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## A Research To Determine The Travel Behaviors Of Women Tourists

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to contribute to the current tourism and gender literature by emphasizing the motivations of female tourists to travel and the negativities they encounter during travel. This study highlights the importance of resistance in women's decision to travel alone. The argument presented here is based on the qualitative method of examining the motivations of international female tourists, especially those who come to an important destination like Istanbul, to travel alone, and the negativeness encountered during their travels. In order to collect the data, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 international female tourists who came to Istanbul. The majority of the participants stated that they did not experience any negative experiences during their travels. Some of the participants stated that the whole society should be educated in order to prevent the negativities they experienced, while others stated that men should be educated. When the factors influencing the selection of the destination were examined, it was seen that safety and hygiene were important. Participants stated that exploring different destinations leads them to travel. It is thought that the purpose here is actually to catch happiness again. Women stated that they felt stuck in a shell in their daily lives and wanted to be happy by exploring destinations they had never seen in order to escape from it. However, the participants stated that researching, learning, exploring different destinations, gaining experience and discovering different cultures made them travel. Based on this result, this study revealed that tourism is not only for pleasure, but also offers an opportunity to discover oneself. The study shows that the negativities during travels of female tourists should be eliminated. In this way, it provides empirical evidence on the reasons behind their motivation to gain travel experience, especially abroad. In addition, the findings of the study provide useful information to the destination managers about the features that female tourists pay attention to when choosing a destination. In addition, recommendations for future research provide valuable information.

**Keywords:** Female Tourist, Motivation, Destination Choice, Behavioral.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Woman has existed in the world despite all the difficulties of nature and living conditions. Woman has been in a constant struggle to maintain this existence. The extent of this struggle has been shaped by the different approach of each society towards women. It is possible to reach the conclusion that every society in which women are valued has made progress. Women also play a key role in the tourism sector, which steers the world's strongest economies. So much so that women in the tourism industry; plays a role as an entrepreneur, employee and manager. Studies have focused specifically on the employment of women in the tourism industry (Duffy, Kline, Mowatt and Chancellor, 2015). Likewise, there are studies that acknowledge how gender ideology affects women's participation in tourism projects (Duffy, Mowatt, Cnacellor, and Cárdenas, 2012; Tucker and Boonabaana, 2012). However, it should not be forgotten that women in the tourism sector also contribute to the development of the sector as a tourist. It is seen that the researches do not focus too much on the expectations of female tourists traveling alone and what risks await them. In this regard, in this study, first of all, the negativities that await female tourists and their motivations to travel are conceptually explained, and with the research, female tourists' motivation to travel alone and the negativities they experience in their travels are shown.

The increased participation of women in tourism provides strong support for the continued growth of the tourism industry despite problems such as security, terrorism, political unrest and economic slowdown (Chiang and Jogaratnam, 2006). Female tourists outnumber males on both leisure and business trips and represent more than half of the market (Zhang, and Hitchcock, 2017). Therefore, female tourists play a key role in terms of both demand and marketing (Khan, Chelliah, Khan, and Amin, 2019:721). However, the recent increase in attacks on female tourists in tourism regions shows that female tourists traveling alone are at serious risk.

A significant portion of the rapidly growing international tourism market consists of solo travelers. Jordan and Aitchison (2008) state that there is a significant increase especially in women who travel independently. More recently, research has emerged on female travelers traveling alone (Chiang and Jogaratnam, 2006; McNamara and Prideaux, 2010; Wilson and Little, 2005). Studies have shown that female tourists traveling alone are interested in a life-changing experience, identity and self-empowerment (Wilson and Harris, 2006). However, it also shows that women have to deal with unwanted male attention, sexual harassment and violence (Wilson and Little, 2005; Seow and Brown, 2018).

Therefore, this study tried to overcome these limitations. An interpretative methodology was applied, based on the justification that an emerging design was needed to document the travel motivation of female travelers traveling alone, without departing from the goal of discovering destination preferences for female tourists traveling for vacation purposes. In particular, the following questions guided this study:

- (1) What are the negative aspects experienced by female tourists traveling alone?
- (2) What kind of travel do female tourists who travel alone desire in the future?
- (3) What are the motivations for female tourists who travel alone?

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In sociology, gender is seen as an important explanatory variable that shapes opportunity and behavior. The links between tourism and women were explicitly highlighted in the UNWTO's Global Report on Women and Tourism 2010 (UNWTO and UN Women, 2011). The report suggested that tourism could aid in the attainment of the third Millennium Development Goal: the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women (Jeffrey, 2019). Women and men are involved differently in the consumption and construction of tourism (Figuerola-Domecq, Pritchard, Segovia-Pérez, Morgan, and Villacé-Molinero, 2015).

In the 21st century, women prefer more to travel abroad alone (Matthews-Sawyer, McCullough and Myers, 2002). Researches show that women's motivations for independent travel are related to a desire to challenge themselves, a sense of autonomy and self-determination, meet new people and/or push themselves 'outside their comfort zone' (Butler, 1995; Jordan and Gibson, 2005; Wilson and Little, 2005). Studies have consistently shown that women tend to be more highly and more severely restricted than men in seeking access to recreational and tourism activities (Henderson, 1991; Jackson and Henderson, 1995; Wilson and Little, 2005). In addition, restrictions seem to have increased for women when they participate in activities outside the home because of their obvious fears of harassment or male violence (Deem, 1996; Little, 2002; Virden and Walker, 1999; Wilson and Little, 2005).

Studies have explained the travel-specific risks and limiting factors of female tourists and explained how female tourists are more vulnerable to risks and restrictions (McNamara and Prideaux, 2010; Kimm, 2012; Yang et al. 2018; Khoo-Lattimore, Prayag and Disegna, 2019). The researchers found that female tourists were more likely to change their travel plans if their perception of risk increased (Kozak, Crofts and Law, 2007). Ayrıca, kadınların belirli bir destinasyon için erkeklerden daha yüksek risk algıladıklarını bulmuşlardır (Lepp and Gibson, 2003).

It has been revealed that among female tourists, the risk perception of women differs according to their travel motivations. For example, Khoo-Lattimore, Prayag, Disegna, (2019) found that elated female tourists were more concerned with personal safety at the accommodation. Studies have revealed that female tourists experience sexual risks in various places, including Asia and Europe. Asian women, in particular, are more vulnerable to sexual risks, especially in Asian destinations (Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, and Arcodia, 2018). The awareness of risk is further reinforced by frequent media reports of sexual assaults and murders of female travelers. Despite this awareness of risk, some women undertake solo adventures in search of the sense of empowerment, autonomy, and freedom (Jordan and Gibson 2005; Wilson and Harris, 2006). This choice renders solo female travel a voluntary risk-taking endeavor to a certain extent (Elsrud 2001; Myers 2010). The distinctive nature of risk faced by solo female travelers and their risk-taking behavior provide the impetus for this study, which seeks to understand how these women perceive and manage the risks of traveling alone and why they take such risks in the first place (Yang, et al. 2018).

Travel motivations are an important factor in explaining the destination choice of tourists (Baloglu and Uysal, 1996). When the literature on travel motivations is examined, it is seen that different theories and models are mentioned. The widely accepted one is the push and pull theory of motivation. According to this theory, people travel according to different push and pull motivation variables and choose the destination they will travel accordingly. Travel motivations basically consist of two stages: one that pushes a person to leave their home and travel and one that attracts the individual to prefer a certain place (Ibis and Batman, 2018).

Female solo travel is on the rise, and more research is needed to understand this phenomenon (Heimtun and Abelsen, 2013). Women travel for a variety of reasons. Khoo-Lattimore and Gibson, (2018) stated in their research that female tourists are not homogeneous, and there are differences between women traveling for business and leisure. It is also important to note that motivations develop throughout the life cycle (Gibson, Berdychevsky and Bell, 2012).

Escape is a common push factor for solo female tourists (Berdychevsky, Gibson and Bell, 2016; Butler, 1995; Chiang and Jogaratnam, 2006; Wilson and Harris, 2006). Junek, Binney, and Winn (2006) also found that the benefits of an all-female travel include a relaxed atmosphere, time for self-indulgence, and increased feelings of security. While Wilson and Harris (2006) found that self-identity seeking, self-empowerment, self-confidence and increase in self-esteem are important, McNamara and Prideaux (2010) revealed that female tourists traveling alone aim to challenge and expand themselves.

Research has also divided female tourists according to their travel motivations (Khoo-Lattimore and Prayag, 2018; Mirehie, Gibson, Khoo-Lattimore and Prayag, 2018). Researchers argued that assessment of risk perception and constraints should be destination-specific (Kozak et al. 2007; Chen, Chen and Okumus, 2013). However, researchers have argued that due to the complex nature of humans, it is difficult to give precise reasons for why people travel and what they want to enjoy (Khan, et al. 2019).

In fact, researchers have increasingly focused on the female tourist experience in the 21st century, particularly on the motivations, benefits, and challenges of traveling in company or alone (Brown and Osman, 2017). Studies have acknowledged that women's travel motivation is different from men's (Jennings, 2005; Chiang and Jogaratnam, 2006; Heimtun, 2012; McNamara and Prideaux, 2010; Khoo-Lattimore and Prayag, 2018). Khoo-Lattimore and Gibson (2015) found that Malaysian women need to have fun and new experiences as an important reason for continuing to travel with their female friends. Literature; as the reason why women travel with women; suggests that avoiding the male gaze, bonding, socializing, escapism, support, and innovation are some of the observable factors that motivate. Considering these motivational elements, the importance of researching the motivational elements that lead women to travel is easily understood. In addition, the question of what kind of travel women would like gains importance.

The tourism sector constitutes a business area for women that can be defined as self-employment, which brings small and medium incomes, complements household expenses. In this process, women took part more in the manual labor part of the tourism sector, in some cases, they struggled with their rivals in the patriarchal society and rose to the top positions, and in some cases they saw tourism as an additional income supplementing the expenses of the house. However, in the tourism sector, women are not only involved as workers or investors, but also as tourists. Therefore, revealing what a female tourist expects from a trip within the tourism industry is very important and critical to see them as a part of this chain. In this context, this study focuses on the travel motivations of women tourists instead of focusing on issues such as employment of women in tourism or women entrepreneurs, because unless expectations and problems of women are understood, they will not be satisfied. Therefore, humanity agrees that positive discrimination should be made against women for a better world. At this point, this study is very valuable in terms of determining the motivations of female tourists to travel alone, the negativities they encounter in their travels and how these problems can be eliminated.

### 3. METHOD

Qualitative method was used in this study, which was carried out in order to reveal the motivations of female tourists to travel alone depending on the nationalities of the participants of this research and the negativities they encounter during travel. The research was exploratory as there was little previous research on the subject. Written documents related to the subject of the study were examined before starting the research. After this stage, a structured questionnaire to be used in the research was prepared together with the relevant literature. A new design was chosen for this study because it assumed that the researcher had working knowledge of the literature, allowing for procedures and questions to be adjusted based on responses. In other words, quantitative reviews are an excellent method to chart the path of scholarly activity, but this article utilises a more critical approach to suggest a limitation of current scholarship. This approach allowed researchers to explore the topic broadly, but with some structure to ensure that interview questions were relevant to the research question. Ultimately, interview questions were designed around the following themes:

- ✓ Negativities experienced by female tourists during travel;
- ✓ Female tourists motivation to travel;
- ✓ How they can resolve their negative experiences by remembering their most recent experience while on vacation; and

✓ What kind of vacation they want in the future.

Due to the pandemic, the data were not collected face-to-face, and the questions were presented to the participants in the social media environment and answers were received. All interviews were conducted in English by the author via social media. The average duration of the interviews was 30 minutes.

The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed by following a qualitative inductive approach, which requires in-depth investigation of the data, especially on a small sample (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Following the constructivist-based theory methodology, the data were analyzed in three steps. First of all, coding was done through the Maxqda program, in the second stage, after the coding was carried out, classifications were made, and in the last stage, graphics were created.

#### 4. SAMPLE

The tourism industry has been attractive to Istanbul due to its ability to generate foreign exchange and rapid return on investment. Before the pandemic period, Istanbul hosted 14,906,663 tourists as of the end of December 2019 (Istanbul Directorate of Culture And Tourism, 2019). Istanbul has a unique charm with its historical texture, multicultural structure, Roman and Ottoman structures. At the same time, its developed industry and easy accessibility increase the preference for tourists. Due to the similar characteristics of travel motivation, the study focused only on female tourists who visited Istanbul alone. In addition, the sample was selected from foreign tourists in order to focus on the reasons behind their motivation to gain travel experience abroad. Data were collected from 30 people and the findings were presented.

#### 5. CODIFICATION OF DATA

Data analysis is not a process waiting to be used on the shelf; It is a process designed, determined and choreographed according to the needs, like a tailor method (Huberman and Miles, 1994). From this point of view, the data obtained from the interviews conducted in this research were re-examined and the notes were read again for the coding process to see the big picture before any coding stage was started. These examinations and readings have been beneficial in terms of establishing the mental links between the data and the research subject. Short notes were kept during the coding and classification, and about the research. Thus, the links, concepts, theoretical associations and categories that the researcher thought during reading could be filed for later use. In line with this information, the interview forms collected from the interviewed participants, the notes taken and the audio recordings were tried to be analyzed by using content analysis. In the first step of the coding process, the sentences and paragraphs of the participants formed the basis for coding. Thus, which sentence is a meaningful whole and which part will form the basis of a code has been determined by an expert academician. As a result of the determined sections, the benefit of spreading the research analysis over a certain period of time has also been experienced. Therefore, the first stage coding was open coding. Thus, the thoughts, ideas and meanings hidden in the transcripts were made more understandable (Straus and Corbin, 1990). The places thought to be related to the categories specified in these studies were selected. The codes were determined in a detailed and understandable way and coded in a different color. This method facilitated the discovery of the main categories and the definition of their subcategories in the later stages of data analysis.

#### 6. DATA ANALYSIS

30 international tourists traveling to Istanbul participated in the research. The findings regarding the training of the participants are shown in Figure 1. Accordingly, that the most represented education level was undergraduate (43.3%) and high school (43.3%) followed by master degree (13.3%).

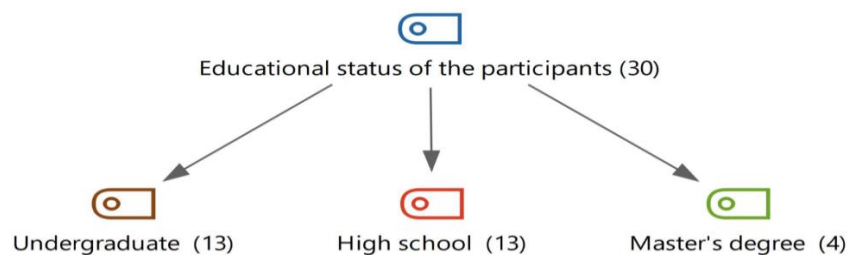


Figure 1. Education levels of the participants

Figure 2 shows the marital status of the participants. Accordingly, the largest proportion of the share were single (53.3%), followed by in a relationship (20%). The remainder were in a married (4%) and married, 1 child (4%).

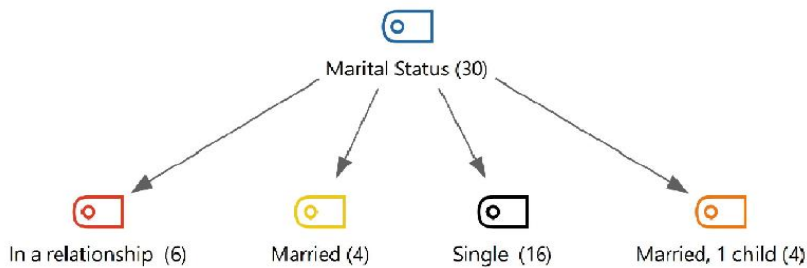


Figure 2. Marital status of the participants

Figure 3 shows participants' intentions to travel alone in the future. Accordingly, 53.3% stated that they intend to travel alone, while 46.7% stated that they do not intend to travel alone. The absence of undecideds here is quite remarkable. It was observed that the participants had a very clear behavior at the point of traveling alone.

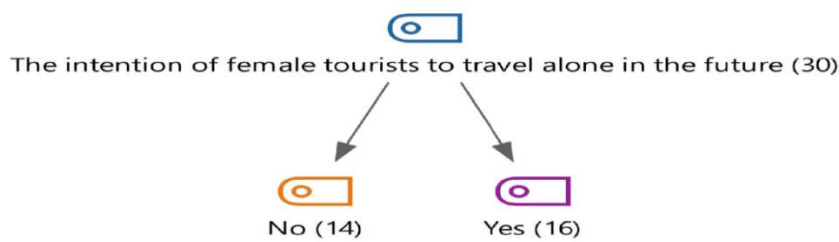


Figure 3. Intentions of participants to travel alone in the future

Figure 4 shows the findings about whether the participants have been discriminated against. Accordingly, 56.7% of them think that they are discriminated against. On the other hand, 43.3% do not think that they are discriminated against.

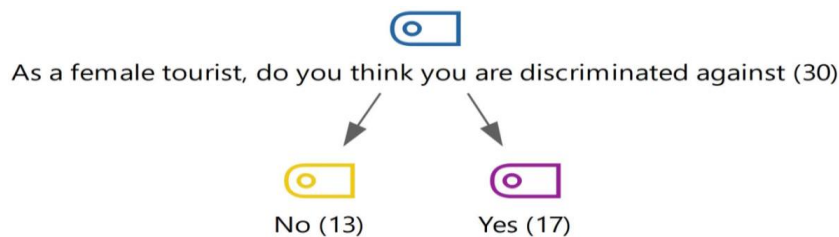


Figure 4. Findings on whether the participants were discriminated against during their travels

Figure 5 shows the findings about whether the participants felt safe during the trip. Accordingly, 40% of the participants stated that they felt safe in their travels and 60% stated that they did not feel safe.

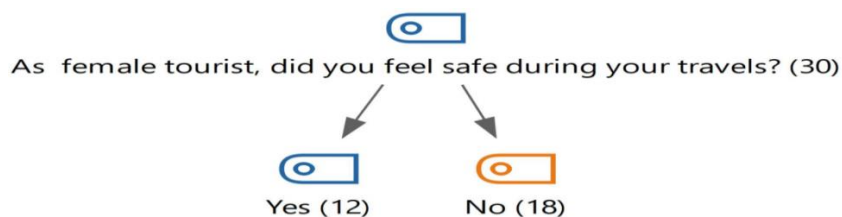


Figure 5. Findings on whether the participants felt safe during the trip

Figure 6 shows the negative experiences of the participants during their travels. Accordingly, 5 main codes and 3 subcodes were created. According to this, 40% of the respondents stated that they did not have a negative experience. 20% of the participants stated that they experienced physical harassment, 20% eye harassment and 10% verbal harassment. Based on this result, it was seen that 15 women were harassed while traveling. This is quite a remarkable result. Unfortunately, harassment continues in the 21st century. The occurrence of harassment in both traditional and modern societies is very thought-provoking for this age. In the USA, one in every two marriages is subject to physical violence, and every seven seconds a woman is beaten by a man. Therefore, these events do not leave women behind in their travels. However, it states in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "Everyone has the right to move freely and reside within the borders of any state". Therefore, these events actually prevent women's freedom of movement and are against the universal declaration of human rights.

3.3% of participants remarked that they were been swindled. Tourists are in target by criminals because of staying together. Also crime events against tourists are seen mostly higher crime rate places (Mawby, 2017; Drawve,

Kennedy, Caplan, and Sarkos, 2020). In this sense, it is an undesirable outcome for women to be swindled on vacation. It is a very bad situation to take away the right of travel of a person whose intention is only to travel. Because swindled woman tourist will lost her self-confidence and will feel herself restless.

3.3% of participants remarked bad experience because Guide did not do his/her duty. Guides are most important tourism employees who can improve the image of the country in the eyes of tourists, as they are the first people to meet people from various countries and are the ones who establish a dialogue between tourists and people of country. Therefore, it is issue to be careful about as the misconduct of the guides will cause low service quality, bad recognition of destination and negative competition.

3.3% of participants remarked that they were generally restless when they traveled alone. It is thought that this result is due to the fact that women think they can not cope with the problems while travelling alone.

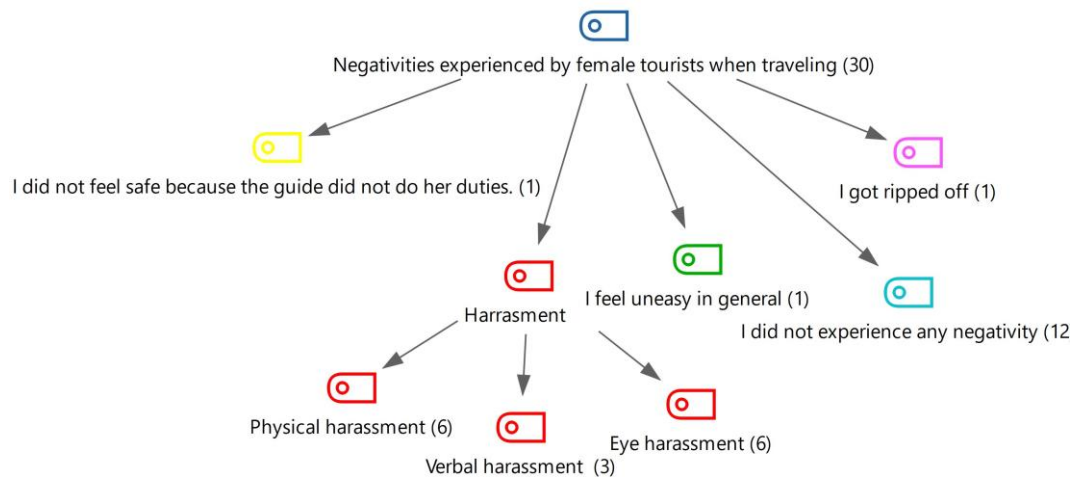


Figure 6. Negative travel experiences of women tourists.

Figure 7 shows what needs to be done to overcome the negative experiences of the participants during their travels. This question was deliberately asked because it matters what women's advice is to overcome these problems and what ideas they have. Because ignoring the solution suggestions of the women who had problems would render the research incomplete. Whereas the things to be done to overcome negative experiences of the participants during their travels were gathered under 10 codes. Accordingly, 16.7% of participants remarked that the whole society should be educated. 13.3% of the participants remarked that the laws should be applied more strictly. 10% of participants remarked that the security forces should be more careful to solve problems. 6% of participants remarked that there is nothing they can do. This was perhaps the most obstructive result. It is thought that women have given such a response because they have accepted these negatives over time and are accustomed to experiencing such negatives. Therefore, these results are valuable for prompt resolution of these problems and for women to travel freely and as they desire. On the other hand, 6.7% of participant remarked that they would complain and would not to go that destination again if it was repeated. Therefore, it is clearly understood from this result that the problems should reach a solution and should not be repeated. This finding contributed greatly to the redemption literature. The importance of avoiding additional costs and saving time in destination marketing is known. Therefore, it can be concluded that the repetition of the negative experiences negatively effects the intention to visit again.

3.3% participants remarked that men should be trained. However, above, 16.7% of the participant remarked that the whole society should be educated. Although the number of participants who stated that only men should be trained, this result is remarkable. It is thought that this result is due to the fact that the negativities such as harassment are caused by men.

3.3% of participants remarked that they should not to be exaggerated about travelling alone. nevertheless, 3.3% of the participants remarked that they may encounter less negativities during the trip by travelling with a guide. However, it should not be forgotten that in the opposite case, the misuse of the duties of the guides or their deficiencies will reveal a different negativity.

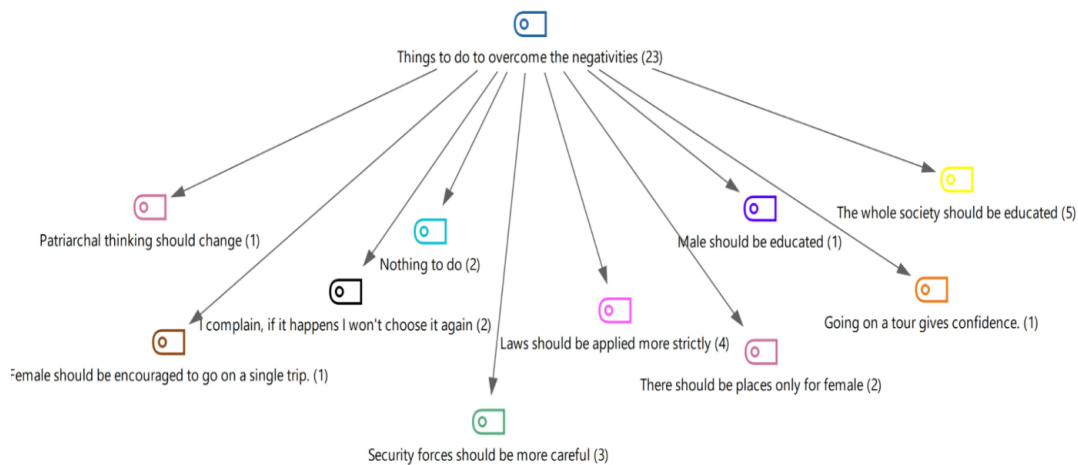


Figure 7. What needs to be done to overcome the negative experiences of the participants in their travels

Figure 8 shows the characteristics that female tourists pay attention to when choosing a destination. Accordingly, the features that the participants paid attention to while choosing a destination were grouped under 10 codes. A great majority of the participants, such as 43.3%, remarked that they pay attention to the hygiene factor. Past research has shown that women pay more attention to hygiene than men. In addition, the presence of the COVID-19 epidemic at the time of the research and the fact that cleanliness and hygiene are among the basic life issues all over the world may also be effective in the emergence of this result. Perhaps, with the pandemic, the most important issue in destination selection will emerge as hygiene in future research as well as in this research. The reliability of this result will increase with panel studies. 36.7% of the participants remarked that they would give priority to serene and quiet destination.

13.3% of the participants stated that comfort is important in destination selection. The fact that it is not known exactly which comfort is mentioned here was initially met as an interesting result. However, this result; points out that women attach importance to the comfort of all services they use during their travel, such as the comfort of the accommodation business, the comfort of the room, the comfort of sunbathing on the beach, the comfort of the transportation vehicles.

10% of the participants remarked that transportation is important in destination selection. Studies have also revealed that transportation is important in choosing a destination (Buhalis, 2000; (Hosany, Ekinci and Uysal, 2006). The importance of transportation in choosing a destination is easily seen. If there is a problem in transportation to the destination, the attractiveness of that destination will not matter. It is understood from this result that this situation is important for female tourists.

6.7% of the participants remarked that the tourist profile is important in choosing a destination. This result is quite remarkable. Because in previous studies, issues such as climate, nature, knowledge and adventure, transportation and activity opportunities, socio-cultural activities were investigated in destination selection. However, in this study, it was revealed that women also attach importance to the tourist profile in their destination selection.

3.3% of the participants remarked that Historical and natural attractiveness, 3.3% service quality, 3.3% Delicious food and 3.3% said price is important.

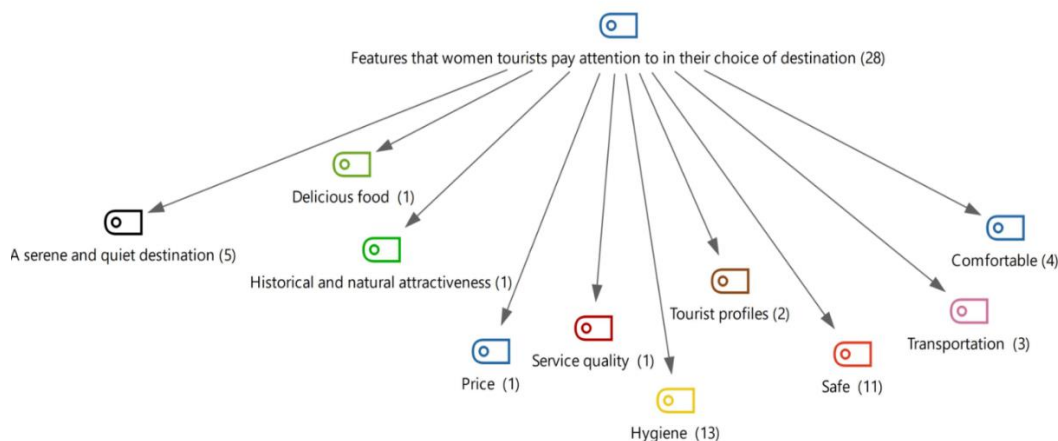


Figure 8. The characteristics that female tourists pay attention to when choosing a destination.

Figure 9 shows what kind of travel the female tourists desire in the future. These results will guide destination marketing managers and researchers. Because understanding what kind of travel women desire will contribute to the development of products for them. It was desired to play accordingly, gathered under 10 codes. 24% of participants indicated that they desire a destination trip. An attractive tow has been put into a destination of security in an attractive way (Huang ve Tsai, 2003; Sangpikul, 2008). Therefore, it is quite natural for female tourists to desire a safe travel. Female tourists desire to be safe in their travels. In other words, it can be concluded that she wants to leave the issue of trust behind and enjoy the events of tourism such as entertainment, rest, travel, sight and discovery. However, the opinions of men on this subject should be taken and comparisons should be made and whether this situation differs according to gender should be investigated.

10% of women said they would like to travel to a calm and quiet destination. Based on this result, it was revealed that they did not want to go to crowded cities like Istanbul, instead they wanted to go to more restful destinations. In this context, the marketing of calmer and quieter destinations such as Muğla and Aydın, especially in the Aegean region, will be more efficient.

6.7% of the participants remarked that they wish to have fun with group of female friends. Of course, having fun is the natural right of every human being. But the interesting thing here is that women just want to have fun with their female friends. With this result, it was revealed that a fun trip away from men and only women to women is desired.

6.7% of the participants remarked that they desire an affordable trip. It is quite remarkable that only 2 female tourists said this. Especially in today's economic conditions, it is expected that the desire for a more affordable travel will be a priority. However, here is one of the most interesting results of this research, where women have more important priorities than price.

6.7% of the participants stated that they wanted a free travel. This was followed by participate in tours organized on a regional basis in Turkey (3.3%), a nice travel where I will live my dreams (3.3%) and Highest level of service quality (3.3%).

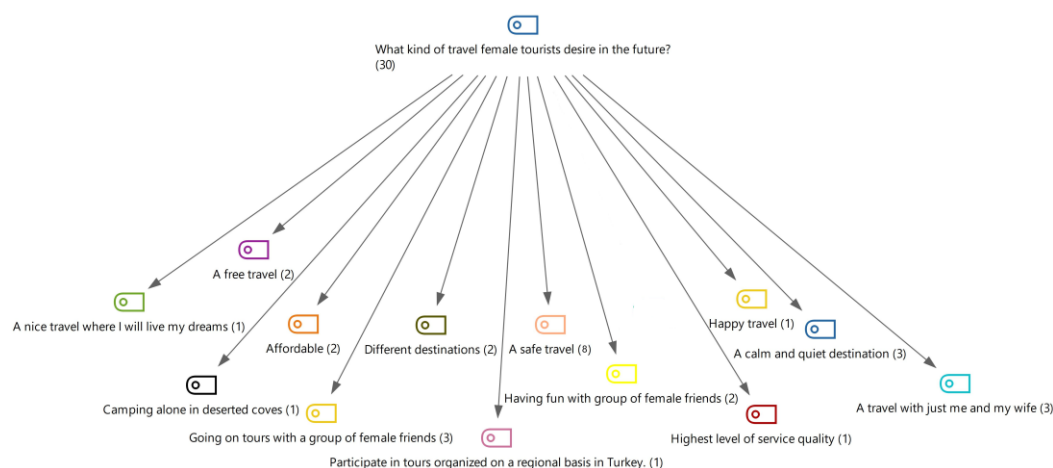


Figure 9. The types of travel that female tourists desire in the future.

Figure 10 shows the travel motivation of female tourists. Lee (2009) emphasizes the importance of travel motivation by remarking that tourist motivations should be taken into consideration while explaining tourist behavior. In terms of tourism management, it is very important to investigate tourist motivations. Because by identifying tourist motivations, various types of motivation are obtained. In this way, it gives important information about which type of tourism we should develop. Travel motivations have a very heterogeneous structure due to the fact that tourists have different countries, cultures, personalities and prefer different tourism products (Kozak, 2002). Due to this heterogeneous structure, although there is no universal theory that reveals tourist motivations, many theories have been put forward and researches have been made. Considering this information, the importance of understanding women's travel motivations is easily understood. Accordingly, travel motivations of female tourists were gathered under 13 codes.

The vast majority of respondents, like 40%, stated that getting rid of the daily routine prompted them to travel. Compared to men, women are tired of doing the same things and being busy with the same jobs. For example; While working women are busy with work during the day, they cannot spare time for themselves outside of work. He travels to find inner happiness as well as daily happiness. Based on this result, it is possible to say that the boringness and exhaustion of daily life creates a motivation for travel on female tourists.



23.3% of the participants remarked that exploring different destinations leads them to travel. It is thought that the aim here is to catch happiness from the original. She wants to be happy by exploring destinations where women have a feeling of being stuck in a shell and have never seen it in order to escape from it. This result is a guide for tour operators and destination managers. For a new destination to become truly deliverable, the destination must be on the tour operators' sales, marketing and promotion list.

16.7% of the participants stated that they directed them to learning, 16.7% to research and 16.7% to have a fun travel. Exciting and entertaining activities that can be done in places visited are important motivations that affect the destination image and destination selection (Ozogul, 2011). The desire to learn and try new things is the next most common motivation. Based on this result, it will be suggested that tour operators and destination marketers develop alternative tourism types such as cultural tourism that will offer women tourists learning and research opportunities.

Another obtrusive result of the research is that 6.7% of female tourists indicate that they prefer freedom to travel. When we look at the previous research, no study has been found that reveals that freedom leads to travel. It is thought that this result is since the sample of this study was carried out on female tourists. To understand freedom in here, it is necessary to deeply embrace the whole of the work. When the general result of the interviews was evaluated, it remarked that female tourists are restricted in their travels and even in their daily lives, and that is why they want to travel alone, at least because they want to be free in their travels. By traveling, women actually want to succeed in a sense, that is, to stand on their own feet and prove that they do not need anyone, in a sense, they want to realize themselves. Considering Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there is the need for self-actualization at the highest level. Considering this, the participants want to realize their own wishes and needs without the limitation of time, time, and place.

6.7% of the participants remarked that getting to know different cultures leads them to travel. This result was thought to occur because women are more emotional and sensitive than men. It can be concluded that they travel in order to understand the culture of different societies and they are sensitive about this issue. 3.3% of the participants remarked that the sea leads them to travel. This result is thought to occur due to the peaceful effect of the sea. Another reason is that women are actually fighting while swimming in the sea. To understand this a little better, women actually struggle against the force that the water exerts on them while swimming and want to succeed. It can be said that the reason why women's travel motivation is the sea is the feeling of happiness and achievement.

It is possible to say that 3.3% of the participants have to gain experience, each new destination they travel to gives different experiences to women, and that's why they travel.

3.3% of the participants remarked that special foods lead them to travel. In the tourism sector, food and beverage products have been evaluated as supportive products for many years, and they are not considered as factors that can attract tourists to destinations as a travel motivation alone. According to Scarpato and Daniele (2004), destinations such as Tuscany and Lyons, which use their gastronomic products as a basic marketing tool and offer touristic products as a touristic product on their own as well as complementing them, have become popular thanks to this (Selwood, 2003). The role of gastronomic identity is great for destinations to cope with the increasing competition and to create a different and inimitable place for themselves. Therefore, it was revealed that the special foods specific to the destinations are effective in the travel of female tourists.

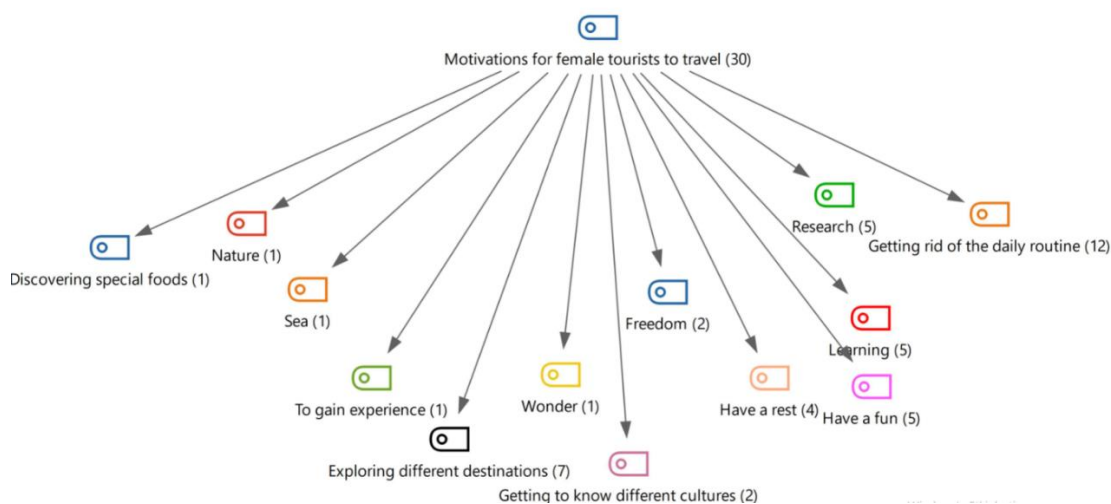


Figure 10. Travel motivations of female tourists

## 7. CONCLUSION

Although women face many problems in the tourism sector, tourism offers an opportunity that can be used to challenge traditional gender roles and has the potential to empower women economically, socially, culturally and politically. The empowerment of women by participating in the tourism sector can play a role in overcoming the gender inequality in family structures and in society in general. First of all, the fact that the institutions of the country, which see tourism as an important sector that generates income and try to produce projects in this field, have to accept, is that a tourism sector without women is impossible. Studies have focused more on the employment of women in the tourism sector and female tourists traveling alone have been ignored. It is known that women who travel alone have an annual market of 6 billion dollars (Mirehie et al. 2018). Therefore, considering this information, the importance of conducting research with female tourists traveling alone can be easily understood. In this context, it was aimed to contribute to the current tourism and gender literature by emphasizing the motivations of female tourists to travel alone and the negative aspects they encounter during travel. In order to realize this goal, the focus was on Istanbul, which hosts approximately 15,000,000 tourists every year. The main reasons for focusing here were that Istanbul connects Asia and Europe, has alternative tourism products such as culture, shopping, sea, sun, sand, gastronomy, and different attractions.

When the negativities experienced by women tourists during their travels are examined, female tourists stated only the major negativities they experienced such as harassment and being defrauded (See Figure 6). However, 40% of the female tourists stated that they did not have a negative experience. It should be noted that despite the negativities they have experienced, those can be ignored because they are satisfied with their holiday. Therefore, since the participants who answered here also evaluate their travels in general, their minor negatives can be ignored. In addition, considering that women cannot easily share their negative experiences due to their legitimate concerns that they will have to tell the event over and over again (Eger, 2021), it is thought that this thought has a justified structure.

Some of the participants stated that the whole society should be educated in order to prevent the negativities they experienced, while others stated that men should be educated (See Figure 7). Although these two results actually support each other, they are different from each other. Because women are actually mothers, wives and friends. When considered in this way, the fact that women are unconscious and uneducated means an uneducated wife and an uneducated friend. Considering this aspect, the number of women who think that not only men but also the whole society should be educated is higher. However, some of the participants argued that men should be educated because they think that the problem can be solved by training the people who suffer the most.

The participants stated that the patriarchal mindset should change. The continuation of the patriarchal mentality, not only in the Middle East countries but also in Europe, prevents the acquisition of some rights for women. This situation is thought to be reflected in the travels of women. Therefore, it can be said that the patriarchal mentality should be changed and men should be educated on this issue in order to eliminate the negativities. With this aspect, education should start not only in school but also in the family, and it can be turned into a project all over the world that individuals go to a marriage school before marriage and these educations can be achieved in that school.

When the factors affecting the choice of destination are examined, it is seen that safety is important (See Figure 8). (Mirehie et al., 2018) revealed in his research with female tourists that safety is the most important factor. The result of this study supports previous researches in this aspect. Khoo-Lattimore and Prayag (2015) argued that for Asian female tourists, the sense of social and emotional security provided by the presence of others may be even more important than physical security. Therefore, it was supported by the results of this research that emotional, social and physical safety is important for female tourists in destination selection.

One of the most important issues in choosing a destination is hygiene. Mirehie et al., (2018) revealed that cleanliness is important for female tourists, regardless of travel purpose, and is a precursor to overall satisfaction. For this reason, female tourists do not want to make concessions on this issue. Especially with the pandemic, the issue of hygiene has gained more importance and obviously the needs of people have been reshaped in this direction. Therefore, in future research, the attitudes of male and female tourists on this subject can be compared. At the same time, the effect of the pandemic can be examined in detail in other studies.

In this study, it was revealed that special foods are a motivation factor among the reasons that lead female tourists to travel. In the study of Khoo-Lattimore and Prayag (2015), female tourists placed high importance on food and beverage options and amenities. The high importance associated with food and drink is probably due to the fact that eating places and the act of consuming food are viewed not only as a means of quenching hunger, but also as spaces for social interaction and bonding, especially among female travelers (Heimtun, 2010; Jordan and Gibson, 2005).

Many participants saw traveling alone as an escape from the daily routine and domestic demands. The participants, as mothers, spouses, students and employees, saw their travel as a time to be free and reflect on life. This result is similar to the results of the research of Seow and Brown, (2018). In the research, female tourists argued that they would get away from their daily routine and become a self, where a new identity could be formed and they could afford to pay more attention to their own well-being. In other words, escaping from their daily routines gave participants the opportunity to reevaluate their lives and find meaning.

It is stated that researching, learning, exploring different destinations, gaining experience and discovering different cultures made them travel. Based on this result, this study supports other studies such as Hottola (2004), O'Reilly (2006), and Seow and Brown (2018), who stated that tourism offers not only pleasure but also an opportunity for self-discovery.

In terms of product offering, destinations basically have two options. The first option is to adapt the existing offers to suit female tourists, as some of the features they consider when choosing a destination (eg hygiene, safety, comfort) are already offered to other segments or can be easily adjusted. The second option requires a redesign of products and the entire service environment to take advantage of this emerging market. This option will require higher investment for destinations as well as hotels and tour operators to deliver unique packages and services to this market.

Future studies should look at segmenting this market at both the country and global level to identify similarities and differences in travel and accommodation behavior. Future studies should replicate the findings in a larger sample of at least 200 participants to confirm the identified relationships. Finally, there is no comprehensive segmentation of the worldwide solo female tourist market yet, and future studies should look at segmenting this market at both the national and global levels to identify similarities and differences in travel and accommodation behaviour. The findings of this study confirm the need for segmentation of the solo female tourist market, as well as the need for improved targeting strategies for this market.

This research focuses on only two factors: the female tourist traveling alone and the travel experience. Future research can be conducted based on other factors such as cost, education level and learning factor that may affect female tourists' destination selection and improvement for better decision making. Since the number of participants and the country chosen is limited, future work can be spread wider, so that more participants can achieve more reliable results and achieve better and improved decision making.

Considering that academic interest in this emerging segment of the female travel market is still in its infancy, conducting research on travel by female tourists is highly valuable. In other words, the number of studies revealing the negativities experienced by women who ensure the survival of the society, knowing how to overcome them, what kind of destination they prefer and the motivation factors that lead them to travel is quite limited. Valuing women should not only be limited to business life or family, but also to make them feel valuable and important in their travels as a whole society. In this respect, this research guides both tourism researchers and destination marketers. However, more research is needed to expand and strengthen the findings of the current study. Future research may include cross-cultural comparisons of different markets on the basis of nationality. Similar studies can be conducted on different destinations such as London, Paris and Rome, which also have high tourist attractions.

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