. *Hidden Europe Magazine*, 25, 10–14.
- Guiver, J., & McGrath, P. (2016). Slow tourism: Exploring the discourses. *Dos Algarves: A Multidisciplinary e-Journal*, 27, 11–34. <https://doi.org/10.18089/DAMEJ.2016.27.1>
- Goyanes, M., Lopezosa, C., & Jordá, B. (2025). Thematic analysis of interview data with ChatGPT: Designing and testing a reliable research protocol for qualitative research. *Quality & Quantity*, 1–32. https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/8mr2f_v1
- Hassan, V., & Fayad, S. A. (2023). Slow tourism as a tool for sustainable tourism development: Guest houses in the Chouf Mount Lebanon. *Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler ve Eğitim Dergisi – USBED*, 5(8), 299–316. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/usbed>
- Heitmann, S., Robinson, P., & Povey, G. (2011). Slow Food, slow cities and slow tourism. In P. Robinson, S. Heitmann, & P. Dieke (Eds.), *Research themes for tourism* (pp. 114–127). CABl.
- Honoré, C. (2004). *In praise of slow: How a worldwide movement is challenging the cult of speed*. Orion Books.
- INE: Instituto Nacional de Estatística. (2023). Produto interno bruto (B.1*g) a preços correntes (Base 2016 – €) por Localização geográfica (NUTS – 2013); Anual. Retrieved October 6, 2024, from https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&indOcorrCod=0009973&contexto=bd&selTab=tab2
- Khan, S. (2015). How slow is "slow." Dilemmas of slow tourism. *TEAM Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 11(1), 39–49.
- International Labor Organization (2010). *World of Work Report 2010 – From one crisis to the next?*. International Institute for Labor Studies. Geneva. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40dgreports/%40dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_145078.pdf
- Le Busque, B., Mingoia, J., & Litchfield, C. (2021). Slow tourism on Instagram: An image content and geotag analysis. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 47(5–6), 623–630. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2021.1927566>
- Lin, L. P. (Lynn). (2018). How would the contextual features of a destination function together with individual factors to enhance tourists' intention toward ST in Taiwan? *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 26(9), 1625–1646. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2018.1491586>
- Liu, A. (2006). Tourism in rural areas: Kedah, Malaysia. *Tourism Management*, 27(5), 878–889.
- Lowry, L., & Lee, M. (2011). CittaSlow, slow cities, slow food: Searching for a model for the development of slow tourism. Retrieved on January 20, 2020, from https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/view_content.cgi?article=1618&context=ttra
- Mariano, K. (2022). 7 significant travel trends to expect in 2023. Travel Daily Media. <https://www.traveldailymedia.com/7-significant-travel-trends-to-expect-in-2023>
- Moira, P., Mylonopoulos, D., & Kondoudaki, A. (2017). The application of slow movement to tourism: Is slow tourism a new paradigm? *Journal of Tourism and Leisure Studies*, 2(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.18848/24709336/CGP/v02i02/1-10>
- Mowforth, M., & Munt, I. (2016). *Tourism and sustainability: Development, globalisation and new tourism in the third world* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Mohamad Noor, F. A., Nair, V., & Mura, P. (2011). Conceptualizing a framework for slow tourism in a rural destination in Malaysia. *Advanced Science Letters*, 4, 400–407. <https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2015.6046>
- Mohamad Noor, F. A., Nair, V., & Mura, P. (2015). Towards the conceptualization of a slow tourism theory for a rural destination. *Hospitality and Tourism*, 2015, 175–179.

- OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2024). *Rethinking regional attractiveness in the Alentejo region of Portugal*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/6e171d0d-en>
- Oh, H., Assaf, G., & Baloglu, S. (2016). Motivations and goals of slow tourism. *Journal of Travel Research*, 55(2), 205–219.
- Österlund, S. (2020). *Can we slow down? Challenges and possibilities of living slower and simpler in Sweden* [Master's thesis, Örebro University School of Humanities]. <https://oru.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1466990/FULLTEXT02.pdf>
- Pecheniuk, A., & Kiziun, A. (2023). Postmodern transformations of tourism. In H. Arjjumend (Ed.), *Mountain eco-systems and resources management*, Vol. 1 (pp. 417–430). The Grassroots Institute. <https://doi.org/10.33002/mount.a/23>
- PORDATA (2023). Dados do turismo por municípios. <https://retratos.pordata.pt/populacao/beja>
- Preston, M., & Pasanen, K. (2024). Slow tourism and its good practices: *European state of play*. SLOWDOWN project (02C0497). University of Eastern Finland, Interreg Europe. Retrieved November, 24, 2025, from <https://www.interregeurope.eu/sites/default/files/2025-03/Slow%20Tourism%20-%20State%20of%20the%20Art%20in%20Europe%20report.pdf>
- Publituris. (2024, July 18). Praias do Alentejo consideradas as melhores da Europa. <https://www.publituris.pt/2014/07/18/praias-do-alentejo-consideradas-as-melhores-da-europa>
- Pécsek, B. (2014). Gyorsuló idő, lassuló turizmus: a lassú turizmus modellezése. *Turizmus Bulletin*, 16(1), 3–10.
- Pécsek, B. (2018). Slow tourism as the sustainable alternative for developing urban tourism destinations. [Doctoral dissertation. Szent István University], Gödöllő, Hungria. https://real-phd.mtak.hu/15813/pecsek_brigitta_thesis.pdf
- RNT: Registo Nacional de Turismo. (2025). <https://rnt.turismodeportugal.pt/RNT>
- Rotas de Portugal. (2013). <https://rotasdeportugal.pt>
- Salvo, Paola & Calzati, Viviana & Soglia, Stefano. (2019). Value for Time: Slowness, a Positive Way of Performing. In A. Campón-Cerro, J. Hernández-Mogollón, & J. Folgado-Fernández (Eds.), *Tourism: Best Practices in Hospitality and Tourism Marketing and Management – A quality of life perspective* (pp. 315–336). Springer.
- Santos, A. M., Edwards, J., & Laranja, M. (2020). *Challenges, opportunities and needs for a sustainable bioeconomy in the Alentejo region*. JRC Policy Insights No. JRC122316. European Commission. <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC122316>
- Sari, A., & Lukito, Y. (2017). Slow living as an alternative response to modern life. *UI Proceedings*, 1. Retrieved November, 24, 2025, from https://www.academia.edu/85477383/Slow_living_as_an_Alternative_Response_to_Modern_Life
- Serdane, Z. (2017). *Slow tourism in slow countries: The case of Latvia* [Doctoral dissertation, Salford Business School, Salford University]. https://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/43513/7/Zanda_Serdane_SLOW_TOURISM_IN_SLOW_COUNTRIES.pdf
- Serdane, Z., Maccarrone-Eaglen, A., & Sharifi, S. (2020). Conceptualising slow tourism: A perspective from Latvia. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 45(3), 337–350. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2020.1726614>
- Sousa, B., Santos, R., & Lubowiecki-Vikuk, A. (2021). Slow tourism as a tourism alternative to sustainable development. *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism*, (Volume XII, Fall), 5(53), 1403–1408. [https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt.v12.5\(53\).24](https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt.v12.5(53).24)
- Agência Lusa. (2025, February 19). O Alentejo teve o melhor ano turístico de sempre. *Sul Informação*. <https://www.sulinformacao.pt/2025/02/alentejo-teve-o-melhor-ano-turistico-de-sempre-em-2024>
- Surla, T., Pivac, T., Lunić, D., & Miljković, J. (2024). The future development of rural areas through the application of slow tourism: A case study of Western Serbia. In SITCON 2023: *Managing the future by learning from the past – contemporary trends in tourism & hospitality* (Orgs.). Conference Paper (pp. 118–125). <https://doi.org/10.15308/Sitcon-2023-118-125>
- Turismo do Alentejo. (2021). Slow travel no Alentejo. <https://turismodoalentejo.com.br/blog/2021/08/11/slow-travel-no-alentejo>
- Turismo do Alentejo e Ribatejo. (2019). <https://www.visitalentejo.pt/pt/o-alentejo>
- Valls, J.-F., Mota, L., Vieira, S. C. F., & Santos, R. (2019). Opportunities for slow tourism in Madeira. *Sustainability*, 11(17), 4534. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11174534>
- Walker, T. (2021). Sustainable development for small island tourism: Developing slow tourism in the Caribbean. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 38(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2020.1842289>
- Walker, T., & Lee, J. (2021). Contributions to sustainable tourism in small islands: An analysis of the Cittàslow movement. *Tourism Geographies*, 23(3), 415–435. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2019.1654539>

- Wen, Z., Xie, Y., Chen, M., & Dinga, C. D. (2021). China's plastic import ban increases prospects of environmental impact mitigation of plastic waste trade flow worldwide. *Nature Communications*, 12, 425. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-020-20741-9>
- Zago, M. (2012). Definire e operativizzare lo slow tourism: il modello Castle. In V. Calzati & P. de Salvo (Eds.), *Le strategie per una valorizzazione sostenibile del territorio* (pp. 155–170). Franco Angeli.
- Zago, M. (2018). Between slow tourists and operators: Expectations and implications of a strategic cross-border proposal. In M. Clancy (Ed.), *Slow tourism, food and cities: Place and the search for the "good life"* (pp. 103–115). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315686714-9>
- Zielińska-Szczepkowska, J (2020). Slow tourism – the fashion for slowness or a conscious choice? *Folia Oeconomica Stetinensia*, 20(2), 468–483. <https://doi.org/10.2478/fofi-2020-0060>

About the Author

Marta Amaral*, Ph.D.

School of Technology and Management of Beja

Polytechnic Institute of Beja

Centre for Tourism Research, Development

and Innovation-CiTUR Beja

Campus do Instituto Politécnico de Beja,

Rua Pedro Soares, Apartado 6155,

7800-295 Beja, Portugal

e-mail: marta.amaral@ipbeja.pt

ORCID: 0000-0001-8006-7309

* Corresponding author.

Acknowledgements and Financial Disclosure

This research was funded within the scope of the project UIDB/04470/2023, <https://doi.org/10.54499/UIDB/04470/2023>, CiTUR – Center for Tourism Research, Development, and Innovation.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that the research took place without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Copyright and License



This article is published under the terms of the
Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) License
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

Published by the Krakow University of Economics – Krakow, Poland