

## Research Article

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# A study of domestic honeymoon tourism in Turkey

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**Abstract:** Honeymoon tourism is an important research area in tourism and travel literature because of its increasing economic importance for host destinations and their specific niche market characteristics. This study used a survey to investigate demographics, the importance of attributes in destination selection, overall satisfaction, loyalty and souvenir purchase preference amongst 540 domestic honeymoon tourists visiting Antalya, Turkey. It also identified in the context of destination marketing both domestic and international competitors of Antalya as a honeymoon destination. The results offered market-specific knowledge about honeymoon tourism in Turkey, such as the identification of the most important attributes in destination selection, tourists' souvenir purchases, overall satisfaction and loyalties. The study concludes with a discussion of theoretical and managerial implications of the findings and recommendations for future study.

**Keywords:** Honeymoon tourism; Destination attributes; Souvenir purchase; Competition; Loyalty

## 1 Introduction

Honeymoon tourism refers to the 'international travels that are taken by tourists either to get married or celebrate their wedding' (Caribbean Tourism Organization,

2007). Although its history goes back to ancient Greeks, the modern-type of honeymoons has existed since the 1800s (Vidauskaite, 2015). Involving various suppliers such as caterers, wedding consultants, beauticians, photographers, gift stores and travel organisers (Pongsiri, 2014), worldwide honeymoon and romantic tourism generates US\$28 billion of business according to 2014 data (Ngarachu, 2015), offering a lucrative tourist market (Seebaluck, Munhurrin, Naidoo & Rughoonauth, 2015). Honeymooners spend significantly more than general vacationers (Lee, Huang & Chen, 2010; Winchester, Winchester & Alvey, 2011). Previous studies have shown that newlywed couples are willing to spend three times more than they would on a regular vacation, with the average honeymoon lasting 7–9 days (Lee et al., 2010). Therefore, honeymooners are the target tourists for many destinations (Bertella, 2017; Del Chiappa & Fortezza, 2013).

As a 'once in-a-lifetime' experience, a honeymoon may be the first trip couples take together (Lee et al., 2010) offering an opportunity to spend time together and get away from daily routines or family environment. Moreover, this journey can positively affect their social status if they visit an exotic destination (Maira, Mylonopoulos & Parthenis, 2011). Even though honeymooners have many destination options, some destinations may have not as many attributes as the couple seeks. Whilst general tourists may consider some destinations more popular and appealing than others (Lee et al., 2010), even some popular locations may not be able to compete in the worldwide honeymoon tourism sector. Therefore, it is important for researchers and practitioners to understand the market-specific and destination-specific factors relevant to this niche market.

In particular, this study focuses specifically on 'honeymoon tourism' as it relates to travels of the newlywed couples to domestic or international destinations *after* their wedding ceremonies (Winchester et al., 2011). The study does not include 'destination weddings' or 'marriage tourism' that involves travels to 'another place, in order to get married' (Paramita, 2008). By using the survey data obtained from domestic honeymoon tourists visiting Antalya, Turkey, this research aims to explore the main characteristics of honeymoon tourists and market-specific factors affecting their levels of satisfaction.

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In terms of market analysis, this study examines tourists' travel preferences, demographics, souvenir purchases, overall satisfaction and loyalties. In addition, it will explore tourists' wishes or desires ('heart shares') and the importance of destination attributes in destination selection in the context of domestic and international competitors of Antalya. In its first three sections, the study offers a theoretical discussion regarding honeymoon tourism, tourists' destination selection process and competition of destinations in honeymoon tourism, destination attributes affecting honeymooners' destination selection and souvenir purchases in honeymoon travels. The later sections describe the research method and results. The paper ends with a discussion of its findings and a conclusion.

## 2 Destination selection process and destination competitiveness in honeymoon tourism

Tourist decision making is a sophisticated and complicated process involving many factors, including whether to travel, where to travel, what to do, when to travel, how long to stay and how much to spend (Hyde, 2008; Middleton & Clarke, 2001; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Jang, Lee, Lee and Hong (2007) observed that newlywed couples reduce conflicts by incorporating their partner's choices through discussion to decide the final honeymoon destination together (Ünal & Dursun, 2016). Honeymooners also use Internet-based information resources such as online reviews and user-generated comments in the decision-making process (Durinec, 2013).

Tourists use a wide range of criteria to select destinations. These criteria are 'altered according to the purpose and features of the trip, elements of the external environment, the characteristics of the traveller and the particularities, and attributes of destinations' (Buhalis, 2000). The destination selection process is, therefore, an inception point for understanding tourist behaviour and identifying the underlying critical factors (Gunn, 1988; Mill & Morrison, 1985; Pearce & Lee, 2005). Several studies have been devoted to understanding the factors affecting tourists' destination selection (Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002). Amongst these factors, they specifically address the questions relating to where to travel and what kind of a vacation experience to seek (Dann, 1977).

More recently, some scholars argued that these questions are the most prominent and determinant issues on vacation choice (Oppewal, Huybers & Crouch, 2015). Moreover, some destinations branded as 'unique-exotic-exclusive' are specially priced and packaged for weddings and honeymoons (Buhalis, 2000). For example, Kim and Agrusa (2005) found potential Korean honeymoon tourists perceive destinations differently than other honeymoon tourists and prefer to travel through destinations with natural resources rather than cultural or historic resources.

Destination competitiveness is 'the destination's ability to create and integrate value added products/services that sustain its resources while maintaining market position relative to competitors' (Hassan, 2000). Currently, even popular honeymoon destinations must ensure their positions in tourism by maintaining and expanding their market shares whilst competing with new destinations (Vada, 2015). To be competitive in the honeymoon market, destinations should identify whether their overall appeal and customer experiences are superior to alternative destinations (Durinec, 2013).

To measure destination competitiveness, one must identify which of the destinations offer the highest 'market', 'heart' and 'mind' shares. Some studies show tourist patterns can be inconsistent in terms of the most desired (heart share) and actually travelled (market share) destinations. For example, in the Korean honeymoon market, 10 years of data (1998–2002) on overseas visit trends show the most desired and most visited destinations are significantly different from each other (Kim & Agrusa, 2005). The 3rd Annual Honeymoon Study (2010) by The Knot Inc. reported that only one in four couples could go on their dream honeymoon.

As noted by Jang *et al.* (2007), honeymoon destinations are selected 'by certain constraints (i.e. situational inhibitors: time, money, etc.) as well as by the preferences of one of the partners who has the greater influence in the relationship'. Therefore, to gauge the competitiveness of honeymoon destinations, it is important, at the micro level, to clarify the decision-making process of tourists who choose under some constraints and who may have varying levels of value or expectations based on experience. At the macro level, competing destinations' market shares, services offered, attractions and marketing strategies are issues to be considered.

### 3 Destination attributes affecting honeymooners' destination selection

To compete with other destinations effectively, honeymoon destinations must create memorable tourist experiences and offer superior value through a varied set of attractive attributes (Cho, 2000). Tourists may show interest in specific destination attributes that are sometimes the main motivating reasons to travel (Moutinho, 1987). Or, these attributes may just be part of several factors motivating the whole travel experience (Albayrak & Caber, 2013). Tourists may consider some destination attributes attractive, whilst they consider other attributes as basic needs rather than attractions (Lee et al., 2010). For example, following the exhausting days of wedding preparation, a newlywed couple may look forward to their honeymoon for some long-awaited relaxation (Lee et al., 2010); this expectation is likely to have a powerful impact on the choice of destination (Moira, Mylonopoulos & Parthenis, 2011). In this scenario, newlyweds are more likely to choose destinations that respect their privacy and provide them a safe and comforting environment.

Most previous studies on honeymoon tourism focus on descriptive issues, including the honeymoon travellers' destination preferences and determinants of their destination choices. Considering the growth of honeymoon tourism market, empirical studies in the literature about the determination of attributes' attractiveness remain scarce. Few studies examine the importance of attributes in honeymoon destination selection. Amongst them, Lee et al. (2010) concluded that 'safety/security', 'high quality of accommodation' and 'reasonable travel costs' are the most important attributes of honeymoon destinations. Similarly, Ünal and Dursun (2016) identified 'security', 'beauty of the beaches' and 'high-quality accommodation facilities' as the top three important destination attributes attracting honeymoon tourists. Kim and Agrusa (2005) concluded that the most frequently identified attributes determining the attractiveness of a honeymoon destination choice are 'good weather', 'safety' and 'reasonable travel cost'. Lee et al. (2010) also proposed that a 'good place for shopping', 'night life, entertainment' and 'reasonable travel cost' affect honeymooners' decision making.

Winchester et al. (2011) suggested 'climate' is more important when choosing a honeymoon destination than it is when choosing a regular holiday destination. They also identified some new honeymoon destination attributes such as 'romance', 'budget' and 'familiarity'. With

respect to familiarity, one group of tourists looks for something completely new and unfamiliar and another wants some level of familiarity. Results showed that honeymooners were more likely to be flexible on their budget and less affected by the cost of their trip compared to other tourists' concerns, as many couples see their honeymoon as a once in a lifetime experience. So, whilst 'budget' is important, guests are inclined to be more concerned with quality than price (Kim & Agrusa, 2005). Seebaluck et al. (2015) stated the most prominent attribute of a honeymoon destination is 'sea, sun and sand', whilst 'facilities and services' and 'reasonable travel cost' make the destination more attractive. Table 1 summarises attributes identified by some of the previous studies as important for the selection of a honeymoon destination.

### 4 Souvenir purchases in honeymoon travels

Leading destinations build their reputation on their shopping opportunities because this activity has become an essential component of the overall tourism experience (Rosenbaum & Spears, 2006). As tourists generally spend more on shopping than food, lodging and entertainment (Swanson & Horridge, 2002), the expenditures comprise almost one-third of the total travel costs (Wilkins, 2011). Zauberman, Ratner and Kim (2009) report that people often acquire objects associated with their special experiences to preserve their most meaningful memories. These keepsakes may include 'photographs of happy moments', 'mementos from past romances' and 'souvenirs of enjoyable travel' (Belk, 1988).

As objects remind tourists of special moments or events, souvenirs are integral to the tourism experience (Swanson & Horridge, 2006). Returning home with a souvenir keeps alive the memory of the travel experience (Swanson, 2004). Therefore, Wilkins (2011) suggested that tourists look for more 'meaningful reminders' indicating the destination rather than 'novelty-focused products'. Likewise, Hillman (2007, p.136) argued that 'since the first tourist brought home souvenir and memorabilia, as signs of trip, tourist purchases are important parts of a recall of journey'. Souvenirs are 'symbols and mementos of the travel' for tourists and their loved ones (Tosun, Temizkan, Timothy & Fyall, 2007), transforming intangible experiences into tangible memories. Moreover, they function as physical evidences of travel because seeing or touching the souvenir not only makes the individuals recall where

**Table 1:** Destination attributes important for honeymoon tourism

	Kim and Agrusa (2005)	Moira et al. (2008)	Az Travel (2008)	Lee, Huang and Chen (2010)	Winchester et al. (2011)	Seebaluck, et al. (2015)	Unal and Dursun (2016)
Climate	x				x		
Romance	x				x		
Budget			x		x		
Safety/security	x		x	x			x
Relaxation		x		x			
Privacy				x			
High quality of accommodation				x			x
Reasonable travel cost	x			x		x	
Beauty of the beaches							x
Night life, entertainment				x			
Shopping attractions	x			x			
Comfort	x						
Good scenery	x		x				
Historical and cultural resources	x						
Facilities and services						x	
Sea, sun and sand						x	

they were but also proves that they were there (Swanson, 2004).

Wilkins (2011) conducted a study on tourists' souvenir purchasing intentions and discovered three reasons for purchasing: to find gifts for others, foster memories and provide evidence. His findings also showed respondents regarded the souvenirs as an '*aide memoire*' (reminder), as did previous studies (Zauberman et al., 2009). In some instances, purchasing souvenirs is an obligation. In the Japanese tradition, newlyweds on their honeymoon are expected to purchase expensive souvenirs for their relatives and loved ones (Langen, Streltzer & Kai, 1997). Consequently, the couple usually makes a long list of souvenirs they must remember to purchase (Nishiyama, 1996).

## 5 Method

### 5.1 Measures

This study used a survey for investigating the main characteristics of the Turkish domestic honeymoon market. Five questions identified participant demographics and travel preferences. Eighteen attributes derived from previous

literature measured the importance of the main destination attributes (Lee et al., 2010; Seebaluck et al., 2015; Winchester et al., 2011). Respondents rated the importance of each attribute on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = not important at all to 5 = quite important. Options obtained from Wilkins (2011) identified attitudes regarding souvenir purchases. Five items obtained from Veasna, Wu and Huang (2013) measured overall customer satisfaction, and four items derived from Dalkılıç (2012) identified loyalty. A 5-point Likert type scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree quantified customer satisfaction and loyalty.

### 5.2 Procedure

Survey participants were Turkish domestic honeymoon tourists who had visited Antalya between 1 July and 26 October 2016. A survey was conducted whilst tourists were waiting for departure transfer through the hotels after completing a daily tour called the Olympos-Ulupinar-Tahtalidag Ropeway Tour. One of the authors approached the tourists and explained the aim of the study, asking them if they would volunteer to complete the questionnaire. Thus, the study used a convenience sampling method. Out of 600 participants, 540 fully answered the

forms and these were used for the analyses. Such a sample size is acceptable for a typical niche market analysis because Malhotra (1999) claimed a typical data set range would be 300–500 with a minimum size of 200.

## 6 Results

### 6.1 Sample

The convenience sample split evenly between male (50.0%) and female (50.0%) tourists (Table 2). Most fell within the age group of 26–30 (66.4%), followed by those who were 25 years old and below (30.2%). The educational level of respondents was high, with 63.0% being university graduates. The average monthly household income

**Table 2:** Demographics of tourists (n = 540)

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	270	50.0
Female	270	50.0
<b>Age (years)</b>		
25 and below	161	30.2
26–30	354	66.4
31–50	18	3.4
<b>Education Level</b>		
Primary school	4	0.7
Secondary school	15	2.8
Vocational school	10	1.9
High school	121	22.4
University	340	63.0
MSc	50	9.3
<b>Monthly Household Income (1 Turkish Lira/TL= 0.29 USD/\$)</b>		
≤ \$435 (≤1,500 TL)	73	13.6
\$436–870 (1,501–3,000 TL)	269	50.3
\$871–1,305 (3,001–4,500 TL)	116	21.7
\$1,306–1,740 (4,501–6,000 TL)	46	8.6
\$1,741–2,175 (6,001–7,500 TL)	11	2.1
≥\$2,176 (≥7,501 TL)	20	3.7
<b>City of Residence</b>		
Istanbul	218	40.4
Ankara	61	11.3
Bursa	38	7.0
Izmir	20	3.7
Kocaeli	18	3.3
Other	185	34.3

was between \$436 and \$870 for most participants (50.3%); 21.7% earned \$871–\$1,305 per month. The single largest group of couples (40.4%) came from Istanbul.

### 6.2 Travel preferences

Whilst 56.7% of honeymoon tourists had come to Antalya for the first time, 43.3% of the sample had been there for a visit at least once before. Many of them (37.4%) preferred to stay for 5 days in the city. However, 6 days (28.1%) and 7 days (19.1%) were also popular lengths of stay. Most (84.6%) did not make any plan for visiting another city after Antalya. A few considered continuing to Istanbul (3.1%) and Izmir (1.9%). Most couples made their honeymoon destination selection together (65.0%). For some, just one of the partners made the decision (mine 11.5%; my partner's 12.6%), and a third party played a role in decision making in 10.9% of the instances (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Travel preferences

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>Times of Visit to Antalya</b>		
First time	306	56.7
Second and more	234	43.3
<b>Length of Stay</b>		
3 days	8	1.5
4 days	62	11.5
5 days	202	37.4
6 days	152	28.1
7 days	103	19.1
8 days	9	1.7
10 days	4	0.7
<b>Plan to Visit Another City After Antalya</b>		
Yes	83	15.4
No	457	84.6
<b>City to Visit After Antalya</b>		
Istanbul	17	3.1
Izmir	10	1.9
Muğla	5	0.9
Other	51	9.5
<b>Decision of Honeymoon Destination</b>		
Mine	62	11.5
My partner's	68	12.6
Both of ours'	351	65.0
Third party people's	59	10.9

**Table 4:** Information resource(s) used for organising travel\*

Resources	Frequency	Percent (%)
Internet	355	65.7
Travel agency	328	60.7
Recommendation of family members and friends	155	28.7
Newspapers	43	8.0
Magazines	17	3.1
Other	5	0.9

\*Total percentage might be higher than 100 as multiple choices were possible

Honeymoon tourists used information resources (Table 4) from the Internet (65.7%), travel agents (60.7%) and recommendations of family members and friends (28.7%). The multiple choices for this question revealed that most tourists examined Internet websites and contacted travel agents for travel information.

Honeymoon tourists covered their travel costs through shared savings (49.6%), credit card(s) (34.6%) and wedding presents (21.1%). Bank credit was generally the least preferred (1.1%) option for financial support (Table 5).

### 6.3 Domestic and international competitors of Antalya by heart share of tourists

To discover the main domestic competitors of Antalya as a popular honeymoon destination in Turkey, the survey asked participants to mention their first, second and third ‘destinations at heart’. Bodrum in Muğla was the first choice for 118 tourists (21.9%) (Table 6). It was second choice for 61 respondents (11.3%). The Black Sea area was the third choice for 40 tourists (7.4%), followed by Bodrum in Muğla (6.9%), Kuşadası in Aydın (6.1%) and Marmaris in Muğla (6.1%).

At international level, participants identified honeymoon destinations competing with Antalya by writing which international destinations they would have considered as a first, second and third option instead of Antalya in their hearts and choice sets. Results show that Italy was at the top position in each of the categories (Table 7). Thus, Italy was the main international competitor of Antalya, followed by Cyprus, Spain, Greece and the Maldives.

**Table 5:** Financial resource(s) of honeymoon travel \*

Resources	Frequency	Percent (%)
Shared savings	268	49.6
Credit card	187	34.6
Wedding presents (gold, money, etc.)	114	21.1
Family gift	30	5.6
Bank credit	6	1.1
Other	57	10.6

\*Total percentage might be higher than 100 as multiple choices were possible

**Table 6:** Domestic competitors of Antalya

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>First Choice Other Than Antalya</b>		
Bodrum (Muğla)	118	21.9
Fethiye (Muğla)	71	13.1
Muğla	55	10.2
Other	296	54.8
<b>Second Choice Other Than Antalya</b>		
Bodrum (Muğla)	61	11.3
Marmaris (Muğla)	50	9.3
Izmir	38	7.0
Other	391	72.4
<b>Third Choice Other Than Antalya</b>		
Black Sea area	40	7.4
Bodrum (Muğla)	37	6.9
Kuşadası (Aydın)	33	6.1
Marmaris (Muğla)	33	6.1
Other	430	79.6

**Table 7:** International competitors of Antalya

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>First Choice Other Than Antalya</b>		
Italy	69	12.8
Cyprus	52	9.6
Maldives	51	9.4
Other	368	68.2
<b>Second Choice Other Than Antalya</b>		
Italy	50	9.3
Spain	38	7.0
Greece	28	5.2
Other	424	78.5
<b>Third Choice Other Than Antalya</b>		
Italy	31	5.7
Cyprus	26	4.8
Spain	23	4.3
Other	460	85.2

**Table 8:** Importance of destination attributes

	Means	Standard Deviation
Cleanliness and hygiene	4.79	0.080
High quality of accommodation facilities	4.73	0.533
Beauty of the beaches	4.72	0.600
Natural beauties	4.61	0.704
Safety	4.52	0.860
Climate	4.43	0.900
Romantic places	4.32	0.869
Ease of access	4.20	1.042
Reasonable prices	4.13	1.014
Cultural and historical places	4.03	1.096
Entertainment opportunities	3.96	1.171
Fame of the City	3.85	1.229
Local foods	3.84	1.199
Sportive activity opportunities	3.49	1.308
Hospitality of the local people	3.31	1.422
Cultural similarity	3.29	1.402
Shopping opportunities	3.07	1.444
Night life	2.94	1.450

**Table 9:** Souvenir purchases at honeymoon and other travels

	Honeymoon		Other Travels		t-value	Significance
	Means	Standard Deviation	Means	Standard Deviation		
Other items representative of the location/destination, such as key, rings/chains fridge magnets, mugs	3.65	1.411	3.59	1.342	1.771	0.077***
Regional specialty arts and crafts, such as carvings, jewellery, glassware	3.28	1.397	3.14	1.306	3.317	0.001*
Photographs, postcards and paintings of the region	3.01	1.476	2.93	1.404	2.119	0.035**
Other local specialty products, such as regional food products, wine, clothing	3.00	1.449	3.01	1.352	-0.269	0.788
Published material on the destination/ region, such as books, magazines	2.64	1.420	2.66	1.335	-0.546	0.585
Perfume, electrical goods, cameras or other similar goods that can be purchased at a discounted price	2.62	1.442	2.72	1.379	-2.688	0.008*
Non-regional arts and crafts, such as paintings, stuffed animals or toys, ornaments	2.48	1.410	2.44	1.334	1.428	0.154
Hats, caps or other clothing branded with the destination, hotel or attraction	2.30	1.366	2.32	1.333	-0.557	0.578

Significant at \* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$  and \*\*\* $p < 0.10$  levels

## 6.4 Destination attributes' importance in destination selection

In terms of destination attributes' importance for tourist decision making, 'cleanliness and hygiene' was the first ( $\bar{X} = 4.79$ ), 'high quality of accommodation facilities' ( $\bar{X} = 4.73$ ) was the second and 'beauty of the beaches' ( $\bar{X} = 4.72$ ) was the third most important attribute for the respondents. The least important attributes were 'shopping opportunities' ( $\bar{X} = 3.07$ ) and 'night life' ( $\bar{X} = 2.94$ ) (Table 8).

## 6.5 Souvenir purchases at honeymoon and other travels

With the purpose of understanding the purchasing behaviour of the honeymoon market segment, the survey asked respondents to evaluate their souvenir purchase preferences both in their honeymoon and in other type of travels (Table 9). A *t*-test compared their choices.

Table 9 reflects that preferred honeymoon souvenir purchases included 'photographs, postcards and paintings of the region'; 'regional specialty arts and crafts, such as carvings, jewellery, glassware'; and 'other items representative of the location/destination, such as key rings/chains fridge magnets, mugs'. By comparison, in other travels, respondents would rather buy 'perfume, electrical

**Table 10:** Reasons of souvenir purchase

	Means	Standard Deviation
Souvenirs allow me to have a memento of where I've been	4.34	1.007
I like to buy souvenirs that represent the country I visited	4.23	1.057
Souvenirs are a reminder of how special my travel experiences were	4.12	1.079
I buy souvenirs that create an association with the place that I visited	4.11	1.085
The souvenirs I buy bring connection to my trip	4.00	1.177
Souvenirs bring back the travel experience	3.94	1.168

goods, cameras or other similar goods that can be purchased at a discounted price'.

## 6.6 Souvenir purchases as memories

The study also examined souvenir purchasing 'as memories of honeymoon travel' (Table 10). Results indicated couples bought souvenirs mainly to have a memento of their travel experience ( $\bar{X} = 4.34$ ). They also considered souvenirs as symbols of the visited countries ( $\bar{X} = 4.23$ ).

## 6.7 Overall satisfaction with destination

Survey participants were very glad to have decided to visit Antalya ( $\bar{X} = 4.62$ ) and sure of the correctness of this decision ( $\bar{X} = 4.60$ ) (Table 11). Overall satisfaction of the respondents was high ( $\bar{X} = 4.58$ ).

## 6.8 Loyalty towards the destination

Although honeymoon tourists tended to say positive things about Antalya to other people ( $\bar{X} = 4.59$ ) and recommend it to others as a honeymoon destination ( $\bar{X} = 4.58$ ), having Antalya as their first choice was relatively low ( $\bar{X} = 3.96$ ) (Table 12). In other words, the respondents' intention of making positive word-of-mouth was high, although their revisit intention was low.

**Table 11:** Overall satisfaction with destination

	Means	Standard Deviation
I feel good about my decision to visit Antalya	4.62	0.622
I am sure it was the right thing to make honeymoon in Antalya	4.60	0.631
I have truly enjoyed in Antalya	4.57	0.667
I am satisfied with my decision to visit Antalya	4.56	0.651
Coming for honeymoon to Antalya has been a good experience	4.54	0.694
Overall satisfaction	4.58	0.654

**Table 12:** Loyalty towards the destination

	Means	Standard Deviation
I say positive things about Antalya to other people	4.59	0.675
I recommend Antalya to someone who seeks my advice on honeymoon travel	4.58	0.677
I encourage my friends and relatives to come to Antalya	4.32	0.858
I consider Antalya on my first choice to have holiday	3.96	1.027

## 7 Discussion and conclusions

This research represents a typical niche market investigation of domestic honeymoon tourists visiting Antalya. As a rare case study in honeymoon tourism literature, the results of the present paper suggest some common characteristics of honeymooners important to know for both the tourism sector and destination authorities. For example, almost half of the honeymoon couples (43.3%) participating in the survey were repeat visitors to Antalya. They were middle-aged (66.4% were 26–30 years old), were well educated (63.0% graduated from university) and had an average level of income (50.3% with a monthly income between \$436 and \$870).

The travels focused on one area, as 84.6% of the participants did not have any intention to visit another destination after Antalya. Most couples chose the honeymoon destination together (65.0%), as confirmed by previous studies in the related literature (Jang *et al.*, 2007; Ünal & Dursun, 2016). Internet (65.7%) and travel agents (60.7%) were the main information resources used during the decision-making process. Interestingly, recommendations from other people were not followed much in decision

making (28.7%), which contradicts findings in some previous studies (Durinec, 2013).

Bodrum was the main domestic destination in the heart share of honeymooners, and Italy was the main international honeymoon destination competing with Antalya. As shown in previous studies, the destination visited can differ from the most desired one in honeymoon tourism because of the various constraints and partners' influence on each other. This finding was similar to previous studies (Kim & Agrusa, 2005; Jang et al., 2007).

In contrast to high meaning of the souvenirs amongst Japanese honeymooners (Langen et al., 1997), Turkish honeymooners did not give importance to shopping opportunities ( $\bar{X} = 3.07$ ). Turkish honeymoon tourists gave the highest level of importance to souvenirs representing the location or destination. Souvenirs included items such as key rings/chains, fridge magnets and mugs from both their honeymoon ( $\bar{X} = 3.65$ ) and other travels ( $\bar{X} = 3.59$ ). These types of souvenirs represented mementos, proof of the experience and gifts to other people.

The study examined the importance of various destination attributes in the decision-making process. The results showed that 'cleanliness and hygiene' ( $\bar{X} = 4.79$ ), 'high quality of accommodation facilities' ( $\bar{X} = 4.73$ ) and 'beauty of beaches' ( $\bar{X} = 4.72$ ) were the top three attributes playing a role in tourist decisions. Therefore, destination authorities and company managers should promote services and resources that meet these expectations if they are to attract tourists.

Overall, measurement of tourists' overall satisfaction indicates that honeymooners were glad to have selected Antalya ( $\bar{X} = 4.62$ ) and the general experience was enjoyable ( $\bar{X} = 4.57$ ). However, many honeymooners intend to visit another destination in their next travels instead of Antalya ( $\bar{X} = 3.96$ ), although they say positive things ( $\bar{X} = 4.59$ ) about Antalya and will recommend it to other people ( $\bar{X} = 4.58$ ). These findings highlight the influence of previous visits on the future travel decisions. Thus, even highly satisfied visitors should not be considered as 'customers in hand', whilst global competition from numerous domestic and international destinations has increased. Destination authorities should develop new services and products to meet the needs and expectations of honeymoon tourists if they are to retain loyal tourists and increase their shares in this niche market.

By way of conclusion, this research has some unavoidable limitations. Because of the time and finance constraints, the study surveyed only honeymoon tourists participating in a daily tour organised in Antalya. This study did not reach tourists travelling on their own or tourists visiting other destinations in Turkey. Moreover, survey

was conducted during the destination's high season and consequently could not compare perceptions of destination attributes and services in other seasons. Lastly, the sample consisted of only domestic tourists, limiting the researchers' ability to test multi-cultural or national differences between domestic and international tourists. In the future studies, the researchers recommend scholars consider these wider factors to obtain generalisable results.

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