



IJAHSS



Copyright@IJAHSS

The Influence of Social Media Trends on the Indian Wedding Ecosystem

Preetilata kumari

Ph.D. Scholar, Royal School of Communication and Media, Royal Global University, Guwahati, Assam, India

*Corresponding Author

Preetilata kumari

ABSTRACT

The emergence of technological advancements, the influence of social media, and the evolving patterns of consumption have contributed to the materialization of extravagant Indian weddings that are characterized by their grandeur and opulence. By reflecting on the past, one can gain insight into the simpler and more understated ways in which marriages were traditionally conducted. In earlier times, the focus was primarily on the rituals and cultural aspects of weddings, but now the emphasis has shifted towards elaborate decorations, following social media trends, and incorporating a fusion of cultures. (Maheshwari, 2018) Weddings possess their own unique set of traditions, customs, and rituals that are intricately woven into the fabric of the marriage ceremony. Nevertheless, as time progresses and society undergoes various transformations, the marriage tradition has experienced numerous alterations. (The Hindu Marriage Tradition in Assam: Change and Continuity | Culture Nurtures Unity, n.d.) One notable change that can be observed is the shift in wedding photography to the evolution of wedding attire. This shift sheds light on the evolving social landscape and context in India, particularly as individuals increasingly embrace social media and draw inspiration from the glamorous world of Bollywood and big fat Indian weddings. The current Indian Wedding Season is significantly influenced by social media trends, Bollywood etc. TV Shows such as Made in Heaven and Indian Matchmaking, as well as high-profile celebrity weddings, have reshaped societal expectations. Social media trends that are immensely popular among newlyweds or bride and grooms are: destination wedding, changes in décor, visual aesthetics, high technology infused wedding photography, digital wedding invites, using of hashtags in social networking sites like Instagram and Facebook etc. The emphasis on weddings that are 'Instagram-worthy' has become integral to the Indian Wedding Season, contributing to its opulence and allure. This research aims to investigate the impact of these changes on the current wedding landscape in India. Specifically, this paper aims to explore the evolving nature of Indian weddings and the effects of social media and its trends on these celebrations. (Maheshwari, 2018)

Key Words: *Social Media, Influence, Trends, Indian Wedding, Fusion of Culture, Shift, Decoration*

INTRODUCTION

Social media exerts a significant influence on its users, shaping trends for various occasions. In particular, social media has transformed marriage ceremonies into a thriving industry. From florists and floral decorations to venues, wedding caterers, and bands, social media serves as the vital link connecting couples with relevant service providers. Through social media, people are seamlessly connected and just a click away from accessing information about any event or happenings around them. The continuous advancements in social media are revolutionizing the way wedding ceremonies are conducted. It has not only created and redefined new concepts for weddings but also influenced the planning, creation, and significance attributed to these special occasions. The impact of media on weddings can be observed through the abundance of marriage-related posts on Instagram, with hashtags serving as an effective means to gather and curate these posts. The opulent weddings showcased on Instagram garner millions of views and posts, ultimately determining the popularity of these ceremonies among the public. (Batooleet al.,2021)

The Indian Wedding Season is a vibrant cultural and economic phenomenon that holds great significance. It has a profound impact on various industries, ranging from catering to jewelry. the tradition of gold and adorning the bride with jewelrymbolizes India's rich cultural heritage. Influenced by media and trends, the Indian Wedding Season is not only a time of joy but also a driving force behind economic growth. It is worth noting that approximately 20% of wedding expenses are borne by the families of the bride and groom, while the remaining 80% benefits a wide range of businesses and services that are essential for these celebrations. Today, the Indian Wedding Season is heavily influenced by Bollywood and social media trends. Popular shows in OTT platforms, celebrity weddings displayed over social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook as well as high-profile celebrity weddings, have redefined expectations. The

desire for weddings that are Instagram-worthy has become integral to the Indian Wedding Season, adding to its extravagance and allure. (brandsjet,2023)

Paradigm changes in the Indian weddings due to social media dependence:

There was a time when brides would flip through beauty and bridal magazines to draw inspiration for their dream weddings but social media have invaded that place now. With just a click they can pin their perfect outfit now in social media sites like Pinterest. The exposure of various global trends on social media have made things easier and accessible to most people. But definitely a pressure is felt to look a certain way and stand out from the rest. Unrealistic expectations, social, financial and mental pressure also make the scenario a little daunting and stressful for the bride and grooms along with the families. The present generation is more curious about Instagrammable picture perfect weddings than a subtle, simple wedding with lots of rituals and rites. (Nivedita, 2022)

The new trends popularized by social media:

Digital invites:

Shift in cultural and behavioral patterns have given rise in new phenomenon in regards to weddings, precisely Indian weddings. The old ways of print invites have taken a backseat to a larger extent and people are seeking online or digital invites which are cost effective, saves time and reaches people instantly. It allows swift communication with the invitees; it is precise in nature and hassle free. The couple can choose their likings to be the theme of the e- card. Most occasions people prefer customized digital card with their own stories, designs, photographs in it. Couples can include videos, animations, and even music, making the invitation an engaging and enriching experience for the recipients. Due to the convenience of technology in facilitating communication and the growing prevalence of social media platforms, news dissemination has become rapid. (Sari et al., 2023)

Destination Wedding:

The concept of a destination wedding has become a prevailing trend among Indians. With the advent of social media, the world has undergone a significant transformation. Consequently, businesses of various types are fervently striving to ascertain ways to capitalize on this ever-evolving technology.

The wedding tourism sector has experienced a significant increase of 75% in recent years, indicating a positive growth trajectory for the destination weddings market within the events tourism industry. Scenic locations such as tropical beaches, historic castles in Europe, vast grasslands, and lush forests are now highly sought after (Goncalves et al., 2022)

In the realm of wedding planning, the selection of a venue is crucial, and opting for a destination wedding can bring a special and unique element to the event. Destination weddings, held in a location different from the couple's usual residence, often involve travel for guests and the wedding party. These weddings take place in a setting outside of the couple's hometown, where they and their families come together to celebrate and exchange vows. The popularity of destination weddings is increasing, as couples are more involved in choosing picturesque locations for their big day.(Kumar & Mashooq, 2022)

Bollywood has significantly influenced the evolution of wedding trends, particularly through films such as *Ye Jawaani Hai Deewani*, etc. This influence has led to a shift in Indian weddings from small, intimate gatherings in wedding halls to extravagant celebrations in iconic venues like the City Palace of Udaipur, hill stations like Manali and other exotic locations. New trends in weddings, such as destination weddings at exotic resorts, sundowner weddings, beachside weddings etc. have emerged as a result. Wedding planners have effectively promoted destination weddings through visually appealing posts on social media platforms, thereby boosting the economies of popular wedding destinations like Jaipur, Udaipur, and Goa etc. This is not only limited to the nation, but people do choose foreign and international locations for their celebrations. Furthermore, this trend has provided a significant boost to small businesses such as confectionaries, packaging companies, decorators, and florists, beauty and make-up industry, photography industry as they now have access to a larger customer base.(Agrawal, 2020)

Emphasis on venues, decors and aesthetics:

Indian weddings have traditionally taken place in the cozy confines of homes. However, with a shift towards creating memorable experiences and smaller guest lists, wedding venues like farmhouses and banquet lawns are becoming increasingly popular. In 2022, a remarkable 56 percent of Indians opted for banquet halls, reflecting a similar trend observed in the United States, where specialized event spaces are highly favored. Banquet halls offer flexibility in accommodating different guest list sizes and provide tailored services, elevating the overall grandeur of the festivities. Indian couples are now embracing innovative and visually appealing wedding setups, drawing inspiration from global trends and Bollywood extravaganzas. The use of curated mood boards, unique themes, and creative floral arrangements is on the rise. While Pinterest continues to be a widely used platform worldwide, Instagram has emerged as the preferred choice for wedding inspiration in India, with 52 percent of couples turning to the platform for creative ideas. People don't shy away from spending hefty amount but they want to stand out from the rest. Colour co-ordinated weddings outfits of

the bride and grooms and theme-based attires for the family and all the guests have become a trend in the recent times. Emphasis on dancing, DJs, music and inviting popular face to take the wedding a layer higher is the new away to be in the limelight. (Kulkarni, 2023)

RESEARCH PROBLEM

With the social media revolution and upsurge, wedding trends have also gained immense popularity. With an astonishing usage pattern of social media, lot have been researched on its influence on people, the positive and the negative aspect of social media but a minimal has been researched on the Influence on Indian wedding scenario, the latest social media trends etc. and how it is impacting the lives of people. There is a dearth of quality literature and research work on this font, though it a very contemporary topic in present times. The full possibilities are yet to be utilized by researchers, scholars etc.

RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To understand social media and its influence on how Indian weddings are conducted in current times
2. To understand the usage pattern of social media and its various wedding trends

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher has embraced a qualitative approach in order to delve into the human social and behavioral aspects, aiming to uncover subjectivity and interpret phenomena. The study focuses on exploring the evolving landscape of Indian weddings, including changes in rituals, visuals, cultural elements, the impact of social media on wedding trends, and current social media trends. Interviews with married couples who actively engage in social media platforms were taken into account as the primary source of research. Secondary sources such as websites, blogs, academic journals, research papers, and relevant publications have been meticulously consulted to gather information pertinent to the study's subject matter. Efforts have been made to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Weddings are often remembered for their extravagant display of culture and values. These grand celebrations, known as big fat weddings, have traditionally been a symbol of one's social status and wealth. It is not uncommon for individuals to allocate a significant portion of their life savings towards their wedding expenses. People invest their entire savings into wedding preparations, including expensive attire and elaborate functions, in order to create lasting memories. Interestingly, the growth of the wedding industry has been fueled not only by the affluent class but also by the middle-class and younger generation. This has led to the expansion of various wedding trends and the integration of the wedding industry with other sub-industries and vendors such as caterers, wedding planners, dress designers, venues, salons, lighting, and decorations. Though weddings hold a significant place in society due to their portrayal of culture and values; the influence of external factors, societal expectation to look a certain way, peer pressure, and their own willingness to be in the limelight highlights the existence of hegemony.

Based on the Global Digital Overview of 2019, the Internet is being accessed by a staggering 4.38 billion individuals worldwide, with 3.48 billion of them actively engaging in social media platforms. In India, as per the data from India's Census in 2011, the youth population constitutes one-fifth of the total population. Among the various Internet-based applications available, Social Networking Sites (SNSs) take the lead as the most widely utilized platforms. These SNSs enable users to create accounts, update their profiles, share information, and interact with others within the online community. Consequently, SNSs have become an essential means of socialization for people across the globe. The majority of Indian youth, making up 85% of non-adult users, have smartphones at their disposal. A significant portion of them spend five hours daily online, with 80% confessing to using social media. An increasing number of young individuals are now turning to OTT platforms for video content, aside from YouTube. (Singhal & Prakash, 2020)

The influence of social media on marriage in India is substantial. Platforms such as Facebook and Pinterest play a crucial role in shaping individuals' choices throughout the wedding planning process, especially for those currently engaged in planning their nuptials. These platforms serve as valuable tools for discovering vendors and gathering ideas for various aspects of the wedding. The emergence of Indian matrimonial websites as a novel and popular means of finding life partners reflects a new facet of media consumption and partner selection, contributing to societal transformations in contemporary India. In essence, social media is transforming the landscape of weddings in India by influencing decision-making, shaping perceptions of marriage, and providing a platform for individual expression and empowerment.

Indian weddings are currently experiencing a transformation across all aspects. The traditional way in which marriages were conducted, arranged, and ritualized has shifted significantly. This change in the paradigm is evident through the drastic alterations in our cultural perspective. The celebratory atmosphere at weddings has taken on a more extravagant tone. Lavish Indian weddings are becoming even more extravagant as the booming economy injects wealth into the market, transforming Indian weddings into elaborate showcases reminiscent of a Bollywood production. This trend has spread beyond the affluent to other segments of society, eager to display their prosperity. Wedding planners

have replaced traditional family members in organizing weddings, and the industry is now worth USD 10 billion, growing at a rate of 25% annually, unaffected by economic fluctuations. (Singh, 2018)

The phenomenon of globalization has led to a worldwide interconnectedness, encompassing both economic and cultural aspects. Variations in wedding customs and traditions can be observed across different regions within a country. In the case of Indian weddings, there has been a noticeable influence of Western practices since the 1990s, attributed to globalization. This influence is evident in the adoption of trends such as theme parties, the concept of the groom proposing marriage, and the inclusion of bridesmaids in ceremonies. The traditional customs of various regions have been altered by globalization's impact on wedding ceremonies. The increasing interconnectivity of the world has played a significant role in shaping the evolution of contemporary marriage practices (Bajaj et al., 2018).

Based on a KPMG report, it has been revealed that the cost of an Indian wedding ranges from Rs 500,000 to Rs 50 crore. Furthermore, the report highlights that an Indian individual typically allocates one-fifth of their wealth towards wedding expenses. The Indian wedding industry is experiencing substantial growth, with an annual rate of 25-30%. Weddings hold a significant position in an Indian's life and are considered one of the most expensive special occasions. The expenditure on weddings in India continues to rise each year, which has been attributed to the surge in remittances. Consequently, these factors contribute to the continuous escalation of wedding costs. It is projected that this industry could expand from \$100 billion to \$0.5 billion within the next decade.

Weddings in contemporary society exhibit a variety of forms, modes, and styles, a phenomenon that can be attributed to the influences of modernity and social advancements (Shida, 1999). Despite the prevalent disapproval of lavish weddings, societal norms, status symbols, and expectations have contributed to the proliferation of extravagant weddings in various aspects (Engel, 1984). This includes elaborate wedding decorations, attire, accessories, makeup, catering, photography, and other elements. In certain cases, extravagant weddings are a response to the desire of the bride, groom, or their families to keep up with their peers or meet perceived societal standards. (Abdulbaqi et al., 2017)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Uses and Gratification theory is employed for this study. The pioneers of this theory are Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch. Elihu Katz came up with the idea that people use media for their own satisfaction to get their needs fulfilled. It also highlights how media affects people. This theory examines the phenomenon of extravagant wedding trends and the role of social media in satisfying individuals' needs. The upper class, the celebrities etc through their control of social media, establish a hegemonic culture that influences the thinking of the middle class, common people who look up to them promoting the idea that these trends are the norm for celebrating a wedding in a particular way. By employing various strategies and ideas, they successfully captivate the public and maintain their social status by enforcing adherence to these trends. The picture set up by these celebrities influences the public in such a way that they tend to follow these celebrities and imitate them. Most people take inspiration from the star-studded big fat Indian weddings and doesn't hesitate to spend large amount to be in the limelight and create such a wedding that stands out from the rest. With the advancement of media and technology, individuals consume and utilize media to shape and refine their own concepts and ideas, sharing them with others through social networking sites and other platforms. Instagram has emerged as a popular platform for users to create and share highlights of their wedding day, as well as engage in online discussions about wedding trends. Users willingly share their wedding albums and even document every aspect of their wedding on social networking sites. Brides pin their wedding outfits, décor designs on sites like Pinterest. Consumers engage with various content to satisfy their own desires, taking screenshots, liking, and saving it for future reference and inspiration for their own events'. They also look for vendors, service providers like wedding planners, photographers online. The trend has become such that, 'If she uses it, I should also be able to use it too. Directly or indirectly, they are being consumed by social media and they find satisfaction when their desires get fulfilled. (Batool et al., 2021)

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The research indicates a clear impact of social media usage on contemporary Indian weddings. Through detailed interviews with married couples who actively engage with social media, it was observed that young couples are increasingly inclined towards creating memorable wedding experiences. The study findings highlight how individuals are motivated to follow current social media trends in order to gain attention and distinguish themselves. By consciously sharing wedding photos on various social networking platforms, individuals seek recognition and validation. This desire to stay in the limelight, coupled with peer influence, often leads individuals to emulate or adopt trends popularized by celebrities, Bollywood, and social media influencers.

Usage of social media sites like Instagram and Facebook in promoting lavish weddings:

The interviewees mostly agreed that Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are the main drivers behind the promotion of these extravagant trends. Instagram, in particular, plays a crucial role in spreading these trends because of its visual nature. Users can easily scroll through captivating pictures and videos, which creates a desire to copy these trends. The findings also reveal a change in people's mindset regarding the financial aspects of weddings. Nowadays, a significant amount of money is mainly spent on decorations, photography, and food during weddings. In contrast,

weddings in the past were simpler and focused more on rituals and cultural traditions. However, there has been a shift, with people now embracing the customs of different communities. The main factors contributing to this shift are globalization, the influence of popular culture, and the widespread impact of social media.

CONCLUSION

There is a scarcity of literature concerning the role of social media in the paradigm shift of rituals in Indian weddings, specifically the impact of social media on the wedding landscape. Limited research studies have been conducted on wedding trends, with a particular emphasis on the influence social media. The studies aimed to address this gap in the existing literature by investigating this issue. The majority of participants, who were married couples utilizing social media, emphasized that platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Pinterest contribute to the promotion of extravagant wedding trends and exert pressures on individuals. Consequently, marriage ceremonies have evolved from simple occasions to showcases of wealth and social status. It is noteworthy that a significant portion of individuals, particularly the parents of the bride and groom, allocate a substantial portion of their life savings to their children's weddings. Social media applications have emerged as popular platforms for promoting the wedding industry, where user-generated content is widely shared. The wedding industry is going to upsurge at a very high level in the coming years. It has already established itself as a huge sector contributing to the economy of the nation.

REFERENCES:

1. Abdulbaqi, S.S., Arikewuyo, A.O., & Omisore, O.T. (2017). Post It, Share It, Like It: Motivations behind Wedding Posts on Social Media among Nigerian Youth. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 57-64. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320765888_Post_It_Share_It_Like_It_Motivations_behind_Wedding_Posts_on_Social_Media_among_Nigerian_Youth
2. Agrawal, B. (2020). An Assessment of Destination Weddings: The New Vogue [Bachelor's Project Report, University of Pune]. <https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=3830990020831170901001061100930890771160470010360570540660940050670700230950666094026035003038107039015041016084005124086100104060083012062088083018013023082086102025041073009089098025077108080094079084114076065029111069001031008065030091066099007105099&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE>
3. Batool, S., Yaseen, Z., & Islam, M. (2021). Role of Instagram in Promoting Extravagant Wedding Trends: An Analysis of Social Pressures on the Middle Class. *Journal of Management Practices, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5 (2), 01-09. <https://global-jws.com/ojs/index.php/global-jws/article/view/54/49>
4. Brandsjet, (2023, November). Indian Wedding Season: A Cultural and Economic Phenomenon. <https://www.brandsjet.ai/article/indian-wedding-season/>
5. Gonçalves, R. A. H., Costa, R.L., & Pereira, L. F. (2022). Impact of Destination Weddings in Tourism Economy. *International Journal of Economics and Business Research*, 1 (1), 2-33. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357485459_Impact_of_Destination_Weddings_in_Tourism_Economy
6. Kulkarni, E. (2023, June 16). Trends That Are Shaping The New-Age Indian Wedding Ecosystem. Hello India. <https://in.hellomagazine.com/lifestyle/20230616302880/indian-wedding-trends/>
7. Kumar, A., & Mashooq, M. (2022). Social Media as an Emerging Tool for Destination Weddings in India. *International Journal of Research in Business Studies*, 7(1), <http://www.ijhromerbs.com/wpcontent/uploads/2022/06/5%20Arun%20Kumar%20&%20Mahevash%20Mashooq.pdf>
8. Maheshwari, R. (2018, August). *The Indian Wedding Industry and Use of Social Media*[Master's Dissertation, Dublin Business School]. DBS <https://esource.dbs.ie/server/api/core/bitstreams/32cd5fdd-7572-4465-b77f-430cf11ecb96/content>
9. Sari, S.A., Azhari, I., & Koesoemadinata, M.I.P. (2023). The phenomenon of digital wedding invitations: Its potential and cultural shift in Surakarta. S. Dyah, R.Idhar, A. Hanif, G. Ganjar&W.Taufiq (Ed.s), *Sustainable Development in Creative Industries: Embracing Digital Culture for Humanities*. (pp.118-122). Routledge.
10. Sharma, N. (2022, January 16). A look at how social media is bringing about a change in Indian weddings. *The Free Press Journal*. <https://www.freepressjournal.in/weekend/a-look-at-how-social-media-is-bringing-is-changing-the-face-of-indian-weddings>
11. Singh, R. (2018, December 20). Changing Face of Indian Wedding. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/changing-face-indian-wedding-ramendra-singh>
12. Singhal, S., & Prakash N. (2020). Social networking sites usage patterns and its relationship with self-esteem among Indian college students. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 8(5), 3644-3652. <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2005480.pdf>