

Wedding trends in Finland 2017

Krista Lahtinen

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Author(s) Krista Lahtinen	
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<p>In this thesis, the whole wedding industry is introduced on the global level first and then given a few good examples of market leaders in Northern America and Europe. Wedding surveys done in USA and UK give informative results about the average age of bride and groom, wedding budget breakdowns, size of the weddings, most popular months to get married, most wanted venues, trendy themes and everlasting traditions. The wedding business in Finland is compared with these huge market leaders by using survey results from thesis about weddings in Finland published few years earlier. Also, a rising trend of destination weddings, which means getting married outside your hometown, is introduced.</p> <p>The whole wedding planning process is introduced in detail and it's divided into five phases. The phases are: research & design, coordination, confirmation & details, implementation and wrap-up & evaluation.</p> <p>Thesis was commissioned by Mennään Naimisiin! wedding magazine. Quantitative survey was committed partly on Mennään naimisiin! wedding fair in Helsinki 14.-15.01.2017 and partly online sharing a link in Facebook. 85 persons participated in survey and they were asked questions about the place, time and type of the wedding, possible theme and budget, number of guests, time used for planning, most challenging part of planning process and if they had considered using a wedding planner. The main objectives of the survey were to figure out the most challenging parts of the planning process, the size of the budget the couples had reserved for the wedding and the time they had used for planning their big day. The goal of these questions was to get an overall picture if there is a need for wedding planners in Finland and if not, what are the most important reasons for that.</p> <p>The survey results show that the average age of the newlyweds is closer to thirties than twenties, the average age of the bride is 27 and the average age of the groom 30. Summer is still the most popular time to arrange a wedding, but the wedding season has extended lasting from May until September. Majority of the couples want to have the traditional church ceremony and most of the weddings are arranged in The Capital Region, including Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. More than half of the couples invite 60-100 guests at their wedding and their budget is 5 000- 10 000e. Most of the couples use 13-24 months to plan for their wedding. Most popular themes were rustic & romantic and natural & bohemian and that can also be seen in a choice of venue; old renovated buildings were highly appreciated. Many couples chose traditional pastel colours for decorations and flowers, but the popularity of bright colours is rising.</p> <p>Wedding budget seemed to be the biggest concern couples have during the planning process. Also, many couples stressed about the guest list, finding a suitable venue and all the small details like decorations. Few couples mentioned that the venue they had booked has its own wedding planner and that eases their stress levels a lot. Most of the couples hadn't even thought of using a wedding planner since they never felt like they needed one. Other reasons for not to hire a wedding planner were the high prices of wedding planners, couple's willingness to plan everything themselves and assistance received from family and friends.</p>	
Keywords Weddings, wedding industry, wedding planning process, wedding survey, wedding planner	

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1 Introduction

This thesis is looking into wedding industry globally by introducing the business in two leading countries USA and UK. Finland is compared with these huge market leaders to give the reader an idea of how the business could be when blooming. Also, the whole wedding planning process is introduced step by step and some of the trends around the world are mentioned. Survey method is described and justified in detail and the survey results are analysed carefully using charts as aid. Results are then discussed and evaluated and development ideas are introduced.

To collect relevant data about wedding business in Finland, quantitative survey was committed in co-operation with Mennään Naimisiin! magazine. Wedding survey was done partly at Mennään Naimisiin! wedding fair and partly online by using Webropol as a tool. Key points of the survey were to research what kind of weddings there are arranged in Finland; what is the size of the weddings, how much money couples are willing to spend, what kind of trends there are right now and how long is the planning process in total. The main objective was to figure out the most stressful parts of the wedding process and whether the couples could consider using a wedding planner. The goal was to form an overall picture of wedding planning habits in Finland and find out whether there is a market place for professional wedding planners or not.

Wedding trends and traditions are researched a lot worldwide, but there is not much data about Finnish weddings. That was one of the biggest reasons to choose this subject for thesis. The data collected in the survey is very beneficial not only for the commissioner but for the whole industry. Personal interest towards wedding planning process and profession also affected the decision when choosing the subject. Wedding as a theme is very trendy subject at the moment and it has received a lot of publicity in media over the last years. High-end celebrity weddings have drawn a lot of attention towards the subject.

Wedding planning is a great business especially in USA and the trend of using a professional wedding planner is spreading. There are some wedding planners in Finland as well, but because of the short wedding season the planners need to provide other services on the side, like baby showers, to get an all-year-around business rolling. The biggest question was, why such a promising and profitable business is not blossoming in Finland? Why couples are not looking for professional assistance even though the wedding day is the most important day of their lives?

2 Wedding industry

Wedding day is one of the most important moments of life. All around the world girls start to dream about their “one day as a princess” at a very early stage and that’s why couples and their parents are willing to throw a party of the century when it’s time to tie the knot. And in many cases money is not an issue. After all they are all wishing for the same thing: the couple will live like in fairy tales “happily ever after”. And that’s one very good reason to put on little extra effort to make the day perfect. There is another world-known line in history that gave huge publicity to whole wedding industry and it is DeBeers’ advertising slogan “A Diamond is forever” by Frances Gerety in 1948. This line carries an ultimate promise of everlasting love and has been used in DeBeers’ marketing campaigns ever since. With this simple slogan, DeBeers created a tradition to buy an engagement ring with a rock. (Sullivan 2014). Even though some don’t believe in magic, not many are willing to take the risk.

Globally the whole wedding industry is estimated to be worth 300 billion dollars (Singh 2016). Wedding industry consists of a wide range of small businesses like catering companies, wedding planners, venues, bridal shops, wedding bands, photographers and florists. After the recession, the industry is blooming and many related industries like jewellers and travel agencies benefit from the rapid industrial growth. USA is naturally one of the market leaders and the interest towards weddings is growing. There are a lot of TV shows and movies build around the theme and the media is giving a lot of publicity to high-end celebrity weddings.

The royal wedding on 29th of April 2011, when Prince William and Kate Middleton tied a knot in Westminster Abbey in London started a huge wedding boom all over the world. 1 900 guests were invited to the royal wedding and London was expecting around 600 000 visitors worldwide on the wedding day. The wedding was estimated to bring roughly £ 500 million of revenue for the city and the whole industry wanted to use this unique opportunity to make profits. Restaurants were arranging royal breakfasts and offering wedding menus for visitors to set them on the mood. Huge TV screens were placed all over the city to provide live picture from the celebrations. Prince William champagne and other souvenirs were sold on the streets together with 150 000 copies of the official wedding program sold by scouts and cadets. There were 5 500 street parties arranged around the city while the official ceremony was held in Buckingham Palace. 5 000 police officers were on duty to maintain the safety and order on the streets. (The Telegraph 2011).

Since the couples' engagement in November 2010 the official royal wedding website has had 9,5 million visitors. According to Telegraph 18 million viewers in the UK alone were following the wedding live which makes around 38% of the total population. Globally roughly 2 billion people from 180 countries were following the wedding by reading the reports and watching photos and videos. 327 photos were expected to be taken of the wedding and celebrations the following day of which around 65 million photos were expected to be posted in social media. Before the reception there were 2,8 million status updates in Facebook of the royal wedding in the US and the UK. And Twitter calculated that there were 237 tweets of the wedding every second during the celebrations. Westminster Abbey offered Royal Wedding –tours from 30th of April until 6th of May to give an opportunity for experiencing the wedding atmosphere by leaving the floral and other décor on its place. (Beckford & Graeme 2011).

The booming Asian market is looking for inspiration from the western world for their weddings, international bridal wear designers have realized the opportunity for great revenues and focused producing gowns and accessories to fit the demand. In India there are around 10 million weddings arranged every year and the budget for 3-5 day celebration varies from 30 000 dollars to 300 000 dollars. In China around the same number of weddings take place annually with the average wedding budget of 12 000 dollars. The budget might sound small compared to India, but on contrary to average annual wage in China which is 8 900 dollars, the budget goes way beyond. Chinese bride might purchase 3-5 dresses for her wedding; one traditional red dress with golden decorations, one western style white gown and few dresses for the pre-wedding photoshoot which might cost over 4 500 dollars since it takes place in different locations some of them might even be overseas. (Singh 2016).

2.1 Wedding business in USA

USA can be seen as a forerunner and trendsetter of wedding business. Every year about 2,5 million people get married and the industry employs nearly 850 000 people in almost 600 000 businesses creating a revenue of 60 billion dollars. The trend seems to be that as the wedding budget gets bigger the number of guests gets smaller, which means the couple wants to provide more luxurious event for only the closest friends and relatives. (IBIS-World 2016).

In 2015 there was a wedding survey collected among 18 000 brides and grooms who got married in USA. The results indicate the average age of the bride to be 29 and for the groom the average age was 31. The most popular month to get engaged was December

covering 16% of the all the participants and the average length of engagement was 14,5 months. Surprisingly most popular time of the year to get married was fall with 39% of all the answers, September and October being the most popular months for a wedding. Summertime comes on a second place with 33% choosing to get married between July and August. 21% of the participants chose a destination wedding of which 33% got married outside the US borders, Caribbean and Mexico being the top choices. 26% of newlyweds had hired a wedding planner and 89% had used smartphone as a wedding planning tool.

Average wedding budget in 2015 was 32 641 dollars which had huge regional differences; the most expensive place to get married was Manhattan, New York with an average budget of 82 299 dollars while the most affordable state for weddings was Alaska with an average budget of 17 361 dollars. 12% of the couples payed all the expenses by themselves. The rest of the couples (88%) build their wedding budget accordingly: 44% was paid by the bride's parents, 43% by the couple and 12% by the groom's family. The average number of guests was 139 and the average cost per guest was 237 dollars. The average number of bridesmaids was 5 and the same number goes for groomsmen as well. The most popular wedding colours were ivory/white (47%), blue (39%), metallic shades (34%), pink (30%) and purple (21%). 40% of the couples wanted to add a personal touch to their wedding ceremony and asked a relative or friend to act as officiant. 19% of the couples had included ethnic or religious elements at their wedding to show respect for their heritage. 22% of the couples designed their own signature cocktail for the wedding to make it more personal. (XO Group / The Knot 2016).

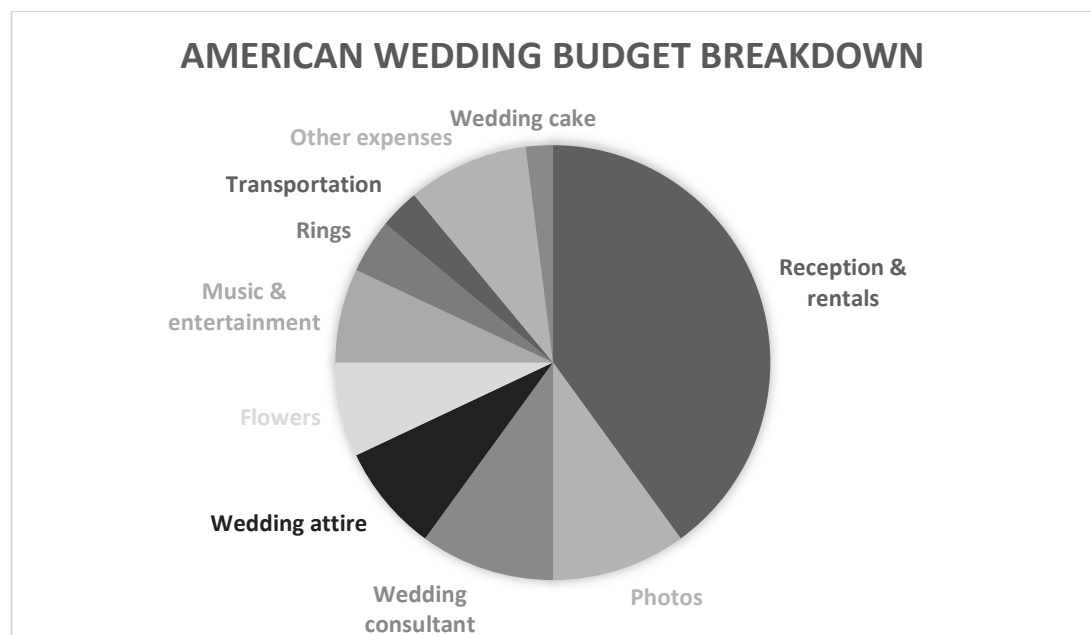


Figure 1. American wedding budget breakdown (Daniels & Loveless 2007, 127-129)

Figure 1 explains the budget breakdown in American weddings. Reception & rentals take up 40% of the whole wedding budget and consists of rental fee of the reception site, lighting & decorations, possible expenses of tables, chairs, linen and glassware if not provided by the venue and naturally all the catering expenses of food and beverage. Most of the couples are willing to sacrifice 10% of their total budget on professional photographer and possibly videographer as well. Also, more and more couples are willing to spend 10% of their budget on a wedding planner to make sure that their wedding day is perfect.

Wedding attire is 8% of the total spend and includes the wedding dress plus all the accessories and jewellery worn by the bride. Tuxedos for the groom and his groomsmen and dresses for bridesmaids are also included. Flowers mean all the floral décor both in ceremony and reception site and is counted to be 7% of the budget. Music and entertainment is counted to be 7% and includes wedding band or DJ and other performers hired for guests' comfort. Wedding rings are roughly 4% of the total spend while the wedding cake eats up 2% of the budget. 3% goes in transportation which includes the vehicles for both to the guests as well as to the bridal party and also the bridal suite for the newlyweds on their wedding night.

9% of other expenses consist of stationery elements like invitations, place cards, menus and programs. In this section is also added possible gifts for wedding party members and favours for guests, legal issues like marriage licence and officiant fee as well as wedding day preparations like make-up and hair. (Daniels & Loveless 2007, 127-129).

2.2 Wedding business in UK

The European counterpart for USA is naturally the United Kingdom, the European pioneer in wedding business. Latest wedding survey in 2016 had over 3 000 participants from all over the UK. The average age of the brides participating the survey was 33 and for grooms 34. Most of the British couples dated around 4 years before getting engaged and they spend 12 months on average planning their wedding. The average wedding budget in the UK is £ 25,090 including honeymoon which is around £ 3,336. 36% of the couples payed the whole wedding themselves, while 48% of the couples shared the wedding expenses with their parents. The average number of guests in British weddings is 75 guests during the daytime and 101 in the evening celebrations. 48% of the couples chose a cash gift list to collect money for their honeymoon. (Hitched 2016).

The most popular location for the wedding ceremony was hotel with 38% of all the answers, not far behind was church or other place of worship with 37%. 19% of the couples

got married at registry office, while 6% chose to celebrate their wedding abroad. Compared to American weddings, British weddings are more traditional; 84% of the weddings included the traditional cake cutting, 79% of the brides wore something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue according to traditions and 81% of the grooms did not see their future wife before the ceremony to respect the old tradition. 64% of the couples sent traditional paper invitations, while only 10% took advantage of the new technology by sending digital invitations. 27% of the wedding couples created an own hashtag for their wedding though. (Thompson 2016).

The most popular themes for weddings in UK in 2015 were vintage with 14% and rustic 7%. Ivory colour for wedding dress dominated in UK with 58% of brides dressed in ivory and only 27% of the brides chose to wear pure white dress. Strapless A-line dress was the most popular style in UK with 41%, while 21% of the brides counted on mermaid style. The most popular wedding colours were blue (16%), pink (15%), purple (11%) and green (7%). The honeymoon budget varied between £ 1,000 and £ 5,000, top 3 destinations being USA, Mexico and Italy. (Thompson 2016).

Main wedding trends that can be seen in UK are relaxed atmosphere and personalisation. Couples are looking for laid-back surroundings with no formalities and because of that pubs have become popular place to arrange a wedding. Civil partnerships have become more common and since for many couples it's not their first marriage they are looking for more intimate party. These mature couples want to put effort on quality rather than quantity and that's why they are inviting fewer guests and providing more luxurious menu for them. Pub weddings don't follow any traditional wedding seasons, they are a-year-around business which usually take place during the week at lunchtime when the pubs are not busy. (Mullen 2012)

2.3 Wedding business in Finland

In 2015 there were 24 708 marriages tied in Finland and the number is rising. The number of first time marriages is approximately 75% and the amount is decreasing while the number of second and third time marriages is increasing. The average age for brides getting married for the first time is 31,2 years and the average age for first-time-grooms is 33,4. There were 318 same-sex marriages registered in 2015 altogether, of which 221 were female couples and 97 male couples. 13 939 marriages ended up in a divorce; the average age for divorced women was 40,2 years and for men 42,8 years. The average length of the marriage before divorce was 10 years. The divorce rate for the first-time married couples is 39%. (Tilastokeskus 2015)

In 2014 there was a thesis published about weddings in Finland. Quantitative survey was committed partly on wedding fairs held in Kuopio and Jyväskylä and partly online using Webropol. The total number of participants was 196 of which 153 were women, 39 couple answering together and 3 men. The thesis was commissioned by Finnish wedding magazine Häät-lehti. The average age of the participants was 28, of all the persons answering the questionnaire 53% were between 24 and 29 years old.

The number of guests in Finnish weddings was 51-100 for 55% and 101-150 for 25%. It was very rare that the planning process took less than 6 months and the majority of 36% estimated 10-13 months of planning time, since many popular venues are booked at least a year beforehand. 72% of the couples pay for the wedding themselves, 21% received aid from their parents and 6% took a loan from bank to cover the expenses. The wedding budget varied mainly between 2 500 € and 10 000 €, last mentioned being the average. 36% wanted to have a relaxed atmosphere in their wedding while 19% were respecting the traditions. 10% were aiming to intimate wedding and 6% had a certain theme for their wedding. 31% were looking for inspiration online: Pinterest and wedding related blogs being the most popular sources of inspiration. 20% bought wedding magazines and 14% visited wedding fairs. (Heikkinen & Kymäläinen 2014).

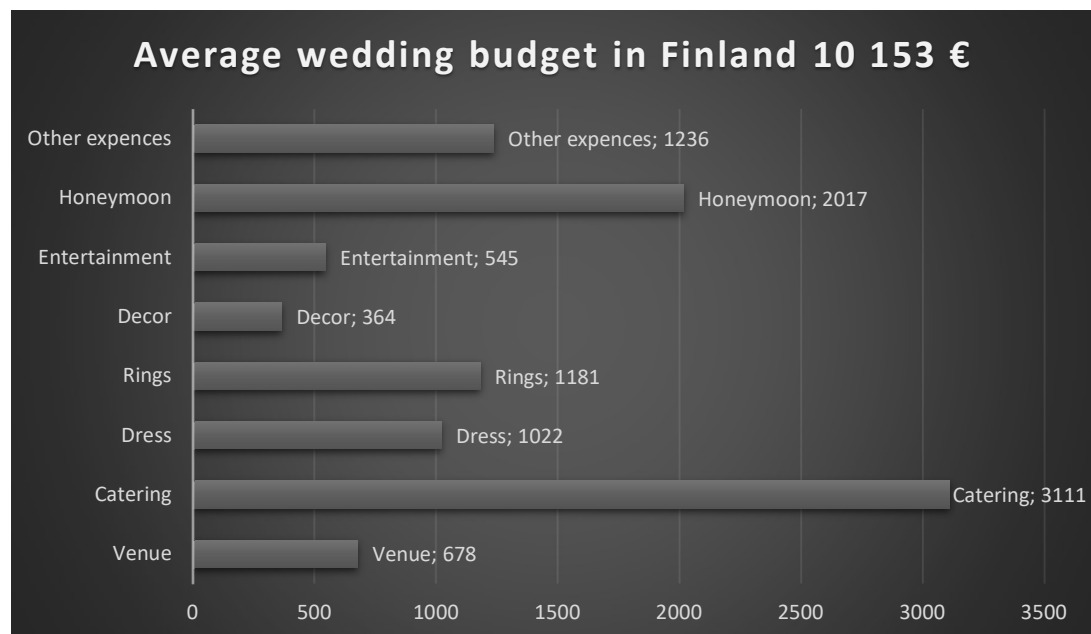


Figure 2. Average wedding budget in Finland 10 153 € (Heikkinen & Kymäläinen 2014)

In Figure 2 it is represented how the average wedding budget in Finland breaks down. The average budget of 10 153 € consist of catering expenses of 3 111 € which is the most expensive part including all the food & beverage served at the wedding. Engagement rings are counted to be around 1 181 € altogether. Dress expenses of 1 022 € include also the groom's tuxedo and in some cases also attires for the whole wedding party. Honeymoon is usually also counted into the wedding budget and takes up around 2 017 € of the whole budget. Entertainment means music and other performers at the wedding and is counted for 545 €. The actual venue costs 678 € and the decorations for both at the ceremony and reception site cost roughly 364 €. Other expenses of 1 236 € include for example transportation, photographer, invitations etc. (Heikkinen & Kymäläinen 2014).

2.4 Comparison between the countries

The average age of the bride and groom seem to be very similar in all the 3 comparison countries which are USA, UK and Finland. The average age for a bride in US is 29 and for a groom 31. The average age for a bride in UK is 33 and for a groom 34. The average age for a Finnish bride is 31 and a groom 33. The first marriage in all above-mentioned countries seems to be timed in peoples' thirties. The weddings in UK and Finland are more traditional and laid-back than in America, where couples are aiming for a formal and more luxurious weddings. Americans are willing to spend huge amounts of money to add some special features at their party and make it unforgettable.

US and UK seem to have quite similar average wedding budgets of approximately 30 000€, while the average budget in Finnish weddings is much smaller around 10 000€. The difference in budget can be explained by the number of guests which in US is 139 in average, in UK the average number of guests in daytime celebrations is 75 and during the evening celebrations 101. Most of the Finnish weddings (55%) have less than 100 guests. Most couples in Finland (72%) pay for the whole wedding themselves and that probably has a huge effect on the budget. In UK 36% of the couples pay for the wedding totally by themselves and the rest share the expenses with their parents. In USA only 12% of the couples pay all the wedding expenses by themselves. Finnish people are also well-known for their do-it-yourself attitude and they are usually too proud to use services provided. Family and friends are supposed to provide their assistance during wedding preparations.

Table 1. Budget comparison

United States of America	30 000€ (32 000 dollars)
United Kingdom	30 000€ (£25,000)
Finland	10 000€

2.5 Wedding trends

Destination weddings is one of the hottest wedding trends around the world at the moment. Term destination wedding means that the couple chooses to get married outside their hometown; the wedding might be held in another city close by or in a totally different country. Even more couples are getting married far away from home and this bridal tourism together with honeymoons generate over 5,3 billion dollars a year, which is around 15% of the total bridal market. (Destination weddings and honeymoons specialist 2012, 4-5). Spain is one of the top destinations for international couples to tie the knot and destination weddings create over 10 billion € revenue for the country. Average spend per guest is calculated to be around 500 € and in addition the wedding attendees are spending around 8 billion € during their stay in destination. There are more than 700 companies in the bridal sector in Spain and those companies employ over 6 000 workers. (Singh 2016).

Young couples today are looking for unique venues to tie the knot like castles, private islands, villas, vineyards and all-inclusive resorts. They want to create an unforgettable experience and intimate event for their closest friends and relatives only in an exotic location. The theme of the wedding is usually built around the characteristics of the location. (Ruppenstein 2016, 9). 49% of the couples arranging destination weddings stated that they wanted to tie the knot on the beach (Destination weddings and honeymoons specialist 2012, 4-5). Top destination in Europe is Italy with romantic Venice and spectacular countryside in Tuscany being the main attractions. In Central America Panama offers a very price-effective option for couples on a budget and has a great mix of old and new infrastructure. (Ruppenstein 2016, 9).

There are over 350 000 destination weddings arranged annually by Americans only (XO Group / The Knot 2016). 70% of the weddings are arranged in the US continent like Florida, California and Nevada, 11% in the Caribbean like Jamaica, Dominican Republic and Bahamas, 6% in Mexico and 5% in Hawaii. In Central America, the most tempting destinations are Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Belize, while in Europe the top 4 consist of Italy, UK, France and Ireland. The average number of guests in destination weddings is 86 and 90% of the couples also plan extra activities during their stay at the destinations. (Destination weddings and honeymoons specialist 2012, 4-5).

Luxury cruise line Royal Caribbean hosted around 900 weddings on board in 2015 and is expecting nearly 1300 weddings to be held on their vessels in 2016. Oasis Hotels & Resorts introduced a new wedding package for 2015 and reported 30% growth in their production. According to their statistics Cancun and Mayan Riviera in Mexico are the most attracting choices for destination weddings. Sandals Resorts has noticed that their WeddingMoons, a combination of wedding and honeymoon, have gained popularity despite of recession and are counting on the booming Canadian market for growth. (Travel courier 2016, 18).

70% of the honeymooners are willing to spend huge amounts to make their honeymoon unforgettable since it's such a big milestone in their lives. Normal holiday budget is estimated to be 850 dollars, but the honeymooners might be spending over 4,000 dollars on their perfect holiday. Destination weddings and honeymoons are all year around business and not limited only to summer months like it seems to be for local venues. And not only the resort receives money from the couple at their wedding day; usually the length of the stay is from 3 to 10 days and the friends and relatives are likely to combine their annual holiday with the wedding and choose to stay at the resort after the wedding. (Johnson 2012, 3-4).

Paula Kirvesmäki the editor in chief of Mennään Naimisiin! magazine has also noticed some trends in Finland. According to her the trend of the year is personalization; couples want to forget the traditional formula and make the day perfect for themselves. Heavy meals are replaced by healthy and light salad buffets, cupcakes and individual pastries take over the dessert table and couple's own song together with well-practiced choreography works as a substitute to the classic first dance. The most important thing for the couples seems to be that the guests enjoy the party. But usually when the couple enjoys, the guests are having a good time as well. (Mennään Naimisiin! 2014).

Sonja Wickström the wedding consultant of Orchidea mentioned some trends above the others; rustic, romantic and natural themes are highly valued and pastel colours like blush, fresh green as well as metallic shades of gold and rose gold seem to be trendy at the moment. Wedding bands are still more popular in Finland than DJs and traditional bouquet and garter tossing have found their places in Finnish weddings. The wedding season starts in April and lasts until September. The budget varies mainly between 5 000€ and 20 000€ and the clients wedding consultant meets in Finland are usually young couples with small kids or couples with busy careers who don't have time to plan their own wedding. (Wickström 29.11.2016).

3 Planning process

Planning a wedding is a stressful and time-consuming process which contains a lot of big decisions not to forget the limitations the budget might set. The planning process is good to start well in advance and the common recommendation is to start at least one year before the actual wedding. One year is just a guideline, since every planning process is unique and couples have their individual ways of organizing their big day. But it is good to keep in mind that the most popular venues might be already booked a year or two ahead, so be the early bird if you have a clear vision of what you want.

Usually couple gets help with all the arrangements from their friends and family and even more regularly they turn to a wedding planner for professional advice. Wedding planner can help the couple during the whole planning process or just get hired to be responsible for one specific part of the wedding. Wedding planner can ease the stress levels of the couple and save their time when given some certain tasks like finding the band/DJ, bids for catering companies or ordering flowers and other décor. Wedding planner can also be used for overall organization; the professional can be hired to control that the couple keeps in the budget and their wishes are realistic as well as source of inspiration and problem solving.

Wedding planning process can be divided in five phases: research & design, coordination, confirmations & details, implementation and wrap-up & evaluation. Phases are introduced in Table 2 below and explained more in detail later on chapters.

Table 2. Wedding planning process.

Research & design 12-24 months before: budget, guest list, venue, date, catering, bridal party, theme & colours, flowers
Coordination 6-12 months before: outfits, transportation, accommodation, photographer, program, music & entertainment, gift registry
Confirmations & details 1-6 months before: marriage licence, officiant, invitations, decorations, seating plan, honeymoon
Implementation 2-4 days: rehearsal dinner, wedding day, after party
Wrap-up & evaluation 1-6 weeks after: thank you –cards, photos

3.1 Research & design

The planning process starts usually right after the engagement and for most couples that means 12-24 months before the actual wedding day. The first big decision the couple is encountered with is the wedding budget. The most important things defining the budget is the place, time and size of the wedding. First of all, the couple should create a draft of a guest list which will determine the type of venue needed. At this part, the guest list doesn't need to be the final version, but it is vital to know if there will be closer to 20 guests or nearly 200 guests. The budget might limit the number of guests invited. When the list is prepared, the couple can start discovering different ceremony and reception site options. The couple also needs to consider whether the ceremony will be held in a church or if it will be a civil ceremony. The wedding date should be discussed; the availability of chosen venue might influence the decision. (Daniels & Loveless 2007, 103-116).

After all the guidelines are clear, the couple should visit the sites of their interest and book the most suitable one for them. The guest list should be finalized and vendors like catering and florist should be contacted. Since food and beverage is such an essential part of the wedding, the catering company should be chosen carefully, keeping the budget in mind. Some couples might value a stunning wedding cake while others think that an open-bar is a must at their wedding. After all the big decisions are made the couple can concentrate on the details; they might have a specific theme or certain colours in mind which defines the style of flowers and other décor. Also, the wedding party including bridesmaids and groomsmen should be formed at this phase. (Real Simple 2017).

3.2 Coordination

The coordination phase takes place 6-12 months before and includes final selection of vendors and purchase of outfits for the whole bridal party. The bride is not the only one to be dressed, but there is flower girls, ring bearer, maid of honour, bestman and naturally the groom himself who will need a matching look. The bridal party might need a vehicle to move around smoothly and it also needs to be considered if the guests will need transportation from the ceremony to the reception site. The couple should also consider if long distance guests need accommodation and whether the honeymoon shall be scheduled right after the wedding.

Photographer is one thing the majority of the couples want to put an effort and no wonder why; good quality photos will catch the most important moments and bring memories alive anytime so they will last forever. Music and other entertainment also needs to be booked

well in forehand and possible gift registry should be created. There should be a lot of thought put into the program, so that it fits for everyone and the schedule is not too tight; there should be time left for mingling and little breaks. Save-the-date cards should be posted at this time if needed and the couple should prepare a draft layout of both ceremony and reception sites as well as create a schedule for the D-day to ease the coordination with vendors. (Daniels & Loveless 2007, 103-116).

3.3 Confirmations & details

All the legal issues shall be fixed 2-6 months before the wedding depending on the place and type of wedding. The couple should find out what documentation is needed at their case and have everything done well in advance. It is good to consider the fact that some offices might be closed for example in summer time or might be very crowded in certain times, so it's good to start early with marriage licence and name-change issues for example. Maybe it's a good idea to have a meeting with the officiant as well to make sure everything is like it's supposed to be and to be able to go through the ceremony program together so that both sides are happy with the plan. In the middle of all the hassle the couple should not forget to send the invitations once the guest list is finalized and prepare a seating plan. (Daniels & Loveless 2007, 103-116).

All the confirmations about the contract details and timelines should be discussed with every single vendor at least one month before the wedding to make sure everything is like it's supposed to be. You can never confirm the deals too many times; it's better to be safe than sorry. All the final preparations like creating a seating plan and preparing decorations, place cards and possible gifts for guests should be done and the honeymoon details shall be confirmed. It is also a good idea to gather the whole wedding party together and go through the program and every ones' responsibilities together. Final calculations will give you good picture if you have managed to stay in your budget. (Real Simple 2017).

3.4 Implementation

Implementation takes usually 2-4 days and consists of rehearsal dinner, possible day-off in between, actual wedding day and possible brunch or other get together the day after. Usually the whole bridal party and the closest family members and friends arrive at the wedding site one or two days before the D-day to help with final arrangements and to participate to rehearsal dinner. For the activity the day after the wedding the couple may choose to have all the guests present or they might only ask for some of the guests to

stay one extra day. For example, some couples might have a lot of friends, who they couldn't invite to the actual wedding because of limited budget, but who will be invited to the after party instead. (Daniels & Loveless 2007, 103-116).

Table 3. Wedding day program (Daniels & Loveless 2007, 103-116)

Hair styling & make-up for the bride and her bridesmaids
Flowers and final decorations at the venue
Transportation for the guests and bridal party to the ceremony site
Ceremony (exchange of rings, matrimony by officiant)
Photoshoot of the newlywed couple
Transportation for the guests and bridal party to the reception site
Music and lighting set for cocktail hour
Place cards for guests according to seating plan
Introduction of the newlywed couple and toast
Reception (dinner, speeches, first dance, cake cutting etc.)

3.5 Wrap-up & evaluation

The wrap-up & evaluation phase takes place 1-6 weeks after the wedding and includes actions like sending thank you –cards and election of the photos. It is also a good idea to give feedback to vendors, both positive and constructive so that they can improve their services if there was something that could have been done better. The couple might want to gather the whole wedding party together after the wedding for de-briefing to make sure no one ends up with hard feelings with unsolved issues. It is also a good possibility to thank you everyone for their great effort. (Daniels & Loveless 2007, 103-116).

4 Wedding survey

The wedding survey was conducted partly by interviewing visitors on a wedding fair arranged in Helsinki in January 2017 and partly online using Webropol as a survey tool. 85 answers were received in total, 46 from the Mennään Naimisiin! -fair in Katajanokka 14.-15.1.2017 and 39 from online survey which was published both on my own Facebook page and Mennään Naimisiin! official Facebook page. A total of 50 visitors was approached on a fair of which 4 refused to answer the questionnaire, so the answer rate was relatively high. The survey link published in Facebook was opened almost 500 times, but since many people had shared only the link without the written explanation, many ended up opening it and noticing that the survey wasn't relevant to them, since they were not getting married in near future. But at least the link spread widely in social media.

The main objective was to find out if couples getting married were willing to use a wedding planner to help with the arrangements and what would be the most important reasons if they chose not to use one. Key questions were built around the main objective and the goal was to figure out which parts of the planning process the future brides and grooms find most challenging and stressful, how much time they have used for planning their wedding and how big of a budget they have for their wedding. With these question conclusions like, is the budget affecting the willingness to use a wedding planner or if the planning time available is affecting the use of professionals, could be done based on answers received.

Target group was people who were planning their wedding in a few years. The aim was to achieve a wide range of participants in different ages and collect information about their wedding planning process. On the fair all the future brides and grooms have all come together in one spot and that was a great place to get in touch with them. The age scale was wide; youngest being in their early twenties and oldest getting closer to their fifties. Another perspective was also discovered since one same-sex couple answered the questionnaire. The online survey had also reached a great sample of population in different ages and also spread widely geographically. The visitors on a fair were mainly from the Capital Region or from the cities nearby.

4.1 Quantitative survey method

Quantitative survey method was chosen, because it was possible to collect a representative sample of target group and the results were able to be generalised to present the entire population or in this case the whole population of brides and grooms - to-be. Since it is impossible to contact all the couples getting married in Finland in a few years, the wedding fair and Facebook was a good way to reach the individuals concerned. Both direct and indirect survey tactics were used to receive as reliable results as possible. When using the direct tactic by interviewing participants face-to-face, the interviewee must be very careful not to influence the nature of the responses. When preparing an indirect method, in this case online survey, it is very important that the message is clear and the receiver understands the original meaning correct. To avoid misunderstandings, the survey was tested by few of my friends before publishing it online. During the interviews, one question was left out of the survey since it seemed irrelevant and hardly none of the participants were able to answer the question. (Brotherton 2008).

One of the reasons to use quantitative survey method was that there were similar surveys conducted in US and UK before using the same method and it seemed to be working well for that purpose. Quantitative survey is also relatively quick and easy to conduct and it gives very reliable results when done right. The only negative thing is that the information collected is very limited; participants only answer the questions asked even though they might have some additional thoughts about the subject. But in this case, only some very specific information about certain subjects was needed. The response rate also needs to be high to be able to draw reliable conclusions, so there is a possibility to end-up with a huge number of non-responses in some questions or receive totally irrelevant information. It also needs to be taken into consideration that questions concerning sensitive or personal subjects might lead to people protecting themselves or portraying themselves in a more favourable light. After all the choice of the survey method was successful and fitted well for the purpose. (Brotherton 2008).

4.2 Survey questions

The questionnaire started with some demographic question to collect basic data about the participants. First question was an open question about the age and gender of the participants and their future wife/husband. Second question was also an open-ended question concerning the timing of the wedding. The reason to leave the question open was to receive as specific answers as possible, since I wanted to know if there some popular weddings dates in 2017 and 2018. Third question was about the ceremony,

whether it was held in church or if it was a civil marriage. This was a multiple-choice question with 3 options, the last being an open-ended option called other. Fourth question was an open-ended question about the geographical location of the wedding and a type of venue chosen. The reason for this open question was to give the participants a choice of either describing the place they were planning to get married if the venue was not booked yet or giving an actual location and venue, if the booking was already done.

The following questions were planned to give more detailed information about the planning process and subjects affecting the decisions. Also the special characteristics of the wedding would be defined. Fifth question was about the number of guests invited to the wedding. This was an open-ended question since it was easier to group the answers together afterwards than it would have been before. Sixth question was about the total amount of money used in the wedding excluding the honeymoon. This was a multiple-choice question with a total of 5 options, since no accurate budgets were needed, just an estimation. The options were: under 5 000€, 5 000-10 000€, 10 001-15 000€, 15 001-20 000€ and over 20 000€. Seventh question was about the time used for planning the wedding. Usually the planning process starts right after the engagement and continues all the way to the actual wedding day. This question was a multiple-choice question with 4 options to ease both the participants' estimation of planning time as well as make it simpler to analyse the answers afterwards since no certain dates were needed. The options were: under 6 months, 6-12 months, 13-24 months and over 2 years. Eight question was an open-ended question about the theme and colours of the wedding. The question was left open because that way it was more likely to get detailed descriptions from the participants having a theme.

The most important questions were left in the end of the questionnaire. Question number 9 was about the most challenging part of the wedding process. This was a multiple-choice question with 5 options and it was possible to choose more than one option. The options were: keeping into budget, finding a venue, preparing the guest list, preparing the schedule for the wedding day and an open spot called other, where the participants could write their own answer. The main purpose of this question was to figure out which parts of the planning process caused most stress for the couples and where they could use some professional help. The last question was about the use of wedding planner. The participants were asked if they had considered using a wedding planner to help with the wedding preparations. There was a multiple choice with simply yes and no options and if the participants answered no, they were asked a reason for not choosing to use a wedding planner.

4.3 Commissioning party

Mennään Naimisiin! magazine was contacted to get a commissioner for the thesis and that way the survey could be prepared to fit the purposes of the magazine and hopefully the whole wedding business in Finland. The commissioner gives thesis more meaning and publicity as well. The co-operation will benefit both parties; the survey was done partly at Mennään Naimisiin! fair, which was a great opportunity to meet the couples concerned and the magazine will get the survey results for their own use. Survey results will give them important information about today's wedding trends and couples planning habits.

Mennään Naimisiin! magazine is published twice a year since 1995: one edition in the summer and one in the wintertime. Articles and blogs are written by professionals from fashion and culinary world as well as top journalists and couples themselves. All the subjects concerning weddings are well covered; everything from planning process, wedding day programs and honeymoons to hairstyles, bouquets, engagement rings and dresses. Magazine introduces new trends, provides tips and to-do-lists and offers a great variety of fresh ideas and inspiration. (Mennään Naimisiin 2016).

Mennään Naimisiin! wedding fair has been arranged every year since 1996 and it is the most popular fair on its field in Finland with around 10 000 annual visitors. The fair takes place in January 2017 in Wanh Satama located in Katajanokka, Helsinki. This nostalgic location provides 4 000 m² area for more than 150 retailers and service providers related to wedding business attending the fair. The range of businesses is wide; anything from catering companies and venues to photographers and blacksmiths. Professionals are offering guidance for bridal make-up and hairstyle as well as do-it-yourself decorations. There are dance lessons and wine tastings arranged not to forget the teacher concentrating on walking with high heels. Professionals are giving speeches about music at weddings, legal issues, floral décor and wedding rings. The highlight of the fair is the Wedding Fashion Show giving a glimpse of the hottest trends. Travel agencies introduce exotic honeymoon destinations and personal trainers and dentists give vital tips for how to look perfect on your wedding day. Voting for the most beautiful bouquet and other competitions will also take place at the fair. (Häämessut 2016).

5 Survey results

The age for the brides varied between 21 and 55 years. For the grooms the age variation was between 22 and 55 years. I had one same-sex couple, so that's why I have 84 brides and 86 grooms when calculating the average ages. The most popular age for brides is 23 with 14 answers in total (17%). For the grooms the most common age is 28 with 11 answers all together (13%). Most of the brides were between 23 and 28 with a total of 54 answers (64%). Most of the grooms were between 27 and 31 with a total of 44 answers (51%). The average age for a bride is 27 and for the groom 30 years.

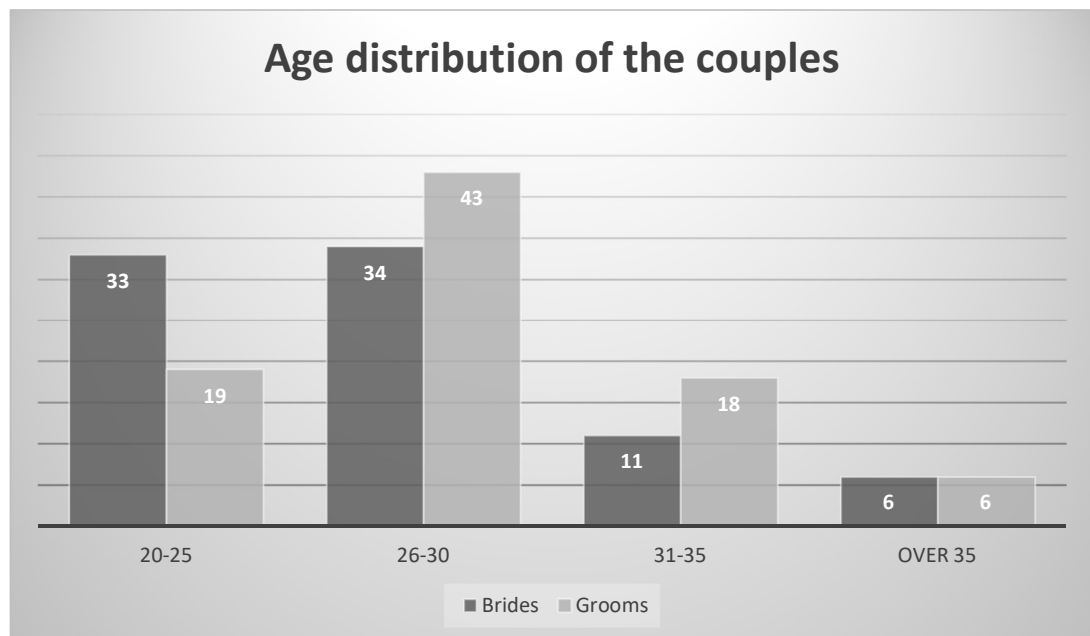


Figure 3. Age distribution of the brides (n=84) and grooms (n=86)

5.1 Timing of the wedding

I received 82 answers in total to this question, since 3 of the participants were in such an early stage of planning that they didn't have a clue when they were getting married. Summer months seem to be the most popular time for weddings still, but the winter weddings are gaining popularity as well. 55 of the participants were getting married this year in 2017 and July seems to be the most popular month with 21 answers in total (38%). One particular date rise above the others and it is 01.07.2017. August is the next popular wedding month with 12 answers (22%) and September comes not far behind with 10 answers (18%). There will be 6 weddings arranged in June (11%) and 2 in May (4%). January, March, April and October got one answer each.



Figure 4. Breakdown of weddings in 2017 month by month (n=82)

19 of the couples had chosen to get married in summer 2018 and one very popular date there was 18.08.2018. There were 5 weddings planned for winter 2018 and 2 weddings for the summer 2019. One participant stated that summer 2020 would probably be most realistic timing for their special day. As we can see from these answers, all the participants were on totally different stages of the planning process.

5.2 Ceremony & reception

The total amount of answers is 87, because 2 couples said they will have both the traditional church and the civil ceremony. 65 couples (75%) said they will get married in church, while 8 couples (9%) were planning a civil ceremony. 14 couples (16%) chose to have the ceremony somewhere else than mentioned above. 6 couples have the ceremony at their venue, 2 couples are getting married at the beach and one couple had planned to hold the ceremony on the top of ski slope. Also, a chapel, summer camp, garden, public building and desert in Nevada were mentioned once.

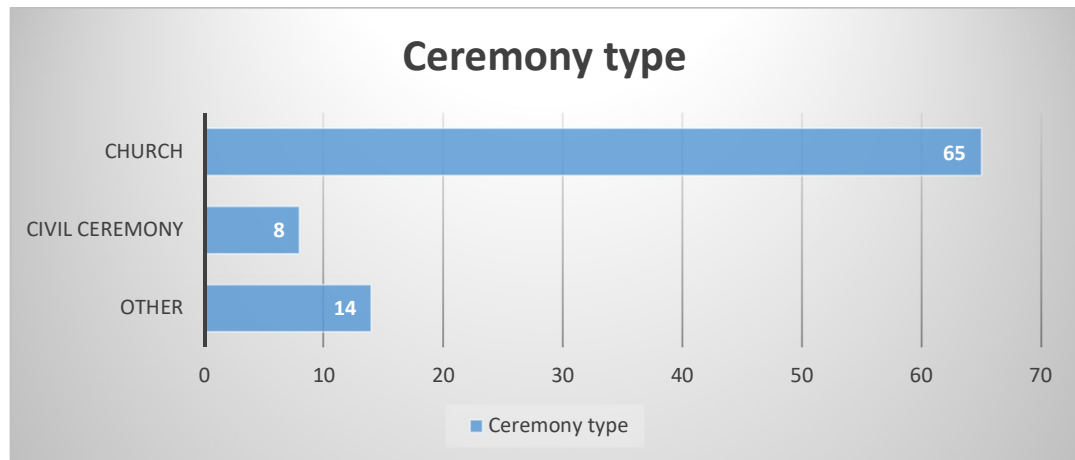


Figure 5. Type of the wedding ceremony (n=87)

To ease the navigation, Finland was in 5 different parts which are Southern Finland, West Coast, Central Parts, Eastern Finland and the Capital Region. Southern Finland consist of cities just outside the Capital Region like Sipoo, Porvoo and Hyvinkää. West Coast is the western coastal area and consists of cities like Turku, Kokkola and Lapua. Central Parts of Finland include cities like Tampere, Lahti, Heinola, Hämeenlinna ja Kouvola. Eastern Finland includes the eastern parts of the country, the biggest city being Mikkeli. The Capital Region contains 3 cities which are Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. Since none of the participants stated that they will get married in the northern parts of Finland, Lapland has been left out of this analysis. 19 participants didn't answer the question, so there are 66 answers in total of which 2 couples were getting married abroad: one in Spain and one in Las Vegas.

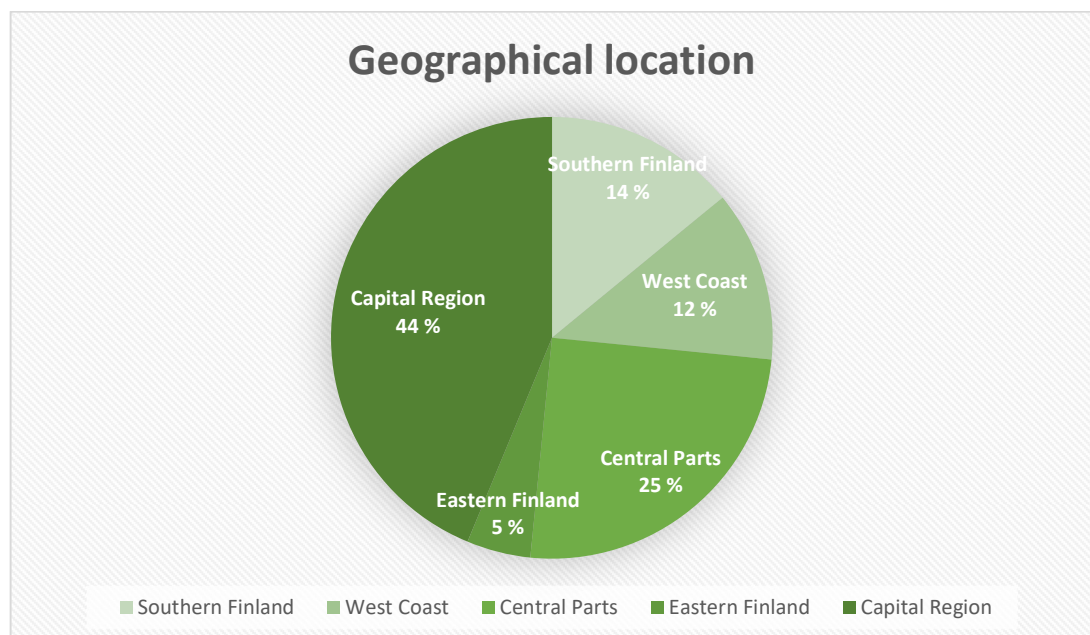


Figure 6. Geographical location of the weddings (n=66)

Southern Finland excluding Capital Region got 9 answers in total (14%), Sipoo being the most popular with 4 answers and Porvoo second with 2 answers. Hyvinkää, Mätsälä and Kirkkonummi got all one answer each. West Coast got 8 answers in total (12%), Turku and Lapua being the most popular cities with 2 answers both. Kokkola, Ylivieska, Kauhava and Satakunta got one answer each. Central Parts collected 16 answers in total (25%), Tampere being the most popular with 3 answers and not far behind Valkeakoski and Kouvola with 2 answers each. Lahti, Heinola, Hämeenlinna, Vesilahti, Sastamala, Forssa, Tammela, Hollola and Päijät-Häme got one answer each. Eastern Finland got 3 answers in total (5%) and the answers were divided equally since Mikkeli, Ruokolahti and Kerimäki got one answer each. The Capital Region got 28 answers in total (44%), Helsinki being the most popular with 16 answers, Espoo second with 6 answers and Vantaa third with 3 answers. 3 participants just mentioned Capital Region without further specifications.

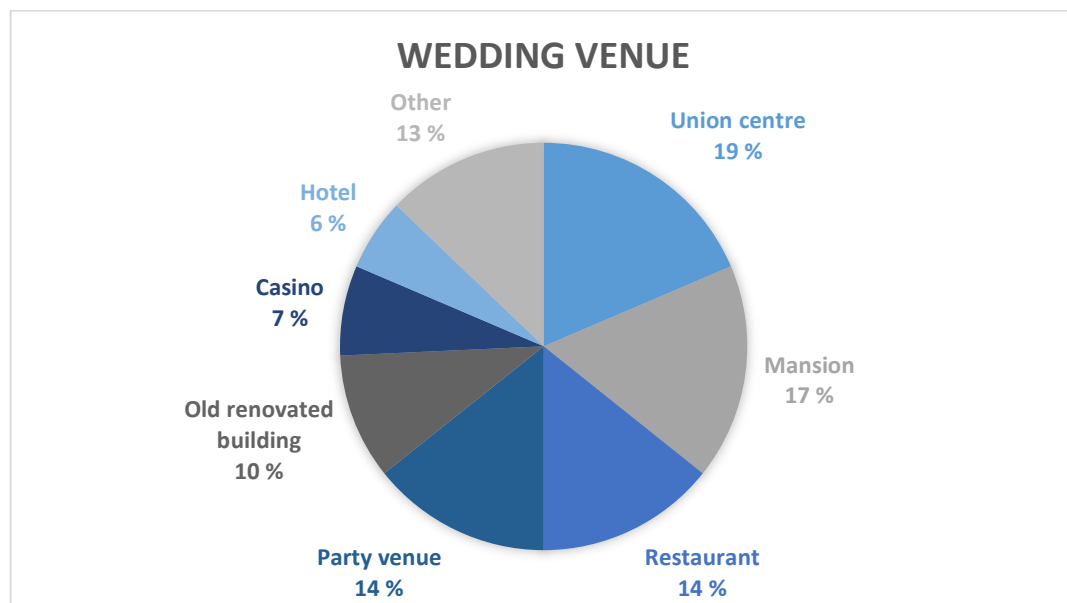


Figure 7. Wedding venues (n=70)

As a venue, 13 couples (19%) had chosen a space belonging to some union like church or youth association. Youth association was mentioned 6 times, congregation place 3 times, voluntary fire brigade and community centre both twice. 12 couples (17%) had chosen a mansion as their venue and 10 couples (14%) arranged their wedding in a restaurant. 10 couples (14%) had booked a venue made just for weddings and other big parties. 7 couples (10%) had found unique old buildings renovated as rustic and characteristic venues. Three couples mentioned an old stable, two an old barn, one couple had an old steam brewery as a venue and one couple an old file mill. 5 couples (7%) chose to celebrate their big day in a glamorous casino and 4 couples (6%) arranged

a party at a luxurious hotel. One couple had booked a tennis club for their wedding, one couple was using the community garden as a venue, one couple chose to get married at a summer camp and one at Soutupaviljonki. Also, cable factory and dockyard were mentioned once as a venue. Two of the couples had chosen to get married abroad and they mentioned desert in Nevada and beach in Spain as their venue. One couple said they won't arrange any kind of wedding celebration. Altogether I received a total of 70 answers to this question, since not all the couples knew their venue yet.

5.3 Size of the wedding & budget

There was only 1 couple who could not answer the question, so I got a total of 84 answers to this question. 28 couples (33%) counted the amount of their wedding guests to be 61-80. 24 couples (29%) estimated the number of guests to be 81-100. 18 couples (21%) were planning a relatively small wedding with under 60 guests and 10 couples (12%) had invited 101-150 guests to their wedding. Only one couple (1%) had planned a huge wedding with more than 150 guests and one couple stated that they will either have 40 guests or 150 guests at their wedding, but they haven't decided yet which one will it be. One couple said they had only invited their parents and one couple said they don't have any guests at all.

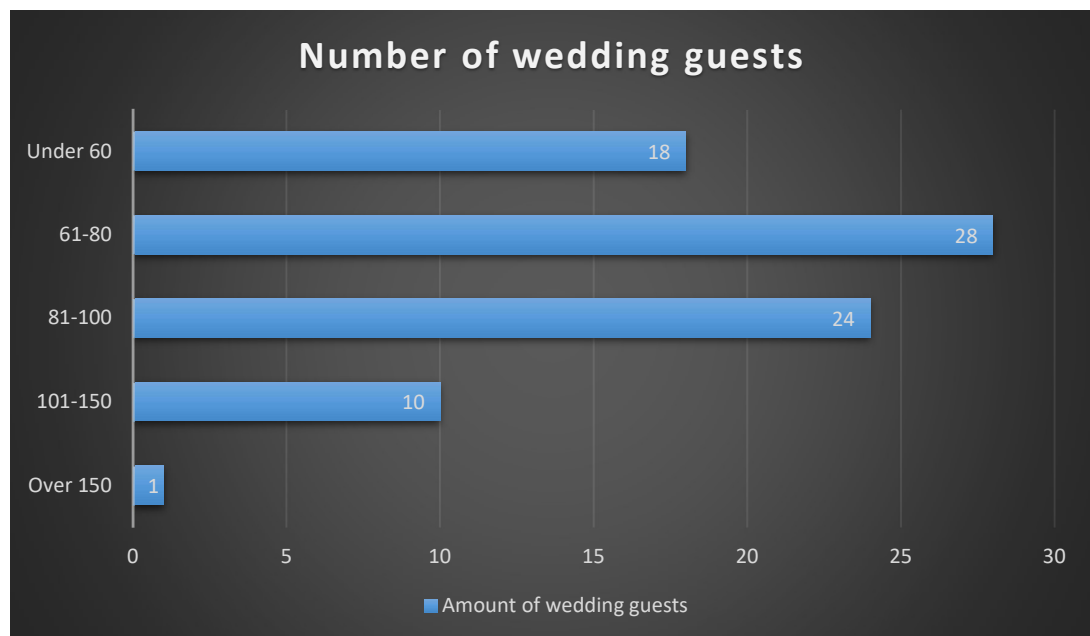


Figure 8. Number of wedding guests (n=84)

Wedding budget doesn't include honeymoon. It consists of the rent of the venue, costs of food and beverage, decorations & flowers, wedding dress and rings, transportation and entertainment etc. More than a half, 42 couples (51%), estimated their total wedding budget to be between 5 000€ and 10 000€. 21 couples (25%) said their budget would be somewhere between 10 001€ and 15 000€ and 6 couples (7%) had calculated their budget between 15 001€ and 20 000€. 13 participants (16%) aimed for small budget with total costs less than 5 000€ and only one couple mentioned a budget over 20 000€. 2 couples were on such an early stage of planning process that they could not answer the question.



Figure 9. Wedding budget (n=83)

5.4 Planning time & theme

All the 85 participants were able to answer the question and the results are as follows: 43 which is more than half of the participants (51%) estimated that they had used 13-24 months for planning their wedding. 28 couples (33%) used 6-12 months planning their big day and 9 couples (11%) had started the planning 2 years before the actual wedding day. Only 5 participants (6%) had planned their wedding in less than 6 months.

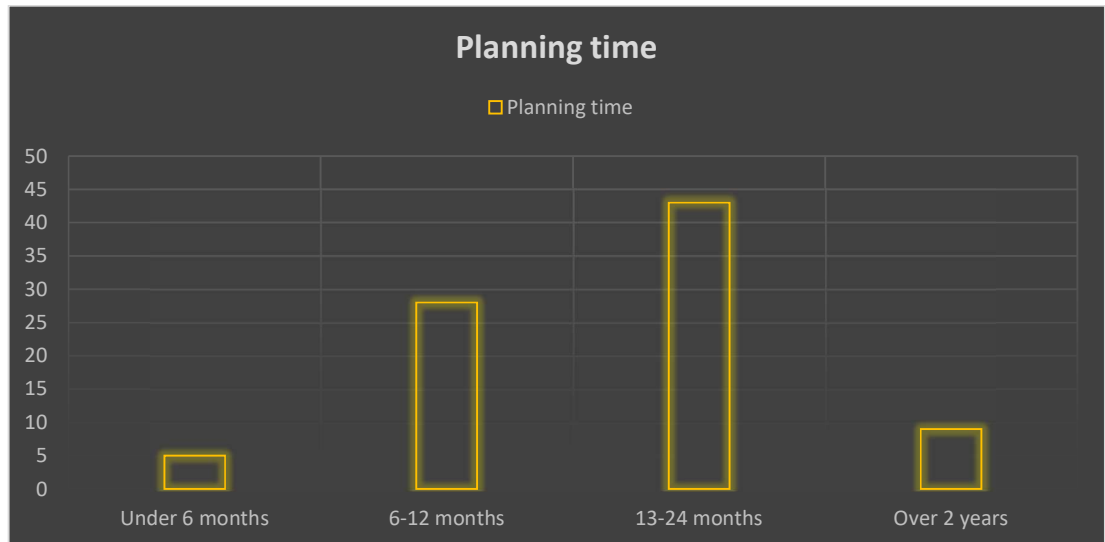


Figure 10. Planning time of the wedding (n=85)

20 participants said that they don't have any specific theme or colours for their wedding. 12 couples (29%) were following rustic and romantic country-side theme on all of their decorations and also when choosing the venue. 6 couples (14%) were looking for natural and bohemian elements for their wedding. 4 couples (10%) build their theme around the time of the year which in 2 cases was winter and in 2 cases autumn. 3 couples (7%) mentioned beach and ocean as a theme and same amount 3 couples (7%) had ended up with vintage style wedding. 3 couples (7%) mentioned that they wanted to have very relaxed and laid-back atmosphere at their wedding. 2 couples (5%) were planning to get married secretly abroad and mentioned that as a theme. The themes that got mentioned by one person only were garden, sunflowers, travelling, own hobbies, modern, industrial, motorbikes, military and naturally love.

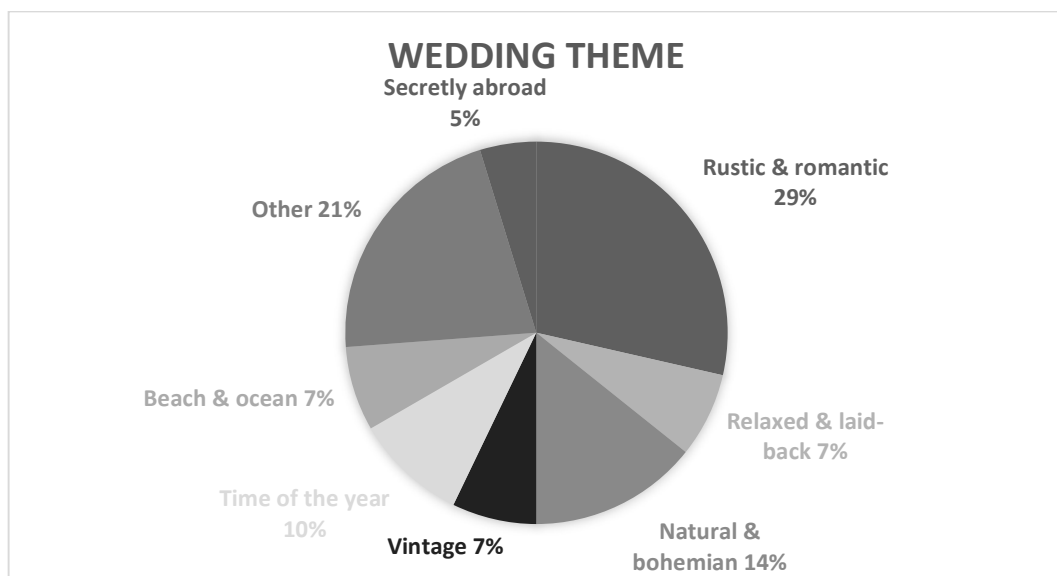


Figure 11. Theme of the wedding (n=42)

Pastel colours are the most popular wedding colours with 32% of all the answers. rose/blush being the most popular with 20% of all the colors mentioned. Bright colors came on the second place with 26% of all the answers, navy blue being the most popular with 15%. Metallic shades got the third place with 19% of the answers and silver was the most popular with 10% of all the answers. White got 16% of all the answers and other colors like dark red got 7% of all the answers.

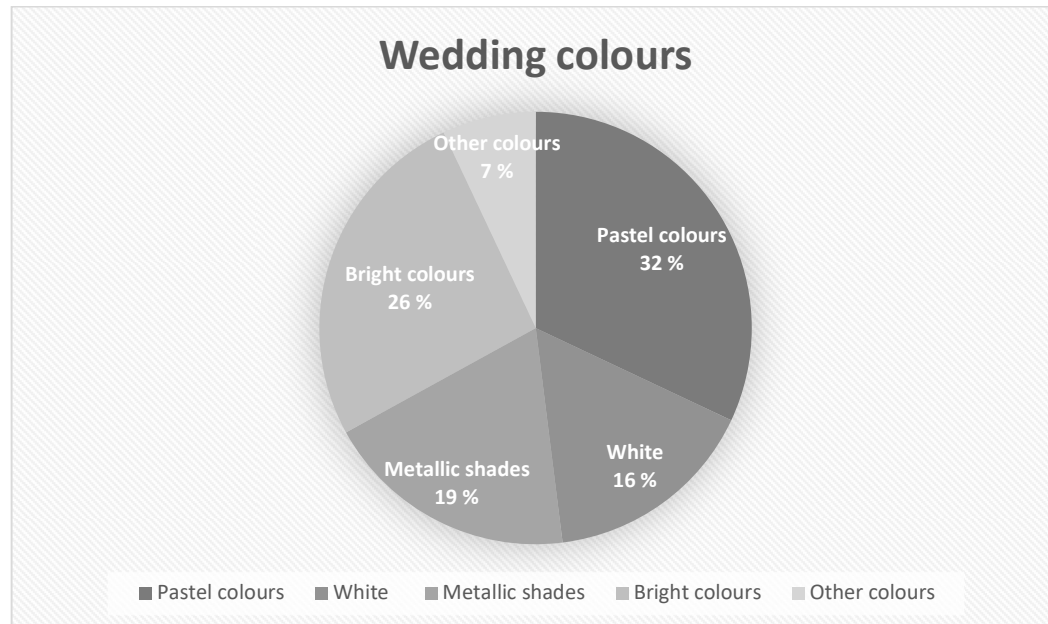


Figure 12. Wedding colours (n=81)

The most popular wedding colour is rose/blush with 16 answers. Second place goes for white with 13 answers and the third place for navy blue with 12 answers. Silver got 8 votes, gold got 6 and beige got 5 votes. Turquoise, green, grey and purple got all 3 answers each. Orange and dark red got 2 answers each. Mint, peach, yellow, rose gold and black-fuchsia were all mentioned once. In the figure, underneath pastel colours are rose, beige, purple, mint and peach. Metallic shades are silver, gold and rose gold. Bright colours are blue, turquoise, green, orange and yellow. And other colours are grey, dark red and black-fuchsia.

5.5 Planning process

Keeping into budget seemed to be most challenging with 26 answers (22%). Preparing the guest list came second with 20 answers (17%) and right after was finding the venue with 17 answers (15%). Preparing the schedule for the wedding day got 11 answers (10%) and the last option where the participants could write their own answer got 42 answers all together (36%). Participants were able to choose more than one option and that's why the total amount of answers is 116.

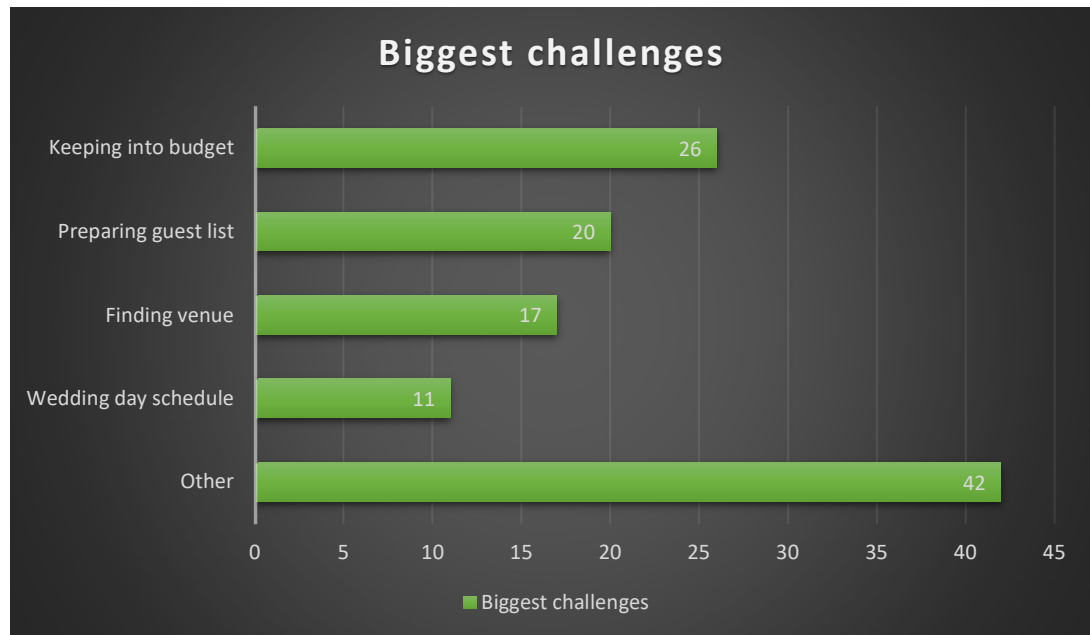


Figure 13. The most challenging parts of wedding planning process (n=116)

To the last open-ended option called other I got following answers: 8 participants (19%) answered that they hadn't felt anything challenging so far, few of them mentioned a wedding package provided by the venue and one used a wedding planner. 5 participants (12%) stated that all the reservations and confirmations caused the most stress for them. 4 participants (10%) worried about finding a perfect wedding dress and 3 (7%) felt booking the church challenging. 3 participants (7%) stressed about everything and 2 (5%) were concerned about all the details. 2 participants (5%) were worried about their future husband's participation on the planning process. All the following subjects got one answer each: decorations, menu, invitations, rings, photographer, priest, seating plan, bachelorette party, weather, accommodation for guests, saving the money, finding the time, keeping the secret, the character of the party and marriage law.

72 participants (85%) answered that they hadn't even thought of using a wedding planner and while 13 (15%) stated that they had given it a thought, but most of them ended up not using one. One of the couples told that they had got a very positive feedback from their friends who had used a wedding planner and had good experiences about it.

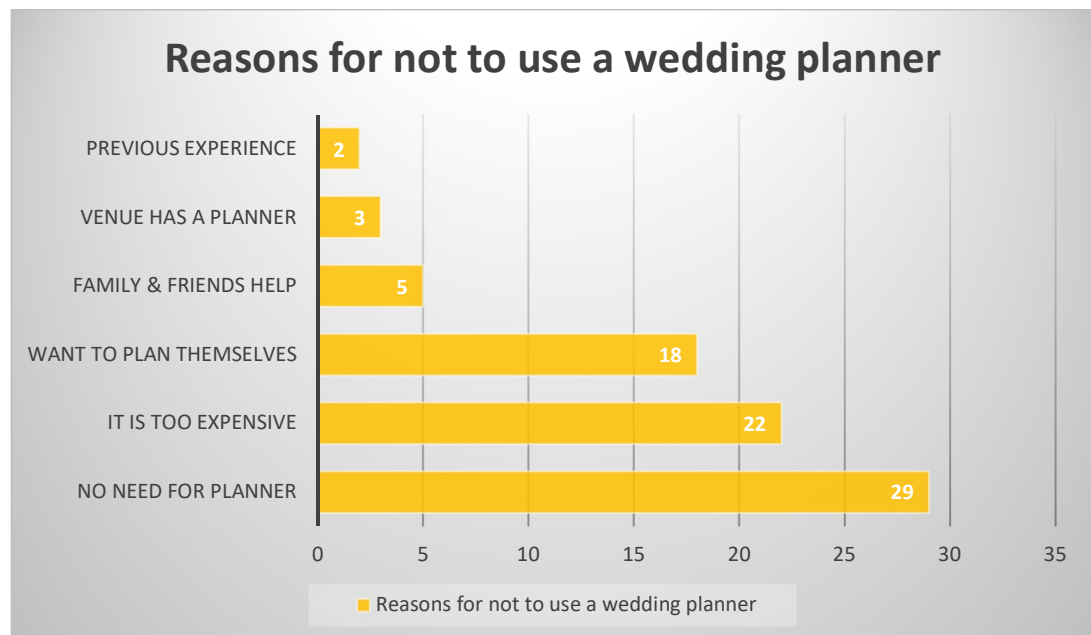


Figure 14. The biggest reasons people don't use a wedding planner (n=85)

The most important reason for not hiring a wedding planner with 29 answers (37%) was that the couples didn't feel like they needed a wedding planner. 22 couples (28%) mentioned that hiring a wedding planner was too expensive and 18 participants (23%) enjoyed the planning so much that they couldn't imagine letting someone else to plan their wedding for them. 5 participants (6%) stated that they have such a good team on the background consisting of family and friends, so they didn't need to outsource anything. For example, maid of honour, bridesmaids, sisters and best friends were mentioned at this point. 3 couples (4%) mentioned that the venue they booked had an own wedding planner who took care of all the preparations for them. 2 participants (3%) mentioned that they have some previous experience of wedding planning and they felt comfortable with the role; the other one had been the maid of honour at her friend's wedding and the other said she is going to be a wedding planner herself.

6 Discussion

When analysing the age and gender breakdown of the participants, in most cases the bride is few years younger than the groom. It is quite rare to have a huge age difference for over 10 years and especially among the older couples, which were over 35 of age, it was more common to have a younger groom. I had only one same-sex couple participating the study, so they still seem to be minority at wedding business. However, since the new marriage law takes place the 1st of March 2017 in Finland and same-sex marriages will be allowed, the numbers might raise dramatically.

Summer months seem still to be most popular time to get married, but the number of winter weddings is rising. The traditional summer season from June to August has been extended with September and May, so the official wedding season nowadays covers 5 months. There is one specific date that rise above others and it was 1st of July 2017. One popular date in 2018 was 18th of August 2018. The popularity of these dates is based on the ease to remember them.

Majority of the couples are willing to respect the traditions of getting married in church, but there is also a surprisingly high number of couples who are looking for something different and want to add a personal touch to the traditional ceremony. Many of the participants mentioned that they will have a priest or other officiant present at the ceremony even though they won't have a traditional church wedding.

The geographical location of the weddings is emphasized in the southern parts of Finland. One reason to the popularity of the Southern parts of Finland is naturally the population; the total population in Finland was almost 5,5 million in the end of 2015 and Uusimaa region alone covers over 1,6 million of the total number (Tilastokeskus 2015). Uusimaa region consists of Capital region and smaller cities around it like Porvoo, Kirkkonummi and Järvenpää. The other reason for popularity of southern parts and total lack of northern parts of Finland might be that the fair I attended to collect the answers was held in Helsinki and the distance is from the North is long for a one day trip. I also shared a link on my own Facebook page and most of my friends are living in the southern or central parts of Finland. That might be one reason that central parts were more common than for example coastal area at the west which is closer to Helsinki than central Finland.

It appears that many couples are looking for venues that have a connection to their lives and might raise some important memories and feelings for them. Also, the fascination to rustic elements can be noticed in the results since many couples are having their reception at historic mansions or other old buildings renovated as spectacular venues. Restaurants, hotels and casinos as venues give a hint of a bit more luxurious weddings and the rising amount of party venues indicates that the business is blossoming. Other options like summer camp and cable factory indicate the willingness to break the traditions and make the wedding more personal. Two couples were planning a destination wedding which shows that people are looking for experiences with a larger scale and the worldwide spread trend has reached Finland as well.

According to statistics most of the Finnish weddings are relatively small; there is between 60 and 100 guests present and the guest list usually consists of closest family members and friends. The tradition to invite all the possible family members at the wedding is disappearing and couples are focusing on the most important people at their own lives. Planning a wedding is a common project, where all the friends and family members are bind together.

The average budget in Finnish weddings is somewhere around 10 000 € and mainly varies between 5 000 € and 15 000 €. Since most of the couples are young and still in the middle of their studies or just starting their career, the budget must be adjusted to their incomes. Most of the couples are paying all wedding expenses themselves with only a little financial assistance from the parents which naturally limits the budget.

The biggest reason for planning time to extent closer to two years than one year is that the popular venues and churches need to be booked well in advance at least one year before. Other reason for long planning times might be the busy lifestyle many follows nowadays; it might be challenging to find extra time in everyday life with all its routines.

Like it can be seen in venue options, same rustic and natural elements can be found dominating in wedding themes as well. It can also be seen that many couples are looking for a relaxed atmosphere instead of formalities and a party that represents the couple just like they are. Pastel colors are still the most popular choice for wedding colors, but the popularity of metallic shades and bright colors is rising all the time. Especially colors connected to nature like blue and green are gaining popularity in Finnish weddings. The respect and fascination to pure Finnish nature can be seen in wedding trends at the moment.

It seems like there are a lot of different things causing stress for couples, money being the most challenging subject. That might be because of many couples taking part to the study were young and willing to pay for their wedding themselves. With a student budget, it is difficult to save huge amounts of money. Guest list is also one very sensitive subject for many couples. A reason for that might be the pressure from parents to invite certain family members even though they are not very close to the couple. Many young couples want to invite more friends and skip the unknown relatives. Concerns about finding venue and church might be realistic since it might be very difficult to get preferred places booked even though you are contacting the place well in advance. Many couples don't feel the need to hire a wedding planner or are too willing to control all the details by themselves, which leaves no room for professionals. A lot of couples also find it too expensive to hire a wedding planner, because they have such a tight budget.

6.1 Suggestions

Like it can be seen from the survey results, there is a lot of stressful parts in wedding planning where the couples could use a little help from professionals. Maybe the wedding planners just haven't marketed their services the right way or the marketing hasn't reached the audience. Sometimes people concentrate too much on the costs and might also not realize that using a wedding planner actually could save them some money; wedding planners are usually able to make great deals with vendors that couples couldn't even dream of and most of all save them some of their precious time. Giving some responsibility to professionals could ease the stress levels of the couple and let them enjoy the most important day of their lives. All the participants who had used a wedding planner seemed really pleased with their services and recommended it to others as well.

Maybe the use of wedding planner is getting more common when time passes by and people get used to the idea of hiring professional help to plan their wedding. Wedding planning business has a lot of potential to glow in Finland as well, if the services are developed to match the requirements set by the clients. Received feedback should be used wisely, since the customers are the ones bringing money to the business. Good customer experiences are free advertisement for the whole industry and the word, both positive and negative, spreads quickly. It is good to bear in mind that weddings are a very sensitive subject for many couples and they want to avoid all the risks that might affect their big day. That's why it's highly important to get everything right at the first time since there won't be second try. No pressure, we are only talking about the most important day of one's life.

6.2 Reliability & validity

The reliability of the survey can be measured by comparing it to similar surveys done previously in Finland. If the results from other studies are similar with the study in question, the results can be seen reliable. The other studies need to be done using the same research method as the survey in question and under similar conditions. Also, if the study was repeated, the results should be quite similar. A good comparison case is the thesis done in 2014, since it has very similar research method and some survey questions are alike. (Dudovskiy 2016).

The number of wedding guests in a survey done in 2014 was 51-100 guests for 55% of the participants. The result from this year is 61-100 guests for 62% of the participants which goes pretty close to the results received 3 years earlier. The budget variety was 2 500€-10 000€ in 2014, 10 000€ being the average. This year 2017, more than half of the participants mentioned a budget of 5 000€-10 000€. The planning time in 2014 was 10-13 months for the majority of 36% and the results from 2017 indicate that the planning time has been extended to 13-24 months for 51% of the participants. But most of them mentioned a planning time closer to one year than two years, so the results are quite similar.

The interview with Sonja Wickström, the wedding consultant of Orchidea, also gave a great comparison object in a professional wedding planners point of view. Wickström mentioned rustic, romantic and natural elements being very trendy at the moment and the survey results indicate the same; rustic & romantic and natural & bohemian were the most popular wedding themes in 2017. And the fascination to pastel colours, especially blush, was both mentioned by her as well as seen in the survey results. According to Wickström, the wedding season in Finland starts in April and ends in September and the survey results show that the main wedding season is timed between May and September. (Wickström 29.11.2016).

The validity of the study means that it fulfills certain requirements of scientific research method. The time scale of the study should be appropriate and in this case the timing was determined by wedding fair which was held in January. The timing was carefully considered by the arrangement team and it was suitable time to interview participants getting married this summer as well as participants planning wedding in 2018. The research method was chosen based on previous successful studies done by using the same method about similar subjects and it fitted well for the purpose. The sample was very precise and concentrated, but it could have been larger. Survey questionnaire was done neutrally and objectively, so the results were not affected by interviewer. (Dudovskiy 2016).

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7 Appendices

Appendix 1. Wedding survey

1. Age of the bride? _____ Age of the groom? _____
2. Wedding date?
Month & year _____
3. Place of ceremony? ☐ Church ☐ Civil ceremony ☐ Other, what? _____
4. Venue type & location? _____
5. Number of wedding guests? _____
6. Wedding budget? (exclusive honeymoon)
☐ Under 5 000€ ☐ 5 000-10 000€ ☐ 10 001-15 000€ ☐ 15 001-20 000€ ☐ Over 20 000€
7. How much time have you used for planning the wedding?
☐ Under 6 months ☐ 6-12 months ☐ 13-24 months ☐ Over 2 years
8. Does your wedding have a theme? (for example colors)

9. Which parts of the planning process have you found most challenging?
☐ Keeping in budget ☐ Finding venue ☐ Preparing guest list
☐ Making the schedule for wedding day
☐ Other, what? _____
10. Have you considered using a wedding planner?
☐ Yes.
☐ No, why? _____