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Reframing Slow Tourism in the Post-Pandemic Era: A Systematic Review and Regenerative Framework for Smart–Slow Destinations

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Abstract

In the post-pandemic era, slow tourism has transitioned from a niche alternative to a key paradigm for sustainable destination regeneration. However, its rapid scholarly growth has produced conceptual fragmentation and inconsistent theoretical grounding. This study conducts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of 31 Scopus-indexed, open-access articles (2020–2025) following PRISMA 2020 guidelines to consolidate theoretical developments, behavioural determinants, and managerial strategies. A thematic analysis reveals a paradigmatic shift from temporal deceleration toward psychological restoration and mindful engagement. The emergence of slomads—long-stay digital nomads seeking autonomy and well-being—defines the behavioural landscape of post-pandemic travel. Evidence also demonstrates a "smart–slow nexus", where technologies such as e-mobility, GIS-based spatial design, and AI visualization support sustainable access to peripheral regions. The analysis further exposes a governance paradox in the Cittàslow movement between authentic degrowth values and instrumental place marketing. Synthesising these insights, the paper proposes a Regenerative Slow Tourism Framework integrating technological innovation, psychological well-being, and co-created authenticity as drivers of resilient, value-oriented visitor economies. The framework advances theoretical consolidation and offers actionable guidance for policymakers and destination managers pursuing post-growth, regenerative tourism futures.

Keywords: Slow Tourism; Smart–Slow Nexus; Cittàslow; Slomads; Regenerative Tourism; Systematic Literature Review.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic catalysed a profound reconfiguration of global mobility, accelerating the search for slower, more meaningful forms of travel. Within this transformation, slow tourism has evolved from a marginal alternative into a central paradigm for regenerative and sustainable destination development. Unlike conventional mass tourism, slow tourism emphasises depth, mindfulness, and experiential authenticity, encouraging travellers to cultivate local connections and temporal awareness. These ideals are institutionally embodied in the Cittàslow movement, which seeks to enhance residents' well-being while safeguarding local distinctiveness.

The post-pandemic years (2020–2025) have witnessed a rapid expansion of scholarship on slow tourism, driven by digital transformations, ecological concerns, and the global rise of "time poverty." Emerging studies reveal structural shifts in traveller profiles, notably the rise of "slomads"—digital nomads who leverage remote work autonomy to engage in long-term, place-based stays (Katz & Savage, 2025). Concurrently, scholars have reframed slow tourism as a psychological and existential process. Drawing on Cognitive Appraisal Theory, (Xu and Chia, 2025) interpret travel experiences as pathways for emotional restoration and temporal reconstruction. Similarly, (Kosykh et al., 2023) emphasise self-expressiveness and eudaimonic fulfilment as intrinsic motivators that reinforce pro-sustainability behaviour.

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Recent research also highlights the technological mediation of slow experiences. Innovations such as e-mobility systems, GIS-based route design, and AI-enabled spatial planning enable slow access to peripheral areas while supporting carbon reduction (Pirolo & Moscarelli, 2025; Jiang et al., 2023). This "smart–slow nexus" challenges the traditional "digital detox" narrative by showing that technology can enhance, rather than disrupt, mindfulness and regeneration. However, tensions persist: the Cittàslow model—once hailed as a symbol of degrowth—now faces criticism for instrumentalising authenticity for place marketing (Amrhein & Hospers, 2025). Governance success thus depends on co-created value systems that reconcile visitor experience with community well-being (Frías-Jamilena et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2025).

Despite these theoretical and managerial advances, research in this field remains fragmented. Existing studies diverge in definitions, methodological approaches, and regional scope, producing limited theoretical consolidation. Prior reviews have yet to synthesise the interplay between psychological well-being, digital transformation, and governance frameworks that underpin slow tourism in the post-pandemic era. Moreover, empirical inconsistencies—such as the relative impact of blogs versus vlogs on emotional engagement (Wang et al., 2024)—illustrate the need for an integrative perspective.

To address these gaps, this study conducts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of peer-reviewed, open-access articles indexed in Scopus from 2020 to 2025. It aims to clarify the conceptual evolution of slow tourism, identify behavioural and psychological determinants of the modern traveller, and outline managerial strategies that support regenerative destination practices. Specifically, this research addresses four guiding questions:

RQ1: What are the prevailing publication patterns and geographic orientations in recent slow tourism scholarship?

RQ2: How have theoretical foundations and conceptual frameworks evolved between 2020 and 2025?

RQ3: Which psychological and behavioural mechanisms characterise the contemporary slow traveller?

RQ4: What strategic and governance implications arise for developing resilient, value-driven slow destinations?

By integrating these dimensions, this review advances a Regenerative Slow Tourism Framework that links technological innovation, psychological restoration, and community-centred governance, offering both theoretical consolidation and actionable guidance for destination managers in the post-growth era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Slow tourism has evolved from a marginal leisure preference into a multidimensional philosophy that privileges experiential depth, ethical mindfulness, and socio-environmental balance. Early conceptualisations equated "slowness" primarily with low-carbon mobility and the rejection of modern acceleration. However, the post-pandemic paradigm reinterprets slowness as a cognitive, emotional, and technological state of engagement—a holistic orientation toward meaningful dwelling rather than mere movement. Contemporary scholarship extends the understanding of slowness beyond physical speed. The rise of "slomads"—digital nomads engaging in month-long stays—demonstrates that slow tourism now represents temporal autonomy and mindful labour–life integration (Katz & Savage, 2025). Building on Cognitive Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1974), (Xu and Chia, 2025) conceptualise slow travel as a form of psychological coping and emotional renewal. Similarly, Kosykh et al. (2023) position eudaimonic fulfilment and self-expressiveness as intrinsic motivations that connect slowness with subjective well-being. These insights shift the theoretical focus from "doing slow" to "being slow", situating slow tourism within the broader psychology of mindfulness and existential authenticity.

Contrary to early depictions of slow tourism as anti-digital, recent evidence reveals a "smart–slow nexus", in which digital innovation enables rather than disrupts decelerated experiences. Sustainable technologies—such as e-mobility systems, GIS-based route design, and AI-assisted visualisation—facilitate access to marginal territories while reducing environmental footprints (Pirolo & Moscarelli, 2025; Jiang et al., 2023). Furthermore, (Agapito and Guerreiro, 2023) propose the "slow, sensory, and smart" design framework, demonstrating how assistive and multisensory technologies enhance accessibility for diverse travellers. These developments signify a paradigmatic reconciliation between technology and slowness: a transition from "digital detox" to "digital enablement" within regenerative tourism systems.

Beyond individual mindfulness, slow tourism functions as a social and institutional mechanism for value co-creation and convivial governance. The Cittàslow movement operationalises these ideals by linking local well-being with visitor experience (Akgiş İlhan et al., 2021; Walker & Lee, 2021). However, scholarly debates expose a persistent governance paradox: whether Cittàslow embodies authentic degrowth principles or serves as symbolic place marketing (Amrhein & Hospers, 2025). Current evidence suggests that effectiveness depends on coopetition, social innovation, and participatory networks that transform inter-urban competition into

shared socio-economic value (Farelnik, 2020; Jaszczak et al., 2024). Nevertheless, challenges endure—limited public awareness (Stanowicka et al., 2023) and policy misalignments with energy transitions (Batyk et al., 2022; Wierzbicka, 2022)—highlighting the need for liveability-centred governance.

Synthesising these perspectives, slow tourism in the post-pandemic era is best understood as a regenerative system integrating three interdependent dimensions: 1) Psychological restoration (mindfulness, meaning, and eudaimonia); 2) Technological mediation (smart–slow complementarity); and 3) Social conviviality (community-driven governance). This triadic structure forms the theoretical foundation for the proposed Regenerative Slow Tourism Framework, which reconceptualises slowness as a process of co-created well-being and technologically supported regeneration, rather than a mere reduction of speed.

METHODS

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to consolidate and critically interpret the conceptual, behavioural, and managerial dimensions of slow tourism in the post-pandemic context (2020–2025). The SLR method was chosen for its analytical rigour and transparency in synthesising fragmented research fields. The review follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines to ensure reproducibility, minimise selection bias, and enhance methodological credibility. The Scopus database was selected as the exclusive data source due to its extensive coverage of high-impact, peer-reviewed journals across tourism, sustainability, and geography disciplines. Scopus also provides robust metadata, enabling reliable bibliometric screening.

To capture the conceptual breadth of the "slow" movement, a Boolean search string was designed to combine thematic and theoretical keywords: *TITLE-ABS-KEY ("slow tourism" OR "slow travel" OR "Cittàslow") AND (theor* OR model* OR framework* OR behavior OR motiv* OR intent* OR manag* OR strateg* OR impact* OR sustainab*)*. The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 and written in English, ensuring analytical consistency and relevance to post-pandemic transformations.

The initial search yielded 240 records. After removing duplicates, 131 articles were screened by title and abstract. Applying the temporal and thematic filters resulted in 55 eligible studies. Each article was assessed for conceptual relevance, methodological quality, and open-access availability, producing a final corpus of 31 studies. The full screening process adhered to the PRISMA protocol (see Figure 1), encompassing four key stages: 1) Identification – Database search and duplicate removal; 2) Screening – Title and abstract review for relevance to theoretical and managerial dimensions; 3) Eligibility – Full-text assessment for thematic depth and post-pandemic alignment; 4) Inclusion – Final selection of 31 high-quality articles for synthesis.

Each article was evaluated using a three-criterion quality framework: 1) Scholarly impact – publication in Scopus Q1/Q2 journals or equivalent; 2) Methodological transparency – clarity of design, data source, and analytical rigor; 3) Conceptual relevance – explicit engagement with slow tourism theory, behaviour, or governance; 4) Articles failing to meet at least two of these criteria were excluded.
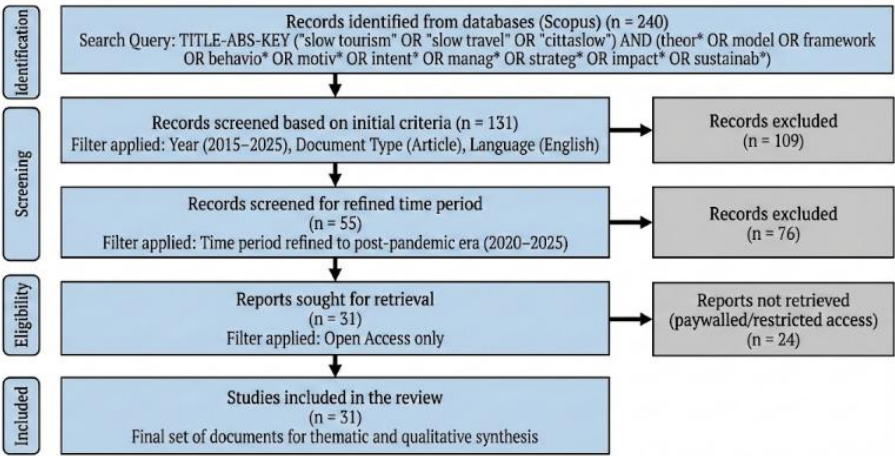

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram
Source: Research data, 2025

The figure illustrates the sequential screening process, from the identification of 240 records to the final inclusion of 31 studies used for thematic synthesis. Data extraction was performed using a structured Excel matrix capturing publication metadata (year, region, journal), theoretical orientation, behavioural determinants, and managerial implications. A thematic synthesis approach was employed, following the steps

of coding, categorisation, and pattern identification (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Themes were subsequently mapped into four analytical clusters: 1) Conceptual evolution (theoretical frameworks and paradigmatic shifts); 2) Behavioural determinants (psychological and lifestyle factors); 3) Managerial strategies (governance and destination management); 4) Smart–slow integration (technological mediation of slowness). Inter-coder reliability was ensured through an independent cross-check of 20% of the sample by a second reviewer, yielding a Cohen's kappa score of 0.86, indicating high agreement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Descriptive and Bibliometric Overview

The bibliometric synthesis of the 31 articles selected for this review reveals clear trajectories in the evolution of slow tourism research between 2020 and 2025. The field has progressed from a reactive, post-crisis discourse toward a systemic paradigm of regenerative destination management. Publication trends demonstrate sustained academic engagement beyond the pandemic's immediate aftermath. As illustrated in Figure 2, output peaked in 2021 (10 papers; 32.3%), reflecting scholars' rapid response to mobility restrictions and proximity-based travel patterns. Output remained stable in subsequent years—2022 (3), 2023 (5), 2024 (4), and early 2025 (5)—indicating that slow tourism has matured into a long-term research agenda rather than a transient reaction.

Geographically, research is predominantly Eurocentric, led by Poland (6 studies) and Italy (4 studies), where the Cittàslow network provides an institutional laboratory for studying slow city governance. These studies focus on socio-economic revitalisation, e-mobility, and regional cooperation (Farelnik, 2020; Wierzbicka, 2020; Pirolo & Moscarelli, 2025). Outside Europe, new research clusters have emerged in China (digital storytelling and audience resonance) and the United States (slomads and remote work travel). The inclusion of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and African contexts signals a gradual diversification of perspectives and a shift toward contextual adaptation of the slow tourism model. This geographic expansion illustrates how the Cittàslow philosophy, once Eurocentric, is being reinterpreted across diverse socio-economic contexts as a flexible governance model for post-growth tourism.

Table 1. Geographic Distribution of Studies

Country/Region	Number of Articles	Key Focus Area
Poland	6	Socio-economic potential of Cittàslow networks
Italy	4	E-mobility, cycle routes, and spatial planning
United States	3	Slomads, Airbnb stay lengths, and stakeholder co-creation
China	2	Cultural ecosystem services and audience resonance
Spain (Mallorca)	1	Degrowth vs. Place promotion

Source: Research data, 2025

Slow tourism research has become increasingly interdisciplinary. Sustainability (Switzerland) dominates publication output (8 articles; 25.8%), confirming its role as the field's principal outlet for conceptual and applied studies. However, the presence of slow tourism research in journals such as Acta Psychologica and Regional Science Policy and Practice demonstrates a disciplinary broadening—incorporating behavioural psychology, smart infrastructure, and spatial planning.

Table 2. Leading Journals

Journal Title	Article Count	Focus/Niche
Sustainability (Switzerland)	8	Multidisciplinary sustainability and slow tourism
Oeconomia Copernicana	2	Economic potential and regional development
Energies	2	Sustainable transport and energy in tourism
Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites	2	Geographic perspectives and destination studies
Tourism Geographies	1	Conceptual and critical tourism studies

Source: Research data, 2025

This dispersion across disciplines highlights a methodological pluralism: while early studies relied on qualitative case designs, recent works increasingly employ mixed methods, network analysis, and GIS modelling—indicating a shift toward evidence-based spatial and behavioural modelling.

A keyword co-occurrence analysis revealed that "slow tourism" and "Cittàslow" remain the most frequent nodes (16 and 11 mentions, respectively), surrounded by three emergent clusters: 1) Sustainability and Degrowth – focusing on socio-economic revitalisation, community welfare, and policy alignment (e.g., Batyk et al., 2022; Amrhein & Hospers, 2025); 2) Behavioural Psychology and Mindfulness – encompassing emotional restoration, existential authenticity, and self-expressiveness (Xu & Chia, 2025; Kosykh et al., 2023); 3) Digitalisation and Smart–Slow Integration – emphasising e-mobility, GIS visualisation, and digital storytelling (Pirolo & Moscarelli, 2025; Wang et al., 2024). These clusters delineate the conceptual evolution of slow

tourism from a low-carbon mobility ethic to an integrative framework of psychological well-being, technological mediation, and community co-creation.

Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Evolution

The synthesis of 31 peer-reviewed studies reveals that between 2020 and 2025, slow tourism theory has transitioned from a moral-philosophical stance to a multidimensional, regenerative paradigm. This evolution is defined by three major theoretical convergences: (1) the psychological turn toward mindfulness and meaning-making, (2) the technological mediation of slowness, and (3) the institutional reconfiguration of Cittàslow governance. Collectively, these shifts underpin a systemic view of slow tourism as an adaptive mechanism for post-growth, technologically enabled well-being.

The Psychological Turn: From Temporal Deceleration to Cognitive Restoration

Early slow tourism literature equated slowness with reduced physical mobility. Recent studies reconceptualise it as a psychological process of appraisal, emotion regulation, and existential restoration. Drawing from Cognitive Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1974), Xu and Chia (2025) position destinations as emotional stimuli that enable temporal–spatial reconstruction and psychological healing. Kosykh et al. (2023) expand this view by identifying self-expressiveness and eudaimonic well-being as motivational drivers, particularly in long-distance, contemplative journeys such as trans-Siberian rail travel. Shang and Chiu (2022) further link existential authenticity and place attachment to the formation of ethical, sustainable behaviours.

These studies collectively mark a psychological inflection point—from "travelling slowly" to "thinking slowly." Slowness is no longer a temporal constraint but a state of reflective consciousness, aligning with the regenerative ethos of post-pandemic travel.

The Technological Mediation of Slowness: The Smart–Slow Nexus

A second conceptual transformation involves dismantling the binary opposition between technology and mindfulness. The reviewed literature increasingly conceptualises a "smart–slow nexus"—a paradigm where technological tools enable rather than disrupt slowness. (Jiang et al., 2023; Pirolo & Moscarelli, 2025) demonstrate how AI and GIS-based spatial planning foster sustainable mobility and access to peripheral landscapes. (Agapito & Guerreiro, 2023) extend this notion through the "slow, sensory, and smart" framework, where assistive technologies and multisensory design improve inclusivity and accessibility. Similarly, (Balletto et al., 2020; Scandiffio, 2021) employ digital dashboards and satellite analytics to operationalise slowness as data-informed spatial rhythm.

This evolution represents a paradigmatic reconciliation: slowness is not anti-modern but techno-mindful. It is enacted through tools that reduce cognitive load, enhance accessibility, and facilitate regenerative interaction with space—core to what this paper identifies as the Smart–Slow Nexus.

Governance and Conviviality: The Institutional Paradox of Cittàslow

The institutional domain remains anchored in the Cittàslow movement, which embodies the tension between authenticity and instrumentalism. Amrhein & Hospers (2025) question whether Cittàslow genuinely aligns with degrowth principles or has devolved into place promotion. Empirical evidence from Poland (Farelnik, 2020; Wierzbicka, 2020) illustrates both revitalisation potential and inconsistencies in environmental alignment (Batyk et al., 2022; Wierzbicka, 2022). Despite these contradictions, recent studies (Munch, 2024; Sept, 2021) highlight social innovation and civic conviviality as emerging governance models, advocating for bottom-up, networked approaches. This shift redefines Cittàslow from a branding initiative into a platform for cooperative resilience, aligning with regenerative urbanism and post-growth ethics.

Territorial and Communicative Shifts

At the territorial level, slowness has become a structural reorganisation of mobility and belonging. The rise of slomads—remote workers engaging in month-plus stays (Katz & Savage, 2025)—reflects a durable transformation in spatial behaviour. Complementary movements such as staycations and agrarian immersion (Dezio, 2021; Dissart, 2021) highlight the localisation of leisure and the fusion of work–life balance with environmental stewardship. Communication studies (Wang et al., 2024; Frías-Jamilena et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2025) further demonstrate that digital co-creation and narrative resonance—especially through vlogs— enhance emotional engagement and pro-environmental intentions. These findings reinforce the idea that slow tourism is mediated through storytelling ecosystems, linking authenticity, identity, and participation.

Table 3. Comprehensive Mapping Of Theoretical And Conceptual Contributions To Slow Tourism

Theoretical Theme	Core Conceptual Focus	Authors (Year)
Psychology & Behavior	Cognitive Appraisal Theory, Healing, Emotions	(Xu & Chia, 2025)
	Self-Expressiveness, Rail Travel, Satisfaction	(Kosykh et al., 2023)
	Brand Experience, Existential Authenticity	(S. S. C. Shang & Chiu, 2022)
	Transformative Travel, Research Framework	(Klarin et al., 2023)
	Post-Pandemic Conceptual Outline	(Kostilnikova et al., 2022)
Smart & Smart Tech	E-mobility, GIS Spatial Planning for E-bikes	(Pirolo & Moscarelli, 2025)
	AI, Information Visualization, Low-Carbon Rural	(Jiang et al., 2023)
	Slow, Sensory, and Smart Framework	(Agapito & Guerreiro, 2023)
	Parametric Itineraries, Satellite Imagery (Sentinel-2)	(Scandiffio, 2021)
	Dashboards for Green Infrastructure	(Balletto et al., 2020)
Governance & Policy	Degrowth Approach vs. Place Promotion	(Amrhein & Hospers, 2025)
	Social Innovation, Small/Medium Town Revitalization	(Jaszczak et al., 2024; Sept, 2021)
	Energy, Environmental, and Renewable Energy Policies	(Batyk et al., 2022; Wierzbicka, 2022)
	Brand Awareness and Resident Impact	(Stanowicka et al., 2023)
	Socio-economic Potential and City Grouping	(Wierzbicka, 2020)
	Network Cooperation and Membership Effects	(Farelnik, 2020; Farelnik et al., 2021)
	Conviviality and Sustainable Cities	(Munch, 2024)
Sustainability Models	Alternative Model vs. Myth (Local Evidence)	(Akgiş İlhan et al., 2021)
	Sustainable Development in SIDS	(Walker & Lee, 2021)
	New Proposition for Local Development	(Brodziński & Kurowska, 2021)
Territorial Shifts	Slomads, Structural Airbnb Shift (Length of Stay)	(Katz & Savage, 2025)
	Staycations and Slow Recreation Transition	(Dissart, 2021)
	Wrestling Shorter Length of Stay (SIDS/Emerging)	(Kebete, 2021)
	Agritourism, Slow Lines, and Mountain Rurality	(Dezio, 2021)
	Public Funding and Pilgrimage Routes (St. James)	(Moscarelli, 2021)
Communication	Vlogs vs. Blogs, Audience Resonance	(Wang et al., 2024)
	Online Co-creation of Destination Image	(Frías-Jamilena et al., 2024)(Huang et al., 2025)

Source: Research data, 2025

Determinants of Slow Traveler Behavior

The behavioural synthesis reveals that post-pandemic slow travel is no longer motivated by simple ecological awareness but by a triadic interplay of psychological restoration, digital mediation, and socio-institutional context. Across the 31 studies reviewed, slow-traveller behaviour emerges as a dynamic negotiation between internal motives (healing, identity, mindfulness) and external conditions (technology, governance, environment).

Psychological Drivers: Healing, Authenticity, and Meaning-Making

The psychological dimension constitutes the most profound behavioural determinant. Drawing on Cognitive Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1974), (Xu and Chia, 2025) conceptualise slow travel as a coping and restoration mechanism, where destinations act as emotional resources for temporal–spatial reconstruction and anti-consumerist reflection. Similarly, (Shang and Chiu, 2022) identify existential authenticity and place attachment as mediators of loyalty within Cittàslow environments, while (Kosykh et al., 2023) highlight self-expressiveness and eudaimonic identity as key predictors of life satisfaction.

Collectively, these studies illustrate that slow travel is an act of psychological regeneration—a conscious reordering of priorities in pursuit of emotional balance, meaning, and ethical awareness. This behavioural shift aligns with the psychological restoration pillar of the Regenerative Slow Tourism Framework.

Lifestyle Transformations: Temporal Autonomy and the "Slomad" Archetype

The pandemic accelerated a structural transformation of mobility and residence patterns. (Katz and Savage, 2025) document the rise of slomads—remote-working travellers whose extended stays (28+ nights) signify a new form of temporal autonomy. This behaviour redefines travel as a mode of living rather than episodic consumption. (Dissart, 2021; Munch, 2024) complement this trend by identifying proximity travel and conviviality as coping strategies for "time famine," particularly in urban societies. Such transitions—from

global movement to local immersion—reflect the degrowth ethics underpinning regenerative tourism, demonstrating how lifestyle adjustments contribute to environmental and social resilience.

Digital Mediation and Co-Creation

The technological dimension significantly shapes behavioural intention and engagement. Recent evidence contradicts earlier assumptions that digital technology undermines mindfulness. Instead, it reveals a smart–slow complementarity, where digital platforms enable emotional and participatory resonance. (Frías-Jamilena et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2025) find that tourists engaged in online value co-creation exhibit stronger pro-environmental intentions. Wang et al. (2024) demonstrate that vlogs evoke greater emotional congruence than blogs, as their decelerated narrative style enhances self-congruence and empathy. Moreover, (Agapito & Guerreiro, 2023; Jiang et al., 2023) show that smart and sensory technologies—such as AI-guided itineraries and assistive interfaces—improve accessibility and revisit intention. These findings affirm the role of digital mediation as an enabler of slow experiences, operationalising the smart–slow nexus within behavioural practice.

Institutional and Environmental Contexts

Behavioural patterns are also shaped by institutional support and environmental design. In Poland, (Stanowicka et al., 2023) show that resident brand awareness and perceived community benefits significantly predict visitor satisfaction and advocacy. Conversely, misalignment between renewable energy policies and slow city objectives can dampen both resident and visitor engagement (Batyk et al., 2022; Wierzbicka, 2022). At the spatial level, (Dezio, 2021; Walker & Lee, 2021) illustrate that agrarian and island settings amplify the behavioural potential of slowness through place-based authenticity and low-carbon mobility. Scandiffio (2021) adds that satellite-informed "slow lines" and green corridors sustain year-round visitation without environmental degradation. These patterns underscore that slow behaviour is contextually co-produced, emerging from the alignment between governance structures, environmental affordances, and traveller psychology—consistent with the governance conviviality pillar of the Regenerative Slow Tourism Framework.

Integrative Interpretation

Synthesising across categories (Table 4), the findings demonstrate that: 1) Psychological restoration motivates engagement through mindfulness, authenticity, and emotional healing; 2) Lifestyle transformation manifests through temporal autonomy and long-stay immersion; 3) Technological mediation enhances accessibility, emotional resonance, and co-creation; 4) Institutional and environmental scaffolding sustain behavioural continuity through supportive governance and design. This convergence reveals that slow-traveller behaviour is both affective and systemic—a composite of cognitive healing, digital participation, and socio-spatial embeddedness. These behavioural determinants thus operationalise the Regenerative Slow Tourism Framework, translating theoretical convergence into lived tourist practices.

Table 4. Synthesis of Behavioral and Psychological Determinants

Determinant Category	Specific Behavioral Drivers	Key Reference (APA 7th)
Psychological	Emotional healing, temporal-spatial reconstruction, and anti-consumerism.	(Xu & Chia, 2025)
	Existential authenticity, brand experience, and place attachment.	(S. S. C. Shang & Chiu, 2022)
	Self-expressiveness, eudaimonistic identity, and life satisfaction.	(Kosykh et al., 2023)
Lifestyle	"Slomad" effect (28+ days stay) and remote work integration.	(Katz & Savage, 2025)
	Transition to staycations and "gentle" recreation in proximity.	(Dissart, 2021)
	Quest for conviviality and friendly social relations in cities.	(Munch, 2024)
Social & Digital	Online value co-creation and pro-environmental intentions.	(Frías-Jamilena et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2025)
	Vlog-driven emotional resonance and self-congruence.	(Huang et al., 2025)
	Need for smart sensory accessibility and AI-guided flexible tours.	(Agapito & Guerreiro, 2023; Jiang et al., 2023)
Institutional	Resident brand awareness and local sustainable development impact.	(Stanowicka et al., 2023)
	Perception of local energy and environmental policies.	(Batyk et al., 2022; Wierzbicka, 2022)

Determinant Category	Specific Behavioral Drivers	Key Reference (APA 7th)
Environmental	Synergy with agritourism and regional "slow lines" in rurality.	(Dezio, 2021; Scandiffio, 2021)

Strategic and Managerial Implications for Slow Tourism Destinations

The systematic synthesis of 31 studies provides an integrative roadmap for Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), policymakers, and community networks seeking to operationalise regenerative slow tourism. Managerial implications move beyond promotional strategies toward a systemic governance model that aligns psychological well-being, technological mediation, and community-based conviviality.

Regenerative Infrastructure and Smart Spatial Planning

A key strategic shift lies in designing regenerative infrastructure that decentralises visitor flows and promotes equitable spatial engagement. The integration of e-mobility systems and pedal-assisted bicycles expands accessibility to peripheral areas while dispersing visitor pressure (Pirolo & Moscarelli, 2025). Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Geographic Information Visualisation facilitate the identification of low-carbon rural scenarios, optimising both trip planning and environmental performance (Jiang et al., 2023). Advanced spatial tools—such as parametric modelling and Sentinel-2 satellite imagery—enable dynamic itinerary design that adapts to seasonal landscape variations (Scandiffio, 2021). To ensure adaptive governance, digital dashboards should monitor infrastructure performance, energy use, and visitor flow to guide evidence-based decisions (Balletto et al., 2020). These practices embody the technological mediation pillar of the Regenerative Slow Tourism Framework, illustrating how digital systems can enable slow mobility rather than accelerate it.

Reframing Market Strategies: From Volume to Value

The emergence of "slomads"—remote-working travellers favouring extended stays—necessitates a transformation of destination marketing and capacity planning. DMOs should reconfigure pricing, zoning, and accommodation policies to incentivise long-term stays, workspace access, and off-season occupation (Katz & Savage, 2025). Marketing narratives should focus on psychological value propositions—such as mindfulness, eudaimonia, and authenticity—rather than conventional sightseeing (Kosykh et al., 2023). For emerging destinations, immersion-based products (agritourism, staycations, and proximity travel) offer sustainable alternatives to short-stay models (Dissart, 2021; Kebete, 2021). This strategy advances psychological restoration by aligning consumption patterns with well-being and local attachment.

Governance, Co-creation, and Social Innovation

The Cittàslow experience underscores that sustainable transformation depends less on branding and more on networked governance and social innovation. Three managerial priorities emerge: 1) Coopetition and Network Synergy: Participation in national slow city networks enables small towns to convert competition into collaboration, fostering shared revitalisation programs and socio-economic resilience (Farelnik, 2020; Jaszczak et al., 2024); 2) Value Co-creation: Digital co-creation platforms should be leveraged to engage travellers in destination storytelling, promoting pro-environmental behaviour and emotional connection (Frías-Jamilena et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2025); 3) Resident Engagement: Building resident awareness and ownership of the slow city brand is critical for legitimacy and social licence to operate (Stanowicka et al., 2023). These principles exemplify social conviviality—the collective capacity to co-design tourism futures through empathy, participation, and mutual benefit.

Policy Alignment and Regenerative Governance

Long-term sustainability requires policy coherence between tourism, energy, and land-use agendas. Studies in Poland and Italy show that destinations achieve the most durable outcomes when renewable energy deployment, mobility infrastructure, and local slow city plans are harmonised (Batyk et al., 2022; Wierzbicka, 2022). Conversely, fragmented governance risks "greenwashing" rather than genuine transformation. DMOs and local governments must thus adopt a regenerative governance approach—one that integrates environmental stewardship, digital monitoring, and participatory design as ongoing feedback loops.

Table 5. Strategic and Managerial Framework for Slow Tourism Destinations

Strategic Area	Key Actionable Recommendations	Intended Sustainability Outcome	Core References (APA 7th)
Infrastructure	Integrate e-bike charging stations (EVSE) and GIS path modelling.	Territorial regeneration and flow dispersion.	(Pirolo & Moscarelli, 2025)

Strategic Area	Key Actionable Recommendations	Intended Sustainability Outcome	Core References (APA 7th)
Technology	Use AI and Geographic Visualization for low-carbon rural planning.	Efficiency in trip preparation; low-carbon mobility.	(Jiang et al., 2023)
Marketing	Target "Slomads" with extended-stay (28+ days) incentives and vlogs.	Increased length of stay and economic yield.	(Katz & Savage, 2025)(Wang et al., 2024)
Accessibility	Adopt "Slow, Sensory, and Smart" design for inclusive experiences.	Social inclusivity and enhanced sensory engagement.	(Agapito & Guerreiro, 2023)
Governance	Foster "coopetition" and supralocal revitalization in city networks.	Socio-economic potential optimization.	(Farelnik, 2020; Jaszczak et al., 2024)
Policy	Align renewable energy deployment with slow city masterplans.	Genuine environmental sustainability vs. greenwashing.	(Batyk et al., 2022; Wierzbicka, 2022)
Experience	Enable online co-creation of "slow destination" images.	Pro-environmental behavior and brand loyalty.	(Frías-Jamilena et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2025)

Source: Research data, 2025

While the strategies outlined above provide actionable guidance, implementation barriers persist. These include limited digital capacity in rural areas, potential over-commercialisation of "authentic" narratives, and unequal access to smart infrastructure. To mitigate these risks, DMOs should embed continuous community evaluation mechanisms, ensuring that regeneration remains locally grounded and ethically governed. Ultimately, the managerial implications reaffirm that slow tourism is a governance ecosystem, not a market niche—requiring technological innovation, psychological empathy, and social collaboration to sustain authentic, resilient destinations.

Discussion

The synthesis of 31 peer-reviewed studies demonstrates that slow tourism has evolved from a counter-cultural niche into a structural strategy for post-pandemic tourism resilience. This discussion interprets the findings through three intersecting dimensions—psychological restoration, technological mediation, and governance conviviality—which collectively define the Regenerative Slow Tourism Framework.

The findings confirm a paradigmatic shift from temporal deceleration to psychological reconstruction. Drawing from Cognitive Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1974), slow tourism is now understood as a meaning-making process rather than a temporal behaviour. Travellers interpret destination stimuli—landscapes, heritage, and sensory experiences—as psychological resources for emotional healing, mindfulness, and resistance to consumerism (Xu & Chia, 2025). (Kosykh et al., 2023) extend this notion by revealing how self-expressiveness and eudaimonic fulfilment—especially through long-distance rail travel—contribute to life satisfaction. These experiences align with flow theory and existential authenticity (S. S. C. Shang & Chiu, 2022), reinforcing that slowness is not a rejection of progress but a deliberate cognitive state of balance. Thus, slowness becomes a psychological ethic, facilitating personal growth, reflective consciousness, and ethical travel behaviour. This insight deepens our understanding of post-pandemic well-being tourism by framing it as a restorative practice, not merely a consumption model.

A key theoretical contribution emerging from this review is the dismantling of the traditional binary between technology and mindfulness. Earlier discourses cast technology as antithetical to slowness, but the reviewed evidence positions it as a facilitator of decelerated experiences. The integration of AI-driven landscape visualisation (Jiang et al., 2023), GIS-based e-bike routing (Pirolo & Moscarelli, 2025), and satellite-monitored itineraries (Scandiffio, 2021) reveals how digital infrastructures can sustain mindfulness through adaptive, low-carbon mobility. (Agapito & Guerreiro, 2023) "Slow, Sensory, and Smart" framework further demonstrates that assistive technologies enhance inclusivity and emotional resonance for travellers with diverse needs. These innovations establish the Smart–Slow Nexus—a theoretical bridge connecting technological mediation with psychological restoration. Rather than accelerating consumption, technology redistributes time and cognition, enabling travellers to remain "present" within a digitally mediated yet mindful journey.

The rise of "slomads"—digital nomads engaging in month-plus stays—symbolises a durable restructuring of mobility and belonging (Katz & Savage, 2025). This behavioural archetype blends remote work autonomy with spatial immersion, producing hybrid identities of labour and leisure. The shift toward staycations and proximity tourism (Dissart, 2021) further reflects travellers' search for equilibrium between productivity and

presence. For emerging destinations, particularly Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and peripheral rural regions, this trend represents an opportunity for regenerative localisation. Prolonged stays encourage deeper economic linkages, cultural immersion, and sustainable resource circulation (Kebete, 2021; Walker & Lee, 2021; Dezio, 2021). Thus, slow mobility is not merely behavioural—it becomes an economic and territorial strategy for resilience and degrowth.

The institutional layer reveals both promise and paradox. The Cittàslow movement embodies the governance tension between authenticity and instrumentalism (Amrhein & Hospers, 2025). On one hand, it has catalysed coopetition—collaborative revitalisation across small towns (Farelnik, 2020; Jaszczak et al., 2024)—demonstrating the power of networked governance. On the other hand, misalignment between energy policies and sustainability goals (Batyk et al., 2022; Wierzbicka, 2022) undermines the credibility of degrowth narratives. Moreover, low resident awareness and participation (Stanowicka et al., 2023) expose the need for convivial governance: a participatory system built on empathy, transparency, and co-creation (Munch, 2024; Huang et al., 2025). Thus, the future of slow cities lies not in static certification, but in adaptive governance ecosystems capable of aligning environmental, technological, and social objectives.

Across these dimensions, the findings converge on a redefinition of slowness as a systemic regenerative process. Slow tourism operates simultaneously as: 1) A psychological framework – nurturing mindfulness, flow, and existential meaning; 2) A technological system – employing digital tools to foster inclusivity and low-carbon mobility; 3) A governance practice – embedding conviviality, cooperation, and co-creation. This triadic convergence gives rise to the Regenerative Slow Tourism Framework, which positions slow tourism as both a theory of human flourishing and a blueprint for sustainable territorial regeneration.

Despite its transformative potential, the operationalisation of slow tourism faces several challenges: 1) Digital inequalities in rural destinations limit access to the smart–slow nexus; 2) Commercialisation risks threaten to commodify authenticity and mindfulness narratives; 3) Governance fragmentation weakens alignment between tourism and environmental policies. Addressing these issues requires a reflexive governance approach, integrating continuous community evaluation, digital inclusion policies, and cross-sectoral alignment. Only through such systemic integration can slow tourism evolve from isolated projects into a regenerative model for post-growth societies.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review of 31 high-impact, open-access studies (2020–2025) reveals a paradigmatic transformation in the field of slow tourism. What began as a marginal reaction to mass tourism has now matured into a core resilience strategy within post-pandemic tourism systems. The synthesis demonstrates that slowness has shifted from a physical attribute—defined by reduced mobility and carbon intensity—to a multidimensional construct grounded in psychological restoration, technological mediation, and governance conviviality. The review advances theoretical discourse by introducing the Smart–Slow Nexus, which dismantles the traditional opposition between technology and mindfulness. In this nexus, digital tools such as AI-driven spatial planning, e-mobility systems, and satellite monitoring become enablers of decelerated, inclusive experiences. Furthermore, by integrating Degrowth and Conviviality theory into the Cittàslow framework, this study provides a critical and regenerative perspective that elevates slow tourism from descriptive sustainability narratives to a systemic theory of socio-ecological transformation.

Managerial and Policy Implications

From a managerial standpoint, the findings redefine success for Destination Management Organisations (DMOs). The rise of the "slomad" archetype—digital nomads pursuing long-stay, mindful lifestyles—signals a strategic shift from volume-based marketing to value-based regeneration. Effective destinations will design therapeutic landscapes that balance visitor experience with community well-being through co-created narratives, smart mobility, and inclusive infrastructure. Policy frameworks must evolve accordingly: governments should foster coopetitive governance models, integrate renewable energy strategies with tourism planning, and adopt digital dashboards for real-time monitoring of ecological and social indicators. In doing so, destinations can move from branding "slowness" to governing regeneration—where technological innovation, psychological well-being, and social equity operate as interconnected levers of resilience.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This review is limited by its focus on English-language, open-access Scopus-indexed articles, which may underrepresent non-Western and localised perspectives. Future research should therefore expand its linguistic and regional scope to incorporate Global South contexts, exploring how slow tourism manifests in non-

European, indigenous, or resource-constrained settings. Empirically, longitudinal and mixed-method studies are needed to quantify the long-term economic, psychological, and ecological impacts of slow tourism. Future work should also investigate digital ethics and inclusivity within the Smart–Slow Nexus—examining how technology shapes equity, accessibility, and authenticity. Ultimately, slow tourism in the mid-2020s represents a "regenerative turn" in travel culture: a framework through which destinations can reconcile economic vitality with environmental integrity, provided that governance remains ethically grounded and community-centred.

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