

VIEWS ABOUT HIRING A WEDDING PLANNER FOR A EUPHORIC EVENT OF LIFE – ‘WEDDING’ (A CASE STUDY OF AHMEDABAD CITY)

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ABSTRACT

Slowly and gradually the concept of hiring wedding planners has entered into Indian mindsets. New generation; having lots of activities to do at a same time, do not having much energy, is mostly found time scarce and easily swayed towards acculturation, is now willing to hand over the most euphoric event of one's life to the wedding planners. This cultural change brought an idea to know the views of people of Ahmedabad about this new change. The purpose of the study was to know what majority of the people of Ahmedabad are aware about the wedding planners, how much amount people are ready to spend on the marriage function, where do they seek information about arranging the different programs related to wedding, why people want to hand over the entire wedding program to wedding planners. To answer the above, a descriptive study of 100 people of different age groups from the different parts of Ahmedabad was conducted with the sample chosen on convenience base. A structured questionnaire was given to them to record their views. The findings of the study revealed that a marriage function consists of 4 days – mehendi, sangeet, cocktail/bachelor/ hen party/ spiritual event like mata ki chowki and wedding cum reception. People are ready to spend around 10 lakhs to 20 lakhs of amount on the entire wedding events. Due to very hectic and stressful life nowadays they would like to hire the wedding planner who is experienced and is suggested by someone close because they are too busy to handle the entire wedding arrangements.

Key Words: Wedding, Euphoric Event, Wedding Planner, Word-of-mouth, Marriage Functions.

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INTRODUCTION

Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation (LPG) has not only exchanged knowledge, ideas, tastes, preferences, lifestyles, goods, services, brain drain but it has also resulted in exchange of cultures. Increasing education, increasing mobility, increasing rate of knowledge, increasing penetration into internet usage, these all have resulted into accepting the different lifestyles and cultures of the world. Due to the knowledge at one's finger tips, one can have the look at what is happening in which corner of the world. Indians are also not spared with the effects of LPG. These days it has been noticed that western culture has taken an entry into Indian households also. A marriage; which was considered, a typically traditional family event in India has now been seen from a different perspective. Slowly and gradually the concept of hiring wedding planners has entered into Indian mindsets. New generation; having lots of activities to do at a same time, do not having much energy, is mostly found time scarce and easily swayed towards acculturation; is now willing to hand over the most euphoric event of one's life to the wedding planners. This change in the mindsets of the people gave an idea to conduct a study to know what majority of the people of Ahmedabad are aware about the wedding planners, what is the perception regarding wedding planners, how much amount people are ready to spend on the marriage functions, where do they seek information about arranging the different programs related to wedding, why people want to hand over the entire wedding program to wedding planners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Not many studies have undertaken in India on the issue under consideration of this research work. But few studies were found to be relevant and undertaken in the developed countries. To mention some of them here are a study conducted by L. De Witt (2006) on 'Key Success Factors For Managing Special Events: The Case Of Wedding Tourism in South Africa' highlighted that operational services like ensuring high levels of hygiene, having a liquor license, accessibility, secure parking must meet the needs of guests and were considered extremely important by wedding planners. Wedding planner's services must meet the needs of guests, offer unique products, develop a checklist as control mechanism and fulfil their promise last but not the least the wedding planner must have the ability to act creatively in order to provide a unique experience for each client. Sivemalar Krishnan (2008) in his study on the Factors Influencing

The Demand For Themed Wedding Packages in Auckland market of New Zealand found that themed weddings are not currently in -demand: most couples still adhere to a ‘traditional’ setting, the few planners who are there in the market are not focusing on themed weddings but on their primary service – the standard wedding event. The study revealed that a themed wedding is where couples-to-be can have the opportunity to reflect their personalities, social status, and culture in their wedding. In addition, couples view themed wedding as one way of having an entertaining event that not only they but also the guests could well experience. Four factors influencing the buying motivation of consumers for themed wedding are: families and friends, lifestyle, advertisements and personal influences; families and friends being the most influential factor. Apiwat Suvagondha and Pattamaporn Soparat (2008) with the objective of analyzing the wedding market in Bangkok together with consumer purchasing behaviour in their work on “Creating marketing strategies for wedding business unit of Amari Atrium Hotel” revealed that Bangkok wedding market is growing rapidly. People element is the most important for the wedding couple to choose the service provider. The hotel should focus on the willingness and attention of the staff (service mind), ability to solve the problem, specialize know how to give an advice, and ability to coordinate with all related persons, it should offer one stop service destination, with good quality of food and other services. The wedding budget can be the biggest limiting factor for a bride when planning a wedding. The budget is considered in every decision about the wedding and determines how big and extravagant or simple and small the wedding must be (Engstrom, 2008). A study conducted by Avery Ruonala (2013) with the objective to assess the future trends in wedding planning among selected California wedding planners highlighted that wedding trend is a noteworthy design element that is popular at the moment and influences the structure and content of a wedding band wedding trend greatly influences brides and sways the direction in which the wedding industry will go. The future trend according to this study falls into ‘glamorous’, ‘vinatage’ and ‘traditional’ themes. Location, budget, food, decore and clothing will be the main aspects of wedding planning. Holmberg J and Yixiao Hu (2014),in their research work on ”Guidelines of traditional weddings in different cultures: a market research for Finnish market” Finland, Haaga Helia, University of Applied Sciences; found that the most common reasons for people interested in the wedding planning services were easy and convenient, saving time, good quality, and professional services and they want their wedding to be a memorable event. Different elements of traditional wedding found in the study were

creativity, wedding dresses, wedding rituals, wedding decoration, food, rings, wedding games, dance and customs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives

Many studies have been undertaken on the different aspects of wedding planning and wedding related programs in foreign countries but not many in India. Nowadays due to the scarcity of time and higher levels of stress at work place many educated prospect grooms and brides wish to hire the services of wedding planners. This study was undertaken with following objectives:

- To know how much amount people are ready to spend on the marriage function.
- To find out where do they seek information about arranging the different programs related to marriage
- To know how many people are aware about the wedding planners.
- To know why people want to hand over the entire wedding program to wedding planners.
- To find out the relationship of income with budget for wedding and preference of venue.

Research Design, Sampling Design and Data Collection

A single cross-sectional descriptive study of 100 people (response rate 35%) who wish to hire wedding planners, of age above 20 years was selected through non-probability sampling technique on convenience base to know the views about wedding planners. A Survey was undertaken to know the views and opinions of people of Ahmedabad about wedding related functions and hiring of wedding planners. A self-administered questionnaire was the primary survey instrument for data collection consisting of open-ended and close-ended questions.

Statistical Tools

To meet the objectives, simple techniques like frequency counts and percentages were used for data analysis. Descriptive and Inferential Measures were used to analyse the data and meet the objectives of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

After collecting the data through questionnaires, all questionnaires were coded and data was checked for inconsistencies. After cleaning the data, tables were prepared and Frequencies and Percentages were derived.

The demographic profile of the respondents is as follows:

TABLE -1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Sr. No.	Demographic Variables	Frequency
1	Age	
	21 years to 25 years	44
	26 years to 35 years	17
	36 years to 40 years	24
	Above 40 years	15
2	Gender	
	Male	57
	Female	43
3	Education	
	HSC	10
	Graduation	37
	Post-Graduate	31
	Professional Degree	22
4	Occupation	
	Student	10
	Service	36
	Business	32
	Profession	12
	House wife	10
5	Monthly Income	
	Dependent	12
	Upto Rs. 1,00,000	20
	Rs. 1,00,000 to Rs. 5,00,000	29
	Rs. 5,00,000 to Rs.10,00,000	14

	Above Rs. Rs. 10,00,000	25
6	Marital Status	
	Married	54
	Unmarried	46

Chi-square test was run on cross tabulation to find out the relationship of income with budget for marriage function and preference of venue.

HYPOTHESIS

HYPOTHESIS 1:

H0: Income does not affect the budget for marriage function.

H1: Income affects the budget for marriage function.

TABLE -2: INCOME v/s BUDGET FOR MARRIAGE

INCOME	BUDGET			
	Less than 10 lacs	10 lacs to 20 lacs	Above 20 lacs	Total no. of Respondents
Dependent	10	02	00	12
Upto Rs. 1 lac	17	03	00	20
Rs. 1 lac Rs. to Rs. 5 lacs	06	21	02	29
Rs. 5 lacs Rs. to Rs. 10 lacs	02	04	08	14
Above 10 lacs	00	00	25	25
Total no. of Respondents	35	30	35	100

In order to test the above hypothesis chi-square statistics was calculated as:

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

$$\text{Where } E_{ij} = \frac{R_i \times C_j}{G}$$

Where O_{ij} = observed frequency in the i - j^{th} cell

E_{ij} = expected frequency of the i - j^{th} cell

R_i = Row Total of i^{th} Row

C_j = Column Total of the j^{th} Column

G = Grand Total

The calculated value of chi-square statistic for Hypothesis 1 was found to be 75.3751 which is greater than the corresponding chi-square table value of 15.507 at $(5-1) \times (3-1) = 8$ degrees of freedom and 5% level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected thereby concluding that Income significantly affects the budget for marriage function. People earning more income are willing to spend more on marriage function.

HYPOTHESIS 2:

H₀: Income does not affect the preference of marriage venue.

H₁: Income affects the preference of marriage venue.

TABLE -3: INCOME v/s PREFERENCE OF VENUE

INCOME	PREFERNCE OF VENUE					Total no. of Respondents
	Party Plot	Farm Hous e	Communi ty Hall	Banquet	Other	
Dependent	1	0	2	8	1	12
Upto Rs. 1 lac	5	0	8	4	3	20
Rs. 1 lac Rs. to Rs. 5 lacs	14	2	8	4	1	29
Rs. 5 lacs Rs. to Rs. 10 lacs	8	3	1	2	0	14
Above 10 lacs	5	20	0	0	0	25
Total no. of Respondents	33	25	19	18	5	100

The calculated value of chi-square statistic for Hypothesis 2 was found to be 69.9516 which is greater than the corresponding chi-square table value of 26.296 at $(5-1)*(5-1) = 16$ degrees of freedom and 5% level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected thereby concluding that Income affects the preference of marriage venue. If the income of the person is higher, he/she prefers farm houses or party plots for marriage function.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study revealed that:

- Families conduct more than four days program for a wedding happening mostly between the end of winter and starting of summer season spiritual events got the maximum weightage of importance among the four days of program.
- Majority of the respondents showed an inclination of spending more than rupees twenty Lakhs for the occasion. About half of the respondents thrived on the Word of Mouth information for services like catering, flowers, etc. and preferred weddings on a Party Plot.
- Wedding Planning is considered as a hectic and stressful task along with the fact that respondents have busy and stressful work schedules that-s-why majority of the respondents who were having monthly income of rupees five lakhs and above were ready to hire the experienced and renowned wedding planners for this memorable event of life.
- Two third of the respondents were aware of the wedding planners providing services in the city and have witnessed the occasion planned by wedding planners. They feel that they are more innovative, creative and provide excellent services, they offer one-stop services and they have a large scope of getting business in near future due to their excellent services, innovativeness, creativity, responsible handling of events and arrangements, excellent hospitality etc. etc. In their opinion, there are excellent opportunities of this flourishing business.
- Those who are not aware about the services of wedding planners or have not witnessed any occasion arranged by wedding planners were not even interested to hire their services in future too and they feel that wedding is a cultural and family event so all the rituals should be followed according to their own culture with their family members, relatives and acquaintances. They believe that wedding planners are careless, inexperienced and insensitive to the different facets of cultures and only mint money from the clients.

CONCLUSION

This study is an eye opener for the people who are into wedding planning business. It will guide them about the present perception of people of Ahmedabad about wedding planners. They will be able to plan their strategies for bringing more awareness and acceptance; removing the disbelief that wedding planners are only minting money. The study indicates that respondents having monthly income of rupees five lakhs and above were willing to hire a wedding planner. The study also indicates the fact that wedding is considered as a cultural and family event so wedding planners should also be aware of the minute details of the different cultures and should target their market accordingly.

This study opens the doors for further research to know how much does the family or friends impact the consumer's decision? How much effect the caste and culture of the person/family has on the choice and decisions related to wedding function/s? Are the various promotional strategies adopted by wedding planners to bring more awareness and acceptance?

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