



## Evaluation of Wedding Tourism in Antalya\*\*

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### Abstract

In this study, wedding tourism, one of the newly emerging products in tourism, has been evaluated in accordance with the opinions of the stakeholders in Antalya destination. The main aim of the study is to determine the present situation of Antalya in the wedding tourism market, wedding tourism facilities, which features should be foregrounded, opportunities, competition, potential markets and how its share in these markets can be increased. Second aim of this research is to examine whether Antalya can be known and preferred wedding destination brand in the world. The purposive sampling method was chosen from non-probability-based sampling methods. Study data were collected from January to December (2017) by questionnaire forms consisting of open and closed-ended questions. It has been determined that couples in Antalya prefer weddings with alcoholic / non-alcoholic meals, weddings held in closed lounges or open-air areas such as pools, beaches and gardens. On the other hand, it has been determined that wedding tourism practitioners provide consulting services on transportation, accommodation, wedding ceremonies, catering services, wedding extras and the execution of legal proceedings. It has identified that Antalya's strengths in wedding tourism are existing infrastructure and superstructure possibilities, natural, cultural attractions, transportation convenience and price range. On the other hand, its weaknesses are identified as marketing problems, price competition reducing the quality of service and problems in the image of the country. It has been determined that, in wedding tourism, Antalya's opportunities are market trends, its threats are political problems, price competition and high taxes.

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## INTRODUCTION

Tourism, which has an effect on the world economy that is growing and changing each day, has become one of the most dynamic sectors today. In order to gain more shares from the increasing tourism revenues around the world, countries are creating and implementing policies to develop the tourism sector and create new demands for tourism. Countries are trying to develop new tourism products or diversify their tourism products to create new demand or increase the demand for tourism. This is because increasing demand for other types of tourism other than “sea, sand and sun” tourism has led countries to diversify their tourism products. For Turkey to increase the demand for tourism, it will be possible to diversify its tourism products and trends to develop different types of tourism. One of these tourism types is wedding tourism. It is known that Russians and Iranians are interested in Antalya for wedding tourism. It is stated that the Western Mediterranean Development Agency is working to attract Indians, who can spend between 1 million dollars and 20 million dollars for their weddings, to Antalya. It is stated that the Western Mediterranean Development Agency is working to attract (Turizm gazetesini, 2016). One of the most famous wedding magazine companies in Russia (wedding-magazine) has placed Turkey in seventh place among the countries to be visited for wedding tourism (Haber3, 2011).

Undoubtedly, evaluating the destination potential of a tourism product can provide significant advantages to the product at the beginning of the development process. For this reason, it is essential to carry out the necessary research first. Scientific studies to be conducted on this tourism product, which will enable the spread of tourism to four seasons and make use of the facilities that are idle outside the season, will be able to make significant contributions to the development of wedding tourism in Antalya. Thus, Antalya can expand its market share in wedding tourism by making use of its tourist facilities, nature, and image throughout the year.

### Wedding Tourism

Marriage is defined as the social institution that constitutes the socially accepted and sanctioned form of establishing a home or family (Turkish Language Association-TLA-, 2015). A ceremony is, on the other hand, defined as a public occasion held for celebrating a marriage or circumcision or a particular event (TLA, 2015). Schumann and Amado (2010, p. 173) define the wedding ceremony as a special event where family members come together to celebrate this special day of the newly married couple. De Witt (2006, p. 9) describes wedding tourism as an activity that includes transportation (flights and transfers of the marrying couple and guests attending the wedding), accommodation (of the marrying couple and guests attending the wedding), catering, and entertainment. Wedding tourism is also defined as the flow of tourists to often another country for a wedding ceremony (Daniels and Loveless, 2013, p. 87). Also defined as the “destination wedding”, wedding tourism includes weddings outside the hometown of the bride and groom (Schumann and Amado, 2010, p. 176).

The main market segments of wedding tourism comprise first-time marriages, second-time marriages, same-sex marriages, and “marriage refreshments” (it is when a husband and a wife “remarries” to refresh their marriage) (Major, McLeay and Waine, 2010, p. 252). De Witt (2006, p. 64) stated that the cost of holding a wedding ceremony in South Africa is one-third of the cost of a traditional wedding ceremony in the UK and noted the following as reasons why English couples hold their wedding ceremonies in South Africa: the desire for good weather, the absence of language problems, the abundance of space for wedding ceremonies, and the desire to combine the wedding ceremony and honeymoon in a sunny and romantic destination. In another study it was stated that traditional Japanese

weddings are held in Shinto shrines with Shinto ceremonies, which cost quite high, and Christian weddings began to increase over the years and hotels with chapels in it became common (Schumann & Amado, 2010, p. 179). Major, McLeay, and Waine, (2010, pp. 257-258) stated that couples' wedding tourism preferences are a decision that require emotionality and participation and emphasized the importance of being customer-oriented for wedding tourism businesses. They also highlighted the legal infrastructure to facilitate wedding tourism will create a competitive advantage for wedding businesses and gave as examples the Caribbean, Mexico, Cyprus, Italy, Greece, Adel and Mauritius (Major, McLeay, & Waine, 2010, p. 254). In his study using secondary sources, Ching (2013, p. 3) culturally evaluated the wedding tourism, which he characterized as "bare feet on the beach". The study argues that couples see wedding tourism as a way of escaping from "neighbourhood pressure" and building their own identities based on gender equality. The study also claims that the pressure of traditional weddings is still felt in wedding tourism, which clearly manifests itself in the white wedding gowns which are still being worn by brides (Ching, 2013, p. 151). Breg (2013, p. 1-8) stated that the cost of destination weddings is less than half that of traditional weddings (e.g., a wedding ceremony averagely costs 12 thousand dollars in the UK while it costs 6 thousand dollars in South Africa) and stressed that warm weather and natural beauties are effective in couples' decision to choose such weddings.

Abroad weddings are an alternative of choice for couples who do not want to spend too much money because of the expensive traditional weddings. Considering couples' wedding expenses as well as their honeymoon trips, abroad weddings can be offered as a two-in-one package. Demand for wedding tourism is increasing due to reasons such as being less costly than traditional weddings, decreasing costs of international travels, and increased number of international flights (Major, McLeay, & Waine, 2010, p. 253). Guaranteed beautiful weather, the desire to hold an unforgettable wedding ceremony in a special venue, and the convenience offered with wedding packages are some of the reasons why couples prefer wedding tourism (Major, McLeay, & Waine, 2010, p. 253). Wedding tourism which provides a range of economic benefits resulting from the travels of couples and guests to the region, contributes economically not only to the destination but also to the components of the tourism sector and the sub-sectors. Nature and landscape play an important role among the factors affecting couples' choice of destination (Kim & Agrusa, 2005, p. 901).

According to Hacıoğlu (2000, p. 39), tourism products are divided into two as tourism products comprising natural, historical and touristic resources of a country or region, or touristic services that constitute package tours that allow consumers to travel and take a holiday. For Turkey to increase the demand for tourism and market share, it will be possible by increasing the number of tourism products available in the country. In this context, this study aims to reveal how the wedding tourism, which is one of the new products in tourism, can contribute to increasing the tourism market share of Antalya. It also aims to determine, based on the opinions of the stakeholders, what needs to be done in order for Antalya to become a popular and preferred wedding destination in the world. To this end, the paper discusses Antalya's current position in the wedding tourism market, its opportunities in terms of wedding tourism, which features should be highlighted, its competitors, the potential markets to which Antalya can open up, how its share in this market can be increased, and whether it can be a popular wedding destination throughout the world.

A thorough search of the relevant literature showed that the number of studies on the subject is very limited, and the conducted studies cover the last ten years. Therefore, considering the fact that the present study will be based on

primary data and will employ the exploratory research model, it will contribute a lot to filling the gap in the literature. Wedding tourism contributes economically not only to the destination but also to the components of the tourism sector and the sub-sectors (Kim & Agrusa, 2005, p. 900). Considering the contribution of wedding tourism product to tourism income, sub-sectors, and promotion of the country and city, a scientific evaluation of this tourism product in all aspects as a product will help decision-makers and sector representatives to make the most of this tourism product and make the right decisions in the tourism market. Therefore, it is thought that this study is important due to these contributions that it will make.

## Method

In this study, the screening model and exploratory research approach were adopted. In order to collect data, wedding tourism studies in the literature (De Witt, 2006; Major, McLeay and Waive, 2010; Lau and Hui, 2010; Nguyen, 2011; Deng, 2013; Seebaluck, et al., 2015; Del Chiappa and Fortezza, 2016; Bertella, 2015) were studied and open- and closed-ended questions were prepared. The questions to which answers were sought in the study are as follows: What are the strengths and weaknesses of Antalya in terms of wedding tourism? What are the opportunities that Antalya has and the threats that it faces in terms of wedding tourism? How can wedding tourism be increased in Antalya? The prepared questionnaires were then revised according to the opinions of the faculty members of the Mersin University Tourism Faculty. The finalized questionnaires were applied between January and December 2017 to the managers of the Antalya hotels where wedding ceremonies are held, wedding tourism organization companies, tourism academicians, Provincial Directors of Culture and Tourism, and municipalities, who were identified as the stakeholders of wedding tourism in Antalya. Due to various problems in the data collection process (some of the stakeholders did not schedule an appointment; some did not send back the questionnaires; and there was a limited number of organization companies, etc.), at the end of the process, 36 valid questionnaires were obtained from 2 wedding organization companies, 15 hotel managers, 18 tourism academicians, and 1 Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism. The collected data were analyzed by content analysis technique (Altunışık et al., 2012, p. 324). Considering the relevant studies in the literature, codings were made, and various themes were reached in this context. The data were then grouped according to themes and, where appropriate, presented numerically. The data collection process is limited to 2017 since scientific studies deal with a specific phenomenon or subjects in a certain period. The number of stakeholders reached, the financial constraints of the research, and the accessibility of the stakeholders are other limitations of the study.

## Findings

47.2% of the participants were private-sector employees and 52.78% were public employees. while reaching the private sector employees, they were reached were either managers or decision-makers in their institutions. public sector employees were, on the other hand, tourism academicians and the provincial director of tourism, whose job description is to *“conduct and commission all kinds of studies in order to make tourism policies and to direct investments compatible with the changes and developments in tourism demand and types in the city.”* two of the few wedding organization companies which organize weddings in line with the definition of wedding tourism agreed to participate in the study.

the evaluation of the current state of wedding tourism in antalya was made through the responses of wedding organization companies and hotel managers as they are the practitioners in the tourism sector and the managers of

the companies producing and selling this product. on the other hand, evaluations on how to develop wedding tourism in this destination were made through the answers of all participants.

### **Current State of Wedding Tourism in Antalya**

In order to determine how wedding tourism can be developed in Antalya, participants' responses to the question inquiring the current state of wedding tourism in Antalya were examined. To the question inquiring what kind of wedding ceremonies couples prefer, the participants answered that they mostly prefer indoor or outdoor (e.g., pool, beach, garden) wedding ceremonies with dinners with/without alcoholic drinks and with live music. To the question inquiring how they determine the prices of the services provided in wedding tourism, all of the participants stated that they determine the prices according to costs. To the question inquiring the price range of the wedding packages, the participants stated that the prices ranged between 20 and 120 euros per each guest, that some weddings cost between 4 thousand TL and 250 thousand TL, and that lavish Indian weddings even cost around 2-3 million TL. As the answers were not comparable, they were not grouped.

Of the wedding organization companies and hotel managers in Antalya, 25.23% provide transportation services, 19.62% provide accommodation services, 19.62% organize wedding ceremonies, and 16.82% provide food and beverage services. Also, only one of them stated that they provide consultancy services about wedding ceremonies. Similarly, one of the wedding organization companies stated that if the marrying couple demands it, they can serve ethnic dishes at the wedding ceremony by either ordering the dishes in Antalya or by bringing a cook from the motherland of the marrying couple. Besides, wedding organization companies stated that they provide wedding dresses and groom suits for couples.

To the question inquiring which countries most prefer Antalya for holding wedding ceremonies, most of the respondents (29.42%) responded as the domestic market even though the reason why we asked this question was to find out about other countries. Given the estimates that the market size of the wedding sector in Turkey exceeded 30 billion dollars (Düğün, 2015; Dünya, 2015), it was natural that the participants emphasized the domestic market. This finding can also be interpreted that wedding tourism has only recently started to attract attention and the domestic market maintains its weight in the sector. Russia and Ukraine, which were former Soviet Union countries, have the same share (29.42%) as the domestic market, and they are followed by the European countries (23.52%). Considering that Antalya's current markets in the tourism sector are the countries in these two groups, it can be said that the businesses in Antalya attract customers for wedding tourism from Antalya's current tourism markets. It was also seen that Far East countries (8.82%), which attract media's attention with their wedding traditions, population and wedding tourism, and the Middle East countries (8.82%), which are among the countries that have increasingly preferred Turkey for tourism in recent years, also prefer Turkey for wedding tourism.

Wedding organization companies and hotel managers stated that Antalya is preferred mostly in June, July and August for wedding tourism. In the literature, it is considered as a normal situation considering the studies that mention that the wishes for having a wedding on a sunny day is important in the preferences of couples in wedding tourism. (Ching, 2013; Breg, 2013; Seebaluck, Munhurrun, Naidoo & Rughoonauth, 2015). What one of the wedding organization companies said about Indian weddings is, on the other hand, in contrast to these preferences. The manager of the wedding organization company stated that Indians mostly prefer the months between November and April for their wedding ceremonies. This difference can be attributed to the fact that wedding tourism has only

recently been developing. The reason why summer months are mostly preferred may be due to the scarcity of wedding tourists and the couples preferring to join their wedding ceremonies with their holidays in search of romance. Wedding organization companies and hotel managers stated that Antalya is preferred mostly on Saturday and Sunday for wedding tourism. The participants stated that marrying couples prefer weekends because they think weekends are more suitable for guests attending their wedding (because of work, school, etc.). Also, the participants stated that Friday is one of the preferred days as the next day is the weekend. In addition, one of the wedding organization companies stated that some Indian weddings start on Thursday and last for 3-4 days and end at the weekend.

It is seen that tour operators and travel agencies have the most share (60.71%) among the distribution channels offering wedding services to international markets. They are followed by wedding organization companies with 32.15% share. As an answer to the question inquiring about the sales development strategies for wedding tourism in Antalya, most of the participants (74.28%) highlighted promotion through media channels. It is followed by 'participation in international fairs' to establish relations with agencies and potential customers and agencies. It can be said that trying to promote this new tourism product is determined as the main strategy. Undoubtedly, being available in the market and increasing public recognition to increase the market share is the basic requirement. Other sales strategies can be applied only when the product has a public recognition in the market.

### **Developing Wedding Tourism in Antalya**

This part of the study focuses on the participants' opinions about what can be done to develop wedding tourism in Antalya. No comparison was made among the participants' opinions due to both a small number of participants and the holistic approach that was sought.

While 78% of the participants said that wedding tourism should be developed in Antalya and wedding tourism should be included in the promotion of Antalya, 22% of them did not favour this idea. Those who favoured this idea stated that all-inclusive tourism products in the 'sea, sand, and sun' tourism model yield less revenue than they used to; therefore, alternative tourism products should be sought. These participants stated that wedding tourism can be a good tourism product alternative and by-product/support product for Antalya due to the high revenue generated, the multiple purchases by couples and guests, and the by-products sold. On the other hand, the participants who did not favour the idea of including wedding tourism in the promotion of the touristic products of Antalya stated that there was a tendency towards too many tourism products due to searches other than sea, sand, and sun, which caused confusion. These participants also stated that instead of focusing on other tourism products, the existing tourism products should be promoted more professionally.

Most of the participants (54.05%) stated that the tourist facilities considering the number of touristic facilities and their opportunities in Antalya are the ideal places for wedding ceremonies. This is followed by tourism regions (Belek, Lara, Kundu and Side) with 22.97%, and other touristic districts (Kemer, Antalya Center, Alanya, Manavgat, Konyaaltı, Serik, and Tekirova) with 16.21%. Finally, the participants stated their opinions about the ambience of the places where wedding ceremonies are held. Some of the participants (6.75%) stated that natural and cultural sites (Dim River, Alanya Castle, historical sites, country gardens, etc.) are suitable for wedding ceremonies. It can be inferred from the participants' opinions that the touristic sites and tourist facilities available in Antalya can provide services for wedding tourism and that the tourist attractions of Antalya can also be used to attract marrying couples to Antalya for their weddings.

34.52% of the participants stated that Middle East countries (Iran, Arab countries and Israel), which have increased their share in Turkish tourism in recent years, should be the target markets for wedding tourism. These markets were ranked first because of their increasing interest in Turkey, the amount of spending per person, and their taste for luxurious wedding ceremonies. The former Soviet Union countries, including Russia as the country from which Antalya hosts most tourists, took second place with 31.03%. European countries ranked third with 18.40%. The participants agreed that the current tourism markets of Antalya should be potential target markets in wedding tourism. The fact that Antalya is popular in these markets and that these markets are familiar to the tourism sector of Antalya has been shown as an advantage in the marketing of this new product in these markets. Finally, India, with its lavish overseas wedding expenditures amounting to 40 billion dollars annually, and China with its population and wedding traditions, were shown by the participants as potential wedding tourism markets.

Most of the participants (52%) pointed to Mediterranean countries (Greece, Italy, Spain, Cyprus, France, etc.) and the famous tourism cities of these countries (Rome, Paris, Venice, Barcelona and Vienna) as the wedding tourism competitors of Antalya. These countries and cities, which are also Turkey's current competitors in tourism, are considered as Turkey's competitors in wedding tourism, as well. These countries and cities in the Mediterranean basin are similar in terms of climatic conditions, natural beauties, and history. Tourism cities in Turkey (İzmir, Muğla (Fethiye, Ölüdeniz), İstanbul and Nevşehir (Cappadocia)) took second place with 22.47%. These cities, which have an important share in Turkey's tourism sector, were regarded by the participants as competitors of Antalya with their tourism popularity, tourist attractions, facilities, and present infrastructure and superstructure. Famous islands in the world known for their tourist attractions and offering an exotic atmosphere with their beaches and tropical climate took third place with 12.40%. Far East wedding tourism destinations (Thailand, Mauritius, Taiwan, and China) (4.63%), Dubai (3.87%), and Russia and Bulgaria (3.08%) were shown as the other competitors of Antalya in wedding tourism. Two participants regarded Antalya unrivalled in wedding tourism.

Within the scope of the study, we asked the participants about the strengths and weaknesses of Antalya and about the opportunities that Antalya has and the threats that it faces in terms of wedding tourism and what could be done to develop wedding tourism and its share in the wedding tourism market. Content analysis was applied to the participants' responses. Table 1 summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of Antalya, the opportunities it has, and the threats it faces in terms of wedding tourism.

The existing infrastructure and superstructure facilities in Antalya are at the top of the strengths with 4.58%. These infrastructure and superstructure facilities include the number of tourism businesses, Antalya's experience in the tourism sector, and the adequate number of businesses that offer spaces for both wedding ceremonies, accommodation, and honeymoon, which were listed by the participants as the strengths of Antalya in terms of wedding tourism. The natural and cultural attractions of Antalya and the image it possesses with these attractions are in second place. The participants stated that Antalya could meet the marrying couples' desire to hold their wedding ceremonies on sunny days and in exotic places with its Mediterranean climate, sea, beaches, and historical sites. In this regard, Antalya's attractions and image were stated as its strengths in terms of wedding tourism by 37.90% of the participants. In addition, 9.59% stated easy access due to the international airport and geographical location and 5.93% price variety as the strengths of Antalya in terms of wedding tourism.

**Table 1:** Strengths and Weaknesses of Antalya, the Opportunities It Has and the Threats It Faces in Terms of Wedding Tourism

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Number of tourism businesses Its Experience in Tourism Advanced Infrastructure Advanced Superstructure Qualified Human Resources Holiday Opportunities for Guests Honeymoon Opportunities High Quality of Service Being a Metropolis Climate Natural Beauties Historical Sites Tourist Attractions	Lack of Promotions Lack of Marketing 3S Positioning in Tourism Lack of Public Recognition Weak Relationships with Agencies Its Image As A Cheap Holiday Region Lack of a Romantic Image Excessive Competition Lack of Entrepreneurs Lack of Equipped Organization Companies Low Quality of Service Price Competition Lack of Qualified Workforce
Number of Sunny Days Its Image as A Destination Easy Access Geographic Location International Airport Being Economical Price Variety Fair Price	Lack of Service Standard Businesses Closing in the Off Season Lack of Direct Flights to Antalya in the Off Season High Tourist Density in the In-Season Safety Political Problems Political Instability Negative Image of the Country Lack of Cooperation Indifference of the Public Lack of Research
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
Pairs Seeking Different Experiences Search for Alternative Tourism Dissemination of Wedding Tourism Decreasing Interest in 3S Turning to Different Markets Becoming a Pioneer Increased Political Relations with Far East Countries Positive Image	Problems with Neighboring Countries Political Issues Safety Terrorism Migration Taxes Excess Costs Excessive Procedures Competition Multiplicity of Alternatives Connecting Flights

36.04% of the participants stated that marketing and image problems are Antalya’s weaknesses in wedding tourism. The participants determined that Antalya’s promotion and marketing problems, its image as a cheap holiday destination, and the 3S tourism could create problems in the marketing of wedding tourism, and in particular, could lead to problems in attracting luxurious weddings to Antalya. In the second place, the problems related to infrastructure and superstructure were mentioned by 29.73% of the participants as the weaknesses of Antalya in wedding tourism. Negative competition due to the high number of touristic businesses, decrease in service quality due to price competition, and the lack of equipped organizers and entrepreneurs to specialize in this field were identified as weaknesses constituting this group. In the third place, 22.53% of the participants stated the negative image of the country as another weakness of Antalya in terms of wedding tourism. It was stated that especially wars in the neighbouring countries, increasing terror incidents, other security problems, and changes in the international policies of the country will affect the tourism sector, and therefore the wedding tourism negatively. Also, 11.70% of the participants highlighted the lack of cooperation between the public and private sectors and lack of research on wedding tourism as the other weaknesses of the wedding tourism.

As to what opportunities Antalya has in terms of wedding tourism, a majority of the participants (71.23%) stated the changing trends in the tourism market. These include marrying couples' demands for holding their wedding ceremonies in different countries, the search for new alternatives in the tourism sector, the spread of overseas weddings, and the decline in interest in 3S tourism. The fact that overseas weddings are less costly than traditional weddings and that young couples want to have their wedding ceremonies on a sunny and hot day surrounded by natural beauties are among the reasons why overseas weddings are preferred (De Witt, 2006, p. 64). 28.77% of the participants indicated the followings as other opportunities of Antalya in terms of wedding tourism: the fact that it is a leading destination in Turkey in terms of wedding tourism, that it has a positive image in terms of wedding tourism in its existing tourism markets, and the increasing relationships with Far East countries, which are the developing markets in tourism and especially in wedding tourism. The factors that the participants regarded as an opportunity for wedding tourism in Antalya are consistent with the determinations related to wedding tourism motivations and wedding tourism markets in the literature.

With regards to the threats that Antalya faces that might impede wedding tourism in Antalya, 46.22% of the participants stressed political problems. The civil war in Syria, terrorist incidents in the region, domestic terrorism, migration due to political problems in neighbouring countries, and the problems experienced by Turkey in international politics were identified as the biggest threat that could adversely affect the development of wedding tourism in Antalya. Also, it was stated that high taxes and the increase in the prices of imported products due to the increase in exchange rates might affect costs negatively. In addition, visa procedures, differences in procedures between countries related to the marriage contract, and the excess of legal procedures for carrying out marriages in other countries is another disadvantage. These determinations were shared by 33.02% of the participants as legal problems in the second place. Finally, 20.75% of the participants underlined the multiplicity of Antalya's competitors in wedding tourism, price competition in the tourism sector in recent years, and reduced direct flights in the off-season as other threats that may adversely affect wedding tourism.

The participants were asked what needs to be done to make Antalya a brand destination in wedding tourism; 49.40% of the participants made suggestions on product quality and variety in the first place. These suggestions include the creation of themes related to wedding tourism, improving service quality, having professional organization companies, and preserving the features of Antalya for which marrying couples prefer Antalya to hold their wedding ceremonies. In order to make Antalya a brand destination in wedding tourism, the participants suggested increasing the number of wedding packages and themes and the quality in these services, which, according to them, will enable Antalya to attract more couples and contribute to the positive image of Antalya. Also, in the second places 41% of the participants highlighted more professional advertising and promotion activities. In short, the production of quality products, offering these products to more couples, and the promotion of these products in the right way are seen as the necessary steps to be taken to make Antalya a brand destination in wedding tourism. 9.6% of the participants argued that Antalya cannot be a brand destination in wedding tourism, that Antalya's existing tourism products need to be improved instead, and that there is no need put any efforts into wedding tourism.

When asked about the things to be done to increase the market share of Antalya in wedding tourism, in the first place 55.83% of the participants expressed marketing activities. Promotion of wedding tourism in Antalya, advertising of wedding opportunities and participation in international wedding fairs were put forward as the factors

deemed necessary to increase the market share of Antalya in wedding tourism. In addition, reconstruction of the current image of Antalya through the modern marketing approach by including wedding tourism was among the suggestions that would enable Antalya to be preferred by marrying couples for wedding tourism. 30% of the participants made suggestions related to the wedding tourism product in the second place. Further investment in wedding tourism, diversification of wedding tourism products and price options, providing ease of transportation, and improving the quality of service with professional tourism workers were stated as the steps to be taken. Finally, 14.16% of the participants stated that to increase the market share of Antalya in wedding tourism, this tourism product should be considered as essential, and plans should be made with the cooperation of stakeholders.

**Table 2:** Slogans That Can Be Used for Promoting Wedding Tourism in Target Markets

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marry in Antalya!</li> <li>• Antalya: A special place for the special person of your heart!</li> <li>• Antalya, with its sea and nature, offers you your dream wedding!</li> <li>• Marrying this summer is a good idea!</li> <li>• Have a happy, long-lasting marriage!</li> <li>• An affordable wedding nested in historical sites and nature!</li> <li>• Wedding on you, honeymoon on us!</li> <li>• Antalia: the wedding city of Turkey!</li> <li>• Always heaven, always purity, always refreshment!</li> </ul>
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Table 2 presents the participants’ ideas on what slogans should be used to promote Antalya's wedding tourism in the target markets. The participants suggested slogans that emphasize sea, nature, purity, paradise, and romanticism and some expressions used in Turkish culture.

The last question asked to the participants about wedding tourism was about what needs to be done to increase the market share of Turkey in wedding tourism. In the first place, 48.48% of the participants made suggestions regarding marketing activities. The promotion of Turkey’s wedding tourism opportunities, advertising of wedding tourism products in tourism destinations, and participation in international wedding fairs were expressed by the participants as the steps to be taken to increase the market share of Turkey in wedding tourism. In addition, TV shows about wedding tourism and incentivizing couples to prefer Turkey for their weddings through promotions were among the suggestions put forward by the participants. Also, in the second place, 32.38% of the participants made suggestions regarding the wedding tourism product. The participants said that wedding tourism products and price options should be diversified, and customer satisfaction should be ensured by professional tourism employees and quality service. As the third place, 10.52% of the participants stated that reducing political problems and political tensions in the country will contribute to expanding Turkey’s market share in wedding tourism and that security problems, mainly due to terrorist incidents, must be resolved. Achieving economic stability was also seen necessary in terms of ensuring more investment in wedding tourism and maintaining the competitiveness of investors. Besides, 6.88% of the participants stated to be important that stakeholders should cooperate, and the management of the destination should be gathered under one roof in order to increase the market share of Turkey in wedding tourism. Finally, 1.61% of the participants argued that there is no need to increase the market share of Turkey in wedding

tourism as Turkey already has a large share in wedding tourism and as its share will continue to grow without having to do anything.

## Conclusion

Although the number of foreign tourists visiting Turkey and the total revenue generated from these tourists have increased over the years, there is no significant increase in the expenditure per tourist, on the contrary, there has been a decrease, albeit small. For example, Turkey's tourism revenues were 20 billion 322 million 112 thousand dollars in 2005, 24 billion 930 million 997 thousand dollars in 2010, 31 billion 464 million 777 thousand dollars in 2015, and 22 billion 107 million 440 thousand dollars in 2016; on the other hand, the expenditure per tourist was 842 dollars in 2005, 755 dollars in 2010, 756 dollars in 2015, and 705 dollars in 2016 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2017). This requires Turkey to seek to develop other tourism models wherein tourists will make more expenditures. The results of the present study, which aimed to reveal current state of wedding tourism in Antalya and how Antalya can contribute to the tourism sector and thus to the national economy are, presented below.

Through active promotions to be made in India and the Middle East, more people in the upper-income group in these regions can be encouraged to hold their wedding ceremonies in Antalya. As stated by the participants, wedding tourism in Antalya is developing spontaneously. Encouraging this development can accelerate development in tourism and enable Turkey to generate more revenue from wedding tourism in general and tourism in general. We have found out that marrying couples have special demands (especially animation) for their wedding ceremonies in Antalya. Since many hotels in Antalya have an animation team, Antalya can meet couples' demands for animation. In addition, the participants stated that marrying couples often wanted to have ethnic dishes and beverages at their weddings that the hotels sometimes try to fulfil their wish with their own means, and sometimes the couples bring their ethnic dishes or a cook from their country to cook the meals. With this aspect, wedding tourism can enable the food and beverage sector to grow. The current size of wedding tourism in Turkey is below its potential and is not sufficient. In countries with cold climates, especially in Northern European countries and Russia, the marketing of wedding tourism can be carried out through emphasizing Antalya's climate, nature, and historical and cultural attractions. Growth to be achieved in markets like India, where people have wedding ceremonies that last 3-4 days, have a wide variety of wedding ceremony traditions, and hold their wedding ceremonies in months that are outside the in-season in Turkey's tourism sector and wedding tourism, can be vital for the hotels during the off-season. This may also allow a new revival in the tourism sector and the spread of tourism revenues all over the year. Especially, considering the prevalence of searching for information on the internet for travelling and the purchases made on the internet in wedding tourism, online promotions of Antalya as a destination and promotion and marketing of businesses and tourist attractions in a professional and accurate manner, as is done by convention bureaus in convention tourism, will positively affect the development of wedding tourism.

In order to ensure the sustainability of Antalya in tourism, it is necessary to consider the "conservation-usage" balance of its sea-sand-sun, historical sites, and nature. Antalya is a complete tourism destination with its infrastructure and superstructure. Offering its infrastructure and superstructure to tourism markets with a holistic approach and increasing the service quality by reducing the competition can increase the tourism revenue of this destination. In addition, increasing the number of direct flights to existing and potential tourism markets may make Antalya more accessible to tourists. Emerging products such as wedding tourism are important for Antalya to be

preferred by more foreign visitors and to increase its tourism revenues, and for businesses in Antalya to survive and flourish. For the future of the destination, it is crucial to evaluate these opportunities correctly with proper planning. It is mentioned in the literature that through “long-lasting good memories,” wedding tourism makes it possible to connect with potential customers and that both couples and guests usually wish to revisit the country where the wedding ceremony is held (Durinec, 2013, p. 15). It should be noted that this type of tourism contributes to establishing long-term relationships with customers: in addition to the possibility that the marrying couples and their guests may revisit the country, the marrying couples’ children, if they have any in the future, may also wish to visit the country where their parents got married.

It was stated as the following steps to be taken to make Antalya a brand destination in wedding tourism: the creation of themes related to wedding tourism, improving service quality, having professional organization companies, increasing advertising and promotion activities, and preserving the features of Antalya for which marrying couples prefer Antalya to hold their wedding ceremonies. Also, It was determined as the following steps to be taken to expand Antalya’s market share in wedding tourism: the promotion of Antalya’s wedding tourism opportunities, advertising of its wedding tourism products, participation in international wedding fairs, making more investments, diversification of wedding tourism products and price options, easy access to Antalya, increasing the quality of services with professional tourism employees, and making plans with the cooperation of stakeholders.

Furthermore, it was identified as the following steps to expand Turkey’s market share in wedding tourism: the promotion of Turkey’s wedding tourism opportunities, advertising of wedding tourism products in tourism destinations, participation in international wedding fairs, having TV shows about wedding tourism, incentivizing couples to prefer Turkey for their weddings through promotions, diversification of wedding tourism products and price options, ensuring customer satisfaction by professional tourism employees and quality service, reducing the political problems and political tensions in the country, solution of the security problems arising from terrorist incidents , and cooperation of the stakeholders. Achieving economic stability was also seen necessary in terms of ensuring more investment in wedding tourism and maintaining the competitiveness of investors. Economic and political stability is one of the prerequisite factors for both wedding tourism investors and other investors. For this reason, the safety of life and property should be ensured, the right to live freely should be granted, the rule of law should be followed, and democracy should be deepened by improving through more for everyone in the country. Every application and effort in this direction will contribute to the improvement of the image of the country. The improved image can contribute to the increase in tourism demand, including wedding tourism, for Antalya and Turkey.

It is thought that the present study will contribute a lot to the relevant literature as it adopted the exploratory research model and is the first study investigating wedding tourism in Turkey. Nevertheless, the study can shed light only on one aspect of the subject, since it only examines wedding tourism in Antalya and provides a “supply-oriented perspective” on the issue. Although it is, of course, important to study wedding tourism with a supply-oriented perspective, not knowing what the consumer wants can lead to significant deficiencies. Therefore, conducting consumer-oriented research in the future is vital for the development of the sector. As a matter of fact, a correctly constructed product that meets the needs of customers is likely to have a long life. In conclusion, research on wedding tourism is of great importance to developing wedding tourism in Antalya and Turkey. An empirical study on this

topic by researchers may help Turkey's wedding tourism sector to develop and tourism season to spread throughout the entire year.

### Declaration

The contribution of all the authors of the article to the article process is equal. There is no conflict of interest to be declared by the authors.

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