

Wedding in Thailand: Traditional and Business

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Abstract—This study is purely qualitative. The objectives of this study can be identified as two main factors: traditionally explanation and economically studying. The study of weddings, both in traditional beauty and the aggressively strong competitive in the wedding business market has limited population of the study only Thailand internal wedding consumers. Focus group with the new marriage couple and in-depth interview with fully experiences wedding businessman were used. Traditionally, Thai weddings are very various; therefore, the recent patterns were briefly concluded to be processes of traditional Thai wedding will be revealed and explained then give more details in the formal procedures. Economically, weddings business are related to many types of businesses from catering business, hospitality and tourism business, pre-wedding photography, and the complete full-serviced wedding organizer for examples. The situations, changes and obstacles of the wedding related business will be discussed.

Keywords—Thailand, Traditional Marriage, Wedding Business, Wedding Consuming Behavior.

I. INTRODUCTION

GENERALLY talking about the wedding, it is a dream of every woman. This research is not talking about how to plan the wedding, how to get successful in the marriage life or the idea of transnational marriage. The research mainly gives an overview of socio-culture of wedding in Thailand which partly leads to a huge business market.

The wedding business industry is a large section in the hospitality industry which makes a lot of money each year. During the press conference of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) held in November 2012, refer the national tourism marketing plan which can related to the research that the wedding will be raised to be a topic to promote the tourism of Thailand as the wedding destinations and honeymoon destinations in 2013 [1]. The southern part of the country and its surrounding islands are popular as a heaven for a couple [2].

Wedding business is comprise with multiple enterprises like caterers, wedding consultants, dresses, various beauty suppliers (hair, makeup), photographers, favors gifts, music, honeymoon trip related, for examples. Those smaller composite suppliers can be very local and likely will be small and privately owned.

The complete wedding organizer or sometimes called as one-stop wedding planning business was initiate to help a couple run their wedding smoothly from a pre-wedding period until a real couple life begins.

With many reasons the wedding market seems to be tight and have aggressive competitions among the various players recently. Considering of many of the smaller components like caterers, DJs, and photographers, wedding favors, invitations, etc. also do other events without necessarily breaking their business down into wedding versus non-wedding. Some of the individuals and businesses that provide services and products may only work part-time on wedding-related services to supplement their income such as the hotel or convention centre for examples. Beside the business with a good friendship, there will either be a minimal charge or no charge at all to help your friend to get marry nice and peacefully. Additionally, the highly develop technology also help anyone could be a good wedding planner by just one touch through the applications (app). This app includes many essential new features to make the wedding planning easy as much as possible. It also features all the wedding planning tools you might need for someone wedding. The wedding planning app also allows you to share your wedding details with your groom, parents, and wedding party. The info entered can be accessed on any other smartphone or tablet.

The life style of Thai people from the beginning of life to the death of one person is related to the powerful culture and tradition of Thailand. Once in a lifetime every Thai people must associated with traditional marriage as a spouse, a guest or a co-host of wedding.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURES

The Thai Royal Institute's dictionary [8] explains that the wedding is a ceremony for the men and women to live together as husband and wife in their tradition. Therefore, the wedding was created in order to announce the traditionally beginning of human family life to the living society. The laws and marriage regulations were changed follows the generation that changed, the wedding style also changed follow the changing consuming behaviors.

Satearkosete [3] explain in details about the wedding from the very old generation, the wedding terms in Thai language were called with two different words, Wiwarmongkol and Arwarmongkol. These two words are different in meaning. 'Wiwarmongkol' means the marriage that after the wedding the married woman will moved into her husband house and be part of his family. On the other hand, 'Arwarmongkol' means the marriage that after the wedding the married gentleman will moved into his wife house and be part of her family. But today the wedding term was changed, generally called as 'mongkolsomrose' consistent to the word 'Sakesomrose' that means the wedding of the royal families.

Today wedding in Thailand, famous and affordable people prefer a huge luxury wedding ceremonies as the size and

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money spent show the social hierarchy. But recently many couples are more economically concerned and they reduce the scale of wedding in order to save in budget. Today form of the wedding still contains the important part of traditional practices but held it simple and less expensive. The researcher has concluded the recent Thai traditional wedding for both traditionally and legal correct as follows; nowadays, Thai traditional wedding usually begins with an informal overture, official proposing between the parents of the couple engagement and wedding ceremony.

Before the wedding ceremonies, the parents or the elders will discuss about a good date and time regarding to the traditional believes that setting a good auspicious date and time to get married giving a lifelong prosperity marriage life. According to the Thai traditional believes the auspicious months that popular to hold the wedding are the second, the forth, the sixth, the ninth, the twelfth month by the Thai traditional lunar calendar. The most popular month is the ninth month as a tip that number nine is a lucky number with a good meaning of growing passage [4]

III. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Method was purely used in this research. Four in-depth interviews with two professional catering businesspersons, two professional complete wedding organizers were arranged. Then the four groups of focus group were held in a friendly environment coffee houses, downtown Bangkok, Thailand. The population limited only with a just married couple (with no longer than 3 years before 2014).

IV. RESULTS

Discussion on the wedding in Thailand and the interesting statistics, the director of the national statistical office claim the decreasing number of average age of getting married of Thai woman. From 2006, the average age of Thai woman who got married was 23.1 years old, but in 2012, it decreased to 22.2 years old. [5]

2011 Survey on conditions of society and culture reports some changes and some remaining ideas concerning the wedding and marriage behaviors. Thai society remains the traditional of virgin marriage, majority of samples agreed sex before marriage, living together without marriage, and homosexual sex is unacceptable. On the other hand, the average age of having the first sex is dropping below fifteen [6].

From four in-depth interviews with two professional catering businesspersons, two professional complete wedding organizers the research found that the wedding business nowadays are in the slightly growing stages. According to interview the professionals claims the interest of their businesses that running the wedding is a big different from holding other types of event, by the happiness related reasons and also in every detail of the wedding event. Holding weddings have many things to deal with many groups of people, many needs to be served and many traditions practice to give priority. And the hardest point was claimed to

“Bridezilla”, an aggressive emotional bride. The wedding ceremony has its own rhyme and pattern. This is not talking about the style and the theme wedding which is an individual requirement.

From the studies of Thai weddings markets from both provider side and consumer side, the result can be concluded as follows:

A. Socio- Culture Changes

The study of preferable styles or patterns of wedding ceremony illustrate the most preferable style are mixed. The result has shown that some parts of Thai traditional wedding ceremonies are highly required. But most of couples require to shorten the process and skipping some ceremonial steps due to limited time of preparation by themselves and to control the budget. In addition, they are other nations' wedding ceremonies, religious based wedding ceremonies and other Thai local ceremonies for the couple to choose from and to mix with Thai traditional style.

The venues for the wedding are, hotels, associations, convention centre, restaurant and club, as they are easily reachable and convenient for the preparations. Choosing the right place to hold the wedding is directly related to the budget that the couple have and also the social status of the couple or their families. The couples who are business people usually hold their wedding in the above average to extra luxury brand hotels with the perfect location in city centre while the couples who work in routine with fixed income always choose the cheaper choice in the clubs or the restaurant.

The dynamics of life style and social conditions are not suite with the old fully traditional etiquettes that has many processes and details. The more details is that the more increasing in the budget. The modern Thai traditional weddings usually have fewer traditions, such as the water pouring and blessing ceremony and the sending a fresh married couple into the bedroom is still exist. The water pouring is an important part of the Thai wedding ceremony as during this part the couple officially become husband and wife. Traditionally, this ceremony was required to valid the marriage, but nowadays the couple is also required obtaining a legal marriage certificate from the local registration office. Before the water pouring can take place the couple must seat themselves at the traditional water pouring tables, with the bride to the left of the groom. They will each have a ceremonial headdress, made from one piece of cotton to signify the joining of the couple, placed upon their heads. The Mong-Kol will have previously been blessed by the Buddhist monks earlier in the wedding. The couple will be fully prepared for the water pouring to commence once they place both hands by stick their palms together, overhanging the water pouring table and positioned above flowers that have been arranged in a water tray, to capture the water that runs off. Each of the elder guests in turn will take the ceremonial water pouring conch shell, which has been freshly filled with holy water from the Buddhist ceremony, and pour a trickle of water from the base of the thumb to the fingertips over first the groom's and then the bride.

The formal sending fresh married couple to bed ceremony starts with bed arrangement by senior couple. The sending bride to bed ceremony usually does at night, after dinner party finish. The groom's and bride's parents will invite an honor senior couple to arrange bed. The selected senior couple need to be a good idol in the long married life from marriage till getting old, wealthy, have good child and all alive. Currently bedding arrangement by a senior couple is just nominal, because it is prepared before the wedding already. On the bed is set of well arranged pillows, blankets, bedspread nets held.

The auspicious things used in this ceremony are various. There are such as stones for crushed herbs, green gourd, white male cat that is powdered all white and perfume. There are also including nuts, sesame seeds, golden rice quantity a handful each then wrapped in fabrics. The senior couple who arrange the bed, will put these things on the bed and bless, and lie down formally on the bed a while, then rise up. The auspicious things have the meaning that cool and heavy like gourd, stay home like the stone, and watch over the house like the old male cat.

The honorable senior couple will lay down on the well prepared bed then when the senior couples rise up from the bed, they will act as if just woke up. The senior woman would say about her auspicious dream and the senior man would say something about consolation and the prediction to rise in the future. Then parents of the bride and groom send the marry couple to the bed room, and the bride's parent say that young bride did not know as much about the households. If there is any deficiency, the groom admonishes and counsels kindly her like a sister, do not have nagging. And help to protect, care and etc., do not neglect her. Then the groom accepts and promises to perform very well. Then the parents of both parties trained the marry couple to know the duties of husband and wife as well, which must continue to rely on each other. Then the couple lay sleeping on the bed. The husband sleep on the right and the bride sleep on the left. Sometimes before lay on the bed the bride will bow her husband for good luck, because husband is considered to take care and protect her. The reason of the husband lay at the right bed is because it is usually nearby the door. In case of a dangerous event, the husband will be able to protect wife.

The ideal of attending the wedding also changed follow the lifestyle of majority of people in the society changed. The people attended the wedding in order to meet other people and open for the opportunities. The wedding ceremonies were held based on the happiness and fun. Many creative activities were created to use as part of the wedding to entertain the guests.

B. Wedding Related Business

1. Wedding Planner or Complete Wedding Organizer

The planners help to provide the most comprehensive and up-to-date wedding planning information in a form of assistance to help the couple to stay organized and well complete on their wedding plans. The complete wedding organizer usually starts their job since the pre-wedding period, the wedding processes until the post event honeymoon trip. The planner works in every detail that the couple want their

wedding to be from an introduction to the wedding, wedding planning and check list, budget analysis, wedding consultant, wedding ceremonies, unique wedding ideas, wedding attires and beauty, wedding photography, wedding music, wedding foods and beverages, wedding flowers and decorations, transportation and parking, wedding rental items, legal matters, wedding parties and wedding destination.

Most wedding packages include the décor, the venue, and the food so the couples do not need to worry in planning for their big day. The bride and groom can feel free and enjoy a very important period before the wedding. Couples can choose from a wide variety of marriage packages. There are offers that are quite flexible as well so you can customize the ceremony according to your preferences and budget. It is important to finding the right package and make sure what included in the package.

Weddings mean expenses for most people. In Thailand, wedding ceremony packages are usually all inclusive. This means that they include details that you would normally have to pay for individually. Critically considering separately pay for many ceremonies and details might be much higher than buy one inclusive package. By buying a wedding package, you can spend you free-time without worry and be able to enjoy the fun details such as choosing your wedding dress, finding outfits for your bridesmaids and meeting relatives and friends you haven't seen for long. But having a package from the organizer definitely mean that the wedding you will have is might be the same pattern and the same things of others for examples you may get the same pre-wedding scenes, same pre-wedding post in the same background and etc. The price of the service are very various, depends on many details, scale of the wedding which based on what the customer demands.

2. Foods and Beverages

Food and beverages were agreed to be the second large proportion to spend on the wedding. Samples raised and discussed some of well-known brand hotels with a perfect location but serve such a stone-cold foods that they experienced and marked out of their list. The hygiene of foods and drinks and serving hot and fresh foods were voted as very important criteria. The appearance and the taste of foods and drink were rated as important criteria.

The popular type of food and beverage line serving in Thai weddings can be classified into three different types; buffet, Chinese round-table and cocktails. The most popular one is buffet with the reason that the most valuable choice, providing foods in large amount while the guest having fun of gathering and meeting friends from the same generation. The cocktail wedding party is suit with the low- budget wedding since it is usually cost less than other types. But interestingly, the cocktail party is claimed to be the most beautiful appearance, good decorations, easy to eat and drink. It is convenient to talk and easy to host. The Chinese round-table is suitable with the wedding party that has many honorable guests and old people. The budget of this type is considering higher than buffet and cocktails. This is the result based on the focus group of recent marriage couples, the cost of the foods and beverages are not

exactly the same of every place. Many places in Thailand may offer the price differently depend on the type of venues, the reputation of the chef, managerial system and etc.

Outsourcing catering services were also used in some cases that the couple did not choose the foods and beverage attached to the venue of the wedding or the place where the foods and beverages are not provided. The advantages of using outsource catering services are improving cost, services and service speed. This service recently popular in case the wedding party was held out-door, on the beach, the place where they are not providing food or drink or the place that only has a good location but uneatable foods. The idea of catering service is letting the professional cook your foods and impressed the guest with exotic foods but less cost.

3. Destination and Venue of the Wedding

It is including hotels, resorts, restaurants, clubs and convention centers. From the magnificent, sunny beaches of the Southern of the country to the stunning mountain of the Northern part and lakefront areas of North Eastern highlands. Thailand offers the ideal location for the perfect wedding destination. Since the economics of the country are driving by the hospitality and tourism industry, the hotels and resorts business section as part of the industry also continuously growing. There is a strong competitive within the market. Hotels, resorts and other venues for the wedding range from two-star simple and local place to luxurious five-star place. In smaller provincial towns, cheaper accommodation is usually in a local family run hotel and resorts, which are typically plain and simple. In tourist-friendly places, you're often able to find modern budget hotels which typically small and less service providing. The five-star hotels and resorts are as luxurious choices as the couple might select, with many the world's well recognized brand hotels were located throughout the country where the distinctive resources, facilities and decorations were provided. Poolside decks, beachfront lawns, barbecue areas, on-site restaurants and function spaces are excellent settings for a rehearsal stages, bridal showers, barbecues or picnics for examples.

Adlerab and Chienmab [7] claim in their paper that the wedding business can be a lucrative market for the hotel food and beverage revenues; however, it often does not get the attention it deserves. The location of the hotel plays a crucial role on the price, the hotels in downtown area charge higher price than suburban hotels. Nevertheless, suburban hotels hold more weddings per year in on average. Consequently, suburban hotels have slightly more food and beverage revenue from weddings. The total benefit from weddings, however, is lower in downtown hotels. The profits of weddings are significant to food and beverage departments and they cannot disregard this segment. The wedding market, therefore, are obviously a great opportunity, challenging to attack to the new costumers with their resources and differentiated packages and promotions. Some places offer day spas and salons, perfect for relaxing and pampering before the big day.

4. Pre-Wedding Photography

Many professional photographers in Thailand offer a high-quality, creative and affordable wedding Photography on various destination both indoor studio and the outdoor destinations from the beautiful seaside, green mountains, multi-colored highland, other beautiful sites in Thailand or even aboard if prefer and affordable. Many professional teams and individuals offer a variety choice of wedding package that will meet all the lovers' needs.

Wedding photography have been growing in popularity and over the last decade for couple wanting to have their pre and post wedding shot in Thailand. The professional complete wedding organizers refer that they have seen a larger amount of requests for theme wedding photo sessions. Unlike your wedding day, a pre-wedding or honeymoon photo shoot in Thailand is ideal as it is a more relaxed approach where the couple can take time and not have to rush or to worry about keeping your guests waiting. And beautiful photos from the pre-wedding also can be shown as part of wedding decorations.

The professionals claim that last five years, the outdoor photography is more popular than taking it in the studio. There are many stunning areas in Thailand, from the city scope of Bangkok, the outskirt rice field, up-country green yard, beaches and islands in the south and high mountains in the north for example. The various theme of photography were designed and created such as the vintage theme, the black and white chic, the gothic arts, and the novel based theme for example. The oversea photography exists in the limited group of customers as the higher cost.

5. Other Extra Options

Wedding live music band, extra decoration, blessing boards, photo point, wedding dresses, wedding rings and other entertainments are all count as additional requirements. All extras options are come with the extra spending. There are many outsourcing professionals to deal individually. Otherwise, the wedding planners can manage but definitely with the extra budget.

C. Budget of Wedding

According to the in-depth interviews and the focus-groups done by this study the budget of the wedding are various depends on the social situation, their families and the budget set by the couple. The social situation is referring as their type of job and living social classes for example. The business people usually spend much higher than the fixed income workers with two main reasons, first the reason of affordable and the second is that they have to present their wealthy and their stability through the luxury ceremonies and the venue of the wedding parties.

Undoubting, one hundred percentages of samples mentioned that they have put the exact amount of budget before they start to plan the wedding.

In addition, seventy-five percentages of sample actually exceed the limit, twenty percentages less than the limit and only five percentage use almost exactly amount of limitation. The main reason of exceeding the limitation because the

marriage couples agreed that wedding will hold only once in a life and they want everything to be perfect. On the other hand, the major reason of paying less than the set budget is a supporting by friends and families. Supporting by friends and families do not mean by the financial supports but refers to the direction of reducing and cutting some unseen costs and extras.

The overall budget that the couples were expected to pay on the wedding were grouped into five groups. First group, they was expected to pay less than 200,000 Thai baht (THB) on their wedding (20 percentages). The second group, the couples were set the budget between 200,001THB to 400,000 THB (46 percentages). The third group, the lovers set the budget from 400,001THB to 600,000THB (14 percentages). The forth group, the couples were decided the budget between 600,001THB and 800,000THB (3 percentages). The last group was expected to pay more than 800,000 THB (17 percentages).

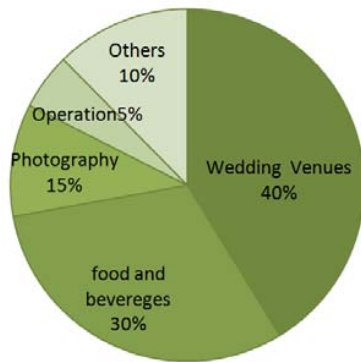


Fig. 1 Proportion of Wedding Budget

Fig. 1 illustrates the estimate proportion of wedding budget spent, concluded from the focus group.

The budget of the wedding usually divided and spent into five groups of expenses, cost of the venue (40 percentages), foods and beverages (30 percentages), photography (15 percentages), event operation (5 percentages) and others (10 percentages).

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