

AN EMERGING TREND OF SLOW TOURISM: PERCEPTIONS OF HUNGARIAN CITIZENS

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ABSTRACT

Besides slow food, slow city, slow fashion, education, and marketing - slow tourism is one of the several different slow movements. Several trends justify the importance and the reasons for the existence of slow tourism: the aging society, the growing power of women in making travel decisions.

Slow tourism was born as a possibility for those, who would like to live their life in a different way even during their travels: giving respect to the environment and to the local people, too. In case of slow tourism local culture, traditions, gastronomy is in the center. Sustainability is also a priority, meanwhile, the well-being and interests of the inhabitants of the destination are also taken into account. Instead of mass tourism products authentic, not standardized experiences are in the supply. The research aimed to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of respondents towards different slow tourism elements. The study is based on quantitative data from an online survey conducted with 386 Hungarian respondents in the framework of omnibus research. To reveal the perceptions and attitude of the respondents towards slow elements multidimensional scaling model and principal component methods were applied. Based on the results it can be concluded, that the “local” elements of a journey are important for the respondents, meanwhile, the personalized services, the spirituality of the destination, and the sustainable approach do not matter. Only a small proportion of respondents avoids crowded destinations, so traveling to hidden places is not a favorite holiday option for the majority of Hungarians. However, the coronavirus epidemics can strengthen the demand for this tourism product, since expectedly there will be more tourists, who want to avoid crowded places during their holiday. Service providers can also benefit from the results of the research, and concentrate on the elements that proved to be important for Hungarian travelers.

KEY WORDS

slow tourism, locality, sustainability

CLASSIFICATION

JEL: Z32

INTRODUCTION

People live their lives at an extraordinary speed. Virtual reality interweaves and spans every minute, the instant life has become typical for most people. However, there is a revolution in society against the speedy lifestyle – which is incorporated in the slow movements, the roots of which date back to the 1970s. As Honoré summarizes: „It is a cultural revolution against the notion that faster is always better. The Slow philosophy is not about doing everything at a snail’s pace. It’s about seeking to do everything at the right speed” [1; p.13].

The slow philosophy of life started with the slow food movement, which emphasizes, that the food must have good quality, should be tasty, and must serve the health. It should not contain any pesticides, and the production should be environment-friendly as well, furthermore, the producers themselves should also get a fair profit. Finally, the protection of regional traditions and the joy of gastronomy are also in the focus. However, this originally quite narrow movement has extended to several areas of life. Now we know and can enjoy among others the concept of the slow city, slow medicine, slow fashion, slow blogging, slow industry, or money [2-7]. The slow movement has also appeared in tourism as well, which can be considered as a counterpoint of mass tourism. Several trends confirm and strengthen the validity and actuality of the concept: aging society, the possible consequences of coronavirus pandemics, the growing income of women, and the growing power of women in making travel decisions [2, 8].

Although slow tourism draws the attention of researchers, tourism professionals, and the general public as well, there is still a lack of systematic researches in this field [9, 10]. The existing literature concentrates on the descriptive, qualitative approach from different aspects [10, 11]. In Hungary, the situation is very similar to this. Only Pécsék has carried out systematic empirical research about the issue [12]. There are more possible reasons for that: the topic is relatively new. Furthermore, it is severely criticized even by tourism professionals. According to Weaver, it is merely a good promotional tool [13, 14]. Besides only some of its elements are researched, but not the concept as a whole [10].

The above-mentioned tendencies seem to justify our proposition, that people are opened to slow elements. We examined, what are the attitudes of Hungarians towards the topic and this special philosophy of tourism. The article examines the legitimacy of this concept today when Instagram tourism is boosting, and analyses the results and lessons of the survey conducted among Hungarian respondents. The following two research questions are drawn up:

RQ₁: What is the attitude of Hungarian respondents towards different “slow” elements of a journey?

RQ₂: How does demographics such as age influence the attitude of the respondents?

With our research, we would like to contribute to the enrichment of knowledge about the attitude of Hungarian people towards this special type of tourism. The results can serve as a starting point for tourism service providers – with special regard to the fact, that after the coronavirus epidemics the whole tourism industry must be rebuilt. In this process, taking into consideration the possible future trends, avoiding the places of mass tourism, and gradually creating tourism products can be a potential way.

THE CONCEPT AND ELEMENTS OF SLOW TOURISM

In slow tourism, the journey itself is the goal. This draws a parallel with slow travelers of our days and pilgrims: both groups try to escape from the everyday obligations and transform

themselves [12, 15, 16]. As Howard formulates:” Slow travelers temporarily liberate themselves from the immediacies of ‘fast life’ ... Such liberation presents the possibility for alternative experiences of time, pace and self – giving forth new modes of being-in-the-world.” [1; p.12]. Thus, the journey transforms the soul and spirituality of the traveler, so these slow journeys can become a kind of pilgrimage [17]. Slow travelers are transformed spiritually during the slow journey, and because they have more freedom, they have a feeling that they can control their own life much better. To make a long journey has also the consequence that they can get rid of their social obligations for a longer time, and they can live a self-controlled life in time with a sense of inner peace [17].

In Canada, the touristic marketing campaign of the Yukon region is also built on this spiritual feature. On one of the pictures above the mountains which are wrapped into fog and clouds the following subtitle can be seen: „Somewhere down there is your soul” [18; p.145]. “On Yukon Time” marketing campaign (2000-2005.) sketched the essence: “Hit the Brakes! Slow down and enjoy the moment. Take time to meet locals, discover special spaces ... Relax. Breathe in our clean, fresh air. Spend a little extra time nourishing your soul” [19; p.164].

Slow travel is also a part of the slow tourism experience. It can be considered to be rather several connecting ideas, a kind of attitude regarding travel [20]. It “constitutes a framework which creates the alternative of traveling by car and flights, this way people travel on a much slower way, uses local transportation and discover local food, traditions, and culture, meanwhile, their attitude is environment friendly” [21; pp.2-3].

If the image of “slow tourists” is drawn, the following should appear on the picture: they are happy to submerge into local culture and traditions and open to everything new. They are experienced travelers; collect information about the destination in advance. They avoid crowded places and are thirsty for an authentic, original relationship with the locals. Besides they respect nature and their hosts [22; pp.144-145]. Their journey has a minimal effect on the environment, only limited resources are needed. A slow tourist does not want a lot of attractions, he wants experiences instead of sights, stays at a certain place for a longer period and enjoys the atmosphere of the place, and concentrates on some things to see [23]. For him, the authenticity and speciality give the spice of a journey. Instead of a globalized, uniform taste world, he confesses the slow food philosophy.

According to Lumsdon and McGrath slow tourism can be considered to be a social and cultural reality [24]. As reported by Dall’Aglio it is a new generation tourism product [25]. This kind of tourism is based on flexible, bottom-up initiations. Instead of pure materialism, it has a strong connection with spiritualism. Further, it is sustainable: eco-tourism, green tourism, agritourism, health, culture, and gastro tourism are perfect examples for that. – they can be reviewed in a slow key [15, 26].

The locality is a central element: tourists should get to know the local culture, gastronomy, meanwhile local service providers come under focus. All services are provided under the aegis of sustainability, tourists should consider their ecological footprint.

The stay of tourists should be longer, this way they can “live” the local experience and become a little bit „part of the destination”, they experience it more deeply. They do not get standardized, boring experiences, but something unique from the destination [27].

This approach does not only concentrate on the tourists’ side, but as the other side is also important, the social well-being, cohesion, and decision-making possibility of the local population are in the spotlight [12, 15]. The active involvement of local society in the “process of tourism” is in the center. They should not be simple supplies or victims of tourism, but active “participants” who profit from the appearance of tourists [28].

However, there are some contradictions as well: the travelers who are devoted to slow tourism get to the place often by flights, car, or coach, where they can start their „slow journey”. Furthermore, laptops and other smart, modern technical devices are inevitable necessities of suitcases even for travelers who want to escape most from their modern life. Then later they keep connection with the world they wanted to escape from with social media, blogs, web pages. Of course, we can say that that’s how they get information and share experiences [29-31].

In this respect there is a shift from the services to the personal experiences: the feelings, senses, emotions, minds, spirituality must be awakened to reach tourist satisfaction [32-34]. Pécsék draws the model of slow tourism, which is based on four pillars, the following components should be emphasized: Locality, sustainability, social well-being, and experience-based approach [12, 15], Figure 1.

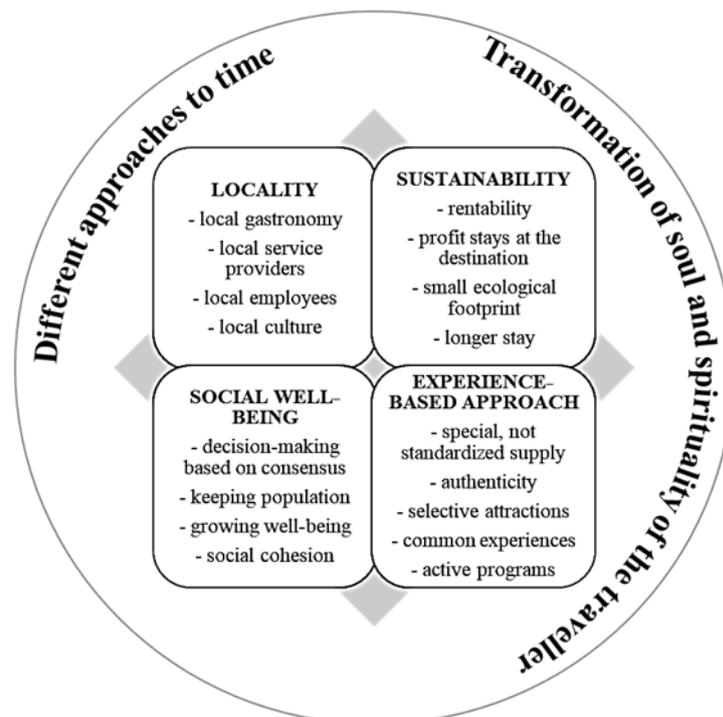


Figure 1. The components of the slow tourism model [12, 15].

METHODOLOGY

This study draws on quantitative data from an online survey conducted with 386 Hungarian respondents under omnibus research in Autumn 2019. The sample consists of people having tourist experiences since 98 % of them make a trip at least once a year. 61,7 percent of respondents travel once or two times a year, 22,5 % travel three or four times (Table 1). Regarding the demographic profile of the survey sample, 71,2 % of the respondents were female, 28,8 percent were male. Most of them (69,9 %) belong to the youngest age group (18-25). The sample was collected using the snowball approach.

In our empirical investigation, we have researched, what are the attitudes and perceptions of the respondents towards different slow elements of tourism. Survey questions were compiled based on the model of slow tourism presented. We have examined, how important different aspects are for respondents, and how their perceptions regarding the slow elements relate to each other, and how the age of the respondents influences the attitude, and what differences can be identified between the different age groups.

To reveal the similarities and differences in perceptions, we applied the method of multidimensional scaling (MDS) with the ALSCAL procedure, and to identify the main attitude components, factor analysis was run. The MDS model by creating a perception map illustrates the perceptions and preferences of the respondents in two-dimensional space [35]. Stress-value is the goodness-of-fit statistic that MDS tries to minimize; its value varies between 0 and 1. The less the value of stress is, the better the fit is [36; p.188]. In the analyses, the scales all used five-point Likert measures, the slow elements were analyzed through 10 items. One-way ANOVA was applied to see if there are significant differences between the age groups.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the sample.

	n	%
Age		
18-25 years	270	69,9 %
26-35 years	32	8,3 %
36-45 years	45	11,7 %
46-55 years	21	5,4 %
55-65 years	13	3,4 %
> 65 years	5	1,3 %
Gender		
Female	275	71,2 %
Male	111	28,8 %
Education		
Primary school	11	2,8 %
Secondary school	302	78,2 %
College/ university	70	18,1 %
Postgraduate/ PhD	3	0,8 %
Occupation		
Student	240	62,2 %
Entrepreneur	9	2,3 %
Public sector employee	42	10,9 %
Private sector employee	88	22,8 %
Retired	1	0,3 %
Other	5	1,3 %
Frequency of travel		
Less than a year	8	2,1 %
1-2 times a year	238	61,7 %
3-4 times a year	87	22,5 %
> 4 times a year	53	13,7 %

RESULTS

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 2 indicates, that the most significant characteristic of the respondents is their willingness to stop for the sake of a beautiful landscape to admire that – since the vast majority of them (73,1 %) have answered this, only 6,5 % said it was not typical for them at all. It was otherwise true for all age groups. The second most important factor is related to eating: the vast majority of the respondents (63,9 %) like to try the local specialties. 63,4 % of the respondents like discovering the destination very thoroughly, which is also a significant manifestation of the “slow” attitude. In a significant ratio (56 %) they prefer buying from local producers if they

have the opportunity. (Only 16,8 % of the respondents are not interested in this at all). It is important for around half of the respondents (47,6 %) to get to know the local culture, local people and to take part in their programs; only 20 % say the opposite. 36,8 % of the respondents are happy to visit the local market, however, a bigger ratio of them (38,9 %) is not interested in that. Spirituality, getting personalized services is not so important, either, since nearly half of the respondents do not demand it on a holiday (45,9 %). Sustainability is the least important since only 15,2 % of the respondents would choose environmental-friendly transportation. It is quite sad, since the CO2 submission, the carbon footprint of vehicles creates a significant environmental burden. Furthermore, only 21,5 % of the respondents would avoid crowded, touristic places, so most of them are not opened for hidden, calm destinations.

Table 2. The attitude of respondents towards slow elements.

Statements	1-not agree	2	3	4	5-fully agree
The target destination should provide a spiritual experience.	20,7 %	23,8 %	31,6 %	15,5 %	8,3 %
Getting personalized services is important for me.	15,5 %	25,4 %	34,5 %	18,9 %	5,7 %
I avoid crowded tourist places as much as possible	17,4 %	27,7 %	33,4 %	15,0 %	6,5 %
Choosing an environmentally friendly transportation tool is important for me.	12,7 %	36,8 %	35,2 %	11,1 %	4,1 %
I like discovering my destination as much as possible.	1,6 %	6,0 %	30,1 %	38,6 %	23,8 %
I like meeting local people, their lives, and their cultures.	3,4 %	16,6 %	32,4 %	30,8 %	16,8 %
I go to the local market if I have the opportunity.	11,7 %	27,2 %	24,4 %	23,1 %	13,7 %
I like to try the local specialties.	3,6 %	9,1 %	23,6 %	32,1 %	31,6 %
I prefer buying from local producers if I have the opportunity.	2,8 %	14,0 %	27,2 %	32,4 %	23,6 %
I modify my original schedule to admire a nice landscape.	1,3 %	5,2 %	20,5 %	34,2 %	38,9 %

Based on the above-analyzed survey results, the respondents are opened to certain slow factors, but not for the whole concept in general. Most of them are opened to take time in a different approach, like to get to know the local culture, people, and cuisine and to buy from local producers – which seem to fit into the general stereotypes about Hungarians. However, the respondents are lazier to go to the local market, and they do not desire personalized services, spiritual experiences at the destination. Besides, the sustainable approach got really low scores – showing, it is the least important of the examined factors.

ANOVA ANALYSIS OF AGE GROUPS

By running One-way ANOVA, we analyzed the impact of age groups on the degree of attitude to different travel aspects. Significant differences were justified in case of the followings on 5 percent significant level: (i) avoidance of crowded places ($p = 0,002 < 0,05$); (ii) spiritual experience ($p = 0,010 < 0,05$); (iii) local market ($p = 0,001 < 0,05$).

Due to the results of the test of Homogeneity of Variances (Levene statistics), in cases, 1-2, LSD post-hoc test, in case 3, Tamhane post-hoc test helped to reveal the significant differences between age groups based on the category means.

It is the least important for respondents aged 26-35 (average: 2,0) and 65+ (average: 2,0), to get a spiritual experience at the destination, meanwhile, the average score for this statement was 2,78 in the case of respondents aged 18-35. As the respondents became older, their willingness to visit the local market became higher as well: meanwhile, the average at the age group 18-25 was 2,84; in the case of the age group 65+ this number was 4,0. A similar tendency could be detected in the case of the element “avoiding crowded places”, Table 3.

Table 3. The attitude of Hungarian responders towards slow tourism elements according to age groups.

Statements	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55-65	65+	Total
I modify my original schedule to admire a nice landscape.	4,04	3,91	3,98	4,19	4,23	4,20	4,04
I like to try the local specialties.	3,81	3,41	3,78	3,95	4,00	3,80	3,79
I like discovering my destination as much as possible.	3,79	3,78	3,64	3,76	4,08	3,40	3,77
I prefer buying from local producers if I have the opportunity.	3,56	3,50	3,71	3,86	3,92	3,20	3,60
I like meeting local people, their lives, and their cultures.	3,39	3,22	3,47	3,57	3,85	3,40	3,41
I go to the local market if I have the opportunity.	2,84	3,09	3,33	3,33	3,92	4,00	3,00
Getting personalized services is important for me.	2,76	2,59	2,76	2,71	2,62	3,00	2,74
The target destination should provide a spiritual experience.	2,78	2,00	2,58	2,76	2,38	2,00	2,67
I avoid crowded tourist places as much as possible	2,51	2,78	3,13	3,10	2,69	3,40	2,66
Choosing an environmentally friendly transportation tool is important for me.	2,60	2,41	2,44	2,62	2,85	2,40	2,57

MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALING

As the result of the MDS configuration, we can see that the respondents link certain items together in their perception, Figure 2. The Stress-value is 0,08929 meaning that the map is suitable for reliable interpretation.

According to the perceptions (distances between the points along the coordinate axis), survey participants differentiate 4-5 areas in the field of slow tourism. As we can see on the map ‘trying local specialties’, ‘meeting local people’, ‘discovering the destination’ and ‘buying from local producers’ are related items; people have similar attitudes, insights in connection with them. For instance, people perceive the items of ‘destination discovery’ and ‘buying from local producers’ exactly in the same way. Visiting local markets and getting personalized services, as well as, the ‘spiritual experience’ is located in two opposite points of Dimension 1, meaning that respondents have different perceptions related to these items (areas). Dimension 1 can be called a “preference dimension”, to the left of the origo those items are located which are priority aspects in travel, while on the opposite side the less preferred items

can be seen. Furthermore, Dimension 1 has an interpretation, content of locality approach, since to the left of the origo, we can find only “locality” related items. Dimension 2 also determines and helps the interpretation of the group of items on the perceptual map. This dimension displays the points related to “socializing”. The need for spiritual experience and personalized services are closely related items, and both of them follow individualistic aspects. On the other side of Dimension 2, the degree of individualism decreases, and more global aspects can appear.

Based on the above-mentioned perceptions, the elements of slow tourism can be categorized into the following 4-5 areas, which are highly compatible with the theoretical background.

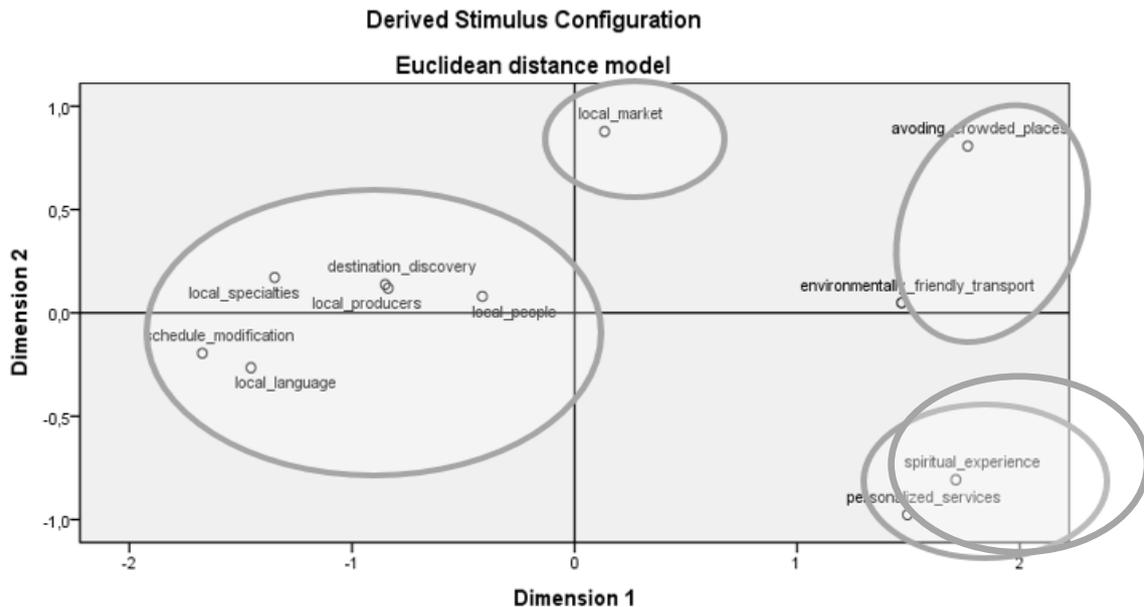


Figure 2. The MDS configuration of the slow tourism-related items.

FACTOR ANALYSIS

In addition to MDS analysis, a factor analysis with the principal component method and varimax rotation was done to reveal the related factors regarding the respondents' attitudes. The suitability of the data for structure detection the KMO test was applied, which indicates the proportion of variance in the variables. Its value is 0,751, which is middling. Based on the result of Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p = 0,000 < 0,05$), there is a correlation between the variables that makes the further analysis possible, such as the extraction values (commonality for each value is above 0,25). The total variance explained is 54,258 %, which is also an acceptable criterium for the analysis.

As a result of data reduction, three components were generated. Table 4 shows the components (1-3) and the related items which are included. The principal component method brought very similar results as the MDS model did, apart from one item (local market), Figure 1. However, the before-mentioned item can be integrated into the component associated with the locality.

Analyzing the importance of the items based on the results of MDS and factor analysis, Table 5 shows that the respondents were the most opened for the “local pillar” (average: 3,59). The “local” pillar has avg score 3,65 based on the importance of the four related statements. Then the well-being of the local community (average 3,3) was the next in the row. Finally, the least important pillars are the personalized services and spirituality (average 2,705) and the matter of sustainability (average 2,61).

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; Rotation converged in 4 iterations

	Component		
	1	2	3
I like meeting local people, their lives, and their cultures.	0,726		
I like to try the local specialties.	0,722		
I like discovering my destination as much as possible.	0,688		
I prefer buying from local producers if I have the opportunity.	0,685		
I go to the local market if I have the opportunity.	0,685		
I modify my original schedule to admire a nice landscape.	0,565		
The target destination should provide a spiritual experience.		0,754	
Getting personalized services is important for me.		0,718	
I avoid crowded tourist places as much as the possible tool is important for me.			0,867
Choosing environmentally-friendly transportation			0,648

Table 5. The importance of different slow elements for respondents; average (1 – not agree at all; 5 – fully agree).

I. LOCALITY	
I modify my original schedule to admire a nice landscape.	4,04
I like discovering my destination as much as possible.	3,77
I like meeting local people, their lives, and their cultures.	3,41
I like to try the local specialties.	3,41
I go to the local market if I have the opportunity.	3,00
I prefer buying from local producers if I have the opportunity.	3,60
Total	3,59
II. PERSONALIZED SERVICES AND SPIRITUALITY	
Getting personalized services is important for me.	2,74
The target destination should provide a spiritual experience.	2,67
Total	2,71
III. SUSTAINABILITY	
I avoid crowded tourist places as much as the possible tool is important for me.	2,66
Choosing environmentally-friendly transportation	2,57
Total	2,61

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

To give an adequate answer for the challenges of today in tourism, “a transformation of the consciousness of all stakeholders” is inevitable; slow tourism can be a good basis for that [37, 38]. However, it must be added, that we should not have illusions: “absolute escape” is possible only for a few [31].

Based on the research results, we can conclude that slow tourism is not in the focus of the Hungarians. According to perceptions of the slow elements and the latent correlation among them, the research results indicated that people consider the slow elements similar to the theoretical model assumes. Only one aspect (social well-being) did not appear as a separate factor or component neither in the MDS model nor in the principal component method. Nevertheless, the other aspects (locality, personalized services/ spirituality, and sustainability) of the slow tourism model could be identified. Social well-being elements (according to the theoretical model) were integrated into the “locality” component regarding

the Hungarian responses. Furthermore, certain slow elements are important factors for the Hungarian respondents, other elements are less so. The “local” components are essential for them, they are looking for authenticity in the destination, should it appear in the local cuisine, local products, or in the marketplace [39, 40]. They love to dive into the depth of the destination – and have not adhered to the original schedule and itinerary for the sake of a beautiful landscape.

However, spirituality is far from them; personalized services do not matter, either. It shows a strong connection with the fact, that only 21,5 % of the respondents avoid crowded destinations, so visiting hidden, calm destinations is a perfect holiday scene only for a few. The age of the respondents caused significant differences in the attitude towards certain slow elements like visiting crowded places, shopping and going to local markets, and searching for spiritual experiences. Middle-aged people are those who are more open to spirituality and find it more important during travel. In the case of the other two elements, the older the people became, the more willing they testify to go to the local market and to avoid crowded places. So both hypotheses are accepted.

The present coronavirus epidemics may change the travel patterns of people significantly. Amadeus’ surveys detected, that a big percentage of travelers (55 %) plan to take longer trips, they would like to travel for at least two weeks [41]. It can be a perfect basis for trips, holidays organized slowly.

The presented research has limitations that need to be taken into account. The questionnaire survey was carried out by snowball sampling technique that resulted in a non-representative sample. Furthermore, the research was accomplished before the COVID pandemic, which has the potential to change travel patterns and attitudes. Based on this, the results may not reflect the present situation. It would be worth re-making the research to see the possible changes in attitudes.

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