

## **An Exploratory Study: Destination Weddings and India**

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### **Abstract**

A destination wedding is seemingly the most amazing trend in the history of tourism. It is also known as ‘Wedding Tourism’ or ‘Marriage Tourism’ in some contexts. We cannot ignore this trend in the tourism industry, regardless of how one treats the situation. One of the nations that benefit from this wonderful trend is India. All Indian weddings, with all of their customary ceremonies and fascinating locations, are becoming increasingly popular among NRIs and foreigners. The already lucrative Indian wedding market generates around INR 50,000 Crores annually, with about a 25 percent annual growth rate, and is looking for partnerships with top hotels and travel agencies to court this expanding market. We cannot disregard this sector, despite the fact that it is challenging to locate exact information and figures about the tourist industry in India. This paper makes an effort to comprehend the idea of a destination wedding. The study looks at potential causes for its rise in popularity as well as how it has helped the tourism, hotel, and related industries, such as wedding resorts, open up new business opportunities. The study comprises of the use of secondary data available on various websites, research papers, research reports, articles, and so on, for the purpose of the collection of information.

### **Keywords**

Destination wedding, Wedding tourism, Marriage tourism, Indian weddings, Indian wedding industry, and Indian destination weddings.

### **1. Introduction**

As the term implies, a destination wedding refers to a strategy of moving to another location in order to get married. A destination wedding is not a brand new idea in India. After all, it is customary for the bridegroom’s family to make the trip to the bride’s home with other family members and guests to conduct the wedding ceremony. Confusion results from the use of numerous names to describe a single mode of transportation (Crompton, 1979).

The rise of destination weddings is a result of a cultural shift in how people see the wedding ceremony as a whole. A wedding was traditionally thought of as a ceremony performed in accordance with societal norms entrenched in the

community. The discourses of society and the individual, marriage and romance, and industry and consumer, are only a few examples of the historical tensions that modern couples increasingly regard marriage as a ritual serving to reconcile. Destination weddings serve as a means of explaining how society and couples are addressing the shifting social relations and evolving social identities (Aegon Life, 2018).

In India, the Ministry of Tourism and Media refers to it as ‘Marriage Tourism’. In her remarks at International Tourism Bourse Berlin’s opening ceremony, Berlin’s tourism minister Ambika Soni brought up the word ‘Marriage Tourism’. Contrarily, in the West, going out of one’s way or abroad to get married is known as wedding tourism or destination wedding. When planning a destination wedding, the location is equally as significant as the ceremony itself. When discussing international weddings where the honeymoon also takes place, some academics have also coined the term ‘Wedding Moons’ (Das, 2022).

We all know that while marriage lasts for a lifetime, weddings only last a day. Marriage is defined as “a legal union of a man and a woman for cohabitation and frequent procreation” by the Oxford dictionary. Additionally, “the act or ceremony commemorating such collaboration” is referred to as marriage. The definition of a wedding in the Oxford dictionary is “the marriage ceremony”. Everyone uses the term ‘wedding’ and ‘marriage’ interchangeably because both are considered “ceremonies” (Baker & Cameron, 2008).

We may understand a destination wedding as a travelling activity to get married in an exotic area in a special way, regardless of the legality of this union in their home country, or hometown or the place of ceremony. Probably, for this reason, some couples choose to get married legally in their home country before or after their ideal destination wedding. Contrarily, marriage tourism would involve getting hitched in a ceremony that is recognized legally, at least in the wedding destination. Although the phrases wedding tourism or destination wedding are more closely associated with tourism, these terms as well as marriage tourism will be used interchangeably in this study (Awaritefe, 2004).

## **2. Review of the Literature**

A destination wedding is a type of wedding that occurs outside of the city or town where the soon-to-be-married couple resides. A wedding that takes place at an hour away location from the couple’s present home or a few states far is assumed as a destination wedding. Another distinguishing attribute of a destination wedding is that most or all the guests are required to travel from away of the town in order to attend the wedding ceremony (RedBarn 20, 2016).

A destination wedding is one where the ceremony is held at a location where most of the invited guests will have to travel and possibly remain for several days. This might be a straight forward ceremony at the residence of a far-off friend or family, a grandiose celebration in a city resort, or a beach ceremony in the tropics. Despite the 2009 recession, destination weddings have continued to increase as compared to traditional weddings because of the cheaper costs associated with fewer guest counts (Bhatia S., 2019).

A group of individuals who travel or leave their normal living situation to celebrate a major occasion in their life with their family and friends is known as a destination wedding. This event will bring together their origins and traditions because migration is expanding quickly these days, and weddings are essential symbols of togetherness for families of both the bride and the groom who were forced to be apart from their loved ones (Bhargava, 2020).

Any overseas journey made by a tourist to get married or celebrate their wedding can also be referred to as a destination wedding. The industry for destination weddings also caters to other occasions like honeymoons and vows renewals. The destination wedding market saw a surge of 75 percent between 2017 and 2019, which demonstrates an incredibly strong trend globally (Country Roads, 2018).

Destination weddings are regarded as a one-of-a-kind events since they are provided to clients by tourism destinations, which offer services and locations that are out of the ordinary with the primary objective of creating memorable moments. According to the Fair Child Bridal Group, only 16 percent of the couples who truly had the intention of planning a destination wedding actually were able to do so (Settheewongsakun, 2019).

The term destination wedding or wedding tourism or marriage tourism in India was first used by the then Union Tourism Minister in a speech at the International Tourism Bourse-Berlin's opening ceremony on March 7, 2007, even though the idea of a destination wedding was widely used at that time (Baker & Cameron, 2008).

India is the world's centre for religion, spirituality, and socio-culture. Indian weddings bring to mind the country's rich cultural and historical traditions. The current situation, which observes a changing trend, its nature of composition, its involvement of many socio-economic classes, its choice of high-quality services, and vendors make it a diverse tourism offering (Gupta, 2019).

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

3.1 To understand the concept of a destination weddings.

3.2 To explore the growth and development of destination weddings in India.

### **4. Research Methodology**

The research methodology involved in the present study is the descriptive literature review method. The research comprises the use of secondary data for collecting information. The researcher has studied and reviewed the literature available in relevant, research papers, articles, conference proceedings, reports, and some online sources for the conduct of the purpose of research.

### **5. Factors Relating to the Choice of Destination Weddings**

Every famous event and often-asked question in the modern world may be found online. The internet has developed into a goldmine of knowledge about destination wedding-related activities. Numerous forums and DIY/self-help websites, like [www.ultimatewedding.com](http://www.ultimatewedding.com) and offers, offer guidance to couples planning their destination wedding. Below are a few intriguing questions and their responses (Destify, 2017).

Why opt for destination wedding? It provides an opportunity for creativity and fewer extra-curricular activities before and after marriage.

How to choose a location? Either a brand-new location or a well-liked vacation spot for families is generally chosen as a wedding destination.

Which legal issues are to be considered? How to get a marriage registered according to the norms of the destination.

How many visitors? Whether the wedding is small and cozy or vast and opulent, it is necessary to make the plans for transportation and lodging, as well as expected visitor numbers.

What are the activities for visitors? Some sort of entertainment for all the visitors, as done in the traditional wedding ceremonies as it will be a new location, which every visitor would love to explore.

The questions listed above provide a general sense of the wants and requirements of the couples travelling to a location to get married. We also need to comprehend the reason behind this recent development, especially in light of the amount of attention destination wedding is generating. The following is a discussion of some of the potential factors for the rising popularity:

### **5.1.Exotic Wedding Traditions**

Exotic wedding customs and traditions draw guests from afar. Going to a place like Hawaii, where one can get married on a private beach while wearing flip flops, makes the wedding less formal and more laid back. Numerous people travel to India to marry in accordance with Hindu traditions in cities like Jaipur, Rajasthan, Pushkar, Rishikesh, Udaipur ad so on. Essentially, these weddings are for NRI couples or foreigners who are willing to experience Indian wedding and marital customs in order to be blessed with a happy married life (Dreamz wedding planner, 2019).

### **5.2.Unique Experience**

The most daring couples prefer to exchange their vows in remarkable ways in special locations while engaged in an activity they both love, getting married underwater, in a hot air balloon, while skydiving, bungee jumping, or any of the extreme sports described above (Booking.com, 2019).

### **5.3.Legal Considerations**

The location's rules also encourage couples to get married somewhere other than their home. This is particularly valid for same-sex weddings. Only a small number of nations worldwide allow and accept same-sex relationships, and even fewer allow them to legally wed and enjoy the rights of a married couple (Bhargava, 2020).

### **5.4.Expenses**

Cost is a key consideration when choosing a destination wedding. Over a western style wedding, some places are more affordable than others. In a country like India, a sit-down wedding is almost five times less expensive compared to the USA. If the bride and groom stay there for a predetermined number of nights, especially all inclusive wedding resorts are less expensive and offer the wedding ceremony free of charge. In rare circumstances, the package even includes the wedding reception party (Country Roads, 2018).

## **6. Destination Weddings and Scope of India**

Both NRIs and foreign tourists already find Indian weddings to be quite appealing. Some international visitors think that participating in the revered Hindu marriage ceremonies will make their union continue longer. A few pages on the Ministry of Tourism website are devoted to the diverse Indian wedding rites and ceremonies, appealing to wedding travelers. During the International Tourism Fair in Berlin, the Ministry of Tourism even stages a mock Indian wedding in a unique mandap decorated with flowers for a willing German couple in order to market India as a destination for weddings (Desai, 2020).

Royal weddings are being offered by tour operators and event management firms in places like Udaipur, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Jaipur, and so on. At the same time, many tourists continue to enjoy visiting the holy city of Pushkar. The marriage of British actress and model Liz Hurley and her Indian fiancé Arun Nayar in March 2007 at the Umaid Bhavan Palace Hotel in Udaipur, followed by two additional functions in Rajasthan, one at the Hotel Lalsamand Palace, located 5 kilometres away from Umaid Bhavan, and the other at the 4<sup>th</sup> century Nagaur Fort, increased demand for Rajasthan as a wedding destination (Kassean & Gassita, 2013).

Numerous superstars from the Mumbai film industry have also wed in the stunning palaces of Rajasthan, Jaipur, and Jodhpur. The accommodations, accessibility, and transit options at these locations may be the cause of their appeal. Numerous historic hotels in all price ranges provide a wide selection of options for destination weddings. While Jaipur and Jodhpur are less expensive, Udaipur offers accommodation for roughly INR 20,000 per person per night. Goa is another well-liked location, as might be expected. The affordability of Goa is what makes it so popular. Goa is also less expensive than Rajasthan in terms of price (Settheewongsakun, 2019)

Apart from the wedding destinations in these states, there are beautiful wedding locations in Madhya Pradesh including Orchha and Bhopal. In the North including Jammu, Rishikesh, and many more. In the South including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Hyderabad, and so on. The Principal Secretary of Kerala Tourism already marketed Kerala abroad as an exotic location for nuptials and Munnar as a honeymoon destination because the state of Kerala's stunning landscapes are in such high demand for wedding tourism. Both Indians and NRIs are becoming more and more enamoured with Sahara's Ambi Valley and Mahabaleshwar (Bhatia A., 2013)

India's tourism industry would undoubtedly benefit from its prominence as a travel destination. The maximum ratio of foreign guests to Indian guests at an NRI wedding is typically 7:3. Additionally, a wedding in India often costs between INR 5 lakhs to INR 10 lakhs. There are many opportunities for the destination wedding industry to prosper as a result. On the Gurgaon-Sohna road, the Omaxe Construction Company has built a mall specifically for Indian weddings. Both domestic customers and wedding tourists are served by this. All wedding-related services, with the exception of lodging, is offered by this theme mall, including clothes, jewellery, entertainment, beverages, wedding planning, tour operators, and others. There is a requirement for India to be observed as one of the major global wedding destinations including the United States, Caribbean and Europe (Donnellan, 2016).

## 7. Conclusion

A Destination wedding is no doubt one of the most recent trends in the tourism sector, and we must move quickly to optimize India's chance in the global context. There are several stories and media pieces on this phenomenon, but there are no precise statistics available regarding the wedding industry or the potential earnings from destination weddings in India.

The middle class in India still finds it difficult to embrace the idea of entrusting a wedding planner with the planning of a family wedding. We have a large number of event management businesses and wedding companies that handle destination weddings in India and work mostly with foreign visitors. The necessity of the hour is to strengthen the ties between the wedding industry and the travel and tourism sector. In addition to helping western tourists grasp the significance of many customs, explaining the Indian marriage ritual will help them feel as though they understand the wedding ceremony. The traditions surrounding marriage that are specific to each section of the nation would further broaden the potential for destination weddings in India by allowing couples to create their ideal wedding by combining the many rituals, traditions, and wedding attire from other places.

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