



**Assessment of choice sets of Pre-Wedding and Honeymoon Destination  
Selection from the Perspectives of Asian Couples: A case study of Phuket**

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of  
Master of Business Administration in Hospitality and Tourism Management  
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ชื่อวิทยานิพนธ์	การประเมินผลสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวสำหรับก่อนแต่งงานและฮันนีมูนในมุมมองของชาวเอเชีย: กรณีศึกษาจังหวัดภูเก็ต
ผู้เขียน	นางสาวกัลญัฐิตา เทพี
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ปีการศึกษา	2560

### บทคัดย่อ

วิทยานิพนธ์เล่มนี้ได้จัดทำขึ้นเพื่อประเมินผลสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวสำหรับก่อนแต่งงานและฮันนีมูนในมุมมองของชาวเอเชีย กรณีศึกษาจังหวัดภูเก็ต โดยวิจัยครั้งนี้ใช้การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างจำนวน 20 คน (10 คู่)จากประเทศต่างๆในทวีปเอเชียที่เลือกจังหวัดภูเก็ตประเทศไทยสำหรับเดินทางท่องเที่ยวสำหรับก่อนแต่งงานและฮันนีมูน โดยพิจารณาจากทางเลือกที่เป็นไปได้ พร้อมทั้งได้มีการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหาเชิงคุณภาพ, การวิเคราะห์เฉพาะเรื่องเพื่อระบุจุดหมายปลายทาง, ปัจจัยทางเลือกที่ถูกอ้างถึงบ่อยที่สุด และเพื่อตรวจสอบเกณฑ์การคัดเลือกในด้านความแตกต่างกันของอายุและสัญชาติ

ผลการสำรวจชี้ให้เห็นว่าการวางแผนงานแต่งงานในมุมมองของคู่รักชาวเอเชียกับการเดินทางท่องเที่ยว โดยสถานที่ที่มีแนวโน้มจะเลือกเดินทางไปมากที่สุดคือจุดหมายปลายทางยุโรป (โดยเฉพาะประเทศฝรั่งเศส) และสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวที่สวยงามอื่นๆในเอเชีย เช่น เกาะเซจู, วัลดีฟส์, ฟิลิปปินส์ และญี่ปุ่น ก่อนจะตัดสินใจเลือกจังหวัดภูเก็ตเป็นจุดหมายปลายทางสุดท้าย ในด้านปัจจัยด้านอื่นๆที่มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจให้ผู้สัมภาษณ์ได้ให้คำตอบที่หลากหลายถึงการเลือกจังหวัดภูเก็ตเพื่อการเดินทางก่อนแต่งงานและฮันนีมูนของพวกเขา ได้แก่ ชายหาดที่สวยงาม, อาหารไทยที่สะอาดอร่อย, สภาพแวดล้อมทางธรรมชาติที่งดงาม, สถานที่พักที่สะดวกสบาย (รวมถึงแพคเกจส่วนลดค่าใช้จ่ายทั่วไป ฯลฯ), สภาพอากาศที่น่าพอใจ รวมไปถึงสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวและกิจกรรมต่างๆในจังหวัดภูเก็ต ส่วนแต่ตอบสนองความต้องการให้คู่รักชาวเอเชียตัดสินใจเลือกเดินทางมาที่นี่และการวิจัยยังพบอีกว่าตัวเลือกการเดินทางของนักท่องเที่ยวที่มีอายุสามสิบขึ้นไป มีแนวโน้มที่จะเลือกสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวก่อนแต่งงานและฮันนีมูน โดยคำนึงเกี่ยวกับที่พักอาศัยเป็นสำคัญ รองลงมาคือการคมนาคมขนส่ง และรวมถึงปัจจัยด้านค่าใช้จ่ายที่เป็นเกณฑ์ที่สำคัญในการเลือกจุดหมายปลายทางการเดินทางท่องเที่ยวก่อนแต่งงานและฮันนีมูน

วิทยานิพนธ์ชิ้นนี้เป็นประโยชน์อย่างยิ่งต่อนักศึกษาและผู้สนใจเกี่ยวกับจังหวัดภูเก็ตที่เป็นสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวสำหรับก่อนแต่งงานและฮันนีมูนยอดนิยมของโลก และผลงานชิ้นนี้ยังเป็นประโยชน์ให้ผู้ประกอบการธุรกิจบริการและการท่องเที่ยวในจังหวัดภูเก็ตในการจัด

กิจกรรมส่งเสริมการตลาดเพื่อดึงดูดความสนใจของนักท่องเที่ยวกลุ่มคู่รักในการเลือกจังหวัดภูเก็ต  
เป็นสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวก่อนแต่งงาน, การจัดงานแต่งงาน และฮันนีมูน

**คำสำคัญ:** การท่องเที่ยวเพื่อแต่งงาน, การท่องเที่ยวก่อนแต่งงาน, การถ่ายภาพก่อนแต่งงาน,  
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### ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to examine the factors that influence destination choice for Asian couples planning pre-wedding or honeymoon trips. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty travelers from various Asian nations who had chosen Phuket, Thailand, for their wedding-related trips after considering a number of possible options. Qualitative content and thematic analyses were conducted to identify the most frequently cited destinations and choice factors, and to determine whether there were age-based or cross-national differences in selection criteria.

The analysis indicated that Asian couples planning wedding-related trips are most likely to contemplate European destinations (particularly France) as alternative options, though island-based destinations such as Jeju Island, the Maldives, the Philippines, Japan, and French Polynesia were also considered by individual study participants. Choice factors cited by multiple respondents, in descending order of frequency, included beaches, Thai food, beautiful environments, accessible or otherwise good location, accommodations, cost factors (discount packages, general affordability, etc.), pleasant weather, sightseeing options, activities or events, islands, markets or stores, the perceived naturalness of the destination, seaside access, spa facilities, and transportation options. Travelers in their thirties were more likely to list accommodations, location issues, sightseeing options, transportation, and cost factors as important criteria while citing bad weather and unclear, uncomfortable, or pest-ridden accommodations as reasons for exclusion, and to choose Asian destinations as possible vacation spots, whereas those in their twenties were more likely to consider European nations as possible alternatives. Some cross-national differences in choice factors and destination preferences were also noted, as Chinese travelers were more likely to cite good weather and beautiful scenery as key criteria, and to select European destinations as additional options, whereas Koreans were more likely to cite island settings as a choice factor and choose island destinations as alternatives.

This research will be especially useful for students and who are interested in Phuket as a pre-wedding and honeymoon destinations. And also useful to operation of hospitality and tourism business in Phuket to promoted marketing activities to attract the tourists, especially couples who selected Phuket as a pre-wedding, wedding and honeymoon destination as well.

**Keyword(s):** Wedding tourism, Pre-wedding trip, Pre-wedding photoshoot, Honeymoon trip, Honeymoon destination, Phuket destination, Choice sets



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

The tourism industry is one of Thailand's economic growth areas. A report from the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2016) indicated that Thailand received 32.6 million international tourist arrivals in 2016, a growth rate of about 9% from 2015. The main sources of international tourists include the ASEAN region, China, Malaysia, South Korea and Japan. Table 1.1 shows the five-year trend in tourist arrivals.

Table 1.1 Top five nationalities most frequently traveling to Thailand

Rank	Country or territory	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
1	ASEAN	8,897,291	7,886,136	6,641,772	7,282,262	6,281,153
2	 China	8,821,148	7,934,791	4,636,298	4,637,335	2,786,860
3	 Malaysia	3,506,199	3,423,397	2,613,418	3,041,097	2,554,397
4	 South Korea	1,419,617	1,163,619	1,006,283	1,163,619	1,006,283
5	 Japan	1,416,903	1,381,690	1,267,886	1,536,425	1,373,716

Source : Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2016.

One of the potential tourism segments that could be expanded in Thailand is wedding and honeymoon tourism (Department of Ministry, Tourism and Sports, 2012). The wedding and honeymoon tourism segment includes trips that are taken by people getting married or starting their marriage (Vodenska, 2013). It also includes the trips taken by guests and participants at destination weddings, or weddings held at a tourism destination away from the family of the bride or groom (Durinec, 2013). Wedding and honeymoon tourism is not popular in all cultures, but it has a growing importance especially in fast-growing Asian countries and in developed nations (Durinec, 2013). Statistics on wedding and honeymoon tourism are difficult to find, because the sector is relatively new and not clearly differentiated in official statistics

(Vodenska, 2013). However, there is strong evidence that there are destinations where wedding and honeymoon tourism is a substantial part of their destination image and pull motivation for visitors (Yonnet, 2007). There are several wedding and honeymoon tourism hotspots that are highly popular among different groups of tourists around the world. For European and American travelers, the Mediterranean is an increasingly important destination wedding and honeymoon spot (Durinec, 2013). Island destinations are highly popular for wedding and honeymoon tourism and for destination weddings (Liestiane, 2017). These sun, sea and sand destinations, like Hawaii, Bali, the Maldives and Mauritius, are viewed as romantic and peaceful, ideal for a wedding or honeymoon, and are often desirable locations for general tourism, making them ideal for destination weddings (Liestiane, 2017).

Some wedding and honeymoon tourism destinations are culturally specific due to historic associations with romance and marriage. One example of such a destination is Jeju Island, a volcanic island off the coast of Korea which is a traditional holiday spot featured in the Korean romantic drama 'All In' (Visit Korea, n.d.). However, even before this drama, Jeju Island was known as "Honeymoon Island" because of its romantic landscape and environment, and many Korean couples have married or honeymooned on the island (Visit Korea, n.d.). Jeju Island is not only popular with Korean couples; in fact, the island has also focused on bringing Chinese couples to the island for destination weddings and honeymoons (Jeju Weekly, 2013). The example of Jeju Island shows that it is possible for wedding and honeymoon tourism destinations to be popular with both domestic and international travelers.

Thailand is already a popular honeymoon destination for European and Asian visitors (Department of Ministry, Tourism and Sports, 2012). Wedding tourism in Thailand is a relatively new phenomenon, only emerging as a major trend in the 2000s (Chao, 2012). Despite this novelty, Thailand is one of the top destinations for international wedding tourism in Asia, and is particularly popular with travelers from India and Hong Kong (TAT News, 2016). Honeymoon tourism is one of the market segments targeted by the Department of Ministry, Tourism, and Sports (2012) for improvement, including quality improvements and targeting high-income tourists. Chao (2012), studying tourism motivations for wedding tourism in Bangkok, showed that tourists were attracted by the combination of relatively low cost travel and the atmosphere and climate, beaches and landscapes, and availability of a range of wedding services including



religious services. Phuket, one of Thailand's premier sun, sea and sand tourism destinations, is well positioned to become a leading wedding and tourism destination (TAT News, 2016). In addition to the factors identified by Chao (2012), Phuket offers more than 30 beaches and a range of luxury resorts, providing an ideal atmosphere for a destination wedding or honeymoon.

South Korean honeymoon tourism is one of the market opportunities that has been identified as a potential growth area (Lang, 2011). South Koreans are already one of the top source countries for Thai tourism, accounting for 1.4 million trips and 50 billion baht in spending in 2012 (Korean Tourism Organization, 2014). This made it Thailand's fifth largest single tourist market, representing about 8% of South Korea's outbound tourism of 13.74 million trips (Korean Tourism Organization, 2014).

The researchers are interested for this research is social media, now that's influencing the current destination choice for travelers. Whether it's a website, online magazine, blogger, etc., all there had top attractions, photos and travel information to the benefit and convenience for travelers. For pre-wedding and honeymoon couples, social media as a way to counter that force to attract couples who are deciding on their destination for photography for pre-wedding and honeymoon. As one blogger suggested Phuket as a liveliest attractions and that is the best destination for young couples because apart from the beauty of the attractions then couples can also enjoy night party and their called Phuket is sensible choice and not missed. (Makemytripblog, 2017)

And another website provides information for couples to travel in Phuket, their give reasons "Why is Thailand?". Phuket is East of Vegas because perfection is a perfect blend of natural beauty, fine dining, luxury and comfortable accommodation that's full package options for your catering to couples fantasies.(Traveltriangle.com, 2018)

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The statistics suggest that Asian honeymoon and wedding guests may be a large tourism target market for Thailand. (Department of Ministry, Tourism and Sports, 2012). The target market's preference for such facilities as beach resorts, as well as existing tourism travel to Thailand, means there is a good established market for Thai tourism. In the case of Asia, increasingly strong economic ties associated with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) may

increase the number of visitors further. However, there has not been many research into honeymoon and wedding tourism from Asian countries to Thailand.

In fact, wedding tourism is a relatively under-examined aspect of the tourism trade. One study on wedding tourism in New Zealand has some interesting insights about how and why people choose honeymoons and wedding tourism in international destinations (Johnston, 2006). This study suggests that the tourism destination serves as a way to connect the wedding or honeymoon with a naturalized and romantic landscape (Johnston, 2006). This could be conceptualized as an escape or a romantic destination for the couple and the wedding party. As a result, highly picturesque and romantic environments are often selected as a destination for wedding tourism. This could be particularly important for Thailand, which is often marketed as such a location. However, there has not been any specific research that examined Thailand's potential as a honeymoon and wedding destination.

The problem of this research will be how Thailand can better meet Asian honeymooners' tourism needs and gain satisfaction. The emphasis on this research will be on factors that influence destination choice sets, the impact of destination choice sets

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. What destinations are in choice sets for Asian couples before they have chosen Phuket as the final choice?
2. What are the factors that influence Asian couples to choose Phuket as their final set?
3. Are there differences based on personal characteristics (age and nationality) in the destination choice sets of Asian couples?

### **1.4 Objectives**

1. To identify destinations in the choice sets of Asian couples before they have selected Phuket as the final choice.
2. To examine the importance of factors influencing their selection of Phuket as their final choice.

3. To examine whether these factors are different based on personal characteristics (age and nationality) in the destination choice sets of Asian couples.

## **1.5 Scope of the study**

### **1.5.1 Scope of the Area**

The geographic scope of the research will be limited to Phuket. The study's data collection phase will be conducted in several Phuket locations that are frequented by international visitors. These will include Phuket International Airport (the main entry point for Asian Visitors) and tourist locations including Chalong Pier and JungceylonPatong. The study will also include Thai massage shops and spas, since these are popular locations for Asian visitors. Data will be collected in each place at standardized times. This will help increase the randomness of selection of the participants.

### **1.5.2 Scope of Demography**

The study will be conducted at the individual level. The demographic group that is the population of the study is Asian couples who have chosen to travel to Phuket. This can include independent travelers as well as travelers with Asian tour companies. Couples will be interviewed together, since they have made decision toward destination choice sets together. Also this study focuses on pre-wedding or honeymoon couple, so the participants are young adult whose agree between 20 to 40 years. For the reasons that all participants are forefingers, English will be used as the main language for interviewing. However, Chinese interpreters also take part in this interview to help communicate with Chinese couples, since all of them cannot speak English.

## **1.6 Definitions of key terms**

***Asian couples:*** refer to couples from Asia who will have married or travelled on their honeymoon trip to Phuket.

***Destinations choice sets:*** refer to the destination choice set as the set of possible destination choices that will fill the needs and desires of the traveler (Meyer, 1980).

***Pre-wedding trips:*** refer to travel together to a given destination, are also common in some cultures, although it is more common to be married at or near the home of the bride and groom (Monger, 2004). Also referred to the trip that couple have made for shooting their wedding photo.

***Honeymoon trips:*** refer to trips taken shortly after a wedding, and are common in many cultures (Monger, 2004). Also referred to short or long trips, taken close to home or far away, or are for the bridal couple only or accompanied by family members (Monger, 2004).

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEWS

This chapter provides the major parts of related literature to discuss and present theories concerning pre-wedding and honeymoon in Phuket. It is separated as follows:

- 2.1 Pre-wedding and honeymoon trips
- 2.2 Asian couples in Phuket
- 2.3 Destinations choice sets
  - 2.3.1 Awareness set
  - 2.3.2 Evoked (Consideration) set
  - 2.3.3 Surrogate set
  - 2.3.4 Exclusion (Reject or Inept) set
  - 2.3.5 Dream set
  - 2.3.6 Unavailable set
  - 2.3.7 Available set
- 2.4 Factor influencing destinations choice sets
- 2.5 Personal characteristics
  - 2.5.1 Age
  - 2.5.2 Nationality
- 2.6 Conceptual framework

#### **2.1 Pre-Wedding and Honeymoon Trips**

This research focuses on pre-wedding and honeymoon trips. Honeymoon trips are trips taken shortly after a wedding, and are common in many cultures (Monger, 2004). The specifics of honeymoons do vary from culture to culture, such as whether they are short or long trips, taken close to home or far away, or are for the bridal couple only or accompanied by family members (Monger, 2004). Pre-wedding trips, in which the bride, groom, and family members and friends travel together to a given destination, are also common in some cultures, although it is more common to be married at or near the home of the bride and groom (Monger, 2004).

Besides, pre-wedding trip can also be referred to the trip that couple have made for shooting their wedding photo. Honeymoon customs also change with time. For example, one author reports that the beginning of the 1980s saw an increase in popularity of longer, international honeymoon trips for Japanese couples, where previously these were short trips to traditional domestic destinations (March, 2000).

Thailand is one of the most popular international honeymoon destinations in the world, with beach resorts like Phuket and Pattaya offering a combination of natural beauty and relaxation that has been popular with honeymooners and pre-wedding travelers for some time (Kim & Agrusa, 2005). Detailed statistics on honeymoons and pre-wedding travel to Thailand are not available. However, consumer surveys in source countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and South Korea have identified Thailand as one of the most commonly selected international honeymoon and wedding destinations (ABTA, 2014; EasyWeddings, 2015; Kim & Agrusa, 2005).

## **2.2 Asian Couples in Phuket**

The honeymoon is a cultural practice that occurs in many countries, including many Asian countries, where a newly married couple takes a holiday or travels for a period of time before beginning their married life at home (Lee et al., 2010). The extent to which honeymoon travel is common in Asian cultures varies. However, it is a relatively strong tradition in South Korea, where domestic destinations such as Jeju Island, as well as international destinations such as Thailand, have long been popular (Seo et al., 2009). Honeymoon travel can be one of the main contributing factors to repeated visits to a location, because of a combination of associations with the positive feelings of the beginning of a marriage and satisfaction with the location itself (Hong & Lee, 2009). This makes honeymoon travel an important concern for tourism planners and managers.

A study of Korean honeymooners showed that Thailand was considered to be a destination for outdoor activities and sun and surf holidays, in competition with Guam and similar locations (Kim & Agrusa, 2005). The prevalence of beach resorts, which provide a complete experience for the visitor, is seen as one of the main reasons why honeymooners visit the country (Rittichainuwat et al., 2008).

Phuket, along with sister coastal resort city Pattaya, is one of the most popular destinations for Korean honeymooners (Kim & Agrusa, 2005). Phuket is easy to reach, with direct flights from major Korean cities, and has a number of high-quality beach resorts that provide relaxing experiences (Kim & Agrusa, 2005). Phuket is also considered to have some of the most beautiful beaches, along with consistently pleasant weather (Rittichainuwat et al., 2008). This is one of the main reasons why honeymooners as well as repeat visitors visit the city.

Phuket is one of the most frequent destinations for South Korean tourists, although the percent of these tourists that are on honeymoon trips is uncertain. In the first six months of 2012, South Korea was the fourth largest market for Phuket inbound visitors, with 102,021 visitors (an increase of 29.53% from 2011) (Sidasathian, 2012). The TAT strategy for Phuket emphasizes honeymooners as one of the main target markets for the resort, along with golfers and sailors (Ketsara, 2013). However, the specifics of this campaign do not appear to be available. Additionally, there are no statistics available regarding the number of honeymooning visitors to Phuket.

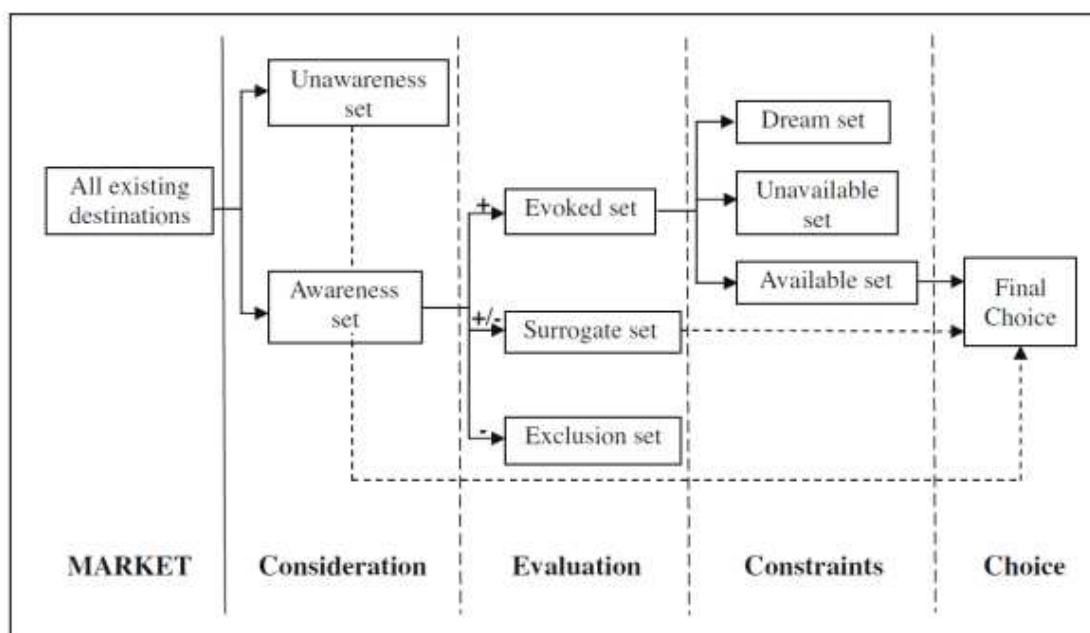
### **2.3 Destination Choice Sets**

The main concern in this research is the destination choice set, and how it is formed by the decision processes of the honeymooning couple. The destination choice set can be defined simply as the set of possible destination choices that will fill the needs and desires of the traveler (Meyer, 1980). The destination choice set is determined by identifying needs and constraints for the travel and then identifying destinations that could fulfil this requirement. For example, a honeymooning couple would start with a set of basic requirements (such as outdoor activities or a beach) as well as a budget, approximate time, and other constraints. They would then determine which sites could match these requirements, based on their own previous experience, reading and other information, and feedback from others (Kim & Agrusa, 2005). This usually results in more than one destination; for example, South Koreans may consider Thailand and Guam to be equivalent (Kim & Agrusa, 2005). As Meyer (1980) pointed out, no destination choice set will be complete, because travelers will always be operating under information limitations – they cannot research every possible alternative site. Additionally, previous

destinations may not be in the destination choice set for a future trip if they were unsatisfactory or do not meet the needs of the future trip (Hong & Lee, 2009).

There are several different destination choice sets that may be arrived at (Decrop, 2010). These include the awareness set, evoked set, surrogate set, exclusion set, dream set, unavailable set, and available set. These sets occur across three stages of the decision, including the consideration, evaluation, and constraint assessment process, leading to a final destination choice from the available set (Decrop, 2010). Figure 1 shows how these sets are related to each other across the destination choice process. Each of these destination choice sets is defined and discussed below, especially in relation to honeymoon destination choice (where available) and the known factors that influence membership in a given set.

Figure 2.1 Destination Choice Model and Resulting Sets



Source: Decrop ,2010.

### 2.3.1 Awareness Set

The awareness set is the simplest destination choice set, as it is just the set of potential destinations that the couple is aware of at the start of the destination choice process and those they learn about during the process of collecting information(Decrop, 2010). The awareness



set is the first set in a three-stage model of destination choice (Hsu et al., 2009). This is then followed by the evoked set (discussed below) and then the final destination (Hsu et al., 2009). Awareness typically includes knowing that a location exists. It also extends to knowledge about the destination and what it has to offer (Decrop, 2010). For example, it would include knowing that Phuket has high-quality beach resorts for visitors.

Studies have generally shown that awareness of the destination is essential for all travelers, since without knowledge of the destination there is no way for the tourist to identify a location as meeting their needs (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). For example, awareness of the destination has been identified as a factor in revisiting destinations (Hong & Lee, 2009). In this case, awareness was generated by the previous experience with the destination and what it has to offer (Hong & Lee, 2009). One of the reasons that Jeju Island is seen as being a popular destination for Korean honeymooners is that it has been a honeymoon destination for a long time (Seo et al., 2009). As a result, Koreans are very aware of the destination and what it can offer them.

### **2.3.2 Evoked (Consideration) Set**

The evoked set, also called the consideration set, is the second stage of the simple three-stage decision making process (Hsu et al., 2009). The evoked set is a subset of the awareness set, which has been narrowed down to the destinations that the traveler, or in this case the couple, see as being the most suitable for their needs (Decrop, 2010) (Decrop, 2010; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). In other words, the evoked set is the subset where the needs and preferences of the couple can be satisfied (de Pelsmacker et al., 2007). It is from the evoked set that the final destination will typically be drawn, following further evaluation and examination (de Pelsmacker et al., 2007).

One of the peculiarities of the evoked set for honeymoon choice is that it is actually the intersection of two sets, which may be arrived at individually by the two travelers (Jang et al., 2007). This means that the evoked set represents a compromise between the needs and constraints of two travelers, rather than the expression of the needs and constraints of a single traveler (Jang et al., 2007). This can frequently result in conflict between the couple, since they may have different preferences and constraints. Typically, this is resolved by adopting each

other's needs and constraints (Jang et al., 2007). However, the destination still needs to be in the evoked set of both members of the couple in order to be successful in the final evaluation.

### 2.3.3 Surrogate Set

The surrogate set is a further subset of the awareness set, based on (Decrop, 2010) model as shown in Figure 1. The surrogate set includes destinations that *satisfice* the requirements of the visitor, or in other words meet the most important requirements although they do not meet all of them (Decrop, 2010). For example, the destination may fit within the couple's budget, but not offer as many outdoor activities as they wanted. The couple may select a destination from the surrogate set under some circumstances, for example if all destinations in their evoked set are unavailable or become undesirable for some reason (de Pelsmacker et al., 2007).

There has been relatively little research regarding the surrogate set in tourism destination choice, despite (Decrop, 2010) inclusion of this set in his decision model. One study on destination choice suggests that the surrogate set could include the destinations that meet one member of the couple's preferences and constraints, but not the other members' (Jang et al., 2007). Thus, the surrogate set could represent a less attractive compromise than those that end up in the evoked set (Jang et al., 2007). However, this has not been tested in detail. Understanding the role of the surrogate set in honeymoon destination choice would be a contribution of the current study.

### 2.3.4 Exclusion (Reject or Inept) Set

The exclusion set, also known as the inept or reject set, is the final subset of the awareness set proposed by (Decrop, 2010). The destinations that are included in the exclusion set are those that are determined to *not* sufficiently meet the traveler's preferences and constraints (Decrop, 2010). Essentially, the exclusion set is the set of destinations that the traveler will *not* choose from. There can be a number of reasons for this rejection. For example, the traveler could have had a bad experience previously, or been given information about someone else's negative experience (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). There could also be other issues. For example, the weather could be undesirable, the cost too high, or the destination could have a poor reputation for safety (Decrop, 2010). In any case, the attitudes and feelings of the traveler toward the destinations in the reject set are too strong to consider including it in their final destination choice.

The nature of the honeymoon destination choice as a couples' decision also influences the reject set (Jang et al., 2007). If one member of a couple has strongly negative feelings about a destination, it may end up in the joint reject set even if it is acceptable to the other member (Jang et al., 2007). There has not been any further specific research into the nature of the reject set in the honeymoon decision. However, if honeymoon decisions are otherwise consistent with other travel decisions, the most likely reason a destination will be placed in the reject set is poor previous experience, followed by negative external information (Petrick et al., 2007).

### **2.3.5 Dream Set**

The last three sets, including the dream set, unavailable set, and available set, are based on the presence of constraints and their nature (Decrop, 2010). All travelers have constraints, which limit their ability to choose from any of the destinations in their evoked set (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). This means that further segmentation must take place on the evoked set in order to arrive at a final destination decision. Of these three sets, the dream set is the subset of the evoked set in which the constraints are *enduring*, or in other words cannot be overcome (Decrop, 2010). For example, the traveler may not be able to get a visa for the country in question or they may not physically be able to travel to the location. For this reason, the dream set will typically be excluded from the final decision, even though the destination does meet the needs and preferences of the traveler (Decrop, 2010).

There has not been much research into the role of the dream set in destination choice, for honeymoons or for other travel. One of the main contributions of this research will be evaluating (Decrop, 2010) model in relation to this set.

### **2.3.6 Unavailable Set**

The unavailable set is the second subset of the evoked set where there are also constraints on the choice (Decrop, 2010). However, unlike the dream set, the constraints on the unavailable set are contingent or ephemeral, rather than enduring. This means that the traveler could, if he or she desired, overcome the constraints on the destinations in the unavailable set. For example, if the constraint is resort availability at a certain time, the time of travel could be changed. If the constraint is that the destination is too expensive, the traveler could save or borrow more money for the journey (Decrop, 2010). In general, the unavailable set will be more

difficult to attain than the available set (discussed below), which means that destinations in this set are only likely to be chosen in case there is no appropriate destination in the available set. However, the unavailable set does meet the needs and preferences of the traveler otherwise, meaning that if they can overcome the constraints they are likely to be satisfied (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005).

There has been relatively little research into the role of the unavailable set for destinations. One study of tourism in Australia has shown that of the 4.2 average destinations in a choice set, 2.2 of them are likely to be in the unavailable set (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). In other words, about half of the potential destinations can be deemed unavailable. However, this number may be reduced in this study since Woodside and Lysonski's (1989) model, developed earlier than (Decrop, 2010) model, did not include dream sets (which are unavailable for different reasons).

### **2.3.7 Available Set**

The final consideration set in (Decrop, 2010) model, as well as models proposed by other researchers (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989), is the available set. The available set can be defined as the subset of the awareness set that fulfils all needs and preferences (or in other words is included in the evoked set) and that has no significant contingent or enduring constraints (Decrop, 2010). This means that the available set meets all the traveler's needs without introducing any significant barriers. Assuming that the evaluation process has yielded any destinations in the available set, it is likely that the traveler will choose from these destinations before referring to the unavailable set (and overcoming contingent constraints) or the surrogate set (and satisficing rather than satisfying needs and preferences) (Decrop, 2010). There has not been much research into the available set specifically on honeymoons. As with earlier stages in the decision, the available set is determined based on the intersection of the available sets of the two travelers (Jang et al., 2007). This does mean that one member of the couple may need to accept a destination with some constraints if there is no overlap between them.

## 2.4 Factors Influencing Destination Choice Sets

As in Figure 1, Decrop (2010) (shown in) suggested main factors that influence the destination choice sets which include needs and preferences of the traveler and constraints placed on the traveler. Tourist needs and preferences are simply defined as what the traveler wants or needs from the destination (Murphy et al., 2007). These needs and preferences are highly individualized and contextual, and may vary for individuals from trip to trip (Middleton et al., 2009). A business traveler likely needs to travel to a specific destination at a specific time, but a leisure traveler may want to take a general *kind* of trip (for example, a trip to the beach in their winter). Some of the factors that could influence needs and preferences include climate and weather, culture and cultural distance, shared language, available activities like outdoor or cultural activities, and the availability of eco-tourism, niche tourism like golf, resorts, and so on (Middleton et al., 2009). Typically, tourists can be segmented by needs and preferences, with different types of tourist destinations appealing to different market segments (Middleton et al., 2009). For example, tourist needs and preferences are some of the defining characteristics that can be used to segment Canadian domestic tourists into activity-based segments such as active explorers, cultural shoppers and outdoor lovers (Choi, Murray, & Kwan, 2011). These groups differed on their preferences for activities such as hiking, museum visits, and shopping, although their needs such as transportation and accommodation were broadly similar (Choi, et al., 2011). A study on tourism preferences for communities outside the Kruger National Park, South Africa, showed that these preferences can be extremely fine-grained (Chaminuka, Groeneveld, Selomane, & Van Ierland, 2012). For example, this study demonstrated that although tourists did prefer to engage in community tours, craft market visits, and other activities outside the park, they were not very interested in seeking accommodation outside the park, preferring instead to stay within the park (Chaminuka, et al., 2012). The authors also studied willingness to pay for these activities, showing that visitors would pay a premium for village tours and craft markets but had a negative willingness to pay for accommodations. These two studies show that tourist needs and preferences shape where tourists are willing to visit, what kinds of activities they undertake while there, and whether they are willing to pay a price premium to engage in these activities. However, this is not enough information to fully determine a destination. The analysis by Choi, et al. (2011) showed that simply considering needs and preferences is not enough to determine tourism

preferences, as tourists do take other factors into account, such as travel constraints. Therefore, other factors also need to be considered here.

The second factor in the destination choice set is constraints (Decrop, 2010; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). The traveler will narrow the set of destinations down based on the type and nature of constraints. Some common constraints include financial constraints (the destination is too expensive), institutional constraints (difficulty of getting visas) and time constraints (the trip must be taken at a certain time) (Decrop, 2010). There can also be other, more personal kinds of constraints, such as those related to traveler physical or psychological health, mobility, and so on (Decrop, 2010). Constraints sort the destinations in the evoked set into dream, unavailable, and available sets. The destination with fewest constraints is likely to be chosen. Empirical evidence demonstrates how constraints influence destination choice. One study examined the destination choice of German tourists, using a destination choice mapping approach that identified specific reasons that destinations were selected or rejected (Karl, Reintinger, & Schmude, 2015). These authors interviewed 622 German tourists about their choice of destination. They found that the initial consideration set included some destinations that were originally considered feasible, but which during the process of evaluation were shown to be infeasible because of various travel constraints. Some of the constraints they identified that influenced travel decisions included financial constraints, time constraints, family situation, potential danger, travel companions, health constraints, the political situation, and climate conditions. Of these constraints, all but the family situation, health constraints and climate conditions had a significant effect. However, the authors also showed that these constraints were not equally important for every destination. For example, financial constraints like travel costs may have more importance in a destination that was considered more expensive, especially if it was unknown or further away (Karl, et al., 2015). Honeymoon tourism may face a particular type of constraint, which relates to the need to make a joint decision between two travellers (Stone, 2016). As Stone (2016) noted, honeymoon tourism destination choice is often complicated by the need to make this joint decision. Some couples may resolve the decision complexity by delegating the decision to one of the members of the couple (for example the bride or groom deciding or accepting the decision of a family member) (Stone, 2016). This can be considered as a specific case of what Karl, et al. (2015) identified as the constraints of family members. Thus,

there is strong evidence that travel constraints will influence the choice of destination. Other factors, like destination image, are also likely to play a role.

There are also other factors that could influence destination choice sets. Destination image, or the general and specific knowledge that a tourist has about the destination, is a well known factor in the destination choice (Prayag, 2010). Destination image encapsulates what an individual knows, thinks, and feels about a destination, and it varies from individual to individual and from source country to source country (Prayag, 2010). Destination image can include functional aspects of the destination, what it has to offer tourists, and an understanding of who the destination is for (Prayag, 2010). A case study of honeymoon tourism to Taiwan identified key aspects of the destination image that influenced the destination choice (Lee, Huang, & Chen, 2010). These authors showed that factors including perceived reasonable cost, perceived safety, and perceived quality of accommodations influenced the destination choice for all travellers. Other characteristics of the destination choice that influenced some but not all travellers included perceived quality of shopping, entertainment, and other characteristics, as well as distance (Lee, et al., 2010). Destination image can also interact with the other factors, such as needs and preferences and constraints, because the tourist refers to what they know about the destination (or in other words the destination image) when deciding if the destination would suit their needs. For example, the perceived cost and distance of a destination can influence tourists to reject it as a potential destination if there are significant financial constraints (Karl, et al., 2015). Similarly, for travellers who are risk-averse, a perception that the destination is dangerous or could be difficult to navigate could be a reason for rejecting the destination (Karl, et al., 2015). There is also the question of whether the destination meets the needs and preferences of the traveller. For example, travellers to the Kruger National Park perceive destinations outside the park as less popular or safe compared to destinations inside the park, and therefore prefer to stay in the park (Chaminuka, et al., 2010).

Furthermore, geographic factors such as the distance between the tourist's home country and the destination can influence destination choice (Nicolau, 2008). The influence of distance on destination choice can be highly individualized, with some individuals having a broad preference for staying close to home and others preferring to travel long distances (Nicolau, 2008). In general, it can be stated that preference for distance is influenced by budget, children,

use of travel intermediaries, interest in novelty and variety, and the individual's home city size and use of public transport. In turn, distance sensitivity influences destination choice (Nicolau, 2008). Finally, it is not just geographic distance that influences destination choice, but also cultural distance (Ahn & McKercher, 2015). Cultural distance can influence destination choice, particularly when tourists are inexperienced travelers or traveling in a group with inexperienced travelers (Ahn & McKercher, 2015). While this is to some extent a personal preference, it could influence the choice of large-group travelers like wedding parties.

## **2.5 Personal Characteristics**

It is notable that the choice of a tourism destination is a highly individualized process and depends on many different factors (Middleton et al., 2009). Many of these factors, such as personality and psychological traits, cannot be readily assessed in a consumer survey. However, demographic characteristics can be. Factors such as gender, age, and national origin can have an effect on traveler location choice in general (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Middleton et al., 2009). In this study, the examination of gender is complicated because the final decision is actually the intersection of two individuals of different genders (Jang et al., 2007). Thus, the additional characteristics that will be studied as control variables include age and nationality.

### **2.5.1 Age**

In general, honeymoon travelers are assumed to be younger, while older travelers (even if traveling as a couple) have different needs (Hong & Lee, 2009). This is related to the age at which people typically get married, which is earlier in life. However, there are two reasons this cannot be accepted as fixed. First, this is an average, rather than an absolute. Second, Asians – including Koreans – are marrying later in life than they used to as recently as a decade ago (The Economist, 2011). This means that it cannot be assumed that honeymooners will be a homogenous age.

Age is commonly used as one of the demographic factors (though not the only one) in tourist segmentation (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Middleton et al., 2009). Older travelers have different tastes and preferences (for example being generally more interested in cultural or niche activities rather than outdoor, adventure or sun and sand holidays). They also have a different socioeconomic profile, with higher incomes and often more sophisticated tastes (Middleton et al.,



2009). Thus, older travelers will on average have different needs, preferences and constraints than younger travelers. Studies have also shown that older travelers have different tourism motivations, such as being more likely to travel out of ego or knowledge motivations (Musa & Sim, 2010). In contrast, younger travelers were more likely to seek out novelty, fun or adventure. Older travelers may also be more open to culturally distant locations, potentially because of increased experience with travel and knowledge-related motivations (Aschauer, 2010). The studies do suggest that age will make a difference in location decision choice sets.

### **2.5.2 Nationality**

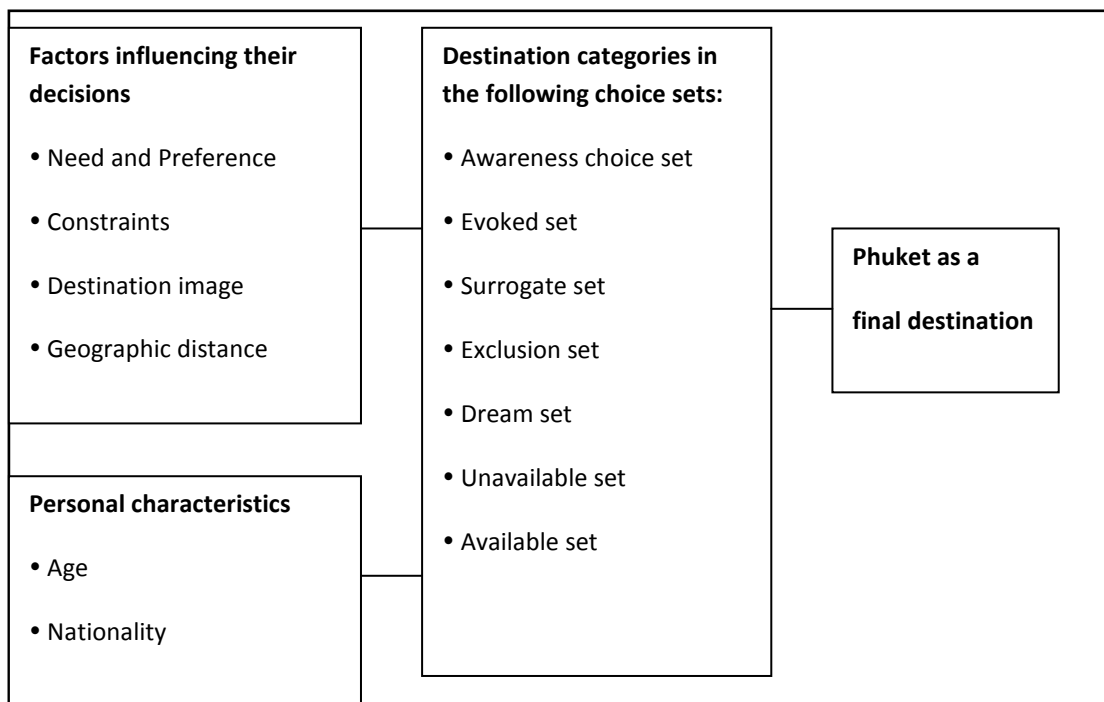
The second demographic factor that is discussed is nationality. Direct studies of the impact of nationality on destination choice are rare, with most studies taking place within a single nationality population. However, research into push and pull factors of tourist destinations suggest that nationality does play a role in the perception of these factors (Prayag & Ryan, 2011). This study was conducted in Mauritius. It showed that tourists from different countries had different images of Mauritius and affective and attitudinal responses to it. It also showed that there were different tourist motivations involved in coming to Mauritius (Prayag & Ryan, 2011). This study is a relatively small-scale qualitative analytical study. However, it does provide some theoretical support for a difference in the reasons for destination choice based on nationality. A study of visitors to Taiwan similarly showed that tourists of different nationalities had different reasons for selecting the location (Hsu et al., 2009). This can be a negative factor as well as a positive factor. For example, a study of international backpackers in Israel found that Japanese backpackers prefer to only travel in groups of other Japanese tourists (Reichel, 2009). This contrasts with other backpackers, who may seek out international travel groups. These studies provide general support for the impact of nationality on destination choice.

## **2.6 Conceptual Framework**

The research framework for the study is shown in Figure 2. This framework is based mainly on the Decrop (2010)'s model of destination choice sets. This framework indicates that consumers will include travel destinations in one of a series of decision sets, and that the choice of final location is most likely to come from the Available set (which is derived in sequence from the Awareness set and the Evoked set) (Decrop, 2010). This model has not been

tested fully, due to its relatively new statement. However, it has been built on existing models of traveler destination choice and as a result can be expected to be reliable in demonstrating the decision process.

Figure 2.2 Conceptual Framework



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study is to describe methods employed to obtain essential data, research instrument, sampling and data analysis techniques. It is structured as follows:

3.1 Intended key informants

3.2 Data collection

3.3 Research instrument

3.4 Data analysis

#### **3.1 Intended key informants**

The intended key informants of this study are Asian honeymooners in Phuket. By honeymooners, this research means couples (including mixed-sex couples) on a holiday together following their wedding, but before beginning their married life. The entire Asian region will be included, including Southeast and South Asia, China, and Japan as well as Asian island countries. However, Thai participants will be excluded, since domestic and international travel is typically very different (Middleton et al., 2009). Honeymooners will be included if they spend all or part of their holiday in Phuket. There will be no further restrictions placed on the population.

The exact size of this population is unknown, although it is expected to be very large (over 100,000 members, but likely far larger). However, determination of a sample size for a qualitative study is not dependent on population size (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This is because the qualitative study is not expected to be representative of the population, but instead to provide deep explanation of the phenomenon under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, the main issue is how much information the researcher can collect from each participant, as well as the amount of time available for data collection (since qualitative data collection is time-intensive and can take several hours per participant) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this research, a sample of 20 individuals (5 honeymoon couples and 5 wedding couples) who travelled for a honeymoon in Phuket, were selected to take part in the study. This is within the appropriate range for a small-scale qualitative study and given the amount of information collected was adequate to provide

meaningful knowledge. Participants were selected purposefully, which is an approach intended to make sure that neither the researcher nor participant wastes time or other resources and irrelevant information is not included (Patton, 2015).

### **3.2 Data Collection**

To select honeymoon couples (the study's informants) the researcher contacted travel agents that specialize in Phuket tours and travel trips, provided information about the study and asked that this information be sent to potential participants. The researcher also recruited via online forums devoted to honeymoon and pre-wedding trip planning. This approach was required because many younger travelers no longer use tour guides or travel agents, but instead plan travel independently using Internet sites and other resources (Cantalops&Salvi, 2014). Participants were selected based on their status (planning a wedding trip or honeymoon) and willingness to participate.

#### **Primary Data**

This study used a qualitative analysis technique. Qualitative research uses varied analytical techniques and non-statistical data in order to form theories and explain phenomena, but does not attempt to quantify or generalize these phenomena (Creswell, 2014). It has a number of advantages compared to quantitative research, including the ability to explain and not just identify causal relationships, the ability to challenge existing theories, and the inclusion of the voice of the participant in the study (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2010). Qualitative research also does have some disadvantages, including a lack of certainty about the findings and inability to generalize findings (Bryman& Bell, 2011). In this study, it is appropriate to use a qualitative approach since it will allow the researcher to explain the research phenomena and begin to develop theory about it. Qualitative research is also appropriate for the research since it is essentially exploratory in nature (Patton, 2015). This will provide some empirical and explanatory support for (Decrop, 2010) conceptual framework of destination choice, specifically in the context of the honeymoon trip to Phuket. The qualitative approach will also provide useful descriptive information for honeymoon tourists to Phuket, which could be used to further develop theories of destination choice in a situation with two (or more) actors. Since this has not been studied in detail, it will be a significant contribution.

### 3.3 Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study is an interview guide designed for semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is an interview in which a series of questions are established, but where interviewers and participants are free to pursue other lines of questioning, challenge each other's preconceptions, and provide new information through interaction (Galletta, 2013). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to collect more information and to challenge existing models and theories through information that is volunteered by participants that fall outside these existing theories (Galletta, 2013). Although some authors recommend unstructured interviews, these interviews are more suited to long-term projects and large-scale theory development (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), which is inconsistent with the resources and limitations of this study. The semi-structured interview guide (Table 3.1) was developed based on the literature review. It was subjected to pre-testing during mock-up interview sessions, in which the questions were refined to improve the clarity and order of the interview. They were also assessed through supervisor review to make sure the questions were consistent with the theoretical base and existing knowledge.

Table 3.1 Interview questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1. What destinations are in choice sets among Asian couples before they have chosen Phuket as the final choice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have you ever been to Phuket before?</li> <li>● How many times have you been to Phuket?</li> <li>● What is the main reason of visiting Phuket?</li> <li>● What do you like most about Phuket?</li> <li>● Where is your favorite destination in Phuket?</li> <li>● Is Phuket the first choice that you choose for pre-wedding or honeymoon? If not where is the first choice and why you change your mind?</li> </ul>

Table 3.1 Continued

Research Questions	Interview Questions
2. What are the factors that influence Asian couples to choose Phuket as their final set?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is the main factor influence your decision on selecting a place for pre-wedding or honeymoon?</li> <li>● Please think about the time when you were selecting a destination for your pre-wedding or honeymoon, what factors did you consider when selecting Phuket as your destination.</li> <li>● How do you make the list of the destinations for your pre-wedding and honeymoon, before you decided your destination?</li> <li>● How do you select Phuket as a pre-wedding or honeymoon because it is your dream place? Or else please explain.</li> <li>● How do you select Phuket as a pre-wedding or honeymoon because it fulfils your needs and preferences? Or else please explain?</li> <li>● How did you ever know or have information about Phuket before selecting it as your pre-wedding or honeymoon destination?</li> <li>● How Phuket match your requirement for pre-wedding or honeymoon destination? And why?</li> <li>● Which place in Phuket influence your decision for pre-wedding or honeymoon?</li> <li>● Why do you think Phuket is a suitable place for shooting pre-wedding or honeymoon?</li> <li>● Would you like to revisit Phuket in the future?</li> <li>● If you can choose freely without any limited (budget and time), where would you prefer as your destination for pre-wedding or honeymoon, and why?</li> </ul>

Table 3.1 Continued

Research Questions	Interview Questions
3. Are there differences among personal characteristics (age and nationality) on types of destination choice sets of Asian couples?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gender (Male/Female)</li> <li>● Age</li> <li>● Nationality</li> </ul>

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a combination of thematic and content analysis. Both of these approaches are common approaches for analysis of textual data, but have slightly different aims and goals (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2010). Content analysis examines the content of the interviews in order to understand its significance and meaning (Schreier, 2012). The process of qualitative content analysis identifies specific units of meaning within the content of the text using a process of phased coding (Schreier, 2012). First, open coding identifies all possible units of meaning; following this process, axial coding focuses on the research question, identifying units of meaning related to these research questions (Schreier, 2012). Content analysis is used to interpret the content contained within the texts and to reflect on its meaning. Thematic analysis uses a similar process of coding, but its goal is somewhat different, as it is intended to draw out themes or shared ideas between different texts (Patton, 2015). This includes for example shared themes and contradictions in the interviews of different participants. The process of thematic analysis begins with open coding, followed by categorization or grouping of codes into different categories (Patton, 2015). For example, “forests” and “beaches” might be placed in the same category of “nature”. The categories are then combined into themes, which have a broader meaning within the context of the study. For example, “city sights” and “nature” might both be classified in the category of “scenery”. For this research, content analysis was conducted on the individual interviews. Thematic analysis was then conducted between interviews. The findings of both these analysis approaches was combined and interpreted using a combination of narrative discussion and quotes.

One of the problems of the coding process was inter-judge reliability, or consensus. This problem resulted because both members of the sample couples were interviewed

about their choice of destination. While in some cases one member of a couple delegates responsibility to the other to make a destination choice (Stone, 2016), this was not always the case. Therefore, determining the extent to which there was a consensus between the two members of a couple on the destination choice factors was an important aspect of understanding it. It was not expected that there would be a fully consistent set of responses between couples, as couples could have different motivations for selecting the same location. For example, one could prefer outdoor activities while the other preferred luxury accommodations, both of which are available in Phuket. Inter-judge reliability is more commonly evaluated in the context of quantitative research, where statistical tests such as Kappa and Cronbach's alpha can be used to test the degree of statistical correspondence between respondents (Morling, 2017). Although there was no statistical test available to evaluate inter-judge reliability in a qualitative context, the researcher controlled the consistency of the coding frame by using pairs of interviews simultaneously in the coding process.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This chapter reports findings in relation to the study's research questions and objectives. Adopting qualitative research method, the key findings are structured as per the followings:

4.1 Demographic profiles of the participants

4.2 Findings of research question 1: What destinations are in choice sets for Asian couples before they have chosen Phuket as the final choice?

4.3 Finding of research question 2: What are the factors that influence Asian couples to choose Phuket as their final set?

4.4 Findings of research question 3: Are there differences based on personal characteristics (age and nationality) in the destination choice sets of Asian couples?

#### **4.1 Demographic profiles of the participants**

Interviews were conducted with 20 Asian travelers (10 couples) who had chosen Phuket for their pre-wedding or honeymoon trips. The respondents are referred to as Couple A to J in order to keep the respondent's identity anonymous and maintain confidentiality. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the respondent demographics and travel purposes. The majority of the respondents are aged 30 years and above, which accounts for 60 percent (n = 12) of the respondents. While the respondents whose age is under 30 years account for 40 percent (n = 8), for gender, this research collected data from males and females equally since the data was collected in pairs. Moreover, the data was collected from either pre-wedding or honeymoon couples. In this case, the travel purpose data was also collected equally between pre-wedding and honeymoon couples, while the nationality of the respondents varies. Most respondents are Chinese (40 percent, n = 8). The second largest group are Korean (20 percent, n = 4). The rest of the nations are Indian, Malaysian, Filipino and Taiwanese (10 percent, n = 2).

Table 4.1 Respondent demographic profiles and travel purposes

<b>Demographic Variable</b>	<b>Demographic Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Age	Below 30 year	8	40.00
	30 and above	12	60.00
Gender	Female	10	50.00
	Male	10	50.00
Nationality	Chinese	8	40.00
	Korean	4	20.00
	Indian	2	10.00
	Malaysian	2	10.00
	Filipino	2	10.00
	Taiwanese	2	10.00
Travel purpose	Pre-wedding	10	50.00
	Honeymoon	10	50.00

#### **4.2 Research Question 1: What destinations are in choice sets for Asian couples before they have chosen Phuket as the final choice?**

Addressing the first research question required identifying the destinations in the respondents' choice sets (see Table 4.2). Phuket was in all of the evoked choice sets, and was the final selected destination for all of the couples. For this reason, Phuket has been chosen as the destination of pre-wedding or honeymoon by all the couples with their awareness about the existence of Phuket. This means that they do aware of Phuket at the time they were making the decision toward final destination. They also chose to visit Phuket because of their own need and preference to satisfy themselves. This can go under evoked choice sets. As evoked set is the

subset of awareness set, where the traveler is selecting this particular destination to fulfill his or her needs.

However, a number of additional destinations were considered, including unspecified nations in Europe (n = 8), France (n = 4), French Polynesia (n = 2), Japan (n = 2), Jeju Island (n = 2), the Maldives (n = 2), and the Philippines (n = 2). As well as Phuket, all of these destinations are under awareness set at the consideration stage, which mean that all participants were aware of the existing of these places when they were considering the place to go for honeymoon or pre-wedding. However, when entering to the evaluation stage, these places cannot fully fulfill their requirements and satisfactions as some participants stated that:

*“First, I think to go Europe for honeymoon trip but after I changed because of time and weather that time is too cold I don’t want that.”* (Couple C, Male 36 and Female 35 years old)

*“No, first place I chose Jeju Island because it’s not too far from Seoul but after I changed because of my wife wanted to go to Phuket.”* (Couple D, Male 32 and Female 31 years old)

*“If I don’t need to worry about time and budget, I would rather go to Paris (France) because I never been there.”* (Couple I, Male 25 and Female 24 years old)

For this reason, at the evaluation stages, their choices have shifted to surrogate set. The surrogate set is the set that most of the requirements have been fulfilled, but since it did not fulfill all the requirements, travelers finally decided to drop it and go for the one that met all the requirements (evoked set). Although these places cannot fulfill all of the requirements, they are the dream destination for participants. Based on the interview results, dream destination can be seen as a factor when selecting honeymoon or pre-wedding destination, but the dream destination should also fulfill all of the requirements as well. Because people can have more than one dream destinations. For example, some participants dream of going to Europe for honeymoon but the change to Phuket because of the weather. This can be implied that when selecting final destination “dream destination” could not fulfil all the requirements (evoked set and available).

Moreover, Chinese couple stated *“I just think about time because I don’t want to have problem with my job and my husband’s job too.”* (Couple I, Male 25 and Female 24 years old). This means that this couple has been through exclusion set at the evaluation stage. The

exclusion is the inept or reject set that are determined to *not* sufficiently meet the traveler's preferences.

Table 4.2 Destinations in Asian couples' choice sets

Destination	Choice Set	No. of people	Percentage (%)
Phuket	Awareness → Evoked → Available	20	100.00
Europe(nation unspecified)	Awareness → Dream ↘ Surrogate	8	40.00
France	Awareness → Dream ↘ Surrogate ↘ Exclusion	4	20.00
French Polynesia	Awareness → Dream ↘ Surrogate	2	10.00
Japan	Awareness → Dream ↘ Surrogate	2	10.00
Jeju Island	Awareness → Dream ↘ Surrogate	2	10.00
The Maldives	Awareness → Dream ↘ Surrogate	2	10.00
The Philippines	Awareness → Dream ↘ Surrogate	2	10.00

#### 4.3 Research Question 2: What are the factors that influence Asian couples to choose Phuket as their final set?

The second research question focused on the factors that influenced destination choice, which are listed in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 in descending order of popularity. Of the needs and preferences cited by at least 40% of the respondents ( $n \geq 4$ ), beaches were by far the

most important, mentioned by all 20 of the study participants, followed by delicious food (n = 14), beautiful scenery (n = 12), a close or otherwise accessible location (n = 10), good accommodations (n = 8), pleasant weather (n = 6), sightseeing opportunities (n = 6), cost factors such as good value for money due to package deals or general affordability (n = 8), activities and events (n = 6), islands (n = 4), markets or stores (n = 4), being near the sea (n = 4), access to spas (n = 4), the perception of Thailand as a natural place (n = 4), and convenient transportation options (n = 4).

The results are not surprising, as Phuket is well known for its beautiful beaches and Thailand is famous for its food and natural scenery. Besides the beautiful beaches Phuket, there are also several natural waterfalls with amazing views and several activities. The province has managed its natural resources well together with the growth of the city. Thus, visiting Phuket, the couple can experience both natural lifestyle and urban lifestyles.

The following are the participants's responses:

*"My favorite place in Phuket, I think all beaches are nice and I really love to visit local night markets around here as well."* (Couple A, Male 30 and Female 30 years old)

*"Phuket had many beaches, good location, accessibility, transportation and good weather. Also Phuket have good accommodations and reasonably priced."*(Couple B, Male 39 and Female 38 years old)

*"I really like Maikhao beach. It's top of beaches here."* (Couple C, Male 36 and Female 35 years old)

*"For Phuket we have fallen in love with beaches, islands, food especially fresh seafood that is very nice. And any promotion honeymoon packages make our decision as well."*(Couple D, Male 32 and Female 31 years old)

*"We liked natural, weather, beaches and Thai foods. Everything here is our favorites. Also we wanted to come to travel here and that's good chance to shooting photo for my wedding as well."* (Couple E, Male 25 and Female 25 years old)

*"We liked a lot of things but the most our favorite is natural atmosphere and taste of foods. Everything great. I loved my wedding photos and Phuket as well."* (Couple F, Male 26 and Female 26 years old)

*"We like Sea, beach activities and Thai foods. We preferred Racha island is*

*the best for this trip.*” (Couple G, Male 29 and Female 29 years old)

*“We think beaches is the best here, good taste foods and Thai people are very lovely. And also I chosen Phuket because not far from my country and not expensive.”*(Couple H, Male 29 and Female 28 years old)

*“I like beaches, Thai foods and Thai fruits. And I like Patong because everything has been here like department store, street market, beaches, spa, massage etc.”* (Couple I, Male 25 and Female 24 years old)

*“I like beautiful beach, Thai foods and I like easy and convenient travel and not far from Malaysia. And I found direct flight ticket with cheap accommodation so that's main reason I chose to come here.”* (Couple J, Male 30 and Female 30 years old)

Table 4.3 Need and preferences factors that contributed to the choice of Phuket

<b>Needs and Preferences</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Beaches	20	100.00
Good food	14	70.00
Beauty	12	60.00
Accessible/close/good location	10	50.00
Accommodations (general)	8	40.00
Good weather	6	30.00
Costs/discounts/promotional packages	6	30.00
Sightseeing	6	30.00
Activities/events	4	20.00
Islands	4	20.00
Markets/stores	4	20.00
Natural	4	20.00

Table 4.3 Continued

<b>Needs and Preferences</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Sea	4	20.00
Spas	4	20.00
Transportation options	4	20.00
Attractions (unspecified)	2	10.00
Beverages	2	10.00
Cleanliness	2	10.00
Comfort	2	10.00
Convenience	2	10.00
Destination image as a tourism hub	2	10.00
Excitement	2	10.00
Good people	2	10.00
Nightlife	2	10.00
Relaxation	2	10.00
Variety (unspecified)	2	10.00
Will not interfere with jobs	2	10.00

Table 4.4 shows some constraints that the participants were concerned when selecting their final destination. These constraints are good weather, not crowded, without pests, cost and budget, and will not interfere with jobs. Based on these constraints that the participants have in their mind, some destinations have cut out, and Phuket has been selected as the final choice. For the reason that Phuket does not have these constraints. For example, the weather is nice not cold, the cost is reasonable, it is not too crowded, and not too far from their hometown.

Therefore, they can go and return within their timeline. The participants answer can be seen as follow:

*“Any beach that’s not crowded.”* (Couple B, Male 39 and Female 38 years old)

*“All places just comfortable and clean without the pests such as flies, mosquitoes, ants, may be a little bit annoying.”* (Couple A, Male 30 and Female 30 years old)

*“First, I think to go Europe for honeymoon trip but after I changed because of time and weather that time is too cold I don’t wanted that. I’d rather focus on time and weather for my honeymoon trip.”* (Couple C, Male 36 and Female 35 years old)

Table 4.4 Constraints factors that contributed to the choice of Phuket

<b>Constraints</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Good weather	6	30.00
Not crowded	2	10.00
Without pests	2	10.00
Will not interfere with jobs	2	10.00
Cost and budget	2	10.00

#### **4.4 Research Question 3: Are there differences based on personal characteristics (age and nationality) in the destination choice sets of Asian couples?**

The data were also analyzed to determine whether destination choice sets differed based on age and nationality. Unfortunately, most of the respondents did not comment on destinations they had excluded or considered temporarily unavailable based on their selection criteria, and the majority did not differentiate between surrogate destinations (those that were also seriously considered) and dream destinations (those they would love to visit but could not due to permanent constraints). Given these limitations, the unavailable set is not included in the analysis and surrogate and dream sets have been combined.



Table 4.5 provides a summary of choice sets based on age groupings. It should be noted that the 20-to-29-year-old age group was separated equally between males ( $n = 5$ ) and females ( $n = 5$ ), as well as the 30-to-39-year-old age group that was also separated between males ( $n = 5$ ) and females ( $n = 5$ ) equally. However, the answers were given by couples, where males and females gave the same answer as they shared the same experience; so, it is impossible to separate gender effects from age effects. In this case, the research has focused on age differences. The younger, couples' respondents cited a wide variety of choice set criteria. However, the only items mentioned by multiple respondents were food, the beauty of the destination, and beaches, and the only constraints cited were issues with jobs. Moreover, all respondents were aware of the existence of Phuket.

As couple A (Male 30 and Female 30 years old) stated *“As I know, Phuket is a place for tour and full of customers from overseas. And I have been there before so that I understand the reason why Phuket can be the nice place for traveling”*.

Couple C (Male 36 and Female 35 years old) stated *“Yes, I went here many times and had wedding ceremony here so I think I'd rather to know information here.”*

This has shown that the respondents have some knowledge about Phuket, which is a part of the awareness set. Under the awareness set, there is three subsets which are evoke set, surrogate set, and exclusion set. For the younger group who are 29 and lower, Phuket was in both the evoked and available sets, and surrogate or dream sets included France, other unspecified countries in Europe, and the Maldives. No excluded destinations were named. Furthermore, when asking the respondents if Phuket matched their requirements, all of them agreed.

*“Yes, because I'm glad to come here and happy with everything here”*.  
(Couple G, Male 29 and Female 29 years old)

*“Yes, because all matched for my requirement.”* (Couple H, Male 29 and Female 28 years old)

This is fitted with evoke and available sets criteria, as the couples do agree about Phuket and coming to Phuket can fulfill their needs and preferences. For surrogate or dreams, the different from the evoke set is that the surrogate and dream sets are also the sets that the couple chose to fulfill their need and preference, but somehow, they cannot be completely fulfilled. There is some limitation occurrence that lead the couples to select a particular destination instead

of the most preferred one. These limitations might be budget, time, weather, or personal reasons. In this case, some respondents stated that they would prefer to select the other place, but there is some limitation occurrence such as time and budget.

*“If I don’t need to worry about time and budget, I would rather go to Paris (France) because I never been there.”* (Couple I, Male 25 and Female 24 years old)

*“Without thinking about anything, I think Europe because all country have identity. Even though I don’t like European food.”* (Couple H, Male 29 and Female 28 years old)

In addition, the respondents who are in their thirties and above, also cited a wide variety of choice set criteria. Those identified by multiple respondents included accommodations, beaches, beautiful scenery, location, costs/discounts/promotional packages, food, sightseeing options, convenient transportation, and good weather. Overall, the older respondents were slightly more likely to be concerned about where they would stay, general location issues, doing touristy things such as sightseeing, having good options for getting around, keeping costs down, and vacationing somewhere with a pleasant climate. Based on these choice set of preferences and needs, Phuket has been selected based on evoke and surrogate sets. For the reasons that Phuket can satisfy and fulfill their needs in most terms, which is matched with evoke and surrogate sets that traveler chooses their destination based on their preferences and needs. This is the opposite with the exclusion criteria. Exclusion criteria cited by members of this group included cold weather and unclear, uncomfortable, or pest-ridden accommodations. For instance, a couple C (Male 36 and Female 35 years old) stated

*“First, I think to go Europe for honeymoon trip but after I changed because of time and weather that time is too cold I don’t wanted that”.*

Couple A (Male 30 and Female 30 years old) stated

*“All places just comfortable and clean without the pests such as flies, mosquitoes, ants, may be a little bit annoying.”*

As with the younger group, Phuket was in both the evoked and available sets, and the surrogate and dream sets included unspecified nations in Europe. However, these latter sets also included Japan, Jeju Island, the Philippines, and French Polynesia.

Although some members of both the older and younger groups showed an interest in Europe, there was more interest in European destinations among the younger, whereas

those in the older were more likely to favour Asian and island-based destinations. For instance, the younger groups stated:

*“In Europe is interested for me if I can.”* (Couple E, Male 25 and Female 25 years old)

*“I preferred France or Europe area because I like European architecture.”*  
(Couple F, Male 26 and Female 26 years old)

While the older groups stated:

*“I wanted to go to Philippines because there had many beaches as well.”*  
(Couple D, Male 32 and Female 31 years old)

*“The place I may consider is to find a nice resort where have access to the beach and have many variety choices to beverages. Also, the resort may offer as plenty of events or activities. In addition, the transportation is another consideration, which may close to the city or having a shuttle to anywhere in the city.”* (Couple A, Male 30 and Female 30 years old)

Table 4.5 Choice set differences by age

Age	Choice Set Criteria	Choice Set	Destinations
20-29	Activities/events (2)	Location (2)	Evoked
	Architecture (2)	Markets/stores (2)	Surrogate/Dream
	Attractions (2)	National identity (2)	France (2)
	Beaches (10)	Naturalness (2)	Europe (4) 1
	Beauty (6)	Novelty (somewhere the	The Maldives (2)
	Convenience (2)	respondent had never	Not name
	Cost/discount/promotional	been (2)	
	package (2)	People (2)	
	Food (8)	Sea (2)	
	Islands (2)	Spas (2)	
	Interference with jobs (2)	Exclusion	France
	Best fit	Available	Phuket (10)

Table 4.5 Continued

Age	Choice Set Criteria	Choice Set	Destinations
30-39	Accessibility (2)	Islands (2)	Evoked Phuket (10)
	Accommodations (8)	Location (general) (4)	Surrogate/Dream Europe (4)
	Activities/events (2)	Markets/stores (2)	Japan (2)
	Beaches (10)	Naturalness (2)	Jeju Island (2)
	Beauty (4)	Nightlife (2)	The Philippines (2)
	Beverages (2)	Not crowded (2)	French Polynesia (2)
	Cleanliness (2)	Relaxation (2)	
	Comfort (2)	Sea (2)	
	Convenience (2)	Sightseeing options (6)	
	Cost/discount/ promotional package (6)	Spas (2) Transportation (4)	
	Destination image (2)	Weather (4)	
	Food (6)		
	Cold weather (2)		Exclusion Europe (2)
	Unclean, uncomfortable, or pest-ridden accommodations (2)		
Best fit		Available Phuket (10)	

Analysis was also conducted to determine whether choice sets differed by nationality (see Table 4.6). All of the respondents said they wanted to go somewhere with nice beaches. Otherwise, their selection criteria cited were quite varied, but with only one representative for many of the national groups and not all of the representatives mentioning surrogate, dream, or exclusion destinations, it is impossible to draw conclusions. Of the groups for which there were multiple representatives, the four Chinese respondents showed more interest in beaches, Thai food, beautiful scenery, and good weather, and considered additional destinations such as France, other European nations, and French Polynesia, and the two Koreans were also interested in beaches and good food. However, neither mentioned many of the features cited by the Chinese respondents, such as markets, naturalness, attractions, sightseeing,

transportation, or weather. Instead, they were more likely to cite islands, seaside access, activities or events, and cost-related factors such as promotions or discounts as important criteria, and their surrogate or dream destinations (all of which provided island access) included Jeju Island, the Philippines, and the Maldives.

“The main factor made our decision, Phuket is very beautiful, convenience, accessibility, cost and good weather.” (Couple B, Chinese, Male 30 and Female 30 years old)

*“First, I think to go Europe for honeymoon trip but after I changed because of time and weather that time is too cold I don’t want that.”* (Couple C, Indian, Male 36 and Female 35 years old)

The choice sets and choice set criteria also differed among the individual representatives of other nations, though it is not known if these divergent criteria indicate cultural differences or differences unique to the single respondents from each nation.

When comparing Chinese and non-Chinese citizens, most of the results are not really any different. For example, most Chinese chose to visit Phuket because of the beaches, beauty, and food, which is quite similar to the other nations. However, there is some choice set that concerns the Chinese while the others do not place importance with such, like accessibility, and architecture. On the other hand, there also some choice sets that the others give the importance to, but the Chinese do not, such as cleanliness. This might depend on culture and values of each country. In some countries, cleanliness is a must that everyone should follow such as in Singapore. However, for Chinese cleanliness might not be a big issue for them. In short, there is not much difference between the Chinese and non-Chinese visitors who visit Phuket for pre-wedding or honeymoon.

Besides, Chinese couples most likely to select Europe as their dream destinations. But at the evaluation stage Europe has been dropped out as it does not fit with all of their requirements (Surrogate sets). They stated that Phuket is also their dream destination and it is a perfect destination that match with all of their requirements.

*“...all thing I like included in Phuket so that’s my perfect requirement.”*  
(Couple E, Chinese, Male 25 and Female 25 years old)

For this reason, Phuket has been selected as their final destinations. When considering at each stage the results showed that at the consideration stage the participants do aware of their choices

(Awareness set); at evaluation stage, the participants evaluate based on their requirements that all should be met (evoked set); and when coming to constraint issues, the participants select based on dream and availability.

However, one thing that should be kept in mind is that this research only collected the data from a few Chinese and non-Chinese, the results might not be able to represent the whole nations for both of the groups.

Overall, the results suggest that there are some national differences in choice sets. However, quantitative research conducted with a larger sample would be required to confirm this possibility.

Table 4.6 Choice set differences by nationality

Nationality	Choice Set Criteria		Choice Set	Destinations
Chinese	Accessibility (2)	Markets/stores (2)	Evoked	Phuket (6)
	Accommodations (2)	Natural (2)	Surrogate/Dream	Europe (6)
	Architecture (2)	Not crowded (2)		France (4)
	Attractions (2)	Novelty (somewhere the		French Polynesia
	Beaches (6)	respondent had never		(2)
	Beauty (6)	been(2)		
	Convenience (2)	Sightseeing (2)		
	Cost/discount/ promotional package (2)	Spas (2) Transportation (2)		
	Food (6)	Weather (4)		
	Location(general) (2)			
	Interference with jobs (2)			Exclusion
	Best fit		Available	Phuket (6)

Table 4.6 Continued

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Choice Set Criteria</b>		<b>Choice Set</b>	<b>Destinations</b>	
Indian	Accommodations (2)	Good weather (2)	Evoked	Phuket (2)	
	Beaches (2)	Sightseeing (2)	Surrogate/Dream	Europe (2)	
	Beauty (2)	Spas (2)			
	Cold weather (2)		Exclusion	Europe	
	Best fit		Available	Phuket (2)	
Korean	Activities/events (2)	Cost/discount/	Evoked	Phuket (4)	
	Beaches (4)	promotional	Surrogate/Dream	Jeju Island (2) The Philippines (2) The Maldives (2)	
	Food (4)	package (4)			
	Sea (2)	Islands (4)			
	None mentioned		Exclusion	None mentioned	
Best fit		Available	Phuket (4)		
Malaysian	Accommodations (2)	Cost/discount/	Evoked	Phuket (2)	
	Beaches (2)	promotional	Surrogate/Dream	Japan (2)	
	Beauty (2)	package (2)			
	Convenience (2)	Location (2)			
	Food (2)	Sea (2)			
None mentioned			Exclusion	None mentioned	
Best fit			Available	Phuket (2)	
Filipino	Beaches (2)	National identity	Evoked	Phuket (2)	
	Food (2)	(2)	Surrogate/Dream	Europe (2)	
	Location (2)	People (2)			
	None mentioned			Exclusion	None mentioned
	Best fit			Available	Phuket (2)

Table 4.6 Continued

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Choice Set Criteria</b>		<b>Choice Set</b>	<b>Destinations</b>
Taiwanese	Activities/events (2)	Destination image	Evoked	Phuket (2)
	Beaches (2)	(2)	Surrogate/Dream	None mentioned
	Beverages (2)	Nightlife (2)		
	Cleanliness (2)	Relaxation (2)		
	Comfort (2)	Transportation (2)		
	Markets/stores (2)			
	Unclean, uncomfortable, pest-ridden (2)		Exclusion	None mentioned
Best fit		Available	Phuket (2)	



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter aims to provide a summary of key findings, and discuss findings in relation to the research objectives of the study. The chapter is then structured in according with the research objectives as per the followings:

- i. To identify destinations in the choice sets of Asian couples before they have selected Phuket as the final choice
- ii. To examine the importance of factors influencing their selection of Phuket as their final choice
- iii. To examine whether these factors are different based on personal characteristics (age and nationality) in the destination choice sets of Asian couples

This section presents conclusions, discussion, recommendations, limitations of current study and recommendations for future study.

#### 5.1 Conclusions and Discussion

This research was conducted to fulfil three objectives: identify the destinations in the choice sets of Asian couples who selected Phuket for a pre-wedding or honeymoon trip, examine the importance of the factors that influenced their choices, and determine whether there are different in destination choice sets based on age and nationality. Twenty Asian tourists (10 couples) from various Asian nations were interviewed, and their responses provided insights into destination preferences, selection criteria and choice sets.

##### **Objective 1: To identify destinations in the choice sets of Asian couples before they have selected Phuket as the final choice**

The first objective was to determine which alternative locations Asian couples consider before choosing Phuket for their pre-wedding or honeymoon trips. Unspecified nations in Europe were the most popular surrogate option, cited by four respondents, and two were interested in France, so more than 50% of the respondents considered European destinations before settling on Phuket. Other destinations that were considered by individual respondents

included Japan, the Maldives, the Philippines, French Polynesia, and Jeju Island, a popular destination for South Korean travelers (Seo et al., 2009).

**Objective 2: To examine the importance of factors influencing their selection of Phuket as their final choice**

Couples choosing a wedding-related destination determine their initial choice set based on personal requirements, budget constraints, and other issues, and then identify destinations that match their criteria based on prior experience and research (Kim & Agrusa, 2005). They start with an awareness set that includes all known destinations, then narrow their choices down to the evoked set, which includes destinations that are aligned with their needs and preferences (Decrop, 2010), and in most cases, they draw their final choice from this latter set (de Pelsmacker et al., 2007).

A honeymooning couples select their evoked destination set based on the needs, preferences, and constraints of two individuals (Jang et al., 2007). Other destinations considered by one or both members of the couple (the surrogate set) meet some but not all of their requirements and are not selected as final choices unless preferred destinations from the evoked set are temporarily unavailable or relegated to the dream set because they are unfeasible due to permanent barriers (Decrop, 2010). During the selection process, an exclusion set is also created for destinations that do not meet the couple's requirements. Reasons noted by the study participants for relegating particular destinations to their exclusion sets included commonly cited factors such as bad weather (Decrop, 2010).

Phuket was the final selection for the research participants because it came closest to meeting all of their requirements and was not relegated to an exclusionary choice set due to constraints. Many different factors contributed to their choice of Phuket. However, beaches were the most commonly cited factor, in keeping with past research indicating that beaches are among the primary reasons for visiting Thailand (Rittichainuwat et al., 2008). Other factors that contributed to the final decision for some of the travelers included activities and resort accommodations, in accordance with the choice factors specified by Middleton et al. (2009). A cultural distance effect, which has been noted by other researchers (Ahn & McKercher, 2015; Middleton et al., 2009), was also evident among the travelers in their thirties who participated in this research, as they were more likely to select Asian destinations for their evoked and surrogate

sets.

Destination image has been identified as a factor in choice (Prayag, 2010), and some of the participants in the current study cited image factors as important to their selection process (for example, the perception that Thailand is a good place for tourists). Past research has also identified geographical factors as contributors to choice (Nicolau, 2008), and several of the participants in the current study cited location as an important variable as well. Additional selection criteria cited by at least 20% of the study participants, included good food, beautiful scenery, sightseeing opportunities, islands, shopping options, seaside access, spa facilities, good transportation options, and cost-effectiveness (package deals or general affordability). Figure 3 provides a graphic showing the relative importance of the choice factors, as indicated by the frequency with which they were cited.

Figure 5.1 Choice factors

Beverages	Cleanliness	Comfort	Convenience	Tourism hub
Sea	Sightseeing opportunities	Food	Cost/ Packages	Islands
Spas	Beauty	Beaches	Location	Markets/ stores
Transportation	Activities/ events/attractions	Accommodations	Weather	Naturalness
Excitement	People	Nightlife	Not crowded	Relaxation

**Objective 3: To examine whether these factors are different based on personal characteristics (age and nationality) in the destination choice sets of Asian couples**

Age is among the demographic factors used to segment tourist groups for marketing purposes (Fyal & Garrod, 2005; Middleton et al., 2009), so it was expected that travelers representing different age groups would have different destination preferences. Age effects were evident in the current study, as older respondents were more likely to express concerns about accommodation and location issues, convenient transportation, costs, and nice weather. Other research has shown that older travelers are typically more interested in cultural activities than the more adventurous pursuits favored by their younger counterparts, and because

their incomes are higher, they may have more sophisticated preferences (Middleton et al., 2009). Both of these effects were seen in the current study, as the older travelers were more likely to be interested in sightseeing and to indicate their higher standards by noting the importance of clean, comfortable, pest-free, or otherwise good accommodations.

It has been suggested that older travelers also show more interest in culturally distant locations due to prior travel experience or a greater likelihood of traveling to gain knowledge (Aschauer, 2010). However, the older travelers who participated in this research showed a preference for Asian destinations, which are more culturally similar, whereas the younger respondents were more likely to prefer culturally distant destinations, such as European nations.

Although the findings of this research suggest that age plays a role in destination choice, it is impossible to separate the effects of age and gender because male and female had been collected equally between older and younger groups. Also, all of the participants were in their twenties and thirties, so middle-aged and older individuals were not represented.

The interviews also analyzed to determine whether choice sets differed based on nationality. There have been fewer studies of cross-national differences in destination choice sets, so there are not many findings with which to compare the study results. Also, there was minimal representation for each national group in the relatively small interview sample, so although the results suggest that there may be cross-national differences, more research would be required to draw definitive conclusions.

Past research indicates that nationality contributes to perceptions of destination factors (Hsu et al., 2009; Prayag & Ryan, 2011), and the findings of the current study suggest that Chinese travelers may be more concerned with beautiful scenery and pleasant weather, and that they are more likely to consider European destinations, while Koreans are more likely to consider island-based destinations such as Jeju Island, the Philippines, and the Maldives, and to think about costs when making their selections. There were also some differences selection criteria and surrogate or dream destinations cited by the individual Taiwanese, Indian, Malaysian, and Filipino respondents. However, with only one representative from each group, it is impossible to draw conclusions, as these individuals may be unusual in some way and therefore not representative of the typical preferences associated with their home nations.

## 5.2 Recommendations

A number of recommendations can be made for tourism planners and managers targeting the Asian pre-wedding and honeymoon traveler market based on the findings of this research. First, the most commonly cited reasons for choosing a particular destination, mentioned by 30% or more of the respondents in this study, included beaches, delicious food, beautiful scenery, good accommodations, cost savings (discounts or cost-effective wedding packages), pleasant weather, accessible location, and sightseeing options. Therefore, these factors should be emphasized in marketing campaigns. However, if marketers wish to prioritize particular features, beaches, food, beauty, accommodations, and overall location should be emphasized, as these factors appeal to the largest proportion of Asian pre-wedding and honeymoon travelers.

Second, this research provides some evidence that there may be age differences in the factors that influence choice sets and final destination selections for Asian travelers planning wedding-related trips. Although additional market research would be required to confirm these age-related differences, the findings of this research suggest that older respondents may care more about clean and comfortable accommodations, sightseeing options, location issues, convenient transportation, and good weather, and that they are more likely to include island destinations and Asian destinations in their choice sets than their younger counterparts. Overall, the responses of the older study participants suggest that those in their thirties care more about comfort, convenience, and familiarity than travelers in their twenties. However, given that the majority of respondents in the 30-to-39-year-old age category were male, it is also possible that this is a gender effect, so a market study that broke out the findings by gender and age would be needed to determine which of the choice factors to emphasize in targeted marketing campaigns aimed at particular age and gender groups.

Third, this research provides evidence that the most salient choice factors may differ based on nationality. However, as with possible age effects, market research would be required to confirm this, but the findings do suggest that destinations could be marketed more effectively with targeted strategies tailored to the needs and preferences of different national groups.

Fourth, many of the respondents in this study chose Phuket from among their choice set options in part because they were drawn to package deals that offered discounts for

pre-wedding or honeymoon trips. This indicates that packages tailored to those who travel for wedding-related purposes are an effective promotional strategy that can be used to increase the appeal of a particular destination.

### **5.3 Limitations of Current Study**

This study had several limitations. The first limitation is that the study is cross-sectional, which means that data will only be collected one time (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This creates a snapshot of the research relationships at that point in time, but cannot reflect on either past or future situations. Another limitation is that the respondents will not necessarily be representative of honeymooners in Phuket. This could affect the application of the data to the general group (Creswell, 2014). However, given that there are no statistics to compare to, there is no way a representative group could be assured. There is also no requirement for qualitative research to be fully representative of a given group, since it is more concerned with explaining relationships and creating theory, which can then be tested later (Patton, 2015). The third limitation is many of the questions asked during the interview series were open-ended and did not elicit specific answers regarding surrogate or dream destinations and exclusion criteria, so not all of the choice sets were addressed. Also, the sample size was small, so there was minimal representation for each national group and the only age groups represented were those in their twenties and thirties. In addition, a convenience sample was used, which may have introduced self-selection bias, and because only qualitative analysis was conducted, the results cannot be generalized to the larger population of Asian couples who consider Phuket as a pre-wedding or honeymoon destination.

### **5.4 Recommendations for Future Study**

A couple of recommendations can be made to address the limitations of this study. It would be informative to conduct a larger quantitative study with a randomly selected population of Asian wedding-related travelers. This research would require adequate representation of each age group and nationality to determine whether choice sets differ significantly based on these demographic variables. The findings of this study could be used to develop targeted destination marketing campaigns for different demographic groups. Also, it

would be useful to conduct interviews with more specific questions regarding surrogate, dream, unavailable, and excluded destination sets to gain further insights into travelers' decision-making processes, as this information would also be helpful for developing more effective destination marketing strategies.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview A

Male – 30 years

Female – 30 years

**Nationality** ...Taiwanese...

**Traveling for**  Honeymoon  Pre-wedding

Interview Questions	Answer
1. Have you ever been to Phuket before?	Yes, we ever been in Phuket last 2 years ago.
2. How many times have you been to Phuket?	Only one time.
3. What is the main reason of visiting Phuket?	Sightseeing and vacation here.
4. What's the most your favorite in Phuket?	My favorite place in Phuket, I think all beaches are very nice and I really love to visit local night markets around here as well.
5. Where's your favorite destination in Phuket?	We liked Ya Nui beach because beautiful and calm.
6. Is Phuket the first choice that you choose for pre-wedding or honeymoon? If not where is the first choice and why you change your mind?	Yes, we chosen Phuket and designed a perfect honeymoon here.
7. What is the main factor influence your decision on selecting a place for honeymoon?	Phuket is the place where has multiple functions. For instance, it is easy to find a beach and lying on the beach to enjoy the relaxing environment. Or, to have an exciting nightlife in Phuket, and so on.

8. Please think about the time when you were selecting a destination for your pre-wedding or honeymoon, what factors did you consider when selecting Phuket as your destination.	The place I may consider is to find a nice resort where have access to the beach and have many variety choices to beverages. Also, the resort may offer as plenty of events or activities. In addition, the transportation is another consideration, which may close to the city or having a shuttle to anywhere in the city.
9. How do you make the list of the destinations for your pre-wedding and honeymoon, before you decided your destination?	Yes.
10. How do you select Phuket as a pre-wedding or honeymoon because it is your dream place? Or else please explain?	No.
11. How do you select Phuket as a pre-wedding or honeymoon because it fulfils your needs and preferences? Or else please explain?	Yes.
12. Have you ever know or have information about the destinations before you selected that for your honeymoon?	Yes.
13. How did you ever know or have information about Phuket before selecting it as your pre-wedding or honeymoon destination?	As we know, Phuket is a place for tour and full of customers from overseas. And we have been there before so that I understand the reason why Phuket can be the nice place for traveling.
14. How Phuket match your requirement for pre-wedding or honeymoon destination? And why?	Yes, because if it didn't meet my requirement I definitely will consider to choose another countries or places.

15. Which place in Phuket influence your decision for pre-wedding or honeymoon?	All places just comfortable and clean without the pests such as flies, mosquitoes, ants, may be a little bit annoying.
16. Why do you think Phuket is a suitable place for shooting pre-wedding or honeymoon?	Yes.
17. Would you like to revisit Phuket in the future?	Definitely.
18. If you can choose freely without any limited (budget and time), where would you prefer as your destination for pre-wedding or honeymoon, and why?	Banyan Tree Phuket. Or DusitThani Laguna Phuket. These two are the international hotel franchises I like. They can satisfied the need I prefer.

**Interview B**

Male - 39 years

Female - 38 years

**Nationality** ...Chinese....**Traveling for**  Honeymoon  Pre-wedding

<b>Interview Questions</b>	<b>Answer</b>
1. Have you ever been to Phuket before?	Yes.
2. How many times have you been to Phuket?	One time.
3. What is the main reason of visiting Phuket?	Travel and sightseeing.
4. What's the most your favorite in Phuket?	I love all Beaches, especially Karon beach and I love Thai foods as well.
5. Where's your favorite destination in Phuket?	Any beach that's not crowded.
6. Is Phuket the first choice that you choose for pre-wedding or honeymoon? If not where is the first choice and why you change your mind?	Of course, Phuket is my first choice. I like Phuket and I was intended to come here.
7. What is the main factor influence your decision on selecting a place for honeymoon?	The main factor for us Phuket is very beautiful, convenience, accessibility, cost and good weather.
8. Please think about the time when you were selecting a destination for your pre-wedding or honeymoon, what factors did you consider when selecting Phuket as your destination.	Phuket met all my requirements but other location considered.
9. How do you make the list of the destinations for your pre-wedding and honeymoon, before you decided your destination?	I started then I saw Phuket and I didn't look further.



10. How do you select Phuket as a pre-wedding or honeymoon because it is your dream place? Or else please explain?	No dream. Research f pre-wedding photos only.
11. How do you select Phuket as a pre-wedding or honeymoon because it fulfils your needs and preferences? Or else please explain?	Yes. Mostly needs and preferences.
12. Have you ever know or have information about the destinations before you selected that for your honeymoon?	I had information and photos I found online.
13. How did you ever know or have information about Phuket before selecting it as your pre-wedding or honeymoon destination?	Phuket had many beaches, good location, accessibility, transportation and good weather.
14. How Phuket match your requirement for pre-wedding or honeymoon destination? And why?	Yes because of accommodations and reasonably priced.
15. Which place in Phuket influence your decision for pre-wedding or honeymoon?	I didn't have specific location. Only photos of beautiful beaches.
16. Why do you think Phuket is a suitable place for shooting pre-wedding or honeymoon?	Yes, for beach themed pre-wedding photos so Phuket has a lots to offer and makes great destination.
17. Would you like to revisit Phuket in the future?	Yes, after the wedding perhaps for anniversary.
18. If you can choose freely without any limited (budget and time), where would you prefer as your destination for pre-wedding or honeymoon, and why?	French Polynesia.

## Appendix B

## Certificate



## VITAE

**Name** Miss Kanthita Thephee

**Student ID** 5630120004

### Educational Attainment

Degree	Name of Institution	Year of Graduation
Bachelor of Arts (Communication Arts, second class honors)	Rangsit University	2010
Diploma of Professional Tourist Guide (Foreign-specific area)	Phuket Community College, Prince of Songkla University (Phuket Campus)	2014

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### List of Publication and Proceeding

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