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## Destination Decision-Making Process of Honeymoon Tourists

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**Abstract:** The process of an individual's travel planning has always been an important issue in terms of understanding the behavior of tourists. The decision-making process of choosing a destination constitutes one of the vital stages of travel planning. Statistics show that honeymooners have grown to be a significant market segment for the tourism industry. This paper is substantial in terms of exploring this growing market segment's decision-making process when selecting a honeymoon destination. Even Though honeymoon tourists' behavior continues to emerge as one of the trend topics in tourism and hospitality studies, there is limited research on the destination decision-making process of honeymooners. In the study, data was collected through in-depth interviews with 21 couples planning to go on their honeymoon in the summer season of 2015 and the responses were analyzed with content analysis. According to the study results, the push motives affecting the destination selection of honeymooners are relaxation, knowledge, prestige, and honeymoon-related factors. The findings also revealed that honeymoon tourists are attracted by destination attributes such as: accessibility, natural and cultural resources, facilities, and honeymoon-related amenities offered by the tourism companies. The decision-making process is dominated by females, mostly because they are more sensitive about the honeymoon holiday.

## 1. Introduction

The decision-making process of travelling individuals has been extensively studied by various tourism researchers in order to understand tourist behavior (Fodness, 1992; Zalatan, 1996; Stewart and Vogt, 1999; Decrop and Snelders, 2005). As an integrated part of this multi-staged travel planning process, destination choice is substantial in terms of affecting other decision units related to travel. Past research related to the destination selection process has investigated various issues such as: attitude determinants affecting tourism destination choice (Um and Crompton, 1990), the determinants of individual choice among destinations and vacation activities with the micro econometric analysis (Eymann and Ronning, 1997), and the role of image of the destination or vacation site on destination selection (Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000).

Although most studies on the destination selection process are focusing on individuals (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu and Uysal, 1996; Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000), family and couples as significant parts of analysis in decision-making research are largely ignored in vacation literature. Honeymoon couples constitute an important group, in order to understand family and couples travel buying behavior and destination selection. Lee et al. (2010) described a honeymoon as “a trip taken by newlywed couples to spend time together, or the first holiday

*they take together to celebrate their marriage*” (p.676). According to the Knot Inc.’s 3rd annual Honeymoon Study results, each year 1.4 million U.S. couples go to a honeymoon holiday and an average of \$4,466 per couple is spent on that honeymoon (Businesswire, 2011). Accordingly, honeymoons are a \$12 billion-dollar-a-year industry in the United States (Tripsavvy.com, 2017) and 41% of travel agents reported that travel spending of North American honeymooners increased in 2014 compared to the previous year (Statista.com, 2017). A survey on UK couples indicates that UK consumers spend \$6,000 for their honeymoon vacation on average. As a whole, the global market size for weddings abroad and honeymoons is estimated to be between 3 and 6 million trips per year (Vodenska, 2013). Although international statistics on the honeymoon market are not available, these figures show that honeymoon tourists make up a significant market segment for the tourism industry. However, the consumer behavior of the honeymoon market segment has not been extensively discussed in academic literature. The limited amount of research conducted on honeymoon tourists: investigated the competitiveness of overseas destinations among potential Korean honeymooners (Kim and Agrusa, 2005), expanded the individual choice-sets model to honeymoon couples (Jang et al., 2007), and identified the attributes that determine the honeymoon destination choice of Taiwanese couples (Lee et al., 2010). Lastly, Reisenwitz (2013) studied US honeymooners in order to define their consumer profile and to examine components related to their destination choice.

According to marriage statistics of the Turkish Statistical Institute (2017), 594,493 couples married in 2016 and one in every five married couples goes on a honeymoon holiday after their marriage (Turizmaktuel.com, 2014). So, in 2014, 240,000 Turkish people were involved in the travel planning process for their honeymoon trip. This study will make a significant contribution to tourism literature since there is no past research investigating the tourist behavior of Turkish honeymooners related to any destination selection processes. Additionally, the findings of the study are expected to be an important source of information for individuals and organizations involved in destination marketing that can be used in market segmentation and targeting strategies. Therefore, this study is important because it sheds light on the variables influencing Turkish honeymooners' choice of destination and information-seeking habits when planning their vacation. The purpose of this article is to investigate, from a wide viewpoint, how this expanding market group chooses a honeymoon destination. The specific goals of this exploratory study were to: (1) *identify the socio-demographic traits of Turkish honeymooners*; (2) *identify the push and pull factors influencing this segment's choice of destination*; and (3) *comprehend the influence of the spouse on the honeymoon decision-making process*. In this direction, first of all, the concepts of travel planning process and destination decision-making process will be explained, a literature review on the subject will be made and prominent studies will be mentioned. Then, information will be given about the method to be used in the study in order to determine the decision-making processes of the honeymooners, and the findings obtained from the comments of the individuals planning the honeymoon trip and analyzed by the content analysis method will be shared with the reader.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Travel planning process**

The decision making process for travel planning involves five phases according to Wall and Malthieson (2006): felt need or desire for travel, information collection and evaluation, purchase or travel decisions, travel preparations and travel experience, and lastly travel satisfaction evaluation. The individuals make travel plans by deciding on a destination, travel companions, accommodation unit, restaurants, activities, modes of travel, and so on, among different alternatives during the vacation planning process (Stewart and Vogt, 1999). During the travel planning process, the expectations from the vacation and the motivation for seeking

information, affects the decisions related to the vacation, and the final decision is formed in consequence of an extensive information gathering process and with the effect of an individual's past experiences (Parrinello, 1993). Since travelling requires a great amount of expenditure and it involves uncertainty due to the intangible nature of tourism activities, past experiences of individuals and word of mouth related to the destination and tourism products play an important role in the travel planning process (Lehto et al., 2004).

According to Decrop (2006), vacation decision-making consists of three levels of decisions, which are considered as conceptual and not as hierarchical or consecutive. These are generic decisions – to go or not to go on holiday; modal decisions associated to the types of vacation; and more specific decisions such as destination, transportation and accommodation. The decision items of travel planning as an ongoing process, which does not halt once a particular choice is made (Decrop and Snelders, 2004) can be aligned as: accommodation, accompaniment, activities, attractions, budget and expenditures, destination, duration, formula, meals, organization, period, purchases, route, tour, transportation, and vacation style (Decrop, 2006). According to Zins' study results (2009), tourism consumers pay the highest attention to mode of transportation (84%) and travel companions (82%) followed by accommodation (80%) and the destination (79%) during the travel planning process. So destination choice is one of the most important issues for the travelers and destination decisions affect most of the vacation sub-decisions such as transportation, accommodation, and activities etc. – since they are arranged according to the destination choice.

## **2.2. Destination decision-making process**

Um and Crompton (1990) developed a two-stage approach to an individual's pleasure travel destination choice process, based on the construct of an evoked set. They also indicated that the destination selection depends upon attitudes toward each alternative and the final destination was selected as a part of the evoked set. Traveler destination choice is affected by traveler awareness, which occurs as a result of marketing variables and traveler variables such as: experience, life-cycle, income and age. Traveler destination preference which in-turn leads to intentions to visit and finally the choice of competing destinations is influenced by situational variables (Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). Visitation intention for a destination is determined by information sources (word-of-mouth, advertisement, and non-promotional), socio-psychological travel motivations such as relaxation/escape, knowledge, and perceptual/cognitive and affective variables such as image of the destination (Baloglu, 2000). According to Dellaert et al. (1998), the decisions about travel choice components such as destination, accommodation, travel companions, mode, departure date, and duration are affected by three constraints – which are authority, coupling, and capacity. While authority constraints are imposed by law or institutions, with examples such as the opening hours of shops etc., coupling constraints affecting travel period and trip length stem from family members, friends, and colleagues. The restrictions about capacity are tangible issues such as an individuals' income, car ownership affecting travel planning, and the number of trips one could make. Moscardo et al. (1996) suggested that there is a critical link between motives and destination selection process related to the activities since activities are seen as key attributes of destinations.

## **2.3. Push and pull factors affecting destination selection**

Most research related to a tourist's motivations affecting the destination decision-making process are focusing on the concept of "push" and "pull" factors (Baloglu and Uysal, 1996; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; You et al., 2000) Dann (1977) explained the underlying reasons for travelling with individuals' anomie and ego-enhancement and made a clear distinction between factors influencing destination choice as push and pull motives. Pull factors are those

which attract the traveler to a certain destination (e.g. sunshine, sea, etc.). On the other hand, push factors refer to the traveler as a subject and they are socio-psychological motives inciting the tourist to travel (e.g. escape, nostalgia, etc.).

Crompton (1979) identified nine motivations of tourism consumers which affect the destination selection. These motivations were divided into two groups as "socio-psychological" and "cultural". Socio-psychological motivations include: escape from a routine daily environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, and social interaction. The other two remaining motivations were classified under the "cultural" category as novelty and education. While socio-psychological motivations are emerging exclusively from within the traveler and defined as push factors, cultural motives are aroused by the destination itself and classified as pull factors affecting an individuals' destination choice. Baloglu and Uysal (1996) categorized pull items as destination attributes such as outdoor activities, different culture, nightlife and entertainment, natural and historical resources, climate, cleanliness, safety, cuisine, and museums. However, items such as learning new things, seeing and experiencing foreign destinations, experiencing new and different life styles, and escaping from ordinary life are classified under the push motivations. Chen and Chen (2015) searched push and pull factors for international birders in their study. The push factors were birdwatching, novelty seeking, contribution and sharing, spiritual refreshment, relationship building, and competition whereas pull factors were resources, professional guides, facilities and infrastructure, and local culture and traditions.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Research objectives**

So far research on destination decision making process focused on international destination selection of different markets such as meeting planners (Jun and McCleary, 1999; Hayat et al., 2014), students who want to study abroad (Nyaupane et al., 2011), and convention tourists (Oppermann and Chon, 1997). However, there has been very little research conducted that explores destination selection process of honeymooners. Therefore, this research is significant in terms of revealing the factors affecting the destination choice of Turkish honeymooners and their information search behavior during the honeymoon trip planning process. The aim of this paper is to explore this growing market segment's decision-making process when selecting a honeymoon destination from a broad perspective. The specific objectives of this exploratory study were: *(1) to identify the socio-demographic characteristics of Turkish honeymooners; (2) to reveal the push and pull factors affecting destination selection of this segment; (3) and to understand spousal influences on the decision-making process of their honeymoon.*

#### **3.2. Research design**

The research is handled with a qualitative approach. Qualitative research method enables participants to discover the existence and nature of their own special experiences (Creswell, 2003). The qualitative method aims to describe, not explain (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1995); For this reason, it is considered that the qualitative method is appropriate since the destination selection process of honeymooners has not been examined before and a definition will be tried to be made in this study. Purpose of the research; since it is to be able to describe the decision-making process of the honeymoon couples during the destination selection stage, a description of these choices of the couples is made in line with the information received from the couples about the planning process of their travels. Therefore, this study is in exploratory research type and singular survey model. The universe of the research consists of all couples living in Turkey who plan to get married and go on their honeymoon.

### 3.3. Study group

In the study, convenience sampling method was chosen due to geographical and financial constraints and the data were collected from suitable couples in the social circles of the two researchers. Convenience sampling is to select the sample from easily accessible and applicable units due to the limitations in terms of time, money and labor. Under certain circumstances, the convenience sampling strategy is an outstanding means of gathering preliminary information quickly and inexpensively (Berg, 2004). Accordingly, it was turned into an advantage that there are too many couples who get married and go on honeymoon in the circles of the researchers because of their age and these couples were invited to participate in the research. However, at this point, in order to prevent the couples invited to participate in the research from being composed of a specific group of people, care was taken to ensure that these people were not from a single environment. Here, the blessings of social media, which provides great communication convenience today, have been utilized. Thanks to the "friend" lists attached to the social media, offers to be included in the research were sent to people who differ from each other due to their demographic characteristics, such as primary school friends whom the researchers have not met for years, business people they met through their sectoral networks, or people they once met in different environments. Thus, it was tried to prevent a one-sided and biased result. A total of 50 honeymoon couples were invited to participate in this study and a total of 21 participant agreed to be interviewed. In the study, couples who went on a honeymoon holiday or who were planning to make a honeymoon trip in the summer season of the year 2015 (May-September) were interviewed.

### 3.4. Data collection

The interview methodology was chosen as the research's preferred method of collecting data since it would enable exploratory data gathering on the identification of the destination choosing process. This method is employed to fully understand all of the participants' knowledge and experiences (Patton, 2002). At the point of interview technique, semi-structured interview technique was preferred. Semi-structured interviews are described as sequences with themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions. Yet at the same time there is an openness to changes of sequences and forms of questions so the interviewer might follow up the stories and answers given (Kvale, 1996). In-depth interviews were conducted between the dates of July 15, 2015 and August 15, 2015. While 11 participants were interviewed with one-on-one interview method face to face, the other 10 participants were interviewed via telephone due to distance and time constraints. While all the participants interviewed face to face consisted of couples, the interviews made via telephone were made with only one of the couples. When the answers from the participants started to repeat each other, the interviews were concluded by thinking that the data saturation point was reached (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Before starting the interviews, all participants were given detailed information about the purpose of the research, how the collected data would be used, and what was expected from them, and they were encouraged to give sincere answers to the questions. When it was noticed that the focus was shifted at some points, the research question was directed to the participants again and the accuracy of the answers of the participants was tested (Shenton, 2004). The participants were informed that their names would be kept confidential, and their names were stated as Respondent 1 (Female / Male), Respondent 2 (Female / Male), ..., Respondent 21 (Female / Male). During the interviews, the responses of the interviewees were noted or recorded with a voice recorder with the permission of the participants. The interviews lasted between 25 and 45 minutes. During the interviews, 4 demographic questions and 21 open-ended questions were asked to the subjects. The questions were formed after the literature review on the destination selection process, travel planning process, information search behavior, and motivations affecting destination choice. Later, the questions were then reviewed by two experts and the

original question form was rearranged in accordance with their recommendations. No other studies on the subject were published during the development of the questionnaire. Firstly, four close-ended questions were directed to extract participants' socio-demographic characteristics such as age, occupation, education, and monthly household income. Only three questions were about the travelling profiles of couples such as honeymoon destination, number of days spent, and the budget allocated for their honeymoon. In order to identify their information search behavior during the travel planning process, the couples were directed two questions. These questions were intended to understand which sources and how they benefited in this process. Did they use the internet or travel agency? Did they browse their social media accounts or listened to their friends' advices? Also two questions were towards understanding spousal influences. It was asked that conflicts in the research and decision phase and how these conflicts were resolved. The remaining 14 questions were dedicated to defining push and pull motives affecting destination selection. At this place, some of the questions asked were: "What were the special points you paid special attention to on your honeymoon trip? What was your priority? Why did you choose this destination? Have you created flexibility in your budget due to honeymoon?".

### **3.5. Data analysis**

In the data collection and data analysis stages of the research, the reliability model, which was created on the basis of reliability, transferability, consistency and verifiability measures in qualitative research proposed by Guba (1981), was adhered to (Şener et al., 2017). Before proceeding to the data analysis stage, the data obtained from the audio recordings and noted were converted into text format by the researchers and transferred to the computer environment and recorded. All the interview transcription was made digitally with Word application. Thus, the preliminary evaluation processes of the research findings started by enabling the researchers to make the first readings on the content of the interviews. Names such as Respondent 1 (R1) – Respondent 21 (R21) were given to each participant in order to keep the participants anonymous. The data analysis was performed by using the content analysis method. According to this method, data is summarized and interpreted according to certain themes addressed by research questions. Content analysis is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort to identify core consistencies and meanings in qualitative material (Patton, 2002). Data is summarized with specific themes or categories in order to present findings in a systematic and clear way (Creswell, 2013). The collected data were analyzed separately by both researchers using the content analysis technique, and main and subcategories were determined. Later, the researchers came together and included the common categories in the research (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), discussed the categories in disagreement until they reached a consensus (Miles and Huberman, 1994), and the final main and subcategories were determined by continuing the content analysis. In order to better understand the findings and increase the reliability of the data, direct quotations from the interviews are included in the findings. Although interviews were conducted in Turkish language, the quotes extracted from the answers of participants were translated into English because the research article was planned to be published in English language. The quotations were translated and compared by two researchers. Then, they were presented and checked to an authority. Finally, it was corrected to another specialist whose native language is English, who knows Turkish and who translates academically.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1. Participant demographics and travelling profiles**

The respondents consisted of 21 couples which mean 42 individuals who went on a honeymoon holiday or who were planning to make a honeymoon trip in the summer season of

the year 2015 (May-September). Participants ages ranged from 25 to 38; 17 aged between 30 and 34 and only three aged higher than 35 and the largest proportion of the sample were the 22 participants aged between 25-29. Almost all of the respondents (41) graduated from university or graduate schools. While most of the respondents had a monthly household income (total income of male and female) of between 1,001-2,000 US Dollars (USD) \*, 29% of them had an income range of 2,001 to 3,000 USD. The occupation question was taken out during the data analysis because we could reach only the individuals from similar occupational categories. So we thought that there would not be any significant difference in the findings.

With regard to the travelling profiles of the couples, nearly three fourths of couples (15) preferred to spend their honeymoon in a different country than Turkey (abroad) and only six couples went to a domestic destination for their honeymoon. While nearly half of the couples (11) spend 6-9 days on their honeymoon holiday, nine couples allocated a travel budget of 1,001-2,000 US dollars. When all responses are taken into consideration, the average length of trip is 7 days, and the average travel budget allocated for a honeymoon holiday is 2.150 US dollars. A total of 14 couples booked their holiday through internet whereas only seven couples used travel agency services while arranging their honeymoon trip.

#### 4.2. Push motives affecting honeymoon destination choice

Table 1 shows push motives and sub-themes affecting honeymoon tourists' destination selection. According to study findings, 'relaxation' is mentioned by the respondents as the leading push factor determining their destination selection. The couples avoided cultural tours and exhausting trips in which they had to rush and they wanted to relieve fatigue, stress, and tension caused during the wedding period. While R6 (female) explained this situation as *"...we gave priority to resting because we were incredibly tired due to the rush of the wedding ceremony..."*, R4 (female) *"...First we were stuck between two choices, resting or touring, then we both preferred resting. Many people around us said that if you are allocating this great budget, you may see more than one destination in Europe. However, we did not want to have a holiday which we need to get up early and walk all day long..."*. Push motives considered under relaxation are determined as 'relaxing physically', 'relieving stress', 'doing nothing at all' and 'having fun' by the respondents.

Another push motive specified by most of the couples is 'being on the seaside'. The vast majority of the respondents defined their alternative destinations during the travel planning process with the influence of this motivation factor. R21 (female) stressed this motive with the words *"...The sea comes to mind first if the aim is relaxing. We did not even think about places without the sea..."*. In accordance with this response, R6 (male) said *"...My wife and I are from Izmir and the sea was a must for our honeymoon, that's why we only searched for destinations on the seaside..."*.

Although the most prominent push motive of honeymooners was 'relaxation' underlined in the respondents' answers, the motives such as 'visiting new places', 'experiencing different cultures and lifestyles', 'travelling to historical places', 'participating in new activities', 'learning new cuisine' and 'meeting new people' played an important role in the honeymooners' travel planning process. These motives are grouped under the push factor 'knowledge' since the respondents wanted to make contributions to their intellect. Concerning this motive, R9 (male) said *"...we do not like to go to a hotel and stay there during the holiday. We wanted to make cultural trips, discover the city, visit museums and historical places and taste new dishes..."*. Additionally, R2 (female) said *"... Rome is a nice city however we wanted to see*

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\* 1 US Dollar equates to 3,03 Turkish Liras on the date of September 11, 2015 (Oanda.com, 2015).

*smaller cities and towns where we could discover Italian culture and communicate with the local people easily...".*

**Table 1.** Push Motives Affecting Destination Selection of Honeymoon Tourists

Push Motives	Sub-themes
<b>Relaxation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relaxing physically</li> <li>• Relieving stress</li> <li>• Doing nothing at all</li> <li>• Having fun</li> <li>• Being on the seaside</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visiting new places</li> <li>• Experiencing different cultures and lifestyles</li> <li>• Travelling to historical places</li> <li>• Participating in new activities</li> <li>• Learning new cuisine</li> <li>• Meeting new people</li> </ul>
<b>Honeymoon-Related</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling luxurious</li> <li>• Having different and romantic time privately</li> <li>• Satisfying the desire to experience a special holiday</li> <li>• Realizing the dream honeymoon</li> </ul>
<b>Prestige</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going to fashionable and trendy places</li> <li>• Visiting a destination that would impress others</li> <li>• Talking about the trip</li> <li>• Going places friends have not been</li> </ul>

If the relaxation and knowledge motivational factors are evaluated together, the stress and fatigue caused during the wedding period triggers the relaxation motive and this motive overwhelms the knowledge motive explicitly. A significant number of the participants planned a relaxation-focused holiday which does not contain any cultural tour and only limited with the activities organized by the hotel itself. In accordance with this finding, R4 (female) said *"...we had a difficult and tiring process and we were really very exhausted until the wedding date. Our aim was lying around and resting during the entire holiday, privately without anybody around us..."*. R1 (female) told *"...normally I do not like lying on the beach and swimming all day long, however I could not get rid of that fatigue in a different way since the honeymoon was just after the wedding..."*. Almost half of the respondents prioritize the aim of resting however they included activities such as visiting new places and attending cultural tours in their travel planning. In consistent with this finding, R13 (female) told *"...I requested a honeymoon which gives us an opportunity to see new places and different cultures and also resting together..."*. R21 (female) said *"...we split our 9-day vacation into two part. First four days, we plan to attend untiring activities such as going to different restaurants, having massage and swimming and then next five days, we will visit different places and travel to nearby cities..."*. Few participants planned a honeymoon holiday consisting of cultural tours and not relaxing activities. Another striking push factor that affects honeymoon tourists' preferences is defined as 'honeymoon-related'. The motives that drive this factor are 'feeling luxurious', 'having different and romantic time privately', 'satisfying the desire to experience a special holiday' and 'realizing the dream honeymoon'. Female respondents generally describe a honeymoon as "a special time-period and memory, and this urged us to plan something special because it occurs once in lifetime". R8 (female), said that *"...honeymoon is a special time-period which we only live once. That's why I desired a remote destination which we cannot go anytime we want and which we can rest, wonder, and swim..."*. R21 (male) explained this motive as: *"...especially my wife demanded something special, romantic, and a little luxurious because it will be our honeymoon holiday..."*.



Besides these factors, another outstanding push factor that emerged from the responses is ‘prestige’. Honeymoon tourists planned a holiday in which they would be happy to tell their friends and relatives, in order to make a difference in their social environment. The drivers of the prestige factor are ‘going to fashionable and trendy places’, ‘visiting a destination that would impress others’, ‘talking about the trip’ and ‘going places friends have not been’. These motives are the ones which individuals do not want to confess; therefore, various questions are asked to the participants in order to reach them indirectly. For instance, most of the respondents explained their dream destinations as ones that are already famous for honeymoon tourism. Additionally, a significant majority of the couples preferred to go abroad for their honeymoon holiday, the remaining ones said that they wanted to go to a different country however they chose a domestic destination due to time and money constraints. Almost all of the respondents expanded the budget allocated for honeymoon holiday since they thought it should be special. R20 (female) explained this issue with these words: “... we formed a flexible budget for our honeymoon and there were many times we spent a lot with the thought that we were on our honeymoon...”. In addition, R8 (female) said “...of course, I was generous for these special days which we would live once in a life-time. We bought the flight tickets one year ago by installments and started to save money for accommodation cost and other expenditures long before...”. Even R3 (male) told “...we could not make our dream honeymoon trip due to time constraints, however if we had enough time, we would absolutely increase our budget and push the limits...”. Additionally, the expression of R15 (female) “...we always heard about the destination from people around us and most of them have been there before. I do not want to say that we were aspired, however we thought that it is a nice destination that’s why people go there again and again...” shows that the motive of “going to fashionable and trendy places” has a great effect on a honeymooners’ destination choice.

#### 4.3. Pull motives affecting honeymoon destination choice

According to research results, a total of 17 sub-themes were found to affect the destination choice of honeymoon tourists and these are grouped into five main pull factors as shown in Table 2. These pull motivation factors are: ‘accessibility’, ‘natural resources’, ‘cultural resources’, ‘facilities’, and ‘honeymoon-related’.

**Table 2.** Pull Motives Affecting Destination Selection of Honeymoon Tourists

Pull Motives	Sub-themes
<i>Accessibility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordability</li> <li>• Distance</li> <li>• Visa process</li> <li>• Convenient transportation</li> <li>• Currency difference</li> </ul>
<i>Natural Resources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beautiful beaches</li> <li>• Natural environment</li> <li>• Beautiful scenery</li> <li>• Good weather</li> </ul>
<i>Cultural Resources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical places</li> <li>• Culture and traditions</li> <li>• Food culture</li> </ul>
<i>Prestige</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation</li> <li>• Entertainment</li> <li>• Different Activities</li> </ul>
<i>Honeymoon-Related</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Romantic atmosphere</li> <li>• Honeymoon packages</li> </ul>

The leading pull motive affecting the travel planning process of honeymooners is ‘accessibility’ which includes the sub-themes ‘affordability’, ‘distance’, ‘visa process’, ‘convenient transportation’, and ‘currency difference’. ‘Affordability’ is the most important criteria influencing the accessibility of the destination. After some special criteria are met, the most significant issue for the respondents is the cost of the destination. Regarding this idea, R2 (male) said *"...The most distinctive issue was budget. The cost of the destination should not have exceeded our budget..."*. Additionally, R18 (female) told *"...we first decided on what we want and then we chose the cheapest one among the alternative destinations..."*. Currency difference between origin country and destination is another factor related to the cost of destination. In accordance with this finding, R21(female) said *"...Thailand was an economic alternative that met our expectations due to its currency exchange rate..."*. As extracted from the responses, ‘distance’ also played an important role in the destination selection process of honeymooners. Although some participants had significant desire and budget, they tended to head for the destinations close to home due to the time constraints caused by various reasons. R3 (female) said *"...We first had different ideas and absolutely wanted to go abroad. We eliminated alternative destinations abroad and we chose a different place which we did not go before and which is close to Izmir because we did not have enough time..."*. According to the findings, some honeymoon couples avoided passport and visa procedures due to the fatigue caused by the wedding period. About this issue, R19 (female) explained *"...we first wanted to go somewhere different however we did not want to deal with passport and visa problems. Therefore, we chose the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus..."*. Additionally, ‘convenient transportation’ is another sub-theme considered under accessibility. R4 (female) stressed this in words: *"...we chose the Maldives because we could reach there with a 9-hour direct flight while it would take 20 hours to go to other islands with only connecting flights..."*. In addition, R1 (female) emphasized all of the affordability, distance and convenient transportation, she said *"...actually my dream was a honeymoon in Phuket but the wedding was so costly and we had to select a closer destination due to high transportation costs..."*.

‘Natural Resources’ is the other pull factor, consisting of four sub-themes. These are: ‘beautiful beaches’, ‘natural environment’, ‘beautiful scenery’, and ‘good weather’. The interview responses show that the most important of these notions is ‘beautiful beaches’. As related with the push motive ‘being on the seaside’, most of the interviewees informed us that they wanted to spend their honeymoon at a seaside destination with beautiful beaches. According to this, R18 (male) replied *"...we wanted to go to a destination with beautiful beaches and a beautiful sea..."*. R8 (female) commented on this stating, *"...in my dreams, there were white thin sand, palm trees, small islands, and an azure sea that is not too cold. I looked for a destination which has all of these attractions together..."*. Although R9 (female) preferred a destination which has cultural resources but does not have a seaside, she emphasized the weather of the destination in these words: *"...we did not think about Northern Europe for our honeymoon because we wanted to go to a place which has a relatively milder summer climate..."*.

Another pull factor extrapolated from the data is ‘cultural resources’. Although the first aim of couples was not visiting historical places, some of them gave importance to the cultural resources of the destination. ‘Historical places’, ‘culture and traditions’, and ‘food culture’ are sub-themes under cultural resources. While R9 (male) informed us *"...we like to visiting places which are not so touristic, trying to understand the local culture and tasting local food..."*, R20 (female) said *"...we wanted to visit historical places such as the Colosseum in Rome on our honeymoon..."*.

‘Facilities’ is indicated as another pull motive affecting destination choice by those couples interviewed. Participants referenced the importance of a location offering adequate

facilities before being considered as a honeymoon destination. Sub-themes under this pull motive are ‘accommodation’, ‘entertainment’, and ‘different activities’. R8 (male) explained *"...while searching about the Maldives, we found that there weren't many activities offered at that destination. That's why we eliminated it as a choice. Then, we focused on Thailand because we would have the opportunity to have fun and attend various activities..."*. The answers of the respondents showed that honeymooners cared about quality of the accommodations because they wanted their holiday to be so special. R10 (female) explained this issue as *"...we requested to stay at a luxury hotel where we can be alone together..."*.

The final pull motive established from the findings is defined as ‘honeymoon-related’. The couples had some specific criteria because it was a very special holiday for them. Sub-themes under this motive are ‘romantic atmosphere’ and ‘honeymoon packages offered by hotels’. While R2 (female) explained this motive with the words *"...we requested a hotel room with sea view which is very cute and romantic..."*, R10 (male) told *"...the most romantic Greek island was Santorini..."*. About the honeymoon packages offered by hotels, R19 (female) said *"...honeymoon offers provided by the hotel itself affected our destination decision..."*.

#### **4.4. Spousal influences on destination selection process of honeymooners**

The destination selection of honeymooners is a process in which the couples are mutually involved. Therefore, it is important to reveal how the couples evaluate each other's opinions in terms of understanding the travel planning process of honeymooners. For this purpose, the questions regarding spousal influences were aimed at measuring the personal effects of couples on the decision-making process.

According to the findings of the study, half of the couples made their destination choice without disagreeing at all about the location of the honeymoon vacation. Couples discussed how they requested similar types of destinations for their honeymoon. Couples that had different general requests typically disagreed in terms of their push motives. While males generally wanted to discover new places, females generally wanted to rest during the honeymoon as shown by the "relaxation" motive. Only one couple made their travel plans according to the husband's wishes, while the bride's desires were addressed in the other examples. Regarding this issue, R1 (female) said *"...my husband normally does not like the 3S's (sea, sand, and sun) holiday and he wants to see new places while on vacation. However, my fatigue was more of an issue and we chose a destination where we could rest..."*. R2 (female) explained this fact as *"...my husband requested to go to England or visit European capital cities which we had never been but I did not want this type of holiday because it was not corresponding to my concept of a honeymoon..."*.

In the case of this type of disagreement regarding a destination, male respondents accepted their wives' decisions since they realize that females are more sensitive about the honeymoon. While R21 (male) proclaimed *"...the honeymoon was a very important issue for my wife. That's why I tried to fulfill her wishes. Otherwise she would have been disappointed..."*, R3 (male) said *"...females consider the honeymoon holiday from a different point of view as in the case of the bridal gown. I was not oversensitive about this issue like her..."*. While males were trying to please their wives, females were quite dominant in terms of imposing their requests. R13 (female) proves this fact with the words *"...my husband did not travel abroad at all; he had only a dream of visiting the Mediterranean Sea. At that point, I agreed with him, however if I did not want it, it would never happen..."*. As similar to this situation, R8 (female) said *"...it happened according to my requests because it was not easy to wait for him for seven years before getting married..."*.

## 5. Discussion And Conclusion

This study has explored the motivational factors affecting the destination selection process of Turkish honeymooners. It is examining in detail, the honeymooner's decision making process and revealing the elements taken into consideration while planning their honeymoon vacation. These elements are expected to be a guide for tourism and destination marketing professionals and researchers. This research also attempted to identify the spousal influences of couples in their honeymoon vacation planning process. It was also discovered that the average length of a honeymoon trip is 7 days and the average travel budget allocated for a honeymoon holiday is 2.150 US dollars. The research shows that respondents are inclined to allocate a greater budget for their honeymoon holiday and prefer more exotic and far away destinations in which they have never been before and which they generally cannot go anytime.

The results revealed that the most outstanding push motive for honeymooners during the process of destination selection is relaxation. This is consistent with the study of Lee et al. (2010), as the honeymoon is considered as a chance to relax by couples after a stressful time-period spent planning the wedding. While some of the couples planned their honeymoon holiday with the motive of seeing new places and new cultures, most of them emphasized honeymoon-related factors such as having a romantic time privately and satisfying the desire to experience a special holiday. Additionally, most couples expanded their budgets in order to go abroad for their honeymoon with prestige as a motivating factor. There have been numerous studies suggesting prestige as an outstanding socio-psychological motive for pleasure vacation (Crompton, 1979).

The data regarding pull motives shows that the most important pull factor is the accessibility of the destination. The sub-themes – distance, visa process, convenient transportation, currency difference, and affordability greatly affects the destination selection of couples. Appropriate tourism cost is also a critical destination attribute, affecting the honeymooners' decision and which provides a competitive advantage for destinations (Kim and Agrusa, 2005). Natural resources such as 3S namely 'sea, sand and sun', good weather, beautiful beaches and sceneries is the other outstanding factor stimulating travel to certain destination as most previous studies proved (Josiam et al., 1999; Day et al, 2002; Correia and Valle, 2007; Chen and Chen, 2015). The other pull factors are cultural resources, facilities offered by the destination and honeymoon-related motives such as romantic atmosphere and honeymoon packages offered by tourism companies. As discussed in the study of Lee et al. (2010), tourism businesses such as hotels and travel agencies should offer special honeymoon packages in cooperation with the destinations.

In this study, it was difficult to generalize the findings about the conflicts that occurred between spouses during the alternative destination selection phase because the number of couples that agreed is equal to the number of couples that disagreed. However, it was observed that couples that disagree usually differ regarding their push motives. In general, it has become apparent that males desire sightseeing, while females are yearning mostly for relaxation. Ultimately, after consideration, males tend to accept their wives' decisions since taking into account the fact that females are more sensitive about honeymoon vacations. A past study also suggested that women are more determined to realize her choice of honeymoon destination (Jang et al., 2007). Thus, coming to the conclusion that the honeymoon decision-making process is generally dominated by the females in newlywed couples.

The limitation of the study was that we could only reach the honeymoon tourists around us, or ones that are relatives or friends of our acquaintances due to time and distance constraints. Therefore, respondents are generally from similar income levels and occupations. The data collection was limited to Turkish nationality only; thus a comparative study in a similar theme

but for different nationalities would be beneficial for the possible validation of research findings. Additionally, for future researches, a quantitative study might be conducted with a larger sample size in order to increase the generalization of the study findings.

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In this study, the data collection process was completed in 2015 and the TR Index Ethics Committee Criteria of the Council of Higher Education were announced on January 1, 2020. Our application to Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University Scientific Publication Ethics Committee was not given to us on the grounds that the data collection process of the research was completed and the relevant criteria were necessary for the studies to be carried out in 2020 and beyond.

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