

AN ASSESSMENT OF FUTURE TRENDS IN WEDDING PLANNING

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ABSTRACT

AN ASSESSMENT OF FUTURE TRENDS IN WEDDING PLANNING

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Weddings are significant life events. It has become essential for brides to stand out with unique weddings. These brides turn to popular trends to create the best weddings. The purpose of this study was to assess the future trends in wedding planning among selected California wedding planners. Fifty planners were sent an email with a link to a questionnaire regarding future wedding trends in California. Out of the 50 planners contacted, 10 responses were received. It was found that all regions in California had similar future wedding trend responses related to “glamorous”, “1920s”, or “vintage” themes. The responses from the wedding planners also showed only a small difference in future wedding trends compared to current trends. It is recommended that future studies use a larger sample size and explore wedding trends within specific regions of California.

Keywords: wedding, trends, future, planners, brides, assessment, California

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background of Study

Weddings have forever been a significant and important celebration for many people around the world. They celebrate the binding love between two people and the journey into a new life together. Often times, weddings are events that brides have been dreaming about and looking forward to their entire lives. Many brides would even agree that, “a wedding is the celebration of a lifetime, and whether that celebration is a grand fete for hundreds or an intimate gathering of family and friends, it is a day when dreams come true” (Davis, 2000, p. 8).

This idealistic, romantic view about weddings has not always been the way it is today. For much of human history it was rare that love was the main reason for people to get married. Until very recently, many civilizations believed in the economic functions of a marriage over personal satisfactions (Coontz, 2006). Marriages were made for family and economic benefits, with the hope that the marriage would result in love later on (Coontz). As a result of this traditional approach, arranged marriages were very common for many years. Only in recent years did the idea of marriage for love become popular.

This new concept of a wedding speaks to many brides and encourages them to make their fantasy weddings come true. The feeling of a dream wedding as a necessity intensifies the lavishness of weddings each year. Significantly more money is spent to create a dream wedding (Otnes & Pleck, 2003). The average budget for a wedding is now estimated at nearly \$27,000 (Grossman, 2012). Couples are going above and beyond to

make their weddings perfect. Every year is different when it comes to creating a dream wedding. In order to keep up with the changes, brides now tend to follow popular trends throughout their planning process.

Many couples look to trends to help them with their wedding planning needs. According to Coontz (2005), “weddings today are the first chance a couple gets to announce to the world their chosen joint identity” (p. 82). The idea of a joint identity encourages brides to utilize certain popular trends to display this identity in the most unique way possible (Coontz). Trends in weddings can range from smaller style trends to broader logistics trends. Each of these different trends can greatly influence how a bride and groom choose to develop the wedding of their dreams.

This study analyzes what wedding planners believe will be the wedding industry trends within the next five years. It will be beneficial to new wedding planners and brides planning their weddings. Within the competitively individualistic wedding industry, any type of wedding planner, bride or professional, can utilize this trend information to make creative, well-informed wedding decisions.

Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted at Robert E. Kennedy Library on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. In addition to books and other resources, the following online databases were utilized: Academic Search Elite, Expanded Academic ASAP, SPORTDiscus, Hospitality and Tourism Complete, and psycINFO. Information was also obtained from the websites

www.theknot.com and www.bridalguide.com. This review of literature is organized into the following topic areas: wedding trends and wedding consumer behavior.

Wedding trends. Wedding trends change throughout the years and are for the most part greatly influenced by many societal factors. These factors and trends influence many couples' choices when it comes to what they want in their weddings. The following section will present information on the different smaller and broader trends of weddings.

The smaller trends predicted for 2013 are much different than trends of the past. In particular, wedding colors, themes, floral arrangements, and beauty styles have become center-stage trends. According to Winikka and Ma (2013), a "homestead elegance" and "dinner party chic" theme has emerged for 2013 (p. 5). These wedding themes incorporate natural outdoor details with elegant, sophisticated elements to create a unique mixed theme that can be seen within all of the emerging trends. In particular, the themes are tied together by a neutral color palette that is set off by lush, romantic floral arrangements of peonies and garden roses (Griffiths, 2013). The bridal beauty styles also follow along with these popular themes. Brides are now most likely to be seen in fitted silk 1920s style dresses complemented by a refined rustic hairstyle that displays the mixture between "homestead elegance" and "dinner party chic" (Winikka & Ma, 2013). The smaller, popular trends can seem the most important to brides, but the broader trends are just as important to consider when planning a wedding. Trends like the budget allotted and venue location can greatly affect the decisions made regarding the wedding planning (Daniels & Loveless, 2007).

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). In 2007, “the U.S. bridal industry [was] estimated at between \$50 and \$70 billion annually...Nearly 2.4 million marriages [were] performed each year” (Engstrom, 2008, p. 60). In 2012, the average couple had a \$26,989 wedding (Grossman, 2012). This significant cost makes the already major event of marriage even more major. Currie (1993) stated that, “many families save for years and spend considerable sums on wedding clothing and receptions, even though the event itself is short lived” (p. 404). Normally, the wedding planning period is thought of as a period of overwhelming excitement during which couples are much more likely to forget about their worries and go on a wedding planning spending spree (Daniels, Lee, & Cohen, 2012).

Despite this spending spree assumption, the beginning of the recession in 2007 forced many couples to “reconsider purchasing behaviors and mindfully spend their shrinking wedding budgets” (Daniels et al., 2012, p. 245). According to *The Wedding Report*, wedding-related expenditures decreased by 23% between 2007 and 2008 (McMurray, 2010). It is becoming more apparent in recent recessionary years that couples have had to become more aware of their wedding-related expenditures (Daniels et al., 2012). Although the overall wedding budget is much higher than budgets of the past, couples are still leaning toward the new trend of stricter, mindful wedding budgets.

In order to stay within their budgets, brides are spending more time in their wedding planning process to make sure they avoid any extra spending (Dosh, 2008). Some brides are even cutting costs by adopting a “good enough” attitude when planning their wedding (Dosh, 2008, p. 44). Weddings can be a daunting expense for many

couples. Luckily, new trends are helping couples tighten up their budgets by finding new cost-effective ways to make their wedding special.

Venues are also key to the celebration of a wedding. They create the atmosphere that is forever linked to the memories of the wedding (Daniels et al., 2012). According to Daniels et al., “the venue is generally one of the first decisions made, thus driving many other wedding purchases” (p. 247). Couples can choose to be as traditional or creative with their venues as they wish. It has even recently become popular to choose a venue based off of a wedding theme (Daniels & Loveless, 2007). For example, a *Great Gatsby* themed wedding could be held on Martha's Vineyard or at the Rosecliff Mansion in Rhode Island (Daniels & Loveless). Destination weddings have also become popular in recent years. Destination weddings are weddings that are held in a location that the couple does not reside in, often in an exotic or popular tourism destination (Daniels & Loveless). These kinds of weddings allow many couples to live out their dream wedding (Daniels & Loveless). In order to accommodate for these new venue desires, most couples will choose a venue early in the planning process so that there is more flexibility in dates (Daniels & Loveless). Theme and destination weddings may be a rising trend, but according to Daniels et al., the top ten wedding locations of 2012 were hotels, country clubs, banquet halls, historic buildings, restaurants, garden sites, resorts, plantation sites, personal residences, and museums. Although these theme and destination weddings are growing in popularity, many couples tend to choose to hold their weddings at more traditional or all-inclusive venues than to follow the popular trends.

Wedding trends change every year. From popular trends to general trends, things are constantly evolving. The hope for a big, dream wedding remains the same for brides,

but these women are now beginning to follow some newer trends and plan for more cost-efficient, natural weddings at traditional venues (Daniels et al., 2007; Winikka & Ma, 2013).

Wedding consumer behavior. Tradition tells us that weddings are supposed to be a celebration of two people committing their love to one another through an endless union. Unfortunately, as our culture has become more consumer-led, the traditional ceremony aspects to weddings have slowly faded to make way for the newer evolution of the lavish twenty-first century wedding (Winch & Webster, 2012). Now more than ever brides have begun to feel that it is necessary to have a “big, white wedding” (Engstrom, 2008, p. 62). As this kind of wedding becomes more popular, brides must learn to navigate a new wedding planning environment defined by the 21st century (Engstrom).

Many women could easily attribute their “big, white wedding” dreams to a childhood of fantasy wedding play and fairytales (Otnes & Pleck, 2003). Fairytales like Cinderella have not only reinforced the idea of a romantic love that leads to marriage, or a “storybook romance”, but have also intensified views of a dream wedding (Otnes & Pleck). The women who dream of these Cinderella weddings are eventually classified as “romantic consumers” (Otnes & Pleck, p. 19). Romantic consumers fantasize about their magical, dream wedding throughout their entire single life and now wish to achieve that long-time goal (Otnes & Pleck). This fantasy makes them believe that it is a necessity to purchase everything they believe will make their wedding a Cinderella wedding, thus turning them into the ultimate wedding consumer (Otnes & Pleck).

These Cinderella dreams are not the only reason that “big, white weddings” have grown more popular throughout the years. Otnes and Pleck (2003) have also attributed

the rise of popular, extravagant weddings to four major reasons. First, most people around the world desire to get married at some point in their adult lives. In the United States, “almost 90 percent of adults...will marry at least once in their lifetimes...” (Otnes & Pleck, p. 5). Second, extravagant weddings are a way that people can display the quantity and quality of their social connections and prestige. Not everyone can afford to have an over-the-top wedding, so anyone who can do so automatically displays his or her social status (Otnes & Pleck). Third, most of the desire for a Cinderella wedding stems from the bride. For women, marriage is a huge status change, so many feel that a lavish wedding is the perfect way to recognize and celebrate this transition into a new life (Otnes & Pleck). Finally, lavish weddings seem to show people that a marriage will last. Many correlate the amount of time and money put into a wedding with the commitment to a marriage (Otnes & Pleck). Overall, it is assumed that marriages that have a lower budget will not last because the bride and groom did not put in enough time and effort into planning as well as contemplating their wedding (Otnes & Pleck). Conversely, it is assumed that these four justifications help explain why lavish weddings have become increasingly popular over the years.

The popularity of these lavish Cinderella weddings brings with it the overwhelming amount of choices necessary to create a dream wedding. Every detail must be accounted for when planning a wedding, which can cause an extreme amount of stress on busy brides (Cramer & Lafreniere, 2003). Weddings should be an occasion to look forward to and celebrate with joy, but consistently weddings “continue to rank seventh among 43 major stressful life events” (Cramer & Lafreniere, p. 1). Most of this stress

comes from the wedding plans and budget limitations that interfere with the bride's perfect wedding dreams (Cramer & Lafreniere).

Continually battling with choices and limitations can put a great amount of stress on a bride and make her ambivalent as a consumer. In such a commercialized wedding market, it is difficult for brides to accept when their expectations might not meet reality (Otnes, Lowrey, & Shrum, 1997). This often happens because most brides feel restricted to selecting only one option for each detail of the wedding that embodies their wedding vision (Otnes et al.). The end result is a conflict between a bride's internal expectations and the external products offered in the wedding market (Otnes, et al.). This conflict is attributed to the fact that weddings have become very individualistic, thus causing a breakdown in the traditional wedding, which leaves brides vulnerable to pressures and persuasions of the newly commercialized wedding industry (Mead, 2007). The wedding industry has grown into such a commercial industry that it can easily make many forget the real meaning behind the vows they are taking (Howard, 2006). As Mead previously mentioned, at this point in wedding industry commercialization so many brides have given into the pressures and persuasions that it is unlikely that the lavish Cinderella dreams will fade any time soon.

Summary. This review of literature covered two topics: weddings trends and wedding consumer behavior. Many trends and styles of weddings change over time. Brides look to many different sources to make their weddings what they have always dreamed of. Many brides go through an assortment of stresses and emotions during the course of planning, but one thing remains the same: their dream of a lavish, Cinderella wedding. This dream turns brides into the ultimate romantic consumers who will buy

anything they feel necessary to create the perfect wedding. This romantic consumerism only grows as the years go on. The ever-changing trends of the twenty-first century and the evolving wedding consumer behavior makes it important for wedding planners to stay up to date in the industry and accommodate to the new consumer needs of brides.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the future trends in wedding planning among selected California wedding planners.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What do wedding planners see as current and future trends in wedding planning?
2. What current wedding planning trends are predicted to change the most within the next five years?
3. Do trend predictions differ based on where wedding planners are located throughout California?
4. What aspects of weddings do wedding planners consider trends?

Delimitations

This study was delimited to the following parameters:

1. Information on wedding planning trends was gathered from wedding planners at selected California wedding planning companies.

2. Trends in wedding planning were analyzed.
3. The data were collected during the spring of 2013.
4. Information for this study was gathered using an online questionnaire distributed via email.

Limitations

This study was limited by the following factors:

1. The subjects did not represent all of the wedding planners throughout California.
2. The instrument was not tested for reliability and validity.
3. Subjects were easily able to delete or ignore the survey since it was sent through email.

Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. All survey participants were professional wedding planners in the wedding industry.
2. If no email response was received stating a declination of participation in the study, then the subject was unwilling to participate in the survey.
3. All subjects utilized their professional knowledge and answered survey questions to the best of their ability.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

Bride. an engaged woman who is currently planning her wedding

Future trend. a style or preference that will be popular within the upcoming years

Trend. a current style or preference that is popular

Wedding. an event that celebrates the union of marriage between two people

Wedding planning. the act of planning and preparing for an upcoming wedding
and reception

Chapter 2

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to assess the future trends in wedding planning among selected California wedding planners. The following chapter consists of the following sections: description of subjects, description of instrument, description of procedures, and method of data analysis.

Description of Subjects

A questionnaire was distributed to professional wedding planners throughout California. Wedding planners were required to have at least one-year experience to be eligible to participate in the study. The number of subjects who participated in the survey was determined by how many wedding planners there were in California. This population consisted of approximately 2,000 people. The wedding planners for this survey were found by searching the following online resources: The Knot (www.theknot.com), Wedding Wire (www.weddingwire.com), and the Association for Wedding Professionals International (www.afwpi.com). These websites were chosen because they are popular wedding websites that provide lists of professional wedding planners throughout the nation. Wedding planners on these sites are owners of highly recommended California wedding planning businesses. The subjects for this study were selected through convenience sampling on each site, which produced a total of 50 wedding planners with 30 participants from www.theknot.com, 10 participants from www.weddingwire.com, and 10 participants from www.afwpi.com.

Description of Instrument

The instrument used for this study was a 15-item questionnaire that was created by the researcher and distributed using email. The instrument was created on SurveyMonkey as an online questionnaire. The instrument was not tested for validity or reliability, but was field-tested by four peers and reviewed by an advisor. The feedback from the peers and advisor was taken into consideration and then used to improve the instrument. A copy of the instrument can be found in Appendix A. Two emails were also constructed by the researcher and were emailed to the subjects of this study. The first email that was sent explained the study, gave a forewarning that a link to the questionnaire would be emailed soon, and asked recipients to ignore the email if they did not have at least one year of experience in the wedding industry. The first email also included a request for participants to respond as soon as possible if they wished to be removed from the study. If the subject who was emailed did not respond with a request to be removed from the study, then a second email was sent to them with the link to the 15-item questionnaire that was developed by the researcher. An Informed Consent form letter that explained the purpose of the study, contact information, and the reason for participation was also attached to the online questionnaire and can be found in Appendix B.

The instrument contained all open-ended questions. The first three items on the questionnaire asked demographic questions regarding the subject's place of business, the amount of time they have worked in the wedding industry, and their wedding association memberships or certifications. Items 4 and 5 covered the current wedding trends of 2013. Items 6 through 15 covered the possible future trends in the wedding industry,

specifically location/venue trends, wedding size trends, clothing trends, décor trends, budget trends, wedding season trends, wedding theme trends, photography/media trends, floral trends, and food trends.

Description of Procedures

A search was done on three different wedding sites for professional wedding planner contacts throughout California. The sites include www.theknot.com, www.weddingwire.com, and www.afwpi.com. These sites were searched for contacts on April 3, 2013. The professional wedding planners found on these sites were then contacted on April 5, 2013. These professionals were first contacted through email and asked to participate in a research study on future trends in the wedding industry. They were also asked to respond to the researcher if they did not wish to take part in the study. A copy of this first email can be found in Appendix C. Planners were emailed a link to the questionnaire on SurveyMonkey if they did not express an interest in removal from the study. A copy of the questionnaire email can be found in Appendix D. Any planners who did not respond after two weeks were assumed to be unwilling to participate. All planners willing to participate were given two weeks to respond. One week after the questionnaire was administered to willing participants, a reminder email was sent out asking the planners to make sure to complete the questionnaire by the deadline. After the two-week deadline was up, all data submitted on SurveyMonkey were downloaded to an Excel spreadsheet. Every participant was sent a thank-you card and a thank-you email by May 5, 2013.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from California wedding planners was analyzed to determine future trends within the wedding industry. After data were collected, each questionnaire was reviewed and categorized based on the location the wedding planner's business. The three categories that the responses were categorized into were Southern California, Central California, and Northern California. Any similar responses within these three categories were separated into sub-categories. The data were then downloaded from SurveyMonkey into Microsoft Excel. Basic statistics were used on the data to determine the future trends in the wedding industry.

The first three items on the instrument were designed to qualify whether the chosen wedding planner was valid as a subject and establish the planner's qualifications. Validity was established if the subject had enough experience in the wedding industry to be able to understand and determine current and future wedding trends. Subjects were asked to not complete the questionnaire if they had less than one year of experience in the wedding industry, so validity was established before the questionnaire was taken. Items 4 and 5 were designed to determine the current trends in the wedding industry as to compare them with the next ten items about future wedding trends. The last ten questions were designed to gain professional opinion and determine future wedding trends for the next five years.

Each item on the questionnaire answered a research question. The first research question asked what wedding planners think wedding trends are. This question was addressed by asking what the subject would define a wedding trend as. Answers were compiled and analyzed to determine a mutual definition of a wedding trend.

The next research question asked what wedding planners see as current and future wedding trends. The research question was answered by asking wedding planners what they thought the 2013 weddings trends were and by asking wedding planners to predict wedding trends within the next five years. Another related research question asked what wedding trends are predicted to change the most within the next five years. A cross-tabulation between predicted future trends and the current wedding trends addressed the question by showing the differences between the two answers.

The last research question assessed whether there was a difference in trend predictions based on where wedding planners were located in California. In order to address this research question, a cross-tabulation of the location of the subject's wedding planning business and their future wedding trend predictions was conducted.

After data collection, a qualitative data analysis was done. The researcher first conducted an inter-rater reliability test in order to determine homogeneity among answers. A friend of the researcher helped sort and compare data. The data were first separated into the Southern California, Central California, and Northern California categories to determine trend differences. Within the location categories, the data were then sorted into similar answer themes that were mutually agreed upon between the researcher and the researcher's assistant. After all answers and questionnaires were categorized, they were then coded in Microsoft Excel and analyzed by the frequency and percentage of responses in order to answer research questions in an appropriate manner.

Chapter 3

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to assess the future trends in wedding planning among selected California wedding planners. An initial email was sent to 50 wedding planners selected from The Knot (www.theknot.com), Wedding Wire (www.weddingwire.com), and the Association for Wedding Professionals International (www.afwpi.com). The selected planners were asked if they would be willing to participate in an online questionnaire about the future trends in the wedding industry. Of the 50 planners who were emailed, a total of ten questionnaires were completed. The following sections will present the responses of the ten participants according to the topics and questions on the questionnaire.

Demographics

Respondents were first asked where their current wedding planning business was located. Two planners were located in Southern California (San Diego to Ventura), four planners were located in Northern California (Santa Cruz to Del Norte), and four planners were located in Central California (Santa Barbara to Monterey). Planners were then asked how long they have been working in the wedding industry. Responses ranged from 3 years to 30 years with an average of 11.2 years. Please refer to Table 1 for visual representation of the data grouped by region in California.

Table 1.
Years Worked in the Wedding Industry by Mean Score and Standard Deviation

Region	Mean	SD
Northern California	12.75	11.59
Central California	11	8.16
Southern California	8.5	2.12

The planners were also asked what wedding associations they currently belong to. Of the ten respondents, four belonged to associations including: ISES (International Special Events Society), ABC (Association of Bridal Consultants), NACE (National Association of Catering Executives), and CCWP (Central Coast Wedding Planners). Six belonged to no associations.

Current Trends

Planners were asked about the current wedding trends of 2013. The planners had many different trends to report, but all of their responses fell into the categories of a “glamorous” trend, a “do-it-yourself” trend, or a “natural” trend. Three out of four Northern California planners referred to a glamorous trend in their responses. These planners referenced aspects such as bold colors, photo booths, signature cocktails, and live bands in their current trend statements. The Central California planners had a variety of responses, but seemed to agree most on the do-it-yourself (DIY) trend, with two out of four planners saying current trends are DIY. These planners referenced Pinterest, personalization, and vintage details in regards to the DIY wedding trend. Southern California planners provided different responses within the DIY and natural trend categories. Their trend responses included things such as wildflower arrangements,

circular ceremonies, outdoor weddings, and neutral colors to compliment the natural and rustic DIY trends. Despite all of the different responses and trend themes, all of the planners agreed that green is a current color trend. Please see Table 2 for a presentation of the data on current wedding trends.

Table 2.
Current Wedding Trends by Frequency and Percentage

Trend	Region					
	Southern		Central		Northern	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Glamorous	0	0	1	25	3	75
Do-It-Yourself (DIY)	1	50	2	50	1	25
Natural	1	50	1	25	0	0

Respondents were also asked to define a “wedding trend”. Responses were very similar regardless of the planner’s location within California. Almost all of the planners responded with a definition that stated that a wedding trend is a noteworthy design element that is popular at the moment and influences the structure and content of a wedding. They also said that a wedding trend greatly influences brides and sways the direction in which the wedding industry will go. A list of all of the planners’ definitions can be found in Appendix E.

Future Trends: Wedding Theme

After being asked about current trends, planners were then asked to predict future trends. First, they were asked what wedding theme trends they thought would be popular in the future. The responses were broken down into a “1920s” theme, a “glamorous” theme, a “vintage” theme, and a “modern” theme. Although the themes were easy to categorize, every planner (regardless of region) referenced a different theme within their responses. The Northern and Central California planners covered all of the themes, and the Southern California planners covered only the “vintage” and “modern” themes. The “glamorous” theme consisted of details like gold accents, neutrals, and simple elegance. The “vintage” theme consisted of details like smaller intimate gatherings, outdoor ceremonies, simple elegance, and antiques. The “1920s” theme consisted of details like jazz music, pearls and lace, and a Great Gatsby reference. Lastly, the “modern” theme consisted of details like bright colors, a focus on music, personality, and metallic colors. For a presentation of the wedding theme data, please see Table 3.

Table 3.
Future Wedding Theme Trends by Frequency and Percentage

Trend	Region					
	Southern		Central		Northern	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
1920s	0	0	1	25	1	25
Glam	0	0	1	25	1	25
Vintage	1	50	1	25	1	25
Modern	1	50	1	25	1	25

Future Trends: Floral

Planners were also asked what floral trends they could see being popular in the next five years. The most common floral trends suggested were arrangements using orchids, wildflowers, mixed materials, and a minimalist technique. Central California planners mostly suggested floral arrangement using a minimalist technique. They also thought that multiple, small arrangements would become popular. Southern California planners stated orchids in arrangements and wildflower bouquets as future trends.

Planners from Northern California suggested every type of future floral arrangement trend including mixed materials, minimalist, orchids, and wildflowers. Planners who suggested a mixed materials trend stated that arrangements with flowers and other items like jewels and brooches would become popular. All three of the regions had at least one planner who stated that wildflower arrangements would be a popular future trend. The planners who said wildflower arrangements would be a future trend stated that this trend would consist of rustic, large blooming flowers. Please reference Table 4 for a visual representation of the floral trends data.

Table 4.
Future Floral Trends by Frequency and Percentage

Trend	Region					
	Southern		Central		Northern	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Mixed Materials	0	0	1	25	1	25
Minimalist	0	0	2	50	1	25
Orchids	1	50	0	0	1	25
Wildflowers	1	50	1	25	1	25

Future Trends: Décor

Respondents were also asked about future wedding décor trends. Planners had a wide variety of responses to this question. All of the planners suggested many different trends like patterned table runners, interesting lighting techniques, antique décor, and colorful décor. Northern California planners mentioned long tables with runners and different lighting features like candles and projection as a future décor trend. Central California planners also mentioned chandelier lighting as being a future décor trend. Planners from Southern California said that they thought antique décor as well as outside lounge furniture would become more popular within the next five years. Overall, all of the regions suggested colorful décor as a future wedding trend. Please refer to Appendix F for a complete list of answers to this question on décor.

Future Trends: Clothing

Planners were asked about future clothing trends for brides and grooms. The responses were broken down into a classic trend, a bohemian trend, a 1920s trend, and a colorful trend. The bohemian trend consisted of details like relaxed style, comfortable shoes like Converse, and open back dresses. The classic trend consisted of details like tuxedos and formal gowns. The 1920s trend consisted of details like lace and pearls, gowns with sleeves, and bowties. The colorful trend consisted of details like colored wedding dresses and colored ties. The Central Coast planners predicted a classic clothing trend to return in the future. Southern California planners were split between the bohemian and colorful trends. The Northern California mostly said 1920s would become

popular, but also said bohemian and colorful trends could become popular. Refer to Table 5 for visual representation of the data on clothing trends.

Table 4.
Future Clothing Trends by Frequency and Percentage

Trend	Region					
	Southern		Central		Northern	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Bohemian	1	50	0	0	1	25
Colorful	1	50	0	0	1	25
1920s	0	0	1	25	2	50
Classic	0	0	3	75	0	0

Future Trends: Food

Planners were asked about future trends in food at weddings. Overall, planners in all regions predicted food trucks and buffets to be popular. Northern California planners strongly predicted that food trucks would be a trend in the next five years. Most Central California planners predicted that plated meals would become popular, but a few also said buffets and food trucks would be popular as well. Southern California planners were split between food trucks and buffets as the popular food trend at weddings. See Table 6 for a presentation of the data on food trends.

Table 5.
Future Food Trends by Frequency and Percentage

Trend	Region					
	Southern		Central		Northern	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Food Trucks	1	50	1	25	3	75
Buffets	1	50	1	25	1	25
Plated	0	0	2	50	0	0

Future Trends: Photography/Media

Respondents were asked about photography and media trends for the future of weddings. Answers either fell in the photojournalism, iPhone pictures, or video trend categories. All regions had at least one respondent predict photojournalism and video as a future trend. Northern California planners responded with photojournalism as their predicted trend while Central California planners responded with iPhone pictures as their predicted trend. Both regions also had planners who responded with photojournalism and video. Southern California planners were split between the photojournalism trend and the video trend. Table 7 provides representation of the data on photography/media trends for future weddings.

Table 6.
Future Photography/Media Trends by Frequency and Percentage

Trend	Region					
	Southern		Central		Northern	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Photojournalism	1	50	1	25	2	50
iPhone	0	0	2	50	1	25
Video	1	50	1	25	1	25

Future Trends: Location/Venue

Planners were asked what they could see as the future trends in the locations and venues of wedding. All of the wedding planners in each region suggested many different places for locations and venues like wineries, the outdoors, and unconventional settings. The unconventional settings suggested were places like private estates, museums, barns, industrial spaces, and gardens. The Central California planners chose the outdoors and wineries as future location trends. The Southern California planners said unconventional venues would become the most popular in the future. Northern California planners mostly said that outdoor weddings would be a future trend, but they also suggested wineries and unconventional settings. Please see Table 8 for data on future location/venue trends.

Table 7.
Future Location/Venue Trends by Frequency and Percentage

Trend	Region					
	Southern		Central		Northern	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Outdoors	0	0	2	50	2	50
Unconventional	2	100	0	0	1	25
Wineries	0	0	2	50	1	25

Future Trends: Wedding Season

Participants were asked what season they thought would be most popular for weddings in the next five years. Planners responded with almost every season and each region had a different opinion on what season would be the most popular. Northern California planners said fall would be the season trend in the future. Central California planners said spring would be the season trend in the future. Southern California planners said summer and fall would be the season trend in the future. No planners in any of the regions stated winter as a future season trend. For a representation of the data on wedding seasons, see Table 9.

Table 8.
Future Wedding Season Trends by Frequency and Percentage

Trend	Region					
	Southern		Central		Northern	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Fall	1	50	0	0	3	75
Spring	0	0	3	75	0	0
Summer	1	50	1	25	1	25

Future Trends: Budget & Wedding Size

Planners were asked about the future of wedding budgets and amount of guests. Both categories had a wide range of answers. The budget size ranged from \$20,000-\$30,000 to \$50,000-\$100,000. The guest amount ranged from 30-40 guests to 150-200 guests. The average number of guests was relatively consistent throughout the three regions. Southern California planners responded with the highest average number of guests, while Central California responded with the lowest average number of guests. The average future budget was consistent for Central and Northern California planners, but much higher for Southern California planners. Overall, the Central California planners predicted a lower guest range and medium budget, the Northern California planners predicted a medium guest size and a little lower budget, and the Southern California planners predicted a higher guest range and a much higher budget. For the data regarding future budget and guest sizes, refer to Table 10.

Table 10.
Average Number of Guests & Average Budget Size

Region	Guests	Budget
Northern California	100	\$32,500
Central California	84	\$35,000
Southern California	150	\$50,000

The results presented in this chapter indicate a slight difference in current and future trends, as well as a slight difference in trend predictions among different regions throughout California. A detailed summary and a discussion of the findings will follow in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study assessed the future trends in wedding planning according to wedding planners throughout California. This concluding chapter will include the following: a summary of the study, as well as a discussion of the findings, limitations, conclusions based on research questions, and implications of the findings, and recommendations for future research.

Summary

Weddings have grown into an important part of every cultural tradition around the world. As weddings have become more important, brides have become accustomed to feeling to need to make their weddings perfect. This feeling makes brides willing to purchase almost anything in order to achieve this dream. Their romantic notions not only make them apt to spend more, but also make them more likely to turn to popular trends to make their wedding the best. These popular trends change from year to year, which can make it difficult for brides to keep up. To assist brides in planning their dream wedding, it is important for wedding planners to stay current on the constantly changing trends, as well as be able to predict what will be popular in the future. This study assessed the future wedding trends within the next five years according to selected California wedding planners.

In order to conduct this study, 50 wedding planners throughout California were selected from three popular wedding related websites. An online questionnaire was then

created to discover the predictions of California wedding planners on future wedding trends. These 50 wedding planners were emailed on April 5, 2013 with a request to participate in the study. They were then emailed a link to the online questionnaire, unless they asked to be removed from the study. After two weeks of leaving the questionnaire open, the data were tabulated and analyzed, as well as grouped into similar responses.

Ten out of the 50 wedding planners that were contacted completed the online questionnaire. The data showed that there are numerous trends to be seen currently and in the future for weddings, but these specific wedding planners did not see much change in trends within the next five years. There was also not much of a difference in responses based on the three different California regions that the planners were located. The only difference seen in wedding trend predictions were related to wedding season, budget, and size. Northern and Southern California planners predicted fall and summer to be popular seasons, while Central California planners predicted spring. Northern and Central California planners predicted weddings with average budgets and smaller guest size to be popular, while Southern California planners predicted larger guest sizes and a much larger budget. Overall, there were only slight differences in wedding trends predictions and only slight differences based on the planners' regions in California.

Discussion

Wedding trends are always changing. It is important for wedding planners to stay on top of these changing trends and even be able to predict new trends for the future. Based on the data collected from this study, it was found that there are numerous trends in the wedding industry and many different aspects of each trend. All ten of the wedding

planners surveyed had varying ideas of what would be popular within the next 5 years in their region of California. These varying future trend ideas were all relatively similar, though, and easy to separate into main trend themes. The future trends for the next five years were also very similar to the current trends that were listed by the wedding planners. This could be attributed to the fact that five years is not that long of a time in regards to trend changes. It seems that according to California wedding planners, trends will generally stay related to a “glamorous” or “vintage” theme within the next five year.

Trend predictions throughout the three regions of California were all very similar, which revealed that there is not a significant difference in wedding trends throughout California. For the most part, response themes were spread out for each reason, but some consistencies were also seen in the future trend areas. These consistencies were mainly seen in the wedding season, wedding budget, and wedding size trends.

Southern California wedding planners predicted summer and fall to be the popular seasons for weddings. This may be because summer and fall is when Southern California has the nicest weather. These planners also predicted that the average wedding budget would be around \$50,000 with a guest size of around 150 people. This high budget and guest amount prediction could be because Southern California is home to Los Angeles and other very wealthy areas; a higher wedding budget usually means a bigger guest list. Southern California predictions were also the most “unconventional” with trend predictions like unconventional wedding venues, colorful wedding clothing, and food truck catering.

Central California wedding planners predicted that spring would be the popular wedding season in five years. This is most likely because spring is the nicest season in

that area. These planners predicted average wedding budget and guest sizes to accommodate for more intimate weddings. These planners tended to have more “traditional” trend predictions like plated meals, classic wedding clothing, and minimalist floral arrangements. This could be because Central California is not located around any main cities, which keeps the trends more traditional.

Northern California wedding planners predicted that fall would be the popular wedding season in five years. This is also most likely because fall is one of the most beautiful seasons in Northern California because of the changing seasons. Much like the Central California planners, these planners predicted average wedding budget and guest sizes. The Northern California planners tended to have more “trendy” wedding predictions with trend predictions like 1920s style clothing, food trucks, photojournalism, and outdoor venues. This could be because San Francisco is a main city in Northern California, which revolves around hip trends. Despite these small differences between regions, all planners in the different regions mostly responded with similar predictions.

It has generally been thought that brides have always dreamed of having a “big, white wedding” (Engstrom, 2008, p. 62). This research has shown that that thought is no longer the case. It is more likely that brides will follow popular trends like the current “glamorous” or “vintage” wedding themes instead of following the “big, white wedding” idea. As previously researched, Mead (2007) observed that weddings have become more individualistic and commercialized, which causes a breakdown in the traditional wedding aspect. Trends like food trucks, vintage decorations, video photography, and colorful wedding dresses were never associated with traditional wedding ideas until now. These

current and future trends pointed out by California wedding planners show the new individualistic nature of wedding planning.

The results and conclusions for this study can only be made for the ten wedding planners who responded to the questionnaire. Despite this limitation, the data that were collected did help the researcher discern that trends will probably not change within the next five years and that in general California wedding planners have the same trend predictions. With more respondents, the study could reveal more specific differences in trend predictions based on the different regions in California. More in depth studies could also help wedding planners discover specifics about each different wedding trend. Overall, these results help determine the different aspects of each current and future wedding trend listed and show that with improvement this study could possibly show a more accurate picture of what wedding trends might be in five years.

Despite the fact that there were some areas for improvement with this study, there were also some limitations to the study that should be factored in. The questionnaire was sent during one of the busier seasons for wedding planners, which could have contributed to the lack of responses received. In addition, the online questionnaire was sent through an email, which relied heavily on the wedding planners to not delete the email and actually take the time to participate to the best of their abilities. The questionnaire was also qualitative in nature and required the planners to type their own responses. Some planners might have been deterred by the fact that they had to think and were not given pre-selected answers. All of these factors could have contributed to the lack of responses received from the 50 original wedding planners that were emailed.

This study was conducted to determine what wedding planners believe will be the wedding industry trends within the next five years. Overall, this study assessed some of the current and future wedding trends according to California wedding planners. It also helped to determine that these trends would not be changing much within the next five years, or throughout California. This research could potentially enable California wedding planners to have some insight on future wedding trends. The common trend themes that were discovered within this study could potentially contribute to the future wedding planning efforts of wedding planners and brides.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The current wedding trends for 2013 follow a “glamorous” trend, a “do-it-yourself” trend, or a “natural” trend. The future wedding trends within the next five years based on California wedding planners responses seem to follow a “1920s” trend, a “vintage” trend, or a “glamorous” trend.
2. Wedding trends will generally stay the same within the next five years. The trends most likely to change are food trends with the introduction of food trucks, budget trends with an increase in the overall wedding budget, and wedding theme trends with the introduction of the “1920s” and “vintage” themes.
3. Future wedding trend predictions differ slightly based on where wedding planners are located throughout California, especially regarding wedding size, budget, and season trends. Southern California planners predicted much

higher budgets and wedding sizes than Northern and Central California planners. Central California planners predicted spring as a popular wedding season, while Southern and Northern California planners predicted fall and summer as a popular wedding season.

4. Wedding planners consider wedding trends to be anything that is a noteworthy design element that is currently popular and influences the structure and content of a wedding.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendation are made:

1. Further studies should be conducted on each specific trend area in order to determine more specific details about each future trend.
2. In future studies, more than 50 wedding planners should be contacted in order to receive more than ten responses and make the study more accurate.
3. Further studies should be conducted on the future wedding trend predictions for each specific region in California as to obtain more specifics and see how the regions actually compare.
4. In future studies, wedding planners should be contacted in forms of communication other than email, like through interviews or phone calls, as to obtain more responses and responses that are more in depth.
5. In future studies, wedding planners should be contacted in their winter off-season and not the beginning of their spring wedding season as to receive more responses.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A
QUESTIONNAIRE

c. Décor trends

d. Clothing trends

e. Food trends

f. Photography/Media trends

g. Location/Venue trends

h. Wedding season trends

i. Budget trends

j. Wedding size trends

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN

A Study of Future Wedding Trends in the California Wedding Industry

A senior project on future wedding trends is being conducted by Avery Ruonala, a student in the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, under the direct supervision of Dr. Jerusha Greenwood. The purpose of the study is to assess the future trends in wedding planning as perceived by selected California wedding planners.

You are being asked to take part in this study by completing the following online questionnaire. Please read the questions and respond to the best of your ability and as accurately as possible. Your participation will take approximately five to seven minutes. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may also omit any items on the questionnaire that you prefer not to answer.

There are no risks anticipated with participation in this study. Your responses will be anonymous to protect your privacy. Potential benefits associated with the study are an increased knowledge of future wedding trends throughout California.

If you have questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Avery Ruonala at (858) 204-0036 or by email at aruonala@yahoo.com, or Dr. Jerusha Greenwood at (805) 756-2050 or jbgreenw@calpoly.edu. If you have concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Steve Davis, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee, at (805) 756-2754, sdavis@calpoly.edu, or Dr. Dean Wendt, Interim Dean of Research, at (805) 756-1508, dwendt@calpoly.edu.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this senior project, please indicate your agreement by completing the following questionnaire. Please print this consent form now for your reference and thank you for your participation in this research.

Yes, I volunteer

No thanks

Appendix C

INITIAL EMAIL

Hello,

My name is Avery Ruonala and I am a Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration major at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. As a graduating senior, I am required to complete a senior project of my choosing. I am currently researching future trends within the California wedding industry.

I am contacting specific wedding planners throughout California for their input on future wedding trends. I would like to email you a questionnaire I created regarding this topic. If you do not wish to receive this questionnaire, please email me back and I will remove you from the study.

If you are not the appropriate person within your organization to receive this questionnaire, I would greatly appreciate it if you could send me the appropriate person's contact information. Also, if you do not have at least one year of experience within the wedding industry, please ignore this email.

Please feel free to email or call me if you have any questions regarding my questionnaire. I greatly appreciate your time and contributions to my research. Have a great day!

Thank you,

Avery Ruonala
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
Recreation Parks and Tourism Administration | Event Planning & Management
aruonala@calpoly.edu
aruonala@yahoo.com
(858) 204-0036

Appendix D

QUESTIONNAIRE EMAIL

Hello,

Earlier this week I emailed you about participating in my research study by completing my questionnaire on the future wedding planning trends in California. Below is the link to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire that I created. Thank you again for your time and participating. I truly appreciate it. Have a great day!

Link to questionnaire:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PFMFBLD>

Thank you,

Avery Ruonala
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
Recreation Parks and Tourism Administration | Event Planning & Management
aruonala@calpoly.edu
aruonala@yahoo.com
(858) 204-0036

Appendix E

WEDDING TRENDS DEFINITION RESPONSES

Wedding Trend Definition Responses

1. I define a wedding trend as a noteworthy tradition or design element popular with both industry and engaged couples planning their events.
2. Whatever is on Pinterest! Seriously, that last trend (Vintage) started when the economy took a down turn, and everyone was trying to save money. Now, it's back to glamorous. It's all cyclical.
3. Direction in which the wedding industry will take place regarding fashion, floral, decor, etc
4. Something that a large group of brides decide that they want their wedding to look like after seeing it
5. As something that influences the structure or content of a wedding.
6. Trends do not necessarily last long - they are popular design or experience fads that have an interest expiration date that varies.
7. A detail that goes into the overall design or planning of the wedding that brides-to-be want to replicate from seeing in another wedding, most often a wedding featured on some of the top industry blogs.
8. Something that a large number of brides are doing or talking about.
9. Anything associated with a wedding that seems to become popular at most weddings over a given period of time
10. Celebrities, TV, designers set the trend and brides pick up on it

Appendix F

FUTURE TRENDS: DECOR RESPONSES

Future Trends: Décor Responses

1. Chandeliers Chandeliers and more chandeliers!
2. Again, glam
3. Backdrops Colorful decor – patterns
4. More personal and comfortable
5. Thrifted, antique, or clean and mod
6. Long Tables, Dessert Displays
7. Patterned linen Vineyard chairs Specialty glassware
8. White and champagne gold, projection
9. Clusters of multi level pillar or floating candles, bright colors and patterns
10. Runners more than colored linens place mats lighting