



ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Role of Instagram in Promoting Extravagant Wedding Trends: An Analysis of Social Pressures on the Middle Class

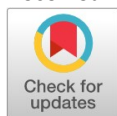
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Abstract— Instagram is the most important platform for the advertisement of marriage events. People become more prone to sharing everything on their Instagram accounts, from personal to public. Wedding ceremonies are expanding in society, and every class tries to follow these patterns regardless of their economic condition. The study was conducted to find out the role of Instagram in promoting extravagant wedding trends among the middle-class young adults of Lahore it aimed to analyze the social pressures endured by middle-class parents due to the promotion of these trends. A triangulation methodology was opted to observe the consumption patterns of Instagram among the young adults through the survey method; in contrast, semi-structured interviews were conducted to analyze the kind of pressures faced by the parents of young adults. A sample of 300 respondents was selected through purposive sampling in the survey method. For Interviews, a sample of 6 parents was selected through the snowball sampling method. Hegemony and uses and Gratification theories as theoretical frameworks helped to develop narratives on the issues. The study concluded that Instagram consumption promotes extravagant wedding trends among young adults and increases social, financial and mental pressures on parents. This study is significant in the current scenario as the wedding ceremonies are expanding in every society, and every class tries to follow these patterns regardless of their economic condition. The study investigates the role of Instagram in promoting extravagant wedding trends and also discusses the pressures endured by the middle class.

Index Terms— Instagram, Consumption Patterns, Extravagant Wedding Trends, Social Pressures, Middle Class

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Introduction

Social media has a great influence on its users and creates trends for all kinds of occasions. Specifically, marriage ceremonies are becoming a big industry through social media. Whether it is about the florist, floor decorations, venues, wedding caterers, bands, it is social media that creates a link between the couples and the companies. People are just connected and linked together through social media and just one click away from any happening and information around them (Micmohen, 2018). The new advancements in social media are now changing the way of wedding ceremonies. It is also created, recreated and formulated a new concept on how a wedding should have happened (Daniels & Wosicki, 2020). It is mainly observed as to how media influenced the people in planning, creating and giving meaning to weddings. There are lots of marriage-related posts on Instagram every day, and the best way to collect these posts is through hashtags. The lavish weddings on Instagram have millions of views and posts that determine the popularity of the wedding ceremonies among the

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public. The users of social media access these events through hashtags. It might be a strong motivating factor for using Instagram to have as many followers as possible (Marwick, 2015). According to a study by Anderson, Jiang, et al. (2018), teenagers are more prone to Instagram and Snapchat which are based on images and videos. The study showed that Instagram has become gradually popular among teenagers, 72% of the respondents reported consuming the site, whereas just 51% use Facebook (Anderson et al., 2018).

There are many marriage-related posts on Instagram every day, and the best way to collect these posts is through hashtags. Pakistan, a developing country, is facing inflation, poverty, and economic instability. Despite all these issues, societal pressures force the middle class to follow these wedding trends, and there is no counter dialogue and resistance. Huge and expanded marriages are now in trend, and those who cannot afford an extravagant wedding are forced to do that, ultimately resulting in economic challenges.

Objectives of the study

The primary objectives of this research are

- To analyze the consumption patterns of Instagram among the middle class of Lahore
- To know how Instagram is influencing the decisions of the middle class taken during the wedding planning
- To investigate the nature of social pressures on the middle class and how they handle them

Research gap

The review of available literature identified the gap that there is a body of literature available on weddings, their rituals and wedding as a business industry, but the role of social media in this regard is missing. Considering this gap, the present study investigated the role of Instagram in creating wedding trends. It has also been identified that little attention has been given to the fact that how the consumption of Instagram has influenced middle-class consumers when they are exposed to extravagant wedding trends. The research study focused on the following questions:

Research questions

- Does Instagram play a role in promoting extravagant wedding trends?
- What are the social pressures that force the middle class to follow extravagant wedding trends on Instagram?
- Does Middle-class decisions are influenced by Instagram during the wedding planning process?
- Does the consumption of Instagram create a hegemonic culture among the middle class by promoting extravagant wedding trends?
- Does the consumption of Instagram impart social pressures on the middle class with reference to wedding trends?

Review of Literature

Social media refers to the mobile or network-based application, which supports creating, exchanging, and accessing user-generated content among members (Chen, Fan, & Sun, 2019). Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Instagram are the most popular social media applications. Social media applications help business operations and marketing (Wang, Lin, & Choi, 2020). The use of social media among the business industries is increasing and trending. The decision of different social media applications to the enterprise are influenced by the popularity of the specific social media application in the market (S. Z. Ahmad, Ahmad, & Bakar, 2018). Social media is not only benefiting the industries, but the individuals are also gaining benefits (Scholtz, Calitz, & Tlebere, 2017).

The marriage industries are uprising their businesses as the extravagant trends are increasing (A. Ahmad, 2013). The marriage industries are commercially sensitive Kalmijn (2004). Weddings are always remembered because of the dramatization of big fat culture and values. Big fat weddings mostly signified one's status and money in society. A person devotes his one-fifth of whole life wealth to his wedding (Bhandari, 2017). The middle-class and young generation also fueled the growth of the wedding industry and became one of the reasons for the expansion of these wedding trends. The wedding industry integrates with other sub-industries and vendors such as caterers, wedding planners, dress designers, venue, salon, light, and decorations (Bundhun, 2016). Currie (1993) stated that people spend their whole lives savings on wedding preparations included expensive dresses, functions to make it memorable, but the reality is in an effort to make their day big, they forget even they don't have any idea about how long this marriage will run. The concept of creating a perfect bridal look also creates dominance and forces the brides through different programs that how perfect and ideal brides should be on their big day. Hegemony is not only imposed by the state through force, but it also exists as consent in that hegemony exists not by state-imposed force but by co or agreement people follow or imposed on them by their own choice. They follow the rules proposed by other bridal media and The Knot. Fear of leading to an imperfect look or a failure of perfect marriage leads to conformity, which basically bridals follow the rules instructed by the experts (Engstrom, 2008).

The wedding trends bring in the culture and identities where one group or class is merged into another Leeds-Hurwitz (2002). The wedding trends are not on commercial but also involve transcultural influences that reflect the 'anxieties' of the era Jung-Kim (2008). Extravagant weddings trends are very popular and highly promoted by the upper class. The upper class used their financial means and made their weddings extravagant and put the pictures and hashtags on Instagram. It set the trend for Middle and Lower-class people who can't afford them and still try to follow their paths. The wedding occasions and celebrations are the arena of class distinction Pauli (2013). The marriage occasions are now becoming a way of showing family wealth and status in society and representing rich and wealthy people in a short display of wasteful resources (Qadeer, 2006). Huge and expanded marriages are now in a trend these days, and unluckily who cannot afford it still wish to fulfill it, and it weakens their economic situation even more. An occasion like a wedding should be celebrated with love, happiness and joy, but unfortunately, it ranked 7th amongst the 43rd most traumatic life occasion (Cramer & Lafreniere, 2003). Upper or elite classes are taking part in setting extravagant/Lavish wedding trends and creating several problems for the people who can't afford such lavishness. The middle and lower class people dedicate their entire life just to saving money for their children's weddings and think before using a penny on themselves. Their entire life goes under the stress of maintaining their status in society and meeting society's values and traditions (Sidhwa, 2008). The wedding coverage of media has strong influences on youngsters expectations (Ackerman, 2015).

Pakistan is an under developing country, is facing numerous economic trials. There are a lot of factors involved in it. Intricate expenditures on wedding ceremonies are factors that affected the economy. Money is spent rashly on these matrimonial ceremonies, including elaborated meals, expensive/branded clothing, decoration of houses, street, marriage halls, etc. In Pakistan, Marriage is taken as an important event of life (Khan & Haider, 2020)

Based on the literature, the study hypothesizes the following:

H_1 : The consumption of Instagram is promoting extravagant wedding trends among the middle class.

H_2 : The consumption of Instagram is imparting social pressures on the middle class with reference to wedding trends.

Theoretical framework

Hegemony and Uses and Gratification theory has been used in this study. These theories define the reasons behind the promotion of these extravagant wedding trends as well as how people gratify their needs by using Instagram. The upper class set a hegemonic culture through social media by controlling the thinking of subordinate class and giving them an ideology that this is the way to celebrate a marriage and share it in society as Common sense. Through using ideas and different techniques, they captivate the public that it is the reality and to maintain their status; people have to follow such trends (Gramsci, 2007). Due to the advancement of media and technology, people consume media and use media to generate and regenerate their concept and ideas and share it with other people through social networking sites and other platforms (Pierson, 2008). Audiences are highly using Instagram to create their big day highlights, share and take participate in online communication about wedding trends. They on their own will share their wedding albums, even their single move on SNS sites. Consumers consume it for their own satisfaction; they take the screenshots, like and save it for their future events.

Research Methodology

A triangulation approach opted in the study. Survey and intensive interviews were applied as methods to collect the data. The survey method was opted to approach the targeted population of young adults. A sample of 300 respondents was selected through purposive sampling. For the purpose of gathering data, a questionnaire was designed on the Likert scale. The second phase of research opted for intensive interviews to focus on subjects' emotions, feelings, and motivations to understand how they think about a particular issue. Intensive interviews motivate interviewees to share their hidden opinions and perceptions about society's issue (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). The target population of interviews was middle-class parents who faced the process of marriage and bore the real expenses and pressures of their children's marriages. A Sample of six parents as subjects was chosen through snowball sampling.

Data Analysis and Results

Total of 300 respondents participated in the study. Middle-class young adults were targeted as a sample for the collection of the data through online google forms. Almost 30% of the population is male respondents, and 70% is female respondents from the total 100% population. The survey result shows that most of the people who are influenced by the consumption of Instagram have income levels between 50,000 – 90,000.

Table I
Correlation among the Variables

		COI	EWT	MCP
COI	Pearson Correlation	1	.346**	.334**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	300	300	300
EWT	Pearson Correlation	.346**	1	.591**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	300	300	300
MCP	Pearson Correlation	.334**	.591**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The H1 hypothesis is accepted because consumption of Instagram is positively correlated with the wedding trends among the middle class. As it is proved that value of r is .346 and it is highly significant with .000, 100%, so (r = .346, p < .01). The H2 hypothesis is also accepted because consumption of Instagram is positively correlated with the wedding trends among the middle class. As it is evident that value of r is .334 and it is significant with 100%, so (r = .334; p < .01)

This analysis (regression) is mostly used to check the effects of correlated variables through a scatter plot. Linear regression analysis is implied when the variables are co-related with each other. In this study, linear regression analysis is used to check the effect of variables.

Table II
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.346a	.120	.117	.58533

a. Predictors: (Constant), consumption of Instagram.

b. Dependent Variable: Extravagant trends.

ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	13.923	1	13.923	40.639	.000a
Residual	102.099	298	.343		
Total	116.023	299			

*Coefficients					
	*Unstandardized Coefficients		*Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.784	.166		16.801	.000
consumption of Instagram	.257	.040	.346	6.375	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Extravagant trends

On the above table, the value of r and r² are given. A moderate positive correlation has been witnessed from the value of r, which is 0.346. Moreover, the overall value R² .120 represents the total change of the DV and can be interpreted as an independent variable. In this case, .120 can be explained, which is very high. The adj. R square showed the value .117 that denoted the percentage of change among the variables, such as a dependent variable is 11 percent explained by the independent variable.

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict the promotion of extravagant wedding trends based on the consumption of Instagram. A significant regression equation was found (F (1,298) = 40.639, p < .000), with an R² of .120. Promotion of extravagant wedding trends prediction is equal to 2.784+.257(consumption of Instagram) when consumption of Instagram is measured. Extravagant wedding trends increased/promoted .257.

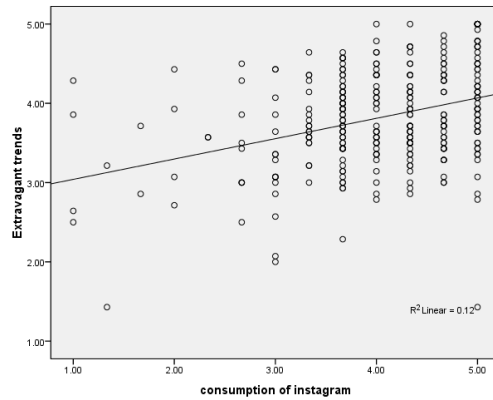


Fig. 1. Regression coefficient (Slope)

H1 hypothesis is accepted. The regression coefficient (slope) answer shows that with a 1 unit increase in an in-dependent variable (consumption of Instagram), the dependent variable also increases by 0.257.

Table III
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.334a	.111	.108	.71444

a. Predictors: (Constant), consumption of Instagram.
b. Dependent Variable: middle-class social pressures.

ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	19.064	1	19.064	37.350	.000a
Residual	152.107	298	.510		
Total	171.171	299			

a. Predictors: (Constant), consumption of Instagram.
b. Dependent Variable: middle-class social pressures.

	*Coefficients			
	*Unstandardized Coefficients		*Standardized Coefficients	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	2.917	.202		14.422
consumption of Instagram	.300	.049	.334	6.111

a. Dependent Variable: Middle-class social pressures

In the above table, the value of r and r² are given. A moderate positive correlation has been witnessed from the value of r, which is .334. Moreover, the overall value R square .111 represents the total change of the DV and can be interpreted as an in DV. The value of the adj. R square showed the value .108 that denoted the percentage of change among the variables such as a dependent variable is 11 percent described by the independent variable. A simple linear regression was calculated to predict Middle-class pressures based on consumption of Instagram. A significant regression equation was found (F (1,298) =37.350, p <.000), with an R² of .111. Middle-class pressures prediction equals 2.917+.300(consumption of Instagram) when consumption of Instagram is measured. Middle-class social pressures increased by 0.300.

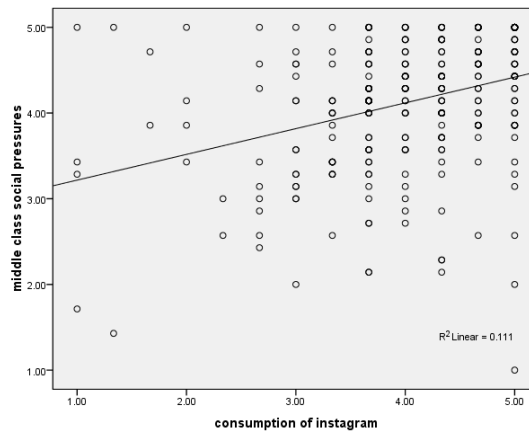


Fig. 2. Regression coefficient (Slope)

The H2 hypothesis is accepted. The regression coefficient (slope) answer shows that with a 1 unit increase in an in-dependent variable (consumption of Instagram), the dependent variable also increases by 0.300.

The results of in-depth interviews depict that majority of the parents completely agreed with this statement that Instagram is the most powerful tool that promotes extravagant wedding trends. Both father and mother highlighted Instagram as the main platform that is continuously promoting these trends among young adults.

Identified role of Instagram and the promotion of extravagant wedding trends

All of the interviewees completely agreed that Instagram is behind the promotion of these extravagant trends. Instagram is playing a very vital role in the promotion of these trends and imparting pressures through pictures, videos and urging people to follow these trends. The results also discussed that majority of the Interviewees would not come under the influence of these extravagant wedding trends that are promoted through Instagram. They clearly said that who would want to spend extravagantly on a wedding when they belonged to a mediocre class. But the minority point of view was that Instagram influences their decision of kids wedding process to some extent since kids watch trends on Instagram and will demand that they want outdoor photoshoots. But everyone has to manage things under their resources. And the fact is the rest are mothers.

Extravagant wedding trends are a symbol of happiness or pressure on parents

The interviewees were totally against spending extravagantly on weddings. The main concern was that instead of wasting this money on marriage, one should save this money for later. These savings should be invested in the couple's new life. They said we would definitely make their marriages memorable, but our goal will be to use money wisely and effectively. All of the interviewees were not in favor of taking these trends as a symbol of happiness but as a burden on parents. In their humble opinion, their point of view was that these trends were not good for society. Some of them might give happiness, but most of them seem pointless and make them depressed or shocked. According to parents, extravagant wedding trends are a wastage of resources. They are creating inferiority and superiority complex simultaneously; people are becoming more conscious of worldly things instead of thinking about their souls and spiritual lives. Anxiety and depression are also increasing to run in a race. Interviewees gave their opinion that they don't think these trends should be followed widely because that is not even what our religion preaches. Instead of preaching these trends widely, people definitely discouraged these trends by saying, "a country like ours where people don't even have basic needs, where the unemployment rate is so high, and families are hardly making their ends meet, it is totally foolish to plant seeds of such stupid trends which make lives even harder".

Kinds of pressures identified on extravagant wedding trends issue

The majority of the interviewees had a similar opinion regarding the kind of pressure they had to face during their child's wedding process. Some parents received lots of pressure because of relatives and society. They said that they had to meet some of society's expectations. They had to feel financial as well as mental pressure at the same time. They hated to say this but "what the people would think" was the biggest stress lingering in their minds and making them feel pressurized. The rest minority believed that they didn't have to face much

pressure as they knew how to spend precisely. The majority of the Interviewees were completely satisfied with their children as they said they never felt any type of pressure from their children regarding the marriage process. But the rest definitely faced a little pressure. But with communication and mutual understanding, issues were managed well.

Opinion regarding Celebrities role in the promotion of Extravagant wedding trends

Interviewees strongly agree with the fact that celebrities influence their children and play an important part in promoting these extravagant trends. According to them, kids who were immature mostly got influenced by celebrities. They tried to copy them by having the same dress, same hairstyle and even the same venue. Interviewees pointed out the positive changes occurring during the lockdown. They pointed out that lockdown has brought only this positive change for them that wedding expenses and pressures are being minimized even celebrities shadowed it and many common people are following their footsteps too.

Promotion of these trends and disturbance in the society

Interviewees were completely against the promotion of these trends as it is creating lots of disturbance and social competition in society. Their opinions were that it's not good to promote these trends in a developing country like ours. It is physically and mentally exhausting to the people. It wastes a lot of financial resources, considering the economy. Society is facing disturbance because many people are attracted to these trends, and they don't have enough resources. Robberies and kidnapping are increasing. Employees are involved in bribery to get enough money for themselves. People are not paying taxes. This country is only turning into a disastrous place and nothing else.

Identified motives behind the promotion of these trends in Pakistan

The interviewees had mixed opinions and perceptions about the motives behind the promotion of these trends. Some pointed out the fashion industries were making a profit and selling their interest; some pointed that the upper and wealthy class wanted to showcase their superiority and show off money. Most interviewees thought that the motive of promoting these trends was creating a class difference and inferiority complex among the mediocre and poor classes.

Discussion

A limited body of literature is available regarding the role of social media in promoting extravagant wedding trends. The studies tried to bridge the gap in the literature by exploring the issue. Most of the participants, both young adults and parents, highlighted Instagram in promoting extravagant wedding trends and imparting pressures on the middle class of society. Weddings have become a test for an ordinary person who saved their whole life just to make their wedding happen according to society's standards. Now marriage ceremonies have transformed from simple occasions to a display of wealth and status (Sidhwa, 2008). The marriage ceremonies have transformed into marriage industries (S. Z. Ahmad et al., 2018; Scholtz et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020). Social media applications are becoming the popular platforms for promoting the wedding industries where user-generated content is shared (Chen et al., 2019). This study explored that majority of the young adults strongly agree that Instagram is the most popular platform that is a platform to highlight and promote these extravagant wedding trends among the public. On the other side, the role also analyzed through in-depth interviews that all of the parents strongly agree that Instagram plays an important role in promoting extravagant wedding trends.

The study found that the middle class faced peer pressures, standards of ideal marriages and pressures of maintaining their status quo in society. The parents also shared similar kinds of experiences as some parents received lots of pressure because of relatives and society. Adults reported that they forced their parents to organize extravagant weddings while the majority of parents revealed they didn't bear any sort of pressure from their children. The new advancements in social media are now changing the way of how a wedding should be designed; it created, recreated and formulated a new concept of how a wedding should be happening (Daniels & Wosicki, 2020). It is mainly pointed out towards how media influence the people in both plannings and creating as well as give meaning to the wedding. The majority of the adults get influenced by the posts of celebrities and their friends. A moderate percentage of people give a neutral response, whereas many people deny it. The majority of the adults agreed that they get motivated to purchase branded clothes for their wedding after seeing the posts on Instagram. The majority of adults admire these latest additions in wedding events (shendi, Qawali nights, bridal shower, bachelor party, shalima, party themes). And a moderate number of young adults revealed they followed these extravagant trends in the wedding (destination wedding, Parties, themes, modern cuisines). Parents strongly agreed with the fact that celebrities post influenced their children and played an important part in promoting these extravagant trends.

Extravagant weddings trends are very popular and highly promoted by the upper class. The upper class used their financial means, made their weddings extravagant, put the pictures and hashtags on Instagram, and set a trend for middle and lower-class people who can't afford them and still try to follow their paths. Many people spend more time planning the wedding than they do planning the marriage.

The elite class is creating a hegemonic culture by the promotion of these extravagant trends on Instagram and making trends natural and taken for granted for the consumers. The consumption of Instagram makes people more beauty-conscious glamour-seeking and urges them to follow the latest trends. Information flow through networking (hashtags trends) on Instagram has made it easy for people to access different pages related to the wedding. The middle class faced lots of pressures because of the consumption of Instagram, e.g., peer pressures, delayed marriages, financial debts, maintaining the status quo in society, which also affects their mental health by increasing stress among them.

Suggestions and future recommendations regarding these trends

All of the interviewees advised other people going through a similar situation to speak up, not letting the social media platforms promote it. The key is not to let your inner peace die with these trends. We can let them come and filter out what we don't need and adopt what is actually reasonable and affordable. Obviously, the fashion industry is not here to listen to what a common man like us is saying. They are here for money and business like all of us. So, it is us who are in command of what we need and what we want to discard. The interviewees suggested that we can overcome these trends by convincing ourselves to stay firm in our decisions and not to get influenced by these baseless rituals. We can educate people around us to make this world a better place. By analyzing these interviews, the researcher also gets to know that fathers are totally against these trends; they are only interested in a good and better quality of foods. The mothers (very few) are sometimes attracted to these trends.

Conclusion

Limited international and national research studies have been conducted on wedding trends and especially promoted through social media. Surprisingly the wedding received very little attention and lack of interest from any theorist (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002). This research attempted to fill the identified gap and concluded that the consumption of Instagram is promoting extravagant wedding trends among the public. The more people consume Instagram, the more they are influenced by these trends. In spite of the economic conditions, adults are admiring these trends. The extravagant trends are also increasing social differences among different classes of society. The elite class is promoting these trends and making these trends a part of social status. Extravagant trends cause financial as well as mental pressure at the same time. The trends of extravagant weddings are creating lots of problems, including social competition and physical and mental problems.

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