



Exploring the Call of Nature: Push and Pull Factors Shaping Slow Tourism in German National Parks

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Abstract:

This dissertation explores the push and pull factors influencing slow tourism in German national parks, an emerging form of sustainable travel. Focused on intentional and enriching experiences, slow tourism nurtures a deeper appreciation for the natural world and local heritage, providing a meaningful substitute for the fast and often damaging style of mainstream tourism. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 21 participants, this research identifies three primary push factors: disconnection from daily life, mental peace and simplicity, and a desire for sustainable and alternative travel. These factors highlight the deep-seated urges of travelers to seek refuge from current lifestyles, cultivate awareness, and engage in eco-friendly behaviors. Utilizing thematic analysis with the Leximancer software, this study reveals the interplay between push and pull factors in shaping tourists' decisions to adopt slow tourism practices. This research broadens the use of the push-pull model within the niche of slow tourism, offering new perspectives on how intrinsic motivations interact with destination characteristics concerning German National Parks.

The results provide practical guidance for decision-makers and park administrators aiming to harmonize visitor enjoyment with environmental preservation objectives.

Key words: Slow Tourism, Travel Motivation, Push and Pull Theory, National Parks Germany

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Resumo:

Esta dissertação explora os fatores que influenciam uma forma emergente de turismo sustentável designado por turismo de ritmo lento nos parques nacionais da Alemanha. Centrado em experiências conscientes e enriquecedoras, o turismo a um ritmo mais lento promove uma experiência profunda junto da natureza e do património local, constituindo uma alternativa ao turismo mais rápido e frequentemente mais prejudicial. Com base em entrevistas semiestruturadas realizadas a 21 participantes, esta investigação identificou três principais fatores que influenciam este tipo de turismo: (1) distanciamento da vida quotidiana, (2) busca de paz mental e simplicidade, e (3) desejo de viagens sustentáveis e alternativas. Estes fatores evidenciam o desejo profundo dos turistas de encontrar um refúgio face ao estilo de vida atual, através da consciencialização e adoção de comportamentos ambientalmente responsáveis. Através da análise qualitativa com o *software* Leximancer, esta investigação revela a interação entre os fatores *push* e *pull* na tomada de decisão dos turistas para que adotem práticas de turismo de ritmo lento. Esta investigação aprofunda a aplicação do modelo *push-pull* no nicho do turismo de ritmo lento, oferecendo novas perspetivas sobre a forma como as motivações intrínsecas interagem com as características dos destinos, especificamente no contexto dos parques nacionais alemães. Os resultados apresentam orientações práticas para gestores e administradores de parques, ajudando-os a integrar o bem-estar dos turistas com a preservação do meio-ambiente.

Palavras-chave: Turismo de ritmo lento, motivação para viajar, teoria *push-pull*, parques nacionais, Alemanha

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Abbreviations

NP – National Park

BfN – Bundesamt für Naturschutz (engl. federal agency for nature conservation)

AI Disclaimer

This document has been reviewed using AI tools for linguistic refinement and clarity.

1. Introduction

With tourism ranking as one of the fastest expanding economic fields worldwide, it is vital to implement controlled tourism practices to maintain the world's natural and cultural heritage (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) & United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2017). As a significant category of protected areas, National Parks (NPs) are crucial for safeguarding biodiversity, delivering ecosystem services, and are intricately connected to the UN's Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (Bruner et al., 2001; Dudley et al., 2017).

Throughout and following the COVID-19 pandemic, NPs have surged in popularity, regarded as a refuge among various tourism options, and serving to cultivate authentic experiences while reconnecting individuals with nature (Rogowski, 2022; Kruczek et al., 2023).

While this resurgence can bolster local economies, this increase in foot traffic can also present significant challenges, particularly in overtourism (Rajaonson & Tanguay, 2022), which threatens the environmental sustainability, biodiversity, and cultural heritage of these protected areas (Walls, 2022). As visitor numbers rise, the management of NPs faces pressing concerns regarding the preservation of unique ecosystems and the impact of tourism on local communities (McGinlay et al., 2020).

Slow tourism has emerged as a promising alternative in response to these challenges (J. Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Valls et al., 2019). This approach encourages travelers to engage more deeply with their surroundings, emphasizing immersive experiences that foster a greater appreciation for nature and local culture (Caffyn, 2012; Conway & Timms, 2012; J. E. Dickinson et al., 2011; Oh et al., 2016). By promoting slower, more mindful travel, slow tourism has the potential to mitigate the adverse effects of overtourism while supporting sustainable practices (Serdane et al., 2020; Timms & Conway, 2012).

The foundational works of Crompton (1979) and Dann (1977) established the push-pull model in tourism, distinguishing internal motives (push factors) like the desire to escape from external destination attractions (pull factors). Iso-Ahola (1982) built on this by focusing on intrinsic motivations for leisure fulfillment, while Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) expanded on these ideas, viewing tourism motivation as a dynamic, evolving process. Pyo et al. (1989) applied these concepts practically, suggesting destinations should align their marketing efforts with both internal motivations and external appeals. Finally, Yuan and McDonald (1990) highlighted

the cultural differences in push-pull factors across nationalities, enhancing the model's relevance in global tourism marketing.

However, the research on slow tourism especially within the context of German national parks is limited, particularly regarding the push and pull motivations that drive individuals toward this travel style. Furthermore, there is a critical need for actionable insights that NP authorities can implement to promote slow tourism as a means of preserving natural resources and cultural heritage in Germany. Understanding how slow tourism influences visitor behavior is essential for developing effective management strategies (Balaban & Keller, 2024; Kim et al., 2003).

The present research aims to address these gaps by exploring the push and pull factors that drive slow tourism, specifically within German national parks. Therefore, this study's primary objective is to understand the tourist's motivations behind slow tourism in NPs and to evaluate the role of push and pull factors in shaping sustainable tourism behaviors. Leading to the investigation of this central research question:

What are the primary push and pull factors motivating slow tourism in national parks in Germany?

By addressing this question, this research seeks to contribute to a growing body of literature on sustainable tourism and slow travel practices, providing actionable insights for tourism management in German NPs. The study's main objective is to understand the push and pull factors that influence a tourist's decision-making when selecting slow tourism experiences in German NPs. By examining the intrinsic motivations (push factors) and destination-specific appeals (pull factors) that influence slow tourism behaviors in German national parks, this research provides a novel contribution to the literature. The timeliness of this research is underscored by the post-COVID-19 shift in travel preferences, where nature-based, sustainable tourism has gained significant traction.

Therefore, this research adopts a qualitative research methodology to account for the complexity and variety of perspectives of the topic. The use of semi-structured interviews in this study on slow tourism in German NPs allows for greater flexibility and depth in data collecting. This method allows participants to express their motivations and experiences in their own words, providing detailed insights on the push and pull variables that influence their travel decisions.

Furthermore, this dissertation follows an academic research format and will be structured as follows: The literature review to understand the theoretical concept regarding the concept of slow tourism, the current situation of slow tourism in NPs and the introduction to the push and pull framework. The methodology chapter creates the methodological foundation and

justification of this study. This chapter also describes sampling, data collection and analysis procedures. Afterwards, the main findings of the semi-structured interviews are presented, and the results will be discussed. The final chapter summarizes the study's conclusions and contributions, discusses its limitations, and offers suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

This literature review explores slow tourism, an approach rooted in the Slow Food movement that emphasizes sustainable, immersive travel. Unlike mass tourism, slow tourism encourages deeper connections with fewer destinations through prolonged stays, cultural engagement, and eco-friendly practices. NPs are essential in this approach, offering low-impact activities and fostering connections with nature. The review also examines the push and pull factors that motivate travelers toward slow tourism, providing insights into how this approach reshapes travel by promoting sustainability and meaningful interactions with nature and local communities.

2.1 Introduction to Slow Tourism

Origins of Slow Tourism

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a novel approach to evaluating travel and the various forms of tourism has emerged (Fusté-Forné & Michael, 2023) with slow travel and a focus on sustainability at the forefront of popularity (Benjamin et al., 2020).

Slow tourism finds its roots in the broader Slow Food movement, which first emerged in Italy in the late 1980s (Oh et al., 2016). The Slow Food movement, initiated as a reaction to the opening of the first McDonald's in Rome in 1986, advocated for locally sourced food, traditional cooking methods, and a focus on enjoying meals leisurely (Karl et al., 2020). Instead of focusing solely on food education, it promotes a mindset of slowing down to enrich one's life experience (Zielińska-Szczepkowska, 2020). Nowadays, the Slow Food Movement is operating globally as an NGO in 160 countries to ensure that everyone has access to high quality food (Slow Food, 2023). This movement quickly expanded beyond food, influencing various aspects of modern life, including tourism. The general slow movement's primary focus in every aspect is a conscious resistance to the rapid pace of contemporary life, promoting sustainability, mindfulness, and deeper, more meaningful engagement with people, places, and activities (Fullagar et al., 2012). Slow Travel denotes a travel philosophy that prioritizes a leisurely pace, advocating for the use of sustainable transport options like buses, bicycles, or walking, which

collectively contribute to a reduced environmental footprint (Timms & Conway, 2012). This thesis will explore slow tourism, focusing on slow travel as a key aspect of it. Since there are no official definitions for either one of those terms, slow travel will be treated as a part of slow tourism. This approach allows for flexibility and contributes to the ongoing discussion about their meaning and application.

In tourism, slow tourism stands in direct opposition to mass tourism. Mass tourism, often characterized by fast, consumer-oriented travel experiences, prioritizes visiting as many destinations as possible in a short amount of time. This approach can lead to superficial interactions with destinations and their local cultures (Heitmann et al., 2011). Additionally, mass tourism can lead to changes in the environment, mass production and low prices as well as changing how locals live (Valls et al., 2019).

In contrast, slow tourism encourages a more deliberate pace of travel, focusing on longer stays in fewer locations. This allows travelers to engage more deeply with the local culture, environment, and community (Oh et al., 2016). Critical voices like Guiver & McGrath (2016) note that activities such as camping, staying in camper vans, and immersing oneself in the local culture of vacation spots are common and have been practiced by millions annually for a long time. What is it that defines slow tourism then?

Sustainability

Slow tourism is often linked to sustainability and responsible tourism but has no official definition yet (Oh et al., 2016; Serdane et al., 2020). One goal is to minimize the environmental impact of travel by choosing sustainable transportation options such as trains, bicycles, or walking, rather than planes or cars (Karanikola et al., 2018).

Additionally, slow travel promotes staying in eco-friendly accommodations and supporting local businesses, which not only minimizes environmental degradation but also ensures that tourism has a positive impact on the local economy (Clancy, 2018). By promoting extended stays and deeper engagement, slow travel offers a more immersive experience that fosters a better understanding of the destination, as well as a more meaningful connection between the traveler and the host community (Moirá et al., 2017). According to Fullagar et al. (2012), slow tourism has been recognized as a form of "new tourism," which, unlike traditional models, seeks authenticity and sustainability.

Nature and Environment

Another significant aspect of slow travel is its emphasis on nature and the environment. Slow travel often involves visiting natural sites and participating in outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling, or simply spending time in nature. These activities allow travelers to form a deeper connection with their surrounding world, fostering a greater appreciation for environmental conservation (Calzati & De Salvo, 2018). Moreover, by spending more time in fewer places, slow travelers can avoid the negative environmental impacts of rapid, high-volume tourism like litter or noise pollution, which often lead to environmental degradation in popular destinations (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010).

Pace of Traveling

Unlike traditional tourism, which often involves cramming as many destinations as possible into a single trip, slow travel encourages travelers to spend more time in fewer places (Oh et al., 2016). This slower pace allows for greater immersion in the local environment and culture, providing the traveler with a deeper, more enriching experience (Moirá et al., 2017). As Clancy (2018) notes, slow travel transforms the journey into a process of exploration and reflection, allowing travelers to form more meaningful connections with the places they visit.

Slow tourism is also tied to the philosophical notion of mindfulness, where the act of travel becomes an opportunity to slow down, reflect, and appreciate the present moment. This mindful approach contrasts sharply with the fast-moving experiences that often characterize traditional tourism (Farkić et al., 2020). It also promotes a flexible and spontaneous approach to travel, because unlike conventional tourism, which often involves rigid itineraries and tight schedules, slow travelers are encouraged to plan loosely, leaving room for spontaneity and exploration (Conway & Timms, 2012). Minimal planning allows travelers to discover destinations organically, often leading to unexpected and rewarding experiences (Manthiou et al., 2022).

For instance, travelers might choose to extend their stay in a particular location if they find it especially enjoyable, or they might follow recommendations from locals on places to visit or things to do (Savchenko, 2020). This flexible approach aligns with the overall philosophy of slowing down and appreciating the present moment (Yurtseven & Kaya, 2011).

Mindfulness in slow travel encourages travelers to focus on quality over quantity, seeking enriching experiences rather than simply checking off a list of popular tourist destinations (Oh et al., 2016). This principle also aligns with the goal of promoting personal well-being. By traveling at a slower pace, travelers can reduce stress, avoid the exhaustion that often accompanies fast-paced tourism, and return from their trips feeling relaxed (Fullagar et al.,

2012). Klarin et al. (2023) note that the current literature on slow tourism fails to address the relationships between speed, travel time, and distance. Taking a sea cruise as an example, the velocity is quite low and there is less action involved, yet when evaluating the carbon footprint, this travel option does not align with the values of slow tourism. In contrast to a sailing cruise, this option exhibits a more environmentally friendly impact, although it operates at a reduced speed. Klarin et al. (2023) introduce the idea of "relative slowness" by analyzing the varying velocities of different modes of transportation, such as contrasting the speed of a high-speed train with that of an airplane and a car.

Local Cultures and Communities

Slow tourism places a strong emphasis on engaging with local cultures and communities. Unlike mass tourism, which often isolates tourists from the local population through chain hotels and tourist-centric experiences, slow travel encourages staying in locally owned accommodations, eating local foods, and participating in cultural activities such as festivals, markets, and traditional crafts (Savchenko, 2020). The idea is to foster meaningful interactions between travelers and locals, promoting a deeper understanding of the destination's cultural heritage. This engagement benefits not only the traveler, who gains a richer, more authentic experience but also the host community, which can showcase its traditions and practices on its own terms (Oh et al., 2016).

Dickinson et al. (2011) distinguish between hard and soft slow travelers regarding the environmental concern of each traveler and how that impacts their motivation. The local community plays an important role in establishing slow tourism because if locals are not willing to share their traditions tourists can not engage and learn through them (ENI CBC Med Program, 2023). Pecsek (2016) found out that there is a large amount of returning tourists to the slow tourism destination Matyó land (Matyóföld) in Hungary, which is important as they could act as valuable ambassadors and could transport Word-of-Mouth.

In summary, slow travel is an intentional, mindful approach to tourism that emphasizes sustainability, cultural engagement, and personal well-being. Its origins lie in the broader slow movement, which aims to work against the hurried pace of modern life.

2.2 Slow Tourism in National Parks

NPs support the preservation of a park's native wildlife while acting as a major tourist destination for nature lovers worldwide. These parks offer a variety of attractions, including cultural, natural, and tourism-related services (Phau et al., 2013). Yellowstone was the first NP

created by the US congress in 1872. This created a movement that resulted in more than 1.200 NPs or equivalent preserves in over 100 countries (Quick History of the National Park Service (U.S. National Park Service), n.d.).

NPs on one hand conserve natural resources and protect ecosystem integrity. On the other hand they are also facilitating environmental education for visitors (Balmford et al., 2015) and can have a positive effect on them as well (Lemieux et al., 2012; X. Li et al., 2021). Research conducted by Buckley (2020) explores the relationship between visits to NPs and mental well-being, questioning whether these visits enhance mental health or if individuals with better mental health are simply more inclined to visit such parks. The research, based on interviews with the tourists, found that 82% believed park visits positively impacted their happiness. Additionally, 87.5% of respondents reported short-term emotional benefits, 60% experienced medium-term stress recovery, and 20% noted long-term changes in worldview.

The study by Li et al. (2021) stated that visitors to Wuyishan National Park reported improved health and social connections, largely through leisure and physical activities. Key experience enhancers included natural scents, scenic views, pleasant climates, and accessible facilities, with young adults and longer-staying (2-3 days) visitors responding most positively (Li et al., 2021).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic had negative impacts on NPs and resulted in overcrowding, because people suddenly turned towards more recreational activities in their own country. This resulted, for example in the closing of certain pathways because of fear that nature was permanently damaged due to too many visitors (Ferguson et al., 2022). Also, the Black Forest NP in Germany had a visitor high during the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in around 100,000 more visitors which was a plus of 50% compared to 2019 (Baden-Württemberg, 2020). New groups of visitors, including families with teenagers, were increasingly seeking recreation in nature, and even remote, previously quiet places experienced an increase in visitors (Nationalpark Schwarzwald, 2020). The Black Forest gained importance as a place of recreation and a source of health, but this posed challenges for its sensitive ecosystems (Rüde, 2022). Activities such as leaving the designated paths or wild camping put a strain on nature. In order to control the crowds and protect nature, the park relied on measures such as one-way traffic regulations and appeals to visitors to use designated paths (Baden-Württemberg, 2020).

Sustainable tourism in protected areas involves balancing two goals: protecting conservation values and allowing tourists to experience them (Wilson et al., 2009). According to McCool (2009), trade-offs arise due to societal disagreements over the protected area's objectives and a lack of scientific data on cause-and-effect correlations.

Slow tourism could be one solution to promote a more sustainable engagement in NPs. The findings of Battino et al. (2023) on slow tourism in the La Maddalena Archipelago NP in Sardinia emphasize that slow tourism offers a sustainable alternative to traditional high-impact tourism. By promoting low-environmental-impact activities such as walking and canoeing, the park enables visitors to experience the landscape in a non-invasive way. The integration of digital tools, such as GPS tracking and the MyMaps platform, allow tourists to explore the park through mapped routes while minimizing their environmental footprint. Another example closely related to NPs is the study by Titus & Spencer (2015) regarding the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens in South Africa. Visitors experienced relaxation and revitalization by spending extended time in the gardens, as well as appreciating its biodiversity and tranquility. The study highlighted that slow tourism activities, such as leisurely walks and sensory engagement with nature, reduce stress and enhance life quality. Additionally, the gardens' sustainable management practices align with visitors' values, fostering economic benefits through longer stays and increased spending on food.

National Parks in Germany

There are currently 16 NPs in Germany with a total area of 1,050,442 ha. In relation to Germany's terrestrial area, which does not include marine areas, the total area of national parks is 208,238 ha, which corresponds to around 0.6 % of the federal territory (Bundesamt für Naturschutz (BfN), 2023). The map of Germany depicted in Figure 1 serves to provide a comprehensive overview of the current NPs present in the country, aiding in the understanding of the topics addressed in the following text.



Figure 1

National Parks in Germany

Note. Map of Germany with the NPs marked in a green color. Adapted from aBfN, 2022 (Source: <https://www.bfn.de/nationalparke>)

NPs represent a national natural heritage in Germany (BfN, 2023) According to Section 24 (1) BNatSchG, (2009) NPs are large, unique areas primarily undisturbed by human activity. They meet the standards of a nature reserve across most of their land, ensuring natural processes can occur with minimal human influence. These areas are either already in a natural state or have the potential to be restored, allowing nature to thrive as freely and dynamically as possible. To the extent permitted by the purpose of protection, NPs should also serve as a scientific observation of the environment, natural history education and the public's experience of nature. Economic use of natural resources through agriculture, forestry, water management, hunting, or fishing is therefore largely excluded or only possible under strict guidelines from the nature conservation authorities (BNATSchG, 2009, § 24). NP regions are very popular among Germans and demonstrably contribute to the volume of tourism (BfN, 2023).

Every year, around 53 million tourists visit the national parks and around 65 million tourists visit the UNESCO biosphere reserves in Germany. These two categories of areas alone generate around 6 billion euros in gross revenue per year in Germany and make a significant contribution to regional value creation (BfN 2023).

2.3 Push and Pull Factors in Tourism

2.3.1 Push Factors in Slow Tourism

Motivation, according to Gnoth (1997) can be described as the interaction between a person's internal drives (needs or urges) and the external situation in which they find themselves. The concept of motivation involves a process in which internal needs, such as emotional desires or cognitive goals, interact with situational factors, including the opportunities and constraints presented by the environment. This interaction leads individuals to select behaviors aimed at fulfilling their needs or desires. In tourism, motivation drives tourists to choose specific destinations or activities that they believe will satisfy their personal values and needs, whether these are emotionally driven (inner-directed) or cognitively driven (outer-directed) (Gnoth, 1997).

Internal motivations of tourists are push factors, which create the urge to travel. Over time research revealed more about certain push and pull factors. One of the first ones who approached the topic of push factors in tourism was Dann (1977). He explored that anomie and ego-enhancement were some of the intrinsic motivations of travelers. The first group with anomie as a motivation is made up of people who would rather travel to get away from their ordinary lives. Those who travel to broaden their understanding of the world are included in the second group, the ego-enhancers (Dann, 1977).

Crompton (1979) identified nine different motives of which seven were classified as push factors: Escape, self-exploration and evaluation, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, and social interaction. He also clarifies that those motivations should not be seen independently, instead, they operate together (Crompton, 1979). Iso-Aloha (1982) identifies push factors as escape motivations, that drive individuals to leave behind their everyday environments and personal or interpersonal stresses. In contrast, pull factors, or seeking motivations, attract individuals to new destinations with the promise of rewards like relaxation, cultural experiences, or personal growth. Both forces work together, as tourists are motivated both to escape undesirable conditions and to pursue fulfilling experiences in new environments (Iso-Ahola, 1982). Fodness (1994) refines the theory by applying functional theory, categorizing motivations based on psychological needs like ego defense, value

expression, and utility. He breaks down general motivations like escape and ego-enhancement into more specific functions, showing that similar motivations can serve different psychological purposes (e.g., relaxation for reward-maximization or escape for punishment-minimization). Crompton and McKay (1997) analyzed push factors in regards on festival visitors and noted that they represent the psychological wants or aspirations that drive people to attend festivals. These motivations include the need for cultural enrichment, novelty, stress relief, and interactions with others.

Yuan and McDonald (1990) accentuate that motivation to travel and the destination vary for individuals from different countries. One general model that fits all countries is not attainable. Oh et al. (2016) describes slow tourism as a goal-driven activity and developed a special set of slow tourism motivations including relaxation, self-reflection, escape, novelty-seeking, engagement, and discovery. There is an overlap with the existing general travel motivations already mentioned. Furthermore, Oh et al. (2016) emphasize that they are not mutually exclusive to slow tourism, because people do not have a set of motivations for traveling on a slower pace.

Two new push factors social interaction, and engagement were introduced to the discussion by Özdemir and Celebi (2018). Tourists interested in slow tourism seek meaningful social interactions with fellow travelers and locals, unlike the limited connections seen in mass tourism. They also value time with family in more isolated settings. Additionally, tourists engaging in slow tourism are motivated by environmental concerns and recognize the benefits of sustainable travel practices. Compared to mass tourism, slow tourism focuses on minimizing environmental impacts, including pollution, transportation, and traffic (Özdemir & Çelebi, 2018).

Đuranović et al. (2019) found that factors like differences in gender, income, age, and education have an influence on the importance that people give to each of the push factors of slow tourism. For example, women are more motivated by the motive of self-reflection. In contrast, when observing the income consumers with the highest monthly income, they were most interested in relaxation on a slow tourism journey (Đuranović et al., 2019). Božović et al. (2022) examined tourists doing slow tourism in the city of Vojvodina in Serbia to find out more about the motivations of those travelers. Respondents who already live in smaller, more rural areas were less motivated by the factor of relaxation. In contrast, for people with high-paying but stressful jobs it was one of the more important push factors (Božović et al., 2022). Kim et al. (2003) identified four push factors, especially in the context of NPs, which included family togetherness and study, appreciating natural resources and health, escaping from routine, as

well as adventure and building friendships. Said and Maryono (2018) identify the push factors environment or climate relaxation, adventure and personal for visiting NPs.

2.3.2 Pull Factors in Slow Tourism

Pull factors, as opposed to push factors, are associated with the destination's features, attractions, or attributes, such as beaches and water/marine-based resources, mountains and stunning scenery, or historic and cultural resources (Kim et al., 2003). They are the factors influencing when, where, and how people will travel (Mill & Morrison, 1985) and are related to the features, attractions, or attributes of the destination itself (Klenosky, 2002).

Crompton (1979) identified two pull factors (novelty and education) related to a destination's specific qualities or attractions, which draw tourists to select that location because they are aroused by what the destination offers rather than by internal needs. In a later study, Fakeye and Crompton (1991) identified six pull factors social opportunities and attractions, natural and cultural amenities, accommodations and transportation, infrastructure, foods, and friendly people, physical amenities and recreation activities and bars and evening entertainment. The perceived importance of the attribute domains varied among repeaters, first-timers, and non-visitors in their study. In a reworked article, Crompton and Petrick (2024) mention the Expectancy-Value theory, which states that people make decisions based on assessments of how closely their intended requirements and the expected results of a vacation at a destination will align. It is proactive, thoughtful, and anticipating by nature. It makes the assumption that actions are logical, purposeful, and concentrated on choosing a location that will satisfy objectives for healing benefits (Crompton & Petrick, 2024).

Yuan and McDonald (1990) identified four different pull factors for individuals from France, Japan, the UK, and West Germany, which included cost, culture, history, and wilderness. They emphasize that people responsible for destination marketing should use these insights of the study to stress the positive factors and develop programs ranked on the importance for potential travelers and destinations. According to Prayag and Ryan (2011), nationality is a crucial variable to comprehend how different nationalities' cultural characteristics influence visitors' meanings, beliefs, and value systems, which in turn affect how they perceive a destination. A study by Meng and Choi (2016) regarding slow tourism recommends that slow tourism destination marketers should rather, promote authenticity over eco-friendly behavior because local culture and food are more important for the tourist than ecological behavior.

Other pull factors in slow tourism include the attractiveness of a destination's product and its image (Özdemir & Çelebi, 2018). Destination image is generally accepted as one pull factor because it represents the place perceptions (Prayag & Ryan, 2011).

Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020) analyzed the destination image and found out that the affective image has the strongest impact on the destination image, more than the other dimensions (cognitive and conative). This suggests that focusing on emotional associations gives marketers an edge in influencing tourists' behavior, as decisions are more driven by feelings and emotions than beliefs or actions.

In the context of NPs, the pull factors likely depend on the countries and the locations but some important pull factors are mentioned often like natural resources or historical or cultural resources (Kim et al., 2003). The pull factors identified in the study by Kruger and Saayman (2010) regarding two NPs in South Africa include opportunities for escape and relaxation, knowledge seeking (learning about endangered species, animals, and plants), and unique park attributes like wildlife in Kruger and scenic beauty in Tsitsikamma. Nostalgia also plays a role for repeat visitors, while specific activities attract tourists to Kruger, and nature experiences and photography draw visitors to Tsitsikamma. These factors highlight the distinct features of each park that appeal to tourists and influence their travel decisions.

Said and Maryono (2018) see perception as one of the most important pull factors in the context of NPs and visitor satisfaction. Perception is based on the image of a destination that tourists have regarding a tourist site (Lee, 2009). Therefore, the main function of NPs is on one hand to preserve the sustainability of the NPs and on the other hand to satisfy visitor's experiences so that they will return to the park again and suggest it to other people (Said & Maryono, 2018).

In conclusion, the pull factors for NPs are likely to differ according to the country or location of the park. Nevertheless, the resources, activities and natural attractions appeared to be the primary pull factors in general. It is crucial for the promotion and planning of NPs to understand the pull factors that attract tourists from any country. Park managers and marketers must comprehend visitor behavior and preferences and remain informed about emerging trends. This enables the delivery of the most suitable marketing messages to potential visitors (Slabbert & Viviers, 2012).

2.3.3 Interaction of Push and Pull Factors

In the current literature, push and pull factors are commonly seen as factors in the decision-making process on why to go (push) and where to go (pull). The timing in the decision-making process can also vary (Crompton, 1979). Prior research only focused on if and to what degree

push and pull factors were related (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Oh et al., 1995; Pyo et al., 1989; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994) until Klenosky (2002) then approached the push-pull relationship with a means-end approach and found that attributes serve as "means" leading to valued "ends." For example, beaches support socialization and appearance goals, fulfilling desires for self-esteem and enjoyment, while scenic locations offer novelty and learning opportunities, meeting the push for self-improvement. This framework further revealed that destination choice and travel motivation are closely connected rather than distinct (Klenosky, 2002). A study by Kim et al. (2003) regarding Korean NPs found that push factors like family bonding, health, and escape were closely linked to pull factors such as natural resources, facility convenience, and accessibility. Family-oriented visitors valued unique resources, while health-focused visitors prioritized accessibility. Escape-driven visitors moderately valued attractions and convenience, whereas adventure seekers showed weaker connections to park amenities. Demographic variations revealed older visitors valued resources for social connection, and low-income groups prioritized accessible amenities (Kim et al., 2003). Özdemir and Celebi (2018) analyzed slow tourism tourists and concluded that destinations cannot control internal motivations (push factors) but can influence external ones (pull factors). Pull factors should align with tourists' push factors to impact decision-making, covering destination appeal, resources, and reputation. Understanding tourists' motivations is essential to meet their expectations, tailor offerings, and create effective marketing through segmentation (Özdemir & Çelebi, 2018).

3. Methodology

In this chapter, a comprehensive and detailed explanation will be provided regarding the research methodology, the techniques utilized for data collection, as well as the processes involved in the analysis of the collected data.

3.1 Research Methods

In this dissertation, the semi-structured interview was the main research method next to secondary data used for the literature review. Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative technique that blends the ability to explore emerging topics with structured questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and are especially useful to investigate the personal and complex reasons behind travel choices (Picken, 2017).

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allow for a greater understanding of the subjective elements by offering consistency among participants and flexibility (Karatsareas, 2022). With

the flexibility to ask additional questions, rearrange the order of inquiries in line with the interview's flow, and address related themes when appropriate, the interviewer can obtain a deeper insight into answers that could be beneficial for the research focus (Mashuri et al., 2022). Probing serves as a method to gain access to a richer and more nuanced level of information by using verbal prompts that invite participants to clarify, elaborate, illustrate, or explain their earlier answers to questions posed during the interview (Robinson, 2023). Due to the open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews, the interviewees can answer intuitively and express their thoughts, knowledge, and opinions (Malhotra et al., 2017).

Therefore, the study of push and pull factors in German NPs in combination with the subject of slow tourism is especially well-suited for this approach since it enables a thorough investigation of personal motives, experiences, and perceptions.

Utilizing insights from the literature review, a series of questions for interviews were formulated to assist in exploring the research question of this thesis (Appendix A). Once the interviews were finished, the gathered data underwent processing with Leximanzer 5.0, which will be elaborated on in the next section. The program was used to provide an overview of the recurring themes, which facilitated the drawing of conclusions about the push and pull factors of slow tourism within Germany's NPs.

3.2 Data Collection

In the literature, there is no definite number of how many semi-structured interviews are beneficial for the research. Guest et al. (2006) found in their study that twelve interviews were the threshold after there were no new additions to the findings. However, they also recognized that with 18 interviews the consistency and robustness was increasing the reliability (Guest et al., 2006). Another study by Hagaman and Wutich (2017) supports the findings of the previous study in regards of the saturation of the most common themes after 16 interviews. Moreover, regarding the analysis of meta-themes in interviews, they suggest roughly 20-40 interviews (Hagaman & Wutich, 2017). Therefore, the researcher of this thesis conducted 21 interviews to gather sufficient data.

Table 1 shows all participants that were found with a participant code to anonymize their identity, their age, which was between 22 and 58 and their gender. Additionally, there is one column to showcase which German NPs they visited and as a requirement had to at least visit one NP in the past.

Table 1*Overview over Participants Demographics*

Participant Code	Age	Gender	German National Parks visited
#P1	57	Female	Black Forest, Wadden Sea
#P2	24	Male	Black Forest, Wadden Sea
#P3	58	Male	Black Forest
#P4	56	Male	Black Forest, Wadden Sea
#P5	26	Female	Black Forest, Bavarian Forest
#P6	26	Female	Black Forest, Saxony Switzerland, Bavarian Forest
#P7	26	Male	Bavarian Forest, Wadden Sea
#P8	53	Male	Black Forest, Wadden Sea, Harz, Saxony Switzerland, Müritz
#P9	26	Male	Black Forest, Wadden Sea, Hunsrück, Saxony Switzerland, Western Pomerania Lagoon Landscape
#P10	22	Male	Black Forest National Park, Wadden Sea
#P11	57	Female	Black Forest, Wadden Sea, Western Pomerania Lagoon Landscape, Bavarian Forest
#P12	58	Female	Black Forest, Müritz, Berchtesgaden, Bavarian Forest, Western Pomerania Lagoon Landscape National Park
#P13	58	Female	Black Forest, Bavarian Forest, Saxony Switzerland
#P14	33	Female	Black Forest, Bavarian Forest, Berchtesgaden
#P15	27	Female	Black Forest, Wadden Sea
#P16	41	Female	Black Bavarian Forest, Berchtesgaden
#P17	35	Male	Black Forest, Saxony Switzerland, Harz National Park
#P18	30	Female	Black Forest, Harz

#P19	29	Male	Kellerwald-Edersee, Bavarina Forest, Black Forest, Bertesgaden, Wadden Sea
#P20	25	Male	Saxony Switzerland
#P21	29	Female	Kellerwald-Edersee, Western Pomerania Lagoon Area, Black Forest, Wadden Sea

Source: Own elaboration of participants demographics of own research data, 2024

The interviews were conducted in German as the requirement to converse in English was perceived as a potential burden to encourage older interviewees to participate, and it was feared that they may encounter difficulties in accurately recalling and retelling their experiences.

3.3 Data Analysis

A total of 21 interviews with 11 Female and 10 Male interviewees were conducted.

The Interviews were recorded either over Zoom or Microsoft Teams and subsequently transcribed utilizing the services of happyscribe.com, followed by translation from German to English with the assistance of Deepl.com and then checked again for translation mistakes due to possible language issues like dialect or proverbs; two illustrative examples for transcripts are included in the appendix (Appendices B and C).

The following Figure 2 shows a distribution of mentioned NPs visited of the interviewees.

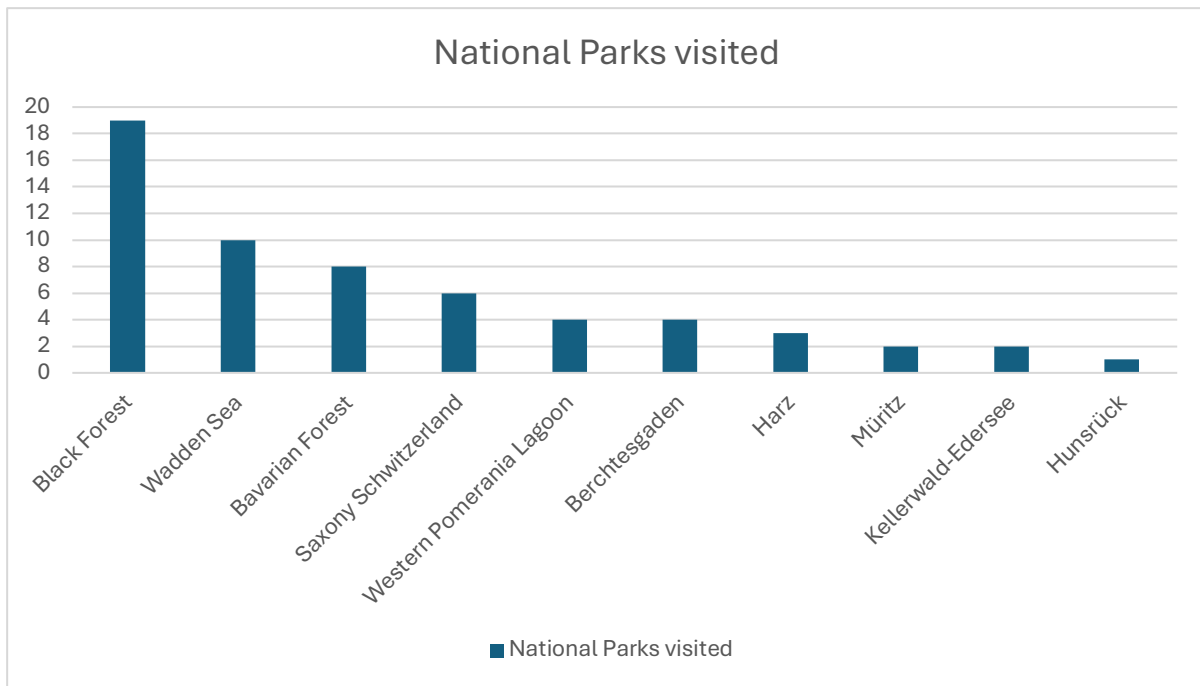


Figure 2

Most visited National Parks by Participants

Source: Own elaboration by interviewees' data

Out of all the NPs, the Black Forest was the most frequented, with 19 individuals indicating they had been there. In the conducted interviews, the Hunsrück National Park was noted for having the least visits, which totaled to only one visit.

Leximancer is a software tool that performs text analysis, focusing on the semantic examination of the conceptual and relational aspects found in natural language, such as qualitative interviews, news pieces, reports, and academic journal publications (Young & Munksgaard, 2018). Leximancer is helping to analyze the text and create a more conceptual structure of the body by creating a topic guide and a concept map (Banfield et al., 2024). The Topic Guide presents an index of all the themes which are contained in the material to show connections between them. The concept map helps to search for specific themes in the source material as well as to create a conceptual structure of a text (Leximancer User Guide, 2021). Themes will be grouped and visually represented using a spectrum of colors that reflect their significance in the analysis. Warm hues, such as red and orange, denote concepts of greater relevance, while cooler shades, like blue and green, indicate concepts of lesser importance. Furthermore, the proximity of the concepts carries significance, as they tend to manifest in closer association within the data as well (Thomas, 2014). Three tags were manually added to the data slow tourism, push, and pull factors. Leximancer's tags are labels that are generated automatically to

help organize and analyze the concept map. They serve as markers that organize related concepts into larger study subjects, offering an overview of which concepts are associated with each. This enables to quickly examine and evaluate how various concepts interact or contribute to specific areas of interest. Tags facilitate the identification of patterns, correlations, and insights by visually connecting concepts to their corresponding tags on the concept map (Tkaczynski et al., 2015).

4. Results

This chapter presents the results of the thematic and conceptual analysis conducted using Leximancer. The study aimed to uncover significant themes and ideas present in the dataset, provides a deeper understanding of the main topics of conversation and how they relate to one another. The concept map in Figure 3 regarding the research of slow tourism in German NPs looks as followed:

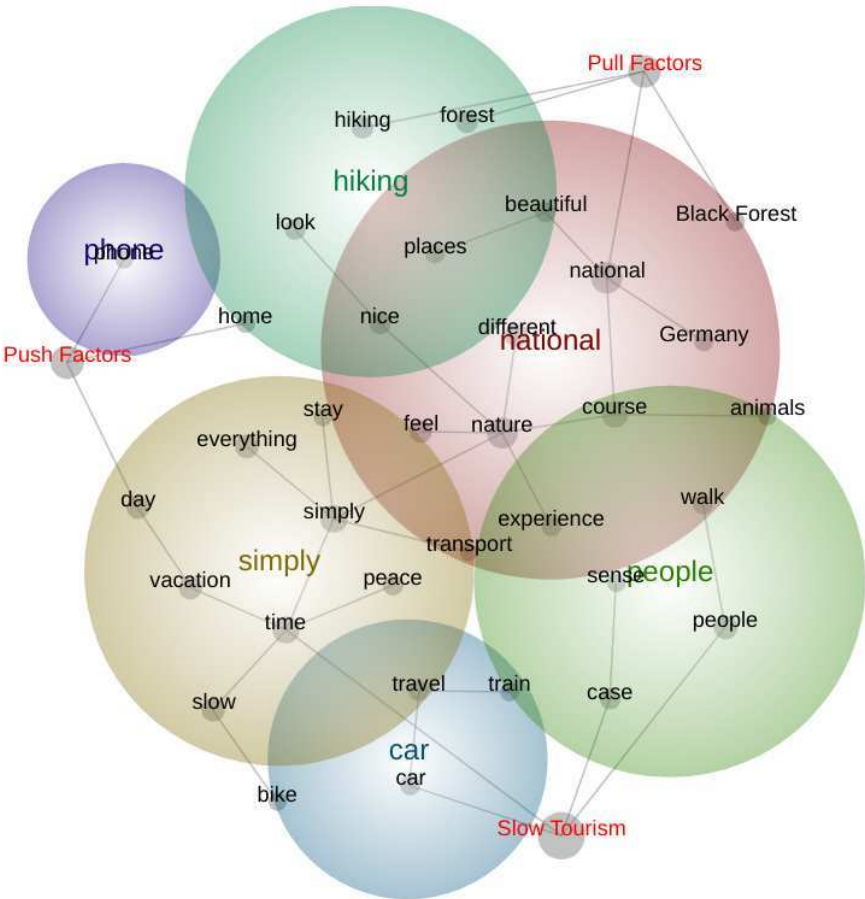


Figure 3
Concept Map of Slow Tourism and Push and Pull Factors
 Source: Leximancer 5.0 Output

There are six major themes that are represented in the concept map. “National” (694 hits), “simply” (607 hits) “people” (320 hits), “hiking” (313 hits), “car” (109 hits) and “phone” (38 hits). The themes seem to be closely related with each other except “phone” with just 38 hits. A hit refers to how many times a theme is repeated in different text blocks (Leximancer User Guide, 2021).

In the following Table 2 the different themes and the corresponding concepts are shown.

Table 2

Themes and Concepts Overview

Theme	Hits	Percentage	Concepts
national	694	33%	Places, beautiful, national Germany course, animals, nature, experience, feel, different, nice, Black Forest, walk, transport
simply	607	29%	stay, simply, everything, transport, peace, time, vacation, day. time, slow, travel
people	320	15%	people, walk, sense, case, experience, animals, experience, course,
hiking	313	15%	forest, beautiful, places, nice, look, home
car	109	5%	travel, train, bike
phone	38	2%	phone
Total	2081	100%	

Source: Own Elaboration of Leximancer Output

The main theme “national” is also sharing the most overlap of concepts with other themes like “people”, “simply” and “hiking”. An overlap between different themes shows the significance of connection those themes share with each other (Smith & Humphreys, 2006).

The red-marked tag labeled “Slow Tourism” is intricately linked to the concepts of “car” and “people,” while the tag “Push Factor” is primarily associated with the theme of “phone” and somewhat connected to the idea of “simply”. In contrast, the tag “Pull Factor” has the strongest association with the themes of “hiking” and “national”.

The smaller concepts within those themes are also connected with each other. In the following table all concepts are presented in order of their count. Hit and count are two crucial metrics in Leximancer used to examine themes and concepts in a dataset. The distribution of a theme or concept throughout the dataset is indicated by the number of text blocks in which it occurs, which is known as a hit. It demonstrates how widespread a certain idea or theme is. A count, on the other hand, counts how many times a concept appears overall, regardless of how many

different text blocks it occurs in. The hit quantifies a concept's overall presence throughout the dataset, whereas the count indicates how frequently it appears (Leximancer User Guide, 2021). In the following Table 3 the overall concepts will be ranked based on their relevance:

Table 3

Concepts Overview

Concept	Count	Relevance (in %)			
national	218	30	beautiful	61	8
nature	198	27	walk	61	8
time	155	21	peace	55	8
course	152	21	travel	54	7
simply	140	19	car	52	7
people	125	17	Black Forest	50	7
slow	111	15	Germany	48	7
everything	100	14	places	45	6
vacation	96	13	experience	40	6
different	93	13	home	39	5
hiking	93	13	train	38	5
day	92	13	phone	38	5
feel	87	12	bike	37	5
forest	86	12	stay	35	5
look	72	10	animals	34	5
case	72	10	sense	32	4
nice	69	10	transport	22	3

Source: Own elaboration of Leximancer Output

The theme of “national” emerges as the most significant, featuring key concepts such as “national”, which appears 218 times and holds a relevance of 30%, alongside “nature” which possesses a relevance of 27%.

5. Discussion

In the following chapter, the results from the qualitative research will thoroughly examine and delve into, to significantly deepen the comprehension and further answer the research question of the various push and pull factors that are linked to the phenomenon of slow tourism within NPs located in Germany.

Slow Tourism in National Parks in Germany

In the context of German NPs, the tag “Slow Tourism” is most closely pictured next to the themes of “car” and “people” (Figure 3).

When asked about their approaches to leisurely travel in Germany, many respondents indicated that they mainly depend on public transportation to explore various NPs, taking advantage of the country's strong infrastructure.

“Erm, yes, and then perhaps somehow prefer to travel there by train or something. Which actually always works quite well in Germany.” - #P6

Nonetheless, various remote locations in Germany still struggle with infrastructure deficiencies and remain poorly linked by bus services. Consequently, a portion of the participants altered their views and opted that they sometimes drive to less accessible locations.

“That's why we don't do it anymore. You don't know. Now let's say we've done it before, we're planning a long-distance hike somewhere in the Black Forest. Then we say that bus X is coming at 4 pm. Bus X doesn't come at 4 pm, it comes at 5:00 pm, great. But it can also mean that the bus doesn't come at all because the driver is ill. And what do we do then? Then we are 20, 25 kilometers away from our car and in the worst case we can order a cab. If we're up there at all, that's the next issue, if we concentrate on the Black Forest, if we even have a network for our cell phone, that's the next issue.”- #P4

Participants continued to look for ways to reduce their reliance on cars, with one individual expressing that arriving at a national park by vehicle seems inappropriate for the natural setting.

“I think I've always paid a lot of attention to the environment and it's sometimes quite difficult for me to go somewhere by car. That's not simply for ecological reasons. I don't really like going into nature by car because it doesn't really feel good for me. I want undisturbed nature, but I go there by car. And that doesn't really make sense to me.” -#P13

The existing literature fails to establish a clear definition of slow tourism in terms of travel speed, leaving uncertainty about the optimal pace for travel. Consequently, the preferred mode of transportation remains undetermined, whether it is by bus or car. What is crucial, however, is maintaining a low carbon footprint or at least fostering a degree of awareness regarding environmental impact (Klarin et al., 2023). This is also what the participants answered mostly.

In the NP itself, people tried to travel by bike or hike which resonates with the concept map and the concepts “bike” and “walk” related to the tag “Slow Tourism”.

Hiking was mentioned as the activity most people associated with slow traveling in NPs, either alone or with friends.

“In national parks another activity No, hiking.” - #P20

“Not directly frequented in the park now. For me, that's actually mostly hiking. I'm not someone who ... I once rented bikes. We rented bikes once when I was actually in Austria with friends. That's nice, you get to see more, but I'm more of a fan of hiking.” - #P7

Replying to further inquiries, several individuals expressed their views on meditation and highlighted the importance of slowing down and practicing mindfulness, frequently incorporating breathing techniques.

“So really try to leave your phone behind and do a few breathing exercises, stop for a moment and realize that you're actually standing in the forest and not just running through it.” - #P5

And if you just stand there and breathe in and out deeply - we also learned breathing techniques like this during our job training, which is also part of our training - you simply calm down. And then you simply notice how you manage to bring your heart rate or pulse down, I think. - #P15

Current research indicates that a more leisurely approach to tourism serves as a means for individuals to take a break from the fast pace of their everyday lives (Cosar & Kozak, 2014).

The concept “people” was also mentioned sometimes in a negative but also in a positive context by the participants. In the negative context overtourism and larger crowds in NPs were mentioned.

“In part, yes. But I also think that in some cases you have to make sure that national parks don't become tourist hotspots. And then you have to search in these national parks again: Where can I really find untouched nature? Yes, especially here in the Black Forest, when you're up there at the Ruhestein National Park Center, there are endless people and coaches and there's also a self-service restaurant and all that sort of thing. And those are the things you don't really want right now.” - #P20

“On the other hand, of course, if everyone only goes to national parks and there are too many of them, then it will backfire at some point. You can't always just say that everything is great and super, but of course you can also become too much at some point.” - #P3

Some individuals recognized that taking their time allowed them to engage more meaningfully with fellow travelers they encountered.

“There are also other people on the hiking trail and I think you're more likely to get in touch with them and talk to them about your experiences. So, that was an exhausting bit or something, so just a bit of small talk and I actually find it really nice that you can somehow connect with people who often have no idea where you can have dinner because they're from the area and somehow have a tip or something.” - #P6

“And the fact that everyone is in the same place means that you are immersed in a culture and can experience this culture together, for example by greeting each other categorically on the mountain while hiking. I think that's just great. For me, that's the kind of culture that comes together within this hiking and recreation destination.” - #P7

“And when we're out and about on our bikes and then take a break somewhere, someone comes along and you immediately strike up a conversation, regardless of the language. We've also spoken to others in English and if we can't understand each other I'm talking xyz with my hands and feet. You don't really have that feeling on a normal vacation. It also feels like people have more time, they take the time to have conversations and look at things.” - #P12

This correlates with the current status of research of Özdemir and Celebi (2018), which states that social interactions with other tourists and locals are important and more desired by slow tourists than tourists interested in mass tourism.

A notable observation regarding participants' perspectives on slow tourism is their intention to engage their senses more deeply to enrich their experiences in nature.

"I actually sometimes do breathing exercises when I'm out and about, sit on a tree trunk somewhere, close my eyes and just listen to the sounds I hear. I always find it very exciting to just engage with different senses from time to time, to just concentrate on listening, to see: "Okay, what do I hear happening here in the forest? To smell: "Hmm, what does it actually smell like here? What does the forest smell like in summer? What does the forest smell like in the fall?" - #P10

Two participants (#P4, #P5) also mentioned the term “forest bathing”, which is the Japanese concept of going for a leisurely trip into nature with the goal of relaxation and recreation. Due to the essential oils in forests, “forest bathing” can be compared to natural aromatherapy (Q. Li, 2010).

The concept of “time” is also directly connected to the tag “Slow Tourism”. Participants mentioned that time can be a challenge when they seek to travel at a slower speed, especially during their hiking activities (#P2, #P14, #P16). They often experienced a sense of urgency, as completing the hike within the allotted time was necessary. As the day came to an end, it consequently marked the end of their natural light source.

The connection of the tag “Slow Tourism” and the concepts “vacation” and “day” will be explained further in the next paragraph because there is also a correlation of those with the tag “Push Factors”.

Push Factors of Slow Tourism in Germany

The first theme closely related to the tag “Push Factors” is “phone” (Figure 2). When asked about whether intentionally setting their phones aside contributed to a slower pace of travel, participants frequently expressed their agreement. Signs like the need to break free from the chaos of routine, and wanting to dedicate more time to oneself and significant others pointed towards a desire for a more relaxed vacation. Because of their hectic daily routines, they make an effort to avoid using their phones when they are outdoors.

"Absolutely, yes. I have it a lot less with me and sometimes leave it in my accommodation during the day, which I don't usually do in everyday life. Also when it comes to electronic devices. I don't have a laptop with me now and I don't watch Netflix in the evenings either, instead I tend to pick up a book." - #P21

"Yes, absolutely. I think that if you just take the time to go out for an hour and maybe even leave your phone at home and just go for a run somewhere nearby and don't even have to drive far away, then you really notice how you suddenly concentrate on how the birds are chirping. Then you hear completely different birds or how the ground sounds under your feet when you walk over it. If you're walking through it and then you're on your cell phone, you pay absolutely no attention to it. It immediately distracts them." #P15

The only time the participants were a little bit conflicted regarding the use of their phones was in regards of using the phone for taking pictures or because they were reliant on it when they needed to look at routes or use GPS apps.

We often need our cell phone because you also use it for routing. We have Komoot on it and the routes are indicated via Komoot because some of the routes, especially in Germany, are very, very poorly signposted. So you do need your cell phone.” - #P12

A study by Wang et al. (2021) highlights that excessive mobile phone use is negatively associated with nature contact. This means people who overuse their phones tend to spend less time in natural environments. Research suggests that encouraging nature contact, such as visiting natural spaces or spending time outdoors, could help mitigate the negative effects of mobile phone overuse on well-being and mindfulness.

Other themes related to the tag “Push Factors” were “hiking” and “simply”. The concept related mostly to the push factor in the theme “hiking” is “home”, which correlates with the interviewees living mostly from the southern region of Germany and having the Black Forest NP really close to their homes as an advantage.

“And especially with our Black Forest National Park. How close it is to us and how easily we can move around in it and really enjoy the most beautiful nature that it has to offer.” - #P11

“Especially in the Black Forest, you have lots of opportunities to go out into the countryside or see waterfalls. And of course, many of the animals are already familiar because you grew up there. But of course it's always nice to get to know your home region.” - #P18

“I'm expanding my radius. I first look at everything in a smaller radius around me, my location, and then expand it all a bit. But it's also important to me to simply explore where I actually live and what the region has to offer. And then sometimes I don't have to travel far to see super beautiful nature and visit old castle ruins. I have all that here too. And that's also a bit of a thought: why am I going away when it's so beautiful at home?” - #P10

The other close theme is “simply”, which is also related to push factors. In this context, it was understood by the participant in the way of being an easy and relaxed way of vacation. Another push factor of slow tourism in NPs is the concept of “day”. The conversation emphasized the value of planning daily tasks in a stress-free way, steering clear of the urge to fit numerous activities into one day.

“I'll say, it was really slow tourism, because we just lived into the day and took time for everything we liked at that moment. And I noticed that I think I sometimes need to do that more often. So I would do it again at any time.” - #P15

This also explains the further correlation with the concept “vacation” which is also related to “time”. This concept is shared with the tag “Slow Tourism”.

Every day feels longer. You really take something with you because you consciously perceive it, like when you're just running through. Often, if you just run through somewhere with your cell phone, you can't even say later what you actually saw or remember. - #P5

This connection supports the argument that slow tourists are especially aware of how many activities are good enough for them so that they are not going to pack too many activities in one day. Especially when traveling to a NP the recreational and relaxing factor is the most important

motivation. This also reflects the study by Bozovic et al. (2022) which claimed that people with stressful jobs or living in bigger cities are more interested in being relaxed after a trip into nature.

This research identified simplicity as a significant motivating factor for both slow tourism and NPs. The “peace” and quiet of the NPs were greatly appreciated by the participants, as they felt that their stress and challenges became more manageable and less overwhelming.

“Personally, of course, I would say that especially when I manage to meditate and really get into it, I actually always find the questions to the problems I have, or the solutions, to be more precise.(...) Because it's just like a kind of safe space for me, just a national park where I feel really comfortable, where I can just think. And this whole atmosphere, this whole vibe in a forest like this, it just helps me along.” - #P10

Time spent in the NP always seems as something wholesome and valuable by the participants, especially when shared with family or friends.

“So it really relaxes me physically, emotionally and mentally. It really has a very clear physical effect for me. And it gives me great satisfaction. So when we've spent a day like that, I always say to my husband: "My God, that's the best way for me to spend a Sunday, for example, or just to spend time moving together and it really brings me a lot of peace. It really brings me inner peace.” - #P11

“And for me, slow tourism also means that you can slow down a bit, that you don't have such a stressful everyday life, but simply find peace and quiet, don't take on so much and then spend a lot of time in nature, simply being outdoors with serenity.” - #P18

Adding to the findings of Kim et al. (2003), the desire for “family togetherness” serves as a crucial push factor in this context.

In summary, the research conducted identified three key push factors out of the data collected in the interviews: “disconnect from daily life”, “mental peace and simplicity” and “desire for alternative travel experience”.

Firstly, we delve deeper into the push factor “disconnection from daily life”. This is due to modern lifestyles, which are dominated by digital connectivity and repetitive routines, and often lead to a desire to unplug and experience a simpler way of living. Concepts like “phone” and “home” highlight the traveler’s inclination to escape the pressures of daily life, seeking a sense of freedom and mental clarity.

Another push factor analyzed from the interviews is “mental peace and simplicity”. Slow tourism appeals to those seeking tranquility, mindfulness, and a break from the hectic pace of urban environments. Terms like “peace,” “simply,” and “vacation” reflect an intrinsic motivation to slow down, appreciate the moment, and prioritize mental well-being.

The last push factor analyzed is “preference for sustainable and alternative travel” because of the growing awareness of the environmental impact of tourism, travelers are motivated to choose slower, more sustainable travel options. Keywords such as “bike”, “train,” and “slow” indicate a preference for eco-friendly modes of transport and a rejection of conventional fast-

paced tourism. This aligns with the desire to reduce carbon footprints while engaging in meaningful and mindful travels to the NPs.

These push factors highlight the broader shift toward a travel philosophy centered on self-care, simplicity, and environmental responsibility especially with NPs. They emphasize the need for a slower, more deliberate approach to tourism that aligns with travelers' aspirations for sustainability, mindfulness, and personal enrichment.

Pull Factors of Slow Tourism in Germany

The themes closest related to the tag “Pull Factors” are “national” and “hiking”. Beginning with the concept “Black Forest,” which was also highlighted by several interviewees as their most frequently visited NP (see Figure 1), is linked to one push factors that attract visitors. The proximity of the natural parks to the homes of the participants makes it a desirable place to visit also for weekend trips.

“Of course, we're also lucky because we live here in the Black Forest. And I've actually already said to my boyfriend that you don't always have to drive far away or fly far away or anything like that. I mean, here in the Black Forest, we could probably go on some amazing hike through the forest or through the park every day for a month and still see something new every day. So from that point of view, I wouldn't necessarily have to travel far away. That would be enough for me. Or rather, what do you mean by enough? It would probably be even more relaxed, because you don't have that long drive somewhere or anything.” - #P5

The concepts “national” and “beautiful” relate to the fact that a lot of participants were aware of the national beauty that exists in Germany and added the want that it should be protected through NPs. A lot of them also expressed interest into exploring other local destinations within Germany that they wish to visit.

“Recreation, connection with nature and perhaps a bit of a return to the roots. Of course, there is also a certain attachment to home, a certain fondness for the homeland, for tradition and, of course, the urge to preserve such places, a certain conservatism for nature.” – #P7

“Yes, definitely. I really want to go to other places and definitely get to know Germany and its nature even better.” - #P18

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly changed how Germans perceive their country and especially the outdoors, prompting them to consider it not only as a suitable destination for recreational activities but also as a promising location for vacations in general (Derks et al., 2020).

“Especially because we've already had such positive experiences. We often travel abroad and I think Germany has so many beautiful things. And Corona in particular has actually shown us how beautiful Germany actually is. It also has its advantages: You speak the language, you might come into contact with more people at the campsite and you don't have to drive for so long.” – #P16

The ideas of “beautiful” and “places” identified by Leximancer also reinforce this notion. Additionally, the respondents pointed out the NPs that were predominantly forested and not located by the sea. Due to the fact that hiking was the most common pursuit they engaged in

concerning slow tourism and were most interested in. Upon further questions regarding their potential interest in exploring additional NPs within Germany, the predominant response was positive. Notably, the concept of slow tourism emerged as the preferred approach for future travel endeavors, particularly concerning NPs.

“I have to be honest, I don't understand people who don't do that. Somehow I can't understand why it's so pleasant to stress yourself out on vacation and always want to experience as much as possible. As I said earlier, I really enjoy simply taking my time and just getting involved in things. So if you walk for 20 minutes through the national park to some viewpoint, then go back as quickly as possible to check out the next viewpoint. After that, you haven't really seen anything and only remember it because you took some photos there.” - #P10

“Yes, definitely. It's the perfect way to get to know national parks and natural areas in particular. That's why I will definitely choose the slow way.” - #P18

The concept “forest” was also mentioned by the participants a lot of times especially when asked about the advantages of NPs in comparison to other nature destinations. The variety and different and vast landscapes were one reason why people opted for a national park.

“So I just feel good when I'm there. If I'm feeling bad or something like that, then I go out, I go into the forest, then I go up the mountain and preferably alone. That's just something, that feeling of having climbed a mountain with my own strength, for example, and then standing up there and seeing the whole small world below from a mountain or something like that, then the problems are simply gone.” - #P13

“So there has to be a bit of variety. In the Black Forest in particular, I think it's nice to have a change between a very dense spruce forest. Then it's more of a deciduous forest again, which is totally extensive, where you can see hundreds of meters through the trees. Then you come to a meadow with a beautiful view. You come to a lake, there are rocks. Yes, it's simply full of variety. And that's definitely something I prefer in a national park, that it's varied in a certain way and offers different possibilities.” - #P2

In summary, the pull factors were “natural beauty and environment”, “cultural and experimental elements” and “proximity and accessibility”.

Taking a closer look at the first determined push factor “natural beauty and environment”, destinations like NPs, such as the Black Forest in Germany, appeal to travelers through their pristine landscapes, rich biodiversity, and opportunities for outdoor activities like hiking or biking. Keywords such as “forest,” “beautiful,” “nature,” and “animals” highlight the allure of scenic environments that provide a sense of connection with nature and an escape from urban surroundings. Another pull factor was “cultural and experiential elements”. German NPs offer opportunities for immersive and culturally enriching experiences. Keywords like “different,” “experience,” and “feel” reflect the importance of peaceful environments, unique cultural elements, and participatory activities (e.g., small signs or guided nature walks) that allow visitors to engage deeply with the location.

Another allocated pull factor is “proximity and accessibility”. Ease of access and familiarity play a key role in attracting travelers. Destinations that are conveniently located within national or domestic boundaries, such as Germany's natural parks, offer a sense of comfort and

simplicity for travelers seeking nearby escapes. Concepts like “places”, “national”, and “Germany” emphasize the importance of proximity and accessibility in shaping destination appeal.

These pull factors underscore the importance of aligning natural, cultural, and logistical elements to attract slow travelers. They highlight how a destination’s inherent qualities and accessibility foster a deeper, more intentional form of tourism.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, the conclusions of the research will be presented shortly to help answer the proposed research question from the introduction. Additionally, the significance of the contributions, both theoretical and practical, is highlighted. Finally, the limitations will be discussed and, afterward, concluded with suggestions for future research.

This study aimed to answer the research question: ***“What are the primary push and pull factors motivating slow tourism in national parks in Germany?”***

To address this, a qualitative approach was adopted, utilizing semi-structured interviews with 21 participants who had prior experiences with slow tourism in German NPs. The methodology allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants’ motivations and experiences, uncovering both push (intrinsic) and pull (extrinsic) factors influencing their travel behaviors. Leximancer software was employed to analyze the interview data, generating a conceptual map that highlighted key themes and relationships within the dataset.

This research provides insights into the factors that drive and limit slow tourism in German national parks, addressing an essential gap in the study of tourism. The findings identified three major push factors: disconnection from daily life, mental peace and simplicity, and a desire for sustainable and alternative travel experiences. These align with the works of Iso-Ahola (1982), who identified escape as a central motivation, and Oh et al. (2016), who described slow tourism as a goal-driven activity focused on relaxation, self-reflection, and engagement. Participants in this study mirrored these intrinsic motivations, frequently emphasizing the need to escape digital distractions and achieve mindfulness in natural settings.

The primary pull factors were identified as natural beauty and biodiversity, cultural and experiential elements, and proximity and accessibility. These findings resonate with Crompton’s (1979) distinction between novelty and education as destination pull factors and Kruger and Saayman’s (2010) emphasis on unique park attributes such as wildlife and scenic

beauty. The diversity and accessibility of Germany's NPs emerged as key attractions, aligning with Kim et al.'s (2003) argument that natural resources and accessibility are pivotal in shaping tourists' destination choices.

Overall, this study supports the notion that slow tourism fosters sustainability by encouraging mindful, low-impact travel behaviors (Serdane et al., 2020; Timms & Conway, 2012). This information not only emphasizes the rising relevance of slow tourism but also illustrates how it corresponds with sustainable travel methods and thoughtful engagement with nature.

By addressing both the intrinsic motivations and destination-specific appeals of travelers, German NPs provide an ideal setting for this emerging form of tourism. This research highlights the promise of slow tourism as a viable approach to fostering sustainability in globally protected regions, paving the way for future research and practical implications.

6.1 Theoretical Contribution

This research extends the literature on push-and-pull motivations in tourism by applying these frameworks to slow tourism within the context of German NPs. As Uysal and Jurowski (1994) noted, the interaction between push and pull factors is central to understanding travel decision-making. This study highlights how internal motivations, such as the desire for peace and simplicity (Iso-Ahola, 1982), interact with destination-specific attributes like scenic beauty and biodiversity (Kim et al., 2003; Crompton, 1979).

Additionally, this research builds on the work of Oh et al. (2016) and Özdemir and Celebi (2018), who emphasized the importance of social interaction, engagement, and environmental consciousness in slow tourism. By focusing specifically on NPs, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how slow tourism motivations align with the sustainable management of protected areas. Furthermore, this research adds to the expanding literature on sustainable tourism by placing slow tourism in the context of wider global objectives, including the protection of the environment of cultural heritage. Additionally, this study advances our knowledge of how slow tourism corresponds with the psychological and emotional desires of modern travelers, providing a theoretical basis for future research aimed at examining its role in encouraging sustainable practices in natural and protected landscapes. This study highlights the relationship between the reasons for travel and the qualities of destinations, offering a comprehensive framework that tourism academics and industry professionals can utilize to formulate sustainable travel approaches that prioritize both guest contentment and ecological sustainability.

6.2 Practical Contribution

From a practical perspective, the findings offer valuable insights for tourism management and destination marketing organizations (DMOs). The study confirms that promoting slow tourism as a sustainable alternative aligns with the goals of NPs to balance conservation with visitor satisfaction (McCool, 2009).

Infrastructure improvements, such as reliable public transport links, are essential to address accessibility issues, as mentioned by various interviewees. Marketing strategies need to highlight the distinctive attractions of German NPs, such as their scenic landscapes, opportunities for cultural interaction, and convenient locations. These elements can enhance the appeal of domestic vacation spots and contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions.

Furthermore, the findings echo Bozovic et al.'s (2022) suggestion that slow tourists prioritize relaxation and cultural authenticity, which should be highlighted in campaigns targeting this market. Tailored marketing strategies that highlight the parks' natural beauty, opportunities for mindfulness, and unique local cultural experiences can further attract visitors seeking sustainable and meaningful travel experiences. Programs like "digital detox areas," organized nature immersion activities, and engaging learning experiences can improve visitor enjoyment by promoting stronger ties to the environment and regional culture. Furthermore, the results highlight the necessity of harmonizing visitor satisfaction with conservation initiatives, positioning this study as a crucial tool for incorporating slow tourism into sustainable park management practices.

6.3 Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The sample size of 21 participants, while sufficient for qualitative analysis, may not capture the full diversity of slow tourists' experiences, echoing the concerns raised by Guest et al. (2006) regarding sample saturation in qualitative research. Furthermore, the focus on domestic travelers limits the generalizability of the findings, as highlighted by Yuan and McDonald (1990), who noted the cultural variability in tourism motivations.

Additionally, the reliance on semi-structured interviews introduces subjectivity, as participants' responses are influenced by their personal contexts. Translation from German to English may have led to some loss of nuance, an issue when working across languages, as well.

6.4 Future Research

Future research could expand the scope of this study by incorporating quantitative methods to validate the qualitative insights presented here. For example, surveys could measure the relative importance of push and pull factors in larger, more diverse samples. Comparative studies across countries or regions could uncover variations in motivations and behaviors, contributing to the global understanding of slow tourism.

Moreover, as Özdemir and Celebi (2018) pointed out, destinations cannot control push factors but can influence pull factors through targeted strategies. Future research could explore how digital tools, such as apps for route planning or virtual nature experiences, can enhance the appeal of slow tourism while maintaining its core principles of sustainability.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

Topic	Source	Open-ended Questions
Introduction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Briefly introduce me and explain the purpose of the interview. - Explain confidentiality, obtain consent to record the interview and assure that responses are confidential.
Warm-Up Questions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could you tell me a bit about your general travel preferences? - What draws you to nature-focused destinations? - Which national parks did you already visit? - What was your slow travel experience?,,,,,,
Understanding and Practicing of Slow Tourism		
Concept and Personal Understanding	(Fullagar et al., 2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What does “slow tourism” mean to you personally?
Reasons for Choosing Slow Tourism:	(Pearce & Lee, 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What motivates you to choose a slower, more mindful approach when planning a trip to a national park?
Practices and Activities:	(Heitmann et al., 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you like to approach your time in a national park during slow tourism trips? (e.g., longer stays, mindful activities like journaling, disconnecting from digital devices, or engaging with local culture)?
Environmental and Social Mindfulness:	(Clancy, 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does practicing slow tourism influence your awareness or connection to the natural environment? - Could you give examples?
Push Factors (Internal Motivations)		
Personal Motivations for Slow Tourism:	(Decrop, 2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What specific benefits do you seek when choosing a slower-paced trip to a national park?
Well-being and Personal Goals:	(Said & Maryono, 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would you say your visits to national parks are part of self-care or wellness practices? Could you explain?
Environmental and Social Values:	(Kim Lian Chan & Baum, 2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do sustainability and environmental responsibility influence your travel choices?

Connection to Nature and Culture:	(Kim et al., 2003)	- Could you describe the connection you feel towards nature after visiting national parks in one word?
Pull Factors (External Attractions)		
Destination-Specific Attractions:	(Kim et al., 2003)	- What specific elements of German national parks are most appealing to you, such as landscapes, biodiversity, or facilities?
Unique Features of German National Parks:	(Kruger & Saayman, 2010)	- Compared to other nature destinations, what makes national parks stand out to you?
Preferences for Activities and Time Spent:		- Could you describe how you like to spend your time during these trips (e.g., hiking, meditating, learning)?
Comparison to Other Destinations:	(Echtner & Ritchie, 2003)	- How do German national parks compare to other outdoor destinations you've visited in terms of slow tourism appeal?
Experiences and Future Perspectives		
Memorable Experiences in German National Parks:	(Huang et al., 2023)	- How did your experience shape your perception of slow tourism?
Challenges or Barriers:	(J. Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010)	- Have you encountered any challenges when practicing slow tourism in national parks, (like accessibility, cost, or time constraints)?
Future Visitation Plans:	(Conway & Timms, 2012)	- Do you see yourself visiting more national parks in Germany for slow tourism? Why or why not? - What aspects of slow tourism would you like to explore more deeply in future visits?
Reflections on Slow Tourism's Impact:	(Fullagar et al., 2012)	- Could you share how slow tourism in these parks has impacted your personal or environmental values?
Closing:		- Thank the participant for their time and insights. - Offer to share a summary of the findings, if they're interested.

Appendix B

Example 1 of an Interview transcript

[00:00:00.000] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Hello and welcome to my interview today for my master's thesis on the topic of slow Tourism in German national parks. The answers you give here will be anonymized later. So you don't have to worry about that. First of all, of course, you have to agree that it's okay for us to record the whole thing here.

[00:00:22.690] - Participant 10

Yes, that's not a problem.

[00:00:24.790] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Could you briefly introduce yourself and perhaps tell us a bit about your travel preferences in general?

[00:00:32.410] - Participant 10

My name is [REDACTED] I'm 22 years old and originally come from [REDACTED] It's near Freiburg, right next to the Black Forest, and I've been living in [REDACTED] for a year now. My travel preferences are actually ... I'm not that much of a southerner, so I don't always have to go to the seaside, but for me it's sometimes enough just to go to the Black Forest or just to go out into nature, or rather, to go out into nature in general, to just relax a bit, to unwind and don't need the hustle and bustle of the city sometimes, but somehow just get out of the city into nature and then it's actually already a vacation for me.

[00:01:20.460] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And what is it about nature destinations that appeals to you?

[00:01:25.190] - Participant 10

Mainly because I find it very interesting to see the flora and fauna in the forest and that everything grows there. On the other hand, I really like the peace and quiet, the relaxed, non-stressful atmosphere that you somehow get here, even in smaller villages, where there is sometimes a lot of hustle and bustle. You don't have that in nature and I sometimes find it very, very relaxing that time is so slowed down.

[00:01:54.660] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And which national parks have you already visited in Germany?

[00:02:02.680] - Participant 10

I've been to a national park in the Black Forest and I've been to the Wadden Sea.

[00:02:09.700] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And now let's move on to the topic of slow tourism, which is also on the agenda today. What does slow tourism mean to you personally?

[00:02:19.730] - Participant 10

For me personally, slow tourism means really taking your time for the things you want to see. So walking through a national park and not taking the beautiful large suspension bridge with you, walking over it once and then jumping back into the car and driving to the next mountain peak, but really just taking your time, walking slowly through nature and letting it all sink in. I think that, above all ... It's just really important to me that I can simply capture the feeling that this entire national park conveys.

[00:02:58.330] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And what motivates you to choose this slow approach when traveling?

[00:03:07.840] - Participant 10

My life here in the city is very hectic at times. There's a lot of hustle and bustle around it, so I really need that peace and quiet, that relaxation, that slowing down on vacation. That's what motivates me to take things very slowly whenever I go on vacation.

[00:03:28.360] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And what practices do you do to slow things down? Do you have any things?

[00:03:37.200] - Participant 10

I actually sometimes do breathing exercises when I'm out and about, sit on a tree trunk somewhere, close my eyes and just listen to the sounds I hear. I always find it very exciting to just engage with different senses from time to time, to just concentrate on listening, to see: "Okay, what do I hear happening here in the forest?" To smell: "Hmm, what does it actually smell like here? What does the forest smell like in summer? What does the forest smell like in the fall?" And then just yes, I would probably rather meditate when I'm doing something, but yes, just doing

different exercises in the forest. And sometimes I also really try to actively walk very slowly and not, as I'm used to here in the city: "I have to get from A to B quickly, but really, when I'm on vacation, to start walking without a destination, just to see where my feet take me.

[00:04:43.280] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And have you noticed that this slow travel has somehow changed your awareness of nature?

[00:04:50.220] - Participant 10

I have the feeling that I perceive nature much, much better than if I were to go through it quickly. I generally do that everywhere, because the more time I take for things, the more I can simply get involved. And I find that particularly important when I'm in nature and then on vacation, when I unfortunately don't have that as standard at the moment and can really enjoy it for a limited time, that I can really get involved, that I really arrive with my whole body, with my mind, just where I am.

[00:05:33.240] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And would you also say that you try to get to know local cultures in some way or do you focus more on nature?

[00:05:44.660] - Participant 10

It depends a bit on how much I need the peace and quiet. There have also been vacations where I really just wanted to switch off. I didn't really get involved much with the local culture, but rather made sure that I was simply out and about for myself, to really slow down and relax. But when I'm not going on vacation from such an intense phase, I also like to take a look at the local cultures. So I'm really just interested in what's there. In the Black Forest in particular, there are lots of really old farms that you can visit and that look really exciting. There are various towns that you can visit. It's just somehow important to me that there's a good balance, that I don't take on too many cultural things, because I perceive the same things there as I do in nature. If I take my time for these things, I find it more interesting and exciting than if I just look at five farms and three small towns in one day.

[00:06:52.420] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Let's move a bit from this slow tourism approach to what I would call your inner processes. What advantages do you hope to gain by going to a national park and taking such a slow approach to discovering it?

[00:07:11.320] - Participant 10

Yes, I just hope, I think, that if I implement it well on vacation, I can take a little bit of it into my everyday life, because I can easily get stressed by my surroundings and that's actually something I want to actively work on, so that I can not only relax on vacation and take things a little easier, but that I can also do it in my everyday life. And that's why it's always very important on vacation to really get back into this slow approach so that afterwards I know: "Okay, this is how it works and I can somehow implement it into my everyday life."

[00:07:56.950] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And would you say that this also has a wellness character for you, this whole slow tourism approach?

[00:08:03.000] - Participant 10

Yes, definitely. Of course, it's not like treating yourself to a massage or anything like that, but I would describe it more as a bit of wellness for the soul. It's just really relaxed and calm. And I really, really enjoy just letting my mind wander a bit. When I'm out and about, I rarely have my cell phone or headphones with me, so I don't really have any distractions around me, but can really just let myself go and focus on this "letting my mind wander".

[00:08:43.690] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Would you also say that your environmental awareness and perhaps also your sustainability awareness play a role in your travel decisions?

[00:08:57.570] - Participant 10

Probably yes. Well, as I said, I'm just not that fond of the south. I don't really like it when it's super warm. That's why I rarely go on vacation in the south. Of course, I could also go north, but somehow I have this approach: "I'm expanding my radius. I first look at everything in a smaller radius around me, my location, and then expand it all a bit. But it's also important to me to simply explore where I actually live and what the region has to offer. And then sometimes I don't have to travel far to see super beautiful nature and visit old castle ruins. I have all that here too. And that's also a bit of a thought: why am I going away when it's so beautiful at home?"

[00:09:52.970] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And which means of transportation do you use most of the time?

[00:10:00.810] - Participant 10

Of course, when you're in national parks, it's difficult to get around by public transport, which is why it's usually the car, although I have to say that I actively inform myself about other ways of getting around outside the car. If there's no other option, I'll go by car, of course. Otherwise, however, I would say bus, which actually works quite well over land. And what I've also done a few times now is to take a bike with me. It's always just a bit of a problem that I can't relax so well when I'm cycling and ride somewhere, then park the bike, go for a walk, slow down and then get back on the bike. I somehow haven't discovered that for myself yet, which is why I would say it's actually more likely to be the car, because you can simply head for the right hiking parking lots and you can stay there longer than 6 or 7 p.m. and still get home. That's kind of the thing

[00:11:15.200] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And when you think back to your last visit to the national park and the nature you saw there, is there somehow a feeling that you can perhaps describe in one word how you felt afterwards?

[00:11:34.780] - Participant 10

I'll have to think about it for a moment, because it's difficult with just one word. Yes, I know. I would say, I think, arrived.

[00:11:52.900] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Can you elaborate a little?

[00:11:55.260] - Participant 10

Yes. The last time I was there, I thought it was just a feeling I had after my first tour, after being out in nature again for the first time in a while, enjoying nature, being completely relaxed on the road, I really had the feeling: "I've arrived at a feel-good place again. And that feeling simply carried through the days that I was there afterwards.

[00:12:29.870] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Very nice. Let's come back a little to the national parks themselves. What are the elements or what makes German national parks particularly attractive to you?

[00:12:47.920] - Participant 10

Germans National Park actually make me ... I've been to the Wadden Sea once in particular. I went there back then because I knew, okay, it's close by, we were there on vacation and then we also went to the Wadden Sea once, me and my family. It was just like: "We'll definitely have a look at that when we're there. In the Black Forest, I think what makes the national parks so attractive is that nature is really left to its own devices, so you don't have the feeling: "Okay, there's a forest growing here that's actually only there so that it can be cut down again at some point, so that it can all be used, in the end, but that you really just let nature run its course a bit. Sure, of course, the animals too. Of course, you always have to keep an eye on things. I understand that too, and I've also looked into it a bit, how it can sometimes end with an animal population if you don't do anything. So of course it's also important to keep an eye on that, just like with plants. There are simply things that spread that you have to restrict somehow.

[00:13:54.540] - Participant 10

But I still have the feeling that nature is simply left as it is. And that's what appeals to me above all. Not walking along a path and then hearing God knows how many chainsaws, tree trunks lying on their sides everywhere, as I'm used to seeing in the forest. I find that very exciting in national parks. And what I also find really cool: I'm always happy when I see any forest dwellers. So when I see a deer, when I see a fawn, when a fox scurries across the path in front of me. And that just happens to me much more often in national parks because I have the feeling that the animals are still really alive and can simply spread out in their natural habitat as they please and are not restricted by us humans or anything like that.

[00:14:46.560] - Silvia Sanati-Far

That actually ties in well with the next question, because that would have been: What makes national parks special compared to other nature destinations? Is there perhaps another point that you say, "Okay, that's special about national parks right now?"

[00:15:09.860] - Participant 10

Yes, the points I've just made about the animals, which I find very, very cool and exciting, and also that nature is simply left alone a little. Do I really find it in national parks ... Well, I have no problem with other nature destinations or anything else. I also like going into the forest when I don't have the opportunity to go to the national park here. But I have to say that I also really like going to the national park because I have the feeling that people come here because they want to be in nature and simply enjoy nature and not just because they're familiar with the normal forest, the normal nature, where there's a bench, there's garbage lying around, people are sometimes

barbecuing, they're out and about with their dogs, which they can't control and can't really call them off. And it's just a bit, yes, of course more used in the end, just more going on. And that's what I particularly enjoy about the national parks, that there really are just large, wide areas that are quiet.

[00:16:31.360] - Participant 10

When you meet people, they are usually like-minded people who are simply out and about here for the same reasons and not just anywhere in nature, but have clearly chosen the national park. They are also just a bit more aware and simply know how to behave in nature. So of course, children can't always ... So children can shout around, everything, but that's difficult in a national park when there are animals out and about and you don't have that either, it's just something that happens in normal forests, which is perfectly okay. But I enjoy the fact that it's not like that in the national park.

[00:17:09.450] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Okay. And you mentioned earlier that you also meditate and hike in the national park? Is there any other activity that you do?

[00:17:24.720] - Participant 10

Yes and no, I don't know if I would call it direct activity. I'm very interested in mushrooms. I find it very, very exciting to simply look for mushrooms, not necessarily to pick them, to cut them off and then take them with me, because I'm not really that familiar with them personally and I'm just very, very careful. And I would never take a mushroom with me if I wasn't 100% sure that I could eat it afterwards, because taking a mushroom with me and throwing it in the bin at home, sorry, but I don't think that's necessary. I'd rather leave it there. But yes, just exploring nature a bit, seeing what's growing here, looking at it and especially the topic of mushrooms. Of course, it's also seasonal. The season is slowly coming to an end now. But somehow it's always just something that I do actively to some extent and where, if it's allowed of course, I like to stay off the beaten track. So of course you have to check where you're going, whether you're allowed to leave the paths at all. If so, then I also like to look for mushrooms.

[00:18:43.270] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Okay. Going back to the topic of slow tourism, what is it that makes German national parks so special compared to other national parks? Especially with regard to slow tourism.

[00:19:00.120] - Participant 10

You mean in comparison to other national parks that are not in Germany?

[00:19:04.690] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Yes, for example.

[00:19:08.110] - Participant 10

I don't actually have that much experience with them because I haven't actually been to that many national parks outside of Germany. But what I like a bit about the national parks in the Black Forest, rather than the other national parks in the Bavarian Forest or the Harz Mountains, is that they're really impressive. It's a really high low-mountain-range and in some places you're really climbing and hiking and not just walking. I think that's actually really nice and that's why I've also sometimes enjoyed hiking in the Alps, because I really enjoy hiking and mountaineering. And it's just something that I think is cool and that I really enjoy doing. I sometimes just call it a bit of an action trail, but for me an action trail is just a trail that isn't wide like a normal road and has a slight incline, a slight decline or goes straight ahead and is just gravel, but these sometimes smaller trails that are just trampled flat, where you have to climb a bit over roots and stones.

[00:20:23.000] - Participant 10

For me, this is simply much, much nicer than being out and about on such big hiking trails. And I've only had very, very good experiences in the Black Forest so far. Okay.

[00:20:32.560] - Silvia Sanati-Far

When you think back to your experiences with slow tourism, how have the experiences you've had recently changed your perception of slow tourism in general?

[00:20:47.660] - Participant 10

I have to be honest, I don't understand people who don't do that. Somehow I can't understand why it's so pleasant to stress yourself out on vacation and always want to experience as much as possible. As I said earlier, I really enjoy simply taking my time and just getting involved in things. So if you walk for 20 minutes through the national park to some viewpoint, then go back as quickly as possible to check out the next viewpoint. After that, you haven't really seen anything and only remember it because you took some photos there. And that's what's most important to me. I mean, I don't often have my cell phone with me anyway. In other words, I rarely take photos, but because I'm traveling so slowly and just want to experience it so intensely and take the

experience with me, I don't need any photos from my vacations because I know exactly what I did and when, what it looked like and I can remember it very well because I took the time to do it.

[00:21:58.470] - Participant 10

That's why I sometimes find vacations in cities like this exhausting, because there's so much on offer. You just have this feeling of: "I have to experience as much as possible, because I'm only here for three days and there are 50 museums, 100 exhibitions and I want to see everything. And in the national park, in nature, you can really, or in nature, just pick out two or three destinations, just do them for two or three days, hike to one destination a day, take your time on the way and do it all in peace and quiet, then a vacation like that is really just really nice. So for me personally, from my personal opinion of course.

[00:22:38.960] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And were there any challenges that you encountered where you would now say, "Okay, I would have liked to have been a bit slower here, done more and it just wasn't possible?"

[00:22:51.860] - Participant 10

Yes, I sometimes notice that at viewpoints in national parks, which are just a bit more touristy. So as soon as there are just more people than actually nobody around me ... Yes, no, but I just mean that you walk to a viewpoint and you don't start at the normal standard hiking parking lot because it's only ten minutes from there to the point anyway and it's also clear that it's going to be super busy. But you still arrive at this viewpoint at some point and then there are just people standing there. People keep coming, people arrive wearing flip-flops because they've just walked there from the parking lot. It's always difficult for me to really get involved, to take the time for the moment, because I somehow ... just from an outside perspective. I would sometimes like to sit down and just meditate. But I think I'd also find it strange if I were the type of person who just wanted to go there for a moment, take a photo, then someone sits there and closes their eyes and breathes actively, just like that. It just stresses me out a bit when there are more people around me, which is why I've noticed that I simply avoid these things.

[00:24:13.450] - Participant 10

Or at times when I'm there, when it's obvious, yes, okay, so really these tourists who just want to take a photo and then leave again, they're already gone. So that's usually either relatively early in the morning, so not four or five, but around 7, 8, 9, there's not that much going on yet. Or in the evening at 5, 6 or 7 pm. Especially in summer, it's quite relaxed, or rather now, a little bit. It gets

dark earlier, but it's actually quite good to go, because you have to say that the viewpoints are really beautiful. And then not taking them with me would be a bit of a shame to let myself be influenced by people who just want to get there quickly. That would also be kind of stupid.

[00:25:04.410] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And could you also imagine visiting other national parks in Germany, especially in this slow tourism way?

[00:25:11.940] - Participant 10

Yes, of course. So I think if I decide to visit a national park ... Well, if I decide to visit the national park again, then I think it would be slow. I don't think I would find it so relaxed to just do it so quickly. I don't know. I now live in Göttingen, as I said earlier, and of course it's not that far from the Harz in the end, which is why I thought about whether I should just go to the Harz for three or four days, for example to hike up the Brocken or something else. But I think I can only imagine it that way. Let's be honest, there aren't that many things that would be worth doing quickly. If I want to do the Harz quickly, then I'll be there for a day and then I'll have seen the most known part and got a picture of it and then I can move on again. But yes, it's kind of a shame, too.

[00:26:21.040] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Is there any aspect of slow tourism that you would perhaps integrate a little more into your trip in the future?

[00:26:36.920] - Participant 10

I need to think about that. I sometimes find it difficult to get involved in this meditation. So, of course, I'm always working a bit on it, trying to get myself in the mood for it. Maybe that's one of the things I'd like to practise a little on Slow Tourism, to really just say: "I'm not available right now. It doesn't bother me if I sit here for two hours and just look, because sometimes I just have this urge inside me: "Yes, okay, can you move on now? Is enough here now? But that's exactly what I don't want. Those are the things I actually want to avoid. And I think it's just because of the hectic life in the city that I'm sometimes just a bit hectic, a bit restless, I can't just sit down somewhere for two hours and do nothing. And that's one of the things I want to work on, just being really clear: "I'm not doing anything today.

[00:28:09.890] - Participant 10

I really don't do anything except hike and enjoy nature. And simply to see that it's okay. So not going home and saying: "But I could have done this today. I could have done this. Because some of these thoughts still come up. When I drive home from a trip or back to my vacation apartment, this thought comes up: "Okay, wait a minute. You could have taken this with you. You wouldn't have seen that now. You won't be able to do that now. It's not bad at all. That's exactly what I want, to take my time for one thing and not look at everything. Nevertheless, I'm not completely free of these thoughts, partly.

[00:28:53.090] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Yes, you can always work on yourself. Perhaps as my final question, how would you say that slow tourism has perhaps changed or impacted your personal and ecological values?

[00:29:12.470] - Participant 10

I have to say that this has played a very, very big role in my environmental awareness. It drives me crazy when I find garbage in the woods when I'm out and about and there's just a small flap from a cereal bar. It's lying on the ground. They probably didn't throw it there on purpose, it just fell out of their pocket. It's very important to me that there's no garbage lying around anywhere and that we leave nature as it is. I usually have a bin bag in my rucksack, which is usually empty. People pay attention to not littering. I think that's very, very good. But still, some of the stuff is left lying around by mistake, so it's a bit like: "Okay, let's just keep the national park clean. Let's just leave it exactly as we found it. And I've really noticed that this has now spilled over into my everyday life here. Simply in urban life too. This whole issue of waste plays a very, very big role for me. I've given a lot of thought to how I can now shop sustainably here, how I can shop without packaging, how I can simply reduce a bit of waste.

[00:30:42.120] - Participant 10

I know that I'm not personally saving the climate by doing this, but it also just feels good to have an awareness of it and just deal with it a little. Personally, of course, I would say that especially when I manage to meditate and really get into it, I actually always find the questions to the problems I have, or the solutions, to be more precise. So I usually find the solutions to all the questions I ask myself at such moments, which somehow gives me a bit of certainty when I'm faced with a difficult decision: "Okay, I don't know what to do at the moment. Where can I go tomorrow? Where can I make time for this? Where can I really think about it in peace? Because it's just like a kind of safe space for me, just a national park where I feel really comfortable, where

I can just think. And this whole atmosphere, this whole vibe in a forest like this, it just helps me along.

[00:31:54.430] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Well, those are very, very nice closing words you've found here. Thank you for your time, your insights and your answers. Yes, I can also send you the master thesis once it's finished, but first of all, thank you very, very much.

[00:32:12.800] - Participant 10

Yes, I would love to. I was very pleased.

Appendix C

Example 2 of an Interview Transcript

[00:00:00.00] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Hello and welcome to our joint interview today for my master's thesis on slow tourism in German national parks. First of all: The answers you give here will be treated confidentially and will be anonymized afterwards. You don't have to worry about that. And once again, we need your permission to record the whole interview here.

[00:00:28.01] - Participant 19

Yes, so first of all, hello, thank you very much for letting me be there, I'd love to. And of course you can record it and use it for your Master's thesis.

[00:00:36.11] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Perfect. Then you could briefly introduce yourself and explain a bit about your general travel preferences.

[00:00:44.15] - Participant 19

So basically, my name is [REDACTED]. I'm from Kassel. Kassel is the second greenest city in Germany in terms of population. That means I grew up very much with the greenery here in Germany anyway, or rather here in my area. That means I spend a lot of time out and about in the surrounding area, whether it's in the forests, the national parks we have and everything in between. And I also try to travel less and less by plane, but more by car to closer destinations, but

I still want to get to know other cultures. This also means traveling across countries by car, for example to Croatia, going to national parks there and hiking a bit in harmony with nature, enjoying the time, etc.

[00:01:40.15] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And what appeals to you about the destinations that lie in nature?

[00:01:46.04] - Participant 19

It's very diverse. It always depends on what stage you're at in life, I think, even if it's just a weekend trip here, for example. We have the one in Kellerwald-Edersee, for example. It's also very well-known around here, the Edersee. I go there, for example, just to switch off from the week. I mean, I live here in the city, I'm also very central and of course there's a lot going on, loud and everything around it. Then the week at work, there's a lot going on, even now. That means that my goal is to switch off when things like that happen, to calm down, to be at peace and in harmony with nature. I actually believe that being in nature is very, very good for people, because that is actually our habitat and not where we live, what we have built up, but I think nature is actually where we become happy and feel good. That's why I think it's always important to take a break from everyday life. And of course, if you then take a little more time to travel somewhere for a week or two weeks, then it's a different intention, also relaxation, but then it's also a bit about getting to know the other cultures better.

[00:03:05.15] - Participant 19

For example, we don't stay in hotels, never actually, hardly ever, but we only stay in Airbnbs, sometimes in Airbnbs where you share with locals or where they also live there. This means that the goal is a bit different, that in addition to relaxation, you also get a bit more into the culture and this natural environment, because every nature is different somewhere due to the weather conditions, etc.

[00:03:34.09] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And which national parks in Germany have you already visited?

[00:03:40.11] - Participant 19

National parks in Germany? Well, I don't know if the Kellerwald is one, but I mean, yes, that's around the corner here. We also have a very large one here ... But I don't know if it's a national park, the Dönsche. The Dönche is also very well known in Germany. It's also very, very diverse in

terms of plants, but also the animals that actually live there. Maybe you've been there before. Then at the Baltic Sea or North Sea, so everything that concerns the Wadden Sea, etc. I've definitely been there. I've definitely been there. Then in the Bavarian Forest, so Chiemsee, that region. I was there for a week and in the end I did nothing but hike every day, but always with the same thing, so not with an overnight stay in the forest, but then always back to the Airbnb or the Berchtesgaden National Park.

[00:04:34.12] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And when we come to the topic of slow tourism, which is also on the agenda today, what does slow tourism mean to you personally?

[00:04:45.04] - Participant 19

For me, slow tourism means something positive first of all, because it means something ... Well, I associate it with being a little more considerate of nature. It means that you don't fly by plane, you take a car, you hitchhike or you take a train, which is also environmentally friendly. Nevertheless, in my opinion, slow tourism is also about being a bit more in tune with nature, getting out more, not going on a typical city trip, but trying to get to know a bit more of the culture, mingling with the locals, not going to the typical places where there are only tourists. For me, that's a bit of slow tourism, but you shouldn't forget that ... I think it's a cool trend that you see more and more on the internet, YouTube, Instagram, if you just think about how many bike vlogs there are - it's crazy - all over the world on bikes, through Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan. It's unbelievable. It's super interesting, I really, really enjoy watching it. It's also very cool. But you shouldn't forget that this slow tourism also means that you're definitely a bit more limited in terms of distance if you take it very seriously and that the actual point of getting to know a bit of culture could be lost as a result, because you're then no longer able to get as far away from Germany, which is all so close to home in Germany, which is a disadvantage that comes with it.

[00:06:27.08] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And what motivates you when you choose to go on a trip to a national park like this, to take a Slow Tourism approach, so to speak?

[00:06:42.00] - Participant 19

Yes, actually the environmental aspect, i.e. why I prefer to travel by car or take the train to get somewhere, is this environmental aspect. Is that what you mean?

[00:06:51.11] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Yes.

[00:06:52.08] - Participant 19

Or, for example, well, then you can't even get to some national parks... You have to either cycle, hike or take the train anyway, but in the end you also have to get there again somehow from the bus stop or train station. I think everything that has to do with national parks is connected and categorizes certain people anyway, because it always goes hand in hand with a kind of slow tourism. You can't really get there any other way. And that's also what you mean.

[00:07:33.02] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Yes, I also mean that you move more slowly on site. What is the motivation behind this?

[00:07:40.12] - Participant 19

The motivation? As I said, a bit to see this habitat, how it is there and then also to relax in a sense kind of. So that's the motivation I mentioned at the beginning, that's why I choose such destinations.

[00:08:00.09] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Yes, you said a lot about this at the beginning. When you think about it, what are some practices that you could use to slow things down even more? Or are there certain things you pay attention to? For example, putting your cell phone away or writing in your diary or something like that?

[00:08:22.06] - Participant 19

It always depends, for example, with this point I mentioned at Lake Edersee, where I was last week with a good friend, we set off in the evening, hiked off and pitched a tent somewhere and made a fire. It's really the case with things like that, where I actively want to relax, that I have my cell phone on flight mode all the time. Just the route, so that I always have the route roughly tracked. I've already used that for that, but I only need GPS for that. And otherwise I had the complete flight mode on all the time. I pay attention to that. Then I actually make sure to enjoy the moment somewhere. In other words, I try to be mindful, to listen to what I can hear in the forest, what animals are there, to sharpen my senses a little more and enjoy the moment more. Meditation also works very well, of course. For example, we meditated, which is also a very nice thing, to be part of nature somewhere, is of course, if it is allowed, if there are fireplaces, to look

somewhere, where is wood, how can I make a fire, then this whole thing around it, which then also arises, this relaxation, but also what is very, very nice is to do sports.

[00:09:47.11] - Participant 19

In addition to the hike, which is already very relaxing and where you become part of nature as a whole, we also did sports in the morning, but in the forest. For example, we did push-ups on the forest floor or wrapped something around a tree, a kind of rope, so that we could then do some pull ups and other things. And that somehow created a certain situation. Plus, falling asleep with nature and waking up with nature is also something completely different, as is being woken up in the morning by birds and the sunrise.

[00:10:34.02] - Silvia Sanati-Far

So that ties in quite well with the next question. Would you say that this somehow also influences you to feel more grounded or that you feel more connected to nature through this slow tourism?

[00:10:49.12] - Participant 19

Definitely, yes. Definitely.

[00:10:53.02] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Can you perhaps give an example? I mean, you've already had a few, can you think of any more?

[00:11:03.11] - Participant 19

Yes, let's put it this way: if we declare tourism to be slow tourism, so to speak, then it's clear that things like city trips, etc., give you zero, zero opportunity to slow down, because it's the same environment, more or less. So this stress, in quotation marks, noise level, everything is similar to what you already have at home and what you go away from. That's why it's definitely very decelerating when you go out into nature and really go where you might, if you think about it, like us, Homo sapiens, there are here 70,000 years, give or take. And how do we live the way we live right now? That's perhaps a few hundred years. And accordingly, I do believe that it has a great influence that if we return to what we did back then, namely living in nature or being in harmony with nature, that this also has an incredible influence on our mind and also on our physical health.

[00:12:12.05] - Silvia Sanati-Far

You mentioned relaxation, that's one thing you're looking for when you go into nature or that goes hand in hand with it. What other benefits do you hope to gain by taking this slow approach to traveling in a national park?

[00:12:31.11] - Participant 19

To the national park, specifically? Well, we said relaxation. Peace and quiet, which is also part of relaxation. Then there are fewer impressions, so less sensory overload in any case, because simply less happens. And in my opinion, everything that happens is already so deeply ingrained in us that we're used to it anyway, such as the sounds of birds or branches making noises. That and another goal, in addition to the points I've just mentioned, is to have fewer people in a way. Studies have shown that it is not very common to have a maximum of between 50 and 50 or 100 people living in a group and otherwise you don't actually see many people. In other words, it's not quite normal, in quotation marks, for us to have so many people around us all the time. In other words, that's another reason why there are far fewer people there, because not so many people have discovered this slow tourism for themselves. And of course, if you can also combine this with locals, i.e. by saying you're going to the Airbnbs that are now near national parks, you can get to know the culture even better or learn something from them.

[00:14:00.15] - Participant 19

I mean, it's a silly example now, but everyone knows the TV series 7 versus Wild, for example. And there, before they are released, they first go to villages where the locals are and learn from the locals how to cope with their environment and what to look out for, etc. And that's something I think is really great. And I think that's a really great thing.

[00:14:25.03] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And would you say that a visit to a national park also has a wellness character for you? Perhaps in the sense of self-care.

[00:14:38.05] - Participant 19

If you define wellness like that ... Well, I personally understand wellness to mean sauna, because I like it very much. Sauna and ice bathing are immediately wellness for me, but wellness is also, as you rightly said, just soothing for the body and for the mind and that's what it is one hundred percent. So yes, it does have a wellness factor. Nevertheless, you have to say, for example, last week when I was at the Edersee, I was completely exhausted when I got there on Saturday because we walked a lot on both days. We walked 26 kilometers, 27 kilometers and of course we

didn't sleep very well. That's why I was completely exhausted, but it still had a wellness character for me.

[00:15:24.02] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Okay. Let's talk a little bit about your environmental awareness and your sustainability mindset. You said earlier that you try to fly less. What else influences your travel decisions in relation to national parks?

[00:15:43.15] - Participant 19

The environmental aspect?

[00:15:45.04] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Yes.

[00:15:46.04] - Participant 19

The journey there, of course. And I'm an absolute fan of what you buy or eat there. You have to eat somehow - you have to pay attention to where it comes from. This aspect is also very important to me. When I'm in a country, I also try to eat locally in some way. And another point is to take care of the environment, which means that I actually want to leave the environment as I found it and don't want to pollute it with garbage or other things that I leave behind. In other words, first of all I try to ensure that it is nature-friendly and then everything else, as I mentioned, then food, but also awareness, environmental awareness in the sense of dirt etc. What you ... Those were actually the four points.

[00:16:49.15] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Would you say you also pick up garbage when you see something?

[00:16:55.12] - Participant 19

That would be a bit too much for me. So that doesn't quite fit in with slow tourism, but as I've already said, if you take it too narrowly, then there's a good chance that you'll neglect far-flung destinations. And of course the cultures are all the more interesting for you because it's something completely different. But now, for example, I was in South Africa with my fiancée this year. We flew there, but of course we paid the CO₂ compensation on top. And to give us a better feeling, we bought a car there, one with very low fuel consumption. And accordingly, what I wanted to say now, we went to a National park. It was actually very interesting at a National Park. It was so

empty, it was really empty and it was beautiful. And we walked along the beach. It was like one beach after another. You always have to climb a bit. Then came the next beach, climb, next beach. And while you were doing this hike, you also saw whales jumping out and everything. So it was fantastic. And when we were on the way back, we started ...

[00:18:07.13] - Participant 19

As I said, there was no one, almost no one in the national park. Really few people and a huge national park. And we started picking up garbage on the beach. In the end, we couldn't carry it any more. We had so much garbage that we ended up throwing away. I think it was two full bags, really big full bags of garbage, that was washed up on the beach from the sea or from the sea, we picked it up and then threw it away. And we don't do that so that I can tell you here, you're the first person I've actually said that to in this interview. That's simply because we take it for granted to do something like that. But I'm also not so extreme that, for example when I'm out here walking, doing sports or something like that, I would not pick up any garbage I see on the ground. You're often ... But the more so in national parks, the more so in places where it's really nature and the countryside, and there's no road like here, then I think you pay a lot of attention or it's very noticeable and that's why you want to clean it up even more.

[00:19:17.07] - Silvia Sanati-Far

When you think back to your last trip into nature, what is one word you could use to describe how you feel after such a visit?

[00:19:34.10] - Participant 19

Grounded.

[00:19:36.09] - Silvia Sanati-Far

In what way?

[00:19:41.03] - Participant 19

Wanting to have a word and then a description to go with it. Of course, the questions you ask here are really great.

[00:20:04.12] - Participant 19

Okay, so grounded because. Actually, if you like, the reasons are similar to what we said earlier. Simply this peace, this relaxation, this wellness factor, being in harmony with nature, which then

leads to you saying after such a trip: "Okay, I'm settled, or "I've calmed down, just got out of all this stress, out of everyday life. And that's what I mean, that's what I mean by grounded. It's also interesting, they say that the best way to ground yourself is to walk barefoot in nature. That means ... And it's also apparently - I haven't read any scientific studies, but apparently they say that standing barefoot in the meadow or in the earth in general is one of the greatest antioxidants and that it's very grounding. But I didn't do that on the hike. I was wearing hiking boots.

[00:21:04.11] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Let's perhaps go back to the national parks a little. What are the elements that you look for when you choose a nature destination, a German national park? Is there anything there that ... For example, the landscape or the facilities on site?

[00:21:24.12] - Participant 19

Do you mean buildings or things made by people?

[00:21:28.11] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Yes, for example a Visiter Center or something like that.

[00:21:33.06] - Participant 19

Yes, well, with large national parks it's helpful that there are somehow ... A) I find it helpful if it's controlled in quotation marks, so if it's perhaps fenced off a bit or if it's ... You know, the problem is with all these ... That many people take advantage of it and don't appreciate the value of it. I don't think it's a bad thing that, for example, national parks, not so much in Germany, but more so abroad, that money is taken for them, i.e. an entrance fee is taken, if it's used to do good and if it's then given back to nature, in whatever sense, then I think that's a good thing and I don't have a problem with it. But with large national parks, it makes sense to have some kind of office where I can find out what is where and what I might need to look out for. In certain national parks, there are places where there are a lot of birds and if you don't have facilities that only allow you to go up to a certain point, then I'm sure there will be enough people who will get as close to the animals as possible, so that you violate their habitat again, so that they retreat, so that they no longer want to be there.

[00:22:48.01] - Participant 19

So I think it's important that national parks are somewhat regulated by organizations that protect nature and animals. I always think that's good when I hear or see something like that. But apart

from that, I'll be honest and say that I'm totally painless when it comes to things like that and just want to see lots of different landscapes ... I don't say that I only like it when there are only hills in the national park or when it's only green or only forest or only beaches. I'm not like that at all, I just like this variety and I like to be surprised every time I go to a national park, whether it's in the Bavarian Forest or wherever.

[00:23:34.07] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And would you say that this facility or this controlled environment is also something that distinguishes a national park, in contrast to other nature destinations?

[00:23:49.10] - Participant 19

Do national parks always have ... Are they always fenced in and stuff like that?

[00:23:53.12] - Silvia Sanati-Far

No, they're not fenced in. Sometimes they have visitor centers where you can still ...

[00:23:58.06] - Participant 19

But not always?

[00:23:59.14] - Silvia Sanati-Far

No, not always. Well, not usually, actually.

[00:24:02.12] - Participant 19

Okay. And what was your question again?

[00:24:06.04] - Silvia Sanati-Far

So the difference between a national park and a normal nature destination. For example, if you think about the forest nearest to you and now the national park, what's the difference for you?

[00:24:29.03] - Participant 19

So if I'm going to be like that, in some national parks you have to pay an entrance fee and then usually the nature is a bit more varied or a bit more exciting, but that's deliberately a national park where they pay a bit of attention to it, precisely for that reason. And at these other destinations, you can do whatever you want. You can walk right through the forest and go anywhere, do anything you want. There's nothing there, no rules, in quotation marks. That's quite a difference.

But I wouldn't say that I like one more than the other. One is perhaps a little more exciting than the other, because you get to see things that you might not necessarily see anywhere else... Some national parks are, but not all, as you said. Some of them are really made especially so that we people can see things that we might not see elsewhere.

[00:25:34.06] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And you said you also hike a lot, you meditate. Are there any other activities that you spend your time doing in the national park?

[00:25:44.06] - Participant 19

When I'm with friends, we like to talk a lot. It's also a kind of therapy, meditation. We talk about all sorts of things. I think that's what hiking is all about. The first two hours are perhaps still active, walking step by step, but after a certain time, an hour, two hours, this step by step is simply absolutely passive. You don't even notice it anymore. And then you get into a certain flow that triggers certain thought processes or you simply talk and suddenly conversations arise that are very interesting, which you might not think about on a daily basis. So I really enjoy doing that. Meditating when you're with friends, talking, hiking, as I said. Of course, sleeping in the forest is also a very good thing, because you're connected to nature in a completely different way, because then you can spend the night and be safe from wherever you come from, from the apartment we live in. That's also always a very big safety aspect and we don't need to be afraid that someone will come into the forest, but the animals are still there somewhere and make noises.

[00:27:05.08] - Participant 19

So that's another one of those ... But coming back to your question: that's actually what I do. Taking breaks and enjoying these views or whatever.

[00:27:24.07] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Okay. If you now perhaps compare German national parks with South Africa or other Croatia, other destinations outside of Germany. What perhaps makes the Germans attractive to you in terms of slow tourism?

[00:27:47.13] - Participant 19

European national parks, such as the Krka National Park in Croatia, are very beautiful, but full of tourists. And that's somehow no longer this slow tourism, it was incredibly full. It was full, full, full of tourists. And I don't think it's like that in Germany either. I don't know of any national park

in Germany that I've been to where I'd say there were lots of people or that it was full of tourists, to be honest. That's why there's definitely a difference. Well, to be fair, there weren't many people in South Africa either, but we weren't there during the high season. And that was probably the reason. Otherwise it would be very crowded. So there is a clear difference, I think.

[00:28:38.13] - Silvia Sanati-Far

If we now come back to the topic of slow tourism, how have your experiences with slow tourism shaped or perhaps changed your perception of the topic?

[00:28:54.14] - Participant 19

Yes, I think it's simply a much fairer and better way to travel, where you pay much more attention to what you're doing. You just travel more consciously somehow. But as I said, I wouldn't want to go without the other types of tourism either. I'm not an absolute fanatic who says: "I only want to do slow tourism now, but it all has its pros and cons. In any case, it has this awareness and I think it's good that we're becoming more and more aware of it, more in tune or paying more attention to what you do, awareness of simply going on vacation. And that leads to all this awareness, now on vacation Slow Tourism etc. In general, it also leads to greater awareness in everyday life. I find this development interesting and exciting.

[00:29:54.08] - Silvia Sanati-Far

When you think back to slow tourism in the German National Park, were there any challenges that you encountered where you said that I would actually be traveling slower now, but unfortunately I can't?

[00:30:15.14] - Participant 19

To be honest, not really.

[00:30:17.08] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Perhaps also in relation to the accessibility of the park or any costs or time problems or something like that.

[00:30:28.08] - Participant 19

No, I think everything is very well organized in Germany, I have to say. All the hiking trails and paths are very, very well signposted and very, very well maintained. They are often walked or have to be walked by the organizations. I once met someone, it was funny, whose job it was to

travel around the world and test hiking trails, see if they were okay and then classify them into which category, moderately difficult, difficult, easy, That was also an interesting person, I did pottery with her, at the VHS once. She had that as her main job, she went hiking, it was great fun, Portugal, everywhere, Europe. In any case, I think it's very, very well organized in Germany. I've never had any problems getting to the parking facilities either ... No, zero. The only thing I sometimes think to myself is ... Or back then, when I didn't have a tent, but slept outside. Also with regard to fireplaces, there could be a few more huts in places where you have regulated fireplaces, because otherwise you make your own fire or you've seen that people have made fires before in places where care was taken that nothing happened, but they're still not official fireplaces.

[00:31:53.02] - Participant 19

In other words, if you know that people do it, then I think you should offer it a bit more often. I've noticed that sometimes.

[00:32:01.15] - Silvia Sanati-Far

That would have been the next question, how those responsible could improve this, but you have already made a suggestion. Could you now also imagine touring other national parks in Germany with the slow approach?

[00:32:22.00] - Participant 19

I think that's the only way, isn't it?

[00:32:24.04] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Yes, that's a good answer.

[00:32:26.03] - Participant 19

I think something like that is always associated with a certain slow tourism.

[00:32:36.15] - Silvia Sanati-Far

And are there any aspects? You said earlier that walking barefoot can somehow ground you or would that be something where you say, "Okay, maybe I would try that on my next trip or other aspects of slow tourism that you would integrate?"

[00:32:54.04] - Participant 19

Yes, something like barefoot, for example. I've done that before or for example What's also interesting is ... I've forgotten the name now. There was a man who did that back then. I've forgotten, if you go into the water, into knee-deep water, barefoot. It also has a very positive effect on people themselves. Or if it's a national park where you're allowed in the water, are you allowed in the water in national parks?

[00:33:23.09] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Yes, of course.

[00:33:24.14] - Participant 19

Yes, to some extent. If you're allowed to, then you can go into the water, even if it's cold. I think it's always very relaxing and very meditative. I don't know what else I would want to try out, because I don't think you can try out that much in a national park, apart from hiking, sleeping, doing sport and going barefoot in the water. But I think that's exactly the great thing. You don't suddenly find an amusement park in the forest, but that's exactly the great thing. You can finally reduce your sensory overload a little.

[00:34:11.02] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Very good. And you also mentioned that certain aspects of Slow Tourism have also been integrated into your everyday life or that you have taken them with you. Are there any other aspects of slow tourism that have had an impact on your personal and ecological values?

[00:34:34.01] - Participant 19

General environmental awareness, as I said. So making sure that you buy locally, for example, including fruit, or paying attention to where you buy things from. Then in general, I'm an absolute animal lover. I don't know, the last time I've ever killed one animal, regardless of its size. Even if it's an ant or there are spiders in our apartment or whatever. I never kill them. That means I always make sure they get out. That's a certain environmental awareness. We are no better than anything else in the world. We're just living beings like everyone else and have exactly the same right to exist as everyone else. And I think you learn that somewhere along the line, the more you engage with the environment and the more you appreciate it, which in turn goes in the same direction as slow tourism, the more you have the opportunity to integrate it into your everyday life and deal with it more consciously and use it more consciously, partly as an outlet. Yes, otherwise it would be a lie if I said that I now cycle everywhere.

[00:35:50.15] - Participant 19

Well, we used to cycle a lot in summer, but in winter I don't feel like it either, to be honest. That means I still drive to my destination by car. Of course, not if it's 100 meters away, but that would be a lie. It hasn't necessarily changed my driving preferences.

[00:36:10.07] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Okay, perfect. Those are good closing words now. Thank you in any case for your time and the insights.

[00:36:14.13] - Silvia Sanati-Far

With pleasure.

[00:36:17.01] - Silvia Sanati-Far

Of course you can also read about the Masterthesis at the end if you like.

[00:36:21.12] - Participant 19

Yes, with pleasure.