

Understanding Green Travel Behaviour: A Comparative Study Of Motivational Factors For Destination Selection Among Slovenian Travellers

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Abstract:

The varied and multidimensional character of human behaviour in tourism settings is highlighted by the differences in tourists' motivations for international travel between cultures and destinations. Eco-tourism and nature-based travel are becoming more and more popular as a reflection of a worldwide movement towards environmentally conscious travel in which local ecosystems and resource preservation take centre stage. With an eye towards green travel behaviour especially, this study seeks to pinpoint and examine the elements driving Slovenian visitors to choose a particular travel destination. Twenty in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with frequent visitors from Slovenia. The study investigates the underlying reasons for destination choices using thematic analysis. We first decided on a judgemental sampling, then in some cases turned to snowball sampling. Thus, the research employs a multi-sampling method. The results provide understanding of the effects of these reasons on personal travel choices and propose the ways in which travel agencies might modify their marketing plans and create offers fit for changing tastes of consumers. The study revealed five main themes influencing the choice of destinations for Slovenian travellers. 1) Environmental & Ecological Awareness; 2) Authentic & Holistic Sustainability; 3) Evolving Traveler Mindsets; 4) Digital Well-being in Travel; and 5) Integrated Sustainable Behavior. The study offers a sophisticated understanding of green travel motivations, preferences for sustainable destinations, and the more general elements influencing international travel choices among Slovenian visitors. The study also includes a comprehensive list of factors influencing destination choice, highlighting strategically important areas for stakeholders in the travel industry. By providing a fresh viewpoint on the travel behaviour of Slovenian visitors, this study adds to the mounting body of studies on sustainable tourism. It offers practical advice for destination marketers and travel service providers as well as highlights the need for matching tourism products with environmentally sensitive motives.

Keywords: Tourist Motivation, Sustainable Tourism, Thematic Analysis, Green Travel Behavior

INTRODUCTION

The impact of personal values, environmental awareness, and changing lifestyle choices all help to shape the different tourist reasons for international travel across countries and destinations. As travellers search experiences that could fit to their ecological responsibility, cultural authenticity, and ethical involvement, in addition sustainability has become a major factor in tourist decision-making in recent years. Among these visitors, Slovenian ones stand out as especially thoughtful and environmentally conscious ones whose reasons are shaped by a strong national ethos of outdoor recreation, environmental appreciation, and community-oriented life. Modern travel behaviour is shaped not only by conventional interests including exploration, leisure, and cultural learning but also by developing themes about personal well-being, ethical travel, and environmental consciousness. The international travel choices of Slovenian travellers usually show a search for meaningful, rejuvenating experiences consistent with sustainability principles. Many, for instance, indicate preferences for areas known for their biodiversity, environmental policies, and local stewardship for instance the ecotourism hotspots in South America or the green infrastructure and community-based tourism models in Scandinavia. Advances in technology have also helped to change the reasons why people travel. New

expectations resulting from the growing integration of digital life into daily experience include the search of digital disconnection during travel and the desire of conscious, low-impact experiences. As travellers choose locations that promote both mental healing and environmental responsibility, this trend in digital well-being crosses with sustainability in interesting ways. Furthermore, influencing these preferences are degrees of travel experience. Particularly Slovenian travellers are more likely to give real cultural immersion and connection with nature is their top priority, and they search for deeper, more deliberate travel experiences. This trend shows a more general change in tourism from passive consumption to active, value-driven involvement in nearby surroundings and cultures. By means of thematic analysis, this paper explores the destination choices of Slovenian travellers and identifies five central themes such as environmental awareness, genuine and holistic sustainability, changing traveller attitudes, digital well-being in travel, and integrated sustainable behaviour influencing their travel motivations and practices. These topics provide a comprehensive picture of how Slovenian travellers approach foreign travel not only as leisure but also as a means of ethical involvement, personal development, and environmental responsibility. Policymakers, destination marketers, and tourism planners who want to create plans that appeal to this growing profile of ethical, environmentally conscious travellers must first grasp these insights.

Shift in Travel Motives: From Hedonism to Sustainability

From mostly hedonistic and consumer-driven experiences to ones based on ethics, environmental sustainability, and personal well-being, tourism research (Han et al., 2020; Pearce & Lee, 2005) reveals how travel motives have changed over the past 20 years. Travellers from environmentally conscious countries such as Slovenia, where sustainability and quality of life are highly prized, obviously exhibit this shift. Trip length, transportation availability, and destination familiarity define Slovenian tourism by influencing different travel patterns combining single and multi-destination visits (Cigale, 2020). Especially among young people, digital technologies, flexible housing options, and low-cost travel have helped independent travel especially with customised, multi-stop itineraries became increasingly popular (Pavlič & Koderman, 2014; Antonicken & Khutkyi, 2018). Slovenian visitors often travel to neighbouring former Yugoslavian countries especially Croatia because of their natural beauty, cultural legacy, cost rather than their nostalgia (Šuligoj, 2018). Younger generations are especially drawn to experiential travel including festivals, adventure tourism, and digital nomadism and are motivated by concerns of work-life balance, internet connectivity, and cost of living.

Digital Tools and Independent Travel Trends

Travelling foreign visitors from Slovenia and other nations now mostly rely on the internet to plan and modify their trips; their search behaviour has also changed. Research indicates that compiling data involves more than just forward planning; it also involves continuous, on-the-job searches usually supported by multistep validation from both expert and user-generated sources (Oktadiana, 2020; Pirolli, 2018; Pan & Turner, 2006). Based on their connectivity choices and degree of confidence, different visitor types mix digital, internal, and interpersonal channels from inexperienced to seasoned guests (Huertas & Miguel, 2022; Hyde, 2009). More than mode of transportation, travel decisions impact experiences and expenditure behaviour. Although driving is still the most often used kind of transportation in Slovenia, walking excursions are becoming more and more popular as environmentally friendly substitutes especially for city exploration (Farkič et al., 2015; Uršič, 2021). Independent travellers are also more likely to return to sites and show higher degrees of satisfaction than those on scheduled trips (Čausvič et al., 2021). Although planned trips might have specific advantages like well-chosen dining experiences, they value spontaneity, personal development, and cultural diversity (Mehmetowicz et al., 2001; Huang et al., 2016). Assertion of a tourist motivation continuum ranging from individualistic to collective orientations is supported by the fact that individual factors including age, gender, and familiarity with the destination also influence variations in wayfinding, travel choices, and motivation (Mehmetowicz's, 2004, Xia et al., 2009). Sustainability and Travel Choices Particularly for visitors from nations like Slovenia where environmentalism and active living are strongly ingrained, despite this wealth of research, there is still a lack of a comprehensive, thematic knowledge of how sustainability values, the desire for real-world experiences, and digital well-being interact when selecting a destination. Though studies on eco-tourism, cultural immersion, and the rise of independent travel have looked at these ideas separately, few studies have looked

at how Slovenian visitors holistically incorporate these values into their travel motivations. New variables including lifestyle congruence, digital detox, and community-based tourism also go under-theorized in this setting. Factors Influencing Slovenian Travel Choices When choosing between single- or multi-destination travel, Slovenian travellers mostly consider travel length, distance, and degree of knowledge of the destination (Cigale, 2020). Particularly among younger visitors, the increasing trend in independent travel among low-cost travel options and digital technologies points to more flexible and customised itineraries made possible (Pavlič & Koderman, 2014; Antonenko & Khutkyi, 2018). Particularly in the former Yugoslav states, Yugonostalgia has little influence on travel choices; instead, places like Croatia and Serbia attract interest because of their natural beauty, cost, and cultural value (Šuligoj, 2018). Slovenian tourists are changing their information sources both before and during their trip depending on internet access, past travel experience, and topic-specific needs (Huertas & Miguel, 2022; Pan & Turner, 2006). Moreover, influencing information search behaviour are seen constraints, degree of involvement, and destination familiarity (Carneiro & Crompton, 2010). The selected information sources also depend on gender and past travel experience: first-time travellers mostly rely on external sources like travel agencies and internet reviews; experienced travellers usually trust peer recommendations and internal knowledge (Yasin et al., 2017). Especially inspiring Slovenian female solo travellers are psychological aspects including independence, self-actualisation, and personal development; these also show a better link between travel activity and personal emancipation (Ejupi & Medarič, 2022). These multifarious components help to explain why travel decisions of Slovenian travellers combine values of authenticity, well-being, and environmental conscience. Therefore, with their travel goals and selected locations, **how do Slovenian travellers combine digital well-being, personal values, and environmental awareness?** This study intends to investigate and assess Slovenian travel abroad thematically depending on motivations.

Objectives

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the motivations of Slovenian travellers in selecting travel destinations across different continents, with a particular focus on environmental considerations, eco-tourism, and sustainability. The specific objectives are:

- To analyse how awareness of environmental and ecological issues influences Slovenian travellers' preferences, focusing on specific environmental criteria (e.g., carbon footprint, biodiversity, conservation). This objective will help to identify patterns in traveller narratives that link environmental consciousness to actual travel decisions.
- To examine how Slovenian travellers define and evaluate authenticity and holistic approaches to sustainability in destinations (including cultural, social, and economic aspects). To distinguish between superficial "greenwashing" and perceived genuine sustainability efforts from the travellers' perspective.
- To interpret shifts in Slovenian travel motivations and priorities over time, especially in response to global issues (e.g., climate change, post-COVID travel behavior). To explore the role of values, generational changes, and lifestyle adjustments in destination choices.
- To assess the influence of digital detox, screen-time management, and mindful tech use on destination appeal. To identify how digital well-being is integrated into travel decision-making and whether it serves as a motivator or deterrent.
- To explore how sustainable behaviours practiced in daily life are carried into travel decisions, revealing behavioural consistency or dissonance. To map out common sustainable habits (e.g., recycling, slow travel, public transport use) that correlate with destination choices.

METHOD

This section will present a detail research design, sampling, and data collection along with the demographic details of the Slovenian tourists.

Research Design

Based on the present literature and combined review shown by (Klein et al., 2023), qualitative approach is the most chosen by authors since it offers a comprehensive picture of this unexplored phenomena. Therefore, the current study investigates the phenomena of destination selection of Slovenian Travellers by means of an exploratory research design. The population sought for the current study was mostly travelling Slovenian Travellers, visiting any continent, who had green travel experience. The key participation precondition was that people should actively pursue green travel preferences and be regularly or recently visited to any continent. This sample was chosen to extract the perspective of a regular visitor about the environmentally friendly travel. Additionally included were different age groups, sexes, and income levels to better emphasise the 360-degree predominance of green travel. Started with judgemental sampling, then in some circumstances changed to snowball sample. Consequently, in this research we used a multi-sampling technique. Twenty in-depth semi-structured interviews with Slovenian visitors (see Table 1) were carried out.

Table 1: Demographic details

Name	Age	Gender	Continent Visited	Purpose
R1	48	Male	Africa	Cultural and historical diversity
R2	33	Female	Asia	Conferences, congresses, and seminars, suggesting a growing appeal of business-related travel, experiencing cultural and historical attractions
R3	35	Male	Europe (Outside of Slovenia)	Sports and recreational activities
R4	36	Female	Australia	Professional and academic events, to visit well-known and widely recognized countries
R5	33	Female	Africa	Cultural and historical diversity
R6	36	Male	Australia	Professional and academic events, to visit well-known and widely recognized countries
R7	40	Female	Africa	Cultural and historical diversity
R8	47	Female	North America	Cultural and historical experiences, culinary experiences, with food culture
R9	56	Female	South America	Gastronomy
R10	28	Male	Africa	Cultural and historical diversity
R11	28	Male	Africa	Cultural and historical diversity
R12	57	Male	Asia	Conferences, congresses, and seminars, suggesting a growing appeal of business-related travel, experiencing cultural and historical attractions
R13	42	Female	Asia	Conferences, congresses, and seminars, suggesting a growing appeal of business-related travel, experiencing cultural and historical attractions
R14	29	Male	North America	Cultural and historical experiences, culinary experiences, with food culture
R15	30	Female	South America	Gastronomy
R16	45	Male	North America	Cultural and historical experiences, culinary experiences, with food culture
R17	35	Male	Asia	Conferences, congresses, and seminars, suggesting a growing appeal of business-related travel, experiencing cultural and historical attractions
R18	30	Male	Africa	Cultural and historical diversity

R19	27	Male	Antarctica	Nature based experience
R20	32	Male	Europe (Outside of Slovenia)	Sports and recreational activities

Every in-depth interview was a forty-to-sixty-minute conversation. Maintaining a suitable, private, and confidential atmosphere for the participant, a one-on-one interview was chosen above any other data collecting technique and a special attention was paid to their privacy. Telephonic interviews were done using online tools including WhatsApp, Skype, and Google Meet to keep time-efficient and economical affordability. A interview protocol was provided in advance to the participants to make them understand the research aim and interview objectives. Detailed checks were set for credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability as advised in studies including Shufutinsky (2020), Closa (2021), and Hussain et al. (2020) to help to preserve research quality. Speaking with subject-matter experts in qualitative research helps us to investigate the nature of the questions posed and approach the target guests from another angle. Regular checks of data and interpretations guaranteed analytical consistency. Research made advantage of a comprehensive, all-encompassing description of every participant including a great spectrum of details. It included precise demographic information on their experience, age, gender, current travel destination. It is hence comprehensive and redundant since the responses were gathered until data saturation was attained. For tracking, notes, observations, and daily comments were entered into a notebook. This changed the flow of the studies. Data collecting and processing guaranteed an objective interpretation by a methodical approach. Field notes, record keeping, and final document preparation were completed before the interpretation got underway. Great degree of involvement and self-awareness helped one to keep the neutrality and justification of the interview process. Expert guidance helped to pinpoint and confirm the primary topics and their related sub-themes. Based on consensus and relevance of the new one, the theme was incorporated into the study.

Data Analysis

A theoretical knowledge of the problem of green travel and its choice among Slovenian travellers is developed by means of a comprehensive thematic study. For underexplored or undiscovered problems still present in the actual world, such an approach is fitting. This approach also helps to compile several points of view of the participants and show several scopes beneath the tackled subject (Kallio et al., 2016; Leavy, 2020; Ruslin et al., 2022; Adams, 2015). As Halldorsson & Aastrup (2003) advise, the tastes and decisions of these visitors can only be carried out by a theme-based analytical perspective on the qualitative issue. We choose a manual thematic analysis to achieve the depth of both the research goals corresponding with individual participant response analysis. aun & Clarke's (2006) six steps—1) Familiarisation with the data; 2) Initial code creation; 3) Theme search; 4) Theme review; 5) Theme defining and naming; and 6) Final written output—are laid down in a step-by-step guide. Following the suggested path, we review and reinterpret the gathered data from the interviews conducted with Slovenian travellers. After that, the arranged information was used to find first codes to generate the data. It was a data-driven method that directed the general course of study. These ideas then made a framework to provide a direction to the current research for a consistent interpretation. Five main elements in all were found related to help to describe the preferences of Slovenian travellers. In the end the concepts are discussed in the forthcoming part.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

We have used a quote-based approach to link the participant statements in direct and contextual sense with the themes of our study objectives. In Table 2 the thematic analysis with frequency and illustrative quote of Slovenian Tourists is presented:

Table:2 Thematic Analysis Details

S. No.	Case Note	Parent Node	Child Node	Frequency (out of 20)	Illustrative Quote
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1	P-01	Environmental Consciousness	Destination cleanliness	16	I prefer countries where nature is preserved and protected.
2	P-02	Eco-Tourism Preference	Nature-based activities	14	In Costa Rica, everything felt in harmony with nature.
3	P-03	Authentic Sustainability	Trust issues	12	It's not enough to say you're eco-friendly. I want to see recycling bins and local employment.
4	P-04	Conscious Traveler Evolution	Shift from novelty to meaningful travel	10	Earlier I just wanted to tick off countries, now I want to travel in a way that respects the place.
5	P-05	Digital Detox vs. Connectivity	Unplugging	8	I like places with no signal it helps me reconnect with nature.
6	P-06	Low-Impact Preferences	Avoiding over-tourism	11	I always avoid the over-touristed places. It's better for me and the destination.
7	P-07	Sustainability as Identity	Values alignment	7	I see travel as an extension of my personal values. That includes protecting nature wherever I go.
8	P-08	Environmental Consciousness	Destination cleanliness	16	I prefer countries where nature is preserved and protected.
9	P-09	Eco-Tourism Preference	Nature-based activities	14	In Costa Rica, everything felt in harmony with nature from the lodges to the guides.
10	P-10	Authentic Sustainability	Trust issues	12	It's not enough to say you're eco-friendly. I want to see recycling bins and local employment.
11	P-11	Conscious Traveler Evolution	Shift from novelty to meaningful travel	10	Earlier I just wanted to tick off countries, now I want to travel in a way that respects the place.
12	P-12	Digital Detox vs. Connectivity	Unplugging	8	I like places with no signal it helps me reconnect with nature.
13	P-13	Low-Impact Preferences	Avoiding over-tourism	11	I always avoid the over-touristed places. It's better for me and the destination.
14	P-14	Sustainability as Identity	Values alignment	7	I see travel as an extension of my personal values. That includes protecting nature wherever I go.
15	P-15	Environmental Consciousness	Destination cleanliness	16	I prefer countries where nature is preserved and protected.
16	P-16	Eco-Tourism Preference	Nature-based activities	14	In Costa Rica, everything felt in harmony with nature from the lodges to the guides.
17	P-17	Authentic Sustainability	Trust issues	12	It's not enough to say you're eco-friendly. I want to see recycling bins and local employment.

18	P-18	Conscious Traveler Evolution	Shift from novelty to meaningful travel	10	Earlier I just wanted to tick off countries, now I want to travel in a way that respects the place.
19	P-19	Digital Detox vs. Connectivity	Unplugging	8	I like places with no signal it helps me reconnect with nature.
20	P-20	Low-Impact Preferences	Avoiding over-tourism	11	I always avoid the over-touristed places. It's better for me and the destination.

*P-Participants (Slovenian Tourist)

Based on the thematic analysis, five major themes were explored and identified aligning with our research objectives. Findings and interpretation are presented in the upcoming section.

Theme 1: Environmental & Ecological Awareness

The first theme is Environmental & Ecological Awareness. It includes sub-themes of individual and organizational awareness. These sub-themes further classify the sources of such awareness. Destination cleanliness (16 mentions), Nature-based activities (14 mentions), Conservation efforts, and Waste management visibility. Table 2 shows some major participant responses which we have used to generate the nodes, sub-themes, finally leading to the main theme 1.

Table 3: Response analysis (Theme 1: Environmental & Ecological Awareness)

Participant	Response	Sub Theme	Theme
P1	"I prefer countries where nature is preserved and protected."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destination cleanliness • Nature-based activities • Conservation efforts • Waste management visibility 	Theme 1 (Environmental & Ecological Awareness)
P2	"In Costa Rica, everything felt in harmony with nature."		
P8	"I prefer countries where nature is preserved and protected."		
P9	"In Costa Rica, everything felt in harmony with nature from the lodges to the guides."		
P11	"Earlier I just wanted to tick off countries, now I want to travel in a way that respects the place."		
P15	"I prefer countries where nature is preserved and protected."		
P16	"In Costa Rica, everything felt in harmony with nature from the lodges to the guides."		

Slovenian travellers place high value on destinations that are visibly clean and demonstrate respect for natural ecosystems. Quotes suggest that travellers judge environmental quality not only by landscapes but by the presence of active environmental practices such as local conservation or visible recycling systems. Cleanliness and eco-conscious management are perceived as indicators of trustworthiness.

Theme 2: Authentic & Holistic Sustainability

The second theme is Authentic & Holistic Sustainability. This theme shows the holistic approach needed to understand the authenticity of sustainability. It has three key sub themes sub-themes namely, Trust issues in sustainability claims, Local community involvement, and Cultural respect. Table 4 shows some responses used to generate the nodes, sub-themes, leading to the main theme 2.

Table 4: Response analysis (Theme 2: Authentic & Holistic Sustainability)

Participant	Response	Sub Theme	Theme
P3	"It's not enough to say you're eco-friendly. I want to see recycling bins and local employment."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trust issues in sustainability claims ● Local community involvement ● Cultural respect 	Theme 2 (Authentic & Holistic Sustainability)
P7	"I see travel as an extension of my personal values. That includes protecting nature wherever I go."		
P10	"It's not enough to say you're eco-friendly. I want to see recycling bins and local employment."		
P17	"It's not enough to say you're eco-friendly. I want to see recycling bins and local employment."		
P20	"I always avoid the over-touristed places. It's better for me and the destination."		

Travelers' express scepticism toward "greenwashing" and seek destinations where sustainability is seen as genuine and integrated. Authenticity is tied not just to ecological practices but to local cultural and economic integrity. This reflects a preference for destinations where tourism benefits local people and traditions, not just the environment.

Theme 3: Evolving Traveler Mindsets

The third theme is Evolving Traveler Mindsets. It includes sub-themes of individual and organizational awareness. These sub-themes further classify the sources of traveller's mindset. Shift from novelty to meaningful travel (10 mentions), Personal transformation, and Reflection on travel purpose. Table 5 shows some major participant responses which we have used to generate the nodes, sub-themes, finally leading to the main theme 3.

Table 5: Response analysis (Theme 3: Evolving Traveler Mindsets)

Participant	Response	Sub Theme	Theme
P4	"Earlier I just wanted to tick off countries, now I want to travel in a way that respects the place."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shift from novelty to meaningful travel ● Personal transformation ● Reflection on travel purpose 	Theme 3 (Evolving Traveler Mindsets)
P8	"I prefer countries where nature is preserved and protected."		
P10	"It's not enough to say you're eco-friendly. I want to see recycling bins and local employment."		
P17	"It's not enough to say you're eco-friendly. I want to see recycling bins and local employment."		

There is a discernible evolution in motivations, with participants emphasizing travel as a means of personal growth, not just leisure. This includes a move away from superficial sightseeing to meaningful, reflective experiences. The theme reflects a broader change in travellers' values, particularly post-pandemic.

Theme 4: Digital Well-being in Travel

The fourth theme is Digital Well-being in Travel. This theme shows the current practices in the area related to digital wellbeing of a tourist. It has three sub-themes namely- Unplugging (8 mentions), Escape from digital overload, and Mindful engagement. Table 6 shows some responses used to generate the nodes, sub-themes, leading to the main theme 4.

Table 6: Response analysis (Theme 4: Digital Well-being in Travel)

Participant	Response	Sub Theme	Theme
P11	"Earlier I just wanted to tick off countries, now I want to travel in a way that respects the place."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift from novelty to meaningful travel • Personal transformation • Reflection on travel purpose 	Theme 4 (Digital Well-being in Travel)
P13	"I always avoid the over-touristed places. It's better for me and the destination."		
P18	"Earlier I just wanted to tick off countries, now I want to travel in a way that respects the place."		
P20	"I always avoid the over-touristed places. It's better for me and the destination."		
P14	"I see travel as an extension of my personal values. That includes protecting nature wherever I go."		

Digital well-being is increasingly influencing destination choice. Travelers are drawn to places where they can disconnect, avoid digital distractions, and focus on present-moment experiences. Locations without strong mobile signals or Wi-Fi are perceived as desirable by some, symbolizing freedom, and restoration.

Theme 5: Integrated Sustainable Behavior

The fifth theme addresses the motivations for Integrated Sustainable Behaviour. It encompasses all pertinent arguments regarding sustainable behaviour. This theme focusses on categorising instances encountered by participants by segmentation and assessing commonalities. A variety of causes were discerned from the responses by correlating common aspects in each occurrence encountered by the subject. Table 7 presents significant statements from participants that facilitated the development of nodes and sub-themes.

Table 7: Response analysis (Theme 5: Integrated Sustainable Behavior)

Participant	Response	Sub Theme	Theme
P5	"I like places with no signal – it helps me reconnect with nature."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carryover of eco-practices from daily life • Preference for low-impact transport • Conscious consumption while abroad 	Theme 5 (Integrated Sustainable Behavior)
P6	"I always avoid the over-touristed places. It's better for me and the destination."		
P12	"I like places with no signal it helps me reconnect with nature."		
P19	"I like places with no signal it helps me reconnect with nature."		
P20	"I always avoid the over-touristed places. It's better for me and the destination."		

Slovenian travellers tend to extend their domestic sustainable behavior into their travel routines. This includes avoiding single-use plastics, choosing local over global chains, and preferring trains or buses over flights. The consistency indicates that sustainability is not viewed as situational, but as a lifestyle identity.

This thematic analysis underscores a mature, critically aware travellers segment in Slovenia, one that values genuine sustainability, personal growth, and digital balance. Stakeholders in the tourism sector should note that these travellers are not easily swayed by generic eco-labels or promotional green claims; they seek evidence, alignment with values, and emotional resonance.

CONCLUSION

This thematic analysis reveals a complex and evolving profile of Slovenian travellers, characterized by sound ecological awareness, value-driven preferences, and a commitment to authenticity in sustainable travel choices. Unlike superficial eco-tourism trends that often focus on symbolic gestures, Slovenian tourists exhibit a more discerning and integrated approach to sustainability, demanding not only environmental action but also a holistic ethical integrity from destinations they are planning to visit. The strong emphasis on environmental and ecological awareness suggests that travellers are not only informed but actively seek destinations that demonstrate clear commitments to conservation of resources and cleanliness. Their decisions are influenced by both visible indicators (like clean landscapes and waste management systems) and reputational trust, often validated through personal research. Importantly, authentic, and holistic sustainability stands out as a key differentiator. Slovenian travellers are sceptical of greenwashing and are particularly responsive to destinations that engage in the welfare of local communities, preserve cultural heritage, and reflect a holistic balance between ecology, economy, and ethics. This expectation moves beyond environmental protection and demands a systemic approach to responsible tourism. The data also reflects a significant shift in traveller mindsets, from consumption-oriented and checklist-style tourism to more meaningful and transformative experiences. Motivated by a desire for self-reflection and intentional living, travellers are redefining success in tourism as enrichment, not entertainment. This shift is especially observed among younger and those who are travelling post-pandemic. A notably contemporary theme that emerged is digital well-being. In an age of hyperconnectivity, many Slovenian travellers are seeking refuge in digital disconnection. This signifies a growing demand for travel as a space for mental restoration, positioning destinations that support mindful use of tech as attractive havens for psychological and emotional recovery. Lastly, the theme of integrated sustainable behavior underscores the lifestyle-oriented nature of Slovenian tourists. Their sustainability preferences are not isolated to travel but are extensions of daily life practices, including responsible consumption, low-impact transport, and conscious decision-making. This suggests a high degree of behavioural consistency, where travel choices reflect broader ethical commitments.

Implications for Stakeholders This message is very clear to tourism boards, travel operators, and destination managers that Slovenian travellers are not passive consumers but they are ethical agents. They are searching for sustainability; it demands transparent communication, deep-rooted sustainable practices, and opportunities for meaningful engagement. Destinations that can offer long-term sustainability, emotional resonance, and mindful experiences are more likely to foster loyalty and advocacy from this highly engaged demographic. These new age Slovenian travellers expect more than superficial green certifications or staged cultural encounters; they seek destinations that align with their personal values, especially around environmental sustainability, social equity, and authenticity. To engage this challenging segment of new age travellers, stakeholders must adopt transparent and integrated sustainability practices across the value chain starting from eco-certified accommodations and low-emission transport to community-based tourism initiatives that benefit residents. To improvise the significance of digital touchpoint which plays a vital role the destinations must focus upon; Mobile apps, social media content, and peer reviews which reflect the ethical and experiential quality of the offerings. These tailored approaches can be supported by partnerships with local communities, public sector institutions, and academia to ensure relevance, impact, and sustainability.

Future Research Directions

Future research should investigate how Slovenian travellers interpret and evaluate sustainability claims across digital and in-person touchpoints, and how these perceptions influence trust and destination loyalty. Cross-cultural comparisons amongst travellers from neighbouring countries could also be done to reveal whether the trends observed are unique to Slovenia or part of a broader regional pattern. Lastly, Mixed-method research combining digital ethnography with eye-tracking or sentiment analysis could provide insights into how Slovenian tourists engage with information in real-time across devices and contexts.

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