

A systematic literature review of slow tourism

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Abstract

This systematic literature review focuses on slow tourism, which grew in popularity during COVID-19. It highlights the gaps in the literature for future researchers by compiling the papers published on slow tourism between 2010 and 2021. In addition, the managerial suggestions we make serve as lessons for practitioners. Developed as a systematic literature review, we used different selection criteria including papers published in English in Q1 or Q2 journals between 2010 and 2021 in the sample. This study identified the following parameters: the number of publications, the most preferred research methodology and data collection methods, and the geographical coverage of slow tourism papers. The relationship between slow tourism and sustainability is strengthened by our analysis. We identified qualitative studies, particularly in-depth interviews, as the most popular data collection method for slow tourism studies. Australia, the United Kingdom, and Poland were the most popular destinations in terms of the geographical context of these studies, followed by Italy. As the literature is missing a unified definition of slow tourism, we propose one based on the four-pillar model.

Keywords: slow tourism, slow travel, slow city, sustainability, Cittaslow, systematic literature review

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Introduction

The positive and negative effects of globalisation are shaping how people live today. Positive effects, such as the spread of technology or easy access to new cultures, offer convenience. Despite these benefits, the concept of speed and fast living has entered our lives (SEMMENS, J. and FREEMAN, C. 2012). A faster way of living leads to faster spending and consuming. The faster we consume, the faster we become confused about the changes in traditional, cultural, spiritual, and social values and norms (BEKAR, A. *et al.* 2015). In response to this rapid consumption, a new lifestyle debate has emerged (ROGOVSKA, V. and LACKOVA, A. 2015) advocating slowness (ÖZÜPEKÇE, S. 2021) and laying the foundations for the slow movement. The movement was promoted as a response to the

opening of fast food outlets in Italy in the 1980s (BROADWAY, M. 2015; PÉCSEK, B. 2015; BARTLOMIEJSKI, R. and KOWALEWSKI, M. 2019; SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020a), which is well summarised by PINK, S. and LEWIS, T. (2014, 696–697) as follows:

“Carlo Petrini decided to resist the steady march of fast food and all that it represents when he organized a protest against the building of a McDonalds near the Spanish steps in Rome. Armed with bowls of Penne, Petrini and his supporters spawned a phenomenon. Three years later Petrini founded the International Slow Food Movement renouncing not only fast food but also the overall pace of ‘fast life.’”

The slow movement was soon adapted to the tourism industry (SERDANE, Z. *et al.* 2020), with slow tourism and the Cittaslow movement (PINK, S. and LEWIS, T. 2014; KARANIKOLA, P. *et al.* 2018; PERANO, M. *et al.*

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2019), with Italian cities becoming pioneers (JAZSCZAK, A. *et al.* 2020) and spreading across Europe to the United States of America (DICKINSON, J.E. *et al.* 2010), where it continues to grow. Cittaslow is also a territorial certification that aims to protect the cultural and environmental values of small towns through a slower lifestyle, while improving the quality of life of its inhabitants (BRODZINSKI, Z. and KUROWSKA, K. 2021). By 2024, there were over 290 Cittaslows from 33 different countries, with towns of fewer than 50,000 inhabitants (PÉCSEK, B. 2015; BARTLOMIEJSKI, R. and KOWALEWSKI, M. 2019; BRODZINSKI, Z. and KUROWSKA, K. 2021). In addition to Cittaslows, cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants can become Cittaslow Supporters while associations, private, and public companies in the tourism, services, and agriculture sectors can become a Cittaslow Friend (PÉCSEK, B. 2015, Cittaslow International 2023, 2024a). In June 2024, the top five countries with the highest number of Cittaslows were (in descending order) Italy, Poland, Germany, Turkey, and South Korea (Cittaslow International, 2024b).

The increasing number of tourists and their impact on the environment, are prompting destinations to look for sustainable models (SERDANE, Z. *et al.* 2020). Slow tourism not only helps tourists escape from daily routines, but also focuses on the quality of life of local people (IVANCSÓNÉ HORVÁTH, Z. *et al.* 2023). It adopts a community-oriented approach and encourages citizens to actively participate in local development (PARK, E. and KIM, S. 2016). In addition, it promotes sustainability especially through slower modes of transport to reduce environmental impact (KARANIKOLA, P. *et al.* 2018) and local production for residents, and supports improving the quality of experience for tourists (KATO, K. and PROGANO, R.N. 2017).

As a consequence of COVID-19, the tourism industry and the concept of mobility have never been more critical (FUSTÉ-FORNÉ, F. and MICHAEL, N. 2021). Now we can talk about the reorientation and revitalisation of the tourism sector especially in the context of sustainability (SEABRA, C. and BHATT. K.

2022), so the popularity of new types of tourism, such as slow tourism, is expected to increase (BENJAMIN, S. *et al.* 2020; ÖZÜPEKÇE, S. 2021; WEN, J. *et al.* 2021). More people are returning to nature and taking the time to slow down since the pandemic (BENJAMIN, S. *et al.* 2020). Changes in daily routines are bringing experiences that emphasise “slow leisure” or “slow tourism” (BREUNIG, M. 2020), as these concepts promote travel quality, local people, longer stays in a destination, and meaningful experiences (WEN, J. *et al.* 2021).

This paper assesses the state of research on slow tourism and proposes a research agenda. In the literature, slow tourism is usually explained by different concepts such as slow food, sustainability, and the impact of COVID-19 (MAVRIC, B. *et al.* 2021). Up to February 2023, four systematic literature reviews on slow tourism could be found. Three of these studies focused on a single database, either Web of Science (MAVRIC, B. *et al.* 2021) or Scopus (WERNER, K. *et al.* 2021; KREŠIĆ, D. and GJURAŠIĆ, M. 2022). One study focused on several databases – Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar – where a science mapping for “slow movements” was created (KLARIN, A. *et al.* 2022). The authors included grey literature from Google Scholar, whereas we excluded it. They also focused on the concept of slow, including slow tourism, Cittaslow, and slow food as well as other emerging slow concepts: slow cinema, slow money, slow science, slow reading, slow research, and slow technology.

We provide a narrower perspective by including both the Scopus and ScienceDirect databases. In addition, we propose a definition of slow tourism. The study provides an opportunity for researchers to follow up on previous research on slow tourism and to stimulate reflection on research gaps. In addition, the managerial suggestions made serve as lessons for practitioners.

This study explores the concept of slow tourism in papers published in Q1 and Q2 level journals between 2010 and 2021 in the Scopus and ScienceDirect databases. In this context, the first part of this study presents a literature

review on slow tourism. The next sections describe the methodology, results, and discussion. The last section includes limitations and provides suggestions for further research.

Overview of the “slow tourism” literature

Slow tourism has gained popularity in the last decade (SIGURÐARDÓTTIR, I. 2018) as an emerging and popular type of tourism (ÖZDEMİR, G. and ÇELEBI, D. 2018, 542) and as a new trend (BALETTI, G. *et al.* 2020). Although mass tourism is still preferred, destinations have started to look for sustainable travel models to minimise environmental impacts (SERDANE, Z. *et al.* 2020). Given the consensus that slow tourism is linked to sustainability and focuses on minimising environmental impacts, there is still no consensus on the definition of slow tourism (OH, H. *et al.* 2016; SERDANE, Z. *et al.* 2020; SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020a, b). Hence different definitions of slow tourism can be found in the literature (*Figure 1*).

With the definitions, the specific characteristics of slow tourism have been highlighted. Slow tourism is identified as an alternative type of tourism (SERDANE, Z. *et al.* 2020; SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020a), an opposition, a contrast to mass tourism (LOSADA, N. and MOTA, G. 2019; SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020a), even an antidote (BALETTI, G. *et al.* 2020, 4) or an experience (LIN, L.-P. *et al.* 2020). Each definition describes

slow tourism from a different angle, such as its link to sustainability (SERDANE, Z. *et al.* 2020; SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020a), and how it encourages tourists to use slower modes of transport (DICKINSON, J.E. *et al.* 2010; KARANIKOLA, P. *et al.* 2018; LIN, L.-P. *et al.* 2020), or to extend their stay in destinations (SOLER, I.P. *et al.* 2018; WONDIRAD, A. *et al.* 2021).

To capture all aspects of slow tourism, PÉCSEK, B. (2018) developed a four-pillar model that highlights the most important key features: locality, experience-focus, sustainability, and social well-being. We therefore developed a comprehensive definition of slow tourism, considering these four pillars:

“An alternative type of tourism based on sustainability, which supports the preservation of local values, encourages tourists to have authentic experiences, and aims to improve the quality of life of local people.”

According to PÉCSEK’s slow tourism model, locality can address the existing demand for local production, which can create the need for new jobs. Slow tourism can provide experiences with a high degree of authenticity (MENG, B. and CHOI, K. 2016a, 398) and allow tourists to interact with locals, including creating a people-friendly environment (JAZSZCZAK, A. *et al.* 2020). The experience pillar highlights the importance of gaining unique experiences, which are more accessible in slow tourism as opposed to mass (fast) tourism (SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020b). Additionally, slow tourism aims to create a longer relationship between

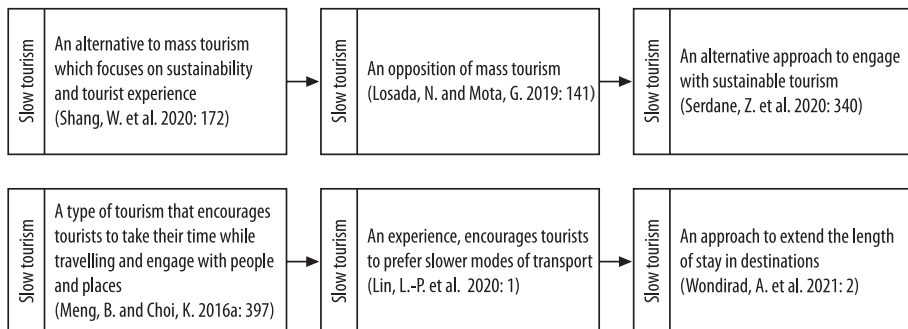


Fig. 1. Different definitions of slow tourism. *Source:* Authors’ own elaboration.

tourists and destinations, which could be obtained through a variety of tourism products. Providing a huge variety of tourism products and focusing on authenticity might help tourists to have in-depth experiences which can result in tourists prolonging their stay in a destination (KEBETE, Y. 2021).

The broader umbrella of sustainability first addressed environmental sustainability through sustainable transport alternatives, such as walking and cycling (SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020b). Economic sustainability is also a goal for destinations and a sustainable experience is a goal for visitors (SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020b). Sustainability encompasses the environment, economy, and society as a whole in slow tourism (BRODZINSKI, Z. and KUROWSKA, K. 2021).

In terms of social well-being, slow tourism can improve the quality of life and well-being of local people while slowing down the pace of Cittaslows (PÉCSEK, B. 2015; BRODZINSKI, Z. and KUROWSKA, K. 2021). The involvement of local people in local development is crucial (PÉCSEK, B. 2018). In addition to local people, the well-being of visitors is also at the centre of attention (SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020b).

In the literature, the terms “slow tourism” and “slow travel” are often used interchangeably (DICKINSON, J.E. *et al.* 2011; KATO, K. and PROGANO, R.N. 2017; LIN, L.-P. 2017), as both concepts encourage people to embrace slowness. Both aim to provide tourists with more authentic experiences by focusing on quality while reducing their carbon footprint (DICKINSON, J.E. and LUMSDON, L.M. 2010; FULLAGAR, S.P. *et al.* 2012; SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020b). Embracing local values and encouraging tourists to have local experiences are considered key features (SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020a), as slow tourism aims to revalue quality leisure time (FULLAGAR, S.P. *et al.* 2012, 21). Tourists are also encouraged to stay longer at a destination and therefore travel less (DICKINSON, J.E. and LUMSDON, L.M. 2010). Consequently, slow tourism is expected to contribute to sustainable tourism while promoting environmentally friendly modes of transport (FULLAGAR, S.P. *et al.* 2012) such as cycling (KARANIKOLA, P. *et al.* 2018).

Methods

This research provides a comprehensive review of papers on slow tourism published between 2010 and 2021. In addition, it contributes to the development of the literature by providing more insights into the current focus of the literature. We used a “Process of Systematic Literature Review” according to XIAO, Y. and WATSON, M. (2019) who pointed out that literature reviews can be prepared using different processes; however, all reviews use a common eight-step approach (Figure 2).

Research Questions – We formulated two research questions to address our research purpose:

RQ1: What research methods were used to study the literature on slow tourism between 2010 and 2021?

RQ2: What was the geographical focus of slow tourism literature between 2010 and 2021?

Formulating the research problem – The formulation of the research question(s) helps the authors to determine the scope of the research. In this study, slow tourism was chosen as the primary motivation for visiting a destination (CHEN, S.-H. *et al.* 2021, 292).

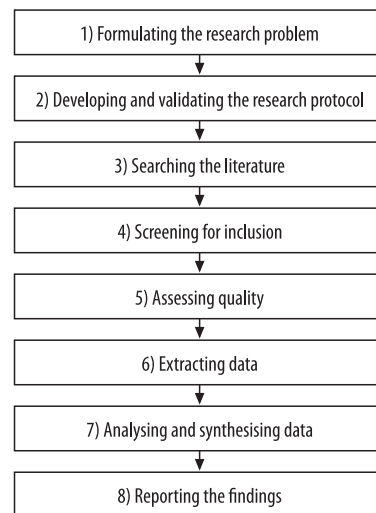


Fig. 2. Systematic literature review process. Source: XIAO, Y. and WATSON, M. (2019)

Research protocol – The main aim is to highlight the current trends in the literature on slow tourism and to suggest future directions. Therefore, we developed a research protocol by identifying tourism and geography journals in the Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management 2020 and Geography, Planning, and Development lists in the Scopus database. Based on these lists, only Q1 and Q2 rated journals were included. We chose the Scopus database because it is considered to be one of the largest databases of scientific journals (SINGH, V.K. *et al.* 2021); the ScienceDirect database is also used as a supplement.

Once the list was completed, we analysed all the journals using the Boolean text search technique. We used the keywords “slow tourism”, “slow city” and “Cittaslow” to determine the sample (Q1 n = 60, Q2 n = 25). The research phase was carried out between 20 January and 30 June 2022; only papers written in the English language were included in the sample.

Searching the literature – We used electronic database searches (XIAO, Y. and WATSON, M. 2019) to search the literature. As only the Scopus and ScienceDirect databases were used, we excluded grey literature.

Throughout the study, we used language of publication and date range as filtering criteria. We included papers published in English and filtered the publication date between January 2010 and December 2021.

Screening for inclusion – We removed duplicate papers to avoid double counting. We examined the abstracts and keywords of the selected papers to determine whether they met the defined research criteria. We then skimmed the papers and excluded those irrelevant to slow tourism. In the end, we found 89 papers to be eligible.

Assessing quality – At this stage, we read the papers and reviewed them to see if the selected criteria were met. Assessing the criteria was a crucial step: “*The most important consideration for this stage is that the criteria are reasonable and defensible*” (XIAO, Y. and WATSON, M. 2019, 106).

Four of the selected papers included a description of the selected keywords but did not elaborate on the concept thoroughly and focused on different concepts. We therefore excluded these papers and updated the total number of papers to 85 (Q1 = 60, Q2 = 25).

Data extraction – We used the data extraction process to identify the eligible studies for this review. *Appendix 1* summarises the papers included in the review including their year of publication and journal.

Findings

Evolution of publications on slow tourism

We examined 85 papers in this systematic review, 78 of which were research papers. In addition, we included three commentaries, two research notes, and two research letters.

Commentaries included an overview of slow tourism and the impact of COVID-19. Research notes focused on the challenges and opportunities of slow cities and their link to sustainability, and a content analysis of images on Instagram. Research letters focused on slow food behaviours and authentic experiences at a slow food festival.

The interest in slow tourism as a research topic has increased, especially since 2020 (*Figure 3*). This can be explained by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing popularity of the “slow development of the world” (KUCUKERGIN, F.N. and OZTURK, Y. 2020, 749). In addition, papers written in 2020 include COVID-19 as a keyword and elaborate on the concept of slow tourism through the pandemic, with a particular focus on changes in people’s behaviour. Apart from COVID-19, the concept of slow travel was one of the most popular topics explored in 2020 (HOED, W. 2020; JAZSCZAK, A. *et al.* 2020; SECHI, L. *et al.* 2020) in a search for alternatives to air and car travel. As a key concept of slow tourism, slow travel encourages people to use more sustainable modes of transport with lower carbon emissions. Cycling is the most common alterna-

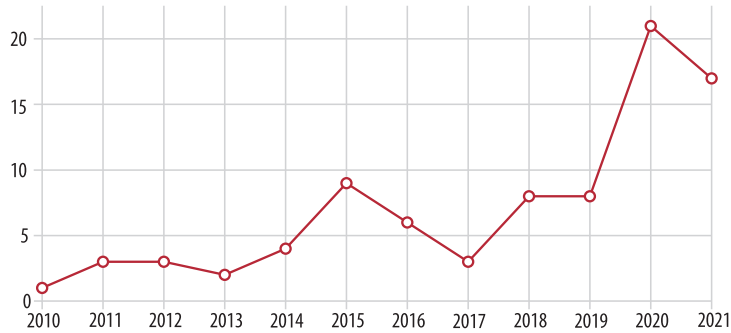


Fig. 3. Yearly number of papers published on slow tourism between 2010 and 2021. *Source:* Authors' own elaboration.

tive promoted to tourists in papers exploring the concept of slow travel.

Methodological perspective

Most of the selected papers are empirical research (71), but we also included literature reviews (14). The latter focused on a small fragment of slow tourism such as tourists' perceptions of slow food, slow events, or tourists' behavioural intentions. One paper was conducted as a systematic literature review focusing on slow events, using qualitative methodology. We therefore included it in both categories (literature review and qualitative methodology).

The most common data collection methods used in the papers, with a balance between in-depth interviews (used in 34 papers; 25 qualitative and 9 mixed methods) and surveys (used in 23 papers; 15 quantitative and 8 mixed methods). This was followed by literature review/conceptual papers used in 14 papers (Table 1).

The majority of the studies that conducted qualitative research (40) focused on at least one of the tourism stakeholders, including local food and beverage providers, tourism entrepreneurs, tourism service providers, civil society representatives, destination marketing organisations, local government officials, officials responsible for Cittaslow projects. On the other hand, visitors and experts were

more likely to be included in the sample of qualitative studies than locals.

There was only one study in the sample that attended to residents of Cittaslows through the concept of sustainability, specifically slower modes of transport (HOED, W. 2020), indicating the lack of research using residents of slow cities as the main sample.

Geographical context

In terms of geographical context, Australia, Poland, and the United Kingdom are the most popular destinations when it comes to slow tourism studies with a total of 8 papers. This is followed by Italy (7), Turkey (6), South Korea (5), China (5), Taiwan (4) and Spain (4).

For Australia, two papers focus on Goolwa, the first recognised Cittaslow outside Europe (Cittaslow Goolwa 2023). Goolwa demonstrated the revival of local products after becoming a Cittaslow (PARK, E. and KIM, S. 2016), while restaurants showed their significant contribution to sustainability (HIGGINS-DESBIOLLES, F. and WIJESINGHE, G. 2019). Queensland, Victoria, Fremantle, and Brisbane were selected as other key destinations used in slow tourism papers. Among the papers using Australia as the main destination, the most popular concept was slow food. The concept was analysed in a variety of settings including restaurants, slow food festivals, food and wine shows, or virtual environments.

Table 1. Qualitative papers that involve at least one tourism stakeholder in their sample

Year	List of authors of the papers	Year	List of authors of the papers
2010	DICKINSON, J.E. and LUMSDON, L.M.	2016	FOLEY, C. OH, H. <i>et al.</i> PARK, E. and KIM, S.
2011	DICKINSON, J.E. <i>et al.</i> LUMSDON, L.M. and McGRATH, P. NILSSON, J.H. <i>et al.</i>	2017	KATO, K. and PROGANO, R.N. WILSON, S. and HANNAM, K.
2012	SEMMENS, J. and FREEMAN, C.	2018	DUIGNAN, M.B. <i>et al.</i> KARANIKOLA, P. <i>et al.</i> ÖZDEMİR, G. and ÇELEBI, D. SIGURDARDÓTTIR, I.
2013	PINK, S. and SERVON, L.J.	2019	HIGGINS-DESBOILLES, F. and WIJESINGHE, G. LAMB, D. LOSADA, N. and MOTA, G. SERDANE, Z.
2014	EKINCI, M.B. JUNG, T.H. <i>et al.</i> PINK, S. and LEWIS, T.	2020	CHEN, X. <i>et al.</i> CHI, X. and HAN, H. FARKIĆ, J. <i>et al.</i> GÜRSOY, İ.T. LIN, L.-P. <i>et al.</i> SERDANE, Z. <i>et al.</i> SHANG, W. <i>et al.</i>
2015	BROADWAY, M. HATIPOGLU, B. LEE, K.-H. <i>et al.</i> PINK, S. and SERVON, L.J. PRESENZA, A. <i>et al.</i>	2021	JAZSZCZAK, A. <i>et al.</i> KEBETE, Y. KIM, J.H. <i>et al.</i> WALKER, T.B. and LEE, T.J. WONDIRAD, A. <i>et al.</i> ZIELINSKA-SZCZEPKOWSKA, J. <i>et al.</i>

Source: Compiled by the authors.

For the UK, each paper focused on a different destination, including Scotland (2) and Wales (3). Two main concepts were explored: slow transport and slow food. Campervan travellers were interviewed in the north of England and Scotland; cyclists were interviewed in Newcastle in a separate study. Cyclists and their active mobility have been shown to promote social and physical well-being (HOED, W. 2020, 185). Another study, which surveyed travellers before and after their journeys within Europe, found that slow travel can be used as an alternative to air and car travel, reducing the carbon footprint (DICKINSON, J.E. *et al.* 2010).

The slow food concept was analysed in the context of Wales (3) and Cambridge (1). Most of the studies conducted in Wales (2), concentrated specifically on Mold, the first Cittaslow in Wales. Slow food was identified

as a major contributor to sustainable tourism development (JUNG, T.H. *et al.* 2014, 432) which was found to have a direct impact on visitor's experience and satisfaction (JUNG, T.H. *et al.* 2015, 277). In addition, cultural offerings that support small and micro producers in a city have been identified as an important contributor to authentic connectivity and slow visitor experiences (DUIGNAN, M.B. *et al.* 2018, 350).

Two recurring themes can be seen in the papers written about Poland: local development and sustainability, in particular sustainable transport. Local development is part of the Cittaslow network, which aims to offer residents alternatives to living in big cities and improve their quality of life (BRODZINSKI, Z. and KUROWSKA, K. 2021). In addition, a study by ZIELINSKA-SZCZEPKOWSKA, J. *et al.* (2021) showed a reduction in unemployment

in slow cities due to revitalisation studies, which is not directly influenced by the revitalisation projects implemented, but nevertheless proves the potential of slow cities.

In terms of sustainable transport, as in other countries, cycling is being studied as one of the most environmentally friendly modes of transport. In the Polish context, cycling has been studied to understand how it is currently used in Poland and how well the infrastructure and road safety allow people to use it as a mode of transport (JASZCZAK, A. *et al.* 2020). An interesting finding of the papers on Poland is that the majority concentrate on more than one city; usually a handful of groups of slow cities are highlighted in one paper (BARTLOMIEJSKI, R. and KOWALEWSKI, M. 2020; JASZCZAK, A. *et al.* 2020, 2021; ZIELINSKA-SZCZEPKOWSKA, J. *et al.* 2021).

In Italy, the pioneer of the Slow Food movement, a focus on slow food can be seen in the papers published before 2015 (NILSSON, J.H. *et al.* 2011; FROST, W. and LAING, J. 2013; LEE, K.-H. *et al.* 2015a). As slow food and slow tourism are intertwined, it is very likely that people first associate slow tourism with the food aspect, and therefore slow food is a popular topic of research for slow tourism researchers. We cannot separate slow tourism from local food culture, hence slow food, as it is mainly concerned with preserving the local heritage, environment and culture (NILSSON, J. H. *et al.* 2011). While destinations promote their local values through food culture, over-promotion can be dangerous. As slow tourism is strongly opposed to mass tourism, this needs to be managed carefully by Cittaslow officials.

Since 2015, the focus has shifted from slow food to the management and support of slow tourism and slow travel. A study conducted by BALETTO, G. *et al.* in 2020 examined an ancient mining route – the Santa Barbara Walk – that is currently being promoted as a slow tourism area. Researchers aim to develop a dashboard to represent the characteristics and offers of this new tourist attraction, which will later be recognised as a network bringing together those interested in slow tourism (BALETTO, G. *et al.* 2020). A separate

study used slow travel options as a case study in Northern Sardinia. As Sardinia is a popular tourist destination, this slow travel route aims to develop tourism in inner cities near Sardinia through a combination of railway lines and cycle paths (SECHI, L. *et al.* 2020).

Additionally, there is also a tendency towards qualitative methods in studies focusing on Italy. Of all the papers we examined, one used quantitative methods (PERANO, M. *et al.* 2019) and another used mixed method (BALETTO, G. *et al.* 2020), while the rest used qualitative methods.

The papers elaborated on Turkey as a slow tourism destination, focusing either on the quality of life of local people or on slow tourism development. Slow tourism and the Cittaslow philosophy were analysed in terms of sustainable tourism development and how local governments can reassess the quality of life and visitor experience (EKINCI, M.B. 2014; HATIPOGLU, B. 2015). In addition, Turkey's first Cittaslow, Seferihisar, was the subject of two papers. Another popular topic for Turkish researchers seems to be the analysis of existing Cittaslows. ÖZÜPEKÇE, S. conducted a study to find out the changes in slow cities, looking at 17 Cittaslows in the country, and concluded that some show a more rapid expansion than others (ÖZÜPEKÇE, S. 2021).

For South Korea, three papers focused on Busan. A popular tourist destination, Busan is a Cittaslow supporter and the second largest city in South Korea after Seoul. As regards accessibility, it is located close to the Cittaslows and is geographically easy to reach. It can be seen as a link between Busan and Cittaslows in South Korea, attracting tourists and promoting slow tourism.

Tourist behavioural intention was found to be the most popular concept among the papers focusing on South Korea. The slow value that a city offers to its visitors or the slow brand attitude that a city has was identified as contributing to visitors' intention to revisit a destination (CHUNG, J.Y. *et al.* 2018; PARK, H.-J. and LEE, T.J. 2019). Authenticity in slow tourism and a destination's authentic offerings were also found to be important

indicators of behavioural intention (MENG, B. and CHOI, K. 2016a).

Three out of four papers written about China focused on Yaxi and the behavioural intention concept. Slow tourism products and services can positively affect tourists' affection, sense of belonging, loyalty, and future behavioural intentions (CHI, X. and HAN, H. 2020, 2021). A separate study explored the relationships between brand experience, authenticity, and place attachment in Yaxi, China's first Cittaslow. According to the findings, destination brands were found to partially influence authenticity, but authenticity was found to significantly influence place attachment (SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020a).

The concept of behavioural intention was popular in papers published in both South Korea and China. The former explored the slow value and slow brand attitudes that a city offers to visitors, which influence their future behavioural intentions (MENG, B. and CHOI, K. 2016b; PARK, H.-J. and LEE, T.J. 2019), while the latter explored the concept of behavioural intention through slow tourism products and services and how these can create a sense of belonging and loyalty (CHI, X. and HAN, H. 2020, 2021; SHANG, W. *et al.* 2020a).

The papers focusing on Taiwan were divided into behavioural intention, slow travel, and food concept. The concept of slow travel was analysed in the context of Taiwan and its unique offerings; the quality of transport and the benefits of tourism experiences highlighted as important drivers of future intentions to travel (LIN, L.-P. 2017, 2018).

The papers written about Spain are mainly about Cittaslow and local development. The Spanish Cittaslow towns of Lekeitio, Pals, Begur, and Rubielos de Mora have been studied to see how global and local values are intertwined and how the Cittaslow concept appeals to local city officials (PINK, S. and SERVON, L.J. 2013, 2015).

European countries were examined in a total of 59 papers, followed by Asian countries with 16 papers. Other countries used by authors to explain the concept of slow tourism are the Caribbean (2), the USA (1), Ethiopia (2),

Argentina (1), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (1), and Tibet (1). In addition, 14 papers have no geographical focus and elaborate on slow tourism in a literature review (Figure 4).

The Cittaslow concept was elaborated in a total of 17 papers; 2 papers were carried out without focusing on a specific location (PRESENZA, A. *et al.* 2015; KIM, J.H. *et al.* 2021); the most popular case study destination was Poland (4), other case study destinations were Turkey (3), Australia (2), Spain (2), China (1), South Korea (1), and Italy (1). The papers built around the Cittaslow concept mostly deal with the sub-concept of "Cittaslow development" and analyse destinations that are recognised as "Cittaslows".

We used VOSviewer software to determine the strength of the co-authorship link between the contributing countries. Apart from the co-authorship link, the software identifies the most cited country. According to the analysis, the country that collaborates most with others is Australia, followed by Italy. The most cited country is the UK, followed by the USA and Australia (Figure 5).

We collected keywords used in the studies using an online word cloud program. Some keywords are seen more often than others when keyword frequency is checked: slow tourism, Cittaslow, sustainable tourism, slow food, slow travel, slow city, and sustainability. Other words associated with slow tourism include quality of life, cycle tourism, tourist experience, and cultural tourism (Figure 6).

Future research recommendations

This systematic literature review highlights the gaps in the literature for future researchers by compiling the papers published on slow tourism between 2010 and 2021. Although the number of published papers is increasing, there are still several concepts related to slow tourism that need further research.

The concepts of slow tourism/travel are widely covered, as can be seen in Appendix 2. Slow tourism and slow travel concepts have been examined as general concepts in most

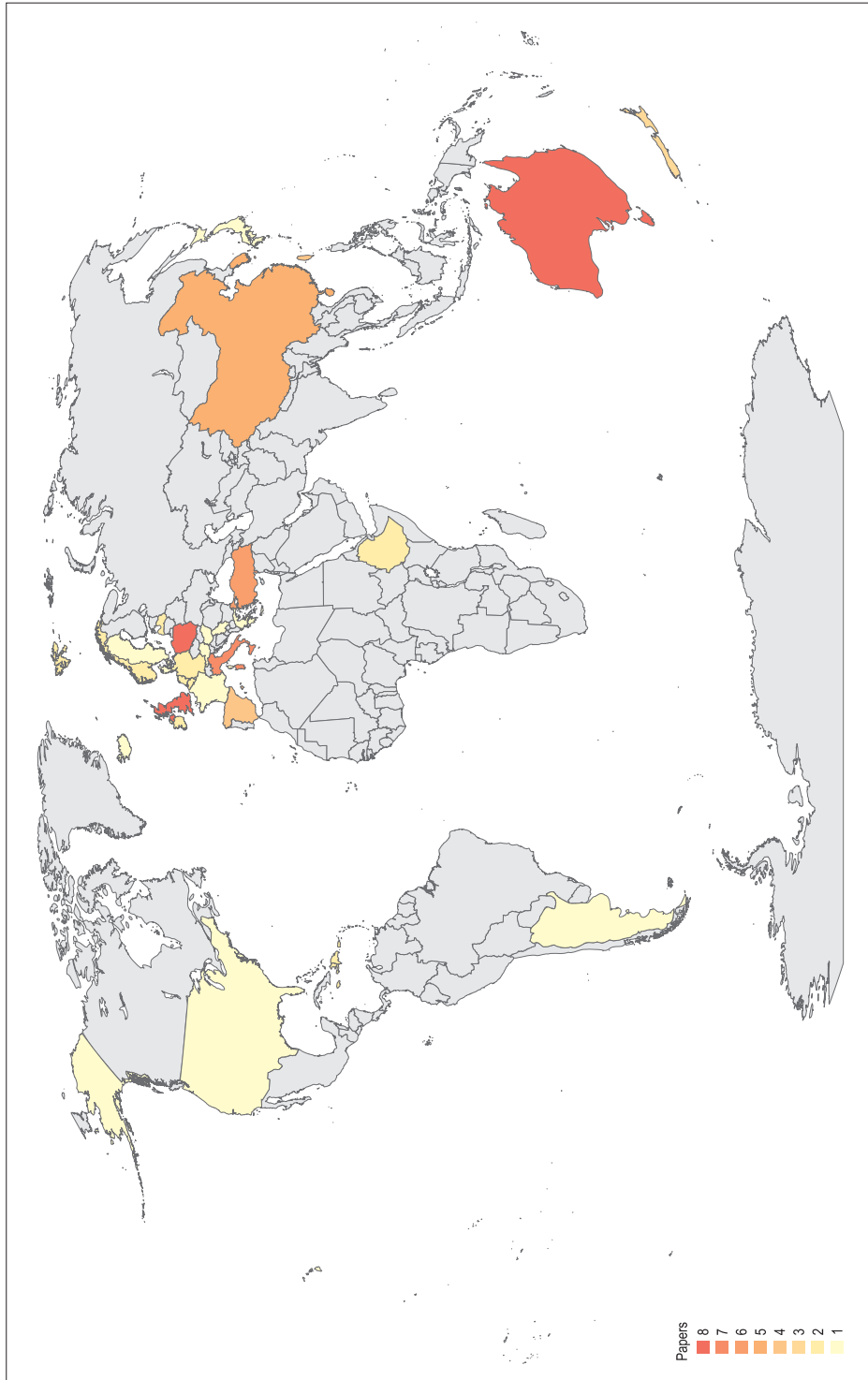


Fig. 4. Geographical scope of the slow tourism studies. Source: Authors' own elaboration.

studies. However, it is important to distinguish between these two concepts to avoid potential confusion, as slow travel is mostly used to explain sustainable transport.

The concept of sustainability and its relationship with slow tourism is a well-researched topic. To contribute to the literature, it would be worth exploring the links between slow tourism and rural or nature-based tourism. Some elements such as slow food and slow adventure have been explored by researchers, but these concepts have not yet been linked.

According to the four pillars of the slow tourism model (PÉCSEK, B. 2018), the current focus can be seen on the locality pillar, specifically on the slow food concept (FROST, W. and LAING, J. 2013; JUNG, T.H. *et al.* 2014, 2015; LEE, K.-H. *et al.* 2015a, b; FUSTÉ-FORNE, F. and JAMAL, T. 2020; GÜRSOY, İ.T. 2020; DIMITROVSKI, D. *et al.* 2021). Another important aspect that can help strengthen this pillar is a focus on local businesses, local culture, and local workforce, which is currently lacking in the literature (PÉCSEK, B. 2018). As slow tourism defends the preservation of local culture while encouraging the participation of local people in the process of improving the quality of life, it is important to explore and analyse local businesses that highlight aspects of the culture rather than food, such as handcrafts, local products, and artisans. By doing so, the focus will shift a little bit from the local food and slow food concepts to other aspects that will help to preserve the local culture.

Considering the other pillars of slow tourism, well-being and experiences are missing from the current literature. The well-being pillar could be addressed by concentrating on residents of slow cities and how their quality of life has changed. The current study identified three papers focusing on residents of slow cities (PARK, E. and KIM, S. 2016; KUCUKERGIN, F.N. and OZTURK, Y. 2020; BICHLER, B.F. 2021), but only one paper explored the role of residents in the development of slow tourism (BICHLER, B.F. 2021).

The experiences pillar needs to be further developed in terms of unique and authen-

tic offers and programmes in a slow city. According to our analysis, this theme is used secondarily to explain the concept of slow tourism, which needs further attention. Indeed, through these authentic experiences slow cities can differentiate themselves and attract visitors. However, we found only two papers exploring visitor experiences (HATIPOGLU, B. 2015; JUNG, T.H. *et al.* 2015). Experiences were mainly studied to understand future revisit intentions or tourist behaviour. In the current study, only a few papers examined experiences at slow events or festivals (DUIGNAN, M.B. *et al.* 2018; WERNER, K. *et al.* 2021). To fully understand how experiences can contribute to slow tourism, future studies are needed.

The final recommendation relates to the methodology and data collection methods used in the literature (Table 2). The current literature tends to focus on qualitative research techniques, particularly in-depth interviews. To contribute to the literature, studies could be conducted using other qualitative methods, such as netnography, focus groups, and participant observation. Our analysis also indicated the need for studies using mixed methods. Again, the majority of studies using mixed methods used in-depth interviews as the main qualitative method. It would be

Table 2. *Methodological classification*

Methods		Number of papers used
Qualitative	In-depth interviews	34
	Content analysis	10
	Focus group	4
	Participant observation	3
	Discourse analysis	3
	Ethnography	2
	Netnography	2
Quantitative	Survey	15
	Another method rather than survey	5
Theoretical/ Explanatory	Literature review	13
	Conceptual paper	1
Mixed	Qualitative + Quantitative techniques	11

Source: Compiled by the authors.

worth exploring the use or inclusion of other qualitative methods as a contribution to mixed methods studies.

Conclusions

This systematic literature review examined the current state of the literature on slow tourism. We examined 85 papers on slow tourism, 60 of which were published in Q1 and 25 in Q2-level journals. This research covers 2010 to 2021 and shows that although there has been a growing interest in slow tourism since the 2000s, it became more popular during the pandemic. In fact, 2020 was the most productive year for slow tourism, with 21 papers published. This can be linked to the COVID-19 pandemic as people are expected to change their travel habits and focus more on nature and well-being (BENJAMIN, S. *et al.* 2020; BREUNIG, M. 2020; WEN, J. *et al.* 2021). This explains the growing popularity of the concepts of “slow adventure”, “slow leisure”, and “slow tourism” (BREUNIG, M. 2020). Studies conducted in the last three years represent 54 percent of the total. This statistically demonstrates the growing popularity of the subject. Most publications have used qualitative methods to analyse slow tourism. The publications concentrate mainly on slow travel, sustainability, Cittaslow, slow food and local development, which is reinforced by the word cloud, as the keyword analysis brought up the mentioned themes. Australia, the UK, Poland, Italy, and Turkey are among the countries where researchers have made the greatest contribution to the topic.

Born in Europe, the very nature of slow tourism encourages people to be more environmentally conscious when travelling, in particular, to use more sustainable modes of transport, to increase the length of their stay, and to explore more of the local culture of a destination they are travelling to. The proximity of the countries and the availability of natural and cultural resources facilitate the improvement of slow tourism in Europe. As mentioned earlier, slow philosophy (includ-

ing the “slow movement” and “slow food”) as well as slow tourism and Cittaslow concepts were founded in Italy. Italy is one of the countries that has contributed most to the current research, demonstrating the importance of these concepts as a pioneering country in the slow tourism literature. In the current research, the countries where researchers have made a significant contribution are mainly in Europe, which can be explained by the feasibility and improvement of slow tourism in Europe. Australia is the largest non-European contributor. The first Cittaslow in Australia was recognised in 2007, which is why slow tourism is a well-studied and developed topic in Australia.

Slow tourism and its proven link to sustainability (PÉCSEK, B. 2018) has been an important research topic in the literature. This link is further strengthened in this study as two journals stand out as the main contributors to this study, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* and *Sustainability*, with a total of 20 papers, demonstrating the importance of sustainability concept in slow tourism.

A large number of studies on slow tourism can be found in the literature; interest is growing. Future research could consider our recommendations to further develop the slow tourism literature.

This research also provides lessons for tourism service providers, tourism policy/decision-makers and destination managers/planners in how destinations could benefit from slow tourism and related activities. For the visitor economy, lessons include how tourism could add value to the local economy of slow cities. And for sustainable development, it's how destinations could conserve their resources and environment for the benefit of future generations.

In terms of limitations, several can be identified for the current study. First, we examined only papers published in English as units of analysis. To extend the current scope, papers written in the local languages of the top contributor countries could be analysed in detail, which would add significant insights to the slow tourism literature. Second,

this study focused only on journals ranked Q1 and Q2 in the Scopus and ScienceDirect databases. Other databases, conference papers, and book chapters could be included to provide a more comprehensive analysis. Finally, the papers included in this study were published between 2010 and 2021. Future research could consider focusing on a longer period to provide more detailed information on slow tourism, possibly starting from 2000 and extending the period by a decade.

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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Appendix 1. Journals contributing to the current study, 2010–2021

Journals	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Anatolia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Annals of Leisure Research	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-
Annals of Tourism Research	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-
Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Built Environment	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
City, Territory and Architecture	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Cities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Cultural Geographies	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Current Issues in Tourism	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
Environment and Planning	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Geographical Review	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Hungarian Geographical Bulletin	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
International Journal of Culture, Tourism & Hospitality Research	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
International Journal of Tourism Cities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
International Planning Studies	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Journal of Destination Marketing & Management	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	2
Journal of Geography	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Journal of Place Management & Development	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	4
Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	3	-
Journal of Tourism Futures	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
Journal of Transport Geography	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Journal of Travel Research	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Journal of Urban Affairs	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Journal of Vacation Marketing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Land Use Policy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leisure Sciences	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Leisure Studies	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality & Tourism	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Sustainability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	4
Tourism Geographies	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	1
Tourism Management	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	-
Tourism Management Perspectives	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Tourism Planning & Development	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	1	-	-
Tourism Recreation Research	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Tourism Review	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
<i>Total</i>	1	3	3	2	4	9	6	3	8	8	21	17

Appendix 2. *Conceptual focus*

Year	Concept	Geographical context	Pillars of slow tourism
2021	Sustainability and COVID-19	N/A	Sustainability
	Sustainable development	Small Island Developing States (SIDS)	Sustainability
	Food tourism	Ethiopia	Slow tourism and Locality
	Role of locals	N/A	Well-being
	Slow tourism development	N/A	Slow tourism
	Sustainability and COVID-19	N/A	Sustainability
	Behavioural intention	China	Slow tourism and Experience
	Social media analysis	N/A	Slow tourism
	Sustainable development	Caribbean islands	Sustainability
	Slow food	Serbia	Locality
	Slow events	Germany	Experience
	Changes in slow cities	Turkey	Slow tourism
	Cittaslow and local sustainable development	Poland	Slow tourism and Sustainability
	Cittaslow and local development	Poland	Slow tourism
	Length of stay and sustainability	Ethiopia	Slow tourism and Sustainability
	Cittaslow and urban development	Poland	Slow tourism
	Sustainable tourism development	N/A	Sustainability
COVID-19 and slowing down	N/A	Slow tourism	
Slow tourism development	Latvia	Slow tourism	
Slow travel and destination image	Taiwan	Slow travel	
COVID-19	N/A	Slow tourism	
Spirituality and inner transformation	N/A	Slow tourism	
Social change of locals	Turkey	Well-being	
Behavioural intention	China	Slow tourism and Experience	
Slow food	New Zealand	Locality	
Degrowth and Buen Vivir	N/A	Slow tourism	
Tourists' well-being	Scotland	Slow tourism	
Slow food	Turkey	Locality	
Slow food tourism	N/A	Locality	
Slow living, leisure, and COVID-19	N/A	Slow tourism	

Appendix 2. *continued*

Year	Concept	Geographical context	Pillars of slow tourism
2020	Cittaslow development	Poland	Slow tourism
	Slow adventures	Tibet	Experience
	Authenticity and place attachment	China	Slow tourism
	Slower mode of transportation	Netherlands and UK	Slow travel
	Management of slow tourism	Italy	Slow tourism
	Sustainable transportation	Poland	Slow tourism and Sustainability
	Slow tourism and place attachment	China	Slow tourism
	Slow travel	Italy	Slow tourism
	Slow tourism attributes	Portugal	Slow tourism
	Behavioural intention	South Korea	Slow tourism and Experience
2019	Slow tourists' behavioural intention	South Korea	Slow tourism
	Slow tourism development	Latvia	Slow tourism
	Slow living	Australia	Slow tourism
	Sustainability	Australia	Sustainability
	Cittaslow competitiveness	15 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom, Spain, Sweden, and Hungary)	Slow tourism
	Slow city and sustainability	Poland	Slow tourism and Sustainability
	Creative tourism	Poland	Slow tourism
	Slow food festivals	UK	Locality and Experience
	Behavioural intention	Taiwan	Slow tourism and Experience
	Length of stay	Spain	Slow tourism
2018	Slow food	South Korea	Locality
	Wellness and equestrian tourism	Iceland	Slow tourism
	Slow travel, cycling	Greece	Slow tourism
	Motivations of slow tourists	Turkey	Slow tourism
	Behavioural intention	Taiwan	Slow tourism and Experience
	Spirituality and inner transformation	Japan	Slow tourism
2017	Means of travel	UK and Scotland	Slow travel
	Behavioural intention	South Korea	Slow tourism and Experience
2016	Slow food tourism	Wales	Locality

Appendix 2. *continued*

Year	Concept	Geographical context	Pillars of slow tourism
2016	Slow travel, motivations and goals	USA	Slow travel
	Repeat visitors and behavioural intention	Australia	Slow tourism and Experience
	Local community	Australia	Well-being
	Slow tourists' behaviour	South Korea	Slow tourism
2015	Quality of life of residents and visitor experiences	Turkey	Well-being
	Visitors' experience, satisfaction, and revisit intention	Wales	Slow tourism and Experience
	Slow adventures	Norway	Experience
	Sustainable development, social well-being of residents	N/A	Sustainability
2014	Destination food activity	Australia, Argentina, Taiwan, Italy	Slow tourism
	Slow food members' travel lifestyle preferences	Australia	Locality
	Cittaslow development	Spain	Slow tourism
	Local food and sense of place	Ireland	Locality
2013	Slow design elements in tourism	Belgium	Slow tourism and Experience
	Slow tourism development	Turkey	Slow tourism
	Sustainable tourism development, stakeholders	Wales	Sustainability
	Small city development	Italy	Slow tourism
2012	Cittaslow and resilience	Australia	Slow tourism
	Persuasive messages of slow food	Italy, Australia, and New Zealand	Locality
2011	Cittaslow	Spain	Slow tourism
	Slow tourism, elements, visitors	N/A	Slow tourism
2010	Slow tourism development	Caribbean islands	Slow tourism
	Cittaslow and sustainable development	New Zealand	Sustainability
2010	Slow travel	UK	Slow travel
	Slow food	Italy	Locality
2010	Slow travel	UK	Slow tourism

