



UNIT-2

Types of Wedding Ceremonies

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Recognize the Religious & Traditional/Formal Wedding Ceremonies.
- ✓ Examine the Destination Wedding and its Benefits
- ✓ Assess the Themed Wedding

Unit 2

Types of Wedding Ceremonies

Determining the type of wedding ceremony the couple is going to have is, one of the first decisions they make. Weddings, both religious and civil, have gone on for centuries with both good and bad results. People from all religions, countries, and cultures have different marriage ceremonies and traditions. Here are some of the various types of wedding ceremonies.

Religious

By far the most common of the wedding ceremonies, a religious wedding ceremony, is still really popular. A religious wedding marks the commitment of two people to share their lives together. Whether a couple chooses a religious or a non-religious wedding depends on their faith or lack of it, and their cultural tradition.

The traditional way to be married is in a church service. Most couples get married in the church for religious reasons. At least one partner, but usually both, are expected to follow the beliefs of the church.

Traditional/Formal

Traditional, formal, religious weddings are the most common type of wedding. Many couples opt to marry in the church of their faith, as it is common for couples to share the same religion. Whether the couple is Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, or any other religion, it is common practice to get married in the church of that faith. However, many couples today do not share the same faith. These inter-faith couples can also have a traditional wedding ceremony. Religious officials have become increasingly cooperative with marrying couples that are not of the same faith.

It is common for traditional or formal weddings to follow certain norms. These common practices include designer dresses, groomsmen wearing tuxedos, elaborate invitations, beautiful flowers, limousine service, and fine dining and live music at a reception that follows the ceremony.

Double Wedding

A double wedding is when two wedding parties get married in the same ceremony. Usually this happens when two siblings are both getting married and decide to share the ceremony with each other. This is often done to share expenses or because a large family may have trouble getting together for two separate occasions that may be close together.

White Wedding

In most western cultures, a white wedding refers to a very formal ceremony and receptions. It also can be used to refer to a wedding where it is the first marriage for both the bride and the groom. The bride

wearing white on her wedding day originated with Queen Victoria. The queen chose a white dress to show off some detailed lace that she wore, then a popular photograph of her swept across the world showing her wearing white on her wedding day and a tradition was born.

Civil Ceremony

A civil ceremony is a wedding performed by an elected or appointed government official (like a mayor, justice of the peace, judge, or other leader). Most civil ceremonies take place in public places like town halls or possibly even inside judge's chambers.

Destination Wedding

The destination wedding occurs when a couple decides to hold their wedding in a location where neither one of them resides. Generally, an exotic or popular tourism destination is chosen, and the wedding often merges into the honeymoon. Because a destination wedding always involves travel, more time is allotted for the occasion, and the wedding becomes a multiday event. Destination weddings allow the couple, to make their own rules. At hometown weddings, the reception always follows the ceremony. And a young bride and groom who are heavily influenced by their parents' taste and budget may be pressured into having a more traditional or complex wedding than they really want.

When more-independent couples wed, they're likely to make choices that are personally important to them, rather than following what others say they "should" have or "should" do at their wedding. Overall, destination weddings tend to be modest and casual. The emphasis is on relaxation and shared experiences. The ceremony could be followed by guests mounting waiting horses to take off on a trail ride, or boarding a catamaran for an afternoon of snorkelling. And in place of a stuffy, old-fashioned reception, you can have a beach barbecue capped by fireworks.

Paying the price

The expense of a hometown wedding is a strong incentive to make couples scan the horizon for a cheaper place to tie the knot. On average, weddings away cost about 40 percent less than traditional at-home weddings.

Choosing quality over quantity

Weddings away are also popular because they get to invite only the people that couple truly want to come. Because not everyone can afford to travel, guest lists are smaller than those of hometown weddings. Fewer guests mean a more intimate event in an ideal setting.

Benefits of Destination Wedding

Location

Destination weddings involve overnight travel to another place, often selected for its scenic appeal. If the setting is particularly beautiful, the wedding couple may be able to save money on certain aspects of the wedding, such as flowers and decorations.

More time to celebrate

A conventional hometown wedding lasts between three and five hours, longer if you have a break between the ceremony and reception. In general, a destination wedding takes place over three days or more.

Lower cost

Despite the longer amount of time involved, destination weddings are usually cheaper than at-home ones.

Casual versus traditional celebration

Hometown weddings are normally traditional affairs, sometimes stodgy and often predictable due to formulaic agendas. At a destination wedding, the couple can toss out conventions they don't like and make the event as laid back or as formal as they like. Most couples opt for casual ease.

No Hard and Fast Rules

Beyond the necessity of obtaining a wedding license and being married by a licensed officiant, destination weddings don't have any hard-and-fast rules.

As a consultant, you will eventually have the opportunity to work with couples who elect to have destination weddings. Most likely they will want you to be in attendance to make sure that their events run smoothly. When creating a contract for a destination wedding, be certain that your costs for transportation, lodging, and meals are written in as additional expenses that are separate from your base consultant fee. While the destination wedding is a vacation for the couple and their guests, you will be there to work and should be compensated accordingly. Some planners do not accept destination weddings because they do not like to be taken away from their own families and other clients, but others thoroughly enjoy the challenge and travel. If you live in an area that is known for destination weddings, such as a beach or mountain resort community, you should be prepared to market your services to visitors who are looking to get married on your home turf. For example, if a couple from Pittsburgh plans to marry in Seattle, it may be more practical for them to hire a knowledgeable Seattle planner rather than pay for the travel costs of a consultant from Pittsburgh. The destination wedding market is yet another avenue through which you can build your business.

Important things to consider when Planning a Destination Wedding

Political Unrest

No matter what idyllic wedding location you might choose anywhere in the world, popular attitude and local politics can shift. So when you plan a destination wedding, scan the news to make sure that the country couple has chosen isn't experiencing instability.

Know the Law

Some countries have laws against using photographers and other professionals who aren't locally based.

Military

A couple whose groom is enlisted in the Armed Forces may have a military wedding in which the groom wears his uniform. A military wedding is considered a formal wedding and guests should dress formally. Oftentimes, the groom's guests will also be in the armed forces and will wear their uniforms as well.

The ushers who are in the armed forces traditionally form an "arch of steel" with their swords or sabres. However, only active duty servicemen participate, as they can only carry their sword or sabre if they are active duty. The arch is usually formed at the conclusion of the ceremony, and the head usher signals the formation by yelling "centre face." After the bride and groom pass through the arch, the ushers return to their bridesmaids to exit with them. Civilian ushers may or may not stand at the arch, a decision usually made by the bride and groom.

The Location

Many military weddings take place at military chapels or on academy grounds (Army, Navy, or Air Force). Most military chapels are like other in-demand ceremony sites -- you need to reserve them at least a year ahead of time, often by applying in writing to the chaplain's office.

There will probably be no charge for the use of the chapel, but a donation to the chapel fund will be expected. Rules for decorating military chapels vary across the country, but all flowers, candelabra, and other decor are arranged by the Chapel Altar Guild and are the same for all weddings. Some chapels and churches do not furnish decorations; the couple plans them themselves.

The Arch of Sabres

After the ceremony the newlyweds walk through an arch of sabres, which are curved swords with only one edge. Actual swords are used in a Naval wedding. The arch is not mandatory, but it's definitely a memorable part of a military ceremony. On most bases, at least one chapel or an honour guard usually has sabres available for wedding ceremonies. The arch is usually formed outside of the church or chapel; traditionally, a sword should never be unsheathed inside a religious sanctuary.

Only commissioned officers can carry sabres or swords and participate in this ceremony.

The Reception

Military receptions at academies or bases are often held at officers' or enlisted clubs on the installation, or at a traditional hotel or restaurant reception. Military guests are traditionally shown to their seats in order of rank. The highlight of a military reception comes when the bride and groom cut the cake using a sabre or sword, one belonging to the groom if he owns one. The groom presents it to the bride and she cuts a slice of the wedding cake with the groom's right hand resting over hers.

Themed weddings

A theme can be applied to any type of wedding including those mentioned above.

Practically, 'themed weddings' refer to the application of a certain pattern or concept that guides the overall ceremony. Moreover, what makes the theme a theme is the arrangement of certain colours, historical symbols, and whatever else the couple wants to be a part of the ceremony, be it additional objects, a much-loved pet, music or even activities that are acceptable for a sacramental ceremony. For example, a medieval theme may involve couples wearing medieval clothing while the venue for the ceremony has been designed in the style of the period, complete with medieval entertainment and a medieval banquet. In order to add more glow to the chosen theme, all other objects or props, as they are termed, will be based on a medieval pattern. This would include the wedding invitations, wedding cake, wedding souvenirs, and so on.



It is imperative to remember that themed weddings do not have to evolve as a costume party because, no matter what happens, the centre of the ceremony is sacramental and is filled with cultural beliefs and values. Therefore, it is not necessary of the guests to match the medieval theme but only for those who will be the part of the entourage. Thus, guests are free to wear any style even it does not correspond to a

medieval design. After all, themed weddings are conceptualised and utilised not to make limitations on the event but rather to add more life and memories to be cherished by the couple and their guests.

Themed weddings are becoming increasingly popular today, especially among couples who can afford to have an outlandish themed wedding. According to Currie (1993), themes in weddings can serve as the core of the wedding ceremony or a trunk from which all of the ceremony's branches or activities grow. Because of this one-of-a-kind feature, themed wedding are granted a crucial role, starting from wedding preparations, to the actual wedding celebration.

In addition (Pollit, 2001), wedding themes keep the wedding celebration from looking disjointed or as if it has been planned arbitrarily. In other words, wedding themes can already be considered as an essential ingredient in creating a perfect and memorable wedding event.

In addition, themed weddings do not have to create conflict with the traditional wedding because they are just a mere enhancement for the mood of the event. It has no hidden intention to replace the cultural or religious context of the wedding.

The challenge of themed wedding for planners

Basically, there are a number of factors that must be considered when setting up a wedding, not necessarily perfectly themed but perfect in a sense that the couples and the entire guests to be satisfied with the result. With reference to Nutt (2007), setting up usually starts by setting a date. This is not a simple task, as the planner must choose a date which is not only convenient for the couple but also for the guests. A wedding is a once-in-a-lifetime-experience so it is assumed that most couples would prefer this event to be witnessed by their entire intended guests. Subsequently, the type of ceremony would have to be finalised as well because this will indicate whether the wedding is formal or semi-formal, big or small.

The budget must be decided upon immediately after the first two factors; date and the type of ceremony. The type of celebration determines whether the ceremony will be enjoyable, and the budget should reflect it accordingly. Zazulak (2008), states that the budget is extremely important because this mainly keeps the cost of the wedding under control in order to prevent future financial problems in the family. After budgeting, the planner or even the couple themselves might start to do the shopping.

Wedding planners have the intelligence and creativity to set up difficult elements of wedding celebration, most specifically the venue for the reception, because, aside from food and beverage, this place has to be designed elegantly and to provide an enjoyable occasion for the guest. With reference to Riggs (2005), wedding planners are keen to identify the following important details:

- i. How far the reception hall will be from the site of the wedding;
- ii. How close the lodging accommodations will be for out-of-town guests;
- iii. What the maximum number of guests is that the facility can comfortably hold;
- iv. Whether there is ample parking for guests' vehicles;
- v. How much the valet parking, if any, will cost;

- vi. If there is a time limitation for the reception venue, and how much it would cost if the event exceeds that time;
- vii. Whether there are sufficient restroom facilities; and
- viii. Whether the banquet package is all-encompassing and includes tables, dinnerware, and chairs.

Factors like these can be overlooked if the person-in-charge of the wedding setup is not details-focused. Moreover, wedding planners help in reducing the pressures brought about by the demand for themed weddings.

Wedding planners would have to encompass a wide range of choice for themed weddings. Sometimes, they may want a theme that is unique, and has not been done before. This demonstrates how challenging themed wedding planning and preparation can be. Moreover, the creativity of clients is also a challenge for wedding planners. Often the clients may only conceptualise a particular dream for a wedding and merely verbalise it to the planner with no actual illustrations at all being provided. As a result, wedding planners would have to be keen on details and put clients' conceptualisation into a much more visible and illustrative plan. This can only be possible if wedding planners have a wide understanding of the creativity that they are dealing with, such as making an effective linkage between the romance and drama metaphor of a client's concept, in order to come up with a satisfying theme for wedding. Generally, developing and managing a themed wedding is inherently difficult because from the it requires a lot of thinking and creativity between the planner and the clients.

Prevalent themes for a themed wedding

Preferences or wedding favour ideas gave birth to themed weddings, with one aim: having one wedding out of a limitless number of favourite ideas. Some prevalent themes in wedding nowadays consist of candle weddings, edible weddings, and practical weddings. Similarly, Napolitano (2007), proved the variety of resources or themes to choose from, such as the popular Valentine's wedding, spring wedding, Christmas weddings and more unique themes like a fire-fighter's themed wedding, a monster truck wedding, and several themes that demonstrate a high level of creativity in compliment to the high level of the couple's feeling for each other.

Beverages are one of the fastest growing themes within the wedding industry these days, because of the potential features that can satisfy not only the couples but their guests as well. According to Palladino (2008), coffee is one of the ideal wedding themes today because of its advantages:

- i. it will be favoured by almost everyone because people all over the world have been drinking coffee for centuries in order to keep moving, especially in special events like wedding;
- ii. coffee themes can be matched to other wedding themes like the beach, autumn, or Christmas, as coffee is one of the few drinks that can be used in whatever occasion, season, and lifestyle;
- iii. coffee is quite a distinctive colour and can therefore match a colour orientated theme for a wedding
- iv. a coffee wedding can be within a reasonable budget because coffee is affordable regardless of how big the wedding party is; and

- v. Coffee can also be served as a wedding souvenir.

Another prevalent wedding theme around the globe is the garden wedding. Some say that garden wedding is one of the least expensive of all wedding themes (Naylor, 2001) but, with reference to some findings like that of Zhou (2005), garden weddings can be expensive, especially if the preference of the couple requires more spending. This spending can derive from some settings such as:

- i. Dividing the wedding garden into different styles, like east and west; and
- ii. Designing the landscape of the garden with poetic grace through architecture, stones, plants, hangings on pillars in the east garden with special emphasis for the southern style, lawn and couplet, and many others.

Setting up a garden wedding is perceived as expensive because the planners or those who are engaged in arranging the venue believe that, just like any other themes, the goal of the garden wedding is to illuminate the importance of the venue for the celebration. In order to do so, further improvement in terms of architectural designs and landscaping would have to be made. Nash (2008) posits that weddings can be powered by anything that interests the couples that is transformable to a wedding theme such as a famous romance of historical characters like Antony and Cleopatra.



Decorations

What makes the themed wedding even more effective is the arrangement of decorations because these communicate the intended atmosphere of the themed wedding to the couple and to the entire guests (Nash, 2008). Decorations can be made out of preferred materials like fresh flowers and lanterns imported from elegant cities like Paris, London, and several others. However, artificial decorations like flowers to be used by the bride to the event itself; from the Church to the reception, are increasing in popularity these days.

There are substantial advantages by saving the couple much money, since fresh flowers are obviously sold by florists and commercial suppliers at a high price, as well as several requirements that have to be

bought in order to keep those flowers fresh for the event. Another advantage of artificial materials, as described by Lee (2008), is their availability regardless of season and other requirements that cannot meet the wedding setup requirements. For example is the availability of artificial flowers preferred by the couple regardless of the month of the wedding. Thus, the couple does not have to worry if the flowers of their choice are seasonal because they can be designed by the artificial flower manufacturer.

Invitations

Another item that has to be explored when considering a themed wedding is the wedding invitation, because it can be considered as the window to the main event. The theme is primarily evident in the appearance of the invitation. If the wedding theme is 'Prince and Princess Nuptial' then the invitation must be in a totally elegant form, as if it came from the royal family in Wales. However, no matter what the invitation looks like, its informative purposes should never be disregarded, so it must have some additional thoughts concerning clothing, footwear, and getting to the venue must be clearly stated



Dress

Another powerful indicator of a themed wedding is dress, ranging from bride, groom, other participants, and guests. According to Nash (2008), themed weddings allow the bride, groom and their guests to relate to the theme by matching it with clothes they believe that are appropriate. It is not necessary to require the guests to cooperate fully in the wedding theme but it would be much appreciable if they would, at least, try to fit in and be a part of the stylish once-in-a-lifetime-event of their bride and groom.

Themed dress does not have to be expensive to be enjoyed by everyone involved. A dress for the bride or for the guests can match the theme by just some colours which are suitable in the theme with matching self-made styles like back-of-the-dress details such as special embroidery. With a simple touch of creativity, everyone could simple fit in into the world created by the couple in their special life changing event.

Music Preparation

On the whole, music plays a very important role in the event as it adds life, a reminiscing quality, and communicates the worth of the event to the guests, the couple and their respective families. According to the Wedding Organization (n.d.), music serves as a key ingredient in setting the mood of the wedding,

specifically the wedding reception theme song. However, choosing the right theme song for this particular part of the event is also an additional burden because the suggestions of a wedding planner and the preferences of the couple are sometimes unable to agree. Since the couple are the ones who have the right to make the musical selection, the burden is being thrown at the wedding planner because he/she has to see to it that the music is suitable for the wedding reception no matter how difficult this may be.

Setups start by identifying the final destination because without this everything will not fall into place. Most themed weddings today take place as a destination wedding, where the ceremony is held in a new place.

Wedding Menus

Due to the current trends and innovative thinking in the wedding industry, the level of difficulty for wedding preparation appears to be increased, in a sense that wedding celebrations are asking for more than what the current time zone and seasons can give; for instance, preparing a winter-themed wedding in the middle of summer where props and, especially foods, can only be provided by selected hotels and restaurants. Focusing more on food, the presence of themed weddings in the market has also raised the expectations of the guests, especially when the couple comes from a wealthy family.

Some of the trendy expectations of guests include:

- i. Switching the expectation from a set menu to an a-la-carte menu, as this provides a wider choice, particularly for those with special dietary requirements;
- ii. a later wedding breakfast plus smaller evening buffet menu;
- iii. no more straight-forward menu items like soup, roast turkey and gateaux. Instead, they are focused more on unusual requests or themed menus:
- iv. Smaller wedding with many more courses; and
- v. Moving away from having a separate traditional cake only to having a cake that can serve as a dessert later in the event.

Additional Touches

Prevalent themes are obviously made out of pure creativity, adding some special touches will surely bring out the best in the themed wedding. Special touches add richness to the theme, such as if everyone is placed in a fantastic destination the like groom arriving at Church on horseback and the bride being carried, like Cinderella, by a horse-drawn carriage.

Since the number of couples getting married under a themed wedding is increasing, it only means that more and more changes are emerging, revolutionising those existing themed wedding.

Entertainment

This is one of the highlights of the event because without this then everyone may not appreciate the celebration. Entertainment not only involves the activities after the wedding ceremony but also it encompasses the items and performances before and during the wedding ceremony like the music allocated for the bride's entrance, music after the ceremony, and so on. In addition even picture-taking not only of the bride and groom but of the guests as well, is considered as a part of entertainment, because there are some themes which involve special touches like allowing the guests to request to personalise or make some further designs on their pictures as a souvenir.

Local attraction

Themed wedding associate with specific venues since couples have different preferences on where they would want to hold their ceremony. However, it is recommended to choose a venue or destination that could best deal with accommodation. After all, the couple will not be the only ones who have to spend hours in the venue - the guests will, too. Therefore, it is important to consider their concern also, and finding a good venue accommodation is the right place to start.

Reasons for having a themed wedding

As was mentioned in the previous sections, couples have their own reason for setting up a themed wedding. Every couple has full control on wedding planning, specifically on whatever they want to put on view. They can even hire someone who can do all the work for them, ranging from the church, the banquets, the decorations, foods and beverages, to some other additional touches. However, putting a burden on wedding planners' shoulders is not the reason why couples choose to set up a themed wedding. After all, the expenses are theirs, which is why there may be some important reasons for such preferences.

Most couples have three common reasons for preferring themed weddings:

- i. Couples believe that making a themed wedding is a unique way of ensuring that even the most common of wedding ideas becomes a reserved theme for the couple who thought of it. They also believe that even though the wedding is not of high profile, themes can still make it look elegant;
- ii. Couples believe that themed weddings highly implant rich memories not only for them but for everyone who witnessed and experienced it. Thus, the event can be a lifetime treasure to be cherished later; and
- iii. Couples prefer themed weddings in order to give respect and display traditions, because personalised weddings in the form of a theme can be a richer way of showing customs and traditions, such as allocating an extraordinary time for gestures of thanks for those who attended the wedding.

To complement the aforementioned reasons, there was also a time when Lingao, a director of wedding events and management, mentioned that couples chose themed weddings because they want to have a totally unique and a memorable wedding, an event that will be remarkable. Therefore, as a wedding planner and manager, the entire preparation must be perfect, from wedding planning services, flowers, cakes, to musical entertainment with accordance to the agreed setup.

Cooperation

Cooperation, which is simply evident when all aspects are being planned around one central theme. In other words, the preparation could be easier and less time-consuming since the ideas that have to be considered in the wedding are all in one piece. Secondly is tradition, which couples would like to reflect since they want to integrate their varied pasts and individual histories into their marriage as an act of honouring their individual heritages.

Personality

The next is the personality of both the bride and the groom. Most couples would want to show and share their happiness to everyone who will attend their wedding and one key to do it is to share them the sweet ambiance of their relationship and personalities. This could only be made possible by themed weddings where everything can be customized with respect to their preferences. In other words, the setup is flexible and it can be modified any time prior to the wedding just to ensure the preferred reflection.

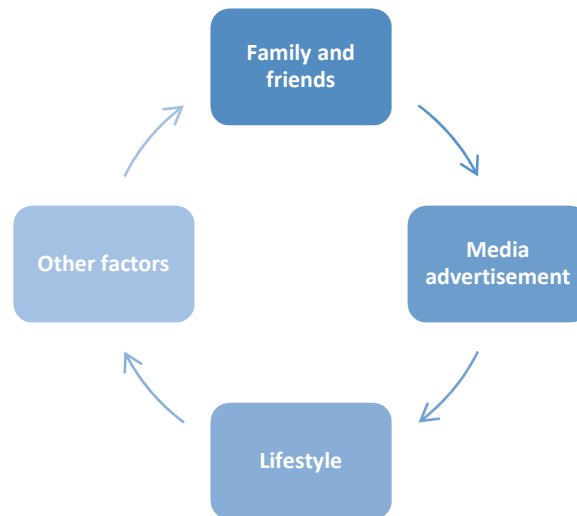
Mood

Lastly, a themed wedding allows the couple to be more specific by setting up the mood, which actually refers to the setting up of atmosphere and tone of the event. One key example of this is a black-and-white theme which only shows a formal tone for a celebration. Therefore, by setting up the mood of the celebration, everything will fall into place and reflect the frame of mind of the wedding.

General interest in themed wedding

Themed wedding have different meanings for wedding planners. With reference to the viewpoints of the thirteen respondents from a survey, some of them gave the impression of themed wedding as something which allows the customer or couples-to-be to decide on what they want to include in their weddings, such as some kind of a twist in order to make it more unique.

Factors influencing choice of themed wedding



Family and friends

Based on the figure above, the majority of the respondents stress that family and friends are the most influential factors for a couple planning a wedding, either a traditional or a themed wedding.

Media advertisement

Firstly, media advertisement were said to be an influential factor, because bride and groom are sometimes establishing their own ideas from someone else's wedding shown in printed advertisements or in bridal magazines. Advertisements in different medium are one of many ways for wedding clients to be exposed to themed weddings.

Moreover, by referencing the statements of respondents in this specific motivation, it can also be concluded that media are being used or consulted by wedding clients. They want to get enough ideas on how to make their wedding a special day which can absolutely impress all the guests, whether or not they ask for a wedding planner's assistance.

Lifestyle

Lifestyle plays a big role in important events like weddings because it drives the theme or style of the wedding event itself.

Other factors

Lastly, there are some influences which can be overlooked. For instance it is difficult for some wedding planners to identify the influential factors of couples especially when those couples are less open minded. Consequently, it depends on the wedding planner to identify and discover the information that is essential.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *The Complete Wedding Plan* By Charlotte Rees
- ✓ *Wedding Photography: A Guide to Photojournalism* By Kerry Morgan
- ✓ *Diane Warner's Contemporary Guide to Wedding Ceremonies: Hundreds of* By Dainee Warner