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Slow Tourism: Exploring the discourses

Slow Tourism: Exploração de discursos

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Abstract

'Slow travel' and 'slow tourism' are relatively new, but contested, concepts. This paper examines the meanings ascribed to them in the academic literature and websites targeted at potential tourists. It finds concurrence on aspects of savouring time at the destination and investing time to appreciate the locality, its people, history, culture and products, but detects different emphases. The academic literature stresses the benefits to the destination and global sustainability, while the websites focus on the personal benefits and ways of becoming a 'slow tourist'. Food and drink epitomise the immersion in and absorption of the destination and the multi-dimensional tourism experience, contrasted with the superficiality of mainstream tourism. The paper discusses whether tourists practising slow tourism without using the label are slow tourists or not.

Keywords: slow travel; slow tourism; discourse.

Resumo

Slow travel e *slow tourism* são conceitos relativamente recentes, embora contestados. Este artigo examina os sentidos conferidos aos conceitos na literatura académica e *websites* dirigidos a potenciais turistas. Encontram-se consistências em aspetos como saborear o tempo no destino e investir tempo para usufruir do local, das pessoas, da história, da cultura e dos produtos, mas detetam-se ênfases diferentes. A literatura académica realça os benefícios para os destinos e sustentatibilidade global, enquanto os *websites* se dedicam aos benefícios pessoais e formas de se ser um *slow tourist*. Comidas e bebidas representam a imersão em e a absorção do destino e da experiência turística multidimensional, contrastando com a superficialidade do turismo de massas. O artigo discute se os turistas que praticam *slow tourism* sem recorrer ao rótulo são ou não turistas *slow*.

Palavras-chave: *slow travel; slow tourism*; discurso.

1. Introduction

The terms 'slow travel' and 'slow tourism' are now recognised as denoting forms of holiday that differ from the mainstream. Whilst still being contested in the academic literature, the terms are freely used in the media, despite the lack of consensus about what they signify. This makes it an appropriate and interesting time to examine their usage in documents which will contribute to 'fixing' the meanings for the future, namely the academic literature and websites promoting slow travel/tourism. The findings reported in this paper identify the similarities and differences between the two types of writing and will contribute to understanding the collection of activities, motivations and benefits which inform the notion of slow tourism.

Here we focus on slow tourism, i.e. activities at the holiday destination, rather than the travel between the tourists' home and their destination or between destinations, while recognising that the term slow travel is often applied to these activities.

The next section reviews the modest literature about slow tourism and associated ideas and is followed by the methodology, explaining how the documents were chosen and analysed. The findings use the documents' words to explore the themes of time and pace, accommodation and travel at the destination, senses and emotions, depth and people. The discussion relates these themes to those from the academic literature and the conclusions summarise the paper. They suggest that the tourist-centric discourses in both academic and online texts about slow tourism re-enforce the power of the tourist and their right to make decisions in their own interests.

2. Literature review

Slow tourism/travel remains a contested term (Dickinson and Lumsdon 2010; McGrath and Sharpley, 2016), but the 'constellation' of ideas (Fullagar, Wilson and Markwell, 2012: 5) surrounding it is beginning to emerge into a meaningful concept (Lumsdon and McGrath, 2011: 273). Here we focus solely on slow tourism attitudes and practices at the destination, confusingly often called 'slow travel' (McGrath and Sharpley, 2016).

The label 'slow tourism' distinguishes it from other kinds of tourism, such as mass or mainstream tourism with their, often unstated, undesirable attributes and differentiates it from other types of 'unconventional' tourism, such as eco-, pro-poor or responsible tourism (McGrath and Sharpley 2016: 3). It can apply to a trend away from conventional tourism (World Travel Market, 2007), an adopted identity (Dickinson, Robbins and Lumsdon, 2010; Smith, 2012), conscious ethical decisions (Fullagar, Wilson and Markwell, 2012), motivations for holiday choices (McGrath and Sharpley, 2016; Oh, Assaf and Baloglu, 2014), types of accommodation (Matos, 2004) or destination (Caffyn, 2012; Timms and Conway, 2012) as well as a description of fundamental changes needed in the organisation of tourism for social justice and environmental sustainability (Hall, 2009). Pinning down exactly what it means is difficult and perhaps should not be attempted: "You can kill the thing you love by trying to define it." (Respondent in Lumsdon and McGrath's research, 2011; 273)

Here we explore five themes emerging from the literature: (i) time; (ii) conscious decision-making; (iii) engaging the senses; (iv) holiday duration and location; and (v) anti-commercialism, before discussing the benefits of slow tourism.

2.1 Time

Although 'slow' indicates a relationship with time, the 'slow' in slow tourism derives from the 'slow' used by the slow food movement, *Cittaslow* (slow cities) (Lumsdon and McGrath, 2011) and other terms such as slow consumption (Hall 2009). It opposes 'fast' (as in fast food) and celebrates processes and the time they occupy.

A growing number of authors, both academic (eg. Bertmann, 1998; Odih, 1999) and popular (eg. Honoré, 2005; Jőnsson, 1999), implicate modern constructions of time in creating stress and dissatisfaction. Paolucci (1998) attributes feelings of stress to having to choose among so many activities and trying to do too many too quickly without enough time to do them with care, while Simpson (2014: 44) claims the focus on means, including instrumentalism embodied in technology, "makes it impossible to assess the value of any given thing or value." The rejection of this goal-orientated, linear time is symbolised by the spiral motif for the slow travel movement (Figure 1), representing a circular and more abundant vision of time (Germann Molz, 2009).

Figure 1: An illustration of the spiral motif, used for slow tourism

Source: Slow Travel Company, 2015.

While holidays should be escapes from such models of time (Howard, 2012), Woehler (2004) believes that the institutionalisation of employment time has permeated vacations, causing time-scarcity even for self-fulfilment. The demands of employment greatly influence the time available for, and activities chosen for, holidays (Dickinson and Peeters, 2014).

Slow tourism reduces the pace of activity, by savouring each activity in its own right (Germann Molz, 2009; Lumsdon and McGrath, 2011), rather than seeing it as the means to an end (see Dickinson, Robbins and Lumsdon, 2010). It is contrasted with 'fast tourism' which involves packing in multiple stops and activities (World Travel Market, 2007).

2.2 Conscious decision-making

For several authors (e.g. Germann Molz, 2009; Caffyn, 2012), the conscious choice of 'slow' is an essential attribute of being a slow tourist, echoing the words of Gardner (2009): "Slow travel is about making conscious choices." Many assume altruistic motives: "Slow travellers consider the impact of their holidays on the local community they visit" (World Travel Market, 2007: 14). For these authors, it would appear that unwittingly practising aspects of slow tourism, perhaps through economic necessity, disqualifies one from being a slow tourist. Others grade the degree of conscious choice or motivation for slow tourism. Yurtseven and Kaya (2011) identify three clusters of tourists visiting a tourist *CittaSlow* destination: 'dedicated', 'interested' and 'accidental' slow tourists, while Smith (2012) and Dickinson, Robbins and Lumsdon (2010) call dedicated and environmentally motivated tourists 'hard slow' and others who enjoy aspects of slow tourism as 'soft slow'. While environmental convictions may play a role in choosing slow tourism, the experiential benefits appear to be the over-

riding motivation (Caffyn, 2012; Dickinson, Robbins and Lumsdon, 2010; Lumsdon and McGrath, 2011, McGrath and Sharpley, 2016).

2.3 Engaging the senses

With its antecedents in the slow food movement, many writers find enjoying local food and drink an essential aspect of slow tourism (Caffyn, 2012). This benefits the destination (employing local people, maintaining traditions) and offers opportunities to mix with local people. Many research respondents (see Dickinson, Robbins and Lumsdon, 2011; Lumsdon and McGrath, 2011; Robbins and Cho, 2012) refer to smells, tastes, meeting people and being 'within' a place, associated with a deeper sense of experience (Germann Molz, 2009). This contrasts with the superficiality of purely visual consumption (Larsen, 2001, Urry, 2002).

2.4 Holiday duration and location

One of the advocated ways of experiencing a place more deeply is to stay longer (Caffyn, 2012), countering current trends for more and shorter holidays, largely facilitated by cheaper airfares (Buckley, 2010). Slow tourism favours rural areas (Matos, 2004) with a slower pace of life and opportunities to walk, cycle and enjoy the countryside, although savouring city life is also advocated (Lumsdon and McGrath, 2011).

2.5 Anti-commercialism

Slow tourism offers an alternative to the homogenisation of the holiday experience, destinations and their tourism provision by conventional (mass) tourism and package holidays (Conway and Timms, 2010). Holiday-makers' time pressures have led to the growth of tourism intermediaries exerting commercial pressure on destinations to provide their interpretation of tourists' needs, including presenting overwhelming choices of activity (Woehler, 2004). Instead, slow tourism offers "making real and meaningful connections with people, places, food, heritage and the

environment" (Caffyn, 2012: 78), where tourists may even attempt to be part of the community, rather than remaining outsiders (Robinson and Cho, 2012), suggesting that relationships between visitors and residents can be deeper than commercial transactions.

As well as celebrating the differentness of places, slow tourists can signify their rejection of the sameness of package holidays: "Considering their travels superior to those of others, many portrayed their identities as alternative and their travels as following a more fulfilling and worthwhile way of life." (Smith, 2012: 39).

2.6 Benefits of slow tourism

Although many authors focus on the environmental motivations and benefits of slow tourism, most of these are from reducing long-haul flights rather than activities at the destination. However, destinations adopting principles of slow tourism may reduce the financial leakage to foreign suppliers and so generate more income and employment for local people (Caffyn, 2012; Conway and Timms, 2010). The emphasis on quality, rather than quantity, and on spending longer in a destination may attract different market segments, often the growing group of time- and cash-rich retirees. Other benefits to the destination include enhancing its sense of identity and pride in local food, agriculture and occupations. There may also be disbenefits, with the power imbalance between tourists and destination creating pressures to 'fix' local identities and activities in an imagined exercise of slow tourism (Germann Molz, 2009).

Most of the claimed benefits for slow tourism accrue to the tourists themselves, including: relaxation, escape from home and work time pressures, more fulfilling holiday experiences and a greater, deeper knowledge and insight into the places they visit and their residents with possibly a cleaner conscience about their environmental and social impacts.

2.7 In summary

From this quick review, it is clear that slow tourism holds different meanings for different writers and actors. The central figure is the tourist, whose motivations and

preferences need to be met for destinations and the planet to benefit from slow tourism. For destinations, social and environmental campaigners, it presents a label to sell the personal, even hedonistic, benefits of more ethical and sustainable forms of tourism (Caffyn, 2012) whilst avoiding the 'greater good' rationale that has so far proved ineffective in changing tourism habits. To really take off (pun intended), it will probably have to be embraced by commercial interests, with a track record of destroying the very thing they are promoting. Another trajectory would be that it became the norm, so that destinations deviating from the norm might be seen as 'fast'. This would take away a selling point from providers and destinations, but no doubt there would still be a market for 'deeper' and more sustainable tourism with new labels such as 'ultra-slow'.

Each use of the terms slow travel and slow tourism helps shape their meaning. It is likely that tourism providers, destinations, travel writers and self-professed slow tourists have different motives for promoting and using the terms. While this review has focused on the academic literature, we now turn to texts created by other actors to examine how they are helping to mould the meanings of the terms.

Figure 2: Motivations, actions for and consequences of slow travel and tourism
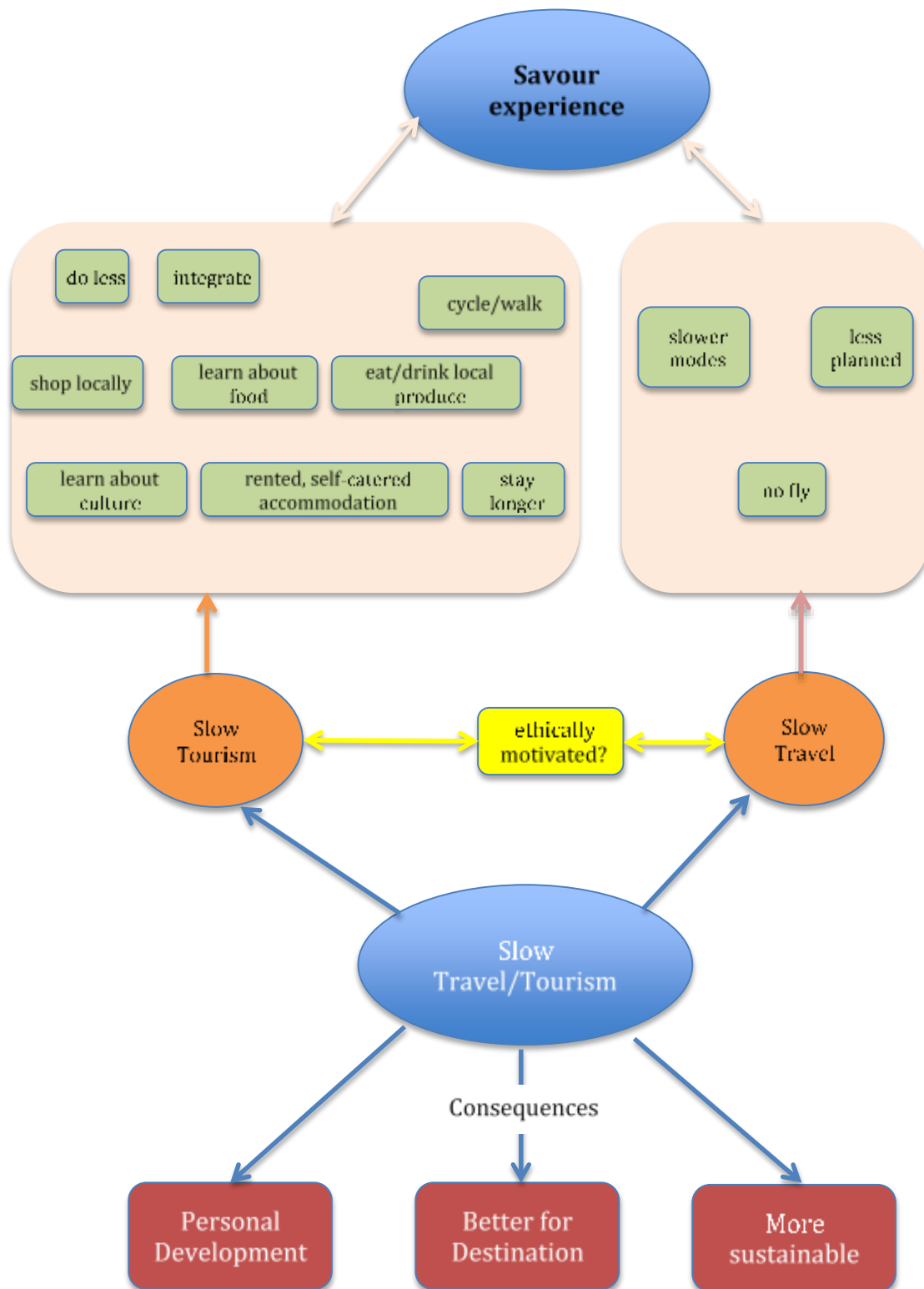
Source: Authors.

3. Methodology

Discourses are present in texts and speech which help construct 'realities' that are created, ordered and transmitted by language and other representations (Burr, 1997; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2000). Communication requires mutually understood words, grammar and meanings about topics, often using cultural references which are not explicitly explained by the author, but are nevertheless understood by the audience (Guiver, 2007). Texts thus both reflect and create common meanings and knowledge, which can be identified though their analysis.

This research set out to explore similarities and differences in the use of the terms slow travel and slow tourism by different actors in the tourism system. The original plan proposed to use samples of text created by different types of people/organisations. However, the search for materials revealed that the boundaries between different roles are more blurred than anticipated. Eventually sixteen texts were selected; they had to fulfil the following requirements:

- be available on the internet and come up on a search for combinations of *slow* and one of the following terms: *travel*, *tourism*, *tourist destination*;
- be within 150 and 3000 words;
- together represent a variety of actors within the tourism system, e.g. tour providers, destinations, travel writers, bloggers.

Table 1 lists the documents and their identifying number.

Table 1: Sources of texts

		Document	Description	Purpose	Words	Website
Accommodation	1A	Slow Travel	Explanation about what Slow Travel is. Aimed at Americans. Picture of detail of old architecture in Umbria, Italy	Convert people to Slow Travel. Encourage holiday rentals	1622	http://www.slowtrav.com/vr/index.htm
	2A	Chalikeri Hotel	Short description of Chalikeri in Kefalonia	Attract customers,	171	http://www.kefalonia.co.uk/accommodation/ http://www.kefalonia.co.uk/accommodation/
Blogger	3B	Never Ending Voyage	Accounts of Travels of Simon and Erin	Recount pleasures of own travels?	999	http://www.neverendingvoyage.com/slow-travel-manifesto/
	4B	The Way of Slow Travel	The Stated Ten Principles of Slow Travel	Uncertain	143	http://www.thewayofslowtravel.com/principles/
Destination	5D	Exmoor National Park	Website advertising Activities in National Park Includes picture of hills, heather and May blossom	Attract more visitors	331	http://www.visitbritain.com/en/Destinations-and-Maps/National-parks-and-scenic-areas/Exmoor-National-Park.html
	6D	Slow Travel Thailand	Leaflet about Slow Tourism Offers in Thailand, listing accommodation and holiday providers	Attract people to visit Thailand, give information about where to find Slow Tourism Offers	81 pages	http://www.tourismusthailand.at/fileadmin/downloads/12/Slow_Travel.pdf
	7D	Tuscany Walking Festival	Advertising a Slow Walking Event	Attract attendees	911	http://www.easier.com/131641-walk-for-enjoyment-exercise-and-empathy-at-slow-travel-fest-tuscany.html
Tour Provider	8TP	Slow Travel Tours	Advertising for an affiliation of providers of slow tourism. Lots of pictures of countryside and 'Slow holidays'	Attract people to book the tours	1,700	http://slowtraveltours.com/
	9TP	InnTravel	Explanation of Slow Travel with examples from their holidays	Encouraging people to book holidays with them	430	https://www.inntravel.co.uk/slow-holidays
	10TP	Indiegogo The Italian Dream - Slow Travel	Why Slow Travel? website, headed by Youtube video and picture of Italian countryside at dawn/dusk	Explanation of Slow Travel, attract customers, crowd funders	2026	https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-italian-dream-slow-travel#/
Travel Writer	11TW	Slow Travel for People in a Hurry: Ed Gillespie	Description of round-the-world Slow Travel journey	Entertainment, information	781	http://www.theguardian.com/travel/blog/2008/apr/04/slowtravelforpeopleinahu
	12TW	Slow Travel Europe	Background to Manifesto	Entertainment, information	524	http://www.slowtraveleurope.eu/

		Document	Description	Purpose	Words	Website
	13TW	A manifesto for slow travel: Nicky Gardner	Much quoted Manifesto for Slow Travel	Entertainment, information	1923	http://www.hiddeneurope.co.uk/a-manifesto-for-slow-travel
	14TW	The Art of Slow Travel Sarah Schlichter	Explanation of what Slow Travel entails.	Entertainment, Information, leading to adverts	1385	http://www.independenttraveler.com/travel-tips/none/the-art-of-slow-travel
	15TW	Take the slow lane in Slovenia Paul Richardson	Article in Financial Times about a Slow Holiday package in Slovenia	Entertainment, recruit customers	907	http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/bbfc5a14-f1bd-11e1-bba3-00144feabdc0.html
Website	16WS	What is Slow Travel	Slow Movement linked to Footprint Choices	uncertain	671	http://www.slowmovement.com/slow_travel.php

Source: Authors.

The texts were analysed using Atlas TI software, which allows the analyst to code the text, compose memos, group and comment on documents, codes, memos and quotations. The themes which emerged from this process are:

- contrasts;
- time and pace;
- accommodation and travel at the destination;
- senses and emotions;
- people.

4.   Findings

4.1 Contrasts

Contrasts often clarify meanings. Holidays were contrasted with working life: "too fast, when deadlines have to be met, obligations attended to" (9TP), "hectic stressful lives" (14TW), although one document equated home and holidays in vacation rentals "that are home away from home – you shop and cook just as you would at home" (WS16).

Mainstream holidays are characterised as rushed, packing in a number of sights, exhausting, often associated with a compulsion to maximise the experience of the trip. "The trap of trying to see everything" (3B), "holiday tours where you flit from one 'must see' to another, and arrive home feeling like you need a holiday" (WS16), "whirlwind tour" (13TW), "manic sightseeing" (14TW), "the stress of attempting to knock out every site in your guidebook" (14TW). An American audience is often assumed, reflecting on their home and holiday behaviour: "Few societies move as quickly as Americans do" (14TW).

A related theme is the superficiality of conventional holidays, contrasted with slow tourism: "living as opposed to 'staying' at your destination" (16WS), "breezing through the major tourist sites" (14TW). Economy and sustainability provide secondary justifications for slow tourism: "vacation rentals are often more cost efficient than

hotels" (14WT), "… the negative effects of mass tourism… exploitation of local resources… global pollution" (10TP).

Among the people possibly not suited to slow tourism are: those who feel "excited and energised by lots of sightseeing" (14TW), "afraid to muck in and make friends" (15TW), or the "more cash and time strapped traveller" (11TW). People with "fast lives" which "demand confirmed arrival times" might be "disquiet[ed]" (13TW), unlike the slow traveller for whom "[d]elayed trains or missed bus connections create new opportunities" (13TW).

Other characteristics of conventional holidays are implied by the texts. Descriptions such as "authentic, family run accommodation where you receive the friendliest of welcomes: leisurely meals of good regional cuisine", "a very personal and individual experience" (9TP), and "you'll see new places and explore new cultures in a way that is less stressful to you, more respectful of the locals and easier on the environment" (14TW) suggest inauthentic, unfriendly, depersonalized, stressful and unsustainable conventional holidays without respect for the local people.

4.1. Time and pace

The emphasis is on savouring activities, often very ordinary activities in the local context, instead of doing too much. A holiday is an "opportunity to take time out to gain a better perspective to re-energise, to create a balance: a time to pause, slow down and savour things for what they really are" (9TP), "it's about taking the time to observe, to be in the moment and take pleasure from simple things" (3B), "take time to wander around a small town, chat to people you meet, enjoy a drink at a local café and just watch the world go by" (9TP), "buying fresh vegetables from the farmers market every morning, sipping *café au lait* on your favourite sidewalk terrace, and taking leisurely trips to neighbouring villages and Châteaus" (14TW).

Potential 'slow' destinations are often rural: "tranquil heart of Brittany" (8TP), "sleepy" (5D, 6D), operating "slowly in accordance with the time and with the seasons, the true speed of life"(6D), especially Italy, the starting point of the slow food and *Cittaslow* movements: "live at an Italian pace" (8TP), "where time seems to have stopped centuries ago" (10TP). Remote places are particularly favoured: "untouched"

(6D), "unknown destinations, and unstepped routes, and out of season scenarios, far from the madding crowd" (10TP), "under-explored" (15TW), "places that will be impossible with the normal road vehicle" (8TP). "[T]he slow travel philosophy" stresses the importance of getting "to know one small area well" rather than seeing "only a little bit of many different areas"(14TW). "It's about getting to know one place well, focusing on quality rather than quantity, and connecting with the place and its people" (3B).

The benefits include: "a stronger connection to the place you are visiting" (14TW), "returning re-energised and relaxed" (3B), "rejuvenated and changed" (1A), "you'll become a more confident person" with more "meaningful memories", "better able to challenge stereotypes"(3B). There may be incidental environmental or economic benefits: slow tourism is "generally much easier on the environment than other types of travel. … often kinder on your budget as well." (14TW). However, almost all the benefits accrue to the tourist, whether it be in the quality of the holiday experience, or character-forming events which deepen understanding of the host culture or oneself.

Although spontaneity is lauded, planning is needed. Absence of time pressures mean "you can stop when you want, head off to explore something that interests you along the way" (9TP), but naturally tour providers stress their preparation, "our Sojourns are impeccably planned, but we intentionally keep the dynamics of the painting workshop and group relaxed" (8TP). Booking self-catered accommodation requires forward planning and can be less flexible than staying in hotels (1A, 14TW).

Learning local history is encouraged, favouring historical places: "a country with a history thousands years old (*sic*)" (10TP), "hundred–years old paths" (10TP), "experience the good life in the mediaeval perched village of Bonnieux" (8TP). "[T]he site is believed to be around 500 years old. It is a place to learn about the … interesting past of the people of this region" (6T).

4.2. Accommodation and travel at the destination

The most common duration of holiday mentioned is one week (1A, 3B, 13TW, 14TW, 15TW, 16WS), although the bloggers (3B, 4B) emphasise that their travels, and often stays in one location, lasted months rather than weeks.

Slow tourists are urged to choose self-catering over catered accommodation (1A, 3B, 14TW, 16WS), largely because they "tend to be more cost-efficient than hotels for longer stays" (TW14). It also means "the slow traveller has to go out into the community to shop. This is an important part of 'living' in your travel destination" (16WS). However, tour providers offer more varied accommodation including: "a range of selected hotels, guest houses, and castles", canal boats (8TP), "authentic, family-run accommodation" (9TP) and one destination (6D) offers homestays. House exchange (14TW) and couchsurfing (3B) offer potential introductions to local people.

Walking or cycling are recommended at the destination: "the best way to slow down and get off the beaten track is to walk or cycle" (9TP), "By exploring on foot and by bike there are opportunities to talk to people and find out the points of interest from their perspective" (16WS). Even slower walking is advocated for greater 'immersion': "strolling through a vegetable market in Rome or wandering down a random sidestreet in Paris" (3B), "walking solo, all [or?] with partners, friends and children, perhaps stopping to sketch, take photos enjoy local food and drink and watch and listen to the entertainment … as they stroll." (7D), "slow travellers explore communities along the way, dawdle and pause as the mood takes them and check out spots recommended by the locals" (12TW). Slow driving may be classed as Slow (13TW, 16WS): "driving along back roads instead of taking the highway" (13TW) or just convenient: "only a short drive from Fiskardo…" (2A). Alternative modes of travel include canal cruises (8TP) and elephant rides (6D) and white water kayaking/rafting (5D, 6D), "to get the adrenaline pumping "(5D).

4.3. Senses and emotions

Despite the claim that slow tourism "engages all your senses" (8TP, 10TP), two senses predominate: sight and taste. A major advantage of slow tourism is "seeing what's around you " (8TP), "you'll see new places" (14TW) and destinations are described in terms of their visual appeal: "picture-perfect coastal towns" (5D), "beautiful scenery", "scenic stroll" (9TP), "a widescreen view of mighty Mount Triglav" (15TW), "some of the most beautiful and iconic scenes on earth" (9TP). These sights also include the night sky (5D, 7D, 10TP). However, slow tourism differs from the

'must-sees' of conventional tourism: "slow travel is about experiences over sights" (3B), "You want to see less, but deeper" (10TP).

Food and/or drink feature in every document but one, sometimes linking slow tourism and the slow food movement. Local food is encouraged: "in a spirit of slow food, try to seek out local ingredients and experience the regional cuisine of the place you're visiting." (14TW). Some dishes are described in detail: "Devon cream tea with locally made clotted cream" (5D), "pan-fried scallops with pancetta, herb gnocchi, truffle buschetta, and tagliatelle with courgette and gorgonzola sauce" (15TW). Being adventurous is recommended: "Seek out at a local restaurant with no English menu, maybe even no menu at all. Order something you don't recognise." (3B).

Not just for eating, food is for learning about, cooking and possibly picking: "take a cooking class and try out the recipes afterwards" (3B), "sit at the kitchen table of a country grandma, who teaches you her cooking secrets"(10TP). "You will taste and cook, make your own olive oil or cheese or gather porcini and chestnuts alongside the locals" (8TP). When eating out, travellers are urged to "patronise locally owned cafes and restaurants" (14TW), "eat at a tiny trattoria one night" and to avoid "chains like Costas and Starbucks, and stick to locally owned cafes" (13TW).

Wine also 'stars' in many of the holidays: "Wine, sea views and amazing holiday" (2A), "spend a week getting to know the wines, local foods and lifestyle" (8TP), "dinners … are served with … large quantities of (very decent) Slovenian wines." (15TW). One company specialises in wine tours, including: "excursions to the small wineries of Galicia and the Bierzo region of north-west Spain", "meet producers of local foods and wines … visit local farms and vineyards and enjoy many meals with small production wines" in Croatia (8TP). There are few allusions to sound (although see Music and Markets Tours' (8TP)) and none to smells.

The earnestness of slow tourism might suggest hard work, with some authors admitting slow tourism may "stretch your comfort zone" (3B, 4B) and be challenging (14TW), although rewarding. Others talk of "celebrating" (4B), "fun" (6D) "the joy of Slow" (11TW) being "comfortable" (16WS), "fulfilling and magic" (10TP) "relaxed" (2A, 8TP, 11TW) "chill[ing] out" (2A) and one holiday may "[u]ncover that inner child alive with the joy of life" (8TP).

4.4. Depth

One of the major benefits of slow Tourism is a deeper understanding of the destination. "Superficial" (11TW, 16WS), conventional holidays are contrasted with "immersion" (3B, 6D, 8TP, 11TW, 16WS): "immerse yourself in the local customs and culture" (6D), "return to the simple pleasures of life as you immerse yourself in the flavours and traditions of one of Tuscany's most distinctive culinary regions" (8TP). "Spend at least one week in one place on your trip to really experience a place at a different level" (16WS). "We want you to experience the difference between looking at a country through a glass window and living it from the inside" (10TP). This three-dimensional experience of slow tourism, being 'in', rather than 'at' a destination, chimes with the desire to 'absorb' it through eating and drinking its produce: "Melt into, feel, and absorb the culture." (8TP).

The history adds another, temporal, dimension. The rewards include finding little-known places missed by other tourists: "Discover the small hidden jewels of the surroundings, led by the local guides" (10TP), "take you to places you've dreamt about and others you've never heard of" (8TP), "a slow holiday is all about exploring the quiet side of the place you are visiting and taking your time to really enjoy its hidden corners traditional ways of life and hospitality" (9TP).

4.5. People

While immersion in the destination is advocated, little is said about the host communities. The texts' protagonists are the travellers, the residents are the backdrop: "the tranquillity and a quarter of a rural society in rude health – the haymakers with their scythes, the neatly kept up Alpine villages" (15 TW). Slow Tourists are encouraged to "watch" (3B) or "talk to" local people (3B, 9TP, 16WS), attend their festivals (3B), live like local people (1A), learn some of their language (3B, 13TW, 16WS) or their cookery (3B, 16WS) and slow tourism is supposedly "more respectful of the locals" (14TW).

The discussion of abstract ideas inevitably leads to portraying the local people generically: "chatting to a local in Bagan, Burma" (3B), "engage with communities at

the right level" (13 TW) or subsuming them as 'culture': "an ideal destination for anyone seeking both greater cultural and environmental awareness" (6D), "exploring food, culture, wine, and artful living" (8TP). Yet slow tourism challenges "stereotypes" (3B, 10TP) and some of the descriptions expand more about the host community and what they offer the traveller: "How people live as a community where everyone is treated like a part of a big family will make one understand how wonderful and simple life can be when a society live(s) in harmony" (6D).

Service providers can be reduced to the service they provide: "authentic, family run accommodation where you receive the friendliest of welcomes; leisurely meals of good regional cuisine …" (9TP), "famously warm welcome" (5D). However, some of the tour providers personalise accommodation and other service providers: "professional archaeologist Steve will guide and interpret for you" (8TP), "Ian as skipper/tour guide, Jane creating great dishes with a Breton twist" (8TP), " Signora Teresa's famous cooking classes" (10TP).

Tour companions are also important 'ingredients' of the holiday. One company reassures its potential customers that their fellow travellers, "a maximum of only four guests" will share their tastes: "a small group of like-minded travellers" (8TP). One travel writer recounts how "a group of perfect strangers" became "firm friends" during a walking holiday (15TW).

4.6. In summary

As expected, the texts are very 'tourist-centric' focusing on the benefits to the tourist of adopting slow tourism. This is contrasted to exhausting and unfulfilling conventional holidays. Staying in rented accommodation, walking and cycling in the area and connecting with its people, culture, history, food and drink promise a deeper and more relaxing experience. Table 2 cross-references the documents and selected themes.

Table 2: Documents and Themes

	Document	don't fly	savour journey	personalised providers	spend time in one place	history	wine	rent accommodation	local people	depth	benefits to traveller	sustainability	contrast with other holidays	rural	walk/cycle	food	sights
1A	Slow Travel	o			x			x			x		x			x	x
2A	Chalikeri Hotel					x	x	x							x		x
3B	Never Ending Voyage					x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x
4B	The Way of Slow Travel																
5D	Elmoor National Park					x								x	x	x	x
6D	Slow Travel Thailand			x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
7D	Tuscan Walking Festival	o		x							x	x	x	x	x	x	x
8TP	Slow Travel Tours	o		x	x	x	x		x	x					x	x	x
9TP	InnTravel							x		x	x			x	x	x	x
10TP	Indiegogo The Italian Dream - Slow Travel			x		x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
11TW	Slow Travel for People in a Hurry: Ed Gillespie:	x	x				x					x	x		x		
12TW	A manifesto for slow travel: Nicky Gardner	x	x		x											x	
13TW	Slow Travel Europe: Nicky Gardner		x						x				x				
14TW	The Art of Slow Travel: Sarah Schlichter	x			x			x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x
15TW	Take the Slow Lane in Slovenia: Paul Richardson			x			x							x	x	x	x
16WS	What is Slow Travel				x			x	x	x				x	x		
	Number of sources mentioning topic	3	3	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	7	8	11	11	11

Key: x = mentioned, o = flying suggested.

Table 2 shows the topics mentioned by each source, with the most mentioned topics (on the right of the table) being walking/cycling, food and sights. There is no apparent pattern emerging, with different types of source giving emphasis to different topics, however, a larger sample might uncover evidence of underlying differences in emphasis.

5. Discussion

With their different audiences, it is not surprising that the academic literature and the websites have different foci. The websites are primarily aimed at potential tourists with the hope of changing their behaviour: to buy into a specific product or consider a different type of holiday. The academic literature addresses the phenomenon from multiple perspectives: opportunities for destinations and businesses, trends in tourism, motivations and sustainability. The benefits to destinations (more locally

controlled outlets and employment, lower turnover of visitors, support of traditional produce, higher local spending, etc. (Caffyn, 2012; Conway and Timms, 2010)) or the environment (Dickinson and Lumsdon, 2010) are described.

Among the common themes is the idea of deeper and more meaningful relationships between visitor and people at the destination, through longer stays and more leisurely appreciation of locality. Both types of literature contrast this 'depth' with the superficial contacts and 'seeing' of conventional tourism. Qualitative research with respondents (Smith, 2012, Lumsdon and McGrath, 2011) reveals the importance of different senses to appreciate the destination and the analysed texts refer to using all the senses, despite concentrating on sight and taste. Eating and drinking local produce is recognised as an important element in a slow holiday in the academic literature, but the website texts exemplify the '3D' experience of being 'in', not 'at' a tourist destination, literally 'absorbing' the culture.

Slow tourism is a label which is intimately tied up with identity (Dickinson, Robbins and Lumsdon, 2010; Smith, 2012). Many people practise aspects of slow tourism without applying the label 'slow tourist' to themselves and much of the academic literature (see Dickinson, Robbins and Lumsdon, 2010; Lumsdon and McGrath, 2011; Robbins and Cho, 2012; Smith, 2012) confirms that motives for adopting the label are mixed and often ambivalent. The websites offer a vision of gentler, more meaningful holidays and explain how these benefit the traveller in the quality of the holiday and its memory and in developing skills, understanding and empathy. Explanations of why it is also beneficial to destinations and the environment are occasionally presented as benign by-products. Thus, it seems that slow tourism needs to be 'sold' to the traveller as benefitting them, not as an ethically sound way of holidaying. All the texts reinforce the discourse that the tourist is completely justified in seeking the best experience for themselves and that the ethical and environmental benefits of slow tourism are a bonus, rather than a motivation for choosing such holidays. Ultimately consumer choice and experience are sovereign, rather than considerations about the impact of tourism on the destination or environment and the texts about slow tourism reproduce this order as much as texts about more conventional tourism.

Slow tourism certainly appears less exploitative to people at the destination than mainstream tourism as depicted on the websites, yet there are potential dangers to

local people at destinations from slow tourism. The lack of personification and often absence of residents in the texts is a warning that it is the tourist's whim which determines the prosperity of the tourism industry at a destination and their first consideration is the experience the holiday offers them. There remains the risk of 'fixing' local identities (Germann Molz, 2009) as an interpretation of the area's 'authentic' character, to be discovered by discerning slow tourists.

More optimistically, the current interest in slow tourism may be another symptom of disquiet with current trends and possibly signals challenges to concepts such as growth and consumption (Hall, 2009) or re-evaluation of our relationships with time and other people (Bertmann, 1998; Honoré 2005; Jőnsson, 1999; Odih, 1999).

6. Conclusions

This paper has explored the shifting meanings of slow tourism through the academic literature and the texts of sixteen websites dedicated to slow tourism. It finds a number of common themes, but notes how the websites take the perspective of the tourists, while academic texts take multiple perspectives, including the potential impact of slow tourism on destinations, travel trends and the environment. However, it seems likely that tourist-centric texts such as those found on the websites, travelogues and blogs will have greater influence in molding the meaning of the term slow tourism and the practices associated with it.

There remains a doubt as to whether unintentional slow tourists, those who practise aspects of slow tourism but who do not recognise or adopt the label, can be classed as slow tourists or whether it can only be applied to people making a conscious choice to be and identify themselves as slow tourists.

When contrasted with, often stereotypical, accounts of conventional tourism, slow tourism means staying longer in a place, engaging with its people, history, culture and attempting to 'live' close to the way that the residents do. There is an emphasis on immersion in the local culture, even absorption of it through consumption of local food and drink, which leads to a more fulfilling and memorable holiday experience. There are potential benefits to the destination and the environment, but these are presented

as side-effects of the tourist's endeavour to savour the differentness of the holiday location.

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