

To what extent is the Indian wedding market following trends similar to those of the American wedding market?

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the degree to which the Indian wedding market imitates the trends prevalent in the American wedding market. The paper includes an extensive literature review examining the available information on the American wedding market including the key factors causing transformations to the ceremonies. The aforementioned is then used to formulate three hypotheses for the Indian wedding market reflecting some of the parallels and distinctions between the American and Indian wedding markets. In order to substantiate the hypotheses, this paper makes use of both primary and secondary research including Indian wedding market statistics, consumer behaviour patterns, and industry expert comments. All the work in this study is supported by appropriate economic and business knowledge and theories.

I. INTRODUCTION

Valued at more than 165 Billion USD globally, the wedding industry is growing at a rapid rate. Estimates quote that by 2030 the industry will be valued at approximately 414.2 billion USD, giving us a compounding annual growth rate of 4.8% (C. and D., 2022).

Weddings are a once-in-a-lifetime event, there is an immense emotional investment by the clients, further causing them to spend more to make tying the knot as special as they can. Weddings are not homogenous products - this industry requires a lot of customization and attention to detail as every couple wants their wedding to be special and unique. Weddings also bear a lot of cultural importance. Different cultures are home to various kinds of celebrations and weddings; hence the vendors have to depict adaptability and variety in order to score clients and acquire a larger customer base. Furthermore, the wedding industry is like an overarching umbrella that only functions on the basis of collaboration and success of many individual industries like catering, wedding consultants, designers, artists and many more. This is what makes the wedding industry extremely complex and dynamic.

Two of the biggest wedding markets in the world are the American and Indian wedding markets. With regards to the wedding market in America, it was valued at more than 57 Billion USD in 2022 (McCain, 2023). In India, the wedding market is particularly vibrant, with a long tradition of elaborate and lavish weddings that are steeped in cultural and religious significance - it is a testament to the importance that Indian families place on the institution of marriage. Valued at a staggering INR 375,000 Crore, the giant Indian wedding market proves to be an important part of the Indian economy (Wedding Wishlist, 2022). While there are certainly some differences between the wedding market in India and the wedding market in other countries, the core values of love, commitment, and family are universal, and they are celebrated in a unique and beautiful way in the Indian wedding tradition.

The aim of the research paper is to analyse past, ongoing and predicted trends for the American wedding market and accordingly hypothesize what may be expected for the future of the Indian wedding market. The aforementioned will be facilitated by the appropriate use of a combination of primary and secondary research. In doing so, the research question to be answered is **“To what extent is the Indian wedding market following trends similar to those of the American wedding market?”**

II. LITERATURE REVIEW – AMERICAN WEDDING MARKET

It was anticipated that the wedding business in the United States would be worth 72 billion USD in 2021, which would have a significant influence on the economy (McCain, 2023). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial influence on the industry's operations and has altered the behaviour and routines of its customers. This literature review, which will be based on a survey of relevant sources such as industry reports, academic publications, and web articles, will investigate the significant developments that have taken place in the wedding

market in the United States over the course of the most recent few years.

One of the most important changes that have occurred in the wedding market in the United States is the fact that individuals are spending a greater amount of money on their nuptials. This trend has been made worse by a variety of different factors, the most notable of which is the rise in prices and interruptions in the supply chain that the COVID-19 outbreak has created. According to Bloomberg, the post-pandemic wedding boom has been negatively impacted by inflation, which has caused some guests to be responsible for expenses totalling up to 20,000 USD in total (Ballentine, 2022). According to projections made by The Knot (2022), a well-known website dedicated to wedding planning, the typical cost of a wedding in the United States was expected to increase by 3.5% by the year 2022.

As a direct response to the rise in the cost of weddings, a growing number of couples are shifting their focus from the typically huge and lavish weddings to weddings that are more intimate, involve fewer guests, and cost less money. According to projections made by Bizwomen, a magazine of American City Business Journals, the "small-big" trend will become more prevalent in the year 2021 (Stych, 2020). Based on this tendency, it appeared that in 2021, couples chose weddings that are both more intimate and adaptable. This trend was brought about not just because of the requirement of reacting to new social distance measures, but also by the worry brought on by the economic climate.

The wedding market in the United States is seeing the emergence of a number of new trends, one of which is the rising popularity of weddings held in unusual locations. Weddings are becoming increasingly common in far-flung locations as a growing number of couples have the desire to provide both themselves and their guest's experiences that are one-of-a-kind and unforgettable. A well-known website dedicated to wedding preparation called Brides claims that 20% of all weddings in the United States take place at a destination (Brides Editors, 2021). This pattern of behaviour can be attributed to a number of different factors, such as the want to deviate from the conventional structure of a wedding and the possibility of combining the wedding with a vacation.

Nuptials that are sustainable and good for the environment are also becoming increasingly

popular. People are becoming more conscious of the environmental difficulties we face, and as a result, they are looking for ways to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emissions that are produced by their weddings and to make their ceremonies and receptions more eco-friendly. According to research conducted by Brides magazine, more than one-third of engaged couples in the United States decide to have environmentally conscious weddings. This trend has led to the development of new products and services, such as wedding invitations that are favourable to the environment and food that is gathered from the local area specifically for use in festivities (Olson and Mulvey, 2021).

The wedding market in the United States has seen a number of shifts in recent years, one of which is a rise in the number of marriages between people of the same gender. Since the United States made it possible for couples of the same gender to be married, there has been a significant increase in the number of same-gender couples that have been able to tie the knot. This trend has led to the development of new goods and services that are catered specifically toward same-sex couples. Some examples of these new goods and services include instructions for organizing same-sex weddings as well as wedding apparel.

On the whole, it can be said that as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, the American wedding market has seen considerable changes in recent years. The most prominent trend has been the growth in wedding expenditures, which has been caused by reasons such as inflation and interruptions in the supply chain. As a result, many couples have changed their attention to smaller, more private, and economic events. In addition to a surge in destination weddings, eco-friendly and sustainable weddings, and same-sex marriages, there is a rise in other developing trends. Despite facing obstacles, the market has changed and developed new methods to suit the demands of couples and provide unforgettable experiences. Overall, it is anticipated that the wedding business will continue to adapt and develop in response to shifting customer tastes and economic situations.

Hypotheses development for the Indian wedding market

Based on the previous data and analysis of the American wedding market, the following are the formulated hypotheses for the Indian wedding market

Hypothesis 1:

India has been exposed to severe rates of inflation since COVID-19. According to recent research, the Indian rupee inflated by 6.52% in January of 2023 (MOSPI, 2019).

Indian weddings are renowned around the globe for their extravagant nature. Since multiple couples had to postpone or completely cancel their weddings due to the pandemic, they are excited to follow through with the grand celebration of tying the knot in traditional Indian tradition.

Hence, India is expected to follow the trend of increasing wedding costs in the near future, in tandem with the American wedding market.

Hypothesis 2:

Due to multiple young adults facing economic turmoil during COVID, awareness of financial literacy has drastically increased in the past 2 years (IBEF, 2022). Instead of prioritizing marriage, the youngsters and their families have started encouraging attaining financial stability first (BetterHalf, 2022).

Thus, similar to the American Wedding Industry trend, a decrease in the amount and frequency of Indian Weddings may be predicted for the next few years.

Hypothesis 3:

Americans have begun focusing on making their weddings environmentally friendly and thus decreasing their carbon footprint. This is due to America making large advances in the renewable energy sector and in the past year, the per megawatt cost per hour for solar and wind energy has fallen below coal-generated energy. However, India is still a nation which is yet to provide basic energy to all its citizens. In comparison to renewable energy sources, traditional sources of power like coal and fossil fuels have a cheaper initial cost. The awareness in India regarding environmental consciousness is extremely less in comparison to America, despite the fact both nations have committed to the net zero initiative.

Hence, unlike American weddings, it can be predicted that Indians will not prioritize nor give importance to their weddings being eco-friendly and sustainable.

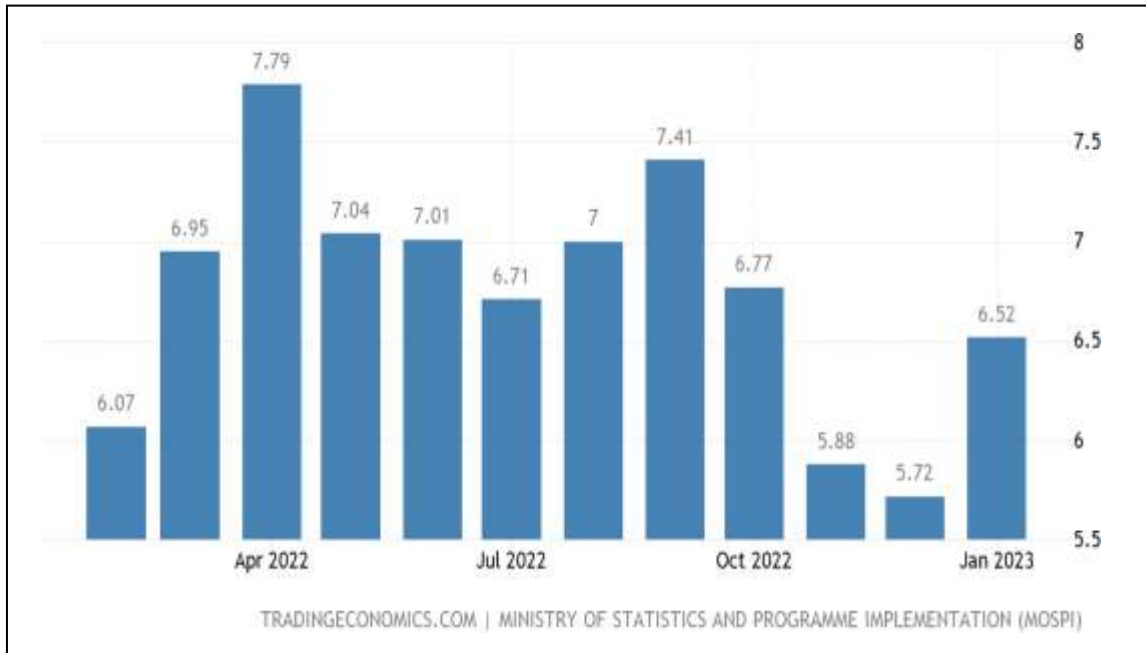
Data and Results

The institution of marriage has always been accorded a great deal of significance in Indian

cultural heritage and a great deal of effort has been devoted to it, resulting in the ceremony being memorable and intricate for Indians. This custom is also known as the "Gigantic Indian Wedding." Despite this, the pandemic was able to knock this vast enterprise to its knees; however, since the COVID outbreak appears to be winding down, the Indian wedding market has made a miraculous recovery.

After the initial confusion produced by COVID had subsided, a seemingly infinite number of couples eagerly awaited the chance to finally marry legally. Vikaas Gutgutia, the founder of Ferns N Petals, published a report predicting that the market for wedding services in India will increase by about 200% over the next several years (Business Desk, 2022). In fact, there has been a great amount of evidence suggesting that the wedding sector has started to experience significant growth as the restrictions were uplifted. The aforementioned has benefited several key players including the likes of the hotel industry. For instance, the executive vice president of sales and marketing for Taj's parent business, Indian Hotels Group Ltd, indicated that the wedding market has recovered and increased by 48% between April and September 2022. The executive vice president furnished this information. The proprietors of hotels have also observed an increase in business, and they pay special emphasis on the rising trend of organizing weddings in exotic locales and the rising tendency of including personalized touches in the ceremony (Sinha, 2022). If the rate of marriages continues to grow as has been observed in an article by PTI (2022), then it can be estimated that the total number of weddings in India each year will surpass 38 million. This is greater than three times the average number of weddings held annually in India.

As a result of supply chain concerns that started to appear during the pandemic, the overall inflation in the economy as well as wedding inflation (aka the unprecedented growth in demand for weddings), the average Indian wedding is becoming more expensive. When focusing on the inflation in the Indian economy, it can be seen that in 2023 January Inflation touched 6.52% which is over the RBI's tolerance of 6% (Ahmed and Singh, 2023). This is visible in the data (MOSPI, 2019) presented in the graph below:



The increase in costs has most definitely been observed by many industry analysts. For instance, WeddingWire India in a survey conducted during the latter half of 2022 found that the earnings of nearly half of its vendors per month have gone up in 2022 as compared to 2019. The survey also found that 31% of its vendors hiked their charges due to high product and labour costs across categories (Business Desk, 2022). This trend was further confirmed in an interview with Mr Punit Sikand, a titan in the catering industry, who states that between the pre-and post-COVID eras, prices in the catering industry have risen by around 25%. Mr Sikand himself points towards the inefficiencies in the supply chain of raw materials incorporated into services and economic inflation to explain the price increases in the current market. Furthermore, Mr Samit Garg, founder and CEO of E-Factor Entertainment, also remarked that the hospitality industry has drastically increased its prices in reaction to the extremely strong demand for bookings they are now experiencing.

Whilst the pandemic produced a tremendous degree of disruption in the business, it also introduced a new awareness and value to the market as a whole. As a result of the disastrous experiences with Covid-19, concerns such as hygiene, security, and respect for human life are given greater consideration while organizing weddings. Hence, individuals in the upper middle class and upper class have suddenly become much more conscious of the need for sustainability, prompting them and wedding management businesses to begin incorporating environmentally

friendly practices into ceremonies and activities. Mr Punit Sikand noted in an interview that there have been a number of cases in which food that has been wasted has been donated to non-governmental organizations. Yet, when food spoils due to exposure to an unfavourable climate for an extended period of time, various firms have joined forces to dispose of this waste in an appropriate and environmentally beneficial manner. Both Mr Samit Garg and Mrs Manika Garg emphasized that, as key industry actors, they had a responsibility to facilitate this transitional progress. In addition to weddings, this change may be observed in other areas of the event industry. For instance, E-Factor Entertainment has hired SKRAP, a business that specializes in waste management, to dispose of the garbage generated at their Eco Retreat Project in Konark, Odisha.

III. DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1

It appears plausible that India's wedding market will continue the trend of increased wedding expenditures in the near future, based on the information offered. According to the data, India's wedding market has recovered from the initial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and is experiencing tremendous growth - driving an increase in demand for wedding services, resulting in a spike in wedding inflation. The aforementioned trend combined with the growing product and labour expenses as well as shortages in the supply chains of various intermediary commodities has led to the incomes of vendors increasing, as suggested by the

data. In the catering industry, prices have climbed by around 25% between the pre- and post-COVID eras. Similar to the food business, several minor industries that collaborate to produce the enormous wedding umbrella have witnessed a price increase for the reasons outlined. All of these additional expenses, when added together, cause the total cost of the wedding to rise. Furthermore, the research reveals that eco- friendly and sustainable practices are gaining prominence in the wedding market which tends to increase the final price.

Taking all the above into consideration, Hypothesis 1 which states “India is expected to follow the trend of increasing wedding costs in the near future, in tandem with the American wedding market” can be accepted. Once again, this trend seems to be driven by a combination of supply chain concerns, inflation in the Indian economy, and an increase in demand for wedding services.

Hypothesis 2

In contrast to the United States, the frequency and quantity of weddings in India will continue to increase for the foreseeable future, according to the analysis of the performed research. One potential reason for this could be the disparities in the cost of living between the two countries. Many couples will continue to pursue marriage despite the rise in financial literacy in India due to the lower cost of housing, schooling, and general living expenses in India compared to the United States. For instance, the cost of living for one person in India is approximately 66% cheaper than the cost of living for one person in the United States. The cost of rental housing in India is also 88% cheaper than the cost of rental housing in the United States (Numbeo, 2023). Therefore, the Indian population may arguably not have to face drastic choices like the couples in America. Even mainstream media has taken up the latter conundrum by producing a Netflix show in the United States that asks couples if marriage is more important than housing (Marriage or Mortgage).

Another factor that may be responsible for the increasing frequency and quantity of weddings in India lies in the fact that the institution of marriage has greater significance in the Asian country. Therefore, the parents are eager to assist their children in financing their extravagant weddings, making it simpler for the pair to tie the knot. Finally, the digitization of wedding services also contributes significantly to the convenience of weddings in India. Organizations such as Wed Me Good give online and prompt support with wedding planning and execution, thereby significantly streamlining the process.

On the basis of the above, Hypothesis 2 stating “similar to the American Wedding Industry trend, a decrease in the amount and frequency of Indian Weddings may be predicted for the next few years” will be rejected.

Hypothesis 3

It can be said that India, like the United States, incorporates eco-friendliness into their weddings. However, the importance given to eco-friendly and sustainable practices during wedding planning may not be as much in India as it is in the United States. The main reason for the aforementioned is that in India, there is a significant discrepancy in wealth among the population. So, the upper middle class and affluent families of India who have been exposed to the proper education and have the resources to do so have begun incorporating these green practices into their festivities. On the other hand, however, the majority of the Indian populace, who do not have access to the highest levels of education and cannot afford to incorporate sustainable practices into their weddings, opt to disregard the sustainability factor.

Therefore, Hypothesis 3 which states “Unlike American weddings, it can be predicted that Indians will not prioritize nor give importance to their weddings being eco-friendly and sustainable” can be accepted to a certain extent at this time.

IV. CONCLUSION:

The wedding industry is a multibillion-dollar, rapidly expanding market. Due to the liveliness and intricacy of the sector, various businesses, including caterers, wedding planners, designers, and artists, must merge. Love, dedication, and family are universal characteristics that are commemorated in a beautiful and distinctive manner within Indian and American wedding ceremonies - two of the biggest wedding markets in the world. This research paper aimed to examine wedding market trends in the United States and subsequently predict the future of the Indian wedding market.

On the basis of the analysis of the American wedding market and current statistics, numerous assumptions were made regarding the Indian wedding market and these were further tested using data gathered and analysed from a mix of primary and secondary resources. The main findings entailed the following; as a result of the removal of COVID restrictions, the Indian wedding business is thriving, and the market for wedding services is projected to increase by 200 percent

over the next five years in contrast to the patterns in the American wedding market. However, similar to American weddings, the cost of Indian weddings is also increasing due to economic inflation and wedding inflation in the country. Furthermore, due to the increased emphasis on hygiene, security, and respect for human life in the wake of the epidemic, wedding management companies have begun adding eco-friendly practices to Indian ceremonies and festivities. The aforementioned is not to the extent that it may be visible in American weddings due to the wealth divide in India and the inability of certain groups to afford the extensive costs of sustainability.

Based on the extensive investigation of each of the hypotheses, it can be concluded that the Indian wedding market will follow the trends prevailing in the American wedding market to a certain extent but will majorly continue on its own trajectory due to various differentiating factors as stated above. However, some limitations which were faced during the drafting of the paper have to be taken into consideration. For the purpose of primary research, only four parties were interviewed, and the secondary sources were limited to online archives and articles. The research can thus be conducted on a larger scale by extracting research from more primary and secondary sources and including the perspectives of additional stakeholders in the wedding umbrella to provide a more conclusive and elaborate answer.

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