The Social Construction of a Postmodern Industry: the Wedding-Planning

Antonio SANDU¹,
Aişa-Iolanda DOBRE²

¹Professor PhD, Ștefan cel Mare
University of Suceava, Romania,
antonio1907@yahoo.com

²Al. I. Cuza University of Iași,
Romania, yolanda_aysa@yahoo.com

Abstract: A personal event, such as onomastics, marriage, anniversary of important events in life, etc., facilitates the creation of a personal brand through which the individual is favorably exposed to the close persons transformed into an audience who receives a message about the person's existence and insertion in his / her social environment, allowing the individual to create and maintain a public image of their close friends. The phenomenon of the industry development of private events, including the wedding, from the perspective of commercialization of private life, is analyzed as a result of the post-industrial society. Deprivation and marketization of domestic activities is one of the most important elements of emancipation of women who no longer have to carry out unpaid domestic activities but also to modernize the family, breaking apart from the extended family and externalizing the support function.

Keywords: *Wedding planning; personal branding; event.*

How to cite: Sandu, A., & Dobre, A.I. (2019). The Social Construction of a Postmodern Industry: the Wedding-Planning. *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Social Sciences*, 8(2), 43-62. doi:10.18662/lumenss/24

Introduction

The wedding is an event of utmost importance in every person's life. For this reason, a real industry of wedding planning has been developed around this event, which includes services in the hospitality industry, restaurant and event rooms rental, specific menus of food and beverage, accommodation services for guests, fashion design, beauty industry services - including hairdresser, other beauty and spa services, pedicure, manicure; photo and video services and, last but not least, professional organization of the event. These event planning services are at the crossroads of communication and *branding* through events, with that of *entertaining*. Wedding planning is a communication event as it communicates to specific publics - made up of the relatives and acquaintances of the bride, the bride and groom - the formation of the new family and becomes the foundation in the public image of the future couple.

Wedding planning as a communication and branding event for the couple

The process of planning and coordinating the event is called event planning (Ramsborg, *et al.* 2008).

The planning of events, both business and private, is a branch of the *creative industries* (Ramsborg, *et al.* 2008: 96) that includes both global events - such as *political summits*, or the organizing of the Olympic Games, world football championships, etc. - to local events, with a small number of participants - such as business dinners, etc. The professional planning of private events in the lives of individuals takes place in the context of transforming individuality into a sui generis *personal brand* and deprivatization of personal events that become public events. An apparently simple activity, such as an anniversary or the celebration of a significant event in a person's life, provides an opportunity to communicate meaningful information to the public about that person, constituting or improving the system of relationships to which that person belongs. The personal event, such as onomastics, marriage, anniversary of important events in life, etc., allows the creation of a *personal brand* through which the individual is favorably exposed to the close persons transformed into an *audience* who receives a message about the person's existence and insertion in his / her social environment , allowing the individual to create and maintain a public image among their close friends (Blakely, 2008). Event planning facilitates placing the organization or individual, in case of personal events, in the center of

attention, creating not only visibility and notoriety, but also a trusting atmosphere by selecting messages on the one hand, and creating a sense of communion with the organization.

Professionalization of organizing private events

Since the 1970s, with the emergence of complex phenomena of intrusion of the public sphere into the private life of the individual and the transformation of personal events into public communication occasions of the individual who is self-perceived as a *personal brand*, brings the need to professionalize the organization of events - in the case of the wedding - due to the complexity involved in this organization and the need for a *communication strategy* (Ramsborg, *et al.*, 2008) that the young family can benefit from in managing the personal position and the relationship system it develops with the different people participating in the event, turning them into symbolic clientele of the young couple (Ramsborg, *et al.*, 2008).

If traditionally the task of organizing weddings came to the newly weds, their widespread families, eventually godparents, maids and knights of honor, with the perception of weddings as widespread social events, especially at the beginning, for weddings organized by wealthy families who felt the need to create a *personal brand* of the new family, the weddings organizing companies emerged, who adapted to the typical and specific of the wedding to that of corporate social events.

A special place in the industry of organizing events is the wedding planning, due to the frequency of these events and the mix of the characteristics of the public event with elements of private life, the marriage remaining in the public mentality as one of the most significant private elements along with birth and death. The deprivation of these events is a feature of modern, post-industrial society. However, strictly personal elements are particularly important, generating a series of limitations and spiritual, cultural or personal needs that the event organizer must take into account.

Wedding planner - professional profile

The wedding planner is a professional called to assist the couple to marry in the planning and management of the wedding and the events associated with it - the civil ceremony, the religious ceremony, the bachelor party, the wedding party.

Marriage is a significant event in the lives of individuals and couples, which causes many such couples to marry to be willing to spend a significant

budget to ensure the proper organization of the wedding and it becoming memorable, both for the newly weds and the other participants (Blakely, 2008: 639-662). In general, couples in the above average class, from the urban environment, with a limited time budget dedicated to wedding organization and less attached to the traditional wedding venues, are willing to turn to a professional in organizing events, leaving all the details of the wedding organization, after having informed the organizer in advance of the vision of the two - eventually their families - about the wedding and the elements that should be included in the future event: guests, location (both the religious ceremony and the after party), the menu, music and more (Hochschild, 2003). Hochschild analyzes the phenomenon of private events sector industry development, including marriage, from the perspective of the commercialization of private life, as a result of the post-industrial society (Hochschild, 2003).

Kristin Blakeley analyzes the phenomenon of the development of this industry from a liberal-feminist perspective as an outsourcing of a specific activity to the future wife, which in the traditional paradigm should be a housewife, and therefore have enough time for organizing, together with the family, the wedding but who, in the contemporary society, becomes involved in productive activities generating income. The outsourcing of wedding organization is a model of marketization of private life, interpreted by K. Blakeley (2008: 639-662) as a model of communicative action (Habermas, 2015). Along with the wedding organization, activities such as hiring baby-sitters and domestic staff, purchasing current food products on the internet as well as calling to *cleaning companies* (Hochschild, 2003: 35-36). In our opinion, not all of these trades are the results of postmodern society, since the name of *babysitter* is an adaptation in the spirit of political correctness of that of nanny or governess, while for the term butler (Apetrei, 2009) - we have the English term *housekeeper*. Outsourcing domestic activities is far from being a postmodern practice, as it is a revival of traditions already existing in wealthy families to use external staff for domestic affairs.

The postmodern specificity of the outsourcing of domestic activities is rather related to the transformation of these activities into industry and their large-scale development, practically transforming into a mass phenomenon of deprivation of family life. Another element of modernity in the *outsourcing* of domestic activities is the anonymization and depersonalization of the relationship between the beneficiary of services and the outsourced service provider. Babysitters, maids, etc, especially in Western society, are employees of agencies / service companies and rarely direct employees of the beneficiary's family.

In any case, deprivation and marketing of domestic activities is one of the most important elements of emancipation of the woman who no longer has to carry out unpaid domestic activities, but also of modernizing the family, which breaks away from the extended family and outsources the support function.

Organizing private events and gender (in)equality

The emancipation of women and the universalization of access to the labor market makes the family go from being a production unit to a consumption unit. Hochschild identifies the emergence of a border of consumer goods and services (Hochschild, 2003: 35-36) that invades the domestic area, transforming the family into a market (Fraser, 1989). The wedding organization industry has developed mainly in the US and Western Europe, but also in countries such as India and China (Perry, 2006). The organization of weddings thus becomes an event of public communication, which gathers specific activities for the destination tourism, more and more weddings being organized in special locations, the public food and accommodation units setting up spaces specially designed for organizing such events. The wedding planning industry includes, along with the complete services of *wedding planner*, a multitude of other services, from the decoration and arrangement of the room, professional makeup and hairdressing services, to the production of pastry and confectionery of which the most strongly promoted is that of the wedding cake. All these services and goods are promoted in such a way as to turn the wedding into a dream event, an event of utmost importance in the life of the bride and groom and beyond. This advertising creation is based on the fact that, in consonance with the religious vision, the wedding represents a symbolic coronation of the grooms, who in the Christian vision acquire at that time the status of emperors of the world.

Starting from this tradition, weddings have always been an exceptional event in the community. The wedding industry is marketing the transformation of an ordinary woman into a sui-generic princess, who just inherits the land. Of course, the coronation event requires tailor-made expenses, which are paid much more easily than for any other event, thus turning the wedding organization industry into an exponent (Debord, 1995), along with the beauty industry wider industry, happiness - surrogate (Bauman, 2000).

Research done by Kristin Blakely shows that, in the opinion of the wedding organizers, they assume an important role in saving time for brides,

but also assume the role of experts, offering advice based on both their own experience and specific professional training, the wedding being not an ordinary event, but a special one in the life of the bride and groom. In their terms, their role is to make dreams come true, "within a reasonable budget" (Blakely, 2008: 643).

If, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a master of ceremonies was used in order to organize the weddings of the wealthy families, the activity became professional after the 1970s, being an organizer of weddings and private events becoming an independent profession (Ingraham, 1999). An important conclusion of Blakely's study (2008:653) is that the wedding organizing industry - at least in America - is addressed exclusively to brides, none of the advertisements analyzed target the groom, but only the bride, even if the advertisement is sometimes destined for the couple. Moreover, the author draws attention to the fact that only 1 in 10 future spouses is actively involved in organizing their own wedding (Blakely, 2008:653). The wedding is seen, from a gender perspective, as an activity in a feminized space, term describing bridal salons, flower shops, cake shops. Thus, domestic consumption is feminized (Otnes & Pleck, 2003).

Another result, obtained by Blakely, is in agreement with Hochschild's views - namely, that the liberalization and secularization of society creates the premises of crossing the "border of comfort for women" (Hochschild, 2003), transforming the private life into the spirit of commercial culture, which results in an increase of involvement of women in public life (Hochschild, 2003).

Wedding planning - from tradition to professionalization

In the Romanian cultural space, the organization of the wedding has both a spiritual dimension correlated with the religious ceremony of the officiating of the marriage, and a social one, related to the participation of relatives and persons close to the party that takes place on the occasion of the marriage ceremony (Snizek, 2005:215–234).

Tamara Snizek analyzes the importance of the wedding for the establishment and functioning of the family and the context of the social (Cheal, 1988: 632–643) construction of the idea of wedding (Snizek, 2005: 215–234). Apparently in line with the traditional perspective, women, more inclined to the problems of home and family, are more involved in the organization of the wedding, men tending to consider that their role is rather that of financial support than the actual participant in the preparation of the event.

However, all couples interviewed by Tamara Sniezek declare to be mutually involved in the decisions regarding the planning of the wedding. As far as the activities considered usual and involving minor decisions, these are assumed by / left to future brides. The future bride is the one who identifies various solutions and alternatives to the details that need to be established and presents them to the husband to make a decision together. Regarding the organizing of the wedding, the managerial role belongs to the woman, her being the one who suggests the best solutions to the future husband, and he rather supervises the planning of the wedding (Sniezek, 2005: 215–234). An interesting observation made by the cited author shows that, in the case of couples who cohabit before the wedding, there is a greater tendency to equally share the tasks of organizing the wedding, than in the case of couples who do not cohabit before the marriage (Sniezek, 2005: 215–234).

From a traditional point of view, the founding of the family represents the element of maturity of the two who leave the families of origin to establish their own family, their own social unity, which is why the family was traditionally seen as a nucleus of the society, weaving around it is the social relations of the traditional community. However, the family was not mononuclear, the wedding having the function of related families of the two grooms. As such, in addition to the spiritual function, marriage played a special social function, in the sense of creating the relationship of spiritual and social kinship, thus strengthening the community or geographically close communities. At present, the solidarity function of marriage is mainly limited to the members of the couple's family who owe their care - at least while their is a family - and develops marital relationships, including the right to a survivor's pension, inheritance, etc. The obligation of solidarity no longer exists between the families of origin, which represents an element of dissolution of the traditional family facing the postmodern family - based on serial monogamy (marriage is no longer a life-long guarantee for the couple).

Considering the transition to the postmodern family, based on individualism potentiated by the choice of a matrimonial regime, the wedding loses its exclusively ritual character, the spiritual elements gaining a character of peripheral centrality in front of the dandy event, much more suited to the entertainment society, as postmodern society is defined. The function of the wedding performance leads to the reinterpretation of the whole ceremonial, which no longer evolves around the ritual religious spiritual element, but the elements of symbolic agape. The center of gravity of the whole event is represented by the party, which is no longer *occasioned* by the spiritual event of the marriage, but which includes it as a preliminary ritual. If in the traditional societies, the party that accompanied the wedding

itself had a ritualistic character, being a reiteration of the pre-Christian banquets, the post-modern wedding - when transformed into a mundane event - can take on an orgiastic dimension, at the level of an exaggerated consumption of food and alcoholic drinks.

In the wedding planning industry, a number of categories of professionals are defined, each of them being specialized in one or another of the activities. They act either alone, if they work as an authorized person, or in a team, within a larger event planning company.

The event planner generally offers planning services for any type of events, including corporate, social, non-profit or private events - including wedding planning. An event organizer can participate in the organization of weddings, but has a broader specialization, being able to successfully organize any type of events. The wedding organizer, on the other hand, specializes only in this type of event.

A distinct category of wedding organizers are those who call themselves *wedding coordinators*. This type of organizers are rather facilitators of the event, being employees of the accommodation and public catering units where the wedding takes place, but also of event organizing companies, having the role of making sure that the wedding is in accordance with the rules specific to the location where the wedding takes place. These wedding coordinators usually act in contrast to the wedding organizers, because they represent the interests of the venue and thus supervise not only the wedding, but also the event organizing company. The wedding coordinator - or in general the event coordinator from the company that ensures the location of the event - is involved in location planning, the menu, the decorations and the program.

The wedding organizer, on the other hand, represents the bride and groom, having a service contract signed with them and aiming to ensure that their ideas and desires are met as much as possible. In order to accomplish this, he carries out an activity of information and evaluation of the wedding organization's needs, including considering the personality of the grooms, parents, nieces, bridesmaids and knights of honor and other guests, in order to best determine the activities within the wedding.

The wedding organizer involved in destination management (destination wedding planner) - is involved in organizing weddings in special locations, located away from the bride and groom's current address, which require particular logistics for organizing. Generally, these weddings last for several days and include, besides the party, tourist elements specific to the location where it takes place: the organization of weddings in mountain resorts, with the visit of the surroundings, but also the organization of exotic

weddings in tourist destinations such as in the Caribbean, Hawaii or India. This type of wedding planner also offers tourist agency services, including reservations of means of transportation, airplanes, car rentals, hotel room reservations, tour guide, etc. Weddings can also be organized within special destinations such as luxury cruises, having wedding guests embark on special vessels that offer such cruises. In this case, the wedding organizer has the status of intermediary between the beneficiaries and the shipping company.

The event designer is the professional who designs the development of the event and the activities, establishing if necessary, the theme of the wedding and its concept, the surprise events, but also the general elements of setting up and organizing the room, the decorative design, the flowers, etc.

The coordinator of the wedding day is the professional hired by the grooms to deal with the reception of guests, their accommodation, identification of their preferences and prompt response to requests. This endorser can be hired directly by the brides or may be subordinate to the wedding organizer as part of the organizing team (Lewis, n.d.).

Identifying opinions on the wedding planning. Micro-research

The pilot research is an exploratory one, with the *objective* of identifying a number of particularities of the social construction of the profession of wedding planner from the perspective of analyzing the discourse of people who participated as grooms in organizing their own wedding, but also of some unmarried people who are in a position to design their own wedding, being in various stages of organizing it.

The micro-research starts from three hypotheses, which it does not intend to validate effectively, due to the exploratory nature of the research and the small size of the sample, but only to draw an image regarding the plausibility of the hypotheses for the situation of the organization of private events - weddings - in our country.

The micro-research hypotheses:

1. The wedding planning is still, in Romania, generally a private event.
2. Its transformation into a personal *branding* event takes place only for a limited number of couples, generally coming from advantaged social media.
3. In general, the bride is the one who plays the main role in the organization of the wedding, being assisted by the groom and the in-laws.

4. The call to a *wedding planner* is still quite rare, due to the high costs of organizing the wedding.

The methodology used

For the accomplishment of the micro-research, a methodological mix was used with an important qualitative component, based on a semi-structured interview, applied to a number of three former brides and who were asked to relate a series of elements regarding the ways of organizing the wedding, the involvement of the various categories of wedding participants - the bride, groom, in-laws, nieces and wedding planner if applicable. They were also asked to describe how relationships between grooms and other categories of wedding attendees evolved, to see if the wedding was intended to create a personal *branding* of the couple and whether or not this was successful. Also, information was requested regarding the most difficult aspects encountered in organizing the wedding.

Starting from the data collected from the analysis of the interviews, a questionnaire was developed that contains both closed and open questions, on the same thematic area as the interviews.

The sample

The sampling used was one of opportunity, questioning a number of 44 people between the ages of 18 and 45, of which 31 were female and 13 were male. Of these, 29 people are unmarried but are in various stages of preparing their own wedding, while 15 people are already married and have had the wedding sometime in the last 5 years. The persons surveyed were students, in one of the specialties in the socio-human fields, from a public university in the N.E. of Romania.

From the point of view of income, 10 people have an income of less than 1500 lei / month, 22 people have an income between 1500 - 3000 lei / month and 15 people have an income of more than 3000 lei / month respectively.

Data interpretation

The analysis of the quantitative results will be presented in a descriptive - narrative manner, along with the actual data obtained also being presented a series of analyzes of the qualitative data, obtained from the three interviews, in order to create a true picture of the phenomenon.

- People involved in the organization of the wedding

Of the people who have already organized the wedding, only 21% resorted to the services of a wedding planner, while 79% did not resort to the services of this professional category, the respective persons declaring that they preferred to organize their wedding alone, for reasons of saving money.

On the other hand, of those who have not yet had the wedding, the proportion of those who plan to use a *wedding planner* is equal to those who do not want it. We consider that this may be due to the fact that, on the one hand, the profession of wedding planner has become more known and accepted socially, and with the development of this profession - and the costs of these services have decreased, making them accessible to a larger category of future grooms.

Regarding the involvement of the grooms in the organization of the wedding, the bride is the one who is in charge of organizing this event, in the case of 62% of couples, the groom in 28% of situations, sisters-in-law in 7% of cases, and godparents in 3% of cases. In general, the persons surveyed stated that the predominant role in the organization of the wedding belonged to the bride, being obviously a traditional influence in expressing the roles in the conjugal couple, the woman being the "organizer of the house", but she consults with the future husband regarding the essential elements of the organization of the event and, in general, the functioning of the marital couple.

In the case of those who are about to have the wedding, the projection of the participation of the two grooms in organizing the event is closer to equality, with a slight increase of the perception regarding the role of the bride in the organization, 43% of the respondents indicating that the bride will be the one who will handle the planning, while the groom is seen by 39% of the respondents as the person who will handle the planning.

The participation of the in-laws and the religious symbolic parents is seen in the same way as by those in the weddings that have already taken place - that is, in 11%, respectively 17% of the situations.

The interviewees appreciated that:

I contacted the wedding organizer, who handled floral arrangements, invitations, bouquets, location decor, the protocol at the civil ceremony. Separately I rented the hall and chose the menus. At the church we discussed separately. The family was little involved in the organizing. The civil ceremony took place 24 hours before the religious one and the wedding. The mother-in-law organized a festive meal for guests from other cities who also came to the civil ceremony. (I1)

The bride and groom organized themselves. The parents did not attend. Neither did the symbolic parents. I called in the specialists. It was simpler and faster. For one or two minor issues, I called friends. (I1)

My mother helped me with the organization of the wedding. Being a chubbier person, I didn't have many options regarding the wedding dress. I had a choice of 3 models. The first model tried was the winner. (I3)

The groom was not extremely involved .. he was the driver for the bride. He allowed me to make all the decisions, trusting me (I3).

The spiritual parents didn't get involved at all. We were told this from the beginning, because one of the spiritual mothers had just had a baby, and her husband as a coach had many trips. And the other pair owns several restaurants and they did not have time (I3).

My parents were very involved, they were responsible for the financial part. The groom's parents did not get involved at all. My in-laws had separated when my husband was 7 years old. My mother-in-law passed away 5 years ago, and my father-in-law has 3 other children from the second marriage. He was there at the wedding but did not get involved in the organizing (I3).

As for the spiritual parents, we both decided. We had 2 pairs of spiritual parents, one from his side, the other from mine. The parents on his side were his brother and sister-in-law, because they were Orthodox, the other relatives being from another confession. The parents on my part were the people I saw as a model in life (I2)

We did not have bridesmaids or best men because, as I mentioned earlier, we wanted the wedding to be simple. In addition, we did not have much time for preparation because the decision for us to marry was taken in haste (I2)

I made the wedding bouquet myself, I chose the dress and the veil alone, instead I hired a professional photographer. However, at that time I had a professional camera and I found that the photos taken by my husband's nephew turned out to be more professional than those of the "professional" photographer (I2).

Yes, because as I said, the restaurant belonged to my cousin and was not intended for large events. The capacity was about 60 people, and we were around 40 people at the civil union. Only my parents and spiritual parents attended the religious ceremony. We didn't go to the restaurant. It was just a meal that took place at my parents' house (I2)

From our point of view, the data show that the modern family is generally involved in organizing important events of their own lives, the

wedding being the official debut of the couple's life, which is why the importance of other categories of people - especially the in-laws but also the grandchildren - is diminished with the decline of the traditional multinucleous and multigenerational family. In-laws and spiritual parents are still a support for married young people, but in-laws in particular lose the central role of *pater familiae*, with the dissolution of the model of organic solidarity.

The interviewees stated that:

When I tried it (the dress) on, I felt it was the chosen one. The location for the party I wanted it very much because it is an elegant place with a very large room. The church I chose was relatively easy, being a Catholic, I chose to hold the ceremony in this church. Everything on the floral side I just wanted to be in shades of pink and purple. Otherwise, the lady was busy with the arrangements. For the role of spiritual parents, we chose our best friends, because we found it to be the best option. And for best men and bridesmaids, we followed the same principle. (I3)

The wedding dress was purchased from a bridal fair. I went and picked it up with the groom, the in-laws and the other mother-in-law. We chose the best option in the price-quality ratio. The bride's bouquet and everything related to the floral arrangements were chosen based on the catalog, at the advice of the wedding organizer. The location for the wedding party was relatively easy to choose. the options were few, compared to the type of room desired (elegant and experienced in the hosting of weddings), so out of 3 or 4 options, I chose the one where I knew someone working there, an aspect that could increase our degree of trust that they will take care of the wedding. The church was chosen so that guests from other locations could easily find it, and I also wanted a church with a high quality choir. (I1)

The wedding was organized in about 3 days, 6 months before the actual date. In the 3 days, I paid the advance for the location, music and photographer & videographer. Then, it was easy to seal the contract with the company dealing with the cakes, the floral arrangements. In April I bought my wedding dress and all the necessary accessories. In the last week I bought the drink, the testimonies, the fruits. (I3).

We got married civilly on August 7, 2011 and the religious ceremony was a week later. Nobody helped me, but my cousin has a catering company and a restaurant. After the civil ceremony ended, we went to the restaurant (40 persons). I chose the menu (I2)

I knew beforehand where I wanted to get married: the church and the priest. The choice was mine because of the close connection I had with the priest who was also a spiritual minister. (I2)

The difference between the perceived involvement of the grooms (in the case of already married couples) with the estimated one (in the case of the couples to be married) can be accounted for by partial dissolutions of gender stereotypes and establishing the balance of power and responsibilities within the marital family. This, however, is valid at the projected level, but the real balance is rather in the sense of an unequal distribution of status-roles between man and woman in the marital couple.

The main problems highlighted in the wedding planning

Regarding the problems encountered in the organization of the wedding, the respondents had the opportunity to present them by answering an open question, the following being highlighted:

- Waiting period for location reservation;
- Wedding costs - including the risk of remaining in debt and staggering payments for the location and music;
- Finding the restaurant / choosing the location;
- The large volume of participants and the difficulty of arranging them at the tables;
- Selecting the participants and sending them invitations;
- The small number of participants compared to the initial responses to the invitation.

From the perspective of the interviewed persons, the biggest problem in organizing the wedding was:

The frivolity of the guests regarding the confirmation of attendance. (I1)

Distance between locations. We got married in Falticeni and the party took place in Rădăuți. At that time I did not know the city and did not know how to guide those who came from the Transylvanian area, that is my husband's relatives. At one point because of the traffic we lost each other and I could not figure out where I was ... (I2)

- How long before the wedding did the preparations begin and what did they state?

We started preparations 2 weeks before the wedding. The documents that we had to submit to the town hall and the medical examinations lasted the most. (I2)

- and did you find the location for the wedding in such a short time?

Another aspect that took us a long time was the search for the right outfit. The civil and the religious ceremony did not take place at the same time, so I had to wear different outfits. The wedding dress was a real adventure. (I2)

The actual number of guests. I invited 450 people. Most of them said that they would come, that they were happy for us, that they wouldn't miss our wedding. But ... when the time came for confirmations ... I reached 160 guests (I3)

Perception of the ideal wedding

As the main argument used in promoting the business of wedding organizers is the organization of a "dream wedding", a question in the questionnaire addressed how the respondents imagined their own wedding when they were 18 years old. Most respondents stated that at the age of 18 they imagined their wedding to be "out of a fairy-tale" - 33% of them, 27% of the respondents did not imagine their own wedding in any way, 20% indicated that the dream wedding was very close to the one they actually had, 13% imagined it to be great fun, and another 7% imagined it to be like on the big screens.

Respondents who have not yet actually organized their wedding added a series of responses such as:

- Hard to organize;
- Small, by the ocean shore;
- The most grandious, but at the same time restricted;
- A beautiful and simple event, the dress costing the most;
- Perfect;
- Delightful as in stories;
- Dress with 5 meters train;
- Small ceremony and large party.

The image of the dream wedding remains archetypal, although unlike other cultural spaces, in the Romanian one there is a higher degree of rejection of the imaginary - regarding the wedding - possibly due to fears of failure for different reasons - personal, financial, etc. - situation in which people prefer not to imagine the event at all. In addition, the Romanian collective imaginary is not so impregnated by the archetype of the wedding as that of the religious marriage and not so much the charm of the wedding

as the beauty of the couple's life. In the Romanian spirituality, the wedding has a dual symbolism related both to the exuberance of the couple's life and to the transfiguration of death: "that at my wedding / a star has fallen" (Ballad of Miorița).

As for how the interviewees declare that they have imagined their own wedding:

Like in the stories. With 500 participants and a groom who waltzed flawlessly (the groom, in fact, had no idea how to dance, but made efforts). (I1)

I think I always saw myself dressed in a wedding dress ... I never saw my wedding and never thought about it (I1)

An elegant, simple, Catholic-style wedding (I1)

I find the weddings pretty busy nowadays ... too many flowers, too many people, too many facade elements that in the end and after all do not bring anything ... go on the premise less means more

And I think I would like a themed wedding (I1)

At 18, I imagined a completely different wedding. I imagined an extremely large, luxurious, colorful wedding. I figured I'd have about 5-6 pairs of spiritual parents, 10-12 bridesmaids and best men. The wedding was totally opposite to what we dreamed of at 18 (I3)

but at the same time it was an elegant wedding. I feel that I have matured quite a lot and that is why my desires have changed in the meantime (I3)

The image of the wedding in the collective mind is strong enough to allow the emergence and development of a true wedding industry, especially under the impact of globalizing the reception of Hollywood movies.

Wedding invitations

As for wedding guests, they generally come from relatives (48%) and friends - especially close friends (45%) and persons to whom the grooms have obligations (7%). In the face of this structure of the guests we appreciate that although there is no clear intention of the grooms to use the wedding as a personal branding opportunity, this is implicit, as it leads to the improvement of the relationships within the family and the group of friends, but also "creating and solving reciprocity relationships". The wedding thus becomes a private event, but which exposes the couple to a wide interaction in order to create and maintain the sociability of the new family.

In this sense, the answers of the persons who are going to have the wedding can be interpreted, which besides the family and friends, introduce among the expected guests the following categories of persons:

- Those with whom they are in different relationships;
- People who invited at least one of the grooms to their wedding;
- People with great influence in the society;
- Other persons to whom the grooms have obligations.

In their turn, the interviewees indicated that their own weddings were small or medium weddings as far as the number of participants is concerned:

I didn't have a big wedding. I don't think that 75 guests is a big wedding, but rather a small one. (I1)

We didn't have a big wedding. About 160 guests. I did not call a wedding planner because I wanted to deal in detail with the most beautiful moment of my life. (I3)

The decision to marry was taken in haste and according to the date available at Falticeni City Hall. What we wanted was to get married, not to make a big event. Thus, the guests were only the family and part of the relatives. I chose this option due to the fact that my sister got married in the same year, but half a month later (I2).

The criteria that underlied the choice of the persons invited to attend the wedding from the perspective of the interviewed persons

Intimate friends, relatives of all types (but to those with whom I did not have too many emotional connections, invited only to avoid discussions, I did not insist too much), close collaborators in the profession of the grooms. (I1)

The wedding is regarded as a *branding* event of the couple vis-à-vis the various categories of persons mentioned, but, as it transpires both from the questionnaire and from interviews, a significant problem in the organization of the wedding is the response rate to the wedding invitations sent by the bride and groom, which makes them ultimately rely on relatives and close friends to be able to design the wedding budget and keep track of its actual costs.

Regarding the *evolution of the relationship between the bride and groom and the other wedding guests*, they are described as:

- improved (29%)
- unchanged (71%)
- worsened (0%)

Where, during the interviews, the wedding was subsequently reported to have cooled relations with certain relatives, this was not a direct effect of the wedding, but of the evolution of the relationships within the couple.

The relations with those involved (who had roles) in everything that involves the preparation of the wedding: spiritual parents, parents, bridesmaids and best men:

The evolution of relationships between the grooms and the other participants that attended the wedding, after the event

The same relations remained with the guests. With the spiritual parents, the relationships broke for professional reasons (there was a professional collaboration relationship prior to the marriage between spiritual parents and newly weds, and when this relationship broke, the personal relationship broke). The relations between the great mother-in-law and the bride were marked by a sincere friendship until her death. The bride and groom broke off with their great-father-in-law about 6 years after the wedding. Currently, the grooms are divorced. (I1)

Relationships remained the same. Neither positive nor negative changes occurred (I3)

The mother-in-law easily accepted all aspects of her role. The great in-laws were somewhat more reluctant to the demands of caring for the label, imposed especially by the bride, in relation to the social categories of the wedding guests, but considering that the grooms were the ones who paid in full the wedding expenses, in the end, the great in-laws conceded in the face of rational arguments. The spiritual parents imposed an atmosphere of relief and joy. So did the bridesmaid and the best man. (I1)

Expectations from the wedding planner

Regarding the expectations that the couple had / have for future wedding, from the wedding planner services, they are aimed at:

- making and / or sending wedding invitations (14%);
- receiving guests and taking care of their accommodation (14%);
- choosing the wedding menu (21%);
- choosing the wedding dress and the groom's costume (10%);
- purchase of food and beverages for the wedding (15%);
- contact with the restaurant (12%);
- the relationship with the person / company that takes the photographs / video recordings (14%);

An interviewee shows that:

to choose the location I want, and the range of colors for the wedding to be pink-purple (nipes, flowers, chair covers, lights). I think this wedding planner is the ideal option for busy people. For those who have time, I advise them to organize

their wedding alone, because they are such emotions and such a pleasant agitation.
(13)

Conclusions

The micro-research has allowed us to reach the following conclusions:

- the preponderance of the female gender was highlighted among the persons involved in the organization of weddings;
- there was increased option for collaborating with a wedding organizer among those who will organize their wedding in the future, correlated with a small number of marriages who have opted for this within their own already held wedding;

The hypothesis that the organization of the wedding remains a private event is confirmed, very few respondents integrating in the list of guests persons to whom the couple has obligations, the guests remaining in the sphere of relatives and close friends, which turn the wedding into rather a private event.

The micro-research carried out did not extend to the weddings of public persons that could be a public event, as they were not the subject of the present research.

The hypothesis that the transformation of the wedding into a personal branding event takes place for a limited number of couples is partially rejected, most of the people questioned showing that the relationship of the bride and groom with the other guests after the wedding either improved or remained in the same parameters.

The hypothesis according to which the bride plays the main role in the organization of the wedding was confirmed for the already married couples, but there was a tendency to balance the intention to participate in the organization of the wedding between the two spouses - for the respondents who are about to organize their wedding.

The hypothesis that calling a professional wedding organizer is rarely met is partially confirmed, being valid for the respondents who have already organized their own wedding, but among those who are going to organize it in the future - the number of those who consider that they will call on a professional is growing.

References

- Apetrei, C. N. (2009). Reședințele boierești din Țara Românească și Moldova în secolele XIV-XVI [The boyar residences from the Romanian Country and Moldova in the XIV-XVI centuries], Brăila, Romania: Istros.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.
- Blakely, K. (2008). Busy Brides and the Business of Family Life: The Wedding-Planning Industry and the Commodity Frontier. *Journal of Family Issues*, 29(5), 639–662. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X07309453>
- Cheal, D. (1988). The Ritualization of Family Ties. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 31(6), 632–643. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764288031006003>
- Debord, G. (1995). *The society of the spectacle*. New York, New York: Zone Books.
- Fraser, N. (1989). *Unruly practices: Power, discourse, and gender in contemporary social theory*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Habermas, J. (2015). *The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and Systems, a Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Vol. 2) (Trans. T. McCarthy). New Jersey, United States: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hochschild, A. (2003). *The commercialization of intimate life: Notes from home and work*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press
- Ingraham, C. (1999). *White weddings: Romancing heterosexuality in popular culture*. New York, New York: Routledge.
- Lewis, V.A. (n.d.) *Wedding Planning As a Career, Discovering if Wedding Planning is the Right Career for you and How to Get Started*. Retrieved from https://s3.amazonaws.com/kajabi-storefronts-production/sites/5606/themes/266240/downloads/3ejMrn1CQjitzkXMBvqD_Wedding_Planning_As_A_Career.pdf
- Otnes, C., & Pleck, E. H. (2003). *Cinderella dreams: The allure of the lavish wedding*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Perry, A. (2006). Letter From New Delhi: Land of the Wedding Planners. *TIME magazine*. Retrieved from <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1161223,00.html>
- Ramsborg, G.C., Miller, B., Breiter, D., Reed, B.J. & Rushing, A. (eds). (2008). *Professional meeting management: Comprehensive strategies for meetings, conventions and events* (5th ed.) Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.
- Snieszek, T. (2005). Is It Our Day or the Bride's Day? The Division of Wedding Labor and Its Meaning for Couples. *Qualitative Sociology*, 28(3): 215–234. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-005-6368-7>