



## Travel Motivations of Spiritual Tourists

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### Abstract

This article aims to identify the motivations that lead tourists to spiritual trips and to determine the differences between the motivations of Turkish tourists living in Turkey for traveling to spiritual sites in Turkey and the travel motivations of tourists from different cultures living in other countries. With the convenience sampling method, 408 Turkish tourists living in Turkey and 301 tourists from different cultures living in other countries were reached. Frequency distributions were examined, and t-test was applied. Significant differences were found according to the demographic characteristics of spiritual tourists living in Turkey and other countries and the push and pull motivations that lead them to travel. Based on the results of the study, it has been possible to make suggestions about the necessary marketing practices in terms of spiritual tourism in order to increase awareness of spiritual areas and to have the desired importance.

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## INTRODUCTION

The motivations for engaging in tourism can include the desire to escape routine, the urge to add meaning to one's life, or the curiosity to experience the lifestyles of unfamiliar ethnic and cultural groups, thereby testing one's own perspective (Norman, 2004, pp. 11; Güzel & Sarıyıldız, 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Spiritual tourism can be defined as visits to the hearts and minds of sages who have lived or currently reside in different places, especially in multi-civilizational environments. The emergence and growth of the spiritual tourism segment can be attributed to secularization, as categorized by Cohen (1979). Thus, the common purpose of religious, spiritual, or faith-based tourism activities may involve experiencing varied expressions of faith and appreciating related arts, architecture, cuisine, and traditions (Huang et al., 2019). Various forms of tourism, including those focusing on wilderness, wildlife, rural areas, and nature, also encompass spiritual dimensions. Some tourists may prefer these types of travel to fulfill their inner needs, such as solitude and contemplation of life (Schanzel & McIntosh, 2000; Moufakkir & Selmi, 2018; Christou et al., 2023). Additionally, New Age movements, contemporary psychological seminars, workshops, and transformative journeys can be included in the realm of spiritual tourism (Hùng, 2013).

Nostalgia helps most people reconstruct their past and build social memory (Van Dyke & Alcock, 2003). Nostalgia and the desire for authentic cultural experiences are factors that influence the development of spiritual tourism. Some people think that the past or the primitive is more authentic (Van Dyke & Alcock, 2003). In this context, spiritual tourism provides a connection with the ideas of both historical eras and primitive cultures.

Spiritual travel is sometimes to places where people feel spiritually strong, and sometimes to artesian wells, magical groves, strange cliffs or mysterious geological sites with their own unique atmosphere. Machu Picchu (in Peru), the Pyramids of Egypt, the entire island of Bali (in Indonesia) and parts of the American Southwest are some of the world's most popular places to travel for spiritual purposes (Hooper, 1994).

In certain periods of history, human beings have tried to reach some truths that they realized that they could not reach through visible and known means by "closing their eyes" and "remaining silent," and only by intuition. Mysticism and spiritualism emerged as a result of these efforts (Vernant & Naquet, 2012). In this context, as a result of spiritual tendencies and needs, people today have started to focus on national and international travel in order to fulfill these needs and experience their tendencies on site. These travels have led to the connection between spiritualism and tourism.

Although the trend towards spiritual travel has started to increase strongly in recent years, the number of studies reflecting the values that have spiritual tourism potential in the world and in Turkey is still very few. For this reason, this study was conducted to determine the differences between the motivations of spiritual Turkish tourists to travel to spiritual sites in Turkey and the travel motivations of tourists from other cultures living in other countries. In this way, it will be possible to make suggestions for increasing awareness of spiritual sites and realizing the necessary marketing practices.

## Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### Spiritual Tourism Concept

The maturation of the tourism industry and the increase in market segments have led to the emergence of spiritual tourism as a distinct field of study and have generated increased interest in this field in recent years. Spiritual tourism

is a form of tourism that intersects with art history, archaeology, anthropology, culture, and heritage studies.

Spiritual visits to heritage sites are fundamentally part of the post-structuralist and post-processual tourist experience (Laws & Stuart, 2007, pp. 1). In post-structuralism, it is argued that one should step out of this world, isolate oneself, or view the world from an external perspective (Ari, 2018). Post-processual archaeology, which relates to spirituality within post-processualism, emphasizes the need to handle everything related to human history separately, to uncover individual meanings such as the individual, woman, man, or child instead of a singular human perspective, and to employ multiple methods without being tied to a single model. In post-processual archaeology, it is acknowledged that there is no right or wrong in human ideas and that the results are interpretations influenced by various social structures. Experience is deemed crucial for interpretation (Mutlu, 2017). This is where spiritual tourism comes into play, allowing individuals to attain spiritual integrity and awareness through their experiences at these heritage sites.

According to Pargament (1997; 1999), spirituality is a quest for the sacred, involving individuals' attempts to explore, maintain, experience, and transform everything they deem sacred in their lives when the need arises. Spiritual tourists are part of a growing category of postmodernists who seek to expand their cultural knowledge through the accumulation of intercultural experiences (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Essentially, they seek experiences that they hope will assist them in achieving personal goals. Among spiritual tourists, there is a desire for a personal and meaningful spiritual experience and a desire to perform ancient rituals (Kujawa, 2017). A spiritual person can be religious but a religious person may not be spiritual (Kurt et al., 2020). Spirituality is an abstract subject that is not limited to religious concepts but is related to the non-material dimension of human existence and is linked to most of the reasons for travel (Imani Khoshkhoo & Farahani, 2020).

In the development of spirituality, certain experiences may involve rituals (Benjamin & Looby, 1998). The desire for enlightenment or an authentic encounter with the divine/sacred can lead people to travel from the non-religious sphere of everyday life to sacred sites that have become ritualized (Olsen & Timoty, 2006). Spiritual tourism also encompasses destinations such as the Vatican for Catholics, the Ganges in India for Hindus, temples and ashrams (places where sages would reside and retreat in mountainous or forested areas, seeking solace away from worldly distractions, as known to be one of the main reasons people visit India), as well as Mecca for Muslims and Sufi shrines (Timothy & Iverson, 2006; Wilson, 2016; Balakrishnan et al., 2021).

In spiritual tourism, the desire to be away from home and seek solutions serves as a means to rectify or enhance physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects for personal well-being. Breaking routines, providing mental rejuvenation, alleviating stress, traveling for health, adventure, or entertainment are among the potential attractions of spiritual tourism (Norman & Pokorny, 2017; Lopez et al., 2017; Cheer et al., 2017).

Despite Cohen's (1979) pioneering work arguing that every human being is spiritual and forms intangible spiritual connections with various spaces, people, and contexts, few studies have empirically explored the extent to which tourism can bring spirituality to individuals and how experiences or tourism encounters can be infused with spiritual meaning for individuals (Aggarwal et al., 2008; Bone, 2013; Haq & Jackson, 2020; ElKafy & Seddik, 2020; Balakrishnan et al., 2021; Aggarwal et al., 2021).

From a management and marketing perspective, spiritual tourism is understood through various dimensions.

Cheer et al. (2017) argue that tourism has two distinct drivers—secular and religious—with different dimensions in each category. Those approaching the topic from a secular perspective emphasize health and healing, personal development, personal quest, socialization, travel, leisure, and recreation, while those approaching it from a religious perspective highlight ritual practices, socialization, identity, and cultural practices. According to Abdul Halim et al. (2021), spiritual tourism is a journey to find the purpose of life and an exploration of life that goes beyond the self. Heintzman (2013) identifies six dimensions associated with spiritual tourism: "stimulating environments," "community transformation," "spiritual transformation," "going beyond the experiential world (transcendence)," "spiritual well-being," and "the experience of finding the purpose or meaning of existence." Robledo (2015) defines the categories of spiritual tourism as "inner development," "transformation," and "spiritual growth." Halim et al. (2021) define seven dimensions of spiritual tourism, including "meaning or purpose of life," "consciousness," "transcendence," "spiritual resources," "self-determination," "reflection-spirit purification," and "dealing with obstacles in a spiritual way" (Balakrishnan et al., 2021).

In particular, the quest for the meaning of life is seen as a universal need, and a lack of meaning can lead to despair and emptiness. Therefore, the search for meaning and purpose in life is considered one of the critically important issues in spirituality (Dyson et al., 1997). The significance of spirituality becomes especially pronounced in challenging times such as emotional stress, physical illness, and death, when one's values and beliefs are challenged, when one experiences an existential crisis, when one seeks answers about life and eternity, and when one struggles to find meaning, hope, strength, and connection (Yılmaz, 2011). Ito (2003) suggests that in contemporary society, traditional religious proximity tends to be neglected, and the number of people interested in spirituality continues to rise. Similarly, Okamoto (2015) argues that with the diminishing influence of religion in the public spheres of society, alternative perspectives in interpreting the world and social values have emerged, and religion has increasingly become limited to an individual's private life. The individual's freedom to accept or reject certain aspects of their own life has enabled them to incorporate elements of other religions into their faith practices.

Norman (2012) proposes that spiritual tourism can be divided into five categories: "healing (such as yoga retreats and ashrams)," "experiential (such as backpacking tourists seeking yoga, meditation, and ashram experiences)," "seeking (such as Hindu religious rituals as part of the Kumbh Mela event in India and seeking the unique characteristics of different cultures)," "retreat (such as meditation retreats, spas, eco-tourism attractions)," and "spiritual combination (seeking a combination of various features related to spirituality)" (Norman, 2012; Mourtazina, 2020). In his study in New Zealand, Bone (2013) found that tourists engaging in spiritual tourism activities sought "a sense of community," "desire to escape," "therapeutic landscapes," and "spirituality."

These categories reveal that spiritual tourist attractions can encompass a variety of places with different characteristics, and even natural and captivating settings can be considered attractions. The elements listed can also be seen as motivational factors.

### **Travel Motivations**

To effectively market destinations and touristic services, tourism marketers must understand the motivating factors that drive travel decisions and consumption behaviors. Although motivation is just one of several variables that contribute to explaining tourist behavior, it is considered a critical factor as it serves as the driving force behind all actions. The fundamental theory of motivation describes a dynamic process of internal psychological factors that

create a state of discomfort in individuals' minds and bodies. These intrinsic needs and resulting tension lead to actions aimed at reducing or eliminating the tension. From a marketing perspective, touristic products need to be designed and presented in a way that addresses tourists' needs (Gee et al., 1997; Fodness, 1994). Therefore, it is important to identify tourist motivations and use them as a guide for activity planning.

Tourism can be viewed either as a regular worldly ritual that provides balance in daily life and work (e.g., annual vacation) or as a tool with spiritual meaning, serving as a source of rejuvenation during life's transitions (e.g., honeymoon, retirement trip) (Nash, 2007). Generally, tourist motivations can be categorized as push and pull factors. Push motivations include excitement, knowledge enhancement, relaxation, a sense of accomplishment, family unity, escape, safety-entertainment-affordability, getting away from home, and exploration. Pull motivations consist of appealing atmospheres and activities, a wide range of areas and activities, suitable environments and climate conditions, natural scenery, affordable dining and sports options, different cultures, cleanliness-shopping, nightlife-local cuisine, interesting towns and villages, and water activities (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). There are differences between general tourist motivations and spiritual tourism motivations in the literature. As observed in Güzel and Sarıyıldız's (2019) study, spiritual tourism motivations include having a spiritual experience, seeking divine connection, exploring the mystery of creation, self-discovery, unity, truth-seeking, self-awareness and enlightenment, achieving body-mind-spirit balance, physical-mental-spiritual purification, purification and rejuvenation, spiritual development, achieving spiritual salvation, searching for the meaning of life, making life meaningful, personal healing and transformation, filling inner and spiritual emptiness, healing the inner world, completing the inner journey, experiencing inner transformation, discovering the secrets of creation, and understanding the connection between nature and humanity.

Spiritualism involves transcending oneself, seeking the meaning of existence, pursuing personal fulfillment through ethical means, living in harmony with nature and beauty, experiencing a sense of connection with oneself, others, and a higher power or greater reality, and displaying concern for and commitment. It entails moving beyond one's previous frame of reference, embracing more knowledge and love, and shifting from unhealthy self-centeredness to healthier inclusiveness and unity. Many individuals consciously travel beyond the confines of religious practices in search of spiritual healing and an enhanced sense of well-being. Therefore, spiritual tourism can be described as "intensely personal and subjective" travel aimed at spiritual healing and self-discovery by following one's inner path (Olsen, 2013). Generally, faith-oriented tourists are motivated to travel for purposes such as developing spiritual understanding, seeking enlightenment, and participating in collective faith experiences by visiting sacred places/monuments (Caber et al., 2021).

Norman (2012) categorized the motivations for spiritual tourist experiences into five categories. The first category is healing, which refers to practices undertaken by individuals facing challenges in their daily lives to resolve those issues. Spiritual tourists seek healing by spending time away from home engaging in religious practices or activities emphasizing psychological healing. The second category is experience, where spiritual tourists travel in pursuit of alternative religious and spiritual streams of thought, seeking to experience lifestyles that can serve as substitutes for their everyday lives and encountering different cultures. The third category is mission, which focuses on personal discovery and the search for meaning. In such travel, the journey itself holds greater importance than the destination. The fourth category is retreat, which involves escaping from the routines of daily life. In this form of spiritual tourism,

tourists aim to visit destinations different from their home countries and indulge in various secular tourist attractions and experiences. The fifth category is joint venture, where spiritual tourists travel to establish spiritual tourism centers. They seek to create new spiritual tourism centers by identifying popular destinations among spiritual tourists and establishing connections with like-minded individuals and groups.

Spiritual tourists tend to make destination decisions thoughtfully, as they anticipate finding relief or answers to their life challenges through the traditions or practices associated with the chosen destination (Norman, 2011). The significant differences between the motivations of general tourists and spiritual tourists highlight the need for more studies exploring the motivations of spiritual tourists.

The research hypotheses developed within the framework of this objective are stated below.

**H1:** There are differences between the push motivations that lead spiritual tourists living in Turkey and other countries towards spiritual tourism.

**H2:** There are differences between the pull motivations that lead spiritual tourists living in Turkey and other countries to spiritual tourism.

The findings regarding the testing of these hypotheses are presented in Table I-Table IV.

## Methodology

### Study Context

On a global scale, with the increase in psychological problems, people have started to seek spirituality by focusing on filling their inner emptiness and the need to be rooted in life (Buzinde, 2020). Thus, the increasing awareness of spiritualism has increased the interest in spiritual travel by affecting many sectors worldwide, including the tourism industry (Haq & Jackson, 2009).

Egypt, India, Thailand, Indonesia, South America (Yener & Onurlubaş, 2019; Jauhari, 2010), etc., which are suitable for spiritual travel around the world; Cappadocia Region in Turkey, Ephesus Ruins in Ephesus, House of Virgin Mary, Temple of Artemis and Temple of Aphrodite in Ephesus, Mevlâna Museum in Konya, Midas Ancient City 80 km. The Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia Mosque, Rüstem Pasha Mosque, Topkapı Palace, Basilica Cistern, Süleymaniye Mosque, Hagia Sophia Monastery in Büyükada, Bursa, Selimiye Mosque in Edirne, Martyrs' Cemeteries in Çanakkale and the Ancient City of Troy, Rize Çamlıhemşin, Sardis Synagogue in Manisa, Göbeklitepe, Balıklı Lake and Harran Historical City in Şanlıurfa, Deyrüzafaran Monastery, Mor Gabriel Monastery, Mardin Great Mosque, Kasımiye Madrasa, Mount Nemrut in Adıyaman, Akdamar Church in Van, Mount Ararat in Ağrı, St. Pierre Church in Hatay, St. Nicholas Church, Apollo Temple, Kekova Island in Demre, Antalya, Faralya Bay in Fethiye, Muğla. Poul's Well in Mersin, Saint Pierre Church in Hatay, St. Nicholas Church in Antalya, Temple of Apollo, Kekova Island in Demre, Antalya, Faralya Bay in Fethiye, Muğla and many other destinations. In this context, although there has been a strong tendency towards spiritual travel in recent years, there is no study on determining the travel motivations of spiritual tourists worldwide and in Turkey. For this reason, this study was conducted to determine the motivations that lead tourists who are interested in spiritual tourism to these trips and to determine the differences between the motivations of Turkish tourists living in Turkey to travel to spiritual sites in Turkey and the motivations of tourists from different cultures living in other countries to travel to different countries.

In this way, it will be possible to make suggestions about the necessary marketing practices in terms of spiritual tourism in order to increase the awareness of spiritual sites and to have the desired importance.

### **Survey Instruments and Data Analysis**

The ethics committee permission required to collect the data used in this research was obtained from the Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University Ethics Committee with the date 29.03.2024 and the decision/issue number 2024.04.55.

The questionnaires prepared in Turkish and English for the research were administered to tourists who have experienced spiritual tourism in Turkey and around the world between 02.01.2020-06.01.2023. Since the motivations of tourists regarding their spiritual tourism experiences in any period of their lives were investigated, the number of tourists worldwide for a certain year was not taken into account in the sample calculation. The tourists who will participate in the survey were reached by convenience sampling method, one of the non-probability sampling methods. Tourists were contacted via online survey links via applications such as Instagram, Messenger, Whatsapp, e-mail. The number of tourists to be reached was determined based on the number 384, which is the sample number calculated for the universe of 100,000,000 people in the  $p = 0.5$   $q = 0.5$  column according to the 0.05 significance level and 0.05 sampling error from the table of sample sizes in the studies of Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan (2014). The online questionnaire form was sent to 1200 people, 748 of which were returned. A total of 709 questionnaires collected from 408 Turkish tourists living in Turkey and 301 tourists from different cultures living in other countries were found suitable for analysis.

The questionnaire form was adapted to the motivational factors scale by taking together the elements expressed as spiritual tourism dimensions (Norman, 2012; Bone, 2013; Heintzman, 2013; Balakrishnan et al., 2021), the spiritual tourism motivations stated by Güzel and Sarıyıldız (2019) in their study, and the push and pull motivational factors stated by Yoon and Uysal (2005) in their study, and statements related to 24 push motivations and 27 pull motivations were created. These statements were prepared on a 5-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, ... Strongly Agree=5) in order to identify the factors that motivate tourists participating in spiritual tourism activities. In addition, the questionnaire form includes a total of 9 questions about the demographic characteristics of tourists (7), their place of residence and the destination they travel to (2).

The data obtained by applying the questionnaire form were analyzed using the SPSS for Windows 23.0 software. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the statements regarding push and pull motivations was 0.865 and thus the scale was found to be reliable. Skewness and kurtosis values were analyzed to examine whether the data set has a normal distribution. The presence of skewness and kurtosis values between -3 and +3 in the data set indicates a normal distribution (Shao, 2002). As a result of the analysis, skewness and kurtosis values were between -3 and +3. In this context, it was determined that the data set showed a normal distribution and it was thought that it would be appropriate to use the T test, one of the parametric tests (Burns & Bush, 2014). In order to determine whether there are significant differences between spiritual tourists living in Turkey and other countries according to the push and pull motivations that lead them to travel, frequency distributions were examined and t-test was applied.

### **Findings**

The table of demographic data related to the research study is presented in Table I.

**Table I.** Findings on demographic characteristics of spiritual tourists living in turkey and other countries

Demographic Characteristics		Spiritual Tourists Living in Turkey		Spiritual Tourists Living in Other Countries	
		n	%	n	%
Gender	Women	280	68.6	166	55.1
	Men	128	31.4	135	44.9
Age	15-25 y/o	13	3.2	9	3
	26-35 y/o	127	31.1	142	47.2
	36-45 y/o	162	39.7	137	45.5
	46-55 y/o	81	19.9	11	3.7
	56 y/o and older	25	6.1	2	0.7
Education	High School	6	1.5	29	9.6
	Undergraduate	210	51.5	172	57.1
	Graduate	192	47.1	100	33.2
Profession	Worker	1	0.2	8	2.7
	Civil servant	48	11.8	5	1.7
	Retired	46	11.3	1	0.3
	Student	16	3.9	69	22.9
	Academician	21	5.1	83	27.6
	Self-employed	90	22.1	135	44.9
	Housewife	7	1.7	0	0
Income	Other*	179	43.9	0	0
	0-5.000TL-\$	107	26.2	91	30.2
	5.001-10.000TL-\$	156	<b>38.2</b>	68	22.6
	10.001-15.000TL-\$	84	20.6	113	<b>37.5</b>
	15.001-20.000TL-\$	42	10.3	29	9.6
Marital Status	20.001TL-\$ and	19	4.7	0	0
	Married	146	35.8	88	29.2
Number of Children	Single	262	64.2	213	70.8
	None	243	59.6	261	86.7
	1	78	19.1	23	7.6
	2	83	20.3	11	3.7
	3	4	1	3	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	4	-	-	3	1
	<b>408</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100</b>	

\*In the “other” option for occupation, participants gave explanations such as yoga instructor, life coach, dance instructor, and bioenergy specialist.

When Table I for the demographic distribution of spiritual tourists living in Turkey and other countries is examined; it is determined that the rate of women among spiritual tourists living in Turkey is 68.6%, while the rate of women among spiritual tourists living in other countries is 55.1%. When the age factor is analyzed, it is seen that the 36-45 age range (39.7%) in tourists living in Turkey and the 26-35 age range (47.2%) in tourists living in other countries are concentrated. In terms of education level, the proportion of university graduates was high in both countries. In terms of occupation, tourists living in Turkey chose other (yoga instructor, life coach, dance instructor, bioenergy specialist) (43.9%), while tourists living in other countries chose self-employment (44.9%). In the income element, the currencies in Turkey and other countries are given in TL and \$. It is seen that the income range of 5001-10.000TL is high among tourists living in Turkey and the income range of 10.001-15.000\$ is high among tourists living in other countries. When the marital status is analyzed, it is seen that singles are concentrated in both groups, but there is a difference in proportion. While the proportion of single tourists living in Turkey is 64.2%, it is 70.8% in other countries. In terms of the number of children, it is seen that the number of those who do not have children is high in both groups (59.6% of tourists living in Turkey and 86.7% of tourists living in other countries), but this is followed by those who have 2 children in tourists living in Turkey and those who have 1 child in those living in other



countries.

**Table II.** Places of residence and destinations traveled by tourists living in turkey and other countries

Spiritual tourist living in turkey					Spiritual tourist living in other countries						
Place of residence	N	%	Destination	n	%	Place of residence	n	%	Destination	n	%
İstanbul	166	40.7	Antalya	79	19.4	Australia	125	41.5	Indonesia and	57	19
Ankara	146	35.8	İzmit	55	13.5	Canada	50	16.6	Peru	42	14
İzmir	24	5.9	Fethiye	53	13	Germany	19	6.3	India	30	10
Nevşehir	16	3.9	Çanakkale	33	8.1	USA	17	5.6	Bhutan	28	9.3
Çanakkale	8	2	İstanbul	27	6.6	Italy	15	5	Guatemala	18	6
Niğde	8	2	Balıkesir	26	6.4	New Zealand	14	4.7	Australia	17	5.6
Trabzon	8	2	Konya	24	5.9	UK	13	4.3	Egypt	17	5.6
Mersin	6	1.5	Niğde	22	5.4	Finland	12	4	Thailand	16	5.3
Mardin	6	1.5	Ankara	20	4.9	Norway	12	4	Chili	15	5
Malatya	6	1.5	Bodrum	19	4.7	France	9	3	Italy	14	4.7
Adana	4	1	Frig Vadisi	18	4.4	Korea	8	2.7	Costa Rica	13	4.3
G. Antep	4	1	Bolu	13	3.2	Egypt	7	2.3	Cambodia	12	4
Bursa	3	0.6	İzmir	12	2.9				Mexico	12	4
Van	3	0.6	Nevşehir	7	1.6	Total	301	100	New Zealand	10	3.2
Total	408	100	Total	408	100				Total	301	100

When Table II is examined, it is seen that the places of residence of tourists living in Turkey are Istanbul and Ankara, and the destinations they travel to are Antalya, Izmit and Fethiye; while the places of residence of tourists living in other countries are Australia and Canada, and the destinations they travel to are Indonesia, Bali, Peru, India and Bhutan.

**Table III.** Push motivations influenced by spiritual tourists living in turkey and other countries

Push motivations and motivation factors		Spiritual tourist living in turkey					Spiritual tourist living in other countries					T test findings for differences
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	
Motivation factors	Push motivations											
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Excitement	I went on this trip to be physically active.	3.4	8.8	29.7	23.5	34.6	82.4	4	13.6	0	0	F = 94.473 t = 4.725 p = 0.000
	I went on this trip to meet people of the opposite sex.	67.2	19.9	10.3	1	1.7	76.4	18.3	0	3.7	1.7	
	I went on this trip for the thrill.	25.7	11.3	28.4	19.1	15.4	0	0	10.3	19.3	70.4	
	I set out on this trip to rediscover myself	3.7	1.2	8.6	21.6	65	0	0	15.9	20.3	63.8	

**Table III.** Push motivations influenced by spiritual tourists living in turkey and other countries (cont.)

Increasing knowledge level	I went on this trip to experience new and different lifestyles.	0	7.1	13.2	31.4	48.3	5.3	1	4.3	34.2	55.1	F = 27.706 t = -6.555 p = 0.000
	I went on this trip to try new foods.	23.3	21.3	24.5	17.2	13.7	19.6	0	19.3	15	46.2	
	I went on this trip to visit historical sites.	9.3	32.4	15.9	19.4	23	0	6	6.6	18.6	68.8	
	I went on this trip to meet new people.	8.8	15.9	16.9	32.4	26	0	59.5	6	12.3	22.3	
	I went on this trip to be free to act as I felt.	2.2	7.6	2.5	19.6	68.1	2	15.3	0	19.6	63.1	
Relaxation	I went on this trip to do nothing.	22.5	12	11	19.6	34.8	80.1	8.3	6.3	4.7	0.7	F= 373.434 t = 23.951 p = 0.000
	I went on this trip to get away from the busy work environment.	23	12.3	1.2	26.7	36.8	67.1	28.6	4.3	0	0	
Feeling of success	I went on this trip to go places where people I do not know.	34.3	18.1	19.4	7.4	20.8	70.4	13	7	0	9.6	F = 38.096 t = 9.669 p = 0.000
	I went on this trip to talk about my journey after I returned.	60	20.6	13.5	3.2	2.7	54.2	29.2	9.6	3.7	3.3	
	I took this trip to relive the good times of the past.	25.2	15.7	19.9	12.7	26.5	78.8	4	4	13.2	0	
Family unity	I went on this trip to visit places where my family or friends had been	61.8	22.8	7.8	0	7.6	71.1	20.3	4.7	0	4	F = 187.517 t = 5.139 p = 0.000
	I took this trip to visit friends and relatives.	69.4	12.7	4.2	6.1	7.6	91.4	0.3	4.3	4	0	
	I took this trip to be together as a	61.5	8.1	4.2	11	15.2	58.5	30.2	5	6.3	0	
Escape	I took this trip to get away from the demands at home.	36.8	19.9	10.3	16.5	16.5	64.8	15.3	4.7	6.6	8.6	F= 4.707 t = 10.983 p = 0.030
	I went on this trip to experience a simpler and simpler way of life.	9.3	8.6	14	36.8	31.4	45.2	20.3	6.3	12.3	15.9	
Safety-entertainment-cheapness	I took this trip to feel safe.	35.1	10.8	13.7	20.7	19.7	13	0	2	26.2	58.8	F = 29.395 t = -7.257 p = 0.000
	I went on this trip to have fun.	11	2.2	22.3	39	25.5	9	0	5.3	45.8	39.9	
	I took this trip to take advantage of the discounted prices.	48.5	39.2	4.7	6.1	1.5	70.4	13.3	3	8	5.3	

**Table III.** Push motivations influenced by spiritual tourists living in turkey and other countries (cont.)

Getting away from home and sightseeing	I went on this trip to feel at home away from home.	35.5	24.5	17.1	9.9	13	88	0	5	2.7	4.3	F = 30.714 t = 3.229 p = 0.000
	I went on this trip to see as much as possible.	58.6	18.9	14.7	5.9	2	12	10	10	29.2	38.9	

When Table III is examined regarding whether there are differences between tourists living in Turkey and tourists living in other countries in terms of the push motivations that lead them to spiritual travel, it is seen that there are significant differences in all push motivation factors. For example, among the statements of the "excitement" factor, 34.5% of tourists living in Turkey agreed with the statement "I went on this trip to experience excitement", while 89.7% of the tourists living in other countries agreed. "While 30.9% of tourists living in Turkey agreed with the statement "I went on this trip to try new foods", 61.2% of tourists living in other countries agreed with this statement. Among the statements of the "relaxation" factor, 54.4% of the tourists living in Turkey agreed with the statement "I went on this trip to do nothing", while 5.4% of the tourists living in other countries agreed. Among the statements of the "feeling of success" factor, 39.2% of the tourists living in Turkey agreed with the statement "I went on this trip to relive the good times of the past", while 13.2% of the tourists living in other countries agreed. Among the statements of the "family unity" factor, 26.2% of tourists living in Turkey and 6.3% of tourists living in other countries agreed with the statement "I went on this trip to be together as a family". Among the statements of the "escape" factor, 33% of tourists living in Turkey agreed with the statement "I took this trip to get away from the demands at home", while 15.2% of tourists living in other countries agreed. Among the statements of the "safety-entertainment-affordability" factor, 40.4% of tourists living in Turkey and 85% of tourists living in other countries agreed with the statement "I went on this trip to feel safe". In the "getting away from home and sightseeing" factor, 22.8% of tourists living in Turkey and 7% of tourists living in other countries agreed with the statement "I went on this trip to feel at home when I was away from home". Therefore, hypothesis H1 is confirmed.

**Table IV.** Pull motivations influenced by tourists living in turkey and other countries

Pull motivations and motivation factors		Spiritual tourist living in turkey					Spiritual tourist living in other countries					T test findings regarding the differences of tourists living in turkey and other countries regarding pull motivation factors
Motivation factors	Pull Motivations	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	

**Table IV.** Pull motivations influenced by tourists living in turkey and other countries (cont.)

Engaging atmosphere And activities	I chose this trip to see modern cities.	58,6	18,9	14,7	5,9	2	91,7	0	2	5	1,3	F = 89,029 t = 1,724 p = 0,000
	I chose this trip to be in an exotic and spiritual atmosphere.	15,9	5,4	13,2	32,4	33,1	1,3	15,9	4,7	17,3	60,8	
	I chose this trip to see live theaters/concerts.	52,7	20,8	7,4	12,7	6,4	83,7	6	2,3	8	0	
	I chose this trip to vacation in first class hotels.	68,1	15,7	12,5	2	1,7	66,1	17,9	1,3	6,7	8	
Wide area and activities	I chose this trip because it provided a budget accommodation.	38	3,9	27	26,5	4,7	61,9	17,6	6,6	5,3	8,6	F = 51,611 t = -6,491 p = 0,000
	I chose this trip because it offered ample opportunities to get away from the crowds.	25,1	2,9	14,7	38,4	18,9	3,7	1,3	8	32,2	54,8	
	I chose this trip because it offered a variety of activities to see and participate	20,3	9,3	12,5	35,3	22,5	5,3	0	8	35,5	51,2	
Suitable environment and climate conditions	I chose this trip because it was a suitable travel option for me.	29,3	12,3	25	24,1	9,3	53,8	22,3	6,6	7	10,3	F = 54,832 t = -3,297 p = 0,000
	I chose this trip to spend time in a beautiful climate.	44,7	25,5	5,4	20,2	4,2	46,8	40,9	3,3	2	7	
	I chose this trip because it offered a safe vacation environment that met my expectations.	22,1	12	22,5	20,1	23,3	0	0	9,3	10,3	80,4	
Natural landscape	I chose this trip because it allowed me to see extraordinary landscapes.	11	13,3	7,8	33,1	34,8	0	5	0	20,2	74,8	F = 42,592 t = -7,225 p = 0,000
	I chose this trip because it offered mountainous and green areas.	4,9	11	3,4	38,2	42,4	9,3	0	6,3	24,3	60,1	
Affordable restaurants and sporting alternatives	I chose this trip because it offered affordable restaurant options.	52	21,3	13,5	12	1,2	57,8	22,3	4,3	5,6	10	F = 42,879 t = -9,976 p = 0,000
	I chose this trip because it offers a variety of sports opportunities.	29,2	22,8	13,7	17,2	17,1	33,5	15,9	0	2,7	47,9	
Different culture	I chose this trip because it allowed me to use quality beaches.	39,2	13,7	12,3	23,3	11,5	70,1	15,3	14,6	0	0	F = 114,664 t = -10,905 p = 0,000
	I chose this trip because I could communicate with interesting/friendly	30,1	15,4	19,9	20,8	13,7	5	0	15	38,5	41,5	
	I chose this trip because I could experience different cultures.	23,8	9,1	6,9	28,7	31,6	5	0	0	9,3	85,7	
	I chose this trip because I could see old historical buildings and sites.	40	14,5	5,9	24	15,7	5	15	0	34,2	45,8	
Cleaning and shopping	I chose this trip because it provided a clean environment.	9,3	6,1	24,8	35,5	24,3	16,4	37,9	4,7	6	35	F = 0,822 t = 8,388 p = 0,365
	I chose this trip for shopping.	71,3	14,2	8,8	5,6	0	66,4	18,6	3,7	5,6	5,6	
	I chose this trip because it offered the opportunity to be secluded.	48	15,4	8,6	17,9	10	58,1	17,9	3,3	6	14,6	
Nightlife and local cuisine	I chose this trip because of its nightlife and entertainment opportunities.	74,5	17,9	3,4	4,2	0	50,2	37,9	10	0	2	F = 64,762 t = -13,332 p = 0,000
	I chose this trip because it offered local cuisine.	34,8	10,3	22,1	18,1	14,7	9,3	0	3	52,2	35,5	

**Table IV.** Pull motivations influenced by tourists living in turkey and other countries (cont.)

<b>Interesting towns and villages</b>	I chose this trip because it offered the opportunity to visit an interesting district/town/village.	17,4	4,5	20,3	40,9	16,9	0	0	5	24,6	70,4	F = 55,893 t = -10,472 p = 0,000
	I chose this trip because of its high-quality restaurant offerings.	59,6	20,1	10	8,6	1,7	59,5	24,3	0	11	5,3	
<b>Water activities</b>	I chose this trip because I knew I was going to a place with a beautiful beach.	36,5	14,7	5,1	28,4	15,2	73,4	0	6	0	20,6	F = 10,082 t = 2,071 p = 0,002
	I chose this trip because I could enjoy water sports.	68,6	18,6	7,4	1,5	3,9	43,5	30,9	8	0	17,6	

Upon examining (Table IV) whether there are differences between tourists living in Turkey and tourists living in other countries who participate in spiritual tourism activities according to the pull motivations that lead them to spiritual travel, it is seen that there are significant differences in all pull motivation factors except for the “cleanliness-shopping” factor. For example, 19.1% of the Turkish tourists answered “strongly agree and agree” to the statement “I chose this trip to watch live theaters/concerts” in the “attractive atmospheres and activities” factor while 8% of the tourists living in other countries, answered “strongly agree and agree”. 57.8% of tourists living in Turkey and 86.7% of tourists living in other countries agreed with the statement “I chose this trip because it offered a variety of activities that I could see and participate in”. Among the statements of the “suitable environment and climatic conditions” factor, 24.4% of tourists living in Turkey agreed with the statement “I chose this trip to spend time in a beautiful climate”, while 9% of tourists living in other countries agreed with the statement. Among the statements of the “Natural scenery” factor, 67.9% of tourists living in Turkey and 95% of tourists living in other countries agreed with the statement “I chose this trip because it allowed me to see extraordinary landscapes”. Among the statements of the factor “Cheap restaurants and sports alternatives”, 34.3% of the tourists living in Turkey agreed with the statement “I chose this trip because it offered various sports opportunities”, while 50.6% of the tourists living in other countries agreed. Among the statements of the factor “different culture”, 34.5% of tourists living in Turkey agreed with the statement “I chose this trip because I could communicate with interesting/friendly local people”, while 80% of the tourists living in other countries agreed. Among the statements of the “Nightlife and local cuisine” factor, 32.8% of tourists living in Turkey and 87.7% of tourists living in other countries agreed with the statement “I chose this trip because it provides local cuisine opportunities”. In the “Interesting towns and villages” factor, 57.8% of tourists living in Turkey and 95% of tourists living in other countries agreed with the statement “I chose this trip because it offered the opportunity to visit an interesting district/town/village”. Among the statements of the “water activities” factor, 43.6% of tourists living in Turkey and 20.6% of tourists living in other countries agreed with the statement “I chose this trip because I knew that I would go to a place with a beautiful beach”. Therefore, H2 hypothesis is confirmed.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Although there has been a significant increase in the demand for spiritual travel worldwide in recent years, in Turkey, which has a large potential for spiritual tourism, there is a dearth of research that reflects these values and identifies differences among tourists interested in such activities around the world. This lack of research has a negative impact on the development of awareness on spiritual tourism. In this context, this study was conducted both

in Turkey and around the world in order to determine the motivations that lead tourists interested in spiritual tourism to these trips and to determine the differences between the travel motivations of Turkish tourists living in Turkey and tourists from different cultures living in other countries.

According to the analysis of the demographic distribution of spiritual tourists living in Turkey and other countries, there are significant differences in all demographic elements except education level. In this context, it is thought that it would be appropriate for organizations and businesses operating in spiritual tourism destinations to make marketing plans by taking into account the demographic characteristics identified. When developing service alternatives, it is thought that it would be effective to prioritize the organizations that women like more, to focus on the alternatives that the 36-45 age range of tourists living in Turkey and the 26-35 age range of tourists living in other countries like when determining the options related to entertainment and sports activities, and to focus on the service options that they are interested in, especially among tourists living in Turkey, since people who are engaged in jobs such as yoga instructors, life coaching, dance instructors, bioenergy specialists prefer such travels.

While determining the prices, it is thought that making arrangements that can be accessed by the income range of 5,001-10,000TL for tourists living in Turkey and 10,001-15,000\$ for tourists living in other countries and preparing environments suitable for the preferences of consumers who are mainly single and have 1-2 children while planning the environments of tourism facilities will increase the attractiveness.

In the literature review, Machu Picchu (in Peru), the Pyramids of Egypt, the entire island of Bali (in Indonesia) and parts of the American Southwest were found to be the most frequently traveled destinations for spiritual purposes worldwide (Hooper, 1994). According to the results of this study, when the places of residence and destinations traveled by tourists living in Turkey and other countries were examined, it was seen that tourists residing in Istanbul and Ankara showed the highest demand for spiritual tourism travel, and the destinations with the highest demand were Antalya, Izmit and Fethiye. In addition, it has been determined that tourists residing in Australia and Canada have the highest demand for spiritual tourism travel, and the destinations with the highest demand are Indonesia, Bali, Peru, India and Bhutan. In this context, it may be useful for spiritual tourism destinations and businesses to prioritize Istanbul and Ankara for Turkey and Australia and Canada for abroad in determining the target markets to direct their marketing efforts.

Güzel and Sarıyıldız (2019), different from the push and pull factors mentioned in this study; having a spiritual experience, seeking the divine, connecting with the creator, discovering the mystery of creation, self-discovery and satisfying the feeling of 'oneness/unity', seeking the ultimate truth or the highest value, self-discovery and completion, increasing self-awareness and enlightenment, achieving body, mind and spirit balance, physical, mental and spiritual purification, purification and renewal, spiritual development, achieving spiritual salvation, searching for the meaning of life, making life meaningful, personal healing and transformation, filling inner and spiritual emptiness, healing the inner world, completing the inner journey, experiencing an inner transformation, discovering the secrets of creation and understanding the connection between nature and human beings. Since Güzel and Sarıyıldız's study was a theoretical study, these motivations were mentioned; however, in this study, it was seen that different motivations were also in question through field research.

As a result of the examination of whether there are differences between tourists living in Turkey and other countries in terms of the push motivations that lead them to spiritual travel, it was seen that there were significant

differences in all push motivation factors. Among the statements of these factors, it was observed that tourists living in Turkey participated more in the statements “to be physically active”, “to do nothing”, “to get away from the busy work environment”, “to get away from the demands at home”, “to experience a simpler and simpler lifestyle”. Tourists living in other countries were more likely to agree with the statements “to experience excitement”, “to try new foods”, “to visit historical sites”, “to feel safe” and “to see as much as possible”. Based on these results, it is thought that it would be beneficial to emphasize physical activity in the activities offered to tourists living in Turkey, to offer environments that create a sense of calmness as opposed to environments that create a feeling of intensity and fatigue in their daily lives, to take care of routine tasks that are part of the daily rush, and to offer environments that adopt a simple and simple lifestyle. In the activities offered to tourists living in other countries, it is thought that prioritizing exciting activities, offering service packages that include different food alternatives and historical site visits, offering environments that make them feel safe and allow them to see as much as possible will increase the satisfaction rate.

According to the results of the examination of whether there are differences between tourists living in Turkey and other countries in terms of the pull motivations that lead them to spiritual travel, there are significant differences in all pull motivation factors. It was found that the tourists living in Turkey participated intensely in the statements “I chose this trip because it provided accommodation that was suitable for my budget”, “it allowed me to spend time in a beautiful climate”, “it allowed me to use quality beaches”, and “I knew that I was going to a place with a beautiful beach”. Tourists living in other countries were more likely to agree with the statements that I chose this trip because “it offered a safe holiday environment in line with my expectations”, “it offered various sports opportunities”, “it gave me the opportunity to communicate with interesting/friendly local people”, “it gave me the opportunity to see old historical buildings and areas”, and “it provided local cuisine opportunities”. Both tourists living in Turkey and tourists living in other countries were more likely to agree with the statements that I chose this trip because “it offered a wide range of opportunities to get away from the crowds”, “it offered various activities that I could see and participate in”, “it allowed me to see extraordinary landscapes”, “it gave me the opportunity to experience different cultures” and “it gave me the opportunity to visit an interesting district/town/village”. In the context of these results, it is thought that keeping the prices at reasonable levels, emphasizing a nice climate and quality/beautiful beach facilities (for seaside destinations) in destinations and businesses that have identified tourists living in Turkey as the target audience; while in destinations and businesses that have identified tourists living in other countries as the target audience, emphasizing safe holiday environment, sports facilities, opportunities to communicate with interesting/friendly local people, historical and old buildings, local cuisine facilities will increase the attractiveness. Destinations and businesses aiming to operate for both tourist groups should emphasize that they are far from crowds, have plenty of activities, extraordinary landscapes, interesting places and opportunities to experience different cultures.

The fact that a significant part of this research coincided with the pandemic period (02.01.2020 - 06.01.2023) severely limited the number of participants that could be reached. During the pandemic period, travel and tourism have attracted attention as an activity that has the power to transform people, facilitate internal changes and repair damaged personalities (Gezon, 2018). Moreover, due to travel restrictions during this period, some destinations in the world have started to implement spiritual experiences through methods such as digital retreat (Sutarya, 2024). Conducting separate studies in countries such as Egypt, India, Thailand, Indonesia, South America, etc., where

spiritual tourism is currently the most developed in the world, and in Turkey will be instructive in terms of the literature and destinations and businesses operating in this field. Because determining the characteristics of the target audience in detail is important in terms of developing activities that will please them.

### Limitations of This Research

The research was conducted on tourists who have traveled around the world and participated in spiritual tourism activities at least once. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged worldwide in March 2020, had a huge negative impact on the tourism sector. There have been significant decreases in the number of tourists due to restrictions on going out on the streets, being in crowded environments and travel restrictions. In addition, due to income problems in many sectors, there has been a decrease in the disposable income that people can allocate for travel. For this reason, the study included everyone who has had any experience of spiritual tourism, not only between the dates of the research, but also to date.

### Declaration

The ethics committee permission required to collect the data used in this research was obtained from the Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University Ethics Committee with the date 29.03.2024 and the decision/issue number 2024.04.55.

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## Appendix 1. Ethics Committee Permission



T.C.  
NEVŞEHİR HACI BEKTAŞ VELİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ  
Bilimsel Araştırmalar ve Yayın Etik Kurulu

TOPLANTI SAYISI  
04

KARAR SAYISI  
2024.04.55

TOPLANTI TARİHİ  
29.03.2024

**Üniversitemiz Turizm Fakültesi Öğretim Üyesi Doç. Dr. Burcu Gülsevil BELBER'in "Spiritüel Tursitlerin Seyahat Motivasyonları" isimli bilimsel araştırma projesi hakkında alınan 22.03.2024 tarih ve 2400025322 sayılı yazının görüşülmesi.**

**2024.04.55** Üniversitemiz Turizm Fakültesi Öğretim Üyesi Doç. Dr. Burcu Gülsevil BELBER'in "Spiritüel Tursitlerin Seyahat Motivasyonları" isimli bilimsel araştırma projesi hakkında alınan 22.03.2024 tarih ve 2400025322 sayılı başvuru dosyası görüşüldü.

Turizm Fakültesi Öğretim Üyesi Doç. Dr. Burcu Gülsevil BELBER'in "*Spiritüel Tursitlerin Seyahat Motivasyonları*" isimli bilimsel araştırma projesi dosyası ve ilgili belgeler araştırmanın gerekçe, amaç, yaklaşım ve yöntemleri dikkate alınarak incelenmiş olup, projenin gerçekleştirilmesinde etik sakınca bulunmadığına kurulumuz üyeleri tarafından oy birliği ile karar verilmiştir.

**\* Prof. Dr. Ensar ÇETİN toplantıya katılmadı.**

Prof. Dr. Mutluhan AKIN  
Kurul Başkanı

Prof. Dr. Fatih ÖZDEMİR  
Kurul Üyesi

Prof. Dr. Merter Rahmi  
TELKENAROĞLU  
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Prof. Dr. Lütfi BUYRUK  
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Prof. Dr. Zübeyde  
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Prof. Dr. Sezer SORGUN  
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Prof. Dr. Muhammet Şevki  
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Prof. Dr. Suzan ÇOBAN  
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