

IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES' PROMOTIONS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THE INDIAN WEDDINGS

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Abstract

The growing digital and technological dependence on creating a picture-perfect and larger-than-life D-day is driving people to feel the pressure and pass it on to the behind-the-scenes crew. Some dedicated firms are working on creating magic for the people and sharing the same on their social networking sites, which in a way creates new demand for them and hence creates a new ecosystem that is governed by social networking sites. It is a nowhere-hidden fact that whatever we do in our lives is greatly influenced by what we see and share on these platforms. Instagram and Facebook are the two main flag bearers that have changed the way we see our weddings. They have created a new way of celebrating this biggest social affair what we call a wedding. This study tries to find out the dependence of the major elements of Indian weddings on social networking sites and how consumer behaviour gets on changing with them. This study also tries to find out how these social networking sites impact the perception and motivation that drives people to select destination weddings. This study tries to see the impact that social networking sites have created in developing pressure among middle-class families and the trend of following their peer group regardless of their economic conditions. In the nutshell, this research paper will help a lot of people working in the wedding market to understand how social networking sites impact consumer behaviour undergoing weddings.

Keywords: Indian Wedding, Social Networking Sites, Consumer Behaviour, Destination wedding Middle-class family and Wedding Vendors.

Introduction

Indian Wedding is symbolic of a virtual treat in which we experience two souls becoming one and it is believed that it will last for the upcoming seven birth of souls. It is guarded with the seven vows the promises that each person involved has to fulfil for each other. According to Marriam-Webster, 'A wedding is a marriage ceremony usually with its accompanying festivities or an act, process, or instance of joining in close association'. The word "Indian Wedding" itself carries a bunch of an entire fortune and luck which people

long to spend. In the researcher's perception, an Indian wedding⁶ creates an aura of joy and excitement all over and one's happiness knows no bounds. There is an environment where gifts are exchanged, elaborated preparations are done more focused on food, fun, decorations, clothes, flowers, etc. With the people involved in the act comes with no of factors that result in no of activities involved which add to the celebration. This makes the celebration extravagant or larger than life and urges to take services in making this event to be the talk of the town.

With the evolution of time weddings in India has evolved exponentially making them the biggest social affair of one's life. The urge for no of services comes hand in hand with the expenses involved in it making this into an industry worth more than \$50 billion which is to be considered second after the US at \$70 billion according to KPMG,2017. As of 2021, India's population is over 4 times that of the US, while its size is only 1/3rd. From a sheer volume perspective, there is no parity between the two countries. India¹¹ is estimated to have about 40 crore weddings in the next 15 years, while the total population of the USA is 32 crore. The per capita expenses in India are about 1/10th of America. Yet, the per capita wedding spend in urban India is 1.5 times the latter. Indians are notorious for extravagant celebrations, with the recent Ambani wedding costing over ₹750 crores. However, the most expensive wedding recorded in America was that of Chelsea Clinton, costing ₹37.5 crores. A person spends one-fifth of his wealth at a wedding in a lifetime(Digital Classifieds In India,2020). The Indian Wedding market¹¹ is growing at an exponential rate of 20% per year and around 10 million weddings take place in India out of which 80% are Hindu weddings.

Social Networking sites have revolutionised the way consumers seek any product or service before making a buying decision. It has been used by no of marketers to influence the buying decisions of the consumer and hence create a sense in their mind far before they buy the product or service in offline mode. In context to the wedding market, they proved to have a fathom influence on the mindset as well choices and their intent of the way they want their marriage to be held. In a country that is known for its extravagant and larger-than-life weddings, social networking sites play a supporting role in making D-day perfect without complications. Presumably, this social networking sites smash has given business ideas to multitudinous entrepreneurs.

There was a time when brides did little more than flip through magazines in search of ideas that would lead to their dream wedding, but social networking sites have now taken that space. Social Networking Sites greatly influenced the Psychology of Indian consumers whether it is related to their choices of wedding style decor to venues to clothing what not. With the staggering use of the internet, the number of social media users¹² has been growing in 2022 at a steady rate of 467 million due to the deep penetration of internet connectivity among people. The number of Internet users in India has grown to a whopping 658 million, which is roughly 47% of the total population of India. Now, social media has become one of the most essential parts of daily internet usage in India. The number of social media users began to rise, and the annual growth in active social media users is 4.2% with more than 19 million new users added last year. With this, different trends on social media in India are poised to grow. The annual growth of Internet users is 5.4% with another 34 million new users. The Social networking site

users are the maximum among that social media users which is Instagram (503.37 million users), and Facebook (491.53 million users).

Social networking sites have influenced the level of thinking and perception of consumers in the way they presume their marriages and the elements involved in it like decor, food etc. This has helped them to always seek new ideas of doing every element different and better from the last they experienced. The money involved in the same has also taken significant change over the last decade. But it's important to understand that what is being posted online is not what it seems every time and also it's the people who produce trends on social networking sites, not the other way around. Be that person and show your individuality on your D-day because there is no henceforth.

Literature Review

A Research Paper (2017) submitted in TIJ's Research Journal of Social Science & Management - RJSSM by Parappagoudar, S1 & Ramanjaneyalu, N. focuses on understanding the hidden big industry of India that is the wedding industry and points out its contribution to the time and money invested by the individual in the lifetime. The author tried to focus the attention on the lack of research in this particular field of study from the management Perspective and even point out the importance of the same. The major objectives of the paper were to understand the wedding industry, future trends, and potentiality of the same, and to advise the wedding planner about the strategies for the business along with how two build upon the same. The paper has thrown the light that the upcoming days are the days of wedding business in India and the potential of the industry looks good on the papers. The wedding business will prove one of the booming businesses in India. Other subsidiary businesses like jewellery, garments, catering, photography, flower decorating, and catering services will also gain profits. The wedding industry has become part of the event industry that had made its presence in global scenarios more promising. The paper has also thrown light that this business is mostly unorganised in many parts of India. The paper tried to cover handsomely the major chunk of the topic but seemed losing in the sense it doesn't account for its research on primary data but the whole finding is majorly dependent on the secondary source. It doesn't seem to specify the strategies it talks about for wedding planners in India to grow exponentially. An Article (2017) submitted to Business line -The Hindu by Cherian, T2. focuses on the Indian wedding market is estimated at \$50 billion (around ₹33,000 crores), the world's second-largest, after the \$70 billion US market. And it is growing at an estimated 20 per cent a year. It was just 100,000 crore in 2015 and it is growing at a rate of 25-30 % per year.

To tap into this opportunity Zankyou gets into the Indian market with a presence in Jaipur and Delhi.

A Dissertation (2018) submitted to Cardiff Metropolitan University by Davies, K3. focuses on the impact of social media platforms like Pinterest and Facebook influencing the decisions of customers in the wedding planning stage and how their planning gets moulded due to the same. The main objective is to know more about the trends in weddings, the wedding planning process and social media uses and impact. Another one was to question the people married and planning to get married is to see how social media impact the planning stage of a wedding. It

was found that in all age groups year after year there is a significant increase in the use of social media and a large no of people using social media on the day of their wedding. The general reviews also causes a great impact on people planning decisions. Pinterest and Facebook proved to be influential factors for those who are planning their wedding.

A Doctoral dissertation (2018) submitted to Dublin Business School by Maheshwari, R4 focuses on the ongoing wedding growth and exponential size of the wedding industry in the last few decades and the use of social media in influencing the decisions of Indian wedding customers on a large scale. It highlights the shift of wedding style from the conventional way of managing a newborn child called wedding planners. The research emphasized the ongoing challenges in the wedding industry of India. The basic objectives of the research were to study the Indian wedding industry size along with social media uses and a need for social platforms for the vendors of the wedding industry. The researcher collected data through interviews and applied grounded theory as the strategy of the research. The research approach was inductive while the research philosophy was interpretivism. The research found that social media greatly affects the interaction and use of different products and services in the wedding industry. Further, the need of creating whole new dedicated social platforms was validated from the research. It also suggested that the Indian wedding industry contributes at a significant level to the Indian economy.

A Research Paper (2020) submitted to Catalyst – Journal of Business Management (CJBM) by Raj, A5, Kumar, A. & Kumar, S. focuses on the effect of Covid-19 on the Indian wedding industry along with its factors like spending limits, size of the gathering, wedding arrangements etc. It also analyses the change in the trend of the wedding business due to Covid-19. The major objectives of the paper were to find out the effect, the change in trends and the new procedures it will adhere to with the end of covid-19. The source of collecting data was a questionnaire along with some journals and newspapers and the sampling technique was simple random sampling. The major findings were that around 52% thought the wedding industry is negatively affected by covid-19 and 44% thought the spending capacity has decreased after covid-19. The paper has significantly shown the effects of covid-19 on the wedding industry but didn't mention the strategies that need too applied by the wedding planners and other subsidiaries to forfeit this effect on their business.

A Research paper (2020) submitted to the International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts-IJCRT by Chopra, C6. And Gupta, S. focuses on the role of social media in deciding for consumers in India. Consumers' emotions also play a vital role in the same. The main aim here is to explain to the readers the importance of social media on consumer behaviour and its decision-making process Consumer behaviour is divided into 5 stage models., Problem recognition, Search of Information, Evaluation of alternatives, Final decision and Post-purchase decisions. The paper's main objectives were to how consumers gather information and process it and to see the effect of social media in different stages of their decision-making. The finding brings out a notice that social media users find it easy to gather information and decision making too rather than in comparison to those who use other information sources.

A Research paper (2020) submitted to the International Journal of Engineering Research & Technology-IJERT by Singh, R7. focuses on the effect of social media on consumer behaviour consumers using social media along with relationships among various social media marketing activities. The paper study is based on a secondary source of data. Paper shared the information about the market share of various social media platforms like Facebook has 2.45 billion users, Twitter with 330 million etc. It gives the important section related to hours spent on social media which comes out to be 2.4 hours on average. Social media has changed the inner connection of the people to the products.

A Research paper (2020) was submitted to the Tarumanagara International Conference on the Applications of Social Sciences and Humanities-TICASH by Khosasi, W8. And Winduwati, S. focus on the concept of social in marketing communication theory and the use of Instagram by premier wedding organiser for posting their works. Premiere Wedding Organizer seeks to experience growth by marketing online and using social media like Instagram as its main promotional tool. The main objective is to find out how premier wedding organisers carry out promotional activities on Instagram. The major finding in this was the premier wedding organiser used the paid aids of Instagram to create a good amount of consumer engagement.

A Research paper (2021) was submitted to the Journal of Consumer Policy by Albers, D., Wren, A9., Knotts, T. And Chupp, M. focus on elevated wedding pricing practice and tries to explain why the practice is tolerated and perpetuated. The paper data collection method was based on a quasi-experiment to test these hypotheses. Finding has shown different pricing structures for wedding-related items to non-wedding-related items.

Massive pressure causes decreased price sensitivity for wedding-related goods as in the case of the bride. Retailers charge higher prices for wedding-related goods.

A Research paper (2021) was submitted to the Journal of Management Practices, Humanities and Social Sciences by Batool, S10., Yasin, Z. And Islam, M. focus on Instagram's role in creating a whole new hub of wedding advertising in the world hence creating a great impact on the consumer behaviour in planning a wedding hence a creating a sense of social pressure amongst the young adult of a middle-class family. The main objectives of this paper are to know the consumption level of Instagram by middle-class adults. The triangulation approach was opted for by the researcher. Simple linear regression was calculated to predict the promotion of extravagant wedding trends based on the use of Instagram. The finding resulted in explaining that the more consumer uses Instagram more they are influenced by the trends. Extravagant weddings result in a great amount of mental pressure as well as social differences amount society.

Research Gap

The review of available literature identified the gap that there is a body of literature available on weddings, their rituals and wedding as a business industry, economic contribution, and social media impact on consumer behaviour but there was no study available that directly establishes the impact of social networking sites on consumer behaviour in the wedding along

with how it changes the perception of consumers, spending trend, creating unnecessary competition among middle-class family and selecting wedding vendors in context to India.

Research Questions

- To study the impact of social networking sites on one's own perception of weddings.
- To study the impact of social networking sites in selecting various wedding vendors.
- To study social networking sites' contribution to changing customer spending trends in weddings.
- To study the impact of social networking sites creating the trend of destination weddings in India.
- To study the impact of social networking sites in creating unnecessary competition amongst Indian middle-class families at weddings.

Research Methodology

Considering the research ideology that relates more to human social and behavioural aspects, we adopted the qualitative technique and inductive approach. A semi-structured telephonic interview was conducted with selected participants and it was recorded for detailed analysis and future reference. According to the area of the study, not much secondary data is available hence the researcher was dependent on primary data only. A total of five participants were selected who had gone through the process of marriage.

Participant Profile

As part of the data collection for this research, a total of five customers were selected who had recently got married, belong to a middle-class family and gone through the process as per the study objectives. The list of all the participants are as follows:

Participant Profile

Participant	Name	Email id
RP1	Aayush Bajjal	aayush.bajjal.ab@gmail.com
RP2	Somiya Atre	somiyaatre@gmail.com
RP3	Saloni Bajjal	salonibajjal1@gmail.com
RP4	Girish Chotrani	girish.chotrani69@gmail.com
RP5	Chandani Manghnani	chandani212@gmail.com

RP stands for Research Participant

Findings

The impact of social networking sites on one's own perception of weddings

A common perspective came into the light as all the participants conveyed that their perception has been greatly impacted by exposure to social networking sites. According to RP3, "it helps them with new ideas and the trends going in the world". According to RP2, "it" provides new

options than before. Overall the major lining is that their thinking towards the wedding changed and would say got the growth through social networking sites.

The impact of social networking sites in selecting various wedding vendors.

According to RP1," we scroll no of reels available on Instagram related to the wedding as soon as we like anyone's work it is very easy to approach to them as all the information is available on their page. But in the earlier times, we were not able to do so and it was hard to find good options, so ultimately have to go which is locally available". According to RP4, "It was a fifty-fifty experience for him as whatever you see online doesn't guaranty its authenticity and originality of work, as it can be copied from someone else and ultimately you get cheated. So need to find out offline too." According to RP2, "It is helpful and proved quite a pleasant experience for them." According to RP5, " It is the need of the modern world hence impacted to the largest extent."

Social networking sites' contribution to changing customer spending trends in weddings.

According to RP5, " She had curated her whole wedding following the social media hence spend around 30% more in her wedding than her sister's marriage." According to RP3," as no of options increased and new trends came into play so purchasing power too had increased. According to RP2," Due to easy access to no of clothing designer available her spending trend increased bifold."

The impact of social networking sites creating the trend of destination weddings in India.

According to RP1," It was pre-decided on their part to do destination wedding but still got motivated with the picture they saw on Instagram of a particular wedding in a property." According to RP3," Celebrity wedding motivated her to do the same". According to RP4," it was cheaper as less no of people was involved ". According to RP5, they" experienced the larger than life photos of a friend's wedding on Instagram".

The impact of social networking sites in creating unnecessary competition amongst Indian middle-class families at weddings.

According to RP5," for people it may but for some it may be not. It is unto us to take the way we want". According to RP4," hundred per cent it adds that pressure as what we see we try to inculcate the same". According to RP2," people get affected with what their friends are doing hence try to compete with them for the same." According to RP1," there is a race amongst our family members to show the superiority on each other through arranging extravagant weddings".

Conclusions

By going through the responses from the no of participants it is quite evident that social networking sites have a great amount of impact on all spheres of an Indian wedding. With the no of social networking site users increasing day by day there is a total shift in the way people arrange their weddings and the way they book their wedding vendors. It is not just the technological change but it is more of behavioural change from the end of consumers. There

are some not dedicated pages available on social networking sites that are focused on wedding services hence it becomes too easy for people to select what best suits them. With easy availability and approach of no of options the buying power of the people has increased and they are always looking for new options of services that they can add to their wedding hence increasing the overall spending pattern. With every technological advancement comes its negative side too as it had created a lot of competition among the middle-class family, a race that has no end causing a lot of financial crisis and mental pressure that overall deplete the real sense of enjoyment of this mega social affair of one's life. It has become more of a point of comparison among the people rather than it was earlier more serene. The destination wedding trend came into play with the increase of no Celebrity destination weddings happening all over the globe. It proved as inoculum in the trend of destination weddings.

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APPENDIX - 1

List of Interview Questions

Q1 On which social networking sites are you active?

Q2 Do you believe that social networking sites had changed your perception of your wedding preparations? If yes, How? / if not, How?

Q3 To what extent do you believe that social networking sites impacted the wedding budget?

Q4 Do you think social networking sites had motivated you to do a Destination wedding?

If yes, How? / if not, How?

Q5 Whether social networking sites eased the process of selecting wedding vendors?

If yes, How? / if not, How?

Q6 Do you believe that social networking sites have created unnecessary competition among middle-class families at weddings?

If yes, How? / if not, How?