

**INVESTIGATING SLOW TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED  
AREAS IN THE RANGE OF RHODOPE MOUNTAINS IN BULGARIA**

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## Foreword

*This master thesis marks the end of our unforgettable journey at the University of Stavanger. Although the idea of the topic was initially developed and proposed by one of us, we both worked very hard and have equal contribution to the research.*

*Slow tourism is a topic that raises many questions when compared to the conventional tourism. Our study is searching for the answers to two interconnected questions. Respectively, those are: to what extent is slow tourism a conventional tourism, and to what extent is conventional tourism a slow tourism.*

*In our search for answers, we were so blessed to meet many incredible people who all contributed to the study. First, we would like to express our gratitude to associate professor Leif Selstad for his support from the very beginning until the completion of this master thesis. Thank you for always being there motivating and helping us patiently with advice, ideas and problem-solving. Secondly, we would like to thank all participants in the research including interviews and questionnaires. A very special Thank You to Mrs. Zdenka Kapchikova who connected us with all the managers we interviewed. We would like to thank also our families for their support and patience in this intensive semester. Finally, a personal note from both of us.*

*I, Dobrinka, devote this master thesis to my husband Yavor and our little baby Dariya who was born during the time of intensive studies in Stavanger. They are the reason for my persistence to keep working hard and never giving up!*

*I, Maria, thank my beloved one for giving me energy and support during the process, let our love grow even as we learn from each other. For a future full of surprises, a present to enjoy and a past to remember. The journey continues as tourism professional; always thinking critically*

## **Abstract**

Slow tourism is a new movement that is competing in the tourism industry. Slow tourism differs from slow travel because it embraces all aspects of tourism, including accommodation, activities, transportation, and food. The main characteristics are to experience, to self-realize and to take care of the environment. Slow tourism principles are based on the respect for the local culture, the environment, and to initiate social interaction between travelers and locals. The aim of this research is to investigate if conventional tourism uses slow tourism activities as part of their offering, and therefore, aspects of slow tourism are implemented to develop conventional tourism. The empirical study was developed in the Rhodope Mountains area in Bulgaria and consists of qualitative and quantitative research methods. In the course of this research, a total of eight tourism professionals and two tourists were interviewed while 179 tourists responded to the questionnaires. The results show that hoteliers incorporate slow tourism activities such as slow food, local culture, and experiences, as part of their offering, with the economic and marketing aim of attracting more tourists to their premises, but they have no intention of changing to slow tourism establishments. Along these lines, conventional hotel establishments are more willing to apply slow tourism activities in the summer because it attracts more movement in the area during the low season, and tourists are willing to cooperate with local slow tourism establishments. Guesthouses, local restaurants, and local tour operators are already involved in the slow tourism philosophy and are part of it.

*Keywords:* Slow tourism, authentic experience, sustainability, self-realization, slow travel, Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria.

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## 1. Introduction

This exploratory research will investigate how perceptions of slow tourism contribute to the development of conventional tourism. The benefits of slow tourism are well known to the academic literature. They include authentic experiences, self-realization, and sustainable development (Dickinson, Lumsdon, & Robbins, 2011; Meng & Choi, 2015; Oh, Assaf, & Baloglu, 2016). Slow tourism was born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as an alternative to the fast-paced life of our technological society (Bac Dorin, 2014; Conway & Timms, 2012). Slow movements convey the benefits of enjoyment versus consumerism (Pecsek, 2016). The experience becomes the most critical concern and includes enjoying authenticity, culture, food, and interaction between tourists and locals (Chung, Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2017; Meng & Choi, 2015). Slowness requires more time in the destination, and therefore, gives us the time to reconnect with oneself (Oh et al., 2016). Slow tourism due to its characteristics, becomes a greener option to the conventional tourism and considers sustainable development in the region as one of the objectives to be achieved (Dickinson et al., 2011; Fraga & Botelho, 2016; Gössling & Peeters, 2015; Guiver & McGrath, 2016; Meng & Choi, 2015). Local production, slow economic growth, and ecology are the benefits of participating in slow tourism as a town/city (Conway & Timms, 2012; Fuentes-Moraleda, Muñoz-Mazón, & Vierna Fernández, 2016; Guiver & McGrath, 2016).

The three main concerns or benefits of slow tourism – authentic experiences, self-realization, and sustainable development will be explored in relation to a question whether conventional tourism uses them as part of their offering, and whether perceptions of slow tourism can be implemented to develop conventional tourism. The empirical research on which this study is based has been conducted in the Rhodope Mountains area in Bulgaria and consists of ten interviews, and 179 questionnaires. The research has significance because it will demonstrate how slow tourism is not only a current trend but can also be used to modify

conventional tourism to create more attractive offers, and as an alternative to complement short-term tourism occupancy to a year-round occupancy. This may contribute to better economic gains in small regions, and empower them in governmental decision makings (Conway & Timms, 2012).

It is important to specify that the following research is about slow tourism, not slow travel. Slow tourism is a trend that emphasizes qualitative experiences, self-realization, and sustainability at the destination, staying longer periods, with the objective of getting to know the culture, the locals and the food of the region at the traveler's time pace. Whereas slow travel is the slow mode of transportation used to a destination and the journey is converted into an experience itself. Slow tourism encloses all the activities done at the destination and does not include the transportation to and from the destination (Caffyn, 2012; Conway & Timms, 2012).

The investigated research question is *“How can perceptions of “slow tourism” contribute to a development from today's conventional tourism? A case study of selected areas in the range of the Rhodope Mountains in Bulgaria”*. The aim of the study is to discover if conventional tourism uses premises of slow tourism to attract more tourists. The case study approach is chosen to develop further the marketing and the product development from a slow tourism perspective, and get to know the tourists' propensity, with the intention to investigate the possibilities for slow tourism in conventional tourism settings (Fullagar, Markwell, & Wilson, 2012, p. 232). The study has eight main objectives to be resolved in the empirical area of the research. Those are:

- Objective 1 (Obj1): Is there any significant number of conventional tourists using slow tourism type offers?
- Objective 2 (Obj2): Do conventional tourists consider themselves as “slow tourists” when practicing slow tourism activities? Do conventional tourists know what “Slow tourism” is?

- Objective 3 (Obj3): Do tourism professionals consider themselves as “slow tourism” establishers?
- Objective 4 (Obj4): Is there any significant perception of slow tourism seen as an improvement of conventional tourism?
- Objective 5 (Obj5): Is there any significant perception of slow tourism seen as an improvement of environmental sustainability?
- Objective 6 (Obj6): Is there any significant perception of slow tourism seen as an improvement of experience authenticity?
- Objective 7 (Obj7): Is there any significant perception of slow tourism seen as an improvement of consuming locality?
- Objective 8 (Obj8): Is there any significant perception of slow tourism seen as an improvement of self-realization?

The structure of the research will contain six main parts. The first part includes a background to the research, which will lead the reader towards the beginning of the literature review's central theme, slow tourism. The second part of the literature review introduces the slow tourism trend. This provides information about what is and what is not slow tourism, the slow tourism challenges and the future, an introduction of the slow tourism movement in Bulgaria, and the current situation of tourism in the Rhodope Mountains area. The theoretical part of the exploration will lead towards the methodology, part three.

The methodology is divided into seven subcategories, starting with the study design, where the design of the embedded single-case study will be described. Next follows the sample selection, an explanation of why nonprobability sampling was chosen. The data collection is the description of the researchers' approach and how the information was collected. The measurements and assessments of the interviews and questionnaires will be explained. The data analysis is where the context and cross text will be defended as qualitative method analysis, and

frequencies, and cross tabulation that will defend the quantitative method as an analysis. The data collection and sample is the section where the steps to collect the data and the representative sample obtained will be exposed. Also, the limitations of the method used will be revealed.

Part four, will include the results from both qualitative and quantitative methods, where the main will be described. Part five will provide a discussion where literature, objectives, and results are discussed together.

Part six will include the main conclusion of the research, specifying the implication of future research, the managerial recommendations, and the limitations of this study. In addition, there will be a list of references for any further consultation and an appendix including extra information that could not be included in the main text.

### **1.1. Background to Research**

The slow life or slow movement was born during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as an alternative to the fast-paced life of the modern society. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is known for its technological advancement, its prepared foods and the establishment of the middle-class workers in the United States of America and Europe (Bac Dorin, 2014; Conway & Timms, 2012). As a response to the acceleration of life which occurred in our society and the health problems caused by it, different social movements urged for the slow life as an opposition to the current life in Italy between 1980's and 1990's (Bac Dorin, 2014; Fraga & Botelho, 2016; Oh et al., 2016). The pioneers of the slow movement were the slow cities, or Cittaslow, and the slow food. Both campaigns were born as an alternative — offering a more sustainable and healthy life with local governance (Bac Dorin, 2014; Chung et al., 2017; Oh et al., 2016). The philosophy of Slowness, as called by Krippendorf (Bac Dorin, 2014), was therefore applied to other social movements like slow activities, slow life and slow tourism (Chung et al., 2017; Meng & Choi, 2015).

Carlo Petrini is considered as the father of the slow movement, thanks to the leadership taken during the marches against the opening of a McDonald's restaurant in Rome in 1985 (Bac Dorin, 2014; Pecsek, 2016). Petrini started the slow food movement with the aim to offer a sustainable, local and healthy option that allows the consumer to enjoy and renew the slow enjoyment as a right (Slow Food Foundation, 2018a). In 1989, the slow food manifesto was written and established as an international association that grew to more than 100.000 members from 160 countries (Bac Dorin, 2014; Slow Food Foundation, 2018a). The association spirit and aims were disseminated around the world and became the inciter of the slow city movement (Lee, Packer, & Scott, 2015).

Cittàslow or slow city movement became the protagonist a decade later in 1999 in Greve, Italy. Paolo Saturnini, mayor of the city, decided to include the features of slow food philosophy into all the city projects. The aim was to find the harmony between the city and the environment and to offer preferences to fairness, locality, traditional, organic and authentic offers (Bac Dorin, 2014; Chung et al., 2017; Meng & Choi, 2015). The movement allowed locals to enjoy the heritage and culture of the city without disturbance and time pressure (Pecsek, 2016). The benefits of living in a slow city attracted tourists, and as the number of cities and travelers increased during the years, to be or visit a slow city, the slow life social movement and philosophy merged together with the slow tourism (Dickinson et al., 2011; Fuentes-Moraleda et al., 2016; Oh et al., 2016; Pecsek, 2016).

Slow tourism offers an alternative to conventional tourism, just like other slow movements (Conway & Timms, 2012). The slow life passed from being related to production and consumerism of products to activities, reaching fields like culture, economics, religion, fashion, urbanism, and tourism (Bac Dorin, 2014; Fraga & Botelho, 2016). The slowness has advanced in our society from a small group of citizens to an attractive and growing social trend (Meng & Choi, 2015). In Scandinavia, the “hygge” trend (coziness), born in Denmark, is a good

example of the popularity of similar social trends of slow life (Wiking, 2016, p. 85). It can be argued that both emerging slow movements, slow tourism and hygge, are interrelated with the main aim to enjoy life, as Wiking states: “It is about the process, not the end product”. He adds: *“the longer a dish takes to cook, the more hyggelig it is”* (Wiking, 2016, pp. 84,85).

The impact of slowness in tourism and travel will be explained in detail in the next section, where concepts like slow tourism and travel will be exposed, clarified, and cataloged as a different and more sustainable movement than mass tourism.

## 2. Literature Review

Slow tourism and slow travel concepts and definitions are confused in the academic articles and literature (Fuentes-Moraleda et al., 2016; Fullagar et al., 2012, pp. 1-2); therefore, the terms will be explained and differentiated. Subsequently, the slow tourism term will receive attention due to its importance in the research. Related topics of individualities, the tourist behavior, the differences between conventional tourism and the slow tourism, challenges for the near future and how to market it will be the main points of discussion. The chapter will end with the development of slow tourism in Bulgaria, especially from the area studied, the Rhodope Mountains. All in all, this should provide a comprehensive knowledge applicable to the empirical study and the evaluation of results.

### 2.1. Slow tourism

Slow life social movements, applied to leisure and recreation. It created the slow tourism, which is an alternative known for its social, environmental and psychological benefits (Kazandzhieva & Lukanova, 2016; Meng & Choi, 2015). Slow tourism combines the essential elements of slow food, slow cities and slow life (Kazandzhieva & Lukanova, 2016) and opposes itself to hypermodernity, or the accelerating pace of industrialized societies (Varley & Semple, 2015). Slow tourism is based on the principles of respect for the local culture and environment and the interaction between locals and travelers, and between travelers. The aim is to slow down the pace of traveling and inspire the travelers to choose slow activities to increase self-enjoyment and to facilitate greener tourism (Caffyn, 2012; Fuentes-Moraleda et al., 2016).

Caffyn (2012) goes further and explains that slow tourism has five different elements that once interconnected with each other to create the slow tourism experience. Those are *Place*, which includes locality, uniqueness, landscape, heritage, environment, and production. *People*, which includes the sense of community, culture, local entrepreneurs, cuisine, hospitality, and

authenticity. *Time*, related to pace, relaxation, unhurried life and in-depth self-realization. *Travel*, which is related to distance, speed, mode, and low carbon expenditure, and the *Personal state*, including well-being, pleasure, recreation, conviviality, and constant learning. Based on the dimensions, one could argue that slow tourism premises are quality over quantity (Conway & Timms, 2012; Lin, 2016). Following the five dimensions described by Caffyn (2012), the research will discuss each element in consecutive order according to the literature found; believing that the dimensions explained includes all aspects discussed in the latest studies in slow tourism.

On the *place* dimension, one of the most discussed terms is the economic benefit, linked to locality and production for the region including local employability and some degree of independence from big tour operators. The locality increases community identity, control of food, agriculture and work prices and local growth (Conway & Timms, 2012; Guiver & McGrath, 2016; Lee et al., 2015). As Conway and Timms (2012) suggests, slow tourism applies the Campbell 3E's of sustainable development – economy, equity, and environment. In addition, it promotes green sustainability, socio-economic development, and equity through slow growth. Slow growth, in economic terms, refers to the choice of a region to base their economy on slow life development and regional qualitative efficiency, including the development of local resources and improvement of the region's production, consumption, and qualitative returns. The antagonist of slow growth is the hard growth which bases the region's economy on a fast life development, increasing size and scale with production and consumption (Conway & Timms, 2012). On the other hand, Hall (Bac Dorin, 2014) writes that slow tourism is a macroeconomic concept of tourism instead of a form of tourism itself. Whether it is or not a form of tourism, the local economic power that slow tourism offers has been studied and affirmed in several studies (Fuentes-Moraleda et al., 2016; Kazandzhieva & Lukanova, 2016;



Lin, 2016; Pecsek, 2016; Tregear, Arfini, Belletti, & Marescotti, 2007; Varley & Semple, 2015).

Another critical element found in the literature inside the *place* dimension is the environmental concern, linked with the environment, heritage and landscape. Slow tourism is linked with sustainability and ecotourism (Bac Dorin, 2014; Meng & Choi, 2015). Tourists with high concern about the protection of nature, heritage, and environment will be inclined to choose slow tourism due to its sustainability and will make their choices and actions to be more reflected (Guiver & McGrath, 2016; Oh et al., 2016). Even though environmental concern is discussed to be an essential aspect of slow tourism; some studies reveal that it is not the traveler's primary motivation for choosing slow tourism versus other currents; studies say that experience and authenticity are more important than sustainability (Dickinson et al., 2011; Fraga & Botelho, 2016; Gössling & Peeters, 2015; Guiver & McGrath, 2016).

The dimension, *People*, is the main characteristic that offers a unique culture, cuisine, hospitality and authentic experience. The social interactions between locals and travelers as well as between travelers is the most crucial aspect in reference to slow tourists (Dickinson et al., 2011; Fraga & Botelho, 2016; Gössling & Peeters, 2015; Guiver & McGrath, 2016). The slow tourist is in constant search of authenticity in the journey (Meng & Choi, 2015) and therefore, the motivation is to remain longer in a destination to discover more profound connections between the destination and oneself (Lee et al., 2015; Lin, 2016; Oh et al., 2016). The perception of authenticity is the reaction of an individual towards objects, behavior, and events considered authentic (Meng & Choi, 2015).

Tourism studies provide three terms to describe authenticity. These are objective authenticity, constructive authenticity, and existential authenticity. Objective authenticity refers to the originality of the object, even though the criteria used to describe the originality of the object is unknown. Constructive authenticity is the symbolic authenticity created by the

individual culture and beliefs. Existential authenticity refers to the form of authenticity from the experience of the individual at the moment (Meng & Choi, 2015). Existential authenticity explains better the perception of authenticity in slow tourism because tourism is an experience itself correlated to the individual believes, and true-self. The experience of traveling does not come from objects or cultural perceptions itself, but from the sensations that one has in consciously choosing and experiencing specific activities, which will give the authentic side of self (Meng & Choi, 2015). Meng and Choi (2015) also claimed that tourists who perceive and sense more authenticity are eager to participate in and search for authentic experiences, such as social interaction with locals, cultural events, and local cuisine.

Local cuisine authenticity is often related to slow food. Slow food as an authentic perception comes from the experience of eating a local delicacy, which often needs a long time of preparation and has a connection with the culture and the geographical area (Chung et al., 2017). The cuisine includes the preparation of the food, how it is consumed and cultural elements around the serving and consumption of the food, such as body language or instruments used that define the community (Chung et al., 2017; Meng & Choi, 2015). Tregear et al. (2007) explains the importance of the official labeling in the regional foods to state the quality and the authenticity of the product. The product qualification allows consumers to identify the quality and the region of the product.

The dimension, *Time*, linked to pace, relaxation, unhurried and more in-depth self-realization, is one of the most discussed terms in slow tourism. The sense of time and the power to control it is considered to constitute us as social human beings. Time in slow tourism is essential (Guiver & McGrath, 2016; Small, 2016). One study on the experience of time in long-term travel has confirmed that there are benefits for the travelers' control of their sense of time by practicing slow mobility as a rebellion to their westernized fast-paced daily life (Small, 2016). Small (2016) also differentiates between travelers and tourists, travelers being the ones

that stay extended periods of time in the destination, often more than a week (Georgica, 2015), while tourists are moving to see as much as they can. It is important to mention that the study only concerns western cultured people, and the concept of time can be different for those with other cultural backgrounds.

It is crucial to discuss the dimension of *Travel* that contains distance, mode, speed and low carbon, as one of the first moves in the process of going to holidays. Small (2016) highlights that the environmental philosophy about reducing tourism carbon emissions was not considered essential for travelers when practicing slow tourism, in the same case study mentioned earlier (Dickinson et al., 2011; Fraga & Botelho, 2016; Gössling & Peeters, 2015; Guiver & McGrath, 2016). To be more specific, fast mode of travel can be considered as “time-saving” whereas slow mode is considered “time-savoring” option, both options are to fit the traveler's goals and motivations (Oh et al., 2016). Dickinson et al. (2011) separated slow tourists into two categories, hard slow and soft slow. Hard slow are the tourists who plan each activity to be slow, including the transport to the destination. On the other hand, soft tourists are the ones who practice slow tourism at the destination but use fast mobility to get there, such as airplanes or car. It is important to point out that private and high greenhouse gas emission transports like airplanes, car, and motorcycles, are fast-paced transport modes. Slow-paced transport modes are public and low greenhouse gas emission transportation, like bus, trains, bikes and walking (Larsen & Guiver, 2013; Lin, 2016).

Yurtseven and Kaya (2011) went further to classify tourists by their conscious decision making on slow tourism mobility adding one more category — accidental. Yurtseven and Kaya (2011) classify slow tourists as ‘dedicated’ (or hard slow by Dickinson et al. (2011)), ‘interested’ (or soft slow), and ‘accidental’ which refers to tourists that practice conventional tourism accidentally without being conscious of it and also participates in slow tourism

activities. Accidental slow tourists are the central aspect of study in this research, and subsequently, the aim is to investigate how they perceive and classify themselves.

The last dimension is the *personal state* including well-being, pleasure, recreation, conviviality, and constant learning. The personal category is all about the activation and the interconnection of the senses (Guiver & McGrath, 2016), with the aim to escape from daily routine and enter liminality which causes a sense of relaxation, pleasure, and openness to novelty (Thomassen, 2013). The recreation experience itself will develop into the openness of the sense of smell, the taste sense, being in a place and meeting new people (Guiver & McGrath, 2016). Which subsequently will contribute to a broader knowledge, constant learning, better adaptability, conviviality, and enhance self-identity and wellbeing (Guiver & McGrath, 2016; Lee et al., 2015; Lin, 2016; Oh et al., 2016). Slow tourism allows the traveler to experience the sense of freedom by spatial distance and temporal deceleration with the objective of self-reflection, escape from routine, seeking novelty, engagement with locals, activities, environment, and discovery with the aim of learning new cultures and lifestyles (Oh et al., 2016).

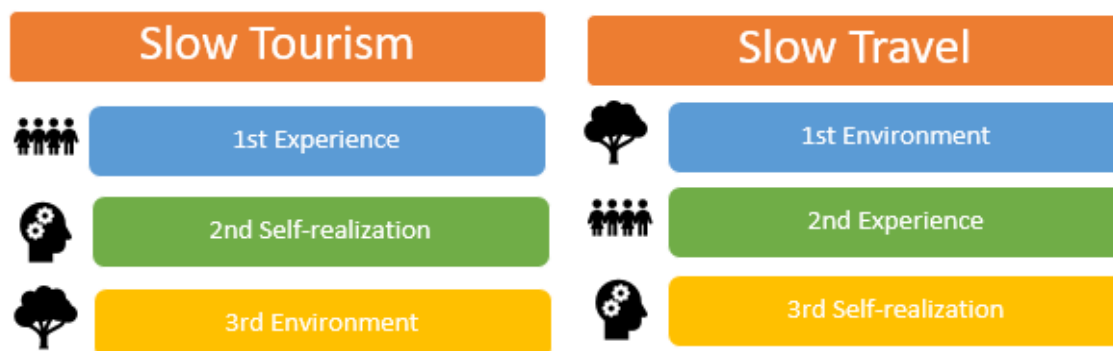
## **2.2 Slow tourism, what is it, and what is it not?**

In this section, the characteristics of slow tourism will be underlined and distinguished from other currents, including slow travel which has created confusion in different articles (Fraga & Botelho, 2016; Fuentes-Moraleda et al., 2016; Georgica, 2015; Kazandzhieva & Lukanova, 2016).

Slow travel and slow tourism are two different concepts (Conway & Timms, 2012). Slow tourism, as explained in the previous section, is the tourism concept of experiencing, obtaining and self-realizing in slow mode holidays. Slowness includes staying longer in the destination, using public transportation, experiencing the food and culture of the site and interacting with locals and other tourists. The aim is to perceive existential authenticity, escape

from routine experiences, and secondarily, to reconnect with oneself (Chung et al., 2017; Meng & Choi, 2015; Oh et al., 2016). The third objective of slow tourism is environmental concern and sustainability (Dickinson et al., 2011; Fraga & Botelho, 2016; Gössling & Peeters, 2015; Guiver & McGrath, 2016; Meng & Choi, 2015). Additionally, slow tourism helps the local destination to become greener, produce locally and slow grow economically (Conway & Timms, 2012; Fuentes-Moraleda et al., 2016; Guiver & McGrath, 2016).

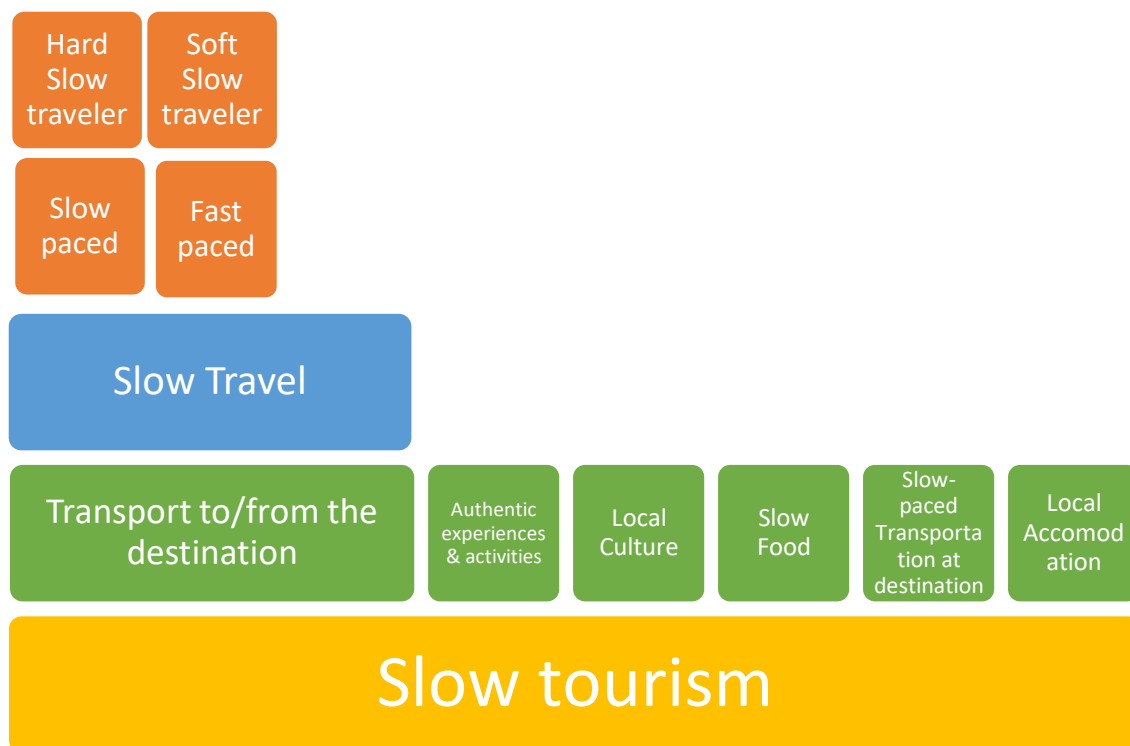
The areas that concern slow tourism are accommodation, tourist experiences, activities, food, culture, and transportation in the destination (Bac Dorin, 2014). As already noted, slow travel refers only to the transportation to the destination, including the travel mode, experience during the travel, and the sustainable mobility (Conway & Timms, 2012; Dickinson et al., 2011; Pecsek, 2016). Slow travel considers the mobility as an activity itself that can be experienced and practiced as greener as possible to help the environment (Dickinson et al., 2011; Larsen & Guiver, 2013; Lin, 2016). The journey between home and the destination becomes non-stressful and a commodity with an abundance of time to relax (Bac Dorin, 2014; Small, 2016) with a minimal footprint or greenhouse emissions impact (Larsen & Guiver, 2013). One of the earliest and most obvious examples of slow travel is the pilgrimage, where the trip itself is the experience, the travel mode is zero greenhouse emission since the mobility method is walking, considered slow-paced mobility.



*Figure 1. Slow tourism and Slow travel concerns (Source: authors' own model)*

By accepting slow traveling, the tourists choose to express their ethical and ideological values or personal identity and their relationship with the environment and place (Dickinson et al., 2011). When it comes to slow tourism, the tourist can choose whether to travel in slow or fast travel modes to the destination. It all depends on personal choices, time pressure, destination, and personal goals to achieve on the journey (Oh et al., 2016).

Slow tourism may or may not include slow travel depending on the traveler's choices. According to Dickinson et al. (2011), the hard slow tourists have high environmental concern and use slow-paced travel modes to arrive at the destination. Au contraire, soft slow tourists do not have a high environmental concern and use fast-paced travel mode to get to the destination, but sometimes they use slow-paced transportation for the experience of it. The main differences are that hard slow travelers have as a priority their environmental footprint, the experience during the trip, to travel shorter distances and stay longer. Hence, soft slow travelers have as a priority the experience, to stay longer on the destination and to enhance social interaction, however, the environmental concern is a secondary objective. Hard and soft slow travelers use the slow-paced transportation mode on the destination to different degrees. On the following conceptual map, the reader can see the conceptualization of slow tourism and slow travel.



**Figure 2. Conceptual map of Slow tourism and Slow travel. (Source: authors' own model)**

In the next section, slow tourism challenges and the future will be discussed to explain and understand further the limitations, challenges and possible solutions that slow tourism offers versus the conventional tourism. Before starting, it is important to know the difference between slow tourism and conventional tourism. The main difference is that slow tourism requires involvement, compromise, and tranquility to interact more with the community and respect the environment; the requirements will create new knowledge and better-valued memories (Fuentes-Moraleda et al., 2016). Lee et al. (2015) shows in his study that slow food practitioners were more open to trying new experiences, whereas non-practitioners prefer comfort and familiarity. This result could partially be applied to the tourist behavior differences between slow and conventional tourists.

### **2.3. Slow Tourism Challenges and the Future**

The first challenge to extending or developing slow tourism is the time and cost dimension. In the occidental society, the workers lack in temporal and financial resources (Larsen & Guiver, 2013). Fast travel modes and shorter holidays adapt to time constraints that the ordinary worker has, and also are cheaper. On the other hand, the cost of slow-paced transportation is high in comparison with fast-paced transportation (Larsen, 2016). The solution to this challenge would require that businesses and companies give more time for traveling and include an extra budget for it; these changes would allow conventional tourists to rethink the option of slow tourism (Larsen & Guiver, 2013) and encourage them to stay longer when traveling long distances (Caffyn, 2012). Another option would be to encourage tourists with time constraints to travel shorter distances (Caffyn, 2012). The tourists' desire for distance does not only contain the physical distance in kilometers between geographical areas but may also involve cultural dissimilarity. The tourists travel far to seek novelty and unfamiliar contexts. The association of physical and cultural distance could be reduced if the destination use marketing to promote themselves as unique, offering specific experiences that the tourists might be interested in, therefore, the relative distance will predominate over the physical distance, and costs and time will be reduced (Larsen & Guiver, 2013; Lin, 2016).

Cheaper and better public transport infrastructure would help to develop slow tourism in the destination. Transportation accounts for 40%-90% of the total environmental impact of tourism, and encouraging tourists to use sustainable mobility would help to improve global emissions and provides safety, freedom, and convenience to tourists (Gössling & Peeters, 2015; Lin, 2016). Cost, travel time, comfort, convenience and schedule flexibility are the main cons for travelers to choose public transportation (Lin, 2016). Consequently, the improvement of the quality of the vehicles, accessibility, experience, information, and affordability would facilitate conventional tourists to choose public transport and reduce air travel (Lin, 2016; Meng & Choi, 2015). Nowadays, air travel accounts for 40% of the 6% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of tourism



(Larsen & Guiver, 2013). Changing tourist behavior towards distance and improving slow transport modes technology would reduce air travel emissions and increase travel quality experience (Fraga & Botelho, 2016; Larsen & Guiver, 2013).

Tour operators and airlines are participants of the mass tourism effect and have power on the market share. Their economy that is usually based on hard growth (Conway & Timms, 2012), and their behavior towards their economy of scale to increase sales and benefits, would not lightly decrease (Larsen & Guiver, 2013). Conway and Timms (2012) offer one solution to challenge tour operators and airlines to promote tourist's experiences over distance, by matching those with nearby destinations and shifting the power slowly to local stakeholders who will help to reduce poverty in the area.

The geographical limitation is another challenge to take into consideration for slow tourism destinations situated in far and restricted areas and whose economy already depends on tourism and flight availability like Oceania, Caribbean, Latin America, Eastern Europe or Africa (Caffyn, 2012; Conway & Timms, 2012). Countries whose economy largely depends on the tourism sector would suffer from the shift of travel behavior and this could cause poverty in the region (Caffyn, 2012). Unfortunately, only developed countries have resources to improve public transportation (Conway & Timms, 2012). Europe would be an example of interconnected public transport systems that connect different countries (Georgica, 2015).

Slow tourism itself is based on experiences; each experience differs from the person who is living it. The non-homogenization of the vacation experience makes it difficult to commercialize compared to conventional tourism (Guiver & McGrath, 2016). Additionally, the term "slow" has more negative associations than positive in the dictionary, and it can be mismatched with fast technologies, causing confusion between receivers and being complicated to market. Slow tourism should be an approach that reaches everyone and a participant of technology solutions that help to create significant experiences (Caffyn, 2012). Caffyn (2012)

suggests marketing slow tourism options without using the term “slow,” to encourage more audiences to participate and make their own conscious choices. She also recommends different marketing strategies for destinations and tourism businesses, those are illustrated in table 1 on page 19.

The literature shows that slow and conventional tourism could be coexisting and in some ways supplement each other. Fuentes-Moraleda et al. (2016); Pecsek (2016); Varley and Semple (2015) confirm that tourists who practice alternative tourism currents, like equestrian tourism, folklore tourism, and adventure tourism respectively, have the same behavior, concern, and attitude as slow tourists but they do not categorize themselves as slow tourists. Are tourists aware of the concept of slow tourism? In this study, the answer to this question will be investigated more closely.

Oh et al. (2016) explores the case that slow and conventional tourism coexist together in the same travel and person, that tourists exchange modes regularly if it is necessary to reach their goals and fulfill their personal well-being, satisfaction, and self-fulfillment. Larsen (2016) corroborates this and adds that most of the tourists do shift between fast and slow tourism behaviors without being conscious of it, and the most valuable memories usually come from the slow mode tourism activities or experiences. Guiver and McGrath (2016) also affirm that many conventional tourists practice slow tourism without using the label. The three cases of research indicate that slow tourism might already exist before as a part of conventional tourism and that the key is to convert mass tourist into more sustainable tourism where slow activities, behaviors, and experiences live together. Thus, it is good for the tourists' health and memories, and the environment. All agree that regardless the transportation mode, the key is to attract conventional tourists to perform differently without classifying them and with the global aim to improve the health of our planet. As shown in the table below on page 20 Caffyn (2012) gave

some advice on how to market slow products without the name slow and broaden the concept to more consumers.

The environmental impacts of tourism are huge, and without a change in various aspects of travel, the resources of energy, water, food, and land may reduce drastically (Gössling & Peeters, 2015). The reduction of the environmental impact should be the primary objective of every stakeholder and user because without protecting our landscapes and resources, the tourism sector will suffer (Farrell, 1999). The need for more sustainable tourism is a fact, and a long-term commitment to provide healthy tourism is to combine social, economic and environmental policy changes where everyone has a stake (Farrell, 1999; Gössling & Peeters, 2015). According to Farrell (1999), there is “No room for choice” if we want to continue enjoying our planet and living on it. Slow tourism offers a greener alternative and when deployed meticulously, it can offer great environmental results, include everyone socially, preserve cultures and languages, and fulfill personal goals.

**Table 1: Marketing strategies without using the word “slow”**

<b>Destinations</b>	<b>Tourism Businesses</b>
Highlight slow ways of arrival, public transport, links to car share websites	Allow visitors to choose their own pace - flexible timings for meals, options to extend stays or take a slower paced tour
Encourage longer stays with suggested itineraries, deals, and packages	Promote the use of slower transport options – discounts for those arriving without a car, information on public transport and bicycle hire, good knowledge of slow options and routes
Minimize car travel in the destination by keeping visitors engaged within a short distance of base with attractive propositions and activities	Provide slower environments such as tranquil areas, TV free or mobile phone free zones, reducing advertising, use of local imagery or literature to strengthen the sense of place
Provide slow activities such as walking, cycling and riding routes, rowing boats, guided walks, taster sessions of arts and crafts, e.g., learning about bushcraft in a woodland	Source and promote local food and drink, traditional dishes, tastings, fair trade products
Provide opportunities for relaxing and soaking up the environment such as viewpoints, outdoor cafes and seating, picnic sites, car-free and tranquil areas	Develop specific slow products such as relaxation/well-being breaks, learning traditional skills or cuisine, slow tours, chill out holidays, slow food menus
Showcase local heritage and culture by highlighting what is distinctive and vernacular, local traditions and festivals	Target specific markets to which slow would especially appeal such as people with stressful lives or older people who may want a slower paced holiday
Promote and support local food and drink including producers, retail, and catering, events, trails, all accompanied by hospitable service	Invest in their staff to encourage not only skilled and hospitable service but a good knowledge of the local area and culture and the skills to share that with visitors like local ambassadors
Tackle infrastructural issues which make slow choices more difficult such as encouraging train companies to allow more bicycles on board	

## **2.4. Slow tourism in Bulgaria**

Travel and tourism in Bulgaria accounts for 11.5% of the total GDP in 2017, with a contribution to the total employment rate of 10.7% or 335,500 jobs. Moreover, in 2017 Bulgaria received 9,208,000 international tourists arrivals (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018). Even though the tourism sector is not the most important economic sector for the country (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018), tourism has grown considerably, precisely 7.6% from 2016. The Bulgarian government is up to date with the benefits of the tourism sector and is currently investing and promoting tourism in Bulgaria (Marcus, 2017; Ministry of Tourism, 2018b).

The current participation of the Ministry of Tourism of Bulgaria as a member in the World Tourism Organization of the United Nations (UNWTO) and the current activity taken in different sustainable projects points out that Bulgaria is willing to change into a more environmentally friendly tourism country. The projects' aims are to improve and promote sustainable tourism development, to drive sustainable economic growth and reduce the negative impacts of tourism (Ministry of Tourism, 2018b). Bulgaria is nowadays participating or is a member of the following projects with UNWTO (Ministry of Tourism, 2018b):

- Tourism and Biodiversity Unit, which provides bio-diversity consulting services for sustainable development of tourism and nature.
- The rational use of electricity in hotels project.
- Protecting children, a campaign to avoid the exploitation of children in tourism.
- Silk Road, a cooperative project with Bulgaria and 28 countries to expand the market and offer new opportunities using the old Silk Road connections.
- Sustainable tourism – an initiative to reduce poverty through sustainable development projects and create local jobs.

- Turkom, a global communication policy between National Tourism Organizations and the UNWTO, to establish a two-way communication channel to increase growth and future tourism development alliances.
- Tourism and water – Protecting our Common Future, a project to increase awareness of the water resources and their preservation through tourism.

On the other hand, Bulgaria has included in their official tourism brochures the following categories, Cultural tourism, Ecotourism and Village Life, Pilgrimage Tourism, Sports tourism, Wine and cuisine tourism, Balneo, Spa and Wellness Tourism (Ministry of Tourism, 2018a). Those might be a sign of the willingness to create more ecological tourism, which produces local economic growth and preserves culture and languages. Slow tourism offers those (Oh et al., 2016) and can be implemented reasonably due to the characteristics of Bulgaria as a destination area. Bulgaria is one of the wealthiest European countries in biological variety, diverse and unique cultures and folklore, and a number of protected conservation parks, national parks and eco trails around the country (Bulgaria Travel, 2013).

Even though Bulgaria does not appear as registered in the Cittaslow organization (Citta Slow International Organization, 2018), it has fifteen Slow food communities registered in the official Slow food movement organization (Slow Food Organization, 2018). Furthermore, the previous projects where Bulgaria participated, as well as, the official tourism brochures and the Tourism Ministry Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism till 2030 (Ministry of Tourism, 2018a, 2018b; Stanchev, 2016) indicates that Bulgaria is heading towards slow tourism. This is in spite of the lack of a slow tourism name or emphasis in the official documents.

Slow tourism also has a role in Bulgaria in the present and there is a growing academic research in slow tourism in Bulgarian universities (Stanchev, 2016). Every year, the growing

number of local enterprises offering slow tourism options, as Bulgaria Personalized (2018) and Bulgaria Travel (2013) gives an idea of the importance of this sector inside Bulgarian tourism.

This research acknowledges Mihalev and Tsankova (2017) conference paper as they were extremely kind to contribute with their own data that was presented at the tourism professionals' conference called "Travel Academy" in Pravets town in 2017. Mihalev and Tsankova have written a few Bulgarian travel guides in the Bulgarian language and one translated into English called *101 Byways; Travelling to lesser – known places in Bulgaria* (Mihalev & Tsankova, 2018). The researchers found the authors thanks to one of the interviewees of this study. Mihalev and Tsankova (2017) support the above-mentioned assumptions of the researchers explaining that the slow tourism market is the fastest growing one in the field of tourism in Bulgaria. Their study describes this new market as mainly young people who want to escape from the cities. They specify that the new travelers are not unemployed or hitchhikers, if not wholly knowledgeable travelers with specific needs (Ivan Mihalev & Tsankova, 2017). The data shown in their presentation reveals that 59,09% of this new market will travel when possible to escape from the cities, 9,09% travel once a week, 27,27% travel twice a month, and 4,55% travel once a month. Also, according to the authors, 76,19% of them travel with their beloved ones, 14,29% travel with a big group of friends, and 9,52% travel with a group of three to four friends. So, the data shows that the new travelers do not prefer to travel alone by themselves. Another interesting fact is that 100% of this target prefer to use their cars, categorized in the academical literature as "soft" travelers as it was discussed above (Dickinson et al., 2011).

Also, Ivan Mihalev and Tsankova (2017) claim that 59,09% of this new target choose their places digitally. The statement leads to the conclusion that the new travelers do use the new technology in search of the authentic experiences, as Caffyn (2012) mentions. The study also reveals that 77,27 % of the travelers chose restaurants instead of fast food facilities for their

meals, and 63,64% require that the restaurant was authentic and visited by locals. The new travelers are 83,37% eager to recommend places they found attractive, which means that this new wave of travelers contributes to the local economy, and the attraction of those is critical for the local businesses (Reynolds & Beatty, 1999, p. 13).

The section below will proceed by explaining the situation of the Rhodope Mountains area, the research focus, and the justification of why the authors had chosen to study this specific region.

## **2.5. The Rhodope Mountains Area**

This paragraph is taken from the master proposal as it explains very well why the authors have decided to study the Rhodope Mountains area. A part of the Rhodope Mountains region is chosen for the conduction of the research as the area can be identified to have similar characteristics with Slow movement with its local communities, cultural identity, the authenticity, and the local food. There are small villages that show the beauty of the local culture and environment. Also, in the village named Smilyan, there is found a special kind of a bean that is labelled now as slow food presidia (Slow Food Foundation, 2018b). According to Slow Food Foundation (2018c) “*The Presidia sustain quality production at risk of extinction, protect unique regions and ecosystems, recover traditional processing methods, safeguard native breeds and local plant varieties*”. At the same time, the area is known as a preferred winter destination as Pamporovo resort has been attracting skiers of all different levels; from beginners to professional skiers (Pamporovo, 2017). For these two features, it is believed that the chosen area to conduct the research is the right one to explore whether there is a strong connection between the conventional tourism and this new form of tourism — slow tourism. Also, the researcher’s interest in this topic arises from the fact that Pamporovo is a winter resort that is exposed to climate changes. Understanding what slow tourism is and who the slow tourists are, can be seen as an adaptation strategy if there are no good snow conditions (Matos, 2004).

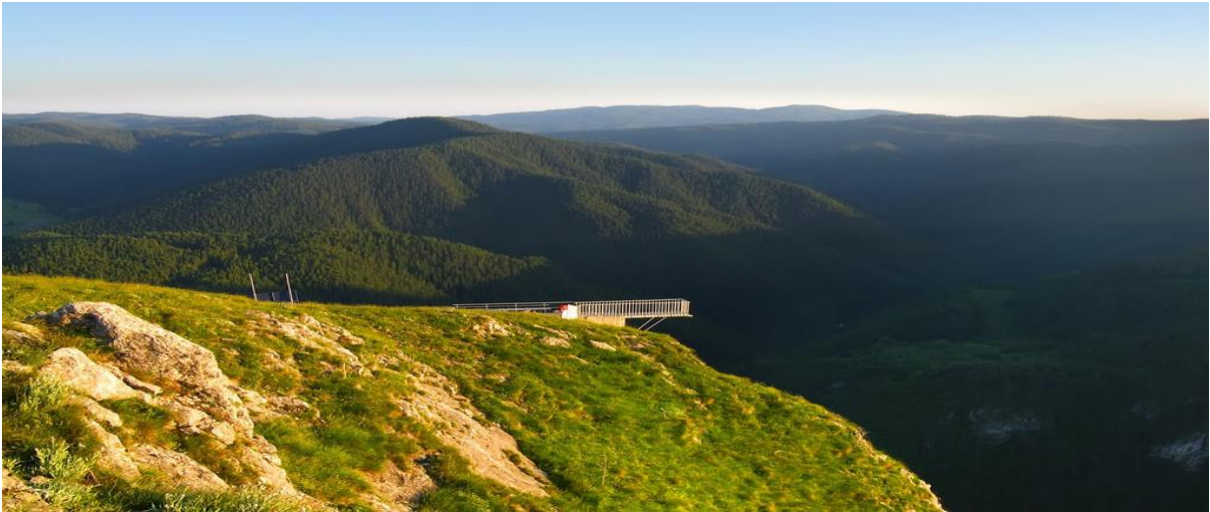


The Rhodope Mountains has an area of about 14,737 square kilometers and it is situated between Bulgaria and Greece (Tourist Maker, 2018). The study has the primary focus on the Rhodope Mountains area in Bulgaria, as almost 83% of the territory of the Rhodope Mountains is in Bulgaria (The Rodope Mountains, 2016). The Rodope Mountains (2016) describes the area as one of the most abundant forests in Europe with a diverse flora and fauna thanks to its climate. The area is known for their vegetation, gorges, and karsts that attract the most adventurous tourists. The Rhodope mountain forests are protected as a UNESCO world heritage natural treasure. The region is also rich in waters as there are many lakes, springs, streams, and rivers.

The most popular attractions are Yagodinska cave, Eagle's Eye or Orlovo Oko (figure 3) which offer a stunning view of the Rhodope Mountains. The Canyon of Waterfalls (figure 4) that is a blend of 46 isolated phenomenal waterfalls. Asen's Fortress (figure 5). Perperikon (figure 6) that is a massive Thracian city considered to be the largest megalithic archaeological site in all of Bulgaria. Chudnite Mostove or "The Wonderful Bridges" (figure 7). Shiroka Laka village (figure 8) famous for its beautiful and authentic Rhodope houses. The Trigrad Gorge which is a seven-kilometer defile beneath towering marble cliffs cut over millions of years by the Trigrad River (figure 9).

Below the reader can build a fundamental notion of the Rhodope Mountains by the enclosed pictures. However, many other attractions are worth visiting as well.

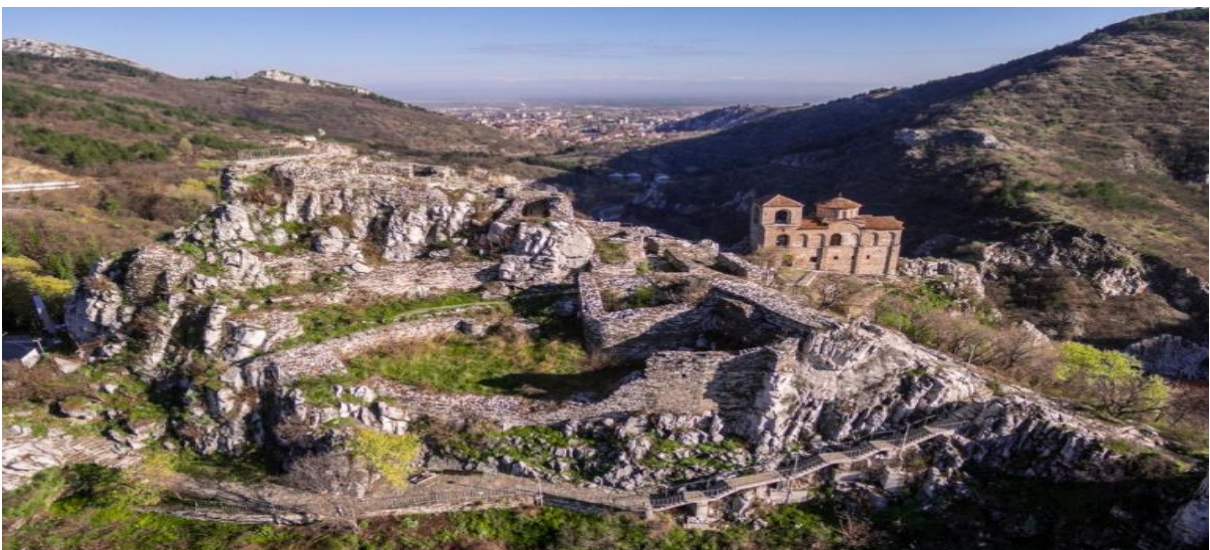
*Figure 3. Eagle's Eye*



*Figure 4. The Canyon of waterfalls*



*Figure 5. Asen's Fortress*



*Figure 6. Perperikon*



*Figure 7. The Wonderful Bridges*



*Figure 8. Shiroka Laka Village*



**Figure 9. Trigrad Gorge**



Figure 4,5,6,7 taken from <http://rhodopemountains.com/best-spots-rhodope-mountains/> (The Rodope Mountains, 2018a)

Figure 3, 8, and 9 taken from <https://www.fixstay.com/en/article/87/10-sights-rhodope.html> (Milen Iliev, 2018)

Moreover, the diversity of the Rhodopean culture is immense as there have been different civilizations living together in this region. Those are Thracians, Greeks, the Byzantium Empire, the Ottoman Turks, and domestic people. They lived in the Rhodopes throughout the centuries creating a diverse and unique culture into the region. Nowadays, there are still Greeks, Muslims, Turks, and Bulgarians living peacefully together in the area. Also, thanks to the unique culture, there is a vast variety of songs, melodies, and dances that are part of the Rhodopean folklore. A variety of festivals and events attract tourists to visit the region. The folklore in this region is one of the most significant and unique characteristics of the Rhodopes. The official website of the Rhodope Mountains writes: *“After all, legend says that mythical singer of God, Orpheus, was born here and sang his most beautiful song in the endless forests of Rhodopes. The song, “Izlel Delio haidutin,” is the most traditional song from Rhodopes, and is included in the list of songs on Voyager’s mission of searching for other civilizations through*

*space by playing music and traveling for next sixty thousand years.” (The Rodope Mountains, 2018b)*

All in all, it is crucial to note that this region has formed its specific cultural style that is perceived as authentic and unique even though different civilizations cohabit. (The Rodope Mountains, 2018b).



**Figure 10.** The folklore dress of the Rhodope region

The picture was taken from <https://narodninosii.bg/blog/rodopi/> (Носии, 2018)

**Research focus.** Again, the wonders of the Rhodope Mountains are so many that it goes beyond our capacity to describe the area. Therefore, this study review will take a closer look at the five selected areas in the research. Respectively, those are Pamporovo, Smolyan, Chepelare, Shiroka Laka and Momchilovci.

Pamporovo is situated at the foot of Snezhanka peak (1926 meters), and it is mostly known as a winter tourism destination with its ski tracks and various types of accommodations (Official Tourism Portal of Bulgaria, 2018b). It could be argued that Pamporovo is a mass tourist destination. There are many hotels, bars, and restaurant as well as many ski tracks suitable for beginners and advanced skiers. The resort is also acknowledged as an excellent ski

destination by many international tour operators (Hotel Prespa, 2018) (ПампоровоАД, 2018). However, the resort is also attractive during the summer due to the numerous activities that can be practiced around the area. The activities around the area are walk tours in ecological paths, rock climbing, speleology in different type of caves, fishing opportunities in rivers and dams, visiting authentic villages situated not far from Pamporovo, sightseeing of the beautiful nature offering astonishing views, herb gathering and mushroom-gathering (Official Tourism Portal of Bulgaria, 2018b).

Smolyan and Chepelare are the closest towns situated near Pamporovo resort. The former has a population of 32 000 inhabitants and the last mentioned has a population of 5800 inhabitants. In Smolyan town can be seen the Raykovo quarter with an authentic architecture, the most significant planetarium with an astronomical observatory in Bulgaria, the largest Orthodox temple in Southern Bulgaria, the seven beautiful Smolyan Lakes, the 750 meters long Nevyastata Eco-Trail (the Bride Eco-Trail), Soskovcheto Reserve and the Waterfall Canyon Eco-Trail (Official Tourism Portal of Bulgaria, 2018d).

Chepelare also offers 20-kilometer tracks for beginners and advanced skiers, the only ski museum in Bulgaria, the museum of Rhodope Karst which is the only one-of-its-kind on the Balkan Peninsula and the temple “St. Athanasius the Great” (Official Tourism Portal of Bulgaria, 2018a). It could be argued that both towns can attract tourists due to the proximity of Pamporovo resort. It is also clear that both towns serve as a further recreator of the tourists that stay in Pamporovo resort.

Momchilovtsi is a small village and an old settlement rich in history and archaeological findings with traces of Thracians and Romans (Momchilovtsi, 2015c). The village is characterized by its unique and beautiful nature, the healing spring of Ayazmo, Dupchov & Kardjaliiski breccia stones remaining from ancient times, the numerous hillside chapels, the

hiking and biking opportunities, the Rhodopes cuisine, the rich history with legends and myths, the folklore and traditions, and the ecological products (Momchilovtsi, 2015b).

Last but not least, Shiroka Laka village is the 87th tourist site out of the hundred National Bulgarian tourist sites (Btsbg.org, 2018). Its unique architecture from the Bulgarian Revival Period characterizes Shiroka Laka, its musical culture and rich history (Official Tourism Portal of Bulgaria, 2018c). Famous for its authentic Rhodope houses, the village attracts many tourists according to the official tourism portal of Bulgaria (Official Tourism Portal of Bulgaria, 2018c). According to the same source, the village has succeeded in preserving the folklore traditions, and some of the most famous singers and bagpipe-performers were born in this village. In the village, there is the National School of Folk Arts, established in 1972, an Ethnographic Museum, Zgurovski konak, and the Church of the Assumption which was built in 1834 in just 38 days by all the people of Shiroka Laka. Shiroka Laka is famous for the hosting of many events and one of the most popular is the annual Mummers festival called “Pesponedelnik.”

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Study Design

Following the discussion of the literature review, it is clear that the Rhodope Mountains area has similar characteristics to the practice of slow tourism. The Rhodope Mountains area has slow life characteristics as folklore, unique culture, slow food, perceived authenticity, and environment awareness (Caffyn, 2012). However, the reality is different. Bulgaria has not yet been registered as a country that markets itself as a slow tourism destination, neither any of the Bulgarian cities according to Cittaslow website, the international association of Slow cities and life movement (Citta Slow International Organization, 2018).

The fact leads to the research question which investigates how conventional tourism uses slow tourism to attract tourists in the area. The research question is *“How can perceptions of “slow tourism” contribute to a development from today’s conventional tourism? A case study of selected areas in the range of the Rhodope Mountains in Bulgaria”*. This research can be easily called a single-case study that has an embedded design since our intention is to investigate and consider both embedded units, the tourism professionals, and the tourists in the selected regions in the Rhodope Mountains. The researchers believe that they need to consider the tourism professionals and the tourist's viewpoints because both are equally important and play a role in the development of slow tourism in the Rhodope Mountains. For this reason, the study consists of both qualitative and quantitative data.

On the one hand, interviewing managers is significant for the study because the research question is an investigation of the perceptions of slow tourism within the conventional tourism. By conducting interviews with them their opinions can be explored (Yin, 2014, pp. 111,113). Also, Rudestam and Newton (2007, p. 110) argue that questions encourage the participants to give more in-depth answers and reflect more on the topic through their experiences. On the other hand, the researchers do not want to exclude the tourists as they are the ones who create



the demands in the region. To ensure a degree of objectivity, the researchers decided to investigate the tourist market by conducting a short questionnaire distributed only among tourists.

Having the right statistical data will enable the comparison of the viewpoints of the tourism professionals and the tourists' market reality in the selected areas. Again, this will help the researchers to be more objective when taking conclusions as well as it will contribute to the study as a reliability check when analyzing the qualitative data. Besides, using mixed methods will allow for getting more vibrant data that will contribute with stronger evidence to the research question (Neuman, 2014, pp. 165-166; Yin, 2014, p. 66).

### **3.2 Sample**

The selection criteria for the sampling frame for the semi-structured interviews for the tourism professionals was that they should have been working in the Rhodope Mountains for longer than fifteen years or they are local citizens. Those characteristics were applied because the tourism professionals after many years would have gained enough knowledge of the surrounding area and experienced different situations within the region. In other words, the participants are knowledgeable enough about the Rhodope Mountains area, and they are professionals in their field of work, which will reflect in the study with more profound insights into the research question.

The participants were selected with the help of one of the participants in our research, who due to her long experience in the region, knew the professionals that the study seeks. In this case, the sampling technique chosen was the nonprobability judgment sampling, due to the criteria was based on the personal judgment of a tourism professional. There were selected five different types of hotel managers, one guest house manager who had also happened to receive a tour operator license recently, one tour operator, one restaurant manager, and two tourists.

The tourists were selected conveniently as a nonprobability convenience sampling technique (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013, pp. 392-394).

The main selection criteria for distributing the questionnaires was the location. Half of the questionnaires were distributed in Shiroka Laka village at a restaurant named “Filter guest house”, upon an agreement with the manager. The restaurant was selected because it had preconditions for slow tourism, due to their menu which is based on local products and delicacies, slow and traditional cooking techniques, and the connection of the menu with the geographical culture (Lee et al., 2015). The other half of the questionnaires were distributed in the winter resort Pamporovo at Prespa Hotel based on an agreement with the hotel manager. The questionnaire at the Prespa Hotel was distributed all over the place including the lobby, the lobby bar, the reception, and the barbeque restaurant that has features of an old-traditional Bulgarian style restaurant. Altogether, a total of 179 valid responses were collected of which 97 from “Filter guest house” and 82 from Prespa Hotel. The population comprised of tourists on their holidays. The workers of the hotel and the locals were not allowed to participate in determining the sampling frame. The workers at the respective locations asked if the participants were tourists, and in case of affirmation, were offering to participate in the questionnaire. In this case, the questionnaire is based on a nonprobability convenience sampling because the units were conveniently chosen by the workers, as well as the locations, by the researchers (Zikmund et al., 2013, pp. 392-393).

### **3.3 Data collection**

The procedures for the semi-structured interviews included a careful analysis of the study region to decide which tourism professionals to be asked for their participation. After the analysis, the possible participants were selected, and a few phone calls were placed with a request to participate in the academical research as a tourism professional. The questionnaire

was designed together with the literature review of slow tourism with the purpose of carrying out market research of the area.

In general, the researchers tried to conduct ethical research consistent with the participant's willingness and requests to the researchers. Therefore, all names of the participants are removed in the study. However, the researchers did receive a permission from the managers to use the real names of their businesses in the research.

### 3.4 Measurements

**Qualitative-interviews.** The researchers ask essential questions that all the interviewees needed to answer. The aim of the questions of the interview is explained consequently.

The question “*What do you think is a good experience for slow tourists?*” is aimed to cover the perceptions of the tourism professionals about slow tourism. The question “*Do you cooperate with the locals, the surrounding small villages?*”, “*Are you willing, for example, to organize a night for the tourists in a traditional tavern in the local villages?*” and “*Do you think that you can cooperate in the future with the local villages?*” were asked to check the current practices of the tourism professionals and their readiness to integrate slow tourism features. The question “*Do you offer slow food?*” and “*What sort of activities related to slow tourism do you offer to your tourists?*” was intended to check the knowledge of the tourism professionals about the slow movement. The question “*Would you make a marketing campaign to this new segment of tourists?*” aims to check whether the tourism professionals consider slow tourism as an option for their future development.

Further discussion of all the questions will be conducted in the results area and the analysis area where discussions will also be provided. It is vital to note that the researcher did not ask all the questions in consecutive order while conducting the interviews. When the interviewee wanted to share some other thoughts, they were allowed to lead the conversation. In that way, it is believed that the participants could reveal more details on the topic of slow

tourism (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 112). The strategy that was implemented to ensure the questions were answered truthfully by the participants was that the researchers encouraged the participants to feel free and relax when conducting the interview. The strategy was accomplished before the start of each interview when the researchers explained to all of the participants that they do not need to be knowledgeable about slow tourism, and they are encouraged to talk about their reality as this study is closely related to the actual and the conventional tourism in the region.

**Quantitative-questionnaire.** All the questions are designed in such a way as to distinguish the slow tourists from the conventional tourists. For example, the first question aims to find out whether the participant could be called a slow tourist considering the statement of Georgica (2015) that this type of travelers stays for a week or more. In addition, all ten questions have a statistical meaning for our research to determine the level of slow tourism in the area and how much slow tourism exists in the conventional tourism. The questions are listed below in the same consecutive order that was stated in our questionnaire, together with the justification and the match with the literature review. To see the full questionnaire, please visit the appendix on page 88.

**Table 2. Justification of the questions in the questionnaire**

<b>The questionnaire</b>	
<p>1. How long is your holiday?</p> <p>a) Less than a week</p> <p>b) One week</p> <p>c) More than a week</p>	<p>According to Georgica (2015), Meng and Choi (2015), and Small (2016) slow tourists need to spend an extended period in the destination, adding a minimum stay of a week to consider it as Slow tourism.</p>
<p>2. Where do you stay during the holiday?</p> <p>a) Hotel</p> <p>b) Guest House</p> <p>c) Apartment for rent</p> <p>d) Other (Please, specify)</p>	<p>The literature review specifies the importance of being open to local and regional experiences, including the accommodation. Guesthouses, rent of apartments/rooms and other family-run hospitality services are closer and offer better slow tourism stays, closer to the slow tourism philosophy (Bac Dorin, 2014; Georgica, 2015; Guiver &amp; McGrath, 2016).</p>
<p>3. Where do you prefer to eat?</p> <p>a) In a local restaurant</p> <p>b) At a restaurant in a hotel</p> <p>c) Somewhere else, please specify</p>	<p>Slow food in local restaurants is one of the premises inside the slow tourism movement (Chung et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2015).</p>
<p>4. Have you visited at least one village in the Rhodope Mountains while on holiday?</p> <p>a) Yes</p> <p>b) No</p>	<p>Tourists who seek authentic experiences go for meeting locals and experiencing folklore (Chung et al., 2017; Meng &amp; Choi, 2015; Pecsek, 2016). If tourists' answers are B, we understand that they are winter sports travelers.</p>
<p>5. Have you tried local traditional food during your stay?</p> <p>a) Yes</p> <p>b) No</p>	<p>People who are open to trying regional food are more eager to practice slow tourism (Bac Dorin, 2014; Lee et al., 2015).</p>
<p>6. How many times have you eaten local food?</p> <p>a) None</p> <p>b) Once</p> <p>c) A few times</p> <p>d) Every time</p>	<p>Tourists that consume local delicacies more often will prefer slow tourism (Lee et al., 2015)</p>

<p>7. When you are on holiday, what kind of food do you prefer?</p> <p>a) Quickly prepared</p> <p>b) Slowly prepared</p>	<p>Slowly prepared food or slower choices are a sign of conscience, experience, and slow life while on holidays (Caffyn, 2012; Lee et al., 2015).</p>
<p>8. What is more important for you during this holiday?</p> <p>a) To see as much as possible here</p> <p>b) To feel how locals live at this place</p>	<p>Response A refers to the hypermodernity, in contrast to the slow movement which desires to have more time to experience and meet locals (Guiver &amp; McGrath, 2016; Larsen, 2016; Varley &amp; Semple, 2015)</p>
<p>9. What are the main activities that you will be practicing during this stay? (Multiple choices)</p> <p>a) Walking</p> <p>b) Winter Sports</p> <p>c) Food experience</p> <p>d) Nightclubs and bars</p> <p>e) Wondering at Sightseeing</p> <p>f) Museums</p> <p>g) Others, please specify</p>	<p>Here is what the tourist do in their holidays at Pamporovo area, if they come for the winter sports or to experience regional activities. The literature mentions the importance of experiencing locality whether it is food, folklore or connecting with the locals (Bac Dorin, 2014; Fuentes-Moraleda et al., 2016).</p>
<p>10. Do you see yourself as a slow tourist?</p> <p>a) Yes</p> <p>b) No</p> <p>c) I do not know what it means</p>	<p>Perceptions of the tourists on how they describe themselves, or if they know the term, is one of our objectives in the research. Therefore, this question is essential.</p>

Researchers did not have any strategy when selecting the tourists who participated in the questionnaire apart from their willingness to participate in our research. All of the participants were asked if they would like to take part in our survey.

### 3.5 Data analysis

The variables of interest for both quantitative and qualitative methods are if any of the characteristics of slow tourism, like slow food, type of accommodation, slow tourism activities, authentic experiences, and sustainability, can be seen on conventional tourism. Therefore, the

variables of interest will be individual in each case depending on which questions are asked or which questions are crosstab to extract more information.

**Qualitative data analysis.** Regarding the qualitative data that was collected, all ten recorded interviews were first transcribed in Bulgarian language word by word with the intention of keeping the whole meaning and content of the interviews. Later, the interviews were translated into English language to make the primary data accessible to all the readers of this research. The translations were also made from an English-Bulgarian professional translator and later checked by the researcher to ensure a full reproduction of the interview's content.

The interviews were analyzed from the translated text using text analysis and cross analysis between questions and interviews. Due to the overwhelming text, the researchers developed codes and categories for sorting and refining the data (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 182). Open coding and axial coding were used to segment the text, and selective coding for reassembling the data (Boeije, 2010, p. 93). The primary approach of the study was deductive as the researchers had already a clear theoretical frame of slow tourism and their aim was to verify it on a new case, namely on conventional tourism (Boeije, 2010, p. 102). However, as the nature of the study is more explorative, the researchers did allow for emergent themes to be incorporated into the deductive approach (Boeije, 2010, p. 102). The process was undertaken by both researchers as the nature of the research question demands more detailed exploration of the study. All the analyses are provided in the results and analysis part of this study.

**Quantitative data analysis.** The quantitative research was done to compare the manager's opinions with the market demands, in this case, the tourists that visit the area. In addition, having a quantitative data that could possibly support the opinion of the tourism professionals would make the study more reliable. Furthermore, the affirmation or disapproval of the results will help to balance the managers' perceptions of interests in the market.

The questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS program. The main analysis conducted was descriptive such as frequencies and crosstabs because the nature of the variables in the questionnaire was nominal and ordinal levels of measurements. Frequency analysis describes in detail the measurements studied, and crosstabs analysis helps with the investigation of the interrelationships between the measurements (Bryman & Cramer, 2011, p. 351; Pallant, 2005, p. 49). Regarding the crosstabs analysis, the researchers chose to investigate the interrelationship of the question *Do you determine yourself as a slow tourist?* with the remaining questions of the questionnaire; doing so, the research got deeper insights of the tourists' perceptions, whether they define themselves as slow tourists or not, and the activities they realize. The information gathered from the crosstabs analysis will help to understand further the complexity of "perceptions" and "knowledge" of the term slow tourism and the latest trends in the conventional tourism in the area studied, which will help to answer the aim of the study.

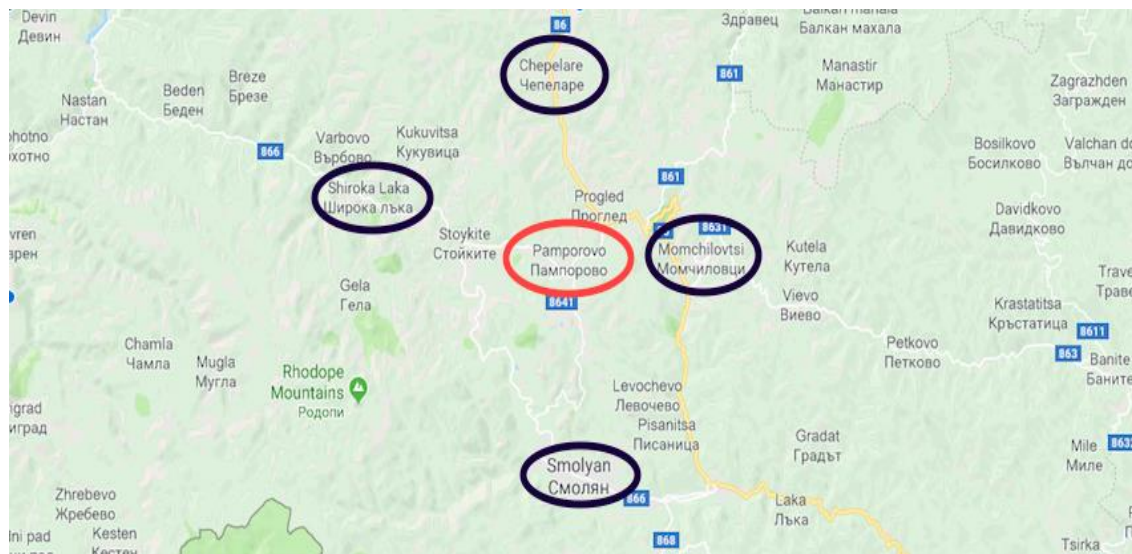
Moreover, to find more answers from the questionnaire, the researchers explored the three variables that had ordinal levels of measurement. The possible analysis for them were tests of normality- Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, and the correlation tests between variables, Spearman's Rank Order Correlation (Pallant, 2005, pp. 53-57, 286,297). The former will provide an information of the quality of the distribution of the obtained sample and the latter will provide an information of the age group that is more likely to try local food as well as the relationship between the duration of stay and the likelihood to try more local food.

### **3.6 Data collection and sample**

The selected areas that were chosen were Pamporovo resort, Chepelare town, Shiroka Laka village, Momchilovtsi village and Smolyan town. Those areas were chosen since Pamporovo region is a famous winter tourism destination and the areas mentioned above are



nearby Pamporovo. The map below illustrates the chosen locations of the research. The location of Pamporovo resort is circled with red color.



**Figure 11.** Map of the research area (Authors` own source)

Pamporovo is chosen since it is well-known as a winter resort destination for mass tourism (Official Tourism Portal of Bulgaria, 2018b), and as a consequence, slow tourism is not likely to be practiced. As the research question aims to investigate the extent of slow tourism in the conventional tourism, the researchers believe that Pamporovo is an excellent choice for a research. Also, all chosen locations, except Pamporovo, have a different type of settings that stand out from the so-called traditional winter resorts. Shiroka Laka and Momchilovtsi are traditional Bulgarian villages as there are no hotels within the area, only guesthouses. Chepelare town and Smolyan town are ordinary Bulgarian towns as discussed in the literature review above (Official Tourism Portal of Bulgaria, 2018a, 2018c, 2018d).

The research was conducted during the peak of the winter season in the area when the arrivals of tourists increase due to the different Bulgarian holidays. The Bulgarian holidays are the school holidays, the Bulgarian National day holiday and the traditional mummers` day “*Pes Ponedelnik*.” Another reason for the selection of the Rhodope Mountains region is that many locals are working seasonal jobs outside of their region. (СТОЙНЕВ, 2011; СУРКОВА, 2015).

In this regard, the study will be beneficial for similar regions that could develop towards slow tourism in all-year-round tourism which could provide locals with more job opportunities within their home.

It could be argued that this study will be of general interest not only to the winter resort destinations or the Rhodope Mountains but also to the surrounding towns and villages in the world with similar characteristics. The research would also be of general interest because towns and villages can evaluate and replace conventional tourism marketing with slow tourism characteristics to favor the relation between the locals and tourists, diminish environmental impacts, and enlighten folklore, culture and local traditions (Caffyn, 2012). By slowly changing to a sustainable slow tourism market, locals will be empowered economically and politically, which is necessary for deciding the future of their settlement (Conway & Timms, 2012).

The distribution of questionnaires and the interviews were held between first of February and tenth of March. The semi-structured interviews were conducted at the participants' premises in convenient for them time. Also, the time range of the conversations was from twenty minutes up to two hours. Dates and times of the interviews are enclosed in the appendix section. It is important to note that the selected criteria for all the participants in the study were aimed to be based only on relevant research outcomes that are of great interest to our research.

The researchers tried to maximize the sample by selecting a different type of accommodation and businesses. There are four hotels of different capacity, one guest house, a restaurant, and a tour operator. The hotels selected include a large hotel named "Snezhanka Hotel," with a capacity of 250 guests that is right in the middle of Pamporovo resort and also a smaller hotel called "Prespa Hotel," with a capacity of 148 guests in the center of Pamporovo resort. A hotel called "Finlandia," with a capacity of 225 guests situated in a quiet area that is 800m from the lifts and the ski-runs from Pamporovo resort. A hotel named "*Подонски дом*"

or translated “Rodopi Home,” with a capacity of more than 100 tourists, situated in Chepelare town that is ten kilometers away from Pamporovo. A guest house called “Momchil Unak,” with a capacity of about 17 guests in the village of Momchilovci that is 10 kilometers away from Pamporovo (Hotel Finlandia, 2018; Hotel Prespa, 2018; Momchilovtsi, 2015a; Rodopi Home, 2015; Snezhanka Hotels, 2015). “Filter guest house” restaurant was selected to consider the slow food aspect; the restaurant is right in the center of Shiroka Laka village and has a capacity of 50 guests during the winter and 100 guests during the summer. Regarding the importance of slow tourism activities, a domestic tour operator “Into the Wild” was selected since it is developing its business in the direction of slow tourism within the investigated region (Into the Wild, 2018). Altogether eight tourism professionals were interviewed as hotel Prespa had two representatives.

The researchers decided to make two in-depth interviews with tourists in addition to the questionnaire in order to compare and gain insight details of their perceptions and preferences. Regarding the convenient selected tourists, the selection criteria were that they should be on holiday for a minimum of one week, as the definition of slow tourism requires spending a long time in the destination (Georgica, 2015; Meng & Choi, 2015). Before conducting the interviews, the researchers asked for the duration of the tourists’ holidays, if their holidays were long enough, the interviewers proceeded with asking if they would like to participate in an interview. The interviews were conducted immediately after their agreement.

The questionnaires data collection started with the face validity from four tourists of the questionnaire’s structure. The tourists read the questions and gave us feedback on the questionnaires. Face validity helped us to adjust the order of the questions and correct few grammatical mistakes before distributing our questionnaire. The result was that one of the questions was removed as it was confusing the readers. All in all, the researchers managed to design a questionnaire that took only two minutes to answer (see appendix 1). As mentioned

earlier a total of 179 valid responses were collected of which 97 were from “Filter guest house” and 82 from Prespa Hotel.

The specific technique used to select participants from the target population was a convenience sampling due to the time frame that the researchers had for the completion of the research. As Neuman (2014, p. 248) argues, convenience samples are easy and quick to obtain. The ready availability and the cost-effectiveness of the data were the main reasons why the researchers selected convenience sampling protocol (Neuman, 2014, p. 248). The researchers believe that the cross-sectional study design of the questionnaire which consists of 40 days during the peak of the winter season for collecting the data is a reasonable time to cover a representative percentage of the tourists in the Rhodope Mountains.

### **3.7 Limitations**

The main limitation when conducting the research was that the questionnaire was distributed only in two of the investigated regions instead of all five investigated regions. Although our qualitative data was collected from all of the five investigated regions, our quantitative data was collected only from two of the regions. The reasons for this were the lack of time for the conduction of the research as well as the lack of financial resources for the research. However, both methods used in the research will provide the study with more abundant information that will help to conduct more extended analyses in search for the answer to the research question.

The next chapter deals with the results or outcome of the research. The chapter contains three parts, which includes the interviews results, the questionnaire results and the cross-tabulation results of the questionnaire.

#### **4. Results**

The aim of this chapter is only to introduce and provide a descriptive overview of the obtained results (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 188) In this chapter, the interviews, questionnaires and cross tabulation results will be represented and explained extensively. More in-depth discussion of the results will be performed in the analysis chapter.

Before starting, it is important to describe the demographics. The obtained sample from the interviews include ten interviews, eight active tourism professionals, and two tourists, as planned. The obtained sample from questionnaires were 179 responses out of 250 questionnaires distributed. The demographics in the questionnaire indicates that our sample is composed by 46,4% of middle age respondents between 30 and 45 years old, 34,1% of young age respondents between 18 and 29 years old, 11,7% of mature age respondents between 46 and 59 years old, 2,8% of teenage respondents under 18 years old, and 1,7% of golden age respondents over 60 years old. As we can see in the table below, the most significant group of participants 80,5 % are adults between 18 and 45 years old going on holidays to Rhodope Mountains.

AGE OF PARTICIPANTS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	UNDER 18	5	2,8	2,9	2,9
	BETWEEN 18 AND 29	61	34,1	35,3	38,2
	BETWEEN 30 AND 45	83	46,4	48,0	86,1
	BETWEEN 46 AND 59	21	11,7	12,1	98,3
	OVER 60	3	1,7	1,7	100,0
	Total	173	96,6	100,0	
Missing	System	6	3,4		
Total		179	100,0		

*Table 3. Age of participants. Questionnaire`s result.*

#### 4.1 Interview Results

The results from the interviews will be exposed in a table with the main issues discussed during the talks. The table will be found on page 47. The table will allow the reader to easily understand the content of the interviews and the consistencies and inconsistencies between the professionals. The two tourist`s interviews will be represented in blue color to differentiate it from the tourism professionals.

#### 4.2 Questionnaire Results

Here the results of the questionnaire will be exposed, using SPSS program tables and explaining the main results on each question. On the other hand, for the ordinal questions an extra test of normality and Spearman`s correlation test were performed to discover if the data is normally distributed, and if there is any correlation between the variables (Pallant, 2005, pp. 57,287).

**Table 4. Summary of the Interviews**

ISSUE	POSITIVE REPLY	NEGATIVE REPLY	NOT SPECIFIED
Awareness of slow tourism	6	2 2	
Philosophy of slow tourism	7 2	1	
Benefits of slow tourism for your business / you	6 2	1	1
Offering slow tourism activities	6 2	2	
Integrating slow tourism in your business/ holiday	5 2	3	Only elements; Only in summer;
Are the Rhodope Mountains suitable for practicing Slow tourism?	8 2		
Are tourists' preferences changing more to slow tourism preferences?	7	1	2
Current Cooperation with local villages/resort	6	1	1
Willingness to share the business with local Villages/resort	6	2	
Competition with local villages	4 1food	2	2
Is slow tourism considered to be beneficial for you in the future?	6 2	1	1
Current adaptation to slow tourism	4 1	2 1	2 elements
Offer advice to tourists about local culture? (Did the hotel give you advice?)	8 1	1	
Organization of events for tourists about local culture (did the hotel offer it?)	6 1	2 1	
Is food an experience for your guests/ for you?	7 1	1 1	
Do you offer slow food?	8		
Are there any differences between slow tourism & the other forms of tourism?	6 2	2	
Knowledge about Cittaslow	1	7 2	
Is conventional tourism a slow tourism?	2 1- only element	3 1	3
Is slow tourism something special?	6 2		2
Strategy for slow tourism	3	5	2
Ideas of slow tourism	6 1	2	1
Can Pamporovo practice more slow tourism activities?	2 1	4	2 1
Can the region adopt the Italian characteristics of slow tourism?	6 1	1	1 1
Is slow tourism a sustainable type of tourism?	6 1		2 1
Are you familiar with the "Hygge" concept?	2 1	6	1

**Question 1: How long is your holiday?** The performed survey revealed that the majority of the participants in the questionnaire 72,6% are spending less than a week for their holiday, and only 27,4% of the participants can be called slow tourists according to the criteria of the literature review such as more extended stays and a stay of a minimum of one week (Georgica, 2015; Meng & Choi, 2015; Small, 2016). The result of this particular question shows that the questionnaire can be taken into further account as the majority of people who participate in it are conventional tourists and this support the above-mentioned aim of this research to investigate whether conventional tourism uses premises of slow tourism. In other words, the sample of the questionnaire is more likely to be representative and reliable as most of the answers are provided by conventional tourists.

<b>DURATION OF HOLIDAY</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	LESS THAN 1 WEEK	130	72,6	72,6	72,6
	1 WEEK	36	20,1	20,1	92,7
	MORE THAN 1 WEEK	13	7,3	7,3	100,0
	Total	179	100,0	100,0	

*Table 5. Duration of holiday. Questionnaire`s result.*

**Question 2: Where do you stay during your holiday?** Most of the people prefer to stay in hotel premises (79,3%) while visiting the Rhodope Mountains. Only 14% uses guest houses, and 1,7% rent an apartment. From this table, again, can be seen that the sample is representative, meaning that most of the people are conventional tourists using hotels for their stay in the region (Bac Dorin, 2014; Georgica, 2015).



TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	HOTEL	142	79,3	79,3	79,3
	GUEST HOUSE	25	14,0	14,0	93,3
	RENTING APARTMENT	3	1,7	1,7	95,0
	OTHER <i>Please specify</i>	9	5,0	5,0	100,0
	<i>Holiday home</i>	4	2,2	2,2	
	<i>Visiting friends</i>	5	2,8	2,8	
Total		179	100,0	100,0	

**Table 6. Type of accommodation. Questionnaire`s result.**

**Question 3: Where do you prefer to eat?** In contrast to question two where people prefer staying in hotels, most of the people (63,1%) replied to question three as eating in local restaurants is more attractive than eating in the restaurant at a hotel (31,8%). This question gives an indication of how conventional tourists use slow tourism activities sporadically, like in this case slow food. So, the data is indicating that the conventional tourists in the Rhodope Mountains can be classified as what Yurtseven and Kaya (2011) claim to be called “accidental” tourists- the ones that practice slow activities without realizing it like it was assumed by the researchers at the beginning of the research.

EATING PREFERENCES					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	LOCAL RESTAURANT	113	63,1	63,1	63,1
	RESTAURANT AT HOTEL	57	31,8	31,8	95,0
Missing	OTHER <i>Please specify</i>	9	5,0	5,0	100,0
	<i>At home</i>	1	,6	,6	
	<i>At villages</i>	3	,6	,6	
	<i>At "Filter guest house"</i>	3	1,7	1,7	
	<i>At restaurant "Orkestar"</i>	1	,6	,6	
	<i>Shiroka Laka</i>	1	,6	,6	
	Total	1	,6	,6	
	999	177	98,9	100	
		2	1,1		
	Total	179	100,0	100,0	

Table 7. Eating preferences. Questionnaire`s result.

**Question 4: Have you visited at least one village in the Rhodope Mountains while on holiday?** Here, the results show that a significant percent of tourists (73,2%) prefer to travel outside of their resort or place of stay to visit local villages. The conventional travelers use part of his winter holidays to visit some of the surrounding villages and therefore, realizes slow tourism experiences as a part of their holidays.

VISITING LOCAL VILLAGE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	YES	131	73,2	73,2	73,2
	NO	48	26,8	26,8	100,0
	Total	179	100,0	100,0	

Table 8. Visiting local village. Questionnaire`s result.

**Question 5: Have you tried local traditional food during your stay?** Question five reveals that 90,5% of the tourists have shown an interest in trying traditional food. As claimed by Bac Dorin (2014) and Lee et al. (2015) those people are more eager to practice slow tourism.

<b>DID YOU TRY TRADITIONAL FOOD?</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	YES	162	90,5	90,5	90,5
	NO	17	9,5	9,5	100,0
	Total	179	100,0	100,0	

*Table 9. Did you try traditional food? Questionnaire`s result.*

**Question 6: How many times have you eaten local food?** The results from the question show that a considerable percentage of people 80,4% are enjoying local food as they tried it repetitively. Therefore, the results suggest that the tourists in the Rhodope Mountain are more likely to incline into slow tourism activities and experience authenticity often (Lee et al., 2015).

<b>HOW MANY TIMES DID YOU TRY LOCAL FOOD?</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None	17	9,5	9,5	9,5
	Once	18	10,1	10,1	19,6
	A FEW	87	48,6	48,6	68,2
	EVERY TIME	57	31,8	31,8	100,0
	Total	179	100,0	100,0	

*Table 10. How many times did you try local food? Questionnaire`s result.*

**Question 7: What kind of food do you prefer when you are on holiday?** Here, the results are very appealing as 83,8% of the people prefer to eat slowly prepared food. Again, the

symbolism of slow food is important even though the sample comes from conventional tourism, the activities from slow tourism are represented and appreciated between other currents of tourism. The results suggest that quality is more appreciated versus quantity, and the local food from the region and its price is valued by consumers (Guiver & McGrath, 2016).

FOOD PREFERENCES					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	QUICKLY PREPARED	29	16,2	16,2	16,2
	SLOWLY PREPARED	150	83,8	83,8	100,0
	Total	179	100,0	100,0	

*Table 11. Food Preferences. Questionnaire`s result.*

**Question 8: What is more important to you during this holiday?** The question reveals that 58,7% of the tourists are interested in seeing as much as possible from the local area during their holidays, making them the standard type of tourists, while 38,5% prefer to get closer to the local people and see how they live, bringing them closer to the slow traveler profile (Guiver & McGrath, 2016; Larsen, 2016; Varley & Semple, 2015).

WHAT MATTERS DURING THIS HOLIDAY?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	TO SEE MANY THINGS	105	58,7	60,3	60,3
	TO FEEL HOW LOCALS LIVE HERE	69	38,5	39,7	100,0
	Total	174	97,2	100,0	
Missing	System	5	2,8		
Total		179	100,0		

*Table 12. What matters during this holiday? Questionnaire`s result.*

**Question 9: What are the main activities that you will be practicing during this stay?** Multiple choice answers. The results from question nine indicate that most of the tourists visiting the Rhodope Mountains are mainly practicing *winter sports 29,6%* and *sightseeing activities 22,3%*, which is not surprising, taking into account the result from question one, which specifies that most of the people who were participating in the questionnaire are conventional tourists. However, a significant percentage of people pointed the importance of *food activities 19,5%* and *walking activities 16,5%* which is in congruence with slow tourism (Caffyn, 2012).

ACTIVITIES Frequencies				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
ACTIVITIES DURING MY HOLIDAY <sup>a</sup>	WALKING ACTIVITIES	66	16,5%	37,5%
	WINTER SPORT ACTIVITIES	118	29,6%	67,0%
	FOOD ACTIVITIES	78	19,5%	44,3%
	BARS ACTIVITIES	24	6,0%	13,6%
	SIGHTSEEING ACTIVITIES	89	22,3%	50,6%
	MUSEUMS ACTIVITIES	20	5,0%	11,4%
	OTHER ACTIVITY	4	1,0%	2,3%
Total		399	100,0%	226,7%

*Table 13. Preferred activities during holiday. Questionnaire`s result.*

**Question 10: Do you determine yourself as a slow tourist?** The table below clearly shows that only 22,9% of the participants regard themselves as slow tourists, and the most substantial percentage of people 43% do not perceive themselves as slow tourists. As expected by the researchers, there are a total of 34,1% of people who admitted that they do not know what the term slow tourist means.

ARE YOU A SLOW TOURIST?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	YES	41	22,9	22,9	22,9
	NO	77	43,0	43,0	65,9
	I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS	61	34,1	34,1	100,0
	Total	179	100,0	100,0	

**Table 14.** Are you a slow tourist? Questionnaire`s results

Further down, the results from the test for normality and Spearman correlation test are shown. On the following table, the tests of normality, the research is only interested in the results from the demographic measurement “*Age of participants*” in order to see whether the research managed to collect answers equally from different age groups. The results show that all p-values are  $<.001$  (.000). This means that the data is not normally distributed (Julie, 2005, p. 57). The results from the test of normality for the measurements “*Duration of holiday*” and “*How many times did you try local food*” are not significant for the research as they are not classified as demographic measurements.

**Table 15.** Tests for normality (n = 179)

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	p-value	Statistic	df	p-value
<b>Age of participants</b>	.247	173	.000	.852	173	.000
<b>Duration of holiday</b>	.436	173	.000	.606	173	.000
<b>How many times did you try local food</b>	.291	173	.000	.807	173	.000

The Spearman’s rank correlation test indicates the following results. A weak correlation between age of participants and duration of the holiday, which means that an increase in the

age of tourist does not affect the duration stayed for the holiday. A weak correlation between age of participants and how many times did you try local food means that an increase in the age of the participant does not increase the probability of trying local foods. A weak correlation between how many times did you try food and duration of holiday means that the event of eating more local food does not necessarily increase during longer holidays. The two are not related.

**Table 16. Correlation between ordinal variables (n = 179)**

		<b>Age of participants</b>	<b>Duration of holiday</b>	<b>How many times did you try local food</b>
<b>Age of participants</b>	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.043	-.072
	p-value (2-tailed)	.	.578	.348
	N	173	173	173
<b>Duration of holiday</b>	Correlation coefficient	.043	1.000	-.056
	p-value (2-tailed)	.578	.	.454
	N	173	179	179
<b>How many times did you try local food</b>	Correlation coefficient	-.072	-.056	1.000
	p-value (2-tailed)	.348	.454	.
	N	173	179	179

### 4.3 Cross tabulation Results

Cross tabulation results will be summarized in one table to facilitate the understanding of it. In this case, the question “Are you a slow tourist?” will be cross-tabulated with the rest of the ten questions. This method will help the reader to gain deeper insights into how slow tourism contributes to today’s conventional tourists and the general knowledge that tourists have about the slow movement.

**Table 17. Are you a slow tourist?**

	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW
<i>Age of participants</i>			
Under 18	0	2	3
Between 18-29	14	34	13
Between 30-45	15	34	34
Between 46-59	8	4	9
Over 60	2	1	0
<i>Duration of holiday</i>			
Less than 1 week	32	58	40
1 week	4	17	15
More than 1 week	5	2	6
<i>Accommodation</i>			
Hotel	28	65	49
Guest House	11	6	8
Renting Apartment	0	2	1
Other	2	4	3
<i>Type of restaurants</i>			
Local restaurant	30	47	36
Hotel restaurant	10	25	22
Other	1	5	3
<i>Visit local village</i>			
Yes	28	57	46
No	13	20	15
<i>Try traditional food</i>			
Yes	37	69	56
No	4	8	5
<i>How many times traditional food</i>			
Zero	1	10	6
One	5	6	7
A few	21	35	31
Every Time	14	26	17
<i>Food preferences</i>			
Quickly prepared	7	14	8
Slowly prepared	34	63	53
<i>What matters on holiday</i>			
To see many things	23	44	38
To feel how locals live	17	32	20
<i>Main activities</i>			
Walking	13	35	19
Winter Sports	26	52	43
Food experience	20	34	24
Night clubs/Bars	7	5	13
Sightseeing	25	40	26
Museums	5	8	7
Other	2	0	2

From the set of “Are you a slow tourist?” questions with the rest of the questionnaire, the following results can be understood. There is a general knowledge of slow tourism between



the respondents. 64% of the conventional tourists could answer affirmatively or negatively about if they were slow tourists. The most representative group opted for “NO”, assuring that the right sample was chosen for the study.

The duration of holidays question tells that 78% of travelers that see themselves as slow tourist stay less than a week in the destination, which does not match with the academical definition of a slow tourist. On the other hand, 54,8% of the sample corroborates again that the sample is made from mainly conventional tourism. Another interesting fact is that 29% of the respondents that answered “No” or “I do not know” could possibly be perceived as slow tourists because they stay one week or more at the destination.

According to accommodation, 79,3% use hotels during their stay, 19,7% of those affirm that they are slow tourists. The literature says that most of the slow travelers prefer a more familiar hospitality choosing guest houses or renting apartments or rooms. In this case, the perception of being a slow tourist is inconsistent with the actions but this informs the reader that slow tourists use conventional accommodation, and therefore, is a good sign for the hoteliers with the aim of changing towards a sustainable tourism. Thus, it is important to note that half of the questionnaires were distributed in a hotel, and subsequently, it is logical that most of the answers are hotel.

A local restaurant is preferred by 63.1% of the respondents, whereas 32,8% still use the hotel restaurant, and 83,9% prefers slowly prepared food. In this aspect, regional restaurant experience and slowly prepared food are important for the conventional and the slow traveler. 90,5% of the guests try traditional food delicacies, 10% one time, 48,6% a few times, and 31,8% every time during their stay. The data tells the importance of the traditional slow food and the willingness of tourists to enjoy a traditional meal more than once. In that respect, slow food movement is already popular among the conventional tourists and it is an activity that they aim to experience.

Visiting local villages out of the resort is important for 15,6% of slow tourists, and 57,5% of conventional tourist. Au contraire, 7,2% of slow tourists do not need to visit local villages, as well as 19,55% of conventional tourists. In general, there is an interest in getting to know surrounding villages as an alternative activity to the winter resort, meaning that at some point, conventional tourists use slow tourism aspects for amusement, but from those visits 58,7% engage in them just to see as many things as they can from the area, and only 38,6% do them to see how locals live, which is according to slow tourism premises.

The main activities for those who consider themselves slow tourists are 63,4% winter sports, 61% sightseeing, 48,8% food experience, 31,7% walking, 17% nightclubs and bars, and 12,2% visit museums. The main activities for those who consider themselves as conventional tourists are 71,7% winter sports, 48% sightseeing, 42% food experience, 39% walking, 13% nightclubs and bars, and 11% museums. Interesting positioning since both types of tourists do the same. There are no big differences in the activities they engage in during holidays between the two groups, whether they consider themselves slow or conventional.

After representing and explaining the main results of the interviews, the questionnaires, and the cross tabulation in easy visual tables, the research will proceed to analyze the results from the interviews and questionnaires by objectives. This method will allow the reader to identify the main results and match them with the literature, to identify if the researchers have achieved the objective, and to identify if the interpretations of the qualitative and quantitative results are in congruence or discordance.

## 5. Analysis and discussion

The analysis will be divided into the eight objectives as mentioned before. Each objective will be given a separate title and will be followed by the question itself. The information included in the subtitle will be the results extracted from both research methods together with the proper analysis from the literature review and analytical interpretations. At the end of the analysis section, the authors will provide a summary of all participants' opinions and perception regarding the tourism in the Rhodope Mountains and the future of slow tourism.

### 5.1 Conventional tourists using slow tourism

The objective one "*Is there any significant number of conventional tourists using slow tourism type offers?*" results will be discussed. On the questionnaire results section, the sample frame has proven to be significantly a conventional tourist, mostly staying in hotels, less than a week and with the aim to see as many things as possible. Considering the above-mentioned, the facts that 83,8% of the participants answered that they prefer slowly prepared food; that 90,5% did try traditional food; and that 73,2% visit local villages, it could be argued that the tourists in the conventional tourism settings practice slow tourism activities sporadically as part of their holiday activities. The tourists' interviews confirm the data with the same answers. Along these lines, Oh et al. (2016) and Larsen (2016) mentions that slow and conventional tourism coexist together in the same travel and person, and they usually shift from fast to slow tourism behaviors without being conscious. This case had been corroborated in this research.

On the other hand, the tourism professionals mention the importance of trekking and nature activities in summer, when the offering of slow tourism activities is wider due to the region's characteristics. The professionals also pinpointed the changing behavior of the tourists towards quality and authentic experiences over the years which is according to slow tourism perceptions (Guiver & McGrath, 2016; Meng & Choi, 2015), and the growing demand on them

in the future. Seven out of eight tourism professionals perceive that tourists' behavior is changing more into slow tourists' behavior. As one of the interviewed participants said: *“Since the previous year or two, there is a huge difference in tourists. People started paying attention to the little things....what they eat, what is the quality.”*

Only two of the professionals did not agree, they expressed that the tourists have no interest in slow activities. The current analysis plus the cooperation from slow tourism establishments with the big hotels gives an extensive answer, which is that there is a growing demand for slow tourism activities from conventional tourists, and therefore conventional tourism establishments use slow tourism to attract tourists.

Besides, all the tourism professionals answered that they offer slow food and advice their tourists to get to know the local culture. One of the managers from Pamporovo resort confirmed the slow food demand from their tourists by saying: *“Even when they come here, they say many times, can there be in the menu, for example, patatnic, marudnic (pancakes from the Rhodopes), typical stuff for the Rhodopes. And this makes them happy.”* Another manager talked about the changes in the attitude of the tourists and her perceptions: *“Experience shows me that people are looking for the original more and more, and also whatever is regional. They are curious, they want to see what is going on. They come and literally their first question during accommodating is what can we see, visit, understand, and learn. That's it.”* In addition, Meng and Choi (2015), Pecsek (2016) and Chung et al. (2017) claim that tourists who are in search for an authentic experience go to meet with locals, and experience regional folklore, so, it could be argued that the traditional tourists' demands prefer to practice more slow tourism activities, which corroborates with the objective's answer.

Moreover, the willing adaptability of all tourism professionals to offer *“elements of slow tourism”* and to be *“the starting point”* of slow tourism activities as they stated is a serious proof that this type of tourism is likely to be of a great importance for the tourists. The answers

give the perception of the importance of slow activities from the traditional tourists seasonally, especially in the summer. The seasonality says that the establishers are willing to adapt if it helps the occupancy on the low-medium season. This finding corroborates the objective answer and in addition, it counsels on the importance of the demand by the tourist side, which according to Caffyn (2012) the slow tourist chooses the kind of tourism they want before the destination. In this aspect, if the hoteliers want to attract more tourist during the low occupancy season, they should market themselves with the activities that tourist are searching for. In this case nature, regional food and quality authentic experiences.

## **5.2 Tourists knowledge of slow tourism and practices**

In this section, the objective two *“Do conventional tourists consider themselves as “slow tourists” when practicing slow tourism activities? Do conventional tourists know the meaning of “slow tourism”?”* answers, can be found in the results of the tenth question in the questionnaire. Only 34% of the people admit that they do not know what slow tourist means, and it could be said that most people who participated in the questionnaire have an idea of what slow tourism is. While it is not known what they understand under the concept of slow tourism as they were not interviewed, it is difficult to answer whether they have significant knowledge of the slow tourism movement. On the tourist interviews, the knowledge of slow tourism is associated with pleasure, enjoyment and no time pressure which is in line with the experience and self-realization objectives of slow tourism (Chung et al., 2017; Meng & Choi, 2015; Oh et al., 2016).

However, their practices show no difference between the tourists who consider themselves as slow tourists or not when engaging in activities during their holidays. The cross-tabulation results state that both types of tourists engage exactly in the same activities in the same proportion. The results are interesting because it explains that conventional tourists do not consider themselves as slow tourists when practicing slow tourism activities like sightseeing,

food experience, walking and museums (Caffyn, 2012; Meng & Choi, 2015), and that the attitude on how to realize those activities is the most important fact to distinguish who is a slow tourist. In this case, the behavioral answer of “*feel like locals live*” gives a glimpse of the slow tourist spirit that is followed by 38,6% of tourists. The behavior towards how the activity is carried out, whether it is fast paced or slow paced, the interactions with other people, and their interest for the local culture and folklore will determine if they are slow tourists or not (Lin, 2016; Oh et al., 2016; Pecsek, 2016). Therefore, the activities engaged in does not confirm if the tourist is part of the slow movement, rather, it is only the behavior when realizing it. In this aspect, the research is limited in the investigation and invites future researchers to study less of which activities they do and more of how they realize them.

### **5.3 Tourism professionals as slow tourism establishers**

On the objective three “*Do tourism professionals consider themselves as “slow tourism” establishers?*” the answers from the hotels indicate that they do not consider themselves as slow tourist establishers. On the other hand, the guesthouse, the local restaurant, and the local tour operator considered themselves as establishers of slow tourism in the region. Furthermore, the restaurant manager was one of the very few who indicated that he is familiar with the “Hygge” trend mentioned in the literature review and he noted that their company provides the enjoyment trend of slow tourism. The fact that small local businesses are the pioneers and more eager to practice slow growth economy (Conway & Timms, 2012), and therefore, participate in slow tourism activities, is not new because their existence is based on self-sufficiency and cooperation thanks to their small capacity. Big hotels need more resources and are dependent on the supply chain to acquire those (Farrell, 1999; Larsen, 2016).

The restaurant manager acknowledged proudly to be the pioneer in Shiroka Laka village to implement slow food and slow tourism premises as their knowledge of food would be classified as solid when considering their forty years of work experience in the hospitality

industry. Also, the guest house manager has indicated to offer slow tourism exactly as Caffyn (2012) claim to be right: when allowing visitors to choose their own pace-flexible timings for meals.

In addition, “Filter” guesthouse restaurant, “Hero” guesthouse, and “Into the Wild” managers recognize that the process of becoming a slow tourism establisher requires hard work and devotion. For the guesthouse and the restaurant, the process took few years and was slow. On the other hand, the tour operator “Into the Wild” acknowledges that their business is developing well as only after one year of business they can set money aside and do investments, although it involves overcoming bureaucratic obstacles and hard work. He adds that “*this business is not that slow as a return*”. This is in contrast to the academic literature that points to the issue of slow capital return for the slow tourism businesses (Conway & Timms, 2012). This single example shows the actual tourists demands and that the future entrepreneurs or tourism establishers in the area are likely to have a bright future considering more slow tourism activities.

The managers agreed that the word of mouth marketing is one of the most valuable tools. Bureaucratic obstacles were experienced on the way but generally, they had no restrictions. Otherwise, hotel managers often mention the bureaucratic obstacles they encounter when incorporating local produce, which is due to the certification restriction.

Another interesting finding is that it can be argued that although managers have similar activities to the literature philosophy of slow tourism, they do not have a clear idea of who exactly the slow travelers are in regard to the slow tourists’ profile. As indicated in the literature review, the profile of the Bulgarian slow tourists according to Ivan Mihalev & Tsankova (2017) is that those tourists are mainly young people who want to escape from cities. However, when asked “*How does this slow tourist look, in your own view?*” one of the managers replied that slow tourists are somewhere above 45 years old. The manager's perception is also in contrast

with the results from the questionnaire as the main age group was up to 45 years old and the Spearman's rank correlation test did not indicate that tourists stay longer when they are older. Another manager said that those are tourists of all age range. So, to attract more slow tourists, managers need to learn about slow tourists first as it looks like they all have different opinions about the profile of the slow tourists. In addition, more detailed research is needed on the topic to find out how managers perceive slow tourists.

Looking into the strategy to incorporate or become slow tourism establisher, the hotel managers states *"I do not see the entire resort changing to slow tourism"*, *"we are not the location for slow tourists"* or *"we are not adjusted to slow tourism"* but affirmed that they would incorporate slow tourism activities if there was a demand from the tourist side. As Larsen (2016) and Caffyn (2012) said, the key is to incorporate slow tourism attributes into the conventional tourism and to market them properly to become a more sustainable activity.

#### **5.4 Slow tourism as an improvement of conventional tourism**

The objective four *"Is there any significant perception of slow tourism seen as an improvement of conventional tourism?"* is answered with a total of seven experts answering positively and one negatively. The manager from Finlandia Hotel specifies that if slow tourism is applied as nowadays, using it only as an alternative activity, then it is not an improvement. The other interviewees see slow tourism as an improvement of conventional tourism because it gives unique experiences, attracts more tourists and helps the occupancy during the low season, especially the summer. Snezhanka hotel and Rhodopi home hotel managers add that slow tourism would be fine for the low season but for the high season, in this case winter, the tourism that they have is already fine. All of them agree that slow tourism will help to attract more tourists, distributed along the year, and to market the region as unique *"as long as interest in people is sustained"* says hotel Prespa manager. The literature agrees with the economic (Conway & Timms, 2012) and marketing view (Caffyn, 2012) of the tourism professionals, but



none of them, except for the Hero guesthouse, mentions the benefits for the tourists, they only mentioned the benefit for the company. In conclusion, slow tourism is mostly viewed as an economic and marketing gain improvement, not as a movement.

Furthermore, the slow tourism establishers add that slow tourism is the “*only future for the area*”, “*adds quality, improve products*”, and “*the region as a whole has not understood the movement, they first need to understand and then apply it*”. The opinions are in congruence with the economic and marketing view that most of the hoteliers have about slow tourism; leading to a misinterpretation of the slow tourism’s philosophy and benefits when putting those in practice.

The connection between social media and slow tourism is also discussed by some of the participants as a contribution to develop and improve the slow tourism. Caffyn (2012) explains that fast technologies should be used and cohabit with slow tourism to extend the philosophy, create more authentic experiences, and help people to find the right choices. In relation to this, professionals claim that not much is needed for their advertisements. The guest house manager stated: “*I have a picture with such a pot of tea, a picture absolutely pure, not professional, a picture which I made with my phone, right there on the fence...the pot of tea simply put to look down to the view... I can't tell you how many people this picture brought me, people are just looking for such stuff...*”

Similarly, the tour operator also commented that he can do great advertisements only by using his phone and Facebook. Taking into account that both of them are claiming to be satisfied with their business, it is not surprising to assume that their way of approaching people is a good way to advertise slow tourism. Another assumption that this study can make based on the findings is that the new target tourists are likely to be more impressed by the simplest advertisements that only show elements of nature like the pure pot of herbal tea mentioned by

the guest house manager and the beautiful sunrise mentioned by the tour operator. However, this requires a completely new research.

Based on the views of the tourists obtained from the interview, the tourism that is presently practiced in Pamporovo has nothing to do with slow tourism, and that twenty-five years ago it would have been more possible to do slow tourism than in the present. They also added that Pamporovo can adapt, but it all depends on the citizens living there. Those views underline the personal view, missing from the tourism professionals. The tourists say that for slow tourism to be considered in the region, it needs to be considered first for the locals. The interaction and the openness between tourists and locals is a premise of slow tourism (Dickinson et al., 2011).

### **5.5 Slow tourism and environmental sustainability**

In this subsection, one of the slow tourism premises will be discussed with the results of the interviews. In this case objective five *“Is there significant perception of slow tourism seen as improvement of environmental sustainability?”* would be answered. This objective goes hand in hand with the theoretical frame of Place and Travel dimensions, from these the subsequent terms will be discussed: landscape, environment, and products related to Place; and distance, speed, mode, and low carbon, related to Travel (Caffyn, 2012).

None of the participants disagreed that slow tourism is a sustainable tourism which leads to the assumption that all of the tourism professionals appreciate the benefits of slow tourism. Also, most of the participants mentioned the area of the Rhodope Mountains and the natural wonders that can be seen in the Rhodopes. Along these lines, it could be said that nature in the region is counted as one of the resources of the conventional tourism. Also, the Into the Wild manager expressed his desire to protect nature more and convert Rhodope area into a natural protected park with the support of the ministry. He highlights the need to limit the access of vehicles to natural areas. The interviewees emphasized the transport dependence of the tourists

in the area, they use cars mostly because the public transport is poor and time-dependent. Lee et al. (2015) mentions the importance of reducing fast travel modes for sustainable purposes. He also declares the need to increase the convenience of public transports, particularly in mountainous areas, where well-equipped public transport will help to maintain the natural resources, the quality of the trip and the safety of the tourists.

Some of the tourism establishers have gone farther by offering in addition to nature, local and bioproducts which *“helps to grow the region into sustainability”*. The providers of ecological and local products remark the importance of the sustainability in their economy. They produce and prepare the food while the client buys; a simple cycle that *“small villages can do and be sustainable, bigger cities rely on food chains, and is more difficult”*.

A casual remark, it was interesting that most of the stakeholders that were involved in delivering quality bio foods did not have any advertisements or marketing campaigns. Instead, they were relying on the word of mouth advertisement. One of the participants stated: *“We cannot advertise ourselves, the clients themselves understand, right after they try the food, where they are, and the advertisement comes from our clients. Word of mouth. This advertisement is the greatest advertisement. We do not brag about who we are... that we sell only real food. Just the guests come and they themselves advertise our restaurant. We have many, many fans of ours and they always call.”* Considering those words, it is clear that slow tourism establishers want to keep their business only for people who will appreciate it and enjoy it. Namely, to keep their business for the slow tourists only.

## **5.6 Slow tourism and authentic experiences**

Authentic experiences are the basis for realizing slow tourism (Chung et al., 2017; Meng & Choi, 2015). An authentic experience can be experienced by the Place dimension, locality, distinctiveness, landscape, and heritage; or by the People dimension, community, culture, local enterprise, cuisine, hospitality and authenticity (Caffyn, 2012). The ideal slow pace place and

the people interactions can make the perfect slow tourism experience valued by its perceived authenticity (Guiver & McGrath, 2016; Meng & Choi, 2015). On the objective six *“Is there any significant perception of slow tourism seen as improvement of experience authenticity?”* the results will be analyzed from the authentic experiences view.

The conducted questionnaire indicates that even the conventional tourists are in search for authentic food experiences, village experience, and interaction with locals which could be interpreted into unique locality, heritage and landscape, and local interaction, with interest for the community, the hospitality, and the culture of the region. The questionnaires indicate that around 63% of the participants claimed to prefer to eat in local restaurants and another 5% of the participants specified other places that could also be identified as slow tourism experiences, like a home meal and local village restaurant. This matches the data of Mihalev and Tsankova (2017) mentioned in the literature review above. Also, the fact that about 90,5% of the participants have tried traditional and local food, and that 80,4% of the participants have tried traditional food few times or every time when on holiday, mean that tourists appreciate the authentic food experience. Secondly, the cross-tabulation table reveals the interest of 57,5% of conventional tourists to visit local villages, and from those, 38,6% are interested in seeing how locals live and interact with them. The tourist interviews support the questionnaires and cross-tabulation results by highlighting the importance of local interaction, food, folklore, and village experience. They add the importance to *“relax”*, *“appreciate small things in life”* and *“aleness”*.

From the tourism professionals' points of view, they all mention that the experiences that tourists seek more are regional food, folklore, traditions and culture, and nature experience. All of the remarked elements are part of the slow tourism experiences (Bac Dorin, 2014), and therefore it could be stated that conventional tourism uses aspects of slow tourism to improve their offering, and consequently improves the experience authenticity of the tourists. This

statement was also clearly expressed by some of the hoteliers. Half of the interviewees mentioned the importance of local interaction, hospitality and gathering activities, such as herbs and mushrooms that are seasonal activities; and few include farming, sports, and yoga. The big capacity hotels remark the importance of “*Bulgarian evenings*” as an activity done in the hotel premises and highly appreciated by the guests.

In addition, the guest house manager specifically emphasized on the attitude and the treatment of the guests. Through the whole interview, the importance of the special treatments of the guests was one of the main topics emerging and accentuating all the time. Also, on the question “*What do tourists mention most often when they are staying with you?*” the guest house manager stated: “*The most that touches them is the attitude. This is the biggest thing that they are impressed of. The attitude.*” So, as the People dimension says, social interaction between locals and tourist is the most crucial aspect to be remembered by slow tourists (Fraga & Botelho, 2016; Gössling & Peeters, 2015; Guiver & McGrath, 2016). In conclusion, tourists visiting the Rhodope villages have the same characteristics as the slow tourists described in the literature. Also, it means that stakeholders, not only in the villages but also in the surrounding areas need to take special care of how they treat their guests in order to be considered in the future as the tourists first choice.

Slow tourism experiences had been acknowledged during the interviews. Therefore, the researchers believe that the reader needs a deeper insight into the thoughts and actions of the professionals about slow food, slow tourism activities and culture.

**Slow food.** Results from the questionnaire showed that most of the tourists prefer slowly prepared food and therefore it is not surprising that all the tourism professionals take care of that element. Regarding the preparation of the food, two of the participants, respectively, the restaurant manager and the guest house manager pinpointed that they are extremely cautious about how they prepared the food. For example, one of the participants mentioned that potatoes

are being peeled and cut at the moment to deliver the needed quality. It is not surprising that it was specifically the participants from Shiroka Laka village and Momchilovtsi village that accentuated the freshly prepared food as they were the ones most knowledgeable about the topic of slow tourism and they were the ones that admitted that their business depends on the tourists' demand for slow food. Also, it becomes clear that the stakeholders from rural areas are likely to be exactly slow tourism establishers.

However, the managers of the bigger hotels claimed that they also offer slow food such as *cheverme* (barbeque that needs around 6 hours to be prepared), *baked bell peppers*, *pickles*, *rabbits*, *turkeys*, *ecological yellow cheese* etc. The difference between them and the participants from the villages was that they would provide more slow food if there is a request by tourists. However, one of the hotel managers said that their own yellow cheese *“is preferred and very much liked by our tourists and guests of the restaurant.”*

Respectively, the traditional tourists are appreciating the slow food. When taking into considerations the managers' words that they would do everything that tourists demand, it could be argued that it is a matter of time before tourism establishers of the bigger hotels turn some of their practices to slow tourism to satisfy the demands.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that one of the traditional hotels is raising their animals such as sheep, lambs, rabbits, and pigs and making their own products. The representatives of the same hotel recognize the importance of the slow food and admitted that the future goes in that direction. With this in mind, it can be argued that even the big bases, considering the capacity of beds in the hotels, can offer elements of slow tourism if they perceive it as an important element for the provided service.

Finally, one of the managers talked about the obstacles hoteliers encounter when they offer slow food, she mentioned the Bulgarian law concerning foods as a restriction. She said: *“A lot of bureaucratic obstacles have to be passed over, which is respectively related to a*

*certain amount of money in order for us to offer slow food, we should have a document.” In addition, the lady mentioned that the hotel cannot even take from a small producer if they do not have a certificate. A very interesting comment she made about the small guest houses was: “to what extent is this food accepted by the health authorities... these people are producing honey for themselves, producing jam for themselves... But when they offer it in a restaurant, during a control, they have no certificates, this is a weakness in our law. This omission that you cannot offer your own produce, because you have no document.”*

So, it can be said that not all managers are ready yet to go through all that bureaucracy as the hotel that has its own little farm. It is certain that this requires a lot of work, money, and new skills on how to deal with own production and managers need to learn the skills. It seems that adopting a slow food concept is not as easy as it seems and this will eventually happen if the tourists’ preferences totally begin to determine the decisions of the conventional hotels. Therefore, it is clear now why all managers in Pamporovo resort stated that they only can offer elements of slow tourism.

**Slow tourism activities.** No need to mention that the participants from the village areas confirmed the practice of slow tourism activities such as storytelling, slow food, walks on food, gathering herbs and others. It was more interesting to hear the opinion of the managers from the resort who were mainly saying that they can offer such activities only in the summer season as the tourists in the winter are in the resort mainly for ski activities. Most of the managers mentioned that they organize visits to different places in the area such as small villages, caves, or other small excursions in the summer. However, the results from our questionnaire that was conducted in the winter season showed that around 73% of the participants have visited a local village in the area and many of the participants prefer walking and food activities. This leads to the assumption that conventional tourists prefer to be offered slow tourism activities.

The tour operator “Into the Wild”, for example, mentioned that he offers alpinism, mountain walks all year round for beginners to advance; which leads to an active relaxation or slow adventure tourism. Slow adventure tourism consists of enjoying the great outdoors and sports, engaging with the environment, feeling, and sensing the place, and reconnecting socially with the community and tradition in nature, in the time pace needed (Varley & Semple, 2015). Into the Wild manager expressed multiple times the satisfaction that his guests derive when relaxing with nature, doing yoga in the mountains, trying local delicacies, or simply reconnecting with Mother Nature during the trip. Again, the perception of authenticity experience on slow tourism activities is improved.

**Culture.** The results from the conducted interviews showed that all the tourism professionals give advice to people to get to know the local culture and most of them have organized events that bring tourists closer to the local culture. This is one sign that conventional tourism adapts to slow tourism elements to offer a good service to its clients. However, one of the participants made the following statement: *“So, for me, the mass tourist can look for certain elements, more like entertainments, let's say to diversify their holiday. For instance, they came with their family, with two children and said, let's see how they make cheese. Yes. This could be an element of slow tourism. But it is not slow tourism.”* Consequently, it could be assumed that conventional tourism is using slow tourism as a commodity only to diversify the tourist opportunities. If this is so, then it is not reliable to argue that conventional tourism is turning more into the slow type of tourism, but only using elements of it for their own benefits.

Quinlan Cuter and Carmichael (2010, p. 7) confirmed that authenticity is one of the essential characteristics of the tourist's experience. So, it could be argued that both conventional and slow tourism depends on a perceived authenticity, however, this study is unable to determine to what extent slow tourism brings authenticity into the conventional tourism.



### 5.7 Slow tourism and local economy

The consumption of local goods, whether tangible or intangible, helps the local economy to grow steadily, to create job opportunities for locals and maintain at certain levels, traditions, culture and folklore (Conway & Timms, 2012; Pecsek, 2016). On the objective seven *“Is there any significant perception of slow tourism seen as improvement of consuming locality?”* the result tends to give a realistic perception of whether slow tourism helps the community to grow and how, and what are their deficiencies. This objective is based on the theoretical frame of Place, including locality and produce, and People dimension, including community and local enterprise (Caffyn, 2012).

The managers stressed that when it comes to food and culture, they prefer to use local suppliers whenever they can. Only big hotels mentioned that they only used non-regional food suppliers when the locals cannot deliver the needed quantity, due to the lack of quantity that could meet all their needs. For the food local suppliers, it means that if they increased their production they would have a buyer, and also create more job opportunities for locals. On the other hand, if the food production is massive with big farms, it will reduce the attractiveness of the area as a village, affect the landscape, and increase the pollution in the area (Gössling & Peeters, 2015).

Six out of eight managers speak about the importance of cooperating with the local enterprises and the community itself. Half of them highlight the need to help each other, and when a tourist seeks an experience that the establisher cannot offer, then the establisher should send it to another local that can satisfy their needs. Participating in decision making, cooperating and accepting cultural differences, encouraging the locals, and learning from each other, are the main attributes of a good slow growth economy when no one is excluded and this produces local jobs (Farrell, 1999). Some of those principles are already showing up in the region and they are an improvement to the local economy. The last statement is confirmed by comments like *“what grows and is produced in the region keeps the region distinctive”*, *“Helps the local*

*production*”, “*Gives the locals opportunity to show their lifestyle and traditions*”, and “*slow tourism is better for locals (economically)*”.

The entrepreneur managers, however, which are the guest house manager, the restaurant, and the tour operator, emphasize the need for more entrepreneurs and ambitious locals to start more local businesses in the region. They added “*Many villages... There is nowhere to sleep, nowhere to eat... This is simply a problem! There should be more ambitious local people*”, “*The slow tourism is something special... because not anybody understands slow tourism and not anybody can apply it,*” and “*Locals do not have the vision*”, they all concluded. Generally, there is a significant improvement of consuming locality, growing economy and cooperation between businesses since slow activities had been applied to regional tourism. Entrepreneurs hope that soon new locals will invest and start a business in the area in line with their businesses after seeing their success.

### **5.8 Slow tourism and self-realization**

The last theme will talk about self-realization, an important premise for slow travelers. The theme will answer the objective eight “*Is there any significant perception of slow tourism seen as improvement of self-realization?*” which will help to close up the theoretical frame by analyzing the results of Time and Personal dimensions (Caffyn, 2012) that appear on the qualitative results. Although the study did not include any specific questions on the topic of self-realization in the questionnaire or in the interviews, the tourism professionals have noticed a change in the tourists’ behavior and talked about it, therefore, an extra section and objective was added because, according to the literature review, this is an important premise for slow tourism (Bac Dorin, 2014; Oh et al., 2016) and the findings suggest an interest in the topic of self-realization.

Looking at the viewpoint of the guest house manager, she explains that people need to slow down the pace, listen to themselves and experience in their time pace. She also adds:

*“Well, in this fast-paced everyday life, there comes a moment when the person starts thinking, you know, where is he rushing to, where does he think of going, and what would he do along the way. Including the holidays. When a person makes a plan, you know, it is clear... some plan to be on holiday somewhere for 15 days, but does he have to rush during this time, like at work, like in the everyday life.... maybe such a moment comes in the life of everybody in particular age, somebody earlier, another one - later, but everybody understands that they cannot be in a rush all the time”.* Her words indicate the awareness of slow tourism as a self-realization activity.

Similarly, Oh et al. (2016) claims that people need the moments of self-reflection, escape from routine, a search for novelty and discovery of life, which fulfills the Personal dimension. The tourist interviews also confirm the importance of the topic as indicates that it is important to feel satisfied and rested physically and mentally, away from the everyday life.

Also, the tour operator “Into the Wild” stated: *“...we offer also some kind of growth of the personality. The person goes to the mountain in order to overcome themselves. Not only because it is beautiful... you go there in order to... all of this murmur that each one of us has... to be removed”.* Tourism professionals are aware of the importance of the aspect of self-realization and time, meaning that their clients are receiving satisfaction, enjoyment, and personal growth. The sensation of living without a time frame or pressed by time can only be offered in accommodations where there is no specific time to eat or rest, as guesthouses, local restaurants or camping. This is clearly expressed by the manager of Momchil Hero guesthouse when she said: *“we do not take into account the hour... at our place, the guests receive whatever they want, whenever they want it”.*

Furthermore, Larsen (2016) claim that most valuable memories of tourists usually come from the slow tourism experiences and activities even when tourists do not realize they have

practiced slow tourism. As Finlandia Hotel manager says, the best memories are from the slow tourism experiences she practiced *“that later remain in the memory and when it is mentioned”*.

As a conclusion, the philosophy of slow tourism from the tourism professionals and the tourists in term of self-realization is right on the spot. Nine out of ten participants did have an opinion about what slow tourism is and they expressed their philosophy and understanding of it. All of them pointed to important elements of slow tourism such as *“relaxation”*; to be *“closer to the nature”*; *“closer to themselves”*; to *“learn”*; to be *“outside of the time frame”*; *“to immerse in the atmosphere”*; *“to feel satisfied and inspired”*; or *“to be in one place and drink the maximum energy from the place itself”*. So, it could be assumed that tourism professionals and even tourists are knowledgeable about slow tourism as an improvement of self-realization.

Consequently, it could mean that the slow type of tourism is appreciated and likely to develop further in the future as the participants indicated the need for this kind of tourism. Although it is difficult to say how slow tourism will develop in regions practicing conventional tourism, the fact that it is recognized in the present shows its future potentials in conventional settings.

### **5.9. A summary of participants' perceptions of slow tourism**

The in-depth interviews with different tourism professionals revealed to the research that there exist both practices of slow tourism and conventional tourism within the region of the Rhodope Mountains within a very close distance to each other. It was identified that the villages practice and adopt all elements of slow tourism such as the type of accommodation, food, and activities while Pamporovo resort and the bigger hotels in the Rhodope Mountains do not practice or practice slow tourism considering food and activities. The contemporary hotels admitted that they can only practice elements of slow tourism as their capacity does not allow them to adopt other types of tourism and they need to fill the gaps and have all the beds occupied

in order to have a healthy business. However, most of them indicated their cooperation with local villages and their willingness to share the business so the tourists can explore the local culture deeper as well as traditions.

It is important to note that all ten participants that were interviewed claim that the Rhodope Mountains is very suitable for practicing slow tourism. Nine of the participants expressed their positive opinions about the future of slow tourism in the area and their likelihood to integrate or get benefits of slow tourism. Also, some of the participants claimed that this is the absolute and only future for the region. Whether this is true or not, the data from the questionnaire clearly showed that people prefer traditional and slowly prepared food, to get closer to the culture and the way of life of locals. The supporting results could only provide the research with assumptions for a grateful future of slow tourism in the Rhodope Mountain.

## 6. Conclusion

Slow tourism comes from the slow life social movement, applied to leisure and recreation (Kazandzhieva & Lukanova, 2016). Slow tourism is an alternative tourism current which focuses on the experience, the psychological benefits and the environmental development (Meng & Choi, 2015) and is opposed to hypermodernity and the accelerating pace of industrialized societies (Varley & Semple, 2015). Slow tourism encompasses all elements, including accommodation, activities, transportation, and food, in contrast to slow travel, which claims the transportation as an experience (Conway & Timms, 2012). The challenges of slow tourism for the future are the time that is needed and the cost (Larsen, 2016), the improvement of public transportation (Lee et al., 2015), the opposition to change by big tour operators and stakeholders with economy of scale (Conway & Timms, 2012), the geographical limitation of some remote areas which can only be accessed through fast transport modes (Caffyn, 2012), the promotion of slow activities through fast technology (Caffyn, 2012; Guiver & McGrath, 2016), and the environmental impact of conventional tourism and the need to change (Farrell, 1999; Gössling & Peeters, 2015).

The methodology used was a single case study with an embedded design that considered tourism professionals, with interviews, and tourists, with questionnaires and two interviews. The study combined qualitative and quantitative methods. The sample for the qualitative method regarding tourism professionals was a nonprobability judgment sampling, whereas, the tourists quantitative and qualitative sample was a nonprobability convenience sampling. The explorative research had a total of ten semi-structured interviews and 179 short questionnaires. The data analysis for the interviews was done with open and axial coding in a deductive approach. For the questionnaires, the SPSS program was used with frequencies and crosstabs because of the ordinal and nominal levels of measurements. The Rhodope Mountains in

particular the Pamporovo winter ski resort, was chosen because slow tourism offers can supplement winter and summer season conventional tourism.

The results and the analysis show that tourists practice slow tourism activities during their holidays as a part of their fulfillment of expectations (Obj1). Both currents, slow and conventional tourism, coexist together and people can switch from one to the other kind of offer depending on the tourists' desires. Conventional tourists showed their appreciation for the regional traditional food, local culture, and visiting surrounding villages. Although most participants denied the view that they are slow tourists, they confirmed their preferences to practice slow tourism activities. Thus, conventional tourists cannot be fully satisfied if there is no provision of slow tourism activities by the suppliers. Tourism professionals mentioned that the number of slow activities increases if there is a demand, that usually slow tourism activities are more practiced during the summer for terrain characteristics. They also mentioned that there is a will to adapt and that they always offer advice on slow tourism experiences. Tourism professionals also highlight that lately, the behavior of tourists is changing towards a demand for quality and authentic experiences that could be interpreted as a demand for slow tourism activities.

The study answers Obj2 by demonstrating that most of the tourists know what the term slow tourism is, but its definition is not well known as the study did not ask for details. The conventional tourists do not consider themselves as slow tourists while practicing slow tourism activities. The research has indicated that tourists who consider themselves as conventional or slow tourists engage in the same activities to a similar degree.

Hoteliers do not consider themselves as slow tourism establishers, but local restaurants, guesthouses, and regional tour operators indicate that they do provide slow experiences (Obj3). The slow tourism establishers indicate that to become one is hard work and requires devotion, that there are some bureaucratic obstacles, and that the word of mouth marketing works

extremely well for them. Hoteliers also criticized the bureaucratic obstacles that they face when implementing regional or local produce on their menu, which is due to the certification restriction imposed on it.

The tourism professionals had recognized that slow tourism improves conventional tourism (Obj4) by creating authentic experiences, marketing the region as unique, and attracting and helping the occupants throughout the year. Hoteliers specially mentioned that if there is a demand for slow tourism activities they will incorporate it for an economical and marketing gain. It can be concluded that bigger hotels are only incorporating those activities just to increase patronage and please their customers, instead of believing in the slow tourism philosophy. This practice is in discordance with the slow movement and can create future tensions between the currents. However, it is interesting to note that hoteliers offer slow food always and that some small hoteliers have gone further ahead by having their own farm or buying from local producers. Also, slow tourism establishers take advantage of the social media to market and improve slow tourism.

Sustainable development is a key feature of slow tourism (Obj5). Tourism professionals agree that nature is their main resource for attracting tourists, and that slow tourism improves the sustainability of the area. Some mention the lack of public transportation in the area and the dependence on private transport which causes pollution and affects the level of protection of the area. The tour operators expressed the need for the Bulgarian ministry to protect nature within the region and to restrict the vehicles. In general, they all agreed that bio products and product qualification make the region more sustainable.

Tourists search for genuine food experiences, local culture, and life in the surrounding villages and local interaction. Tourist professionals say that tourists search for local food, folklore, and nature experiences. Either way, they all agree that slow tourism improves the experience of perceived authenticity (Obj6) but to what extent slow tourism fosters regional



development the study cannot say; except that offers similar to slow tourism form a significant part of what the area has to offer.

The welfare of the local economy is important for the managers (Obj7). All of them cooperate with local enterprises to some extent and prefer local suppliers for their food produce and culture activities. Most of the managers are willing to share the business with local villages which is an indicator that slow tourism could be developed in the Rhodope Mountain region in the future. Big hotels remark that they only use foreign products when local suppliers cannot meet their demand. Slow tourism establishers emphasized the need for more entrepreneurs in the area. All in all, slow tourism is considered an improvement in the consumption of local foods, activities, and culture.

Self-reflection is part of the slow tourism characteristic — the use of tourism as a time to self-reflect on oneself. The interviews have shown that self-reflection improves with slow tourism because tourists slowing down their pace, experiencing their time as they will, and having time to reflect and feel “aleness”. The analysis also shows that the most valuable or remembered moments come from the slow tourism activities.

The case study indicates that the answer to the research question “*How can perceptions of “slow tourism” contribute to a development from today’s conventional tourism*”, is that conventional tourists are practicing slow tourism activities during their holidays and that both currents coexist together. This affirmation was confirmed by both types of conducted research. Based on the findings, slow food activities and slow tourism activities, such as the gathering of herbs, walking around and enjoying the local atmosphere visiting local villages, as well as the cooperation between Pamporovo resort and local villages are the main elements that are detected as confirming to slow tourism offers in the current research, with reference to the literature review. Also, both tourists and businesses express an interest in seeing and showcasing the preserved local traditions and products of the place. The authenticity of locality

can be considered as a bridge for conventional tourism to promote more slow tourism, and at the same time, for slow tourism to attract conventional businesses to adapt to slow tourism elements.

**Further Research and recommendations.** The fact that not much research has been carried out on slow tourism and its roots, means that there is a field full of available and significant topics to be researched in the future. Further research needs to be conducted to investigate more closely how slow tourism can be developed in conventional tourism settings; how the right marketing campaigns would allow stakeholders to benefit, as well as conventional and slow tourism. Another area to be researched, as mentioned before, would be to what extent slow tourism brings perceived authenticity in conventional tourism settings, and how the behavior of slow tourists versus conventional tourists differ in realizing experiences and expectations. Also, a topic to be explored is the social interactions between locals and travelers in order to know what really motivates the tourist to explore offers to the fullest, and at the same time to understand what the attitude of the locals towards the slow tourists is.

The limitation of the research is that the study was conducted in an occidental society, different concepts and results can appear in different contexts. It is important to mention that the aim of this study was to clarify if conventional tourism will employ slow tourism offers, while the behaviors and characteristics of self-declared slow tourists must remain for future study.

The research findings are important because it is demonstrated that conventional tourism can become greener and more attentive to local traditions and culture. The adaptation will help hospitality establishments to create attractive marketing offers, make economic gains by having long-term occupancy, and helping local economy. The research has indicated that similar regions with comparable characteristics can benefit from changing slowly towards slow tourism.

Considering the recommendations, firstly, the researchers would like to recommend the future practice of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data of the regions studied equally. If the researchers failed to do that, as in this research, the study may not produce accurate results. Secondly, as Bac Dorin (2014) identified that transportation in the destination is also an element of slow tourism, it is recommended that a new study can also incorporate this element which the current study did not investigate.

Conventional tourism has slow tourism activities. The key is to convert conventional tourism slowly towards slow tourism in response to the demand of tourists, visitors and stakeholders. The change will create a more ethical and greener tourism, which appreciates diversity and wishes to conserve it. The world is beautiful, let's start to preserve it.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Questionnaire to Tourists

First page:

This survey is completely anonymous, and the data will be used only in our master thesis. All other questions you will find on the back of this leaflet. Please, fill in all the questions!

How old are you?

- a. Under 18 years old
- b. I am between 18 years old and 29 years old
- c. I am between 30 years old and 45 years old
- d. I am between 46 years old and 59 years old
- e. I am more than 60 years old

Second page:

1. How long is your holiday?

- a) Less than a week    b) 1 week    c) more than a week

2. Where do you stay during your holiday?

- a) Hotel    b) Guest house    c) Apartment for rent    d) Other, please specify

3. Where do you prefer to eat?

- a) In a local restaurant    b) In the hotel restaurant    c) Other, please specify

4. Have you visited at least one village in the Rhodope mountains while on holiday?

- a) Yes    b) No

5. Have you tried local traditional food during your stay?

- a) Yes    b) No

6. How many times have you eaten local food?

- a) None    b) Just one    c) Few times    d) Every time

7. What kind of food do you prefer when you are on holiday?

- a) Quickly prepared    b) Slowly prepared

8. What is more important for you during this holiday?

- a) To see as much as possible here    b) To feel how locals live at this place

9. What are the main activities that you will be practicing during this stay? Multiple choice

- a) Walking    b) Winter sports    c) Food experiences    d) Night clubs & bars
- e) Wondering and Sightseeing    f) museums    g) Other, please specify

10. Do you determine yourself as a slow tourist?

- a) Yes    b) No    c) I don't know what it means



## Appendix 2 Interview questions

- Questions to hotel/restaurant managers:

1. Have you ever heard about *Slow Tourism*?
2. What is *Slow Tourism personally for you?*/ What is your philosophy about *slow tourism*?/  
What do you think is a good experience for *slow tourists*?
3. How can the slow tourism contribute to your business?
4. What sort of activities related to slow tourism do you offer to your tourists?
5. Do you think that your hotel can be promoted as a place for experiencing slow tourism?
- 5.1. Would you make a marketing campaign to this new segment of tourists?
6. Do you think that the Rhodopes are suitable for practicing slow tourism?
7. Do you notice a change in the preference of tourists, their demand, to orientate more to slow tourism?
8. Do you cooperate with the locals, the surrounding small villages?
- 8.1. Are you willing, for example, to organize a night of the tourists in traditional tavern in the local villages?
- 8.2. Do you think that you can have competition from this type of tourism, for example the guest houses?
9. Do you think that one day the slow tourism will contribute to the development of your business and this term slow tourism, would it be helpful for your business in future? Are you ready to change your orientation to the aspects of slow tourism? Offering elements of slow tourism?
10. How can you adapt to slow tourism if you didn't adapt yet? What activities would you practice?
11. Do you currently give any advices to the tourists to go and see these small villages, to touch the local culture?
- 11.1. Have you organized such events that could touch the tourists to the local culture?
12. Do you think that the food can be a slow experience for your guests?
13. Do you offer slow food? Local food?
14. What is the difference, according to you, between slow tourism and other forms of tourism? (sustainable tourism, mass tourism, village tourism)
15. Have you heard about Cittaslow and do you think that Cittaslow has any future in the Rhodopes?
16. Do you think that the conventional, traditional tourism is slow tourism and do you think that the slow tourism is something special?

17. Do you have any strategy for slow tourism? And if yes, what is it?

- If you do not have, what do you think about developing slow tourism in future?

- If you have to think of a few main ideas for developing slow tourism, what would your first idea for slow tourism be?

18. Do you think that particularly in Pamporovo/ Chepelare more slow tourism could be practiced?

19. *The slow tourism* is established in Italy, do you think that it can be applied in the same form in the region, with these same features?

20. What are the experiences your tourists find most interesting, most relaxing after their stay and what do they mention most often at leaving the hotel?

21. Do you think that the slow tourism has a potential to turn into more like sustainable tourism in future? Or it is sustainable tourism, according to you?

22. What are the restrictions for practicing the slow tourism in Pamporovo/ Chepelare? and what about the Rhodopes, according to you?

23. Have you heard the word Hygge? which practically means something like pleasure... there is no particular translation of the word in Bulgarian? For example, the way you stand in front of the fireplace with a cup of cappuccino / Mursala tea...?

▪ Questions to tour operator:

1. Have you ever heard about *Slow Tourism*?

2. Okay, according to you personally, what is *Slow Tourism*? From what you have heard? What is your philosophy about *slow tourism*... And what do you think is a good experience for *slow tourists*?

3. Do you perceive your clients as slow tourists?

4. What are your clients looking for as experiences? ... apart from these excursions on foot you mentioned...?

5. What activities of slow tourism is Into the wild developing?

6. According to you, how does the slow tourist look like? What do they look for?

7. Do you think that the Rhodopes are a suitable region for the development of *Slow Tourism*? / Is there any future for this type of tourism in the mountain of the Rhodopes and how would it contribute to the future development of the region?

8. In this regard.....How can the *Slow Tourism* contribute to the development of your business?

8.1. i.e. you believe in this term *Slow Tourism* and it has future, according to you?

9. Do you believe in promoting your business as a way of experiencing slow tourism?

10. Do you notice the traditional tourists changing their preferences and orientating more to this type of tourism?
11. Do you want to adapt to the slow tourism if you didn't do it yet? / And if you have adapted to the slow tourism, how did you accept this form of tourism, for example... what was the work process?
  - 11.1. How much time did it take you this adjustment to the slow tourism?
12. Do you cooperate with the hotel owners of Pamporovo? Did they call you, do they have any interest in cooperating with you?
13. Do you advice the tourists to touch to the local culture as customs and traditions... you already told me?
  - 13.1. Do you organize any events in order to get them acquainted with the local culture... so that the tourists to touch more to the locals?
14. Do you think that the food is a *slow experience* for the tourists... what do you notice when you are with them? Are they looking for traditional dishes or do they emphasize on sandwiches and pizzas?
15. Again an unnecessary question, because you already responded to me... but.... Do you guide the tourists to traditional eating places when you are with them the entire day... / or you are only in the forest?
16. Have you thought about some sort of activities related to slow tourism, different than the ones you apply today? Would you practice in future other different things?
17. \*(related to question 16) Do you have any strategy about the implementation of *the slow tourism* in future? Didn't you say that you are already thinking...
18. What is the difference, according to you, between *SLOW TOURISM* and the other forms of tourism, for example, adventure tourism, alpinism... / To what extent does the alpinism merge and differ with the slow tourism, according to you?
19. I think that *the slow tourism* derives from the conventional/traditional tourism or *the slow tourism* is something special in the mountain of the Rhodopes?
20. Have you heard about Citta Slow and if yes, does it have any future in this region?
21. *The slow tourism* is established in Italy, do you think that it can be applied in its same form in the region?
22. What experiences do your tourists find the most interesting and relaxing? What do they mention most often when parting with you?
23. Do you think that *the slow tourism* has any chance to turn into sustainable tourism in future?
24. According to you, what are the restrictions

1st of the slow tourism in this region?

2nd and personally does Into the Wild meet any restrictions for practicing slow tourism...?

25. Have you heard about the Danish conception Hygge and if yes, do you think that you can develop in this direction in regards of marketing activity and so on.

▪ Questions to tourists:

1. Have you ever heard about *Slow Tourism*?

2. What is *Slow Tourism personally for you?* What is your philosophy about *slow tourism*

3. What do you consider as a good experience of *slow tourism*?

4. How does the slow tourist look like, according to you? What do they look for? Would you call yourself a slow tourist?

5. Do you think that Pamporovo provides enough to satisfy the needs of a slow tourist?

5.1. And the hotel where you are staying?

5.2. Did they recommend you to visit the local little villages, to get accustomed with the lifestyle and culture of the Rhodopes?

6. For how long are you in Pamporovo?

7. Are you coming for the first time?

8. What activities of the slow tourism did you practice during your holiday?

9. Do you think that the Rhodopes are a suitable region for the development of *Slow Tourism*?

/Is there future in this type of tourism in the mountain of Rhodopes and how would it contribute to the future development of the region?

10. How can the *Slow Tourism* contribute to your holiday?

11. Does this term *Slow Tourism* have any future according to you?

12. If you have adapted to the slow tourism, how did you accept this form of tourism?

13. During your stay here did you get in touch with the local culture like customs and traditions?

14. Did the hotel organize any events for you to get you to know the local culture... to get connected to the local population more?

15. Do you think that the food is a *slow experience* for you... what do you notice when you are in the restaurant?

16. Is there any interest from your side to traditional dishes?

17. Did they take you to traditional eating places?

18. Do you have any ideas for future activities, how to practice slow tourism?

19. According to you, what is the difference between *SLOW TOURISM* and the other forms of tourism, for example adventure tourism, alpinism.../ To what extent does the alpinism merge and differentiate with the slow tourism, according to you?
20. Do you think that the *slow tourism* originates from the conventional/traditional tourism or the *slow tourism* is something special for the mountain of Rhodopes?
21. Have you ever heard about Cittaslow and if yes, does it have any future in this region?
22. *The slow tourism* is established in Italy, do you think that it can be applied in its original form in the region?
23. What experiences did you find more interesting and relaxing? What will stay forever in your memories after you leave from here?
24. Do you think that the *slow tourism* has any chances to turn into a sustainable tourism in future?
25. What are the restrictions for you to practice slow tourism? / And what about Pamporovo?
26. Have you heard about the Danish conception `Hygge` and if yes, do you see yourself as a tourist seeking for such sensations?

### **Appendix 3 Interviews**

*NB. Due to the very long interviews, now we show the four most essential interviews.*

*By request we can provide all ten interviews.*

#### **Interview with Guest house manager (P1) and tour operator -12.02.2018 17:00 o'clock at Momchilovtsi Hero guest house**

*While I am waiting for the interview, the woman prepares tea...*

P1: We count a lot on our children, they work with us... family business. / *She serves me tea...*

Interviewer: What kind of tea is it?

P1: This is mixed tea, especially Balkan tea, primrose, thyme, white elderberry and St. John's Wort. We offer in the house only such a tea for so many years, 9-10 already. Nothing else. The guests like it very much. And they want to buy it and we got to the conclusion that it is nice to offer such a product.

Interviewer: Have you ever thought about patent it.

P1: We already had it patented.

Interviewer: Well done!

P1: On the business card, which I gave you, you cannot tell, but I reserved the trademark “Vitality Traditions” and for the products I reserved a brand named “Momchilovtsi Secret” ... i.e. our products, that come out of Momchilovtsi, particularly the tea and the home-made jams, are a reserved trademarked.

Interviewer: Well done! Have you heard about slow food?

P1: Yes, yes...

Interviewer: So you can apply for slow food presidia?

P1: We could, but we do not have such an ambition, just I thought of the idea, because the guests liked it a lot and everybody is asking “Can I buy it?”... it just all started from there.

Interviewer: And why shouldn't you have such an ambition?

P1: I think that we didn't thought about it as something to strive to.

Interviewer: I think that this tee makes you unique.

P1: Yes, exactly, I have a picture with a such a pot of tea, a picture absolutely pure, not professional, a picture, which I made with my phone, right there on the fence... the pot of tea simply put to look down to the view... I can't tell you how many people this picture brought me, people are just looking for such stuff... people are sick of eating plastic products, I see them here when they come... they simply... we do not have such semi-finished products... for example, they order now some French fries, for example, the simplest... you wait 20 mins, for example, half an hour, but the potatoes are being peeled in the moment, they are cut in the moment and they are fried in the moment, they are not pre-prepared.

Interviewer: Bravo... even during the season you do not dare to peel them?

P1: No, no, during the season, for instance, now you can make a preparation 2 hour before, just to peel them and to put them in cold water, without cutting them... but there is no, absolutely no way a blanched potato.

Interviewer: Well done!

P1: This is what makes us unique, that is why we have people... The guest when they come, for example, this group, which left yesterday, they are with a package... accommodation, breakfast, dinner... they eat cooked dishes, they do not eat, for instance, something that is bought from Lidl and is cooked... they eat home-made food! Mandja (a Bulgarian word for a home-made meal)! This is what they love, this is what people miss... they say it...

Interviewer: And what did they tell you when they make the order or the arrangements with their bookings?

P1: Just like this... we could be not specifying a menu, because most of the guests already know us or resend their acquaintances of acquaintances... this is the best advertisement.

Interviewer: What do your guests eat for breakfast in the morning?

P1: Well, we are trying to have a trend to the Rhodopes, i.e. even if it not from the Rhodopes, they should be traditional dishes... For instance, French toasts with home-made jam and home-made white cheese.

Interviewer: You produce it all yourself?

P1: Yes, yes, it is a must, here, do you see these jams there, whatever we eat in our family, this is what we sell. We do not buy anything prepared, we do not have preserve, we have nothing prepared, this is what slow tourism is for us. Purely logical, when you think about it, this is the future. Think about 5-6 years ago when these buffets started... they came from Turkey, right... buffets, buffets, everybody rushed there to the buffet and for a moment what it turned out to be... It turned out that everything, that is in excess and unfortunately is leftover and cut out garbage... it is tomorrow on your buffet... People started realizing and started avoiding it. Get to the point now, let's start with the questions.

2. What is Slow Tourism personally for you? What is your philosophy about slow tourism?

Interviewer: And what do you think is a good experience for slow tourists?

P1: Well, in this fast-paced everyday life, there comes a moment when the person starts thinking, you know, where is he rushing to, where does he think of going, and what would he do along the way. Including the holidays. When a person makes a plan, you know, it is clear... some plan to be on holiday somewhere for 15 days, but does he have to rush during this time, like at work, like in the everyday life.... maybe such a moment comes in the life of everybody in particular age, somebody earlier, another one - later, but everybody understands that they cannot be in a rush all the time. Even I think that maybe this kind of "brains" get to the category slow tourism, because you can really not be in a hurry all the time. A person has a need to relax their mind and to start a little bit deeper in himself in order to see. Not just to be in a hurry. I do not say that there is no purpose in the rush and a direction, but this is not inherent, not in the nature of human to be relentlessly hurrying to somewhere. A person should listen to themselves a little bit. This idea for the so called slow tourism is going to be successful. I also observe the guests here, since about 1-2 years they started realizing this thing and they kind of start appreciating the essence. These values, which were lost, purely human, are started to come back.

Interviewer: And what experiences are the slow tourists looking for?

P1: Well... I also thought about this issue and I will tell you basically why... Because in Momchilovtsi where we basically work, we are aiming to developing Momchilovtsi as a

tourist's location. I asked myself this question, because in Momchilovtsi, you probably know, there are neither shiny hotels with SPA complexes, nor there are some huge attractions, nor there is something that makes impression on the tourist, for example, on Slanchev bryag (Sunny beach) ... we do not have such things, but we have the pure human attitude towards the tourist. Whether individual or in group, there is another kind of treatment, the demand is different, even here of this tea, which we are drinking at the moment... of the food... it is totally different... there is attitude. This is the first thing, with which we impress our guests... after that people have probably forgotten... thus, when they are relaxing in a small location, to ask and for example, the way I am at the moment... to tell the small things, which are actually the essence. The stories and legends... something interesting from the village... for example, this cheshma (tap-water fountain), which is against us, this is the love cheshma of Momchilovtsi. This is the first water coming from the mountain and it has a great story. Very nice. They are described in stories by father Kanio, God rest his soul, the long-time priest of Momchilovtsi. He wrote the story of Momchilovtsi. After him other people went on, which keeps the history alive, for example, the story about the healing Ayazmo, there is no single story in Momchilovtsi, which is made up... You know, you just go like in Greece and say, on this chair have sit so-and-so, you pay 10 Euro, you sit, you take a picture and that's it... there is no such a thing here, everything is real. When we tell our guests about it, they just get impressed, they come back to us for sure... You cannot live in a mega polis and for example to learn how to forecast the weather. What is going to be the weather for example 6 months in advance. Do you yourself know such a thing?

Interviewer: No

P1: So there are some days in September... we called them the counted days... from these counted days you can make notes what it is at the moment... before noon, until noon, after noon and this shows the time for 6 months in advance - what would it be. 100% true...100%! My husband is writing it down already 3rd or 4th year... 100% true.

Interviewer: Seriously?

P1: Yes, this is nature, it is just that in the old times people used to understand nature. For instance, our shepherds when they were travelling to the White Sea... how did they knew when to go from there in order to get back to Bulgaria. They waited for a particular star to show up on a particular place and then they went. You know, these are such purely... how can I tell, very interesting job, but since we have distanced ourselves from nature, this thing is already not inherent for us to know.

Interviewer: Yes, unfortunately...



P1: And when you tell the people such stuff... for me this is also included in the slow tourism. Because when people understand these stuff, they understand that they should be closer to the nature... it is clear to everybody that they should work, that everybody has their own life somewhere there, right... on the yellow pavement or on the Eiffel tower... or wherever they are, but to give themselves a certain period of time, the so called holiday, during which to understand other stuff, to be closer to the nature... closer to themselves, to turn to God if they didn't do it yet. Well, purely just such simple things set in a human. For example, when they had to build the tray of this cheshma in the old times, they were wooden trays and got out of the woods right across... all of the neighborhood with candles prayed to this tree to forgive them that they have to cut it out for a tray.

Interviewer: Seriously?

P1: We do not do this nowadays, we now neglect this... probably... this is what we have to learn to appreciate.

Interviewer: but you live with these traditions, these stories...

P1: Yes... Exactly. If you are interested, I could send you the stories.

Interviewer: Yes, I am very interested.

P1: To see how nice it is... this story about this cheshma, all of them are unique... but it finishes like this... Drink up - young ones for luck, and old ones for strength. There are many meaningful things. For me this is the point of this slow tourism, to put in there the stories, legends, the purely human things... the real things. We forget about the made-up things, which lately become well-known like modern work in order to attract tourists. Let there be some kind of tourists, but I say with what we personally could attract our guests. Exactly with the walks on foot, with the cycling walks, with such interesting things, which are simply forgotten, but they are here... with the traditional cuisine... You know, people have forgotten to cook every day... maybe they are not able, maybe they don't have time... maybe they are in a hurry, maybe they travel a lot, i do not know, but the food you are cooking every day... for example, in our family it is cooked everyday twice, for lunch and for dinner... the breakfast is clear that it is not such a cooking... the freshly prepared food is different. This is slow tourism. This, to learn little by little to slow down the pace and to understand actually yourself... why you are a human, what is your essence, what is your nature... to think it over a little bit and to feel this. Because a person cannot be in a hurry all the time.

3. Do you perceive your clients as slow tourists?

P1: Lately, yes... I mean, for example, since the previous year or two there is a huge difference in the tourists. People started paying attention to the little things... what they eat, what is the quality.

4. What are you clients looking for? (experiences)

P1: In Momchilovtsi especially, in the winter they definitely are looking for ski and, in the summer, - walks on foot. For the children a few summers in a row I am organizing adventure summer. For example, one week, let's say I gather all the children guests of Momchilovtsi in a group... and we have a certain program, I get them acquainted with the legends, stories, we make adventure walks in the forest. We have entertaining sport games. It is both entertaining and educative... they also learn many things about the nature... it is very well done... we also teach them to cook. Such entertainments...

5. What activities of slow tourism can you offer to your clients?

P1: What I said is for the children, however, it is very interesting for the groups, even for single groups, meaning they are families... we teach them to do particular things. For example, the last group, they were children... I taught them to make a cake with home-made products... they made it together with me, afterwards, in the next evening they ate it. Generally, for adults, here in the front we put a wood burning stove. This stove is 20 years old... we show them traditional dishes of the Rhodopes, how they are cooked. The cook comes out...

Interviewer: Is the cook your husband?

P1: Yes... he comes out with the products and shows them the way to prepare the traditional dishes... they all ask curiously about everything. For example, about the patatnic ... (a traditional dish with potatoes), he makes it in front of our guests, then they bake it together, later they turn it around and start tasting it when the dish is ready and if somebody wants to cook, they try... it is interesting to the guests.

Interviewer: i.e. some sort of culinary school...

P1: Yes, something like this.

Interviewer: And do they know this before they visit you...

P1: not everybody... I love making surprises often. For instance, if they are for just a night, nice... they are welcome... when I start speaking and they do not want me to stop telling them stories... and then I found an option to give such stories on papyrus... for example, this is the story about the cuckoo from Dobrich, how in our villages the people discovered that we are going to be freed from Turkish Slavery... Read them, I will not tell you, it is very interesting... this here is about the cross of Saint Atanas. There are three shining crosses in Momchilovtsi... on the east, on the west and on the north... On the east there is Dupchov Kamak (literally

meaning Rock of the Hole), then on Saint Atanas peak and on Saint Dimitar peak... and by the way Dupchov Kamak and Kardzhaliyski Kamak (Kardzhali Rock) next to it, the rocks and sandy hills here... Saint Atanas, Saint Iliya, Saint Dimitar. On Saint Iliya there is the healing Ayazmo (healing spring), these are remains from Paleogene era when Momchilovtsi used to be the bottom of a huge lake. That is why when you are sunbathing at Dupchov Kamak, the view to the village is beautiful and the village itself looks like a bowl. This lake used to reach all the way to Vlahovo, it was a huge lake. And these are such remains from the Paleogene era.

*The phone rings... then she continues...*

It is also very modern now to show how yoghurt is made. All the Chinese groups, even individual tourists, too... I show everybody the souring of the yoghurt, this is simply as a condition in their program. The souring of yoghurt is very modern, this is number 1.

6. How does the slow tourist look like, according to you?

P1: How do they look like... I consider myself such a type of tourist. We are used to go to the big hotels... first, to make it clarify that this is not a criticism, it is just normal that there is some schedule in the big hotels a capacity of 200-300 people. For example, breakfast from 8 until 10 and this way everything is under some kind of control... i.e. you are put in some control... we do not do such a thing.

Interviewer: You do not have particular hours?

P1: We do have in front of the institutions, because we should have a working time. BUT, no, we do not take into account the hour. At our place the guests receive whatever they want, whenever they want it. This is it - in the evening, if anybody says at 2 a.m. that they want some appetizer / they will receive the appetizer. In the morning, if they want to have breakfast at 11 o'clock, they will receive a breakfast at 11.

Interviewer: What are these slow tourists looking for?

P1: First, not to be in a hurry with the time. Not to be put again in a frame. Because, for example, the typical for everybody is 8-to-5 o'clock at work, i.e. if you go on a vacation and you are put in some frames... for me, a slow tourist has to be outside of the frames. I do not know how you study it, but this is how I imagine it, I am such a type myself and I want such an experience. The slow tourist shouldn't have any frame... they should receive whatever information they need... for example, when the group for a certain eco path is leaving, it is not necessary for them to fit into the time... if they miss the group, they can hire an individual leader. Or they can just ask us which markings to follow and to go on their own... i.e. they are outside of any frame. This is the most important, to receive a service they want and which they need, without to be tied with a frame. This is slow tourism.

Interviewer: exactly as by the books.

P1: I do not know, I am not such an erudite... I have a pedagogical education, but I observe what is happening. I look at... the behavior of people, but I do not follow any trends, I also do not buy books about tourism... I comprehend it all looking at what happens globally and from the tourists that passed by us... we communicate with the tourists, this is the best of the guest house. I know every single tourist, know where they are, when did they come... I do not follow them, do not understand me wrong, but I know during each moment what do they need, they ask me... I always cooperate with our guests. There are also such people, who simply come here, passing and ask about hiring a room... they ask about the costs and I say, for example 50 BGN, and they respond, it is expensive for me... I say, okay, I will at once call the colleagues, I will accommodate you, stay in Momchilovtsi. It is nice... I always accommodate them, never sent them away.

Interviewer: you cooperate with everybody?

P1: It is necessary! I always accommodate them and tell them, if you need any information, our office is in the center, there is a girl that will serve you... This and that... just so that the tourist stays in Momchilovtsi.

7. Do you think that the Rhodopes are an appropriate region for developing Slow Tourism? / Is there future for this type of tourism in the mountain of Rhodopes?

P1: Well, I think that there is no other chance for developing such a type of tourism. First to say this.

Interviewer: How would it contribute to the future development of the region?

P1: All the places are small here and Pamporovo is a big famous resort, that is why I say that it is a must for us to cooperate with them in any possible way. Both we will be in their favor and they will be in ours. The more tourists see, the happier they are. My opinion is this. I think that many people also do not know, of course, but many people know, and they have heard about the Rhodopes. I think the Rhodopes is a very valuable mountain for outside, I mean abroad. I do not know why like this... I didn't read any statistics, but I see that the foreigners, that pass by here, even for a while, like the Rhodopes a lot. So this is a two-sided process. I think that there should be more local ambitious people that should engage in this work, because first, it is not easy, second, it happens very slowly. There should be given some thought about the thorough service... for example, at the moment there are many villages that don't even have a base, they do not have basis. There is nowhere to sleep, nowhere to eat, there is not a single restaurant, even a smaller one... None! This is simply a problem! There should be more ambitious local people - that's it. This is definitely missing for us. Nevertheless, I think that

there is future. Even in our region this is it, we cannot do anything else. We can attract with the herbs, the gathering of herbs... I offer it to the guests. For example, when the season comes, we gather our own herbs, all of the ones that are here... a very big part (of the guests) want to come with us. They also learn what it is, they have never seen thyme... so for them this is very interesting, too. The nature gave everything to us, it should be used.

8. How can the Slow Tourism contribute to the development of your business?

P1: I think that people, who do such a type of tourism, they drag others after them, you know, explaining, for example, what experience did they have together with us... But according to me, a little more time should pass until people realize that they need this thing. A thing, whatever it is, when it is not it's time to happen, it cannot happen. There is no way for it to happen. Everything has its own time. I think that slow tourism maybe needs 2-3 years more. So that people can think about it.

8.1. Does this term Slow Tourism have any future, according to you?

P1: According to me, there is future, whether we call it slow or in any other way... the word is starting to dominate. The point is important. The word dominates. There is a point in it, I noticed that people start realizing.

9. Do you believe in promoting your business as a way to earn a living on slow tourism?

P1: I believe, I even think that people lately thought more about their lifestyle, everybody on their own, everybody for themselves. For example, beginning from the healthy eating, from the movement...

Interviewer: This is my next question.

P1: Okay, I am sorry, I am talking too much... (laughter)

10. Do you notice the traditional tourists changing their preferences and orientating more to this type of tourism?

P1: Exactly, that is why I created a new product, brand new. It is a proto variant, but it is called Health and longevity lessons. So everything is included in it: traditions, culture, history, sport activities like yoga... walks on foot, rituals, to teach the person to be grateful, prayer... just the real stuff the way our grandmothers and grandfathers did it. If you thought about how many people, according to you, in your surrounding get up in the morning and say to God: Thanks...

Interviewer: Well, no, there aren't many.

P1: There it is, I understand that when you live in a mega polis, for example, I understand that your thinking is set to another wave, still this depends on us... you know, to get up in the morning and thanks to God. This is an internal setting and therefore it is said: when the soul has a healthy basis, it doesn't matter where you are, right?

11. Would you like to adjust to the development of the slow tourism if you didn't do it yet? / And if you adapted to the slow tourism, how did you accept this form of tourism, for example... what was the work process?

P1: In the past our main activity used to be construction and real estates. And when we decided to engage with tourism, to come in this house and to do such a tourism, we honestly didn't know what should we do. Meaning that we are not professionals... Yes, my husband is a cook, an extremely good cook. He is not a modern cook, but he is that type of a cook from the old times... there are no made-up stuff inside (the dishes), he cooks food: quality... I, thinking about coming here to be his partner, had to be his waitress, and organizer, and janitor, and everything... I am everything else... i.e. simply as you think... to be everything is hard work, right... and I told him to talk about this issue... after we are going to engage with this, let's accept a conception of ours... He is asking me what... and I offered him... that we should forget that we came in the big house and to think that it is just like we are in his family house and the tourists are our personal guests... personal guests that we know. We welcome personal guests... I do not know why we decided it like this, but not knowing many things, we accepted that they are our personal guests... We forgot that they pay for the room and food... And so we started it on this formula.

11.1. Did the things happen easy or difficult?

P1: I cannot say that the things happened difficult... they just drag themselves one after another...

Interviewer: How much time did it take you?

P1: A few years, let's say 3 years until they started teaching us more. So I meant that beginning with this conception that all the guests are just our personal guests and it happened very good that way. Even without knowing, we started this slow tourism without realizing it... but maybe I felt it somehow inside this and afterwards I learned that even if we haven't started it this way, the last two years would have made me change the conception, because the people themselves already make you be like this... it is just that the users make you be like this./you cannot differently, I am talking about the small places such as this house, I do not have much insight about the bigger hotels, but I think that they still haven't reached our level.

12. Do you cooperate with the hotel owners from Pamporovo? Did they call you or are they interested in cooperating with you?

P1: To tell you the truth, well, I talked to one particular company, because I have an idea to offer, especially for the summer tourism, because I think that they do not need the winter one, but I think that in the summer they need additional services. I heard comments from their

tourists, which are not bad, but they would like to get to know the region. And I used to talk to them... and by the way, they responded, they said: bring offers, we will put them in, no problem. But it was my fault... you know, some things happened that there is no point to mention, the fault was mine. However, this year I am thinking about bringing them such offers. On their site I have seen that they are bringing tourists mainly to Shiroka Laka, Smolyan, Chepelare, that's it... But Momchilovtsi is not included, I think that Momchilovtsi is an attractive place, which has to be seen... maybe this is a weakness of mine, but I think that is the way it is.

12.1 According to you, do the local people and guest houses want to cooperate with the bigger hotels, what is your point of view on the things... how do they perceive them - do they see them a competitor or a partner in them?

P1: Well, I don't know, maybe there are different opinions, I will tell you what I know that most of the guest houses here, speaking only about Momchilovtsi... for example, they are given to the hotel owners, for example, their parents built them, let's say a house on 4 floors and two of them are not used and given as a hotel... Not many of them are like us, who for example, have hired a place and want to develop such a type of tourism. ...

Interviewer: Did you hire it?

P1: Yes! This is something totally different. You try and develop it... while these, for whom this thing is given, if they just have people, it is okay, if there are no people, it is still okay, because they go to a different job, too, and it happens like this... For example, I am more active in tourism and I work also for everybody else here, because the tour operator company allows me this... I work instead of everybody else, I send guests to everybody... everywhere. And they are happy with this job. I.e. if there is somebody helping even more to them, it would be welcomed, but I cannot say that there are many active people, who work for it. That is why I say, active people are needed, (people) that work. They are not simply using this, which is given to them.

13. Do you advise the tourists to get in touch with the local culture such as customs and traditions? 13.1. Did you organize any events to get acquainted with the local culture... the tourists to touch to the locals more? *We already talked about this...*

P1: So all the tourists are impressed how the local people when they come out in the morning, are always greeting them. This is the simplest. This makes them impression, the way how when we get out of the balcony, we talk to the neighbours... it makes them impression when sometimes I start leading them on some route until we get out, how many people greet me, this makes them impression, regarding the traditions, history and culture, many people come because of this...

Interviewer: Yes...

P1: We have very much holidays, Christian ones, actually not only we... they are everywhere, but here we honor them a lot, for example, now after a few days, it is Todorovden (Christian holiday, name day of people named Todor and similar) ... Before that, it is Sirni zagovezni (Slavic carnival) ... and even from now they are preparing where the fire will be... you know... they are preparing such a gazebo... covered... where the people will sit and so on, I mean that everybody lives with this... On Todorovden on the 23rd, we are expecting a lot of guests... they come especially for the holiday, i.e. we organize excursions for different holidays... for example, on every Gergiovdan (Christian holiday, name day of people named Georgi and similar) ... here we have 27 chapels, surrounding the village... each one is honored on its church holiday... sacrificial rite is made, everything is done there. And people already know about this and come especially for this.

Interviewer: Very interesting...

P1: Yes, it is interesting, when a group of 10 people, for example, gathers... my little boys are bagpipers and without the tourists knowing, they dress up, come in front of the tourists and they (the tourists) are just immersed in an atmosphere... we take them in this without organization... we just know... they will be happy... and even if they want this, we show it to them.

14. Do you think that the food is a slow experience for the tourists... what do you notice when you are with them? Are they looking for traditional dishes or they are stressing on sandwiches and pizzas?

P1: So lately absolutely categorically they are looking for traditional dishes. I see that they are not even looking for soft drinks any more... they think of this... what they eat and what they drink. Lately this is very clearly put. There is everything... but since I talk about the eating habits, according to me, they are starting to realize..... Unfortunately, if I have to put an age limit, these are the ones about 30 years old and above... The young parents, the very young parents still do not realize this and still allow their children to eat for example... at the 5 dinners, during which they stayed, to eat 2 kebapches (Bulgarian dish - minced meat in a cylindrical form)... nothing else...

Interviewer: Got it...

P1: There is such a thing still, but the trend is absolutely to change their preferences to food.

15. Do you guide the tourists to local traditional eating places if they are here for longer time?

P1: To tell you the truth, I tried a lot of times to lead them, but they do not want...

Interviewer: Actually, yes, that is how we started our conversation about slow food...



P1: This is exactly such a moment, you know, about the slow food, to learn in general how to live a little bit slower... Because we are put in this situation and frame... even from our own children I see how, unfortunately, they are sometimes eating like a horse... Why? A 10, 15 year old child cannot get out of home in the morning at 7 a.m.... and to eat something, for example, and to buy something during the big break in school at 10 a.m. and then to finish (school) at 3 p.m... he didn't even eat... or to have 10 mins to eat at lunch... the children do it entirely unconscious... we make them that way... if we realize that we should live in a little bit different way, maybe after certain amount of years, there will be different understanding... and these matters have to be reviewed from a little bit higher level... so that a person learns to live this way. Not to be in a hurry to nowhere their entire life... this is it all.

Interviewer: It really is.

P1: Of course, it is, both the body and the soul are amortizing. I do not say that we should get lazy, but there is some measure... What did the people from the old times did... only when you look at the nature, you understand... if it starts darkening, your functions get calmer... if the sun starts awakening, you should start, too. This is how it is.

16. Have you thought what sort of activities related to slow tourism, different from the ones you are applying today, would you practice in future?

P1: Well, I think about a little bit more interesting places of attractions, because the village itself needs, except for the transitions, we also show the souring of the milk and dishes... and traditions... this way purely physical activity... for example, I have showed processing wool... we make aromatic carpets, for example, you gather yourself herbs and make yourself a carpet... It has a scent and it smells... but I think that in general for a place, that is going to be established close to the center, you go there to do some activity, to be opened non-stop, to be able to do something without being dependent on time... I didn't devise it the way it should be yet... I will think about it.

17. \*(related to question 16) Do you have any strategy about doing *the slow tourism* in future? If yes, what a strategy?

P1: I have a strategy, I just think that we should follow in this direction, that we started, I think that our tourists in Momchilovtsi and in the Rhodopes are like this and that we have no other option. We have good air, good water, good forest, herbs, good food, we have (nice) treatment, traditions, culture, history, we have everything!! We cannot start thinking how to impress some tourist with some tiles and terracotta floor... Absolutely no! So I would like to say that I do not think of changing the direction. I think that my compass is correct, so to say it, right... However, we should, except for continuing work on this matter, to have business with the local

community. I want to say that all the people here, who offer some kind of a tourist service, should understand this trend... there are people here in Momchilovtsi, that haven't understand it yet and they are not a few. I even think that even in the region as a whole, they haven't understand this thing, I think that people are desperate more than they should be... Because we have to do something... we cannot just want the things to happen to us. There is no such an option... i.e. my strategy is to go on in the same direction, but we should think of some entertainments for the tourists and expand our cooperation with the neighboring villages, regions, with Pamporovo... we should expand, because helping one another, it will happen faster. It is a must!

18. What is the difference, according to you, between *SLOW TOURISM* and the other forms of tourism, for example adventure tourism, alpinism... / To what extent does the alpinism interflow and differ from the slow tourism, according to you?

P1: The first thing is the frame, in the slow tourism there shouldn't be any frame, there should be some compliance, but there shouldn't be any frame in general! Second, when you do the slow tourism, everything in the slow tourism should be done like this... Not defined thing, for example, not to think that when you ate slowly, this was slow tourism, no! Simply everything should be done without any tension... for me, this is slow tourism. Not to be accumulate neither physical, not psychological fatigue... the impressions are also creating some sort of a tension... i.e. there should be exceptional balance in what you do. This is it. The Slow tourism is something 100% different!

19. Do you think that the *slow tourism* originates from the conventional / traditional tourism or the *slow tourism* is something special in the mountain of Rhodopes?

P1: Thinking about it, you will always find a connection between them both and I would say that it originates from something, but I personally think something else. I personally think that this kind of tourism originates from the attitude of people. From their realization... from this that somebody, who felt this preliminary attitude... they provide such a type of tourism... even if they do not know... the slow tourism is different from the rural tourism, it brings in itself a whole different line, firstly... who, by the way, invented this type of tourism...?

*I tell her ...*

P1: I would also like to share my impressions of the slopes of Pamporovo... how everybody is under some sort of a pressure... even a raising of the voice can be heard... Why should the things happen this way? The tourists shout to their children... this is also part of the slow tourism, the attitude that you should show somebody..... the way to slow down the pace... this is also some kind of a skill and it is included in it...

20. Have you heard about Cittaslow, and if yes, does it have any future in this region?

P1: No, I haven't heard... But I think that there will be such things after what you told me, but they will happen slower, they will be on a little bit later stage here in Bulgaria, it will not be soon, but the slow tourism has to be understood first, to be made even purposefully... not like me, I do it, because I feel it this way... I do not do it purposefully, but when this thing happens with more people, then we will reach here.

21. *The Slow tourism* is established in Italy, do you think that it can be applied in the same form in the region?

P1: It could, without me knowing anything, and it should...

22. What experiences do your tourists find more interesting and relaxing? What do they mention most often when they are parting with you?

P1: They mostly like the walks on foot, I explain it to myself this way... they came to breathe the clean air, they are among the nature, they have the opportunity to stay for a while with themselves, to listen to a bird or whatever simple thing there is, that we hear every day, but there is no way to do it in the big city. They want to touch more to this. Some years ago they weren't impressed even when the birds were tweeting at spring. They weren't impressed by this. Now I notice that the trend is the other way around. Even when they go, though, apart from everything else, the most that touches them is the attitude. This is the biggest thing that they are impressed of. The attitude. A human is a human, wherever they live, however their attitude changed... this is purely human, to be impressed by the attitude.

23. Do you think that the *slow tourism* has any chance of turning into a sustainable tourism in future or it is this way, according to you?

P1: Yes, closer to yes... it is this way and it will turn into sustainable.

24. What are the restrictions, according to you of the slow tourism in this region?

P1: I wouldn't say that there are any restrictions. Nevertheless, the users should come here. It is all related to the change in the attitude to the guests.

2nd) of your business to offer slow tourism?

P1: There are no restrictions for us. At the moment I have a feeling that the people finding us, are exactly the ones that should. They are just like this, slow tourists...

25. Have you heard about the Danish conception `Hygge` and if yes, do you think that you can develop in this direction, including marketing activity and so on.

P1: No, I haven't heard....

**Interview with hotel manager (P2) ,13.02.2018, 14:00 o'clock at Finlandia Hotel, Pamporovo**

1. Have you ever heard about *Slow Tourism*?

P2: Not until it was mentioned in regards with your research, before that I haven't heard about slow tourism.

2. What is Slow Tourism personally for you? What is your philosophy about slow tourism?

P2: Since I haven't heard before, I got informed these days, I read in the internet... I saw what it is about... a carefree journey avoiding these big tourist complexes, more like searching the typical of the particular region. Relation, contacts with the population... with local crafts, local architecture... I like this... going around the small streets where there are different dukkans (shops), small shops, cafes... and so on... this is something that I like very much and that I did, honestly. Me and my husband go in the last two years on cruises in the Mediterranean sea, every morning you are on some port there and we do not try chasing the museums, because there is no time, for example, the ship is on the port for 5-6 hours, you don't have time to go to see some museum, you know, for 2-3 hours you wander and we do this... we wander around on the streets, we immerse in the atmosphere... I liked this thing... I didn't know that it is called slow tourism. But I totally agree with it... this is the thing I like.

*Interviewer:* And what do you consider a good experience for the *slow tourists*?

P2: Precisely the immersing in the atmosphere of this place you visit. We used to be in Morocco and in Cannes and other places in Spain... in Malaga, in Barcelona... every place has some specific places that later remain in the memory and when it is mentioned, for example, you hear somewhere about Malaga... at once you picture what you saw, felt and experienced... the savor of the place itself... this is something that inspires me... not, for example, visiting a museum and for example, going around and seeing for two hours. There are people needed for this, too, and time to be directed with such a cultural trend... I like the architecture of a certain place... the different things...

3. How can the slow tourism contribute to your business?

P2: Here in Pamporovo, I just don't know, we are maybe from these big complexes, that a slow tourist should avoid, because here what would be... it would be possible to be a starting point, the hotel, for people that are practicing this type of tourism, as a base from here to go around Shiroka Laka, Momchilovtsi, Gela... And afterwards they come back here where there is, let's say, SPA, restaurants... You know to combine the slow tourism with the other one... However,

this is tearing them away from this atmosphere, so I think that we are not the location for the slow tourist.

13. What sort of activities related to slow tourism do you offer to your tourists?

P2: What are the activities of slow tourism... ? so people go around and enter the local eating house. We are catering in an authentic traditional type of restaurant (bitov), of the barbecue kind, also... Zabardo village is the thing we offered.

Interviewer: And have you offered this as an excursion... I mean going to Zabardo village?

P2: Yes, as an excursion... some kind of cooperation with the locals... they organize everything there at the place, we organize the contact... to our tourists with them.

4. Do you think that your hotel can be promoted as a place for experiencing slow tourism?

P2: right now, I am not sure this is possible

Interviewer: Would you make a marketing campaign to this new segment of tourists?

P2: No, I think that we are not the most suitable destination for this kind of tourism... the only thing we can do is what I said... as a starting point for slow tourism... because also the visits of the meeting that is made here in Rozhen, Shiroka Laka... Uhlovitsa, Smilyan, we can do this like some sort of a starting point of people wanting to get to know the traditions of the region. However, we don't have such a material basis as a typical place in order to look as an object that can enter this way in the slow tourism.

5. Do you think that the Rhodopes are suitable for practicing slow tourism?

P2: Yes, there is much to see... a lot of authentic location and natural sights, cultural, religious...

6. Do you notice a change in the preference of tourists, their demand, to orientate more to slow tourism?

P2: In the summer, yes, there are people that choose our hotel more likely because it is more distanced than the center, the noise, these architecture of a big complex... you know, after all we are distanced, we are situated on a meadow in the forest... and we are more close, like something more typical for the Rhodopes, you know, the hotel is preferred in the summer, but it is again like a starting point... for surrounding routes and sights. And so on...

7. Do you cooperate with the locals, the surrounding small villages?

P2: There were such beginning, years ago they were looking for exactly like a starting point accommodating at our place groups, for example, for 5-6 days in order to diversify their stay among the mountain, walks in the forest... so herbs and something else they were looking for, for example, contact with the local crafts and then we contacted Zabardo, you know there are many interesting things at the Ferris wheel, the typical - a sort of a village carousel that anybody

who goes can visit... besides, they had some kind of a zoo... something small, of course... two roes, 3 somethings, but for a village this is interesting and they have a tradition in weaving. In regards with this, we kept contact with them, also bagpipe lessons... things that are typical for the village and are offered by the locals, but actually we were more like the starting point of diversifying the tourist.

7.1. Are you willing, for example, to organize a night of the tourists in traditional tavern in the local villages?

P2: No, we do this only if the tourists ask for cooperation, because we have such a restaurant... You know, the idea of everybody, who does this business, is to keep the tourist as much as they can with themselves, but we had cases when groups wanted to make them somewhere a traditional night... and we got in touch mostly with Shiroka Laka and Smilyan. With local people having such restaurant in a typical for Shiroka Laka style, Slavchev in Shiroka Laka... and Smolenata in Smilyan.

7.2. Do you think that you can have competition from this type of tourism, for example the guest houses?

P2: Well, the segments are different and the one looking for slow tourism and guest houses wouldn't come to our place... anyway, they will be searching for staying in a guest house in the villages, so we do not feel such a strong competition. Everybody has a target, which is different. The one of the hotel is different than the one of the village houses.

8. Do you think that one day the slow tourism will contribute to the development of your business and this term slow tourism, would it be helpful for your business in future? Are you ready to change your orientation to the aspects of slow tourism or adapt some elements of slow tourism?

P2: We haven't thought about this matter yet... we do it sporadically, when there is obvious interest from the client's side, but in future, if this segment is really strengthened, probably there would options searched to make something here at this place.

9. How can you adapt to slow tourism if you didn't adapt yet? / if you have, what did you do for slow tourism? (activities)

*I didn't ask this because of her earlier statements*

10. Do you currently give any advices to the tourists to go and see these small villages, to touch the local culture?

P2: Yes... so when they ask us what can be done here, for example, for a week... we point them at once Shiroka Laka, Smilyan, the caves... the observatory in Rozhen, at once we point at something typical that they don't have anywhere else to see, in the places they are coming from.

So this helps us, them too...so, there is some symbiosis between us and the slow tourism... with the surrounding villages and small towns, because people that come for longer staying in our hotel, are looking for what else they can do and for us it is welcomed that there are such locations close, which we can point at... to go and come back to us. During the day to be there and in the evening to come back... to us.

10.1. Didn't you mention about these events you organized in order the tourists to touch to the local culture, are they organized only during the summer or during the winter, too?

P2: Mostly during the summer, because in the winter the typical tourist is the skier and we are also more likely pointed at there.

11. Do you think that the food can be a slow experience for your guests?

P2: Yes, definitely. Even when they come here, they say many times, can there be in the menu, for example, patatnic, marudnic (puncakes from the Rhodopes), typical stuff for the Rhodopes. And this makes them happy.

12. Do you offer slow food? Local food?

P2: If the cheverme (barbecue that needs 4-6 hours to be prepared) is a slow food, yes, we offer it. They often come and want cheverme, which is put at two o'clock to cook and taken off at eight o'clock in the evening. So it is very slow to cook.

Interviewer: Yes, this is a slow food... and it is local... and are your suppliers local?

P2: Mostly local. Many times we have had attacks from big food chains such as Metro and others... to deliver us in big quantities regularly with a lot of discounts, with a lot of baits, but I am personally tuned locally-patriotically and this way in general, I reject them because this is going to get us to bankruptcy. If everybody order from the big chains, all the hotel owners and restaurants in the surroundings, the local companies will get to bankruptcy... and mostly because of this, I decline.

Interviewer: Well done, and what is the capacity of your hotel?

P2: 200 regular beds, 103 rooms, it is big, it is not the typical small hotel...

14. What is the difference, according to you, between slow tourism and other forms of tourism? (sustainable tourism, mass tourism, village tourism)

P2: There is difference, there is nothing to talk about the mass tourism, it is clear. For the ski tourism, too... but for example, the rural tourism is more like being on the same location in a village in a farm and engaging in the local work activity. While during the slow tourism, it is not obligatory to get in the barn... this is to be present, to watch, to gather emotions, impressions... it is more likely that this is the difference. While during the rural tourism it is the same, again you gather emotions and impressions, but you also gain some skills... you get into

the traditions of the local people much deeper than the slow tourism where you are only watching them. This is just what I think... I might be wrong...

15. Have you heard about Citta slow and do you think that Citta slow has any future in the Rhodopes?

P2: No, I haven't heard.

16. Do you think that the conventional, traditional tourism is slow tourism, and do you think that the slow tourism is something special?

P2: I think that it is something special... because time flies by very quickly and it is actually in a much hurry... people are in a lot of hurry and they try to communicate as fast as they can, to travel faster, to reach somewhere faster... but it seems like slow tourism is like the counter point, like a strike against this trend, it comes up and I think that the slow tourism will gather speed. Seems like people are tired to communicate online and fast, seems like they need some slow down of the pace. I think that there is future for it...

17. Do you have any strategy for slow tourism? And if yes, what is it? If you do not have, what do you think about developing slow tourism in future? If you have to think of a few main ideas for developing slow tourism, what would your first idea for slow tourism be?

P2: I think that we can hardly fit in now. We first need investments in order to make the place suitable for this type of tourism and then to think about it already...

Interviewer: What about cooperation with the small villages?

P2: This has to be thought about... what does it mean... cooperation again from a point of view that we could be a starting point for them... We haven't thought yet...

18. Do you think that especially in Pamporovo, more slow tourism could be practiced?

P2: Well, in this form, no!

19. The slow tourism is established in Italy, do you think that it can be applied in the same form in the region, with these same features?

P2: Yes, in the region of the Rhodopes, I think that it definitely could.

20. What are the experiences your tourists find most interesting, most relaxing after their stay and what do they mention most often at leaving the hotel?

P2: Well, usually first of all is the cleanness of the hotel and in the region, attitude of staff and local people... And basically it is always mentioned that people here are very friendly in comparison with other resorts in Bulgaria, let's not mention them now. So they find us very friendly and the third thing they mention is the food... for them it is of great importance, the food... So the cleanness, people, human factor and food...



21. Do you think that the slow tourism has a potential to turn into more like sustainable tourism in future? Or it is sustainable tourism, according to you?

P2: Yes, I think that the slow tourism can be accepted as some kind of sustainable tourism with all the elements, which are offered to the tourist, who practices slow tourism... this is also the local architecture and the local producers of products, the local craftsman, natural sights... I think that they can turn based on non-stop growing of the region.

22. What are the restrictions of practicing slow tourism in Pamporovo? and about the Rhodopes, according to you. And for you...

P2: First, the facilities, which exists in the resort, both in the hotel and resort. According to me, it is not suitable for developing slow tourism... these hotels, constructions, finished or not... big complexes, huge hotels, lack of other activities besides the hotels with their bars and restaurants meaning that nothing else is offered like this, for example... such as a horse facility, skating rink... other stuff to do are missing... based driving skin in the winter and taking a walk on the paths of the forest, which is not bad at all... after all there are mountain bikes in the summer... so some things one by one... are going to happen. They made lanes for mountain bicycles, which is nice and sparing to the nature, because it is not related to laying asphalt, but the formations of the nature... gullies, paths... rivers... there is not much additional infrastructure to develop something additionally... what should people do... to be closer to the local nature and to the local texture of the place, of this region.

Interviewer: How does this slow tourist look, according to you?

P2: According to me, they are people aged... somewhere above 45 years... this is what I imagine... because I would like this....

23. Have you heard the word Hygge? which practically means something like pleasure... there is no particular translation of the word in Bulgarian? For example, the way you stand in front of the fireplace with a cup of cappuccino / Mursala tea...?

P2: I have heard, yes... This means home coziness... I have read lately, I even think that this word was a last year's word if I am not wrong. It means something like very cozy... some intimacy, warmth of the home, I have heard about this word and I have read about it...

Interviewer: Do you think that you can promote the hotel with such an image?

P2: First, investments are needed to make it cozy and warm, our hotel is little.....errr.... it is built on an old base and many of the elements from it are saved... old mosaics, old rendering... it needs more softening of the surroundings in order to get closer to this Hygge feeling.

Interviewer: Thank you very much... great...

**Interview with hotel manager (P3), 14.02.2018 12:00 o'clock at "Rhodopi Home"**

**( "Rodopski Dom" ) hotel, Chepelare town**

1. Have you ever heard about Slow Tourism?

P3: Yes...

2. What is Slow Tourism personally for you? What is your philosophy about slow tourism? And what do you think is a good experience for slow tourists?

P3: For me personally it is a very good as an idea, as an experience, as an opportunity to see something different, to feel something more different... According to me, there are people for everything, there are people for both slow tourism and extreme tourism, as long as a person finds what he likes. As an organization for the slow tourism has to happen in family houses, pensions... so that the family itself can organize it in order the contact with the client to be more informal, more immediate, because in a big hotel people are different, with different claims and for me the slow tourism can be done only where there are not many people in order to be able to reach them, to get them together by interests... In order to have one and the same interest... then when they decide, for example, that today is the day of the Rhodopean cuisine and this day of the Rhodopean cuisine would be of the dishes... people to gather and everyone to give their share, for example, making of a local dish, one of them to peel the potatoes, the other one to cut the onion and after that together if they should prepare food for 20 people, they divide in half and everybody makes the necessary quantity for 20 people... On the next day it can be decided as a day for going to a certain dairy farm and there on the spot, just like here in Chepelare, there is a dairy farm where a family is raising cows and making cheese, milk... the way they organized it... they have clients and in particular days of the week they deliver milk to the houses, too.

Interviewer: Do you order from them?

P3: No, we cannot afford it, because this system, which is the law concerning foods is not allowing it. We should have invoices and certificates, consignment numbers... the own manufacture is not so easy. A lot of bureaucratic obstacles have to be passed over, which is respectively related to a certain amount of money in order for us to offer slow food, we should have a document. In order to be given a document, people should follow some procedure, be approved in order to be able to present it to us. Many such small producers think that they have clients and it is not necessary to sell in the big places. They do not have such a big production, too. Taking into account these requirements, we cannot afford it... we can take potatoes from agricultural producers and if there is another agricultural producer, I would accept them with pleasure, because they have a document. They are licensed, approved, registered according to

the respective laws. For instance, recently, last year we were on such a meeting in the municipality of Chepelare and there were people from the village Orehovo. In Orehovo, for example, there are such guest houses where they produce their own food. And this is exactly what we commented, to what extent is this food accepted by the health authorities and then it was about it... these people are producing themselves honey, producing themselves jam... But when they offer it in a restaurant, during a control, they have no certificates, this is a weakness in our law. This omission that you cannot offer your own produce, because you have no document.

Interviewer: I have such a question for the end of the interview about the restriction of the slow tourism...

P3: Yes, this is a restriction, because the producers have to protect certain criteria and to be licensed, certified in order to have this right. It is not that the law concerning foods is forbidding you, but it does not allow you without a document. This is a restriction. Here there is an omission in the law. Even when we make... we make ourselves pickles, we make ourselves sauerkraut, we make our bell peppers... we buy them locally for the purpose of making our own products, so.... this thing is not delivered from a store with a certificate, such as Metro when the goods arrive with the invoice with the consignment number and so on, then I should mandatory send test probes to a laboratory... a specialized laboratory... thus, I receive a certificate, approved, that I can offer the baked bell peppers and pickles. We cook for the local school, too, so there is no way to avoid this. There are strict rules and we need to have documents. The foods are by the state standards. Thus, for me the slow tourism is related exactly with a small location.

Interviewer: Chepelare is a small location.

P3: Yes, this is what this restaurant Drenchev makes, there is a restaurant here that belongs to a family. They make themselves sarma dishes, however, whether they are certified or not, this is none of my business, but these people make them, the sarma dishes are very nice, they make themselves wine, they bake their bell peppers... they also offer their own produce... they have a hotel, too...

### 3. How can the slow tourism contribute to your business?

P3: The only thing I see with the accommodation in the hotel. People leaving from this sort of tourism are accommodated in the hotel, they book themselves a reservation, then we are useful just to the extent of giving them information where and what can they see. I very regularly direct them to Zlatograd and Shiroka Laka where there is something they can see. Thus, they can contribute with the accommodation... in case they prefer a hotel that has a swimming pool,

too. Chepelare is a small town with only 5400 citizens, from the calm locations with fresh air and nice nature, with ecopaths and similar conditions. They made now bicycle lanes, too. They hold cycling competitions, all of these are opportunities available as summer tourism. I relate it as opportunities for summer tourism, because the winter one does not suggest such a slow tourism, since it is of the ski sport that is not related to the slow tourism. People might want to be in a less populated place, but not to be deprived of certain condition for spoiling... for example, a swimming pool, steam bath, sauna...

Interviewer: SPA?

P3: We cannot call ourselves SPA hotel, because it is already in the law that we should meet certain requirements in order to be called SPA, either to have mineral water, or to have a certain amount of services... ours are not enough, that is why I avoid saying SPA... we neither have mineral water, nor do we have some particular showers... we have to offer much more things in order the tap water to be healing... because this is either the mineral water to heal, or the procedures to heal, related to health. If people, for instance, want to go and see the local nature, culture, tradition and want to still have good conditions, this is what we offer... this part of the slow tourism... to offer them conditions of good accommodation.

Interviewer: What sort of activities related to slow tourism do you offer to your tourists?

P3: We do not offer them. At least right now I cannot think of any. This is all related to outside of the hotel, here, at the spot, besides the relax we are offering...I can't think of something else..... relax, because for me the slow tourism is related with a holiday, too, not only with the local landmarks... the slow tourism for me is also recovering after a tense work day...

4. Do you think that your hotel can be promoted as a place for experiencing slow tourism?

P3: Yes, definitely, taking into account that it is in Chepelare and the recovering procedures we offer in the hotel and the information with which we can direct the tourists in the area.

Interviewer: Would you make a marketing campaign to this new segment of tourists?

P3: Of course, definitely.

5. Do you think that the Rhodopes are suitable for practicing slow tourism?

P3: Very suitable.

6. Do you notice a change in the preference of tourists, their demand, to orientate more to slow tourism?

P3: The summer ones yes, they are definitely searching for this in the summer.

7. Do you cooperate with the locals, the surrounding small villages?

P3: Yes... with Shiroka Laka, Orehovo, Zornitsa

Interviewer: What are you doing with them?

P3: We direct the tourists to them this way. If the tourists show interest, we are searching for a way to cooperate with other small villages.

7.1. Are you willing, for example, to organize a night of the tourists in traditional tavern in the local villages?

P3: It could happen in case there is a willing group of people having interest. We are ready for everything in case there is interest and demand.

7.2. Do you think that you can have competition from this type of tourism, for example the guest houses.

P3: No, for me people are searching... the client defines it, there are people for both, us and them.

8. Do you think that one day the slow tourism will contribute to the development of your business and this term slow tourism, would it be helpful for your business in future? Are you ready to change your orientation to the aspects of slow tourism? Offering elements of slow tourism?

P3: Yes, yes, everything is useful, in case there is demand, we change our direction in order to satisfy this demand. We cannot change our orientation on 100%, but we are ready to have such a type of services.

9. How can you adapt to slow tourism if you didn't adapt yet? What activities would you practice?

P3: It is a little bit hard to say.

Interviewer: You didn't think about it.

P3: Yes... I just didn't think about offering such a type of services at the spot, however, regarding cooperation of external ones, yes... in the hotel it would be difficult for us to offer something more particular than this.

10. Do you currently give any advices to the tourists to go and see these small villages, to touch the local culture?

P3: Yes, definitely, the tourists are going around in all the villages...

10.1. Have you organized such events that could touch the tourists to the local culture?

P3: At the moment we are using the ones of Chepelare. They are doing a lot... they have one of the music, one of the "Tarkala" (competition for mountain running and cycling), we cooperate with all this as much as we can in order to inform the guests and assist them with information, but we personally do not organize them. As a base, we have no abilities to organize them... this what the municipality can organize is like a singing competition, because there is

one of the old urban song (Bulgarian style of music), of traditional music, of capitan Petko Voyvoda, this the hotel cannot organize. There is nowhere to do it. We can cooperate only with the local initiatives, because there are such.

11. Do you think that the food can be a slow experience for your guests?

P3: Our food, that we make, is suchlike that it is compliant with our traditions, we make it ourselves. Slow food is to make yourself the food, it is not ready-made our food. It is prepared at the spot and according to me, the tourists are experiencing this, because... what we offer and the way they perceive it, for me it is such a type.

12. Do you offer slow food? Local food?

P3: Yes, the way we cook it. We do not have fast food, we prepare everything ourselves. We use local producers as much as possible, Rodopea, the local products, they are also Rhodopean... this is an element of the slow food, right?

Interviewer: Yes...

14. What is the difference, according to you, between slow tourism and other forms of tourism? (sustainable tourism, mass tourism, rural tourism)

P3: Both terms with the rural one are overlapping each other, at least I relate it this way with the slow experience and the village idyll... you know, the life is slower there, it is not so fast-paced and the slow tourist actually has to adapt in a certain period of time to the particular place, that is why I relate them, for me the slow tourism is sustainable, the nature is related to both kinds, the ski, mountain, nature.

15. Have you heard about Citta slow and do you think that Citta slow has any future in the Rhodopes?

P3: No, what is this... I cannot think about this.

16. Do you think that the conventional, traditional tourism is slow tourism and do you think that the slow tourism is something special?

P3: For me in the Rhodopes there are two kinds of tourism, winter and summer, the winter one is a sport one, it cannot be slow, while I just perceive the summer as slow tourism, a more carefree experience, there is no such a type of physical exercise... the summer is in order to run away from the heat and to come breathing some fresh air... for me, both are here.

17. Do you have any strategy for slow tourism? And if yes, what is it?

P3: I have no strategy.

Interviewer: If you do not have, what do you think about developing slow tourism in future? If you have to think of a few main ideas for developing slow tourism, what would your first idea for slow tourism be?

P3: Contact with such locations that could be of interest for the people included as a program, as a package, they accommodate for a weekend, for example, and you know, one of the days one experience in Momchilovtsi is offered, for example, or the other moment it is in Trigrad... we are willing to cooperate as an organization, as a holiday package

Interviewer: But you are still not doing it?

P3: We are not doing it, because there is no interest. If there is such a group of people, no problem, there are people offering transport, excursions to the wonder bridges constantly... People are coming and offering it, we as a hotel can organize the matter if there is interest. At least I didn't see any interest in our hotel.

18. Do you think that particularly in Chepelare more slow tourism could be practised?

P3: To some extent yes, because there are such people that remained with family hotels that can offer this type of tourism, but the bad thing is the depopulating of Chepelare. A lot of young people went abroad, the business decreased, there are no human resources...

19. The slow tourism is established in Italy, do you think that it can be applied in the same form in the region, with these same features?

P3: Yes, it could, but not exactly the one-to-one from the Italian, but it can adapt to the local conditions, tradition and culture, yes. Because this is it. The future is always the one that there awakes interest, we should change our orientation. Things are changing and if there is such interest, then our policy should be changed.

20. What are the experiences your tourists find most interesting, most relaxing after their stay and what do they mention most often at leaving the hotel?

P3: Firstly, I should differentiate the guests. The winter one of ski and then from the holiday in the hotel. For example, they say: we liked very much the swimming pool... the steam bath... the food... we will come again, they relate it to the slopes and you know, the entire experience in the hotel. In the summer when they are going out... You know, the Bulgarians don't go much on eco paths...

Interviewer: Is that so?

P3: The people going to eco paths are little. They go to Pamporovo with the cars, they go around there, they go to caves and then they say the Rhodopes are a wonderful location. We have people from Northern Bulgaria, that come our way and say that they like very much the Rhodopes, they come back to the location as an experience, nature and as good accommodation in the hotel.

Interviewer: And who is walking on these eco paths?

P3: They are a group of people enthusiast that walk, the others prefer Pamporovo, because it is easier, while the eco path is a bit harder. And they go, for example, to Snezhanka, to Pamporovo, in the summer there is a climbing wall, too... and they climb there... on the meadows they are staying, the love walking on the bridge, which is at Saint Pantaleon, there is one eco path, to go to the caves and at Orlovo oko they make them a safari, Shiroka Laka regularly, because they are impressed by the architecture... the student groups regularly go to the observatory and the planetarium and now I forgot to tell you two things. In the winter, for example, on the 3rd of March, the municipality in Chepelare makes an expedition on occasion of the Bulgarian national holiday from Chepelare to Mechi Chal and we have a group of enthusiasts that come in the hotel in order to participate in the expedition. A man with 3-4 children and their friends of 10-15 people and there really is interest. The municipality is organizing it again on the 3rd of March, expedition up and down to Mechi Chal.

Interviewer: Interesting

P3: Yes... and about the summer I forgot to tell you about the expeditions on foot. It has to be related to the municipality, the hotel could hardly find so many people in order to become an event.

Interviewer: Yes...

P3: Because we are not only slow tourism, we have different interests, but if we find 15 people that have a desire, we could, for example, help them with transportation to a certain place... but the municipality as a location can also organize other opportunities as capacity... and so on. The other thing, which is in Chepelare, there should have been held co-working holidays, but it didn't happen during the last 2 years. This is... IT specialists to move in for a certain amount of time, I have a request from another place, too, and I am waiting for confirmation now... to move to Chepelare in order to work here. However, they had to choose whether to be in a hotel or a guest house or amongst the nature. There was interest of this, but I do not know why it didn't happen... Maybe they chose some other location... I have another request about the spring, a small group of IT specialists to come to work here amongst the nature, to stray a little from their busy everyday life and doing their job, to relax. We are making another similar event from another company, they come for 3 days and we offer them here a job position... they work and rest. This is also some kind of slow tourism if you ask me... it is not necessarily only to be in vacation and to go with your family. For me it can also happen, according to the interests, as a company's event. Lately in Bulgaria the team building is interpret almost that they drive you somewhere and burden you physically with paintball, extreme climbing... I do not know why this is so... how it is understood in Bulgaria.... And these IT people are not that burdened



physically, they are a sitting type of people, but after all they bring them out to another environment in another location. It is discussed a lot lately about how the IT specialists are buying houses outside of Sofia, in small villages, they are bringing their family there, they work online... but they are among the nature in the silence and clean air, this can happen also in a municipality. This is a type of slow tourism, I don't know if it happens in the Rhodopes, but I hear that around Sofia there is such a thing, which could be done and here if there is any interest. This is a kind of slow tourism that is not related to a hotel, people obviously got orientated.

21. Do you think that the slow tourism has a potential to turn into more like sustainable tourism in future? Or it is sustainable tourism, according to you?

P3: It is not sustainable, according to me, it is starting to develop now. The Bulgarians just started preferring the small hotels, the small villages.

22. What are the restrictions for practicing the slow tourism in Chepelare?, and what about the Rhodopes, according to you? for you... you mentioned the food...

P3: In Chepelare as a town, I don't want to be too sharp, it is not nice to write it down, but people from Chepelare kind of do not care. Before they wanted more small business, but it decreased so much either the people left, or something stopped them... this is the issue.

Interviewer: Maybe there are no tourists.

P3: They decreased, yes, but it should be also attractive in order tourists to come, as if in Chepelare they are not that active as in Bansko. You know, I am not from here, I cannot say it, that is why it could be said in some mild manner, because it is not nice for the locals... as if they kind of... They try opening stores, the restaurants are the same like in the old times, even years ago there were more small restaurants, but they closed, because there is no work and there are a few left that work... The local people open stores... For the hotel especially in order to offer local produce, the restriction is the certification, but regarding the people that would come, there are no restrictions. What stops us, not related to the tourism, is to offer local dishes, but if they go to the house of the person X, they can offer them that. But we cannot, we offer breakfast, dinner to the people, we try offering local food, yes, but the tourist decides that one of the nights they would go to another type of restaurant / thus, the guest houses are our competitor, because they are traditional and there they eat food offered at the spot... and they prepare it for us... At our place, the restrictions are to such an extent how much we should do it ourselves and certify it. While the small restaurants offer it, but only they know how do the offer...

23. Have you heard the word Hygge? which practically means something like pleasure... there is no particular translation of the word in Bulgarian? For example, the way you stand in front of the fireplace with a cup of cappuccino / Mursala tea...?

P3: What does this term mean? No, I am not familiar and I think that it is not quite in the mentality of the Bulgaria... so much time I am working with different people... We are all so different... you know, the Danish have thought, you know, when you go there, you can say delight... There is no way to happen in Chepelare... Our hotel is not like this, for me to go to a hotel and to be with the slippers and socks, like you are at home, is kind of not okay for me. But we are all different nations and that is the way they like it in Bulgaria, to sit in front of the fireplace... we are lighting ours in the evening, so that they can sit, so that there could be a little relax, but the tourists would do it in any house, people are now renting guest houses, I cannot quite see it in the hotel, we are different, very different.

Interviewer: Thank you!

P3: You are welcome!

**Interview with restaurant manager (P4) 21.02.2018 at 11.00 o'clock at "Filter guest house" restaurant, Shiroka Laka**

1. Have you heard about *Slow Tourism*?

P4: Yes, we heard about it.

1.1. And about slow food?

P4: Yes.

2. What is Slow Tourism personally for you?

P4: Slow tourism for me is the family to take 1 month vacation and to go to the Rhodopes.

Interviewer: What is your philosophy about the slow tourism? And what do you consider a good experience for slow tourists?

P4: To be in the Rhodopes. The Rhodopes is one of the most beautiful mountains in the entire world. This mountain has it all. Rivers, waterfalls, very beautiful places where the view wherever you look is unique. It inspires you and charges you with energy.

Interviewer: Since you mentioned that for you the slow tourist is a month on holiday, did you meet such tourists?

P4: Yes, there are such tourists that hire guest houses in Shiroka Laka and on the Rhodopes... There are many such houses here, which are made and just stay... and when the guests move in, they travel around the Rhodopes and every day they are at different places: caves, they go to the dam, fishing... they make barbecue, visit such restaurants as ours in Shiroka Laka... to eat natural food, because this food is served less and less... and instead the restaurants offer foods from these made-up chains like Metro, from which you cannot know the origin of the

food. And in our restaurant the origin of the food is known. We are raising our animals, we have sheep, every year we buy our turkeys, which we raise for the restaurant.

Interviewer: Do you serve the meat?

P4: Absolutely! Of course! Everything, that is slaughtered, goes to HEI(an organization that has to approve the food) and a sample is given and after that we receive a certificate. Then we can sell this thing in our restaurant.

/ Do they organize here in Shiroka Laka different festivals, celebrations... related to tradition, culture and food...

P4: Many, many, many. There are many holidays in Shiroka Laka, for example, the celebration of the village Shiroka Laka is Virgin Mary on 15 August. And in the church many people gather, then sacrificial rites are made for different things from restaurant owners, hotel owners also... The sacrificial rites are made in the church in cauldrons and they are given for free to all the visitors who come to Shiroka Laka for this holiday. On this holiday the mayor himself orders an orchestra, which is on the expense of the town hall. Many people are gathered... Simply thousands of people pass through here.

Interviewer: Is this the biggest holiday of the village?

P4: No... there is bagpipe competition, it is in Gela, but still the guests stay in Shiroka Laka. It is made during the first Sunday of August.

Interviewer: I understood that soon such a holiday is coming called "Pes Monday" ...

P4: This holiday is since long years and then on this celebration most people are gathered. Maybe there were even 15000 people. Then groups come...

Interviewer: And Shiroka Laka is a small village...

P4: Yes, it is small.

Interviewer: How many residents are there at the moment?

P4: So, at the moment in Shiroka Laka live 289 residents... but the population is about 460, but most of them live in the cities of Smolyan, Devin... and so on in the surroundings bigger settlements. On "Pes Monday" there are again leading mummers in the entire country... They show the emblematic things for their regions, they chase away the devil... chasing the bad. And that is why they make these masks, to chase away the bad spirits.

Interviewer: Is this a mummers' holiday?

P4: Yes, it is made every year. The first Sunday of March. Simply 2-3 days it is very busy. Then is also our national holiday 3-rd of March and the village is just boiling from guests from everywhere.

Interviewer: And before the interview started, you mentioned about the holiday of the salo (pig fat) ... what celebrations of food are there here?

P4: The celebration of the salo takes place already second year... again under the guidance of restaurant owners, hotel owners, private producers... shepherds who are watching over cows... animals and have domestic produces like cow cheese, sheep and local kashkavals (yellow cheeses) cheese, see, producers, which are made in smaller quantities, but from the animals that the farmers themselves are raising. This year there were 6 producers from the region: there were salo, kashkaval(yellow cheese), branza, cheese...

Interviewer: What is branza?

P4: The branza is sheep cheese. There was also sheep kashkaval(yellow cheese)... these things from old recipes mature and do not sell immediately. They mature according to previous standards... The Bulgarian state standard is called once upon a time... and our producers want to get back these old standards / when the foods matured for 6 months at least and then to start selling.

Interviewer: Is this the reason they made this celebration, to show everybody what they are capable of, is that so?

P4: Exactly... There is even a competition, a lotto is made, all the visitors pass and try wines, appetizers and so on and after that they give their opinion which producer impressed them the most. Everybody votes and then a jury assesses and proclaims who the winner with the first prize is. For a second year one and the same producer from Shiroka Laka wins the first prize. He produces salami, domestic appetizers, cheese... And this speaks good about him.

### 3. How can the slow tourism contribute to your business?

P4: Our restaurant in Shiroka Laka has its clients. I personally from 3 years every single day am present at work and I welcome every client with welcome and every client asks me what home-made dish we have prepared. That is why we make our production... We have domestic animals... which we are taking care of, sheep, turkeys, chickens, fishes... I have a pond, in which I produce my trout and sell it in the restaurant. We also raise pigs the same way.

Interviewer: And this trout, what do you feed it with?

P4: I first start feeding it with foods the way trout is fed in the fishponds, but we raise it until it becomes about 150 g. After that one year we do not feed them. They eat whatever they found, because the fish is in entrance water and exit water and there are insects and it just feeds in a natural way. Like in the rivers. That way it cleanses itself and becomes unique. And when the tourists try our food, they say to other friends: "It is wonderful here!"

Interviewer: And what did you say, something about the trout entrance water-exit water...?

P4: entrance water exit water... this is pure water, water, in which there is oxygen, so that this trout can live.

Interviewer: i.e. you create good conditions for raising delicious fish.

P4: Exactly! We make only home-made dishes, soups, hominies, klins (dish with baked dough and filling), patatnics (dish with potatoes)... these are Rhodopes dishes that glorify the Rhodopes and the people that come to us are looking for this food.

4. Do you think that your restaurant can be promoted as a place for subsisting on slow tourism... pleasure of the slow food?

P4: Exactly, I think that is what we think...

Interviewer: Would you make a marketing campaign to this new segment of tourists?

P4: We cannot advertise ourselves, the clients themselves understand, right after they try the food, where they are and the advertisement comes from our clients. Word of mouth. This advertisement is the greatest advertisement. We do not brag with who we are... that we sell only real food. Just the guests come and they themselves advertise our restaurant. We have many, many fans of ours and they always call. Our restaurant is small, it is for eating only, not for big celebrations. The guests come, eat, get up and go. That is how it is at our place.

Interviewer: How many seats do you have?

P4: It is with 36 seats inside and outside we have seats for smokers. And summer the restaurant becomes up to 90 seats with the tables outside and there are tourists all the time.

Interviewer: I.e. you wouldn't afford to make a marketing campaign.

P4: We do advertise, but not like a pep talk to agitate the people... our advertising comes from the tourists themselves. Whoever tries once... that is where our advertising comes from. We have tourists that come from Pamporovo to Shiroka Laka to eat turkey soup, because they tell about turkey soup in Bulgaria, but cannot find it anywhere, only at our place there is home-made turkey soup. They come especially to eat turkey soup, hominy, patatnik, clin... sarmas... We separately have baked... lambs, calves... all these things are home-made and the tourists are enjoying them. When they try, and they say... that they haven't eaten such tasty food anywhere and this is what we understand by our thinking about slow tourism.

5. Do you think that the Rhodopes are suitable for practicing slow tourism?

P4: The Rhodopes are the most suitable for practicing slow tourism... Because the tourists themselves... Especially in the houses of the small villages like Yagodina, Trigrad, where there are many tourists in the summer and there the landlords themselves raise animals and then the tourists themselves want to see how the cow is milked, the goat... the tourists are curious to understand how the foods are prepared... for instance, we also make every year jam from wild

strawberries, we gather Boletus, which we keep in such a way that it always comes out fresh for our clients. Most things, which we offer in our restaurant are in the form of this slow tourism. People receive fresh and pure food at our place. These are all the kinds of jams, potatoes, beans, which we raise...

Most of the things in the menu are home-made... The milks, desserts, baklava, everything we make according to home recipes in the moment.

6. Do you notice a change in the preferences of tourists, their demand, to orientate more to slow tourism? Slow movement?

P4: Absolutely! Most of the tourists want to enjoy... because they enjoy this good and quality food. They want such a food. They share that in the capital they cannot find such a food anywhere.

Interviewer: For example, do you notice a change in their orders...?

P4: No, their orders are always to the first page. On the first page is everything from the Rhodopes. They always ask where the food comes from, is it real, is it made by us...

They are looking for the food from the Rhodopes and according to me, they come in the Rhodopes to enjoy the good food, which they consume with great pleasure. And the little children when they try the turkey soup and the parents say: my child started eating soup. It is unique, we want it for take-out... seriously, every day we have a surprise by these small visitors, who start eating at our place... this is real food, seriously, yesterday we had such a case. A kid that is not two years old yet comes and congratulates me that it is delicious.

Interviewer: Well done! And are the quickly prepared meals or slowly prepared meals preferred... by the tourists?

P4: Fast prepared food is for people, who are in a hurry and want stopping by to have a take-away food... But our food is made all of it in the moment. We make only the soups each morning, then they are hot. And that way the tourists take a soup or something quick to eat and go, but most tourists at our place ... want to sit, to enjoy, to eat and to go... It is difficult to find available seats. Even the soup is prepared for long time. We open the restaurant when we are ready with the meals and we cook only for the day. If we are out of soup, we do not offer it any more, we make it again tomorrow. We have many cases when they want to eat only soups and they finish. And most people already do not have so much financial resources... they want for example with less money to enjoy and to satiate... Because the lamb, the calf, these are expensive things and most tourists cannot afford them.

7. Do you cooperate with the local population, the surrounding little villages?

P4: We have hotels, which do not prepare food and they call for reservations, we also send freshly prepared food for take-out...

7.1. Do you cooperate with complex Pamporovo and other settlements, if yes/ which ones and with what?

P4: Absolutely always.

7.2. Do you think that you can have competition from this type of tourism, for instance guest houses?

P4: Competition gives birth to the truth. This can only make us happy when we have competition, because this type of tourism starts developing faster and with more quality. I am absolutely for the competition. There should be competition always, otherwise, it is not working.

8. Do you think that one day the slow tourism will contribute to the development of your business and this term slow tourism, could it be useful for your business in future?

P4: This tourism is already developing, because most tourists are already searching for these elements from it... real food, real food, because real food is the one that you see yourself, you make yourself, you produce it yourself and sell it. Then the quality becomes number 1!

*Interviewer:* Are you ready to change your orientation to the aspects of slow tourism?

P4: We have adapted long ago.

*Interviewer:* Was the adaption process hard...?

P4: It cannot be hard for us, because we are developing tourism since 40 years, especially I have seen everything and passed through all the obstacles and we passed through time, I know what the client is looking for now, he/she is searching for quality food and wants it cheaper. That is it, each client is searching for it in the Rhodopes. There are clients for every food, but most client are searching for the real food.

9. How can you adapt to slow tourism if you haven't adapted yet? / if you haven't, what would you do for slow tourism? (activities)

*This question was answered yarlier in the text*

10. In the present do you give any advices to the tourists to go and see these small villages, to get in touch with the local culture?

P4: Well, all the tourists that come to us, they ask... always! We are like an information desk, because we are in the way and all the tourists ask where to go... they ask about caves, gorges, horses, they ask for everything... about churches and sanctuaries / there are many such places in the Rhodopes... and we are always guiding their way. We say that everywhere is very

beautiful... And whoever wants wherever, what opportunities are there and with how many days do they have, we advise them according to what the tourist wants.

10.1. Did you organize such events that can get in touch the tourists with the local culture and traditional food?

P4: There were tourists that wanted to see our turkeys... how we feed them, they ask when they are slaughtered and how the meat is preserved... and so on. The turkeys are slaughtered in December, but we sell them an all year round. This soup, we have a way to preserve these turkeys. We sterilize and put them in cans... the meat survives an year, two and every day the food comes out fresh... for everything there is a way to preserve in order to come out fresh, everything... For the lamb, as well as for the veal... Also, Bulgarians that live in Italy and have heard about us, call us and say... We want a cheverme (barbecue)... but they want to see it themselves... We record how it is slaughtered during the day, how it is skinned, how it is prepared, and they come to see it on the cheverme... They also ordered a bagpiper, singer... we have such tourists that are with good financial resources and they make such evenings.

Interviewer: The cheverme is being prepared for long time, isn't it?

P4: Yes... between 4 and 6 hours it is spinning... this is the typical slow food for the Rhodopes... Also, like I already mentioned, the hominy is prepared in the moment... with typical corn flour...

Interviewer: And the client is waiting?

P4: Yes, of course. They want to consume this food. But the clin and patatnic are made in the morning and they are ready, although that they are a kind of slow food, according to the way they are prepared. The client when he comes, can receive at once clin, patatnic and the hominy has to be done in the moment... because it has to be eaten in the moment.

11. I think that you already answered me, but... Do you think that the food can be a slow experience for your guests?

P4: The food is the greatest thing for a person, not only for tourists and anyone, who respects themselves, has to eat good food.

12. Who are your suppliers? Are they local companies?

P4: Only local companies. The big chains are not preferred at our place.

14. What is the difference, according to you, between slow tourism and other forms of tourism?

P4: There is a difference, they appreciate it and see the difference in the quality of the food, the guests themselves.



15. Have you heard about Cittaslow and do you think that Cittaslow is the future for the Rhodopes?

P4: Yes, Varbovo... this village stayed, it is old, it is slow... the people are living there like in the old days...

Interviewer: Where is this Varbovo?

P4: Exactly 1 km away from us, from Shiroka Laka...

Interviewer: There aren't generally any officially slowly towns in Bulgaria...

P4: I think that we could have, but the Bulgarian tourism is far from perfect...

16. Do you think that the traditional tourism is slow tourism, and do you think that the slow tourism is something special?

P4: The slow tourism is something special... because not anybody understands slow tourism and not anybody can apply it.

17. Do you have any strategy for slow tourism? And if yes, what is it?...

If you don't have, what do you think about developing the slow tourism in future?

If you have to think about a few main ideas for developing slow tourism, what would the first idea for slow tourism be?

P4: At the moment we are realizing an idea, with which we want to make a holiday village with wooden houses and rock, the tourists to come and prepare the food themselves, i.e. they will cook. The idea comes from this that most people do not want to go to restaurants but want to prepare their food. And thus, we could help them with charcoal with grills... right... the guest houses that we want to make to have equipment and the guests themselves to prepare their food, which we can provide... our pure and ecological food.

Interviewer: Do you think about developing this in Shiroka Laka?

P4: No, in Smolyan, and at the moment we have such a house ready. And we have animals there... and when the tourists come, they enjoy the turkeys, the chicken, the sheep, because the animals are close to them... when we are there, the guests want to feed the animals with us...

18. Do you think that especially in Shiroka Laka more slow tourism can be practiced?

P4: More and more houses in Shiroka Laka are suitable for slow tourism. The people come not to live in luxury, but to live in an old house. Most of the tourists are now looking for the old... cozycas (carpets from goat's wool), to see how their ancestors slept in the old times... they run away from the shine. Always most of the times there are no vacant places in Shiroka Laka...

Interviewer: Is that so?

P4: Yes, especially in the summer season.

19. The *slow tourism* is settled in Italy, do you think that it can be applied in the same form in the region, with these same characteristics?

P4: Difficult... every place is unique itself.

Interviewer: Why difficult?

P4: Not difficult, it is developed, but it is just that we stick to the things that are personally from this region. Just like in the old times our ancestors have cooked, this is what we stick to in our restaurant. To have the meals prepared like in the old times, because the tourists come and ask for everything... for example, what is patatnic...

Interviewer: Did you make such a demonstrations for them? How are the meals prepared?

P4: The demonstrations cannot be shown, only the ready products. Because the tourists don't have their personal healthcare documents with them and you cannot let them in the kitchen. According to me, most of the tourists want only to eat. They feel the things when they eat.

20. What are the experiences that your tourists find the most interesting, relaxing after their stay and what do they mention mostly when leaving the hotel?

P4: THE FOOD! Such a food they never ate and they will come back again and they will tell everybody where to come to eat. This makes us the best! This makes us happy! Every single client that is welcomed and sent back by us, they go away with a smile and happy from the food.

21. Do you think that the slow tourism has any potential to turn into more than sustainable tourism in future? Or it is sustainable tourism, according to you?

P4: It is hard to apply it anywhere. It requires quality products in order to be done. It is only in the villages and such small villages as ours, where you producing the food can exist. The bigger cities, the bigger food chains conquered everybody and nothing can be done. The slow tourism can exist only in the smaller villages.

Interviewer: What about Pamporovo?

P4: In Pamporovo it is hard. The tourist there is different... There it is almost impossible for slow tourism. There could be restaurants for slow tourism, but these are smaller restaurants. Most of the restaurants are for the mass tourist. There are such restaurants, but they are not many.

22. What are the restrictions for practicing the slow tourism in Shiroka Laka? And what about the Rhodopes, according to you? And for you personally?

P4: According to me, there are no such restrictions, nothing can stop us. I personally do not see such restrictions.

23. Have you heard the word Hygge, which means actually sort of pleasure... there is no exact translation of the word in Bulgarian? For example, to stay by the fireplace with a cup of cappuccino/ Mursala tea...?

P4: I hear it every day from my guests... although it is in Bulgarian... they say... Ah, I haven't tried such a thing before, such a food... every single day! I hear it from my guests... they come and go with a smile from us, because our food is the most magnificent food! And this is the human... they want to fill in their stomach in order to be happy.

Interviewer: Thank you !