

UDC 338.48-44:338.48-6+658.8+658.5 (502/504)

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## **SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT: INTEGRATING SLOW TOURISM PRINCIPLES INTO MARKETING AND OPERATIONS**

The growing urgency of climate change, overtourism, and the commodification of cultural and natural resources has led scholars and practitioners alike to question the long-term sustainability of conventional tourism and hospitality models. In recent years, slow tourism has emerged as a meaningful alternative that emphasizes environmental responsibility, cultural immersion, and the conscious deceleration of travel experiences. Despite this growing interest, integrating slow tourism principles into mainstream hospitality marketing and management remains underexplored. This study seeks to investigate how hospitality businesses can strategically adopt slow tourism values across their operational practices and marketing communications, thereby contributing to environmental stewardship, guest satisfaction, brand differentiation, and long-term profitability. This article critically assesses the primary challenges of marketing management in slow tourism. It also exemplifies the strategic aspects of marketing development as a response to the rising demand for slow tourism in the hospitality industry.

Tourists' behaviour underwent a significant transformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to the increased prominence of proximity-based forms of travel. Notably, there was a marked rise in staycations, in which individuals chose to vacation in their immediate geographic regions [2; 3]. Concurrently, demand for nature-based, rural, and road-trip tourism intensified, driven both by restrictions on long-distance

mobility and a renewed preference for open-air environments. Additionally, an emergent trend toward experiential depth has been observed, with a growing proportion of travellers expressing a desire to establish authentic connections with local inhabitants, cultural settings, and place-based identities. This inclination is closely associated with the adoption of slower, more immersive modes of travel called slow tourism. Slow tourism refers to ‘a vacation during which tourists take a longer time and have a flexible plan to experience tourism offers while living in harmony with nature, the local communities, their people, and their culture at the highest level of engagement. Slow tourism is a holistic tourism concept that promotes sustainability in all aspects of a traveller’s journey. It is a promising alternative to mass tourism, with which tourists, destination managers, and tourism service providers are willing to engage [3].

Hotels that embed slow-tourism well-being (unhurried, restorative experiences) can accelerate post-pandemic recovery and differentiation by leveraging nature-linked and biophilic offerings that measurably improve guest well-being, perceived value, and intentions to return [1].

A nature focus enables credible rebranding and price resilience, as nature-based and green hotel propositions supported by biophilic design and verified environmental practices are associated with higher satisfaction, stronger loyalty, and a demonstrable willingness to pay a premium. Positioning around crowd avoidance strengthens perceived safety and exclusivity, the key drivers of revisit intentions, and helps hotels target high-yield segments seeking low-density environments rather than mass-tourism settings.

There are three most important principles in sustainable hospitality: slow-tourism well-being (unhurried, restorative experiences), a nature focus that enables credible rebranding and price resilience, as nature-based and green hotel propositions, and crowd avoidance that strengthens perceived safety and exclusivity [4; 5].

One primary challenge lies in identifying and reaching the appropriate market segments. Slow tourism appeals to a niche audience of typically values-driven, environmentally conscious travellers who prioritise quality over quantity and depth of

experience over convenience. However, this demographic is diverse in motivations, spanning subgroups such as eco-tourists, wellness travellers, cultural heritage enthusiasts, and digital nomads. Crafting targeted marketing messages that resonate across these varied niches without diluting the core ethos of slow tourism requires careful segmentation and brand positioning. Another major challenge involves communicating intangible values. Traditional tourism marketing often highlights amenities, convenience, and entertainment. In contrast, slow tourism focuses on emotional and experiential attributes such as mindfulness, connection with nature, and time flexibility, which are difficult to quantify and to promote through conventional marketing channels. Moreover, there is a risk of greenwashing if sustainability claims are not backed by genuine practices, thereby undermining brand credibility. Operational alignment is another critical issue. Marketing strategies that emphasize slowness, eco-friendliness, and community benefits must be matched by tangible operational policies, such as low-carbon transport options, locally sourced food, fair labour practices, and waste-reduction systems. The lack of integration between sustainable marketing and actual service delivery often leads to guest disappointment and reputational harm. Finally, slow tourism marketing must navigate the tension between promoting destinations and preventing overtourism (a paradox that demands long-term stewardship rather than short-term visitor maximisation).

In conclusion, in the context of slow tourism, marketing management faces a unique set of challenges that stem from the movement's emphasis on sustainability, local engagement, and the conscious deceleration of travel experiences. Unlike traditional mass tourism, which is often driven by standardisation, efficiency, and broad consumer appeal, slow tourism prioritises values such as authenticity, ecosystem preservation, and culturally immersive interactions. These goals fundamentally reshape the marketing landscape for hospitality businesses and destination managers. As such, marketing managers must adopt a regenerative, stakeholder-inclusive approach that balances business goals with social and ecological responsibility.

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