Creating the Model for Special Event Plan

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The main objective of this thesis is to create a basic model for an event plan, which will be used as a template for other similar events in the future. This work is carried out for a future event company, owned by the author. The company mainly focuses on wedding planning services. An objective for the project described in this thesis is a medium scale wedding for up to 50 guests, with the maximum budget of €8 000.

The theoretical background of this thesis is collected from books and journals on event management, along with customer-oriented services, their needs and customer experiences. It is followed by the research methods, a semi-structured interview with the commissioner, survey for the visitors and benchmarking of three other event-planning companies. The last one was performed by the means of net scouting, researching different electronic sources like web pages, blogs and podcasts.

A proper event concept, venue and vendor selection, in addition to budget allocation, should be considered as the key results of this thesis. Event design illustrated by the mood boards is presented in the event overview section. A detailed financial plan is described together with the provided contractor information; a checklist of all necessary organizational steps is included. As the final phase the agenda for the event day is developed. As one of the outcomes, the feedback from the commissioner is given in the last section.

This thesis is a good example of a big project development, which includes all the steps, starting with research and ending up with the implementation plan and scheduling. It covers the work with a customer, event concepting and design, search for contractors, budgeting and the actual event model with timing.

Keywords: customer experience, event management, special events, wedding

Contents

1   Introduction

When starting with any project – the most crucial thing to have is a plan. Knowing the order of the tasks and having the layout of all the things to do is equal to a big part of the project already done, when just implementation is left. Following the model of the plan helps making sure that everything is taken into consideration and even the risks are planned.

In this thesis author is creating the model of a special event that will become one of the milestones in running the event planning company. This model of a plan will be designed for a wedding day of the particular couple that would be implemented later. In this thesis the author is doing the research on the event management topic itself and the specification on the wedding business as well as the customer experience. As the author is planning to run her own event agency, all the researches made for this thesis will be used in the future while running the company.

As this is a project-based thesis, the qualitative research method is used, as the engaged couple will get interviewed on how they imagine their wedding day and what kind of preferences do they have. In addition, author will do the benchmarking on the other event agencies, to get insights and ideas on developing own project. This will help to arrange the event agency's work in the most efficient way, as well as to plan the very first event successfully.

The planned outcome of this thesis is an event model that will serve as a start for the above-mentioned event agency as the first project of the company. Following the plan will be used as a base in the future events, helping to understand the features and details of the business, as well as the general knowledge of the event industry.

This thesis includes five chapters, following the introduction. The theoretical subjects will be examined in the second and third chapters. Author will cover the basic knowledge on the event management with the focus on special and personal events. Theory on targeting, client-oriented services and customer experience will follow. In the next chapter, the qualitative research will be applied and benchmarking findings described. In the last chapters, the overview, concept and the actual plan of the event are offered, following by the evaluation of the clients.

2   Event industry basics and it's significance in peoples lives

In this chapter the event management and planning will be described, focusing on the basic theoretical information, in order to create an event. The basic components of any event are presented, as well as the planning stages, including clarifications regarding the deepening in the wedding industry and its organizational features and related services. The definitions and the categorization of special events will be mentioned, as well as how important those are for community.

2.1   Basic knowledge

Damm (2012, 6) describes that the word "event" comes from the Latin word "eventus" and is translated as "result", "success", "outcome". He also mentions that the first mentioned definition in the English-speaking world was made by Robert Jani in 1955. Jani, one of the managers of the Walt Disney theme park, said that "a special event is something that is different from an ordinary day in life." In turn, the researcher Dr. Goldblatt (2002, 6), one of the main event management researchers, has given the following definition of a special event: "a unique moment in time celebrated with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs". Shone and Perry (2010, 258) define the term as: "The phenomenon arising from nonroutine occasions that have leisure, cultural, personal or organizational objectives set apart from the normal activity of daily life, and whose purpose is to enlighten, celebrate, entertain or challenge the experience of a group of people."

Above-mentioned authors emphasize the main feature of the special event - the difference from ordinary life, unusual state of affairs. It has an internal logic, a story that makes the participants perform functions that are unusual for them. At the event, someone already has arranged everything for the visitors, trying to surprise and entertain them. Often a "sense of the ideal world" is created, visitors discover a new world, and they wonder about it, enjoy it. They understand that this world is not real, that it is made up especially for them, but they still follow the rules of the game and enjoy the event. (Damm 2012, 20.)

Today the term of "special events" includes a wide variety of social gatherings, meetings, sports, shows and performances. In recent years, the number of events has grown rapidly and the industry around events has evolved, so that event industry is one of the fastest growing and economically profitable industries in the world. (Damm 2012, 22.)

According to Holzbaur, Jettinger, Knauss, Moser & Zeller (2010, 16) the exceptional nature of the event depends on the following factors: it is valuable as a memory and is remembered as something exceptional, but in the positive key. It is unique; there is no routine, as it encourages participants to be active, providing them with additional benefits and effects, like surprises. It is properly planned, and designed or staged in a correct way, leaves the good im-

pression and from the participants' point of view it is an outstanding occasion. Holzbaur et al. (2010, 36) states that every special event is an event, however not every event is a special event; it needs a "zest" that can make it unique.

The special event should be remarkable, and its key characteristic is that they each have a beginning and an end, and each special event is different from the other. One of the researchers of special events, Getz (2007, 18) claims that even with a strong desire, it is impossible to reproduce an event that has already passed.

Shone and Parry (2010, 5) are stating that the special events are strictly separated from the normal daily routine, as the cultural, leisure, organizational and personal occasions are outstanding by their nature, as the functions of those are celebration, enlightening, entertaining the group of people.
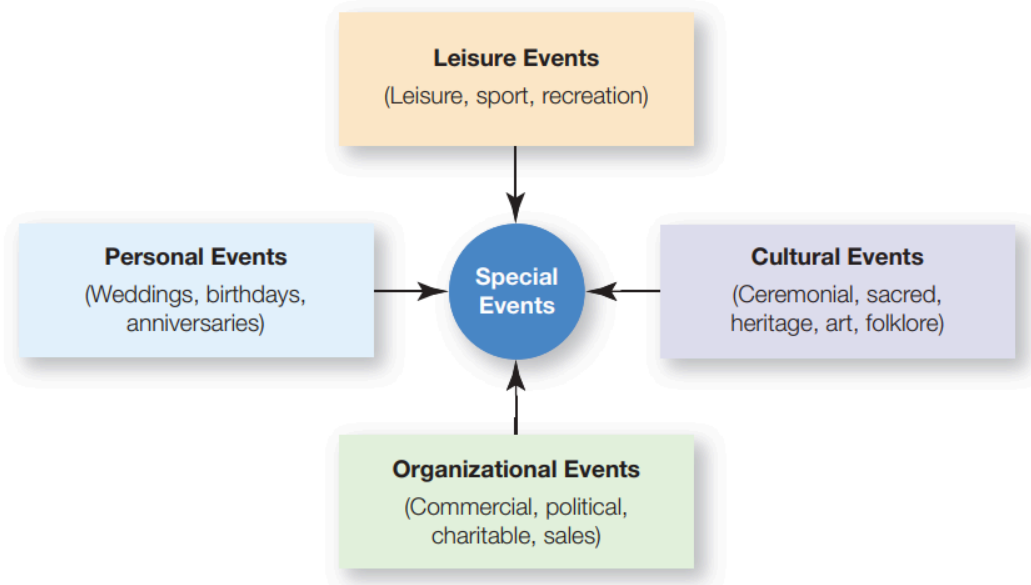
Figure 1: A suggested categorization of special events (Shone & Parry 2010, 5)

Special events can be divided into four basic types (Figure 1). Leisure events include sports, music, all kind of entertainment. Cultural events dedicated to ceremonies, religious, memorial, folklore. Organizational events are all sorts of commercial, political, charitable, commercial, industrial gatherings. Personal events are about celebrations, anniversaries, weddings, birthdays. However, overly strict classification should not be applied, as measures tend to be also of multiple meanings. For example, a charity event - a concert with the invitation

of musicians, which includes both types of organizational and cultural event. (Shone & Parry 2010, 5.)

Shone and Parry (2010,7) consider that the events can enormously vary in size and complexity. However, if the event is relatively simple, the number of visitors to the event can make it more difficult to implement. There are a number of differences between a birthday party designed for 6 or 60 people, although the format, structure and ideological content are the same.

2.2   Event management

Author assumes that organizing events is generally creative and exciting process, with many interesting aspects, details and opportunities for the realization of ideas and fantasies. However, many administrative, legal, technical aspects of the event must also be taken into account. Management is often complicated - especially in large-scale events where it are involved lots of human, financial and material resources.

Technically, the organization of any event begins with preparation. In order to effectively plan the event, one needs to realize the general pattern of its life cycle. The special logical scheme of this process has been developed by Dr. Goldblatt (2002, 36) depicting the stages of event development (Figure 2).
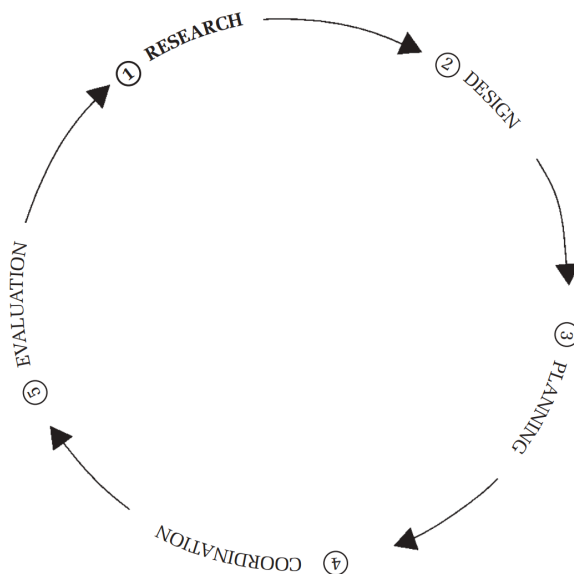

Figure 2: Event Management Process (Goldblatt 2002, 36)

The organization of the event begins with research and then there comes a period of searching for ideas for an event, planning and implementation, evaluation of results. In turn, the evaluation of the results becomes the starting point of research for the next activity. Consid-

ering these stages, it is taken into account that surveys, questionnaires and so on, that is research, is done both at the end of the event and before it. (Goldblatt 2002, 39.)

In its interpretation, event management includes two main aspects: first, the use of special events to achieve various corporate and public goals; second, the methods and techniques for managing unique events, which are considered as separate business projects. In modern management, the concept of event means any gathering of people with a specific purpose (Holzbaur et al. 2010, 37).

As reported by Holzbaur et al. (2010, 192) the project triangle (Figure 2) is formed from three main angles that determine the integrity of the project are following: result/goal, resources/expenses and time/dates. In the framework of event management, the event itself is the highest goal of the entire project. From this primary goal, further there are following, depending on the nature of the event, the most diverse secondary goals.

Resources or expenses include all necessary expenses throughout the entire duration of the project. This includes not only financial funds, but also the necessary working time (as a product of the number of employees and duration of work) and the corresponding infrastructure (premises, useful areas, car parks, etc.). Timing or dates cover the actual calendar dates of the event. And it is necessary to take into account the planning of deadlines and their compliance as the event is based on following the planned deadlines.

Result = Event

Resources = Money + Staff   Time = Deadline

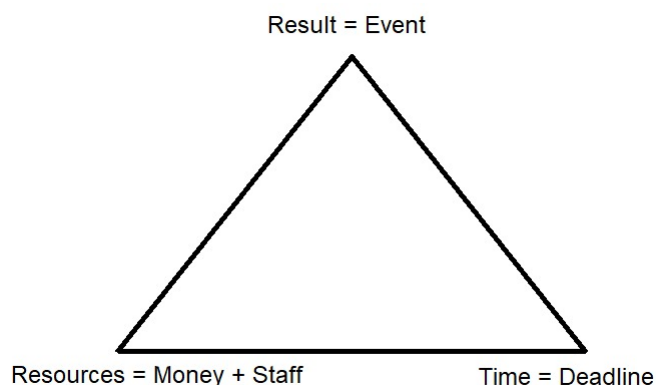Figure 3: The project triangle relating to event management (Holzbaur et al. 2010, 194)

None of the angles (Figure 3) can be changed individually, but each time a change of one pulls the rest of the determinants. If, for example, too few co-workers are ready to organize and carry out an event, this lack of resources can be compensated only by an increase in the duration of work or by adjusting goals. (Holzbaur et al. 2010, 192)

2.3   Significance of personal events and wedding as research subject

Coming of age (adulthood celebration), anniversaries, weddings, memorial services and other events, which reveal the passing of time with a significant celebration, are increasing for two primary reasons. When people live longer lives and their ages increase as a result of health-care advancements, there are more and more opportunities and motives to celebrate. A golden (fifty-year) wedding anniversary, for example, was a special occasion a few years back. Today, it seems to be fairly common. (Goldblatt 2007, 19.)

Often it's usual to organize an event that will last for many (three or more) days if looking into some important details about the weding industry, including a factual ceremony on the main day. This is due to the long distances that certain family members often drive in order to meet for these festivities. This may also be attributed to the constantly developing society we live in, that also, of course, prevents family and friends from gathering on these special occasions. Whatever the cause, societal life cycle celebrations and activities are growing in number, length, and budget scale. (Goldblatt 2007,19.)

Together with the disappearance of the classical, previous century, families and the propensity for people to move away and migrate, it is very fair to think that social events, marriages, anniversaries, and burials are significant causes in our lives to reunite with family and friends. In the future, there might be opportunities for advancement for future event organizers. The art of planning and organizing a full life cycle of activities that contribute unique facilities and lodging, such as in resorts or guest houses. Private events have always been important. Since some individuals have less spare time, an increasing number of clients are using the services of event companies to plan and coordinate crucial social activities. (Goldblatt 2007, 20.)

A wedding is a unique and one-of-a-kind occasion itself. So to be special, it needs to be prepared, organized and performed completely, thoroughly, smoothly and tastefully. Wedding includes numerous aspects; the planning and organization of such an event is a process that consumes time and energy and requires attention at all stages. In addition, one has to make sure that a precise content plan exists throughout the night, which would allow little elements to be included in a cohesive plan. (Wikolaski & Phillips 2006, 47.)

The couple's wedding day is one of the most important days in their lives. For the bride, it's an opportunity to feel like "Cinderella," hosting her own ball and having all the visitors' attention on her. Very likely, being a young girl, she dreamed going down the aisle to her prince. As a rule, a wedding for her is an opportunity to be in the spotlight, to feel bright and beautiful. Most tales and many romantic films end with a wedding: evil is defeated, she and he are reunited, and they walk into the sunset holding hands while beautiful music sounds. Because of all those quite high expectations, there is no place for inaccuracies or anything not being

ideal. The good wedding planner should aim to give the couple and their family to feel the peace of mind by keeping everything under control. The couple and their relatives should be able to enjoy themselves at the celebration without being concerned about the specifics and challenges. The difficulty of a wedding as an event arises from the fact that, despite some regulations and technology for its administration, it remains a very personal and, at times, intimate celebration. As a consequence, while designing a wedding model plan, the organizing team should ensure that it embodies the couple's spirit as much as possible: their nature, character, and state of mind. The visitors attending the celebration must also participate in the activities of this occasion. (Wikolaski & Phillips 2006, 49.)

From an organizational standpoint, the first step is to persuade the couple that their wedding will be developed, arranged, and executed in the best possible way. The wedding might be classy or outlandish. For the second choice, one must be imaginative and come up with exceptional ideas. However, every form of event, even a modest and simple celebration, requires the use of a wide variety of professional services. Even if the costs are not the main issues that worry the couple (for example in luxury weddings), but it still is important to follow the certain budget. Being a professional in wedding planning means guiding the bride in the right direction, even though for each bride it would mean something else. One should be a good listener and be able to ask the exactly correct questions. (Wikolaski & Phillips 2006, 49.)

The most important component of every event, without doubt, is the memorization of the celebration. In terms of wedding, the most essential thing for guests is that they witness a miracle, the birth of a new family, regardless of how much work and time was spent. It is a joyful event, when a large number of guests is present and the programme, based on different styles and customs, may vary. (Goldblatt 2002, 21.)

Following that, wedding planner needs to control the efficiency and timeliness of contractors' work, as well as ensure that customers are happy. Because of the unique nature of this industry, it is unlikely that a customer will return to the same company twice, but positive feedback is critical. As it is difficult to check out a service before using it, so it is common that new customers will contact the event planning company on the recommendation of friends, or after attending an event that they enjoyed. When working with a vendor, it should be remembered that they are the experts in their environment. The event will be successful if good conductors were chosen, then the bride will be pleased with the service and the result. It's important to note that in the event planning industry, the business is just as good as the worst partner conductor. (Wilkolaski & Phillips 2006, 51.)

Every marriage ceremony has its own structure and personality. Although the script and timing are customized for each wedding, there is a general outline (author's example): first,

there is the morning routine – make up and hairstyle for the bride, dressing up, transportation to the site (church, registry office or any other ceremonial space). Then comes the official part with wedding vows and marriage registration, followed by congratulation from family and friends. After that usually everybody is heading to the party venue (it may be the restaurant, banquet hall or the family house). Sometimes newlyweds are having a small photo shoot while guests are getting ready and having snacks. Then the informal part of the day starts. Normally it includes dinner, different kind of performances, traditional wedding essentials, dancing, getting two families to know each other and finally the cake cutting.

Depending on the venue and location, there may be different kinds of regulations and legislations, such as for loud music and noise, vehicle parking, fire safety, and the use of various types of equipment, thus it is critical for any organizer to be in charge of all the regulations and take the dangers into account (Conway 2009, 144-150). There are exceptions in secluded and remote locations away from the residential area, but they are the exception rather than the rule. The wedding, like any other event, should proceed according to plan and script, but problems may emerge. Visitors, newlyweds, and even vendors all play an essential part at a private celebration. A wedding may not be simple to manage, but one should be prepared to adapt and plan for several probable scenarios (Conway 2009, 18-19).

3   Customer oriented events

In the following chapter author is defining the types of audiences of the event visitors. Definition of client-oriented company is made in order to understand how to meet the customers' needs and encourage them to become loyal to the brand. Topic of customers' experience is expanded for better client insight.

3.1   Targeted customer focus and needs

Meeting at events and discussing the benefits and characteristics of the brand that has organized this event, people talk about it, analyze it and start to relate to the brand by themselves. According to Kotler, Burton, Deans, Brown & Armstrong (2013) when arranging events, there are some elements one should absolutely remember. An event facilitates the introduction of new brand, promotes interest in renowned companies and offers the greatest results in large cities, as it is a financially more efficient alternative to traditional advertising.

Narver, Slater & MacLachlan (2004) distinguish three groups of characteristics of market orientation: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and cross-functional coordination. The authors see the concept of marketing as a distinct organizational culture, shared norms and values within the company that place the consumer at the center of the organization.

There is no single approach to the definition of customer focus; however, all interpretations are based on understanding and taking into account the needs of the client, awareness of the paramount importance of the client in all processes of the company. The goal of the company's customer focus, therefore, is the long-term creation of added value for the consumer that meets his current and future needs. A company can create value for the consumer in two ways: by increasing the value for the consumer in relation to his costs or by reducing the consumer's costs for the value he receives. A customer-oriented company is a business that is designed for a long-term perspective, a stable brand in which its customers are confident. Employees of such a company must identify customer demand and cover it with the organization's product or service. (Narver et al. 2004, 337.)

There is an opinion that only its clients can objectively assess the degree of customer focus of a company. Customer focus is seen as the client's assessment of the visible part of the company's activities. Whatever the company's efforts to become customer-centric, the result depends on how the customer evaluates its customer focus. For the client, only the visible activity of the company is important, since it is rather difficult to evaluate the internal efforts of the organization from the outside. (Narver et al. 2004, 339.)

Customer-oriented principles include several points. Conscientiousness in work is the key factor. If a company and its employees keep their promises, do it comfortably for customers, then customers will definitely highlight such an organization. Understanding what the consumer wants. Customer focus is not just pleasing customers, but constant analysis of product quality and service. While creating a blueprint, it is important to note what is done nicely and what needs to be improved. Understanding and accepting the customer's opinion. One needs to learn to listen and not say "no" to the customer. Sincere attention to the problem, the desire to be useful in solving it is captivating the client. Attention to detail. When communicating with people, one needs to try to notice the little things that will irritate the buyer. It happens so, that the customer focus of the company is at its best, but because of annoying little things, some of the customers leave. These oversights must be identified and eliminated. Anticipating consumer desires. If the company can pleasantly surprise their customers, then 100% the client will become loyal. Do a better job it is needed to give more than a person expects - this increases brand loyalty. (Sheppard 2011, 35.)

The target audience should be decided while arranging an event. A basic question should be asked "Who should be on the list of guests?" The goals and objectives of the event should be met by the attendees. The target audience may be split into three categories: inner, outer and mixed. The internal audience is formed of people who know each other: the same company's friends, relatives, and colleagues. Family, seasonal, professional and business activities are the common events for this public. External TA involves persons who are unfamiliar (or just somewhat familiar) with one another: customers, partners, dealers, media representa-

tives, and government bodies. This audience is served via business events, seminars, and presentations. The event manager should understand the distinction between internal and external communication channels. Events held in the circles of "friends" and "strangers" are fundamentally different from one another. It is necessary to establish an environment in which everyone who arrives feels at ease, not just among friends, but also among strangers. A mixed target audience is one that combines internal and external customers. A mixed crowd is frequently observed at client events when the purpose is to introduce the target audience to the company's product or service. At such events, the host party gets the chance to meet the potential customer in person and showcase the benefits of the product, service, and company as a whole. (Kotler et al. 2013, 204-206.)

3.2 Customer experience

This chapter describes the basic theories, concepts and relationships that can be applied in studying the experience of event visitors. At the same time, the experience of event visitors also include sensory, emotional, cognitive elements, as well as subconscious components that are not realized by consumers themselves. Therefore, this chapter provides an explanation of the nature of experiences and various possibilities to measure their prerequisites and consequences.

3.2.1 Quality and value of events from the participants' point of view

There is no point in talking about the absolute quality, since people evaluate all its components in completely different ways. Components of perceived quality may include communication, reliability, safety, empathy, and some other variables. Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1988) have come up with the idea that providing superior service quality affects customer satisfaction and can be considered one of the key prerequisites for commercial success. They conducted a study of various components of perceived quality and developed a SERVQUAL service quality measurement scale, which subsequently became one of the dominant rating scales for researching customer service.

The subjective quality of the event is the visitor's perception of the overall quality of the event as a whole. Perceived quality is usually correlated with customer perceptions of the benefits or functional characteristics of a product or service. Crompton and Love (1995, 21) describe two different types of quality: quality of service and quality of experience. Quality of service is the quality of the components of the service that of course can be influenced by the one who provides these services, while the quality of the experience consists of the components that the visitor himself brings to these experiences. Crompton and Love (1995, 21) also presented five types of interactions that can be analysed when examining the quality of services: customer expectations and service characteristics, the interaction between customer expectations and the significance of the service, the relationship between the real level of

provision of component services and their significance, level of provision of service components and expectations and the interaction between results, expectations, significance.

According to Lee, Lee & Choi (2011), five types of values are distinguished: functional, emotional, social, cognitive and conditional. Functional value is defined as the utility acquired as a result of the impressions received, their functional and practical properties. Emotional value is determined by what emotions and psychological states caused these impressions. Social value - this is the utility obtained in the interaction as part of a group of people. Cognitive value related with the satisfaction of curiosity and thirst for knowledge and conditional - with a specific situation or special circumstances. Accordingly, visitors determine the value of events by comparing the benefits (functional, emotional, social, cognitive and conditional) that they receive and costs — time spent, money, and effort.

3.2.2 Experience of event visitors

In the meaning of experience, the evolution of consumer value goes from raw materials to goods, services and finally to experience that is the greatest value to the consumer and can be sold with a substantial margin to their actual market value. Pine and Gilmore (1999) describe the different levels of consumer interaction with experiences — absorption or immersion and degree of participation in the process — active or passive. They identified four main areas of experience: educational, escapist, esthetical and entertainment (Figure 4).

The economy of experience is an economy in which the experience received and the level of influence of goods and services on people's lives is more important than the goods and services themselves. Experiences in the educational realm imply the willingness of participants to acquire new skills and knowledge; a high level of activity and a low level of immersion characterize them. Entertainment stems from a need to unwind and have fun while being passive and virtually unaffected by the experience. The sphere of aesthetics also does not imply active actions, but in this case a person is deeply immersed in an event or environment. Escapism or avoiding reality means activity and a greater degree of immersion in the experience. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 31-34.)
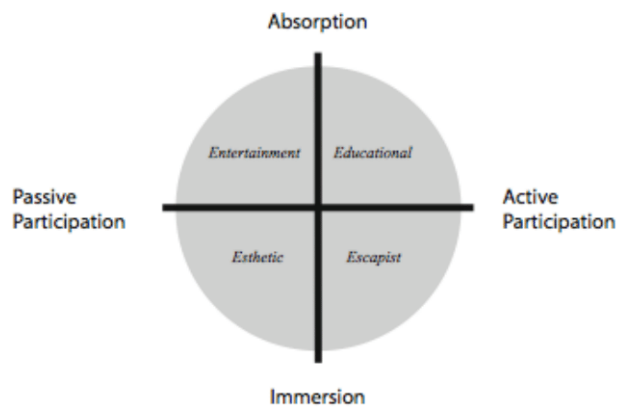
Figure 4: Four realms of experience (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 30)

Getz (2007) describes the different meanings of the word "experience" in terms of cognition, consciousness, influence, feelings, knowledge and skills. The author also offers various interpretations of the verb "to experience", in relation to events, emotions, feelings and changes, and offers to differentiate the behavioural, cognitive and emotional components of experience. The behavioural component of experience characterizes the real behaviour of people, including their physical activity, it can be described as real actions of people in relation to the object. The cognitive component determines how a person understands, remembers and evaluates the experience received. The emotional component of experience includes emotions, feelings and values. Therefore, the description of experience as pleasure is associated with the emotions of people, while social aspects (social interaction, sense of belonging to the community) reflect their values.
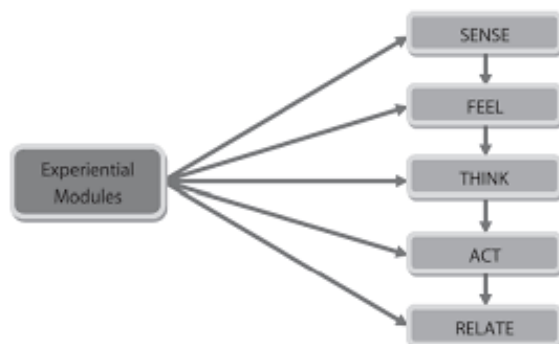
Figure 5: Experiential modules (Schmitt 1999, 60)

Schmitt (1999) uses the term "experience marketing", which is fundamentally different from traditional marketing, which defines consumers as rational decision-makers based on economic benefits and functional characteristics. Unlike from a standard approach, experience marketing describes customers as people experiencing numerous emotions and striving to get as many pleasant experiences as possible. Schmitt (1999) identifies five strategic modules that can be used to form customer experiences: sensory experiences (SENSE), emotional experi-

ences (FEEL), physical experiences (ACT), cognitive experiences (THINK) and socially identifying experiences that are associated with a certain group or culture (RELATE) (Figure 5).

The purpose of SENSE marketing in the opinion of Schmitt (1999) is to create sensations perceived by the senses - sounds, touches, tastes and smells. According to the author, SENSE marketing can be used to differentiate brands with products and motivate customers. FEEL marketing is focused on the emotions and feelings of customers; its task is to provide emotional attachment to a product or service. ACT marketing aims to influence people's physical experiences by offering them alternative activities and an alternative lifestyle. THINK marketing is addressed to the intellect of people and appeals to the creative potential of customers, forming their cognitive experiences. RELATE marketing involves various aspects of the other components considered, but goes beyond the personal inner experiences of the individual.

3.2.3 Emotions of event visitors

Many studies describe the significant predominance of the emotional components of the impressions of event participants. Therefore, when studying the complex of impressions of visitors to events, it is necessary first of all to study the emotional state of visitors, including the periods before and after the event. Plutchik (2001) proposed an evolutionary theory of emotions, describing eight basic emotions (joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness, anticipation, anger and disgust), and various levels, covering a wide range of emotions.
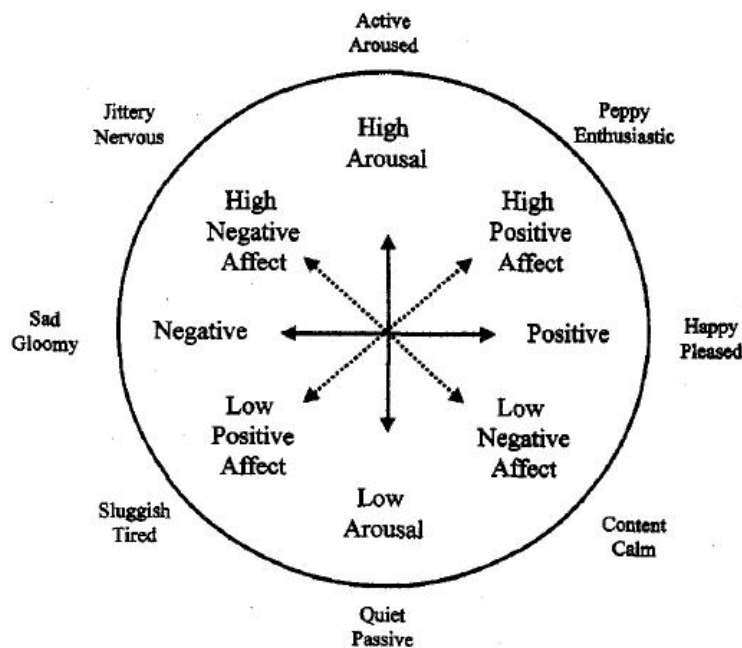

Figure 6: Two-dimensional emotions model (Russell & Mehrabian 1977, 291)

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In multidimensional models of emotions, two or three dimensions of emotions are defined, usually including valency (positive or negative) and emotional arousal (Figure 6). According to some researchers, arousal is the main characteristic of experiencing emotions. Russell and Mehrabian (1977) developed a PAD emotional state model that describes three main dimensions of emotions: pleasure, arousal and dominance and also introduced the scales "pleasure-displeasure", "high arousal-low arousal" and "submission-dominance".

4   Event planning research methods

In this chapter author is figuring out what kind of applicable research methods would work to succeed in the event planning and management. Quantitative research method is implemented in order to focus on the customer and benchmarking by the means of net scouting is applied to get the best practices from the industry-leading companies. Author analyzes the received data and forms her own vision of how to work with the client in the most effective way.

4.1   Interview as the research method

Interviewing is a technique for gathering knowledge through oral direct contact. Provides registration and interpretation of responses to questions, as well as research into the characteristics of respondents' nonverbal behavior. In comparison to casual communication, the interviewing method has a specific goal, entails preliminary preparation of measures to gather evidence, and involves the processing of the gathered data. (Miller & Rollnick 2012, 25.)

It is a subjective approach and there is a very high chance of getting an incorrect, intentionally or unintentionally corrupted message. On the one side, there is a respondent, who is an individual taking part in the survey as a source of information. On the other, there is an interviewer, who is the one in charge of the survey. (Miller & Rollnick 2012, 27). Respondents may deviate from the truthful facts for a variety of reasons. Among these facts are: conformity with actual or perceived coercion from the interviewer, a proclivity to share socially acceptable views, the effect of current behavioral beliefs and thought stereotypes on responses; a vague knowledge of their own opinions; positions and relationships; lack of knowledge of certain evidence or inaccurate information; hostility toward the researcher; concerns over the resulting security of the message's confidentiality; intentional deceit or deliberate silence; or accidental memory errors. (Miller & Rollnick 2012, 30.)

The types of interviews can be categorized in the following ways: single or multiple, individual or group, based on the circumstances of the process. Interviews are classified into three types based on their mode of communication: free interviews, structured interviews, and semi-structured interviews. (Miller & Rollnick 2012, 31.)

A free interview is a dialogue in which the researcher has the freedom to adjust the subject, order, and arrangement of questions if needed to ensure the procedure's effectiveness. It is distinguished by the adaptability of the strategies used to create a discussion on a specific subject, the full attention given to the particular features of the respondents, and the comparatively more simple conditions of the study. The challenge in comparing the responses obtained is due to the large variability of the questions posed. The benefit of a free interview is that it allows respondents to articulate their own points of view and articulate themselves more fully. Because of these advantages, a free interview is often used in the early stages of the research. (Miller & Rollnick 2012, 32.)

A structured interview conducts a survey in accordance with a precisely defined scheme that is the same for all participants. The interviewer is not permitted to modify the wording or order of the questions, nor does he or she ask new ones. The procedure's conditions are specified. (Miller, Rollnick, 2012, 32). As a result, all individual responses are highly comparable, the amount of mistakes in query specification is kept to a minimum, and the reliability of the survey results is improved. All of this is relevant in situations where it is possible to interview a significant number of individuals and process information using statistical methods. However, respondents' views are seldom fully expressed, and the survey itself becomes rather hierarchical in nature, making it difficult to maintain good communication between the researcher and the participants. (Enabulele 2018, 41).

The semi-structured interview combines two kinds of questions. Some - obligatory, key ones - can be posed to each interviewee, and others - "sub-questions," clarifying - are included in the dialogue or omitted from it by the interviewer, depending on the responses to the key questions. As a result, the survey's flexibility is accomplished, as is the opportunity to take into account the individual traits of the participants and modifications in the communicative situation. At the same time, the knowledge collected in this approach is highly comparable. The researcher effectively directs the conversation, driving the respondents' attention to any additional elements of the explored problems when needed. The activity of the interviewer in holding a semi-structured interview is very close to the general scheme of computer program operation (if ... then ... otherwise). If the respondent said (or did not say) something or demonstrated (or did not demonstrate) any behavioral response, he is asked the given question. If he behaved differently, he is asked a new question, and so on. (Enabulele 2018, 43-45.)

The interview is organized as follows: introduction, main section, and conclusion. Introduction to the conversation: making contact, informing about the survey's goals and conditions of operation, developing an attitude toward collaboration, and responding to the respondent's questions. The crucial step of the interview includes doing extensive analysis in accordance

with a predetermined schedule. And the end of the dialogue is a release of tension; an expression of appreciation and recognition for involvement in the work. (Enabulele 2018, 46.)

Questions that tend to optimize the analysis process (identify a degree of consciousness of the respondent, understand the intent of the interview, contribute to the establishment and maintenance of communication with the interviewer) can be categorized as procedural (or operational) in relation to the study purpose; and thematic (informational), based on which such psychological hypotheses are drawn in the future. (Enabulele 2018, 48.)

According to their substance, questions are separated into accurate facts regarding the social role of the respondent and the events of his/her life; explain the respondent's subjective views, the motivations of his/her behaving, his/her feelings towards him/her and others. Depending on the context of the responses, brief, monosyllabic, unusual responses may be received or widespread, detailed opinions and positions expressed by respondents. The response form may conclude questions where an interviewee is to only make his or her choice from the answer options given, without going beyond or open in which the interviewed person formulates his or her own answer. (Enabulele 2018, 49.)

There are some guidelines to write questions for the interview. Each question, for example, must be logically clear and do not have many relatively independent components requiring separate responses. The use of less familiar unusual terms, special expressions and words of infinite significance should be avoided, making the task of the respondents difficult. It is hard to answer questions that are unnecessarily long, given that the respondent cannot fully recall them and only answer several or deny any answer. Small questions are preferred to broad or widespread ones. (Cenedella 2019, 31-34.)

The interview cannot be started with questions which are comparatively difficult or non-interesting for the interviewee or which he/she considers too personal. The more interested they are in the interview, the harder it is for them to decline to discuss this topic. In case the respondent is not sufficiently qualified, it is often desired to make an adequate preface and to clarify the material in the question to him or her by example. (Cenedella 2019, 35.)

Interview data recording is a specific concern. The secret tape recorder for instance does not correspond with the ethical values of science in the disguises of technical methods to record responses. Open recording with professional equipment results in a very embarrassing for respondents. Similarly, interview transcripts or verbatim notices of the interviewer impair their behavior. Since memory-only material fixation sometimes results in distortions of the material at the conclusion of the survey process. (Cenedella 2019, 37.)

4.2 Process and results of the interview

The subject for the research is engaged couple Anastasia and Andrew, who are planning their wedding. For this particular research author has chosen the semi-structured type of the interview. The goal of this interview is to figure out the wishes and requests for the customers' special event, as well as to understand their mood and mind-set, so to arrange the event they would be happy about. The interview was hold via Zoom.us video call on 13.04.2021 at 13:30. The couple was asked to think and discuss the event also before the meeting, so some questions were sent in advance. The interview questions are presented in Appendix 1.

Author believes it is important to know some personal details about the couple to get the big picture and testimonial. The bride and groom are together for about 4 years and they decided to get married already in 2019 when the proposal was made. This couple likes to travel and one of important countries in their union is Italy, as the proposal to marry was made there. They describe themselves as a quite romantic couple, so small details are crucial for them. The couple is not planning to write their own wedding vows, as they feel too sentimental to read them out loud in front of the people. Previously they were planning to get married on 30th September 2020, but because of the pandemic it was decided to postpone to 2021, but with saving the same date. They know each other pretty well and are quite romantic and sentimental, as they have chosen the date for the wedding to be the same as their engagement day that happened in Italy. From this, author believes that Italian motives should be very meaningful for the couple and they would enjoy bringing those to their wedding day as well.

Author has figured out that the couple likes when the wedding ceremony and party are held outdoors with lots of room, space and air, without precise seating of guests. Number of guests will be about 45-50 people and the style of the whole event is needed to be elegant and classy with some Italian twist. The total budget for this kind of event is set to be around €5,000 with the absolute maximum of €8,000.

The couple is not much into special national or family traditions but at the same time there are some highlighted points that are important for the bride, like photo shoot, first dance, cake cutting and tossing the bouquet. Bride and groom are not willing to get married in the church or registered office, they would like to do it on-site, it would be convenient not to travel between the actual registry and the reception. So the party will follow the main part of the event - the ceremony hosted by the registrar that will start in the afternoon.

The venue should be a manor or an old building with the big field or garden, so that the event could be held outside, but would be still possible to arrange the tent or move the whole event indoors if the weather would not be suitable. Important aspect is that if the venue would be

situated out of the city, there should be the possibility to stay overnight for all the guests. No special transportation is going to be arranged, guests will be coming and leaving by their own.

As an entertainment the live music cover band is planned and some decorated photo zones for guests to take pictures. Mostly all the guests know each other, so bride and groom believe no special amusements are needed, as people would like to chat and spend time together rather then watch any kind of performances. There is not going to be any structured table setting, the whole event is planned to look more like a cocktail party, with the snack buffet and drinks.

During the interview author has figured out that picking the right menu and beverages for guests might be a struggle, so it was decided to design the questionnaire (Appendix 2) to solve the problem. It includes basic questions about food preferences such as meat, fish, vegetarian or vegan options, as well as intolerances such as gluten and lactose. Another point in this questionnaire is related to beverages, as in order to count all the amounts it is important to understand the preferences of the consumers. There are also several options like sparkling, white or red wine, whiskey, cognac or non-alcoholic option. As agreed with the couple, this questionnaire will be sent to their guests together with "save the date" cards.

4.3   Benchmarking through net scouting

Today there are hundreds of definitions of benchmarking by both scientists and practitioners. The authors' approaches, despite all their apparent similarities, may differ. One of the most comprehensive definitions of benchmarking, which is integrative of other definitions, describes it as continuous analysis of strategies, functions, processes, products or services, characteristics, etc. in comparison with the best organizations, through an appropriate method of data collection in order to assess the existing standards of the company and self-improvement by introducing changes or raising these standards (Anand & Rambabu 2008, 259.)

Andersen (2007, 227) also considers the benchmarking mechanism as one of the key tools for improving a company's business processes. He conventionally divided the benchmarking process into five main phases (planning, search, observation, analysis, adaptation), which are the so-called "benchmarking wheel" (Figure 7). Each of these phases also includes several stages.
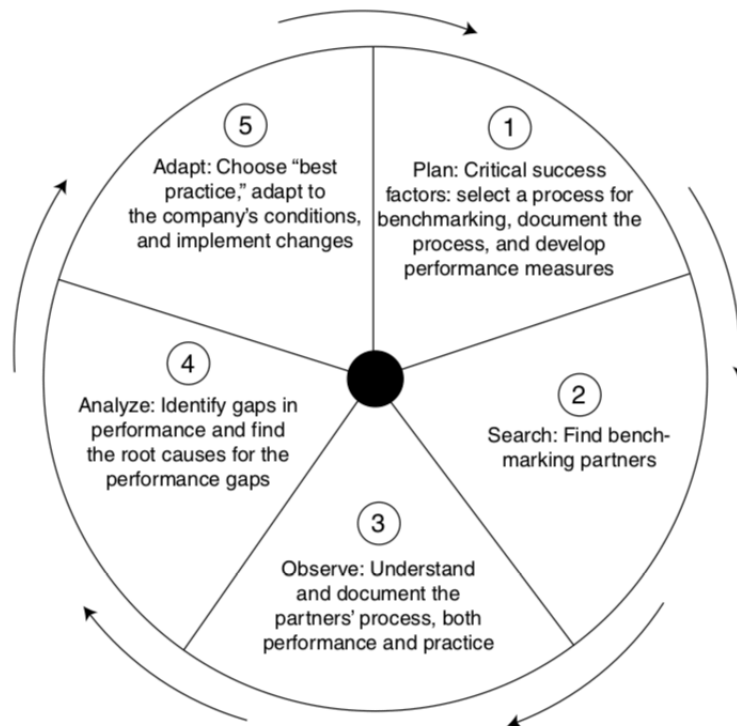
Figure 7: The benchmarking wheel showing the benchmarking process. (Andersen 2007, 228)

Planning means assessment of the internal and external environment of the company and identification of areas for improvements. This stage involves diagnosing the company and identifying key performance indicators. The information that was obtained during the assessment is a benchmark for comparison with competitors and it allows to identify the strengths and weaknesses of activities. Areas where performance differs significantly from competitive or ideal are potential benchmarks (Andersen 2007, 228). Searching is determination of a benchmarking partner and selection of the type of reference comparison. Choosing a benchmarking partner is a difficult but important step that determines the success of the entire project (Andersen 2007, 229).

Observation is about collecting of information. For gathering the information, different tools like questionnaires, interviews or direct observations can be used. The result can be achieved by the personal contact, like phone or visit, but also virtually. After that, the information should be sorted and it is good to remember adding the personal impressions in the notes (Andersen 2007, 231.)

The virtual way of observation is net scouting. This approach involves looking for information on the Internet. When conducting research, it is best to use net scouting at the start of the process to obtain as much insight and knowledge as possible. When using this approach, it should be kept in mind that the origins of each article posted on the Internet should be verified to determine if the articles are accurate. It is important to remember to narrow down

the topic when using net scouting, as the Internet is full of articles that may or may not be related to the current. (Moritz 2005, 194.)

Analysis of information, determination of restrictions on project implementation and development of an implementation plan. Having received qualitative and quantitative information about the activities of the reference company, it is necessary to analyze the data obtained and determine which block of information can help improve the work of your company (Andersen 2007, 232). Adaptation means implementation of the gained experience in the company's activities. Definition on how does the ideal process look like and what kind of actions should be implemented to reach the goal. The last stage of the process of formation and implementation of benchmarking is the assessment and control of the implemented changes. The main goals of control are to ensure performance, timely detection of deflections and effective achievement of the assigned tasks in a timely manner (Andersen 2007, 233).

4.4   Process and results of net scouting

In this chapter the net scouting practices will be applied in order to get specific information about other event planning companies that arrange weddings. The goal is to understand the structure of their work, therefore the following questions were formed: what channels of connections to the customers do they have; what is the pricing; what kind of services are included; who is actually responsible for the work? The author has chosen three companies that are quite successful and it is a good chance to gain some experience and inspiration from them. Companies chosen are the following: Andrea Eppolito Weddings & Events, Smiling though Chaos and Modern Grace Events. For this particular research there were used personal blogs, video diaries and interview podcasts, so the author gets the most full picture of the ways in which the companies work and what are their visions. Andrea Eppolito Weddings & Events is focused on the luxury event experience, Smiling though Chaos offers wellbeing services in addition to event planning and Modern Grace Events has the most flexible service options.

Andrea Eppolito Weddings & Events

10 years old company based in Las Vegas, USA and is arranging extraordinary events for extraordinary people. The founder, Andrea Eppolito is Italian-American hospitality associate who is basically running the whole process of any wedding planning mainly herself. There is a limit of 6-8 weddings per year that the company is working at, as she believes it is not possible to keep the high standard of the events, working simultaneously with the bigger number of couples as she is paying her clients appropriate amount of time and attention. But at the same time, in order to reach her customers Andrea is using as many channels as possible. In addition to the website and basic social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook, she has widely developed her Pinterest board and YouTube channel, where she is sharing useful con-

tent for engaged couples and active brides. In addition, she has her own podcast, where she is talking about the actual problems of the industry, as well as sharing the tips and advices to the couples.

Andrea considers that firstly it is important to understand who are the people (her clients) and how do they see themselves in the world, why do they want this wedding or why do they think they want this wedding? Her way of designing the events is to see it with her customer's eyes. She always visits their home or asks for a video tour to figure out how do they live, what kind of colors and things are they surrounded with. During the first calls or meetings the wedding in particular is not really discussed, as Andrea is trying to dive as deeply into their lives as possible and to find something that is really personal. She claims it is the way to bring the event to the completely new level considering feelings and emotions.

During the event planning and preparation Andrea is paying lot of time to details – she accompanies her couple while choosing the jewelry, takes them shoe shopping, participates in choosing the dress, attends all the tastings. There is no limit for phone calls, meetings and texts until all the questions will be covered. That is the main reason there is a limit on her signature weddings per year. Her attention to details appears during each step of wedding design. As an example, Andrea loves to bring some personal item from her couple's home to the reception venue, as she believes that things carry energy and will give support in the very exciting moment. This company's pricing depends on the job required and involves both an attendant and a management fee ranging from 15% to 20%. These expenses are deducted from the total wedding budget. When mentioning about the vendor service, Andrea claims it should be arranged so smoothly, in the way so that the guests and the couple would almost not notice the process, only the result. In her opinion it will make people focus on participation in the event, without being distracted by trifles.

Smiling though Chaos

The company is founded and leaded by Amanda Hudes, who is not only an event planner, but also nutritionist, Yoga trainer, Reiki healer and a Behavior Change Specialist. All these knowledge helps to apply new practices into ordinary event planning. As an example, to decrease the stress level of the couple and their families, Amanda offers different kind of wellness activities and routines as well as changing wrong eating habits to more effective nutritional plans. Besides the website with all the structured information, Amanda is quite active on her Instagram blog, where she is sharing behind the scenes stories, her personal life and family, as well as wedding pictures and her previous clients' reviews and feedbacks.

With wedding planning Smiling through Chaos have several services – exclusive planning, which means planning the entire weekend (rehearsal, dinner, brunch, wedding or cultural weddings that last several days), full planning from start to finish including the day of, or a

month of coordination. Amanda lines up that relationship between wedding planner and the couple should be all about communication and transparency and her contract is about 10 pages. In the means of pricing she does not do the percentage as in her opinion it is unfair to charge differently for the same amount of work done, so she has the fixed fee plus hourly consultation fee in special and additional cases.

Amanda's approach is to read the people, watch the body language. As an example, while dress shopping she is watching if the client is stressed out and who is stressing them out, if there is someone. Amanda is building trustful relationship with her couples in the way she can lead the event planning and her advices are meaningful. She pays attention to not only what the couple particularly wants, but also makes sure they think about what do their guests want – especially considering food and music. Smiling through Chaos company finishes all the preparations a week before the wedding, as they believe it is important for the couple to calm down, relax and enjoy the time.

Amanda believes the key to success is to be flexible and to make things happen; there is no such word as "cannot", having this mind set helps a lot in reaching the goals. Normally her team spends 8-10 hours on the wedding day of, coordinating the event, following the schedule, solving the issues that my arise. They make sure the couple and guests are happy and satisfied, vendors cope with all the tasks and their day is over only when all the visitors have left the venue. After the wedding she keeps up with her clients, as she believes these kind or relationship is worth keeping.

Modern Grace Events

Even though the company was established only 2 years ago, co-founders Ashlee and Jessica planned the first wedding 4 years ago. Forming the brand helped them to increase engagement, build awareness and also rise the pricing for the services. Ashlee and Jessica believe it is quite beneficial to work together on the weddings, as each of them has her strengths and weaknesses, so they can divide the work in the most valuable way and there is always the partner who will belay.

Regarding the pricing, Modern Grace Events has 4 types of packages, starting with the luxurious experience as the most expensive option, followed by full service planning, then comes the opportunity to order only the design of the event, and the cheapest choice is 2 month before curating the wedding. They also offer custom pricing for the option where the couple can pick defined services as: help with the budget, vendor contract checking, supervision on the day of or even the phone call consultation. They have added this service after the pandemic, as it helps the customers arranging micro weddings or having a tight budget.

Even though all the information can be well obtained through the website, Jessica and Ashley are using Instagram blog, showing beautiful wedding pictures, tagging some of their vendors and keeping their followers updated with the news. Modern Grace Events are specialized more in rustic and shabby chick styled weddings, but it is not a must. There are no rules when it comes to wedding planning from this company; Ashlee and Jessica encourage their couples to show their individuality and to bring it to their wedding day with some special features inherent only to them.

Analyzing the information received it is quite understandable that even though all the companies are providing the same basic service, it can be done in quite different ways. Special feature of Andrea Eppolito Events is the special attention to details and deep customer understanding. In authors opinion it helps the organizer to get into trust and build special relationship with the customer, so that it becomes possible to get that special vision. Smiling Through Chaos company masterfully applies the additional knowledge that the founder has. Understanding that getting ready for the event like wedding is quite stressful for the clients it is essential to use any kind of methods for making them calm down and enjoy that special moment in their lives. The benefit of Modern Grace Events is the possibility to order selective services in place of full package. Due to different obstacles this kind of option might become a game changer for some customers.

This method of research is quite applicable and in author's opinion it should be used quite regularly, to improve own business and bring new ideas to it. Benchmarking, also by the means of net scouting, should be an ongoing process aimed at enhancing a company's competitive advantage. For the progressive business development it is necessary to follow the market trends and predict what will cause the greatest interest in the future.

5   Outcomes

This chapter is combining all the previously mentioned theory and research knowledge in order to design the model of the event that will be implemented later. It will contain the overall picture and the details that should be taken into consideration. Scheduling and budgeting are made and in the end, this plan will receive the feedback from the customers of the event company.

5.1   Event vision and concept

During the interview with the couple, author has found out what are their preferences concerning the style and the overall experience of the event that is important to take into consideration. The whole event should happen at the manor/farmhouse, with enough space in the garden to arrange the aisle with sittings for 50 people and then to transform the venue to

the dining and partying area. In case of bad weather there should be enough space to put a tent or any other cover to fit everyone. The style of the whole wedding is elegant, classy, with Italian twist.

Decorations should combine cultural symbolism with home simplicity, as is customary in Italian weddings. Olive twigs that would be found everywhere: in vases, tables, chairs and garlands, remain integral attributes. Also, the basis of the wedding should be floral arrangements and compositions, garlands, flowerpots with flowers. All this should be complemented by the presence of a large amount of fruits and vegetables in the vases. In addition, candles, fairy lights and lanterns will be excellent attributes. Figure 8 is a mood board with the idea of the overall event design.

Figure 8: Event design mood board

Particular attention should be paid to the design of invitation cards for guests. Wedding invitations are not just a beautiful information card, in which date, address and time are written. Invitations give great ideas about the style of the event, those help to comprehend the concept of the wedding. Guests should be sent / handed out: invitation indicating the date of the wedding, the venue, address and time; dress code details: the palette of events (or options for stales of evening outfits); phone number of the organizer or responsible person; small

route map, so that the guests can quickly find the wedding venue or a parking at the spot. And all that sent in the envelope. In addition, same style as the invitations should be the place cards, menu cards and thank-you cards that can be attached to the presents for the guests in memory of an unforgettable event. Those could be beautifully designed bottles with spices and oils as gifts. Figure 9 is a mood board for the wedding stationery and gifts.

Figure 9: Wedding stationery

The bride's outfit should match the classic style. A white lace dress will look very cute and touching - it will create the image of an Italian bride. The presence of a veil or veil covering the bride's face is one option; another would be some flower elements in the hairstyle. The bride's makeup should be delicate, with bright arrows in the eyes and lush eyelashes, dim lipstick. Accessories like necklaces and earrings would complete the look. The image of the groom must necessarily match the style of the bride. This should be a classic suit with a vest or a jacket, and a thin tie, bowtie or even without any.

For the bride's bouquet, it is necessary to create an original composition with a variety of bright colors, which will emphasize the beautiful and variegated essence of Italy. Olive twigs and greens can be added to the composition. The basis of the bouquet can include lilies, roses, orchids, asters and wildflowers of all colors. Groom's boutonniere should match the bride's bouquet.

In addition, the younger girls of the family or friends could be the flower girls. For example, they can walk in front of the bride, showering her path with flower petals. Or hold the hem of a dress or veil if those are too long. They can also carry boxes with rings and bring them to the couple at the right time. The outfits for the flower girls can be the same light color, or the same style, but different colors, so that all girls are different.

The outfits should be simple, but sophisticated, should be combined with the bride's dress, without overshadowing its beauty, and should not stand out from the general theme of the wedding. Dresses for bridesmaids will be made of the same material, the same color or palette, but different styles (different bodice shapes, variability of drapery, the presence of straps or lack thereof). So each girl can choose an outfit that suits her body type. Almost the same for the groomsmen – their outfits should match the groom's suite in style or color and also correlate with each other. Figure 10 is a mood board for the outfits and accessories.

Figure 10: Outfits and accessories

Menu should contain of snacks, main dish and dessert. It is planned to continue with the Italian style also in the means food and beverages. Italian cuisine suggests a lot of vegetables, those can be grilled or cut into fresh salad, in addition a lot of like of basil, arugula, rosemary and so on. Those can be added to salads, to the main dish for the decor, as well as served on

plates in the fresh form. Cheese plate with both soft and solid varieties, salted and spicy, with mold and without. Those can be served with honey, nuts or fruits. Lots of traditional Italian dishes are made from pasta. It can be applied as the main dish. Special attention should be paid to sauces. It will be perfect if guests will be given several options to choose from. Small desserts should also be available at the buffet, so that everyone could choose what they specially like. The wedding cake will be designed similarly as the whole event – minimalistic with some flower or floral decoration.

It is planned to start the party with sparkling wine, followed by other types of wine and stronger drinks for those, who desire. As non-alcohol options there should be fruity lemonades and fresh water. Coffee and tea are served together with the cake. Figure 11 is a mood board for the food and beverages.

Figure 11: Food and beverages

In the beginning of the event there will be arranged the aisle with the chairs on the sides and the arch in the end (Figure 8). After the guests are seated, the main ceremony will start. The groom together with the registrar will wait for the bride to come down the aisle, then the vows will be pronounced and the rings exchanged. After that will be the time to receive congratulations and take photos of the newlyweds.

Later some tables will be arranged for the guests to be seated and eat, but the idea is not to stay at the table for too long. In addition there are going to be arranged different lounge zones, where guests would be able to gather in different companies and talk to each other or play games. Photo zone or photo-booth is another excellent option for entertainment. It is a beautifully decorated zone where guests can take pictures. It will be designed in the style of the event, with recognizable details like own wedding hashtag and different accessories. It would be possible to take pictures with guests' own cameras or Polaroid instant camera, to get the images straight away. Those can be glued to the guest book, together with writing the wishes to the newlyweds. This would be the main gift to the couple, as it is quite sentimental memory from their special day.

Live music is a great addition to an exquisite wedding evening with a well-thought-out program, and to a cozy dinner for the closest. So there is going to be a musical cover band playing well-known songs, so everyone could dance. The event will slowly end after tossing the bouquet for unmarried ladies and cake cutting. Figure 12 is a mood board for the entertainment at the event.

Figure 12: Wedding party entertainment

The concept of a wedding is the unity of all components of the details of the wedding, where nothing is knocked out from the framework of the chosen idea, and all the elements are harmoniously combined with each other. Fashion changes, but the aesthetically good taste remains unchanged. Author takes into consideration, that when the couple will view wedding photos in 10 years, they should remember the connection between all the details and will still consider their wedding the most beautiful history of love, which they can rightfully be proud of. Arranging the feeling of "timeless" for the wedding is very important, so that the story would not eventually be tied to a specific decade, specific trend and fashion, it should just be beautiful - equally beautiful for the couple themselves and for their future children and even grandchildren.

5.2   Planning process & event model

After the decisions on the concept, date and the budget of the event were made it is important to start with the venue reservation. The number of invitees affects not only the budget of the event, but also its format. A step-by-step wedding plan and step-by-step preparation begins with a guest list. After that, it will immediately become clear which site is more suitable for such a number of guests. As was already defined during the interview with the couple, the number of guests will be limited to 50, this gives a bigger opportunity options for choosing the celebration site.

Since the couple does not want to be involved in travel arrangements for the guests, those will arrive on their own. There are two choices for selecting a site: one with an overnight choice for visitors, but located outside of the city, or one without overnight options but within the city, where people can take a taxi home. Second alternative obviously is a cheaper option, by all means, as traveling out of the city will also affect the pricing for the music, catering and other.

As planned by the concept, it is important that the venue has enough space for holding the event outside in the garden, and as an option – arranging a tent in the case of rainy or windy weather. Another important thing to take into consideration is the catering option on site, as this will greatly simplify the process of food and beverage arrangements. Opportunity of bringing own alcohol beverages would also be considered as a huge benefit.

Summarizing all of the above, author considers Villa Åkerblom located in Espoo is a fairly good venue for the event. As the event is planned to happen on Thursday it significantly decreases the venue cost, as it will be available for €695. For easier budget understanding the financial table is available in Appendix 4.

After the venue is booked it is crucial to send the invitations to the guests, so that they could plan their time appropriately. As mentioned in the concept, those are planned to be printed

in paper and sent / handed out in the envelope. The approximate cost of those if ordering from "Papershop" would be €124 for 24 pieces. This amount should be enough, but it may vary after the accurate guest list is ready. In the "Papershop" they have lots of ready-made design templates, some of them would perfectly match the event's concept.

Booking the date for marriage ceremony has to be done on time as well. According to the concept, it is not planned to visit the local register office, but it is preferred to invite the officiator to the venue to hold the ceremony. The fee for this service during office hours (9:00-16:15) is €150 plus travel expenses, out of office hours is €250. As an option, to save on this formality, the couple can come to the registry office day before or after and fix the papers for free. Then, during the ceremony on the wedding day some other person from the family or friends can stage the role of registrar.

Booking the photographer is quite an important step, as this person will be responsible for the main source of memories in the future. At "Mywed" there is a list of photographer portfolios, with the estimated price of €100-150 per hour. For the good wedding photo album 4-5 hours should be enough, so the total price is about €500.
Music is important at the wedding, as it will set the mood of the whole event. Music cover bands normally charge around €1500 for several hours and there is a big list of different bands at "Hääbändi.fi". In addition, it is possible to book the DJ from "Meririsvot Juhlapelvelu" with the price of €40 per hour for the after party.

Catering services available at the site of Villa Åkerblom are "Meririsvot Juhlapelvelu". They have rather diverse menu options and in addition they are open for upgrades and changes. Approximate pricing for the food and hot beverages are €40 per person, €2000 in total. For the wedding cake author considers "Natalian Konditoria" as an option. Wedding cakes they make - look good and the price is €4.50 per serving, €225 in total. Author considers that beverages would cost approximately €15 per person, €750 in total and it is planned to get and deliver by own means, without any mediators.

Flower bouquet for the bride can be ordered from "Kukkakauppa Lumo". They have the option that would perfectly meet the color scheme and concept of the event. The cost for the flowers would be €80. Makeup and hairstyle can be made by "Diabeauty" and will cost €190 for the whole set.

All the decoration items for the venue is planned to buy online and arrange by the own means, according to the concept. Artificial greenery and flowers can be used in the place of the real ones; this will significantly decrease the costs. Candleholders, lanterns and other

elements can be purchased and sold afterwards for the similar event. The approximate over-all expenses for the décor would be €500.

For better understanding of the timing, author has designed the brochure that can be also sent to the guests, for them to be confident about the schedule (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Wedding day timing

The start of the event is planned on 30.09.2021 at 14:00, by this time all the guests should arrive and start to sit around the aisle. When everyone is ready, at 14:30 the main part begins with ceremonial walking in and continues with the registrar speech followed by bride's and fiancé's vows at 14:45. At 15:00 there is a time for everyone to salute the newlyweds and to take pictures with family and friends. While the couple gets their personal time together, guests can have first snacks and drinks, having fun and talking to each other starting from 16:00. At 17:30 the newlyweds come back to their guests and it is the time for the speeches followed by the dinner at 18:00. After eating the dance floor will be brightened up with the couple's first dance at 19:00 and all the guests are welcomed to join. At 20:00 there will be tossing of the bouquet followed by the cake cutting at 21:00. After dessert, at 21:30 DJ will

take place of the music band and it is the time for after party. Around 23:30 the Thank-you words would be said and guests will start to leave. The event should be over by 01:00. (Figure 13)

5.3   Methods implementation plan evaluation with the couple

Author had a meeting with the couple via Zoom.us video call on 23.05.2021. During the session the vision, plan and schedule of the upcoming event were discussed. They truly enjoyed the concept, especially Italian style in food and decoration, as this country laid the beginning for their family. In addition, as there is no real change to travel during the pandemic, they truly believe that their guests will be pleasantly surprised with the opportunity to plunge into the atmosphere of the foreign country.

Bride claimed that for her at the wedding it is very important to create a family-like cozy atmosphere, so that there were no unnecessary people; that is why they would probably decrease the guest list till 40. Therefore, she wants to create a group chat, where to unite all the guests. It is necessary so that all the guests just feel like a part of the event, and not guests at this holiday. That is why she would like to involve everyone in the preparation of the upcoming wedding, like decoration and entertainment zone arrangements.

According the actual marriage registration, the couple picked up the idea of staging the ceremony in a beautiful way and then registering in the local office on the next day. This would not only save on the budget, but also would make less stress if the family member hosts the ceremony. In addition, there are two little nieces of the bride who would perfectly fit the role of flower maids. Involving family member will make the event even more meaningful and valuable for the couple.

From the side of the bride and groom, there was a small disappointment that the author has not chosen the particular photographer and the music band, but at the same time they agreed that it would be interesting for them to review the portfolios and pick the exact ones by themselves, counting that all the actual booking and arrangements will be done by the author.

One of the main aspects of the customers' satisfaction was that the wedding plan fitted their budget. As the approximate amount planned to spent is approximately €6700 without clothing and rings, from the overall maximum budget of €8000. The dress for the bride is already bought during the last years wedding salon sale. Couple is planning to use the family rings that were inherited from fiancé's grandparents, as they believe it will make them remember the roots. Otherwise, only the groom's suite is left to purchase.

Bride and groom evaluated the model of their wedding very highly, claiming that in some aspects they were quite pleasantly surprised how deeply the author got their couple's character and mindset. They are looking forward to see the implementation in September.

6   Conclusion

The planning of a private event entails a number of processes that must be completed in order to turn concepts into reality. The main goal of this thesis was the creation of model of the special event plan, which could be easily implemented later. To do so the author has researched on the event and especially event management topic itself, focusing on the subject of the private celebrations and meaning of those in peoples' lives. It was important to understand the target audiences and how to become a client-oriented company, including the knowledge on the customers' experience, as every event is designed and arranged for the purposes of the visitor. Basically, author has proved that each event is customer oriented and the best way to succeed is to involve the visitors in the happening as much as possible.

This thesis is dedicated to the grand start for the author's own event agency, that is why it includes important tools for research and implementation. To understand her own first customers, author has conducted an interview with the engaged couple. This quantitative research made a big impact on the design, concept and vision of the event, as well as defined the budget of the whole thing. As a wedding planner, author has imagined a complete picture of the project. For the clients to be able to see how their decisions and ideas affect the overall wedding concept. The author has carefully and responsibly selected every detail, her decisions are based on ideas about scale, idea, location, price and how all this can come into balance with other elements of the wedding. The interaction of all these elements is a key condition for a solid concept and filling of the wedding day.

Using the benchmarking and net scouting research methods, author has got the idea of how the bigger and already established in the market event agencies are dealing with the same work. The main insight author got during the study is that it is very important to understand the customers, their needs and even try to penetrate their mind to see the world through their eyes and feel it with their heart. The concept of customer focus is one of the key concepts in marketing theory, firstly, as an element of the company's orientation to the market and, secondly, as an essential driver of business performance.

To get the critical evaluation of the work done, author has arranged the meeting with the clients of the event agency, to get their opinion about the upcoming event. The feedback was very positive, as the customers claimed that the created experience anticipated their expectations and they are looking forward to the day of implementation.

The aim of the thesis was the creating the working model that would be possible to use in the future to organize the similar kind of events. The plan of the particular wedding described in this work is a medium-size, quite family-like event, designed in the Italian style. This concept assumes specific details distinguishing the particular couple's state of mind. But the base of the plan, including the checklist and techniques can be easily adapted for any kind wedding, regardless of the style and size. The amount of job may vary, but the sequence and list of main tasks would stay unchanged. This makes the outcome of the thesis quite valuable in the future perspective.

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Figures

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview with the couple

- For how long do you know each other?

- How was the proposal made?

- Do you describe yourselves being romantic couple?

- Are you planning to write your own wedding vows?

- Have you already chosen the date for your wedding?

- Could you please describe some nice features that you have liked and remembered from other weddings you have attended?

- How many guests are you planning to have?

- What style would you prefer your wedding to be?

- What is your medium and also totally maximal budget?

- Are there any national or family traditions that it is important for you to observe during the wedding day?

- Do you want to get married in the church or register office?

- Any scheduling preferences?

- What kind of venue is in your mind?

- What about the guests – how are they going to arrive and leave if the event would be out of the town?

- What kind of entertainment would you like to have?

- And what about food?

Banquet menu

Please select the option that suits you best

What kind of meal option would suit you best?

- O   Meat

- O   Fish

- O   Vegetarian

- O   Vegan

Any kind of food intolerance?

- O   Red meat

- O   Lactose

- O   Gluten

- O   Other _____

What kind of beverages would you prefer?

- O   Sparkling wine

- O   White wine

- O   Red wine

- O   Whiskey

- O   Cognac

- O   Alcohol free

- O   Other _____

Any food and beverage related comments:

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 3: Wedding checklist

WEDDING DAY CHECK-LIST

FIRST THINGS TO DO:

- O Select the date
- O Define the budget
- O Make the guest list
- O Decide on the style and concept
- O Book the venue
- O Order & send the invitation cards
- O Apply to the registry office

SELECT THE VENDORS:

- O Photographer / Videographer
- O Music band / DJ
- O Host of the event (if required)
- O Catering
- O Cake confectioner
- O Transportation (if needed)
- O Make-up & hair artist

DEFINE THE OUTFITS:

- O Wedding dress & shoes
- O Groom's suite & shoes
- O Accessories
- O Wedding rings & jewelry
- O Bridesmaids' & groomsmen outfits
- O Wedding bouquet & boutonniere selection

VENUE DESIGN & SCHEDULE:

- O Decide on the decorations
- O Necessary elements buying / renting
- O Arrange the time schedule of the day

WEEK BEFORE THE WEDDING DAY:

- O Check all the vendors
- O Define the details
- O Instruct the team on the work & schedule
- O Get all the stuff ready and packed

Appendix 4: Wedding budget

Service	Price	Quantity/hours	Total
Venue	695,00 €	1	695,00 €
Cards		24	124,00 €
Registration	- €		- €
Photographer	100,00 €	5	500,00 €
Music Band			1 500,00 €
DJ	40,00 €	3	120,00 €
Catering	40,00 €	50	2 000,00 €
Cake	4,50 €	50	225,00 €
Bevarages	15,00 €	50	750,00 €
Bouquet	80,00 €	1	80,00 €
Hair & Make up	190,00 €	1	190,00 €
Décor			500,00 €
Wedding rings	- €	2	- €
IN TOTAL			**6 684,00 €**