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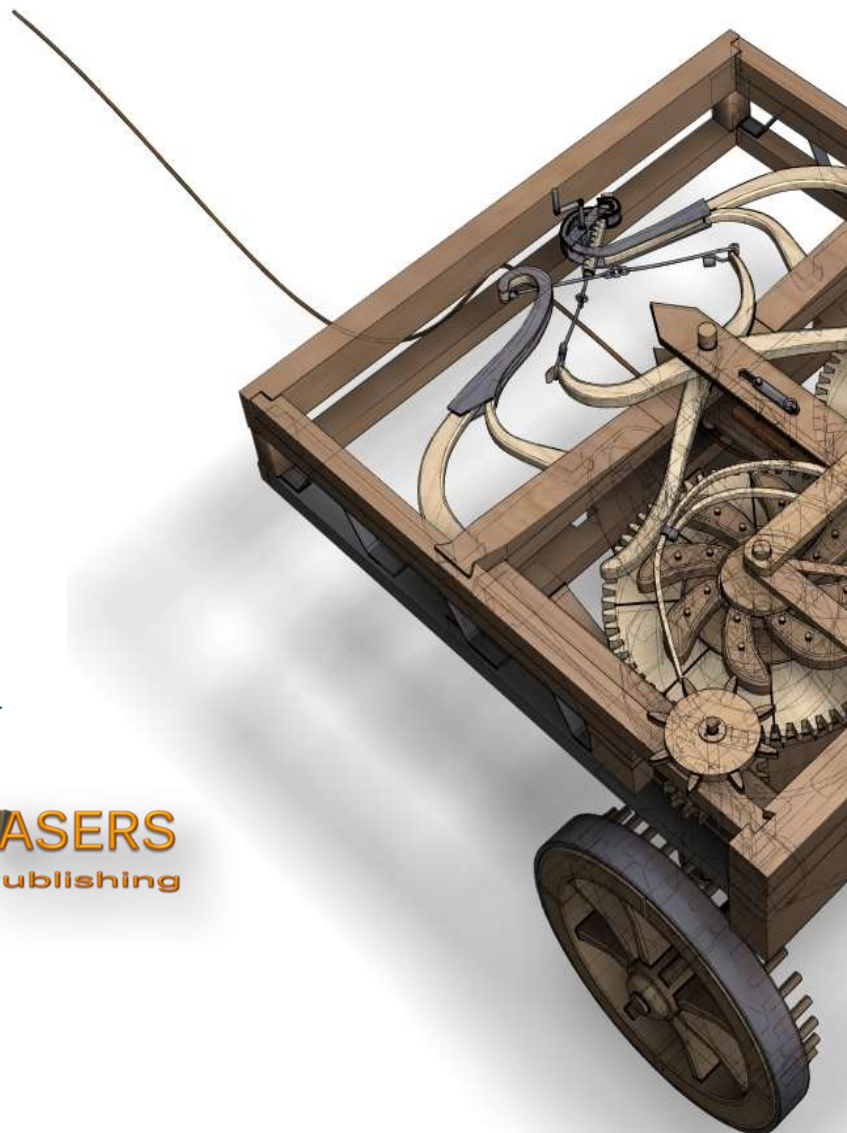
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Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism is an interdisciplinary research journal, aimed to publish articles and original research papers that should contribute to the development of both experimental and theoretical nature in the field of Environmental Management and Tourism Sciences.

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Analyzing the Sociodemographic Aspects and Characteristics of Honeymoon Trips

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Abstract

Honeymoon travel is an important sector in the field of tourism due to its growing economic impact on host destinations. The objective of this research was to identify the profile and preferences of honeymoon travel consumers, their sociodemographic variables, consumption trend, tourist spending and the attributes that the destination must have to be chosen. The study was carried out in the city of Guayaquil-Ecuador, through the application of a questionnaire. Variant and bivariate techniques were used to analyze the data. The results showed that most of this market segment were young people with tertiary education and good economic income who generally chose Caribbean tourist destinations as a travel option, that is, sun and beach tourism. They also indicated that "romantic", "pleasant climate", "good accommodation" and "affordable prices" were the most important attributes for choosing a honeymoon destination. This study provides useful information for countries, operators, and wholesalers of tourism that work on developing tourism products and promotion strategies focused on attracting this consumer profile.

Keywords: tourism; honeymoon; profile; attributes of the destination; Guayaquil.

JEL Classification: M00; R11; Z32.

Introduction

Honeymoon tourism is an important market segment that is growing rapidly, the South Pacific Tourism Organization (2015) indicates that the size of the global market for honeymoons and weddings has been estimated at 5.5 billion trips per year, this type of tourism constitutes 12 billion dollars a year in the United States. In this sense, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2001) states that the term "honeymoon tourism" refers to a national or foreign destination that newlywed couples visit after their wedding.

Due to the growing demand for honeymoon tourism, some destinations have increased their efforts to target couples as important customers (Kim and Agrusa 2005; Lee *et al.* 2010), such is the case of Thailand, a

leading tourist destination in Southeast Asia, it earns approximately US \$ 1 billion a year solely from international honeymoon visits (Citrinot 2016; Tourism Authority of Thailand 2013).

This market has a significant economic impact on some tourist destinations (Lee, Huang and Chen 2010; Japan Tourism Office 2008), for example, couples in the United States spend an average of US \$ 4,466 on a honeymoon trip, which is considered three times higher than the average spending of American travelers on a typical family vacation (Sardone 2018), there is also a similar pattern of spending in the United Kingdom (Kuoni 2013; Tourism Intelligence International 2009), in other words, the level of spending is higher than a regular vacation.

The objective of this article is to present the results of a field work carried out in the city of Guayaquil, which addresses the socio-demographic profile of honeymoon tourists, the trend of consumption, tourist spending and determining factor for the choice of the tourist destination. To achieve this objective, the article is structured in the following parts: introduction, literature review, description of the study area, methodology, results, the document ends with the conclusions and limitations of the research and the references used.

1. Literature Review

Honeymoon Tourism

The honeymoon is considered an extension of the wedding ceremony. It has been a tradition and a central part of Western societies since the late 18th century. However, the honeymoon was not a common practice at all levels of society until the middle of the 20th century because in the past, the working class had to take a short break from their employment to organize their wedding (Bulcroft *et al.* 1999).

In recent decades, newlywed Asian couples have also become increasingly interested in honeymoon trips abroad, leading to the rise in popularity of this type of tourism around the world (Jang *et al.* 2007; Kim and Agrusa 2005; Bulcroft *et al.* 1999), the honeymoon is more than just the bride and groom go on vacation after the wedding, it's considered as a period of harmony between them at the beginning of their new marital status.

Despite the economic impact and the growing popularity of honeymoon tourism, this type of trip and the behavior of this consumer has not been widely addressed in the academic literature, especially in our country Ecuador, whose research related to the subject is almost nonexistent.

Only a few empirical academic studies at the international level have investigated related questions, the honeymoon tourism literature published in the last 15 years covers limited research areas, such as the identification and understanding of the attributes that affect the tourism experience (Dwyer and Kim 2003; Enright and Newton 2004), the competitiveness and positioning of honeymoon destinations abroad (Kim and Agrusa 2005), the determinants of the choice of honeymoon destination (Lee *et al.* 2010), wedding tourism (Bertella 2015; Schumann and Amado 2010; Seebaluck *et al.* 2015).

Regarding sociodemographic attributes, some findings related to honeymoon tourism conclude that most of the people who make this type of travel are young and professional (Lee *et al.* 2010; Ünal *et al.* 2017), their travels last 5 to 7 days for the most part, among the resources they have used to organize their trip is the internet, travel agencies, recommendations from friends or family, etc. (Ünal *et al.* 2017).

Understanding the implications of sociodemographic characteristics in any type of trip and tourist visits, motivation and satisfaction is crucial to facilitate management plans (Lee 2009; Lee and Abrahams 2018), also sociodemographic data are indicators of tourist motivation (Adam *et al.* 2019; Villagómez-Buele *et al.* 2020) and, therefore, reflect the activities that tourists like to join, the places they like to visit and the possible impacts of these activities and places on tourists.

Determinants of the Choice of Tourist Destination

According to Dann (1977), tourists are first pressured by their needs and want to decide "whether to go", and then they are dragged by the attributes of the destinations to make a decision "where to go". In this sense, the attributes of destination can be seen as the determinants of the choice of destination (Formica and Uysal 2006; Carvache-Franco *et al.* 2020).

Laws (1995) classifies these destination attributes into two main categories. The main category includes innate characteristics such as climate, ecology, natural resources, culture, and historical architecture. Secondary characteristics are those developments introduced particularly for tourists such as hotels, catering, transportation, activities, and entertainment.

Regarding honeymoon trips, Lee *et al.* (2010) identify the most determining attributes as: safety, the excellent quality of accommodation and the reasonable cost of the trip. For their part, Winchester *et al.* (2011) agree on the importance of the budget and include familiarity and romanticism. Likewise, they emphasize that the

climate is a more important attribute here than for other types of tourism. Similarly, Kim and Agrusa (2005) include among determining attributes for a honeymoon destination, climate, security, romance, adequate budget, and add others such as comfort, landscape, cultural resources / historical and places to go shopping.

A tourist destination must be reached easily and comfortably through various modes of transport, such as airplanes, trains, and automobiles (Chen *et al.* 2011; Shonk and Chelladurai 2008). Although newlyweds seek exotic destinations, they also prefer destinations easily accessible through multiple airlines (Lee *et al.* 2010). Local transportation is also a major concern for accessing tourist attractions, accommodation, and entertainment venues (Kim *et al.* 2013).

Attracting honeymoon travelers can be more challenging because this group of tourists tends to look for a place where various dream activities are available to fulfill their once in a lifetime moment (Lee *et al.* 2010). Honeymoon destinations should offer memorable and romantic attractions, such as beach activities, historical and cultural experiences, outdoor sports, and spa services (Bulcroft *et al.* 1999; Lee *et al.* 2010; Payne 2015).

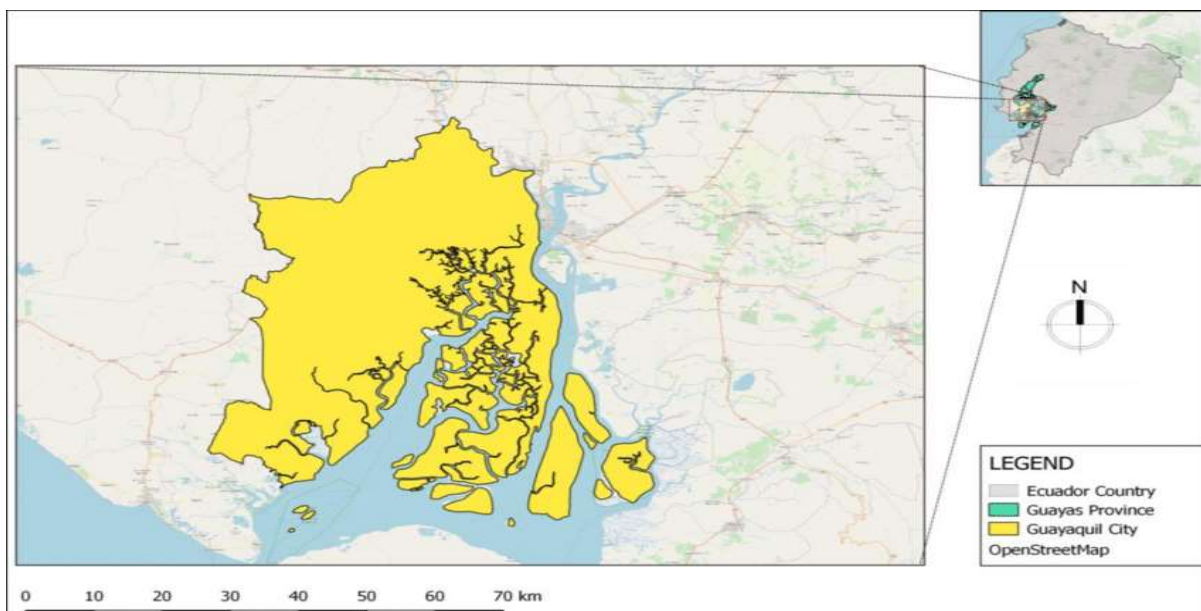
Travel agencies have continually developed honeymoon programs or packages to meet the ever-changing needs of newlyweds (Kim and Agrusa 2005). For example, an all-inclusive honeymoon package was popular in the past because it provides a convenient one-stop-shop for accommodation, transportation, meals, and touristic visits. However, given the changes in the psychosocial characteristics of travelers over the years, honeymoon tourists increasingly select a partial package to have more private time (Lee *et al.* 2010).

As mentioned previously, destination attributes are of great importance in determining the choice of tourist destination (Awaritefe 2004; Carvache-Franco *et al.* 2021; Carrascosa-López; Lai and Graefe 1999). Since tourists are attracted to a destination by the special attributes it offers, it is believed that the destination or product that has the most attractive attributes will have a higher probability of being chosen.

2. Study Area

This study is limited to "Santiago de Guayaquil", known as Guayaquil, located in northwestern South America with a hot and humid climate (Figure 1). It is easily accessible, thanks to the Guayas River that surrounds the city to the east and the "Estuario del Salado" that surrounds it to the west. Guayaquil is not only the commercial heart of Ecuador, but also a vibrant and expanding city, increasingly safe with more than 2,350,915 inhabitants (National Institute of Statistics and Census, 2010).

Figure 1. Geographic location of the city of Guayaquil (Ecuador)



The city is also the focus of Ecuador's international trade economically, it is the most important in the country because its port handles approximately 90% of the country's imports and 50% of its exports with products such as: banana, coffee and cocoa. At the same time, the city's economy is given by government and private participation, with small and medium-sized enterprises (PYME's), international commercial companies and also by the performance of agricultural and aquaculture activities, wholesale and retail sales represent 57.4% of businesses in the city.

3. Methodology

The present study was a descriptive investigation, that is, it seeks to specify important characteristics and features of any phenomenon to be analyzed, the facts are described as they are observed, the design was cross-sectional because data was collected in a single period of time.

This empirical study was based on field work consisting of questionnaires containing 28 questions divided into 18 closed questions and 10 open questions, sociodemographic variables, consumption trend, tourist spending on the honeymoon trip were taken into account, finally a 5-point Likert scale was used to determine the determinants for choosing the destination, 5 being very important and 1 not important.

For the estimation of the sample, a finite population was selected, with the universe of 3,934 marriages carried out in 2015 in the city of Guayaquil, that is, the survey was carried out on newly married people, therefore, the information they provided us was the most successful to be able to elaborate this sociodemographic profile, these questionnaires were carried out during the month of November and December 2016 in the city of Guayaquil.

It is important to emphasize that the sample belongs to the three levels of social strata that are the target of this research work, since they are the ones that have the economic resource to purchase honeymoon trips, according to the Institute of Statistics and Censuses in its Socioeconomic Level Stratification Survey carried out in 2011, it divided the population into Level A, B, C+, C-, and D, with Level A representing the country's upper class (1.9%), the B the upper middle class (11.2%) and C+ the middle class (22.8%). 134 people were surveyed and a non-probability sampling was applied at the convenience of level A, B and C+.

The present investigation used a margin of error of 5%, a confidence level of 95% and a variation of 50% (Table 1).

Table 1. Research method

Geographic area	Guayaquil (Ecuador)
Population	Just Married
Period of realization	Noviembre - Diciembre 2016
Process	Non-probability sampling at convenience
Confidence level	95%
Error range	+/- 5%
Valid questionnaires	134

4. Results

Sociodemographic Variables

Table 2 shows the results of the sociodemographic variables.

Table 2. Sociodemographic variables

Variables	Category	N=134	%
Gender	Female	83	62
	Male	51	38
Age	18-28	68	51
	29-39	64	48
	40-50	2	1
Educational level	Secondary completed or less	1	1
	Attending University	11	8
	University completed	97	72
	Studying postgrade	16	12
	Postgrade completed	9	7
Occupation	Private employee	68	51
	Public employee	46	34
	Independent professional	17	13
	Unemployed	0	0
	Student	3	2
Economic Income	< 500 dolars	5	4
	501 – 800	33	25
	801 – 1100	45	34
	1101 – 1400	25	19
	1401 – 1700	15	11
	1701 – 2000	3	2
	More than 2001	8	6

62% of the people surveyed were women and 38% men. Of the total sample, 51% of those surveyed are between 18 and 28 years old, 48% between 29 and 39 years old and 1% between 40 and 50 years old, that is, the majority are young, like the study by Lee *et al.* (2010), Unal *et al.* (2017).

Most of those surveyed had as their highest educational level the university finished with 72%, in second place they were studying a postgraduate degree with 12%, 8% are studying university, 7% have a finished postgraduate and 1% the high school completed. Occupation was divided into sectors, 51% are private employees, 34% public sector employees, 13% are independent professionals and 2% are students.

Their economic income was three important ranges, from 801 to 1100 dollars with 33.7%, from 501 to 800 with 24.6% and from 1100 to 1400 with 18.7%, in a lower percentage from 1401 to 1700 with 11.2%, from 1701 to 2000 with 2.2%, more than 2001 with 6% and the lowest range is less than 500 usd with 3.7%.

Consumption Trend

The first question that was asked related to the consumption trend of the newlyweds was if they have made their honeymoon trip, 79% answered yes, 19% have not bought any trip and 2% mentioned that they have purchased a trip but have not yet done.

From these results, only the percentage that has made their honeymoon trip will be taken into account so that the profile is as close as possible to the consumers of this type of trip in the city of Guayaquil.

According to the type of tourism carried out, the favorite for Guayaquil people was sun and beach tourism with 41% acceptance, followed by Wellness, health, spa, relaxation with 26%, Urban 12%, Culture (gastronomy, religion, art) with 11%, Natural areas 5%, Cruises 3% and Extreme Sports 2%.

Table 3. Consumption trend

Consumption	Category	n	%
Type of tourism carried out	Beach and sun	61	58
	Well-being, health, spa, relaxation	22	21
	Urban	9	8
	Culture (gastronomy, religion, art)	8	8
	Natural áreas	3	3
	Cruises	2	2
	Extreme sports	1	1
Time before the wedding that you purchased the honeymoon trip	Days before the wedding	11	10
	Days after the wedding	13	12
	Months after the wedding	7	7
	1 - 4 months before the wedding	34	32
	5 - 8 months before the wedding	25	24
Average number of days your trip lasted	9 - 12 months before the wedding	16	15
	7 days or les	84	79
	8 - 15 days	19	18
	16 - 24 days	3	3
	25 - 31 days	0	0
Person who chose the honeymoon trip	More than 31 days	0	0
	Bride	21	20
	Groom	5	5
	Both	76	72
Means to find out about the trip *The total percentage is greater than 100 because the question was multiple choice.	Others (Gift, prize)	4	4
	Internet	106	100
	Tourist guides	3	3
	Travel Agencies	37	35
	Books	1	1
Destination chosen	Referrals from friends or family	40	38
	Caribbean	39	37
	Continental Ecuador	30	28
	Galápagos	20	19
	USA	10	9
	Europa	7	7

Regarding the time before the wedding that the honeymoon trip acquired, the following responses were obtained. 32% of people purchased their honeymoon trip between 1 and 4 months before the wedding, 24% between 5 and 8 months before the wedding, 15% between 9 and 12 months before the wedding, the 29% do it after the wedding.

In relation to the time that the honeymoon trip lasted, the results of this research are similar to those of Ünal et al (2017), the average trip is 7 days or less with 79%, between 8 and 15 days a 18% and finally 3% from 16 to 24 days.

The person who chose the honeymoon travel 72% of respondents say that they both selected the honeymoon travel destination, 20% say it was the girlfriend, 5% the boyfriend and 4% say that was a present.

According to the media to find out about the trip, 100% of the people said that they used the Internet, 38% references from friends or family, 35% from Travel Agencies, 3% tourist guides and 1% books. (The total percentage is greater than 100% because the question was multiple choice)

People chose Caribbean destinations by 38%, national destinations (continental Ecuador) by 37%, Galapagos by 19%, the United States by 9%, Europe by 7% (Table 3).

Tourist Expenditure

Table 4 shows that 50% of people bought directly from each provider, stating that the internet have everything; however, some mentioned that they would be willing to buy at a Travel Agency if the product was different from the one they find in the web. 46% purchased their trip through a travel agency, respondents mentioned that who better than them who are experts on the subject to plan the trip, finally 4% made a mix between the two ways, that is, they bought a part direct to the provider and the other through a travel agency because buying a partial package to have more private time as mentioned by Lee *et al.* (2010).

The payment method used mostly was the credit card with 77%, 11% through bank deposits and in the same percentage of 11% it was in cash because many businesses make discounts when paying in that way.

35% invested in their honeymoon trip between \$ 2001 and 3000, 26% less than \$ 1000, 25% between \$ 1001 and 2000, 7% more than \$ 5000, 4% between \$ 3001 and 4000 and finally 3% between \$ 4001 and 5000.

Table 4. Expense

Variable	Category	n	%
Means of purchase	Travel Agency	49	46
	Direct to each supplier	53	50
	One part with the agency and another directly with the provider	4	4
Payment method	Credit card	82	77
	Cash	12	11
	Bank deposit	12	11
Budget (per couple)	< 1000 usd.	28	26
	1001 - 2000 usd.	27	25
	2001 - 3000 usd.	37	35
	3001 - 4000 usd.	4	4
	4001 - 5000 usd	3	3
	> 5000 usd	7	7

Determinants to choose the destination.

Table 5 shows the results related to the determinants (attributes) for the choice of the honeymoon destination, listing the average importance score of each of the 10 attributes. A five-point Likert scale (1 not important and 5 very important) was used to measure the attributes. The Likert scale is used to measure the attitudes of several interrelated variables (Likert 1932); therefore, its use in this study is justified.

The main attributes chosen by the newlyweds of the tourist destination that were perceived by Guayaquil residents as the highest with scores higher than 4.5 are: the place must be romantic (4.85), the climate must be very pleasant (4.61) the place should have good accommodation (4.53), these results coincide with the findings of Kim and Agrusa (2015), Payne (2015), Winchester *et al.* (2011), Lee *et al.* (2010), Bulcroft *et al.* (1999)

The attributes of the destination of medium importance levels have scores below 4.5 and include aspects of the affordable price of the trip (4.48), in agreement with the results of Winchester *et al.* (2012), Kim and Agrusa (2015), they were also associated with the security levels of the place (4.33) and beautiful landscapes (4.28).

The destination attributes with low importance levels, with an average score lower than 4.0, the destination must be accessible (3.92) as stated in their study by Chen *et al.* (2011), Shonk and Chelladurai (2008), Lee et al

(2010), a good place to shop (3.36), that there are cultural places (3.3) and that it has a nightlife (3.29) was also associated as an attribute.

Table 5. Attributes for choosing a honeymoon destination

Attributes	Average	Ranking
Romantic place	4.85	1
Pleasant weather	4.61	2
Affordable prices	4.53	3
Precios accesibles	4.48	4
Safe place	4.33	5
Beautiful landscapes	4.28	6
Accessibility	3.92	7
Good place to shop	3.36	8
Cultural places	3.3	9
Nightlife	3.29	10

Note. Medium scale: 5 (very important), 1 (not important).

Conclusions and Limitations

The honeymoon market is growing rapidly worldwide, the economic potential of this segment has led many destinations to participate in promotional activities to attract these types of tourists.

The present study provided a profile of honeymoon consumers in a specific market niche, which are Guayaquil residents, as well as the determining factors for choosing the destination. The results suggest some common characteristics of newlyweds that are important to know both for the tourism sector and for the destination authorities, for example, almost half of the honeymoon couples (51%) were young people between 18 and 29 years old and just as important, another 48% were middle-aged, that is, between 29 and 39 years old, had a good education (91%), the majority worked (98%) and each had a significant level of monthly income (53% between \$ 801 and \$ 1400).

58% prefer sun and beach trips for their honeymoon, with an average of 7 days or less at the destination (79%), all use the internet to search for destinations and choose places located in the Caribbean (37%), there is a similar percentage regarding the way of buying, they do it directly from the supplier (50%) and through a travel agency (46%).

The analysis of the importance of the characteristics of the attractiveness of the honeymoon destination shows that "the romantic", "the pleasant climate" and "good accommodation" are the three of the most important attributes.

These study results are very important and very useful for countries, tourism operators, tourism wholesalers that seek and work to develop new products or specialized tourist destinations and the creation of promotional strategies focused on serving, satisfying and attracting this profile of the consumer of honeymoon travel in the Guayaquil market. This market segment demands new options and travel alternatives that are exclusive and that allow unique experiences to celebrate this special event.

Collaborative efforts by travel agencies and wholesalers are necessary to involve more activities with a romantic experiential approach because newlyweds want that element in the trip as the main attribute when choosing a destination.

This study has potential limitations and has provided possible directions for future research. First, the respondents were a local sample, which may have compromised generalizability. Future research can determine if the results can be replicated with a larger provincial or national sample. Second, the study examined a limited number of variables. Future research may examine other variables that are important to the study of this important travel segment, for example, future studies may examine the level of satisfaction with the destinations they chose and its relationship with sociodemographic variables.

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