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Slow Tourism as a Tool for sustainable tourism development: Guest houses in the Chouf Mount Lebanon

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ABSTRACT

Slow Tourism or Slow Travel is a new niche market related to sustainable tourism that helps people to appreciate the local food, nature, culture, and heritage. The current study seeks to analyze the impact of slow tourism in Lebanon, especially in the Chouf area, and the role of the guesthouses in promoting this type of Tourism. The main aim of the study is to advocate slow tourism in Lebanon as a solution for sustainable tourism development, and that outdoor activities such as cycling, hiking, etc., may give a noteworthy understanding of the issue at hand, and are under investigation. The selected research strategy the researchers propose to conduct will attempt to answer this, mostly through gathering and analyzing primary data from surveying a tourism science expert and through a questionnaire targeting a randomly selected population. The analysis of the findings helped gather the insights and incentives of tourists in endorsing slow tourism in Lebanon for the recovery of the industry post-pandemic.

Keywords: Slow tourism, Sustainable tourism development, Guest houses, post-pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

Slow tourism or Slow travel is one of the new trending concepts that bring the concept of slowness into tourism practices in a way that tourists appreciate the local food, the culture, and the heritage. This type of tourism emanated from novel ideas and concepts that bring about sustainability and responsibility in touristic activities that encourage valorizing the sites proposing such activities (Kresic and Gjurasic, 2023). According to the global tourism market, it can apply away from conventional tourism however, slow

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tourism lessens the pace of activity, by trying each activity in its own right, this term is contrasted with active tourism where tourism involves multiple stops and activities.

Thus, the core topic for this study is to see if guesthouses as a type of slow accommodation, do contribute to sustainability. Also, it will help future researchers expand on this topic by taking more elements of slow tourism in Lebanon under study. This guesthouse aims to preserve local food heritage by supporting Lebanese producers, so visitors can certainly enjoy the taste of authentic dishes.

This study attempted to understand the relationship between slow tourism and sustainable development by taking into consideration the resident's perception, and tourist motivation toward the slow tourism concept. Thus, this is the main research question: "How can slow tourism be a tool for sustainable development in Lebanon?" Slow Tourism can be an addition to the tourism development of many Lebanese destinations. The researcher discusses the concept of slow tourism, by studying tourists' trends and preferences, focusing on the quality of the vacation, the interaction with the local people, and the appreciation of the local cultures (Dickinson and Lumsdon, 2010). Besides, the main objective of this research is to indicate the relationship between slow tourism, movement, sustainable development, and ecology.

Table1

Slow tourism vs Mass tourism source : (Moira et al, 2017)

<i>Mass Tourism</i>	<i>Slow Tourism</i>
Quick movement	Slow movement
The airplane is the dominant means of transport, mainly charter flights	Use of alternative means of transport, mainly train or bus
Transportation with high carbon dioxide emissions	Transportation with low carbon dioxide emissions
Speed	Slow pace
The trip coincides with the movement	The movement is part of the journey
Visit to numerous tourist attractions	Perceive to local character of the place
Quantifying the visiting areas	Qualifying the tourist experience – maximizing the enjoyment of the destination
Passive tourist	Active tourist
Standardized experiences	Authentic experiences
Standardized food services (catering style)	Local and traditional type of diet
Impersonal acquaintance and low contact with the place and its residents	Substantial contact and real communication with the destination and its residents
Accommodation in commercialized resorts or hotel complexes	Accommodation in small accommodation units
Group options, lack of flexibility	Individual options, flexibility
Hostage – omnipresence of the communication technologies during holidays	Getting rid of the communication technologies during holidays
Continuous contact with the workplace	No contact with the workplace

Source: Moira, Mylonopoulos, and Kondoudaki 2017

Table 1 helps us define slow tourism versus fast tourism (Moira et al., 2017). For this purpose, we designed the two hypotheses, these hypotheses are referred to as the null hypothesis (H₀), and the alternative hypothesis (H_A).

H₀: There is no correlation between Slow Tourism and Lebanon's sustainability post-pandemic.

H_A: There is a correlation between Slow Tourism and Lebanon's sustainability post-pandemic.

Thus, the case that the authors currently investigate the analysis of tourist behavior from visiting guesthouses and rest houses in Lebanon from primary data while investigating the phenomena of guesthouses throughout Lebanon, in an attempt to generalize the type of behavior linked to slow tourism and sustainable tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Slow tourism

Slow travel or slow tourism is a relatively new concept in the tourism industry. It came out from a broader trend of so-called “slow movement”, which can be specified by the philosophy of “slow food” and the general philosophy of “slow city” that is known as “citta slow” (Moira et al., 2017). According to Schneider 2008 the slow food movement was founded in 1989 as a dissent against the widespread fast-food overrunning in Europe. In 1999 many researchers introduced the philosophy of the slow city, while this concept was born and attributed to Paolo Saturnini, the mayor of the town of Greve in Chianti, Tuscany (Presenza, 2015).

In 2015 Georgica, defines the meaning of each letter of the “SLOW”, S-sustainability, L-Locally, O-Organic, W-Whole. Besides, he emphasizes that slow traveling built a keen relationship with the destination. While Moira et al. in 2017 explained the three different pillars of slow travel: the first ‘doing things at the right speed,’ the second ‘changing the attitude towards speed, and the last one is ‘seeking quality over quantity.’ So, the slowness concept is commonly taking a gander at how well utilized the declaration of time, quality, and a feeling of prosperity concept (Lumsdon and McGrath, 2011).

Also, the disappearance of local food traditions, and people dwindling interest in the food, the origin, the tastes, and how the food choices affect the rest of the world (Schneider, 2008). In *The Holiday Makers*, he advises us, “Throw out the clock to get rid of the pressure of time, deadlines, schedules, learn to observe more than to look and see everything at a fast pace, break the barriers of communication, and use the holidays and trips to meet other people, explore and learn” (Moira et al., 2017).

Sustainable Development

Over the last decade, the concept of sustainable tourism development has become the focal point of expanding consideration among tourism scholars and experts alike.

The notion of sustainable development acquired its first important international acceptance in 1972 during the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment,

which was held in Stockholm, Sweden's capital. This conference brought together emerging countries to determine what people's "rights" are in a productive environment (UNWTO, 1993, p. 7). The United Nations National Conference on Sustainable Development gives a great overview of what the term "sustainable development" means. This has always been used interchangeably with the term "sustainability," which is also the case today. With the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987, sustainable development was defined as "development that meets current demands without jeopardizing future generations' ability to satisfy their own needs"(Hobson and Essex, 2001).

(Hobson and Essex, 2001) defined "sustainable development as the growth that satisfies the requirements of present societies without jeopardizing the ability of future societies to meet their demands. The United Nations conference "the Earth Summit" was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, while agenda 21 outlined core principles of sustainable tourism. These entailed ensuring and saving the environment, biodiversity, and biological systems, and securing and protecting natural resources, as summed up in Figure 1, below.

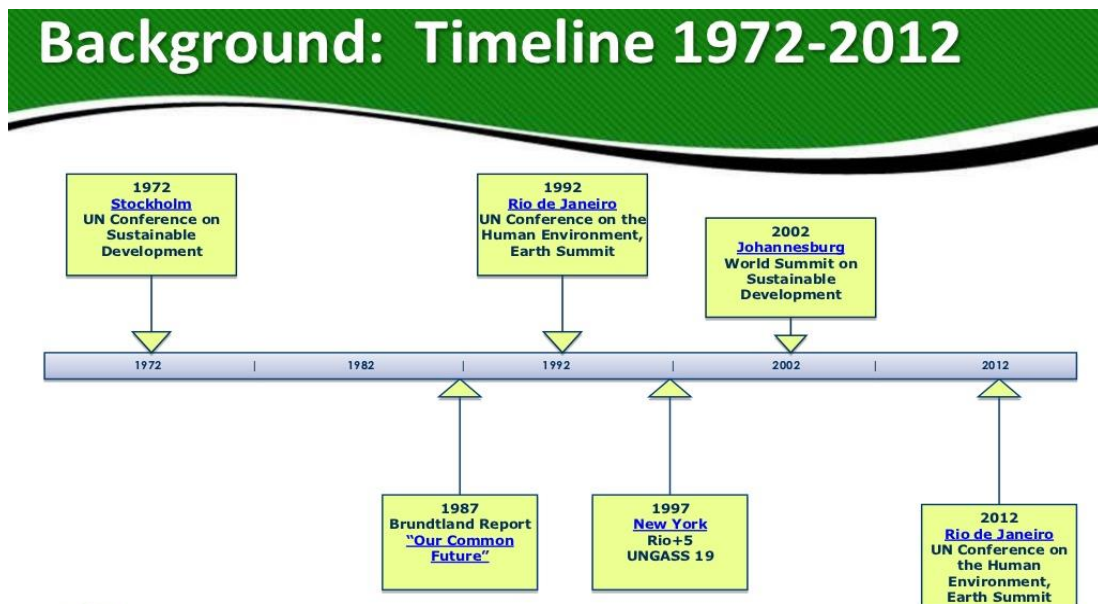


Figure 1. Sustainable development timeline (Author 2023).

Slow tourism dimensions

After discussing the definition and origin of slow tourism, it is essential to understand the dimensions of this concept. According to (Dall'Aglio, 2011), slow tourism consists of six dimensions: 1) Time: Taking time means a modification of the daily time relationship, precisely an alternate view of nature and living in harmony with a place, its occupants, and their way of life. Tourists must have the option to change pace, to look rather than to see, to encounter the territory instead of suffering it (Mohamad Noor, 2015). 2) Slowness: Slow tourism must satisfy two essential principles: "doing things at the right speed" (Moirira et al., 2017). (While attempting to change our daily propensities and "real connection to the place". 3) Contamination: Slow tourism produces less pollution since it is more focused on locality, the use of clean energy, reduces the carbon footprint, and ecological and ethical vision. Also, the slower experience over land, and the activities like trekking, running, and bird watching, are less aggressive for the environment, due to the less timing travel, resource reduction, and customization. 4) Authenticity: There is a lot of ambiguity surrounding the term authenticity; according to (Hassan et al., 2021b) authenticity is more about how you feel than something you can define.

Similarly, discussion in the tourism literature frequently argues that the higher the chance of fortuitous discovery of significance or connection with these and through them of oneself, the more authentic, genuine, and truthful tourist encounters with objects, places, and persons are thought to be (Ram et al., 2016). 5) Sustainability: The impact of tourism activity on the local environment, broadly speaking. It claims the need for a sustainable approach that is ecologically light in the long term, economically, ethically, and socially fair toward locals (Mohamad Noor, 2015). 6) Emotion: Planning and supplying the service that can empower or encourage feelings inside the arranged ad-hoc (external environment stimulus) circumstances and occasions that connect individual answers (internal) contrasting by people's understanding see: (Hassan et al., 2021b).

Relation between Slow tourism and Sustainable development

Many authors considered sustainable development as an essential pillar of slow tourism and slow movement philosophy as an efficient destination development strategy in urban areas, when in fact all forms of tourism should move toward focusing on the three pillars of sustainability: Economic, environmental, and socio-cultural. Researchers have attained an assent on the advantages of slow tourism; it provides opportunities for more green forms for destinations. Eco-friendly activities, slow types of transport, and regular accommodations (vacation rentals). Thus, it goes under the concept of sustainable development which helps to protect the environment and the tourism industry. However, following away and a trend like slow movement includes a slow development of the environment results at a pace and limits that permit the residents to adjust and adapt to the advancements (Georgica, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods approach based on primary data through an interview addressed to a tourism sciences expert, along with a survey addressed randomly to the tourists and the Local residents, and secondary data through research articles, publications, and journals mainly data from an article published by Hassan et al., 2021 to compare the demographic data.

(Hassan et al., 2021b) provided some of the data we presented in the secondary data interpretation section. To answer the above questions, a multi-qualitative approach targeting a generalized approach of how people react to slow tourism concepts and activities was conducted by adapting the case of (Hassan et al., 2021b) to Lebanon. While, (Oh et al., 2016) discussed the main goals of slow tourism, this is of course adaptable anywhere in areas where rest houses or guesthouses are implanted near natural sites, offering continuity in the atmosphere. So, the analysis of the results should be beneficial in understanding the perceptions and motivations of tourists which helps promote slow tourism in this area. The selected research method was derived from Figure 2, below.

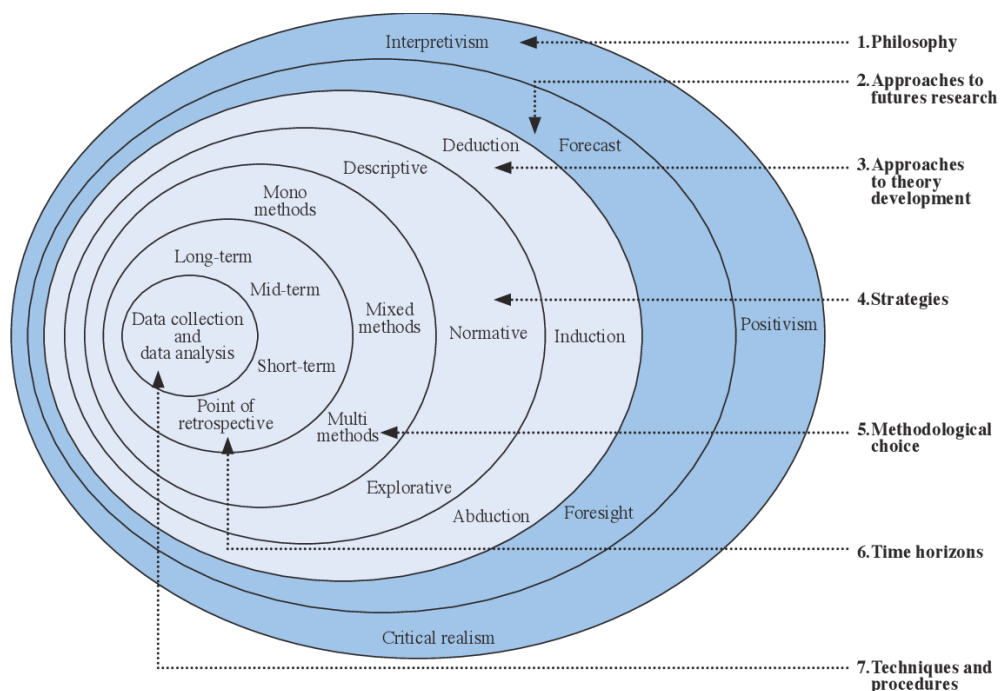


Figure 2. Bases of the current study's research design (Saunders et al., 2019).

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Results from secondary data

According to (Hassan et al., 2021b), 92% of participants agreed that slow tourism is a tool of sustainable development and had a positive impact on the environment and that practicing slow tourism differs from local food, and local products, to slow activities (biking, walking, and relaxing in nature), while 94% of the participants practicing by tasting local food, 56% of their practice slow activities, which may indicate that now all of the sampled subjects were aware of this. (Hassan et al., 2021b), also suggested indeed people need to improve sustainable development activities linked to tourism, and that the majority of the respondents agreed that reducing carbon footprint, respecting the practices of local people, taking care of heritage sites, and so on would be a good starting point.

While (Hassan et al., 2021b), noted that 54% agreed with the importance of enhancing slow tourism activities yet, whether or not slow tourism journeys are preferred versus "fast" tourism journeys, a tradeoff seems to be found in the answers. While the idea that

slow tourists have an all-inclusive package seems true since 44% of the respondents pointed out that those large groups of tourists might practice slow tourism. Finally, whether or not the money spent through slow tourism activities stays in the local community, a tradeoff seems to be noted in the responses. While the fact that physically slowing down tourists influences slow tourism indeed shows no link.

While the majority typically go there for leisure, a minority go for business and relaxation. This follows what (Hassan et al., 2021b), found out about the motivations and interests of the visitors they sampled since collectively most of them seek eco-friendly, sustainable, and authentic vacations. Although some believe that at times tourists visiting such resorts or guesthouses could propose modifications that could make the experience better for others (Hassan et al., 2021b). So, some suggested improving relaxation facilities while others proposed making them more connected to nature by relying less on AI and VR and being more down to earth (see: Christofle and Héliou, 2018).

Demographic data, and other inferences.

The age group of residents and visitors is dominated by the 18 years segment (40%), the second biggest age being 29 – 40 (40%). The other percentage is distributed among the rest age groups. When it comes to gender, it is to be noticed that there were more women (83%) than men (17%) responding to both surveys.

When education level was examined for visitors and residents it was found that 88% of respondents had attended university. The majority of the rest had attended only high school 6% and 5% holding qualifications less than high school level. In terms of age group, we targeted more professional people than students, with most being over 25, then from 18 to 25 with a minority of respondents being underage. This covers question 3 on our survey. Our survey focused on randomly targeted Lebanese people, whose information excluded the professional work domain, but it is suspected those over 25 years old are professionally involved. Though according to secondary data interpretation, the rate of unemployment surpasses employment in Lebanon at present. However, our sample according to age distribution targeted, in order, employed people, then students, then other, as in occupation. This covers question 4.

For the employment status of the residents, 56% were unemployed, 32% were employed students, and the other percentages were distributed among employed and trainee people. Out of 20 tourists, collected from the secondary data, there were 7 different nationalities. The highest rank is for Maltese tourists were 45% and Lebanese visitors 30%. As our sample is mostly comprised of Lebanese people, we, therefore, have a 100% Lebanese population sample. The analysis of the second part of the survey was about the resident's perception toward slow tourism shows: 92% of participants agreed that slow tourism is a tool of sustainable development and had a positive impact on the environment (our question 8 has similar results). Figure 3 summarizes our findings.

Comparative data

Practicing slow tourism differ from local food, and local products, to slow activities (biking, walking, and relaxing in nature). 94% of the participants practiced by tasting local food, and practiced slow activities. They were asked also about suggestions on what they would recommend improving sustainable development. Obtained answers show that the majority of the respondents 74% have chosen all the options such as (reducing carbon footprint respecting the practices of local people, taking care of heritage places, etc.). Our cohort did not explicitly sample the valorization of touristic sites. On the other hand, it was necessary to ask residents about some practices concerning the slow tourism concept. Though, several statements were used with a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 strongly agree to strongly disagree. For the first statement, it was analyzed that 38% of the respondents agreed with it and 16% of them strongly agreed.

Slow tourism is the contrast to mass tourism in which organized trips are replaced by the slow journey. At this pace, the rest of the statements include that slow tourists have fixed programs during their tours, 34% of respondents agreed, and 32% answered neutrally. However, slow tourists rarely had a fixed program for their trip. Besides, 44% of the respondents pointed out that those large groups of tourists might practice slow tourism. Finally, the last two phrases state if the money spent through slow tourism stays in the local community, 32% of the residents agreed, and 30% were neutral.

Concerning physically slowing down tourists, 50% of the answers were neutral, and 32% agreed.

Study results

Our study aims to find out the relationship between guesthouses and slow tourism. Several questions like the aim of the guesthouse, the location, sustainable development, activities, etc..., were addressed to several experts in the domain. So, one of the interviewees noted that slow tourism in Lebanon does affect its sustainability post-pandemic as they indeed are involved with cultural and natural resource valorization. (Bellos, 2021) and (Bou Melhem, 2021) respectively link this with education, since we need to valorize the resource and then educate people about it. Yet, the idea is to find out in what way can slow tourism be a tool for sustainable development. In this case, the expert interviewee says that people practice this type of tourism to discover and enjoy each moment during the trip.

The tourism specialist we interviewed points out that slow tourism is indeed considered a tool of sustainability and yet that it is not necessary to identify the motivation of tourists toward slow tourism. Because, not all tourists, only the people who want to practice this type of tourism, will be interested to conduct smart tourism activities since not all tourists are motivated toward slow tourism. As such, according to the interviewee, slow food is involved with slow tourism, and she does practice the other practices linked to slow tourism activities, such as hiking, biking, etc., and enjoys relaxing in nature.

Our study results indicate close to a 100% agreement in the link of slow tourism concerning its long-term sustainability in Lebanon, post-pandemic like from what the literature pointed out. Yet after a closer look, 76% agree, and 24% do not (Figure 3). These results corroborate the secondary data collected by (Hassan et al., 2021b), Since old Lebanese houses were restored into guest homes by some establishments experts in slow food and slow tourism trends propose to the clientele the unique experience that the resorts that were discussed in (Hassan et al., 2021b), present in their research. The guesthouses that they investigated both in their literature review and their findings show

that valorizing these sites or the actual premises is beneficial for the industry name in promoting these sites.

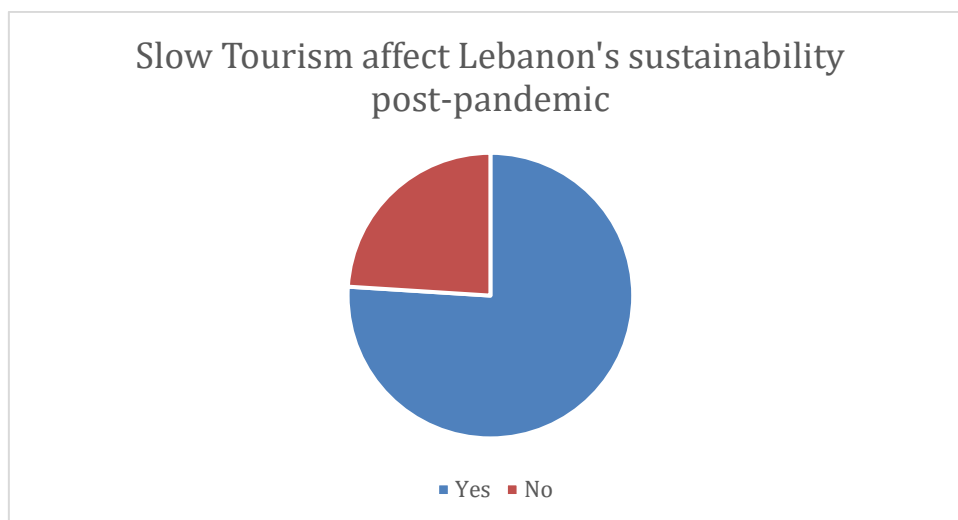


Figure 3. Survey results

DISCUSSION

As we discussed the links with the SDGs, we need to realize that slow tourism offers more quality holidays for visitors liking nature, and as the visitors focus on the pillars of sustainable development, just as all stakeholders involved in this, we need to realize the importance of what it means to be a quality and responsible citizen, especially when it comes to traveling in a responsible way and in respecting the planet and the site we visit. As such, and through smart tourism and sustainability, jobs can be created around the site (this stresses SDG 8, within each touristic destination working on marketing their end stop strategically). Besides, like many examples that were shown in the past, a well-defined destination strategy plan can reap benefits for the host communities and generate incomes through direct and indirect activities, and this will ultimately benefit Lebanon's GDP, as Pierre Achkar mentioned in his interview.

The discussion will be based on three themes that emerged from the interview and questionnaires. Firstly, the Slow tourism and sustainability concept. After gathering the interview and questionnaire results, it is shown that slow tourism is a new, attractive concept for people of different ages, where most people with high education and knowledge practice slow tourism and their activities appropriately to lead to sustainable

development. Also, slow tourism helped the local market and the visitors to be eco-friendlier and better absorb the culture. In addition, slow tourists had plenty of time to explore a destination and immerse themselves in the experience while protecting environmental resources (Hassan et al., 2021). The authors in the current study corroborate that any rest house (or guesthouse) in Lebanon follows the same core sustainability concepts as the ones researched by (Hassan et al., 2021b) Since both studies provided evidence that engaging in activities that embrace sustainability and smart travel.

Secondly the resident's perception of the slow tourism concept. Based on questionnaires, we conclude that most respondents practice slow movement or slow activities in their daily lives without any knowledge about slow tourism. 94% of residents reported that they eat local food and practice slow activities. Also, they recommend reducing the carbon footprint and respecting the practices of locals to improve sustainability. Moreover, they support slow tourism since it involves local people (Hassan et al., 2021b), showing similar evidence.

Lastly, the Visitors' motivation and experience at guesthouses. Per the analysis of the results, the main reason for staying in the guest house is for leisure with a one-week maximum stay. Most visitors claim that such guesthouses are authentic and eco-friendly accommodations. Besides, the staff helped the visitors to feel comfortable and experience the tradition, and the culture, and gave them a warm welcome. Also, visitors pointed out that the guest house is an authentic, cozy place where they can enjoy the eco-friendly environment, and experience slow activities, and movement. As (Hassan et al., 2021b), pointed out any guest, or rest house, in Lebanese hinterland tourist sites follow the same guidelines in terms of welcoming guests and sustainability.

The motivation of tourists toward slow tourism can be identified. As 82% of our cohort agreed to this. While slow tourism somehow affects sustainable development since 64% of the participants agree. Whereas, 82% of the surveyed subjects agreed that slow tourism can be used as a tool for sustainable development enabling us to see a relationship between both variables. Finally, indeed, slow tourism is promoting sustainability in the long run, as 90% of the responses show agreement. While slow

tourism is common, important, or useful in Lebanon as a type of tourism, only 64% of the respondents. Finally, our findings confirm that slow tourism is a tool of sustainable development in Lebanon and indeed that natural resources (18%) planning (10%) economic concerns (18%) educational needs (18%), awareness of tourism (35%) and all 5 aforementioned attributes cover for the remaining 40%. Table 2 shows the reliability test results for our survey, while Figure 3 shows the results. Finally, with this, we validate H_a and reject H_o .

Table 2

Reliability results (Cronbach, 1951).

Cronbach's Alpha	0.958787947
Split-Half (odd-even) Correlation	1
Split-Half with Spearman-Brown Adjustment	1
Mean for Test	250
Standard Deviation for Test	133
KR21 (use only 0 and 1 to enter data for this)	2.11565097
KR20 (use only 0 and 1 to enter data for this)	2.11565097

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After collecting the data following our study methods, it is now evident that slow tourism gains momentum as the future trend in terms of post-Covid strategies and trends the industry is considering since slow tourism and their activities lead to sustainable development. Moreover, slow tourism surely helped the local market, but also visitors to be eco-friendlier, absorbing the local culture as many other studies pointed out, as tourism education and resource valorization are related to this too (Bellos, 2021; Bou Melhem, 2021).

People practicing slow tourism activities tend to enjoy their time at their destination, to spend quality holidays instead of mass or fast tourism where people cram activities in a short time.

Does slow tourism affect sustainable development? Yes, since sustainable tourism can play a major role, not only in conserving and preserving biodiversity, but also in respecting terrestrial ecosystems, owing to its efforts towards the reduction of waste and consumption, the conservation of native flora and fauna, and its awareness-raising activities. Our results showed that 64% of the respondents agree.

“How can slow tourism be a tool of sustainable development”? Slow tourism has also grown due to increased holiday time offered in jobs around the world and because of the option of working remotely nowadays, especially after the pandemic.

So, what are the benefits of slow tourism? Usually, travel and tourism do affect the ecosystem, as Slow Tourism promotes Ecotourism focusing on the environmental aspect, this type of tourism will control the damage done to the environment by carbon emissions. As such, indeed slow travel promotes a fair and ethical travel industry by empowering local businesses, supporting the preservation of the unique character of places, and taking the pressure off touristic hotspots suffering from the effects of over-tourism.

“Slow tourism is promoting sustainability in the long run”. Yes, slow tourism is an approach to tourism, which is presented as an alternative to mass tourism, as 91% of our respondents agree, against the 9% who don't. It forms part of the wider sustainable tourism and does contribute to this trend. While “the motivation of tourists toward slow tourism can be identified, several experts and the literature evidence that it is not needed to do so since not all visitors are concerned for such types of tourism, we, however, found out that 812% of our respondents agree (Hobson and Essex, 2001).

Limitations were mainly the complicated situations in collecting primary data, so the current researchers relied on secondary data, while the collected data were triangulated to ensure that the data we collected is well considered. This is because our cohort was small, and data was not enough to generalize over the total population. But the

secondary data helped us in justifying our results, as did the reliability values of Table 2, following Cronbach's (1951) reliability method, and validating Ha.

In addition, in the future, researchers could elaborate more on the concept of slow tourism in Lebanon, namely, to propose studies that focus more on promoting slow tourism as a wide range of tourists still lacks awareness of this. Supplementary studies on this trend of tourism are a must, as it is capital to bridge the literature gap on this subject, as there are scarce studies in Lebanon dealing with this issue. Per see slow tourism destinations (including guesthouses) must focus on sustainable or any economic activities that encourage the development of local communities around the attraction.

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