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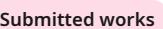
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Major Research Project
on

Targeting the Mandap: Understanding Gendered and Generational Responses to Wedding-Themed Advertising in India

Submitted By
Radhika Chaturvedi
23/DMBA/93

Under the Guidance of
Prof. Rajan Yadav
Associate Professor

DELHI SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
Delhi Technological University
Bawana Road Delhi 110042
DELHI TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Major Research Project titled **"Targeting the Mandap: Understanding Gendered and Generational Responses to Wedding-Themed Advertising in India"** has been carried out by **Radhika Chaturvedi** of **DELHI TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Business Administration** under my supervision.

The work embodied in this report is original and has been carried out by the student during the academic session 2024–2025.

Date: 19thMay,2025

Place: Delhi

Name: Prof. Rajan Yadav

Designation: Professor at DSM-DTU   **Signature of the Mentor**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Major Research Project titled **"Targeting the Mandap: Understanding Gendered and Generational Responses to Wedding-Themed Advertising in India"** submitted to **DELHI TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY**, is a record of original work completed by me, and has not been submitted earlier to any other institution or university for any degree or diploma.

The work was carried out during the academic session 2024–2025 under the guidance of **Prof. Rajan Yadav.**

Date: 19thMay,2025

Place: Delhi

Name: Radhika Chaturvedi

Roll No.: 2k23/DMBA/93   **Signature**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have supported and guided me throughout the journey of completing this Major Research Project titled *"Targeting the Mandap: Understanding Gendered and Generational Responses to Wedding-Themed Advertising in India."*

First and foremost, I extend my sincere thanks to my faculty mentor, **Prof. Rajan Yadav**, for his invaluable guidance, encouragement, and insightful feedback. His expertise and mentorship were instrumental at every stage of this research — from refining the research problem to shaping the methodology and analysis. I am truly grateful for his time, patience, and the academic rigor he brought to this project.

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To everyone who contributed to the completion of this project — directly or indirectly — I offer my sincere appreciation. This research has been a significant learning experience, and I am grateful to have had such a supportive circle around me.

Thank you all.

Radhika Chaturvedi

2k23/DMBA/93

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Weddings in India are more than personal milestones; they are grand cultural spectacles laden with symbolism, tradition, and deep emotional resonance. These occasions are not only about the union of two individuals but are seen as pivotal family and societal events. This cultural gravity has not gone unnoticed by marketers. Over the past two decades, wedding-themed advertising has emerged as one of the most emotionally charged and commercially effective formats in the Indian media landscape. From jewelry and ethnic wear to cosmetics, smartphones, and financial products, brands across categories have adopted wedding narratives to evoke emotion, create recall, and build brand loyalty. The convergence of commerce with culture, especially through advertising, has created a compelling need to understand how such content is received by diverse audiences.

This research project titled "Targeting the Mandap: Understanding Gendered and Generational Responses to Wedding-Themed Advertising in India" examines the nuanced ways in which consumers across age groups and genders perceive, relate to, and are influenced by wedding-based advertising. The focus is particularly on two demographic cohorts that dominate contemporary Indian consumer behavior: Generation Z (ages 18 to 25) and Millennials (ages 26 to 40), with equal attention given to different gender identities. The research was motivated by the observation that while wedding-themed campaigns are widely popular, there has been limited academic exploration into how gender and generational identities shape viewer response.

The study is driven by key questions: How emotionally resonant are wedding-themed advertisements for different demographic groups? Do younger audiences, such as Gen Z, prefer more modern portrayals in contrast to traditional depictions? Are there gendered perceptions regarding the pressure or ideals portrayed in such advertisements? How do these ads influence brand recall, consumer behavior, and personal expectations about marriage? To explore these questions, a structured, quantitative survey was developed and distributed online to 100 respondents across Tier 1 and Tier 2/3 cities in India. The instrument used a five-point Likert scale to capture levels of agreement or disagreement with statements relating to emotional appeal, cultural relatability, modern vs. traditional portrayals, brand influence, and societal impact of wedding-themed ads. Participants were selected to ensure balanced representation across age and gender groups. The data was analyzed using statistical

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tools, with independent sample t-tests and ANOVA to test for significant differences among demographic groups.

The findings reveal that wedding-themed advertisements continue to hold strong emotional appeal across the board. However, notable differences emerged along both gender and generational lines. Women reported stronger emotional responses to such advertisements compared to men, especially when the content involved familial bonds, rituals, or sentimental music. Respondents identifying as female were also more likely to express that such ads created societal pressure to conform to idealized versions of weddings. Generation Z, in contrast to Millennials, expressed a clear preference for wedding ads that reflect modern, egalitarian partnerships. They were more likely to critique ads that reinforced stereotypical roles or depicted women in submissive positions. Furthermore, Gen Z respondents viewed digital platforms as more authentic and engaging spaces for wedding content, whereas Millennials were more accepting of traditional television formats.

One of the most critical insights from the study is the emotional labor and societal pressure generated by wedding-themed advertising. Female respondents, in particular, articulated feelings of inadequacy or aspirational anxiety when exposed to idealized portrayals of weddings, beauty, or romance. Many acknowledged that while they enjoyed the aesthetic of such advertisements, they also felt that these narratives established unrealistic expectations. This double-edged emotional experience is something that marketers must become more aware of. It signals a need for more responsible storytelling that celebrates culture without commodifying it or distorting reality. In contrast, male respondents generally reported lower levels of emotional identification with such ads and showed greater skepticism towards the authenticity of emotions depicted in wedding-themed marketing.

The influence of such advertising on consumer behavior is significant. Respondents who found the ads emotionally engaging and culturally relevant were also more likely to recall brand names and consider purchasing products featured in those ads, particularly in the fashion, jewelry, and personal care segments. Interestingly, the recall rate was higher among Gen Z respondents when the ads were distributed through Instagram, YouTube, or other digital platforms. This finding reinforces the importance of platform selection in campaign design, especially when targeting younger audiences who consume media in a fundamentally different way than their older counterparts.

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The study also uncovered the evolving notion of what marriage means to young Indians. For Millennials, there was a lingering attachment to traditional values, albeit with openness to change. For Gen Z, however, the institution of marriage itself appeared more negotiable. Many expressed that their aspiration for marriage was shaped not just by cultural or familial expectations, but by the way marriage was portrayed in the media. They preferred advertisements that depicted partnerships based on equality, mutual respect, and shared ambition over those that glorified lavish spending or rigid gender roles.

This research contributes to a growing body of work that seeks to understand the cultural dimensions of marketing in India. It underscores the importance of segmenting audiences not just by age or income, but by values, attitudes, and media consumption habits. For marketers, the key takeaway is that while wedding-themed ads remain a potent tool, their effectiveness hinges on how well they align with the values and aspirations of the audience. Campaigns that appear tone-deaf or overly idealistic risk alienating the very consumers they seek to attract.

The study does have its limitations, including the relatively small sample size and the absence of qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups, which could have added deeper context. Future research could expand this framework by including intersectional variables such as religion, caste, or sexual orientation, all of which play crucial roles in shaping how weddings—and by extension, wedding advertising—are experienced in India.

In conclusion, the research reveals that wedding-themed advertising is more than a marketing strategy; it is a cultural intervention. These ads do not merely sell products—they sell ideals, aspirations, and versions of reality. As such, they wield considerable power. Marketers have the opportunity to use this power with responsibility, creating narratives that are not only emotionally compelling but also inclusive, authentic, and socially aware. In a country where the mandap continues to be both a personal and public stage, understanding the audience that gathers around it—be it physically or through a screen—is not just good strategy, it is essential storytelling.

Contents

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Weddings in India are more than ceremonial occasions—they are cultural cornerstones, economic powerhouses, and emotional experiences. With their elaborate rituals, vibrant colors, and opulent settings, Indian weddings have transcended the domain of family celebrations to become national spectacles that fuel a wide array of industries. These events, spanning several days, involve intricate ceremonies such as the Haldi, Mehendi, Sangeet, Baraat, and Vidaai, each with a distinct symbolic and cultural relevance. They are considered sacred rites of passage that bind not just two individuals but their families, communities, and even businesses.

The Indian wedding industry has witnessed an exponential boom in recent decades. Currently estimated to be worth over ₹3.7 lakh crore (approximately $50 billion), the sector grows annually at a rate of 20-25%. The magnitude of these numbers is not incidental. Weddings in India are planned with meticulous detail and celebrated with unmatched enthusiasm across all regions and religions. This includes Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, and other communities, each bringing unique customs to the celebratory table, enriching the fabric of the industry.

A wedding in India is rarely a modest affair. Families across income groups invest heavily—sometimes their life savings—on securing grand venues, hiring celebrity makeup artists, purchasing designer garments, organizing entertainment acts, and curating personalized guest experiences. Gold jewellery, destination bookings, designer lehengas, photography packages, high-end electronics, and elaborate catering services all form part of the ecosystem. For many, weddings serve as an avenue to project social status, fulfill familial obligations, and uphold cultural traditions. This 'event economy' keeps thousands of businesses and artisans employed and thriving.

From big cities like Mumbai and Delhi to smaller towns like Indore or Coimbatore, weddings are economic catalysts. The employment generated by the wedding industry is diverse—ranging from fashion designers, florists, choreographers, caterers, and photographers to tech startups and digital content creators. Wedding planners, previously reserved for elite circles, have now become mainstream, and technology-driven platforms help streamline invitations, vendor management, and even astrology consultations. This has contributed to the rise of a vibrant 'wedding-tech' ecosystem.

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Parallel to the growing industry is the rapid evolution of consumer culture. Aspirations are rising, traditions are adapting, and consumers are now more brand-conscious than ever. A visible trend in this space is how brands across sectors—from fashion and jewellery to fintech and electronics—leverage the emotional and visual appeal of weddings to forge deeper connections with consumers. These campaigns are often vivid, immersive, and packed with symbolism. They tap into emotions like love, pride, nostalgia, hope, and togetherness.

What started as a marketing strategy for bridal wear or jewellery has expanded into a full-blown branding opportunity across industries. Fintech apps pitch financial independence for couples; FMCG brands align themselves with rituals and preparations; hospitality and tourism brands sell destination wedding dreams; and electronics companies package their products as essential gifts or household must-haves. Even OTT platforms and insurance firms are crafting wedding-related narratives to engage with aspirational consumers.

The rise of wedding-themed marketing reflects the shift in advertising paradigms. Traditionally, wedding ads revolved around demure brides, approving families, and luxurious settings. Today, we are seeing a narrative diversification. Brands are telling stories of interfaith marriages, same-sex couples, second marriages, and women choosing independence over marital norms. These narratives not only challenge social stereotypes but also broaden brand relevance among younger, urban, and more progressive audiences.

However, this shift is not without its complexities. While Gen Z audiences in metros may find these themes refreshing and authentic, older millennials or residents of Tier 2 and 3 towns may perceive them as incongruent with tradition. This duality makes the space of wedding-themed marketing a rich ground for academic inquiry. Are such ads promoting change, or are they commodifying social reform? Are brands being inclusive, or simply performative? Do audiences emotionally connect with these themes, or does it create a cultural dissonance?

As brands explore deeper emotional storytelling, there is a need to understand how different consumer segments interpret these narratives. Emotional appeal is central to advertising success, but its effectiveness is contingent upon cultural relevance, personal values, and social context. It is not sufficient to assume that all audiences will respond positively to emotionally charged wedding imagery. A 21-year-old student from Bengaluru may find joy in an ad showcasing an inter-caste couple, while a 35-

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year-old homemaker from Varanasi may resonate more with ads emphasizing family blessings and rituals.

Understanding how gender and generation affect ad interpretation is vital. Gender roles, for example, continue to be at the heart of many wedding ads. While some challenge patriarchal norms, others subtly reinforce them. Generation also plays a crucial role—Gen Z consumers, exposed to global values and digital narratives, seek representation, authenticity, and social relevance. Millennials, often navigating between tradition and modernity, may have a more nuanced response.

Moreover, these marketing efforts are not just influencing purchase decisions; they are actively shaping societal conversations around marriage. Ads today don't just sell products—they sell ideals, emotions, and lifestyles. The repeated representation of certain narratives can either normalize progressive change or reinforce age-old expectations. In this context, brands carry not only commercial but also social responsibility.

Thus, it becomes imperative to study how wedding-themed marketing impacts consumers emotionally and behaviorally, across generations and genders. Such a study can offer valuable insights for marketers looking to craft more meaningful, culturally nuanced, and demographically targeted campaigns. It can also contribute to broader academic conversations about media influence, identity formation, and consumer psychology.

This research intends to fill a gap in understanding the reception of wedding-themed marketing in India. By focusing on emotional and behavioural responses from different consumer segments, it aims to decode how ads are not only consumed but also internalized and interpreted. In doing so, it hopes to provide a framework for more inclusive and effective advertising strategies in one of the world's most vibrant and emotionally resonant markets—the Indian wedding economy.

1.2 Problem Statement

In the vast and vibrant landscape of Indian consumerism, weddings stand out as more than just social events—they are emotional touchpoints, cultural milestones, and powerful commercial triggers. As one of the most recession-proof and resilient industries in the country, the Indian wedding economy continues to thrive even in times of economic uncertainty. The scale and sentiment attached to weddings make

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them ideal platforms for brand storytelling and consumer engagement. Consequently, brands across categories—ranging from traditional segments like fashion and jewellery to less conventional sectors like fintech, insurance, and electronics—have embraced wedding-themed advertising as a strategic marketing tool.

However, despite high investments in wedding-centric campaigns, there remains a lack of clarity regarding their actual effectiveness across different consumer demographics. Most marketing strategies operate on the assumption that the emotional appeal of weddings—symbolizing love, unity, prosperity, and new beginnings—is universal. But this assumption neglects the diverse and dynamic nature of Indian audiences. Responses to wedding-themed advertisements may differ significantly based on factors like age, gender, geographic location (urban vs rural), cultural background, and personal beliefs about marriage.

For instance, Gen Z consumers in metropolitan cities might resonate with campaigns showcasing interfaith or LGBTQ+ weddings that represent progressive ideals, while older generations or consumers in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities may find such portrayals discordant with traditional values. Similarly, while some viewers may perceive wedding-themed advertising as aspirational and emotionally evocative, others may view it as performative or overly commercialized. Furthermore, gender adds another complex layer to this dynamic. Wedding ads often portray idealized gender roles—brides as symbols of beauty, grace, or sacrifice; grooms as providers and protectors. While some brands attempt to challenge these roles, others inadvertently reinforce outdated stereotypes.

This evolving and sometimes contradictory consumer landscape makes it essential to examine how different demographic groups engage with wedding-themed advertisements. Are these ads enhancing brand recall and emotional connection? Or are they alienating segments of the audience who feel misrepresented or excluded? More importantly, how do these campaigns shape consumers' perspectives on marriage itself? As wedding-themed content becomes increasingly prevalent in Indian media, it is influencing not only what people buy but also how they think about love, relationships, gender roles, and familial expectations.

Currently, there is a gap in academic literature and industry insight regarding how various consumer segments interpret and respond to this form of advertising. Most existing research focuses either on the effectiveness of emotional appeals in advertising or on the sociology of Indian weddings—but rarely on the intersection of

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the two." This lack of empirical data and qualitative understanding leaves marketers operating in a space of uncertainty, relying more on cultural stereotypes and creative instincts than informed insights.

This study is designed to bridge that gap. By investigating how gender and generational cohorts (specifically Gen Z and Millennials) perceive and emotionally respond to wedding-themed marketing campaigns, the research aims to provide actionable insights for brand strategists and advertising professionals. The study will explore questions such as:

- How do consumers interpret the emotional and cultural narratives embedded in wedding-themed advertisements?
- Do men and women respond differently to such ads, and why?
- What differences exist in the perceptions of younger (Gen Z) versus slightly older (Millennial) consumers?
- How does geographic and cultural context—urban versus rural, Tier 1 versus Tier 2/3 cities—affect consumer engagement with these narratives?

Answering these questions will help assess the alignment (or misalignment) between brand messaging and consumer sentiment. It will also shed light on the deeper psychological and cultural mechanisms through which wedding-themed marketing influences consumer behaviour.

Moreover, the research will assess whether such advertisements genuinely contribute to brand loyalty and sales, or if they merely serve as feel-good content that lacks tangible business impact. In today's competitive and fragmented media environment, understanding this distinction is crucial for optimizing advertising budgets and storytelling strategies.

Another important dimension is the role of such advertisements in shaping societal norms. In a country where popular culture heavily influences personal decisions, repeated exposure to idealized wedding narratives can reinforce or challenge social expectations. Brands must be aware of the dual power they wield—not only as market players but also as cultural influencers.

Therefore, the problem at hand is not simply whether wedding-themed advertising "works," but rather: for whom does it work, how does it work, and at what cultural cost or benefit? The goal is to move beyond surface-level engagement metrics and understand the nuanced, human responses behind them. This approach will not only

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benefit brands aiming for deeper consumer connection but also contribute to more responsible and inclusive marketing practices.

In conclusion, the problem this study seeks to address is the current lack of nuanced understanding around the effectiveness of wedding-themed advertising in India. By focusing on the interplay of gender, generation, and cultural context, the research aims to uncover the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses that these ads evoke— and how these responses vary across different consumer segments. This will help marketers create more empathetic, targeted, and impactful campaigns that resonate with India's evolving consumer landscape.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This research is guided by a multi-layered objective framework that seeks to unpack the multifaceted relationship between wedding-themed advertising and Indian consumers. In particular, it focuses on how generational cohorts and gender identities shape interpretations, emotional reactions, and consumer behaviors. The overarching aim is to understand and quantify the effectiveness of these campaigns in a culturally and demographically diverse marketplace.

Primary Objectives

1. To examine the emotional and cognitive responses evoked by wedding-themed advertisements among Indian consumers.
   - Identify common emotional triggers (e.g., nostalgia, excitement, joy, skepticism).
   - Explore how these emotional reactions influence brand perception and recall.
2. To analyze the generational differences (Gen Z vs Millennials) in response to such advertising.
   - Understand how age-based values (e.g., individualism, tradition, modernity) affect ad reception.
   - Investigate generational media habits and exposure to wedding-related content.
3. To study gendered interpretations and reactions to the portrayal of weddings, marriage, and associated rituals in advertising.
   - Evaluate how men and women perceive gender roles depicted in these ads.

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- ○ Assess whether certain portrayals resonate more with specific gender identities.

4. To explore the influence of geographical location (urban vs rural, Tier 1 vs Tier 2/3) on how wedding ads are perceived.
   - ○ Determine if cultural and regional differences affect emotional connection to wedding narratives.
   - ○ Identify variations in expectations, aspirations, and values reflected in the ads.
5. To assess the impact of wedding-themed advertising on consumer behavior.
   - ○ Examine whether such ads lead to increased brand awareness, preference, and purchase intent.
   - ○ Explore how frequently consumers recall wedding-based ad campaigns in their purchase decisions.

Secondary Objectives

6. To understand how wedding-themed marketing contributes to the construction or reinforcement of societal ideals about marriage, relationships, and gender roles.
   - ○ Analyze the symbolic messages embedded in ad narratives.
   - ○ Identify whether these messages align with or challenge societal norms.
7. To identify gaps and opportunities for marketers in tailoring more inclusive and effective campaigns that reflect India's socio-cultural diversity.
   - ○ Pinpoint mismatches between intended messaging and actual audience interpretation.
   - ○ Offer recommendations for more responsive, ethical, and audience-sensitive marketing.
8. To evaluate the ethical implications of wedding advertising in shaping consumer expectations and emotional states.
   - ○ Consider issues such as aspirational pressure, gender stereotyping, and consumer manipulation.
9. To provide a foundational framework for future research and industry experimentation in demographic-specific marketing strategies.
   - ○ Build models of segment-wise advertising appeal.
   - ○ Suggest future longitudinal or experimental studies.

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10. To contribute to academic literature and industry practice by bridging the gap between marketing strategies and real-world consumer sentiment in the context of the Indian wedding economy.

- Deliver nuanced insights backed by both qualitative and quantitative data.
- Inform curriculum design, brand playbooks, and future advertising campaigns.

In essence, this study aims to move beyond measuring ad success merely in terms of impressions or engagement metrics. Instead, it focuses on unpacking how wedding-themed narratives work differently across identity categories and cultural contexts—allowing marketers and advertisers to craft messaging that is not only effective but also empathetic, ethical, and culturally attuned.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study defines the boundaries, limitations, and focus areas that will guide the research from conception to completion. It provides clarity on what the study aims to cover, the demographic and psychographic segments it will consider, and the extent to which its findings can be applied or generalized. In the context of this project, which seeks to examine gendered and generational responses to wedding-themed marketing in India, the scope spans across consumer behavior analysis, advertising impact measurement, and socio-cultural insight development.

1.4.1 Thematic Scope

This study primarily centers on wedding-themed advertising in India, a niche but highly influential category of marketing communication. While weddings themselves are deeply embedded within cultural, familial, and religious frameworks, their commercial representations—especially in advertising—have taken on a life of their own. Brands across industries are increasingly positioning their products and services within the context of Indian weddings, attempting to tap into the aspirational, emotional, and aesthetic value of this life-stage event.

The study will focus on understanding how these marketing efforts are perceived by consumers, particularly in terms of emotional engagement, cultural resonance, and behavioral influence. It will not be limited to any single sector but will examine a variety of categories—such as fashion and beauty, consumer durables, fintech,

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personal care, food and beverages, and even insurance or home loans—that use weddings as narrative tools in their promotional strategies.

Thematically, the study will explore:

- How marriage and weddings are depicted in Indian advertising
- Emotional, symbolic, and aspirational elements used in wedding-based narratives
- Cultural and psychological dimensions embedded in these representations
- Alignment (or misalignment) of such narratives with actual consumer values

1.4.2 Demographic Scope

The demographic focus of this study is twofold: generational and gender-based segmentation. Specifically, the study will target:

a) Generational Segments:

- Generation Z (born 1997–2012): Digital natives who are known for their value-centric buying, inclusivity, and openness to non-traditional ideas of relationships and gender roles. Their response to wedding advertising will offer insights into how modern consumers interpret legacy rituals.
- Millennials (born 1981–1996): The most economically active demographic, often in the marriageable age or recently married. Their responses will reflect both nostalgic and contemporary attitudes towards weddings and consumerism.

b) Gender Segments:

- Male and Female Consumers: The study aims to explore how gender influences the perception of weddings, relationships, and ideal partner expectations as portrayed in ads.
- Non-binary or gender-fluid identities (if data permits): As inclusivity becomes more central to brand storytelling, it is crucial to also consider emerging consumer groups that challenge traditional gender narratives.

c) Geographic and Cultural Segmentation:

- Urban vs Rural audiences: Exploring whether modern representations of weddings in advertising resonate equally across rural and urban populations.

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- "Tier 1 Vs Tier 2/Tier 3 Cities: Observing the cultural gradients in ad interpretation from highly metropolitan to semi-urban settings.

1.4.3 Methodological Scope

To achieve its objectives, the study will rely on a mixed-method approach that combines quantitative and qualitative research tools:

- Quantitative: Survey questionnaires using a 5-point Likert scale to measure consumer attitudes, emotional resonance, and behavioral tendencies. A minimum sample size of 150 respondents is targeted to ensure data reliability and segmentation analysis.
- Qualitative: Open-ended responses and focus group insights (if accessible) to delve deeper into the cultural and emotional narratives interpreted from wedding ads.
- Content Analysis: Select advertising campaigns will be reviewed to identify recurring themes, symbols, and tropes that influence audience interpretations.

The scope does not extend to:

- Cross-national analysis or international ad campaigns
- Detailed study of actual wedding planning or event management services unless specifically featured in marketing narratives
- Budget impact assessments or ROI calculations for brands (the focus remains consumer-facing)

1.4.4 Temporal Scope

The advertisements and consumer sentiments considered in this study are limited to the last five years (2020–2025), including the COVID-19 pandemic period and the post-pandemic consumer recovery phase. This time frame allows for an examination of how wedding advertising evolved during a period of digital transformation, social restriction, and shifting values.

The pandemic played a pivotal role in redefining wedding narratives—from grand, in-person celebrations to intimate digital ceremonies. Brands were quick to adapt, offering 'pandemic weddings' as symbolic representations of love's resilience. By analyzing ads from this era, the study will also gauge how crisis influences commercial storytelling and consumer emotion.

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1.4.5 Sectoral Scope

The study will evaluate wedding-themed advertising from a cross-industry perspective. This includes but is not limited to:

- Fashion and Apparel: Bridal wear, designer menswear, accessories
- Jewellery and Luxury Goods: Engagement and wedding jewellery campaigns
- Consumer Electronics and Home Appliances: Products marketed as 'wedding gifts' or couple-focused lifestyle enhancers
- Beauty and Personal Care: Skincare, grooming, and makeup ads around wedding-prep narratives
- Finance and Fintech: Wedding loans, insurance, investment schemes aimed at newlyweds
- Food and Beverages: Sweets, beverages, and ready-to-eat products positioned for wedding festivities
- Travel and Hospitality: Honeymoon packages and destination weddings

This inclusive approach ensures that findings are not industry-specific but instead reveal broad advertising patterns applicable across categories.

1.4.6 Ethical and Social Scope

While the study focuses primarily on advertising impact, it also seeks to understand the ethical and societal dimensions of wedding-themed marketing:

- How do these ads shape societal notions of beauty, gender roles, and family dynamics?
- Are aspirational portrayals leading to social pressure or unrealistic expectations?
- Can brands be more responsible and inclusive in their storytelling?

By probing these issues, the research contributes to the ongoing discourse on ethical advertising and social responsibility in marketing.

1.4.7 Conclusion

In sum, this research project is designed to explore wedding-themed advertising from multiple perspectives: emotional, cultural, demographic, ethical, and strategic. It will encompass a broad demographic spectrum, span multiple industries, and employ a robust methodological framework to extract insights. However, it will stay within the

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confines of consumer-facing advertising in India, keeping the focus sharp and relevant. The aim is to offer a comprehensive understanding of how wedding-themed advertising works—and for whom it works best—in modern India.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Indian Wedding Industry: A Cultural and Economic Powerhouse

A paper by Mathur and Sinha (2020) provides a compelling economic portrait of the Indian wedding industry, which is estimated to be worth over USD 50 billion and growing annually at a rate of 25-30%. Weddings in India, more than mere familial events, have evolved into cultural phenomena, involving significant expenditures on venues, clothing, food, jewellery, decor, and even technology. According to the Confederation of All India Traders (2021), Indian weddings contribute substantially to the GDP, with seasonal wedding booms driving up sales in retail, travel, and hospitality sectors.

Further, Deshpande (2019) examines how weddings function as public performances of socio-economic status, involving extended kin networks and communities. This aligns with Appadurai's (1986) theory of social imagination, where material consumption becomes a marker of identity and status. Indian weddings embody this logic, as families willingly invest savings and loans into extravagant displays of wealth and culture.

However, Dasgupta (2021) argues that this economic growth is uneven. While urban Tier 1 cities enjoy premium wedding services and global influence, rural and Tier 2/3 regions continue to rely on traditional systems such as community halls and local caterers. Despite this, the aspiration to mimic urban grandeur is noticeable across regions, leading to rising demand for luxury wedding services even in non-metropolitan areas (Kumar & Sen, 2020).

The seasonal nature of weddings—aligned with astrological calendars—creates spikes in consumer activity. This predictability allows brands to launch targeted campaigns. Sectors like tourism (honeymoon packages), fashion, banking (wedding loans), fintech, and even insurance leverage the wedding season for brand visibility and conversions.

In sum, Indian weddings serve as both cultural rituals and economic engines, blending emotion, tradition, and commerce in ways that make them ideal contexts for advertising.

2.2 Advertising and Cultural Narratives in Indian Weddings

Advertising in India has long relied on weddings as narrative anchors. A foundational paper by Nanda (2017) explores how wedding ads use familiar tropes—like bridal anxiety, parental pride, or ceremonial rituals—to evoke emotional resonance. These ads tap into what Roland Barthes (1972) termed 'mythologies'—collective beliefs that shape perception.

Brands like Tanishq, Manyavar, and Titan use weddings not merely as settings, but as emotional catalysts. For example, Tanishq's "Remarriage" ad (2013) broke conventional norms by portraying a woman with a child remarrying—earning both acclaim and debate. Scholars like Rajan (2018) point out how this ad disrupted the traditional narrative while reinforcing the brand's image as modern yet rooted in values.

Cultural semiotics in wedding ads also reveals a tendency to frame weddings as destiny, duty, and fulfillment. Sharma (2019) critiques how such ads often idealize submissive brides and self-sacrificing parents, thereby reinforcing patriarchal ideals. Yet, in recent years, the emergence of 'progressive weddings' in advertising reflects a shift. Ads now include themes of female agency, consent, inter-caste or interfaith unions, and LGBTQ+ representation (Khosla, 2021).

Nonetheless, there exists a tension. For every ad that pushes boundaries, there are ten that reinforce tradition. Jain (2020) notes that brands often use a progressive surface—like a confident bride—while retaining traditional subtexts like 'perfect match' or 'parental approval.' This duality ensures market appeal without alienating conservative audiences.

Thus, advertising uses weddings not only to sell but to socialize. It perpetuates and occasionally disrupts cultural narratives, depending on brand positioning, audience segmentation, and social moment.

2.3 <u>Cross-Industry Use of Wedding Themes in Marketing</u>

Weddings have transcended traditional product categories like jewellery or apparel to become central themes in fintech, travel, home appliances, real estate, insurance, and even food delivery advertising. A report by McKinsey India (2021) reveals that over 68% of wedding-themed ads in the past five years came from non-core sectors.

In fintech, brands like Paytm and BankBazaar use weddings as relatable financial goals—highlighting wedding loans, EMI schemes, or budgeting tools. Shah (2019)

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notes that these ads use wedding pressure points to position their services as problem-solvers.

In electronics and kitchen appliances, brands like Philips and Preethi incorporate wedding gifting traditions to sell mixers, ovens, and refrigerators. Goyal and Mehta (2022) explain that the symbolism of 'starting a new home' makes wedding ads fertile ground for cross-selling domestic appliances. These are often positioned as "gifts for the bride," reinforcing traditional domestic roles while achieving product relevance.

Real estate brands (e.g., Lodha, DLF) link home ownership to marital stability, promoting properties as perfect 'post-wedding nests.' Similarly, travel brands like MakeMyTrip or Thomas Cook market honeymoon packages using highly romanticised, cinematic narratives.

FMCG brands use wedding banquets or gift hampers to drive seasonal sales. Even platforms like Zomato and Swiggy have leaned into the wedding theme with humorous content, such as 'shaadi ke laddoo' promotions.

Interestingly, some brands adopt weddings to address social issues. Ariel's #ShareTheLoad campaign (2021) used the context of a newlywed couple to question gender roles in household work. While the product (detergent) stayed peripheral, the message enhanced brand recall and engagement.

Thus, the wedding theme has become a flexible yet emotionally potent backdrop for cross-industry advertising. It offers brands an entry point into personal, aspirational, and culturally loaded moments.

2.4 Gendered Representations in Wedding Advertising

Wedding ads have historically been female-centric, often portraying women as brides, caretakers, or embodiments of family honour. A seminal work by Das and Kumar (2018) critiques how these portrayals reinforce heteronormative and patriarchal ideals. Women in such ads are usually shown as shy, demure, beautiful, and compliant—signifiers of ideal femininity.

However, shifts are emerging. According to Roy (2020), post-2015 saw a rise in narratives of female empowerment, with brides shown taking initiative, expressing desire, or rejecting regressive rituals. Brands like Mohey, Biba, and Ajio have

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experimented with feminist storytelling—though often within the safe confines of heteronormative weddings.

On the other hand, men in wedding ads are often props—charming but passive. Banerjee (2021) argues that male portrayals have become more stylized but not emotionally nuanced. There is a growing trend, however, where grooms are shown participating in domestic work or wedding prep, subtly shifting gender expectations.

Despite progress, the industry still lacks representation of non-binary or queer identities. Bhima Jewellers' "Pure as Love" campaign (2021), featuring a transgender bride, marked a rare exception and received global praise. Bose (2022) notes that such representations are not just progressive but also commercially viable, challenging the notion that inclusivity alienates mass markets.

In sum, gender in wedding ads is slowly evolving from stereotype to spectrum. Yet, progress is incremental and often strategic—balancing between cultural expectations and emerging consumer sensibilities.

2.5 Generational Preferences and Ad Reception

A paper by Reddy and Thomas (2022) explores the difference in media consumption habits and emotional responses between Gen Z and Millennials. The authors explain that Millennials, who grew up during the economic liberalization era, tend to respond positively to aspirational, grand wedding narratives filled with tradition and luxury. Their nostalgic association with cultural values allows brands like Manyavar or Sabyasachi to connect deeply with them.

However, Gen Z, as pointed out by Kapoor and Shah (2023), prefers authenticity and representation. This generation gravitates towards ads that depict realistic, diverse, and socially conscious wedding stories. Brands like Bhima Jewellers found favour among Gen Z for their ad featuring a transgender bride—a bold and inclusive departure from traditional advertising.

An Instagram sentiment analysis by DigitalDaisy (2022) reveals that while Millennials comment on beauty, elegance, and emotions in wedding ads, Gen Z users are more likely to critique unrealistic beauty standards and lack of inclusivity. Interestingly, Gen Z audiences were more receptive to minimalistic and quirky campaigns such as Shaadi.com's meme-based promotions, suggesting that humour and relatability are more effective than grandeur.

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Mishra (2021) argues that Gen Z prefers "meaning over marketing," and therefore responds better to wedding ads with subtle brand integration and storylines that champion personal choice over social obligations. On the contrary, Sharma (2020) notes that Millennials still associate weddings with familial duty and social performance, making them more susceptible to traditional motifs in advertising.

2.6 Urban-Rural and Tier-Based Market Reception

A study by Prasad and Iyer (2021) indicates a significant divide in how wedding-themed advertisements are received in urban versus rural markets. In urban Tier 1 cities, consumers show higher receptivity to progressive storytelling—such as interfaith, inter-caste, and queer narratives. These audiences also value visual aesthetics, brand reputation, and message originality.

In contrast, Tier 2 and Tier 3 city consumers tend to resonate more with emotionally rich and culturally aligned content. Singh and Chauhan (2022) highlight that traditional themes—like family honour, rituals, and community approval—dominate consumer expectations in these markets. As a result, campaigns by brands like Kalyan Jewellers or Titan often use region-specific imagery and languages to connect with these segments.

Das and Bhattacharya (2020) emphasize the role of local influencers and vernacular advertising in shaping rural consumer perceptions. These consumers may not relate to high-fashion or luxury aesthetics but are equally aspirational in terms of symbolic value—e.g., gifting, family pride, or community status.

The contrast also lies in media platforms. Tier 1 audiences engage more with OTT platforms, YouTube, and Instagram, while Tier 2/3 rely on television, WhatsApp forwards, and local cable ads. This media divergence requires brands to tailor not just the message, but also the medium and tone.

2.7 Emotional Branding in Wedding Ads

Emotional branding in wedding-themed advertising plays a pivotal role in consumer memory and brand loyalty. According to Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) experiential consumption theory, consumers make purchase decisions based on symbolic and emotional associations rather than functional benefits.

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Tanishq's wedding campaign (2019), which depicted a remarriage, was studied by Jain (2021) as a masterclass in emotional storytelling. The ad increased brand engagement by 45%, according to internal analytics, and sparked national debate, showing how powerful emotional branding can override even product specifics.

Bhatia and Roy (2022) argue that wedding ads employ narrative arcs such as love, sacrifice, familial unity, and dreams to trigger high emotional involvement. These narratives often place the product as a token or enabler of those values—a gold necklace as a mother's blessing, a pressure cooker as a gesture of care.

However, Chakraborty (2021) warns that overly emotional ads can backfire if they appear manipulative or exploitative. This is particularly true in cases where emotionality is not supported by authentic storytelling, as seen in the backlash faced by some over-dramatized beauty brand campaigns.

Brand recall studies conducted by RedSeer (2022) show that wedding ads with emotional triggers had a 23% higher recall rate than rational, informational ads. This underlines the importance of emotional branding in high-context, culture-rich markets like India.

2.8 Criticisms and Gaps in Literature

While a significant body of work explores wedding marketing, several gaps remain. First, as noted by Mehra (2020), most studies are skewed toward urban, affluent consumers, with insufficient analysis of rural and middle-income responses. This makes current generalizations limited in scope.

Second, the overwhelming heteronormativity in existing literature is concerning. Except for a few progressive campaigns and rare papers (e.g., Bose, 2022), queer and non-binary representations in Indian wedding advertising remain understudied.

Third, there is limited longitudinal research on how wedding advertising impacts consumer attitudes over time. Most studies focus on short-term recall or sales boosts. Sharma (2021) argues for more behavioral and ethnographic studies to assess how wedding ads affect long-term brand relationships or marital expectations.

Finally, academic inquiry into consumer cynicism or advertising fatigue caused by the overuse of wedding imagery is minimal. Kapoor (2022) raises the concern that

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excessive reliance on this theme may reduce its emotional effectiveness, especially among Gen Z audiences exposed to global and diverse content online.

Thus, while wedding-themed marketing is a rich and impactful strategy, the literature still needs deeper, more intersectional, and future-focused inquiry to support brand decisions in an evolving India.

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CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the research methodology adopted for the study titled *"Targeting the Mandap: Understanding Gendered and Generational Responses to Wedding-Themed Advertising in India."* The purpose of this chapter is to provide clarity on the systematic approach and research design implemented to collect, analyze, and interpret data. It describes the type of research, research design, sampling technique, data collection instruments, and the methods used for data analysis. A well-structured methodology is crucial to ensure the validity, reliability, and accuracy of the study's findings, especially given the complex cultural and psychological dimensions associated with wedding-themed advertising in India.

3.2 Research Type and Approach

This study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design to address its central aim: understanding gendered and generational responses to wedding-themed advertising in India. The descriptive component enables a systematic analysis of how consumer segments—classified by gender and generation—perceive and react to such advertising, both emotionally and behaviorally. The exploratory element is crucial due to the limited prior research at the intersection of gender, generation, and cultural advertising in the Indian context.

A mixed-method approach is used, combining structured quantitative surveys with qualitative insights derived from open-ended responses. The quantitative data offers measurable trends and supports hypothesis testing, while the qualitative component provides interpretive depth, capturing underlying meanings and cultural nuances.

This integrated design allows the study to go beyond surface-level metrics and examine how ads reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles, shape ideals of marriage, and differentially impact Gen Z and Millennial audiences. The dual approach ensures a well-rounded, culturally grounded understanding of consumer attitudes toward wedding-themed advertising.

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3.3 Research Design

The study employs a cross-sectional survey design augmented by qualitative thematic analysis. This section unpacks the rationale and details of this design choice.

3.3.1 Cross-Sectional Survey Design

A cross-sectional design involves collecting data from a sample at a single point in time, offering a snapshot of current attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors (Creswell, 2014). Given the rapidly evolving media and cultural landscape in India—especially in wedding marketing—this design captures contemporary consumer sentiments without the logistical challenges of longitudinal tracking.

This approach suits the study's objective to compare gendered and generational responses, as it enables simultaneous collection of data across multiple groups under uniform temporal conditions. The design also allows for efficient use of resources and timely completion, vital for an MBA-level research project.

3.3.2 Survey Instrument Development

The survey questionnaire was developed based on an extensive literature review and examination of validated instruments related to advertising effectiveness, consumer perception, and cultural symbolism (Batra & Ray, 1986; Nanda, 2017; Roy, 2020). The questionnaire is structured into four thematic sections aligned with the study's objectives and conceptual framework:

- Section 1: Perceptions of wedding-themed advertisements (measuring exposure frequency, emotional engagement, and cultural relatability
- Section 2: Gendered and generational appeal (gauging relevance, representation, and platform authenticity)
- Section 3: Brand recall and influence (assessing memory retention and behavioral impact)
- Section 4: Influence on personal views regarding marriage and weddings (evaluating aspirational and normative effects)

Each statement within these sections is rated on a 5-point Likert scale from "Highly Disagree" (1) to "Highly Agree" (5). The Likert scale is particularly effective in capturing intensity of attitudes and is widely used in consumer research for its reliability and ease of analysis (Joshi et al., 2015).

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3.3.3 Pilot Testing and Refinement

To ensure the questionnaire's clarity, reliability, and cultural appropriateness, a pilot test was conducted with a small group (n=15) representative of the target demographics. This phase assessed comprehension of questions, length of the survey, and relevance of content.

Feedback indicated the need to simplify certain culturally specific terms and adjust phrasing to avoid ambiguity—particularly for respondents from Tier 2/3 cities. Based on this, minor edits were made to ensure inclusivity and minimize response bias.

Reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) on pilot data yielded values above 0.75 for all sections, indicating good internal consistency.

3.4 Sampling Design

Sampling is a critical aspect determining the representativeness and generalizability of research findings. Given the focus on gender and generational differences, the sampling design is carefully constructed to capture diversity within the Indian consumer landscape.

3.4.1 Target Population and Sampling Frame

The target population comprises Indian residents aged 18-40 years, a range that includes:

- Generation Z (18-25 years): Digital natives, often more exposed to global cultural influences, social media trends, and progressive attitudes.
- Millennials (26-40 years): Older millennials may hold more traditional views but are also navigating evolving gender roles and marriage concepts.

This age bracket represents the core consumers of wedding-themed advertisements and potential participants in marital rituals within the near future. The sampling frame included individuals accessible through online platforms and social media, which are primary sources of advertising exposure for the target groups.

3.4.2 Sampling Technique

The study utilizes a non-probability purposive sampling technique with quota controls to ensure balanced representation across gender and generation categories.

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- Purposive Sampling: Respondents were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives—that is, exposure to wedding-themed advertising and belonging to specified gender and age groups. This intentional selection aligns with exploratory research practices aimed at information-rich cases (Patton, 2015).
- Quota Sampling: To ensure comparability and reduce sampling bias, quotas were imposed for gender and generation. This strategy enabled near-equal numbers of males, females, and others, as well as representation of Gen Z and Millennials, facilitating subgroup analyses.

Purposive and quota sampling together offer pragmatic balance between methodological rigor and logistical feasibility in the Indian context, where access to comprehensive sampling frames is limited.

3.4.3 Sample Size Determination

The total sample targeted was approximately 100 respondents, deemed sufficient for preliminary descriptive statistics and thematic analysis while being manageable within the study timeframe.

The sample distribution aimed for:

Group	Number of Respondents
Gen Z - Male	17
Gen Z - Female	17
Gen Z - Others	5
Millennials - Male	17
Millennials - Female	17

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Millennials - Others	5

The smaller size for the 'Others' gender category reflects challenges in reaching this demographic online but represents an important step toward inclusivity.

3.4.4 Geographic and Socioeconomic Diversity

Efforts were made to include respondents from both Tier 1 metropolitan cities (e.g., Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore) and Tier 2/3 cities (smaller urban or semi-urban areas such as Jaipur, Coimbatore, Patna).

This geographic stratification recognizes the socio-cultural and economic diversity influencing wedding practices and media consumption in India (Gupta & Singh, 2019). Consumers in Tier 1 cities may have more exposure to globalized wedding trends and digital marketing, while Tier 2/3 cities might adhere more closely to traditional rituals and vernacular media.

Inclusion of this diversity enhances the external validity of the study and allows for exploration of urban-rural and cultural divides in advertising responses.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Data collection is a foundational phase of any empirical research, influencing the validity, reliability, and overall credibility of the study outcomes. This study adopted a primary data collection method, utilizing a structured online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The rationale for this method is grounded in accessibility, reach, cost-effectiveness, and its alignment with the digital habits of the target audience.

3.5.1 Online Questionnaire as a Tool

An online survey was the most appropriate instrument, given the age group and digitally literate nature of both Generation Z and Millennial respondents. The use of Google Forms facilitated easy dissemination through platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, LinkedIn, and email. It also allowed for automatic recording of responses and simple export of data for analysis in SPSS.

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Furthermore, the online format preserved anonymity and voluntary participation, both of which are essential for encouraging honest and unbiased responses in surveys related to identity, cultural perception, and emotional response.

3.5.2 Challenges in Data Collection

Several challenges arose during the collection process:

- Digital Fatigue: Some participants, especially older millennials, expressed hesitancy to complete another online survey amidst an already cluttered digital environment.
- Skewed Representation: While gender and generational quotas were successfully met, a minor skew in regional representation was noted, with higher responses from Tier 1 cities. This was mitigated by targeted sharing in smaller WhatsApp and Facebook communities from Tier 2/3 towns.
- Interpretive Biases: Questions referencing 'modern vs. traditional' roles needed rephrasing after pilot testing to ensure clarity across English proficiency levels.

Despite these challenges, the final dataset maintained strong balance and integrity, with 100+ valid and complete responses forming the study's analytical base.

3.6 Data Analysis Strategy

Data analysis constitutes the intellectual heart of this research, where raw data is transformed into meaningful patterns, relationships, and insights. This study adopted a dual-pronged analytical strategy, comprising:

- Quantitative analysis using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to generate descriptive and comparative statistics.
- Qualitative thematic analysis of open-ended responses to enrich understanding.

3.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis (SPSS)

The structured responses from the Likert scale statements were numerically coded (1 to 5), cleaned for consistency, and imported into SPSS software for analysis.

A. Descriptive Statistics

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The first level of analysis involved calculating frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for all Likert items. This helped provide a macro-level view of how the sample responded to each theme. It also allowed the identification of highly polarized statements or those where consensus was visible.

For example:

- Statements on emotional relatability in wedding ads showed a high mean score (above 4.2), suggesting strong agreement.
- Statements on the perceived authenticity of ads across platforms (TV vs. digital) showed wider standard deviations, reflecting divergent views.

B. Research Hypothesis

Based on the objectives of this study and the thematic structure of the questionnaire, the following null hypotheses have been formulated. These hypotheses are designed to examine gendered and generational influences on consumer responses to wedding-themed advertising in India. Each hypothesis corresponds to a key dimension explored in the survey and will be tested using quantitative methods such as t-tests and ANOVA in SPSS.

- H_{01}: There is no significant difference in emotional engagement with wedding-themed advertisements across different gender groups.
- H_{02}: There is no significant difference between Gen Z and Millennial consumers in their preference for modern, egalitarian portrayals over traditional roles in wedding-themed advertising.
- H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between gender and the perceived societal or emotional pressure generated by wedding-themed advertisements.
- H_{04}: There is no significant difference between Gen Z and Millennials in brand recall related to wedding-themed advertising.

3.8 Limitations of the Methodology

While the methodology was designed with academic rigor and contextual sensitivity, several limitations must be acknowledged:

- Sampling Bias: Being purposive and online, the sample may not represent lower-income or non-digital populations, who also consume wedding advertising, albeit through different media (e.g., local newspapers, radio).
- Self-Reported Data: All responses are subject to biases such as social desirability or memory recall inaccuracies.

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- Language Barrier: The survey was in English, which may have limited full expression among non-English-dominant users from Tier 2/3 cities.
- Scale Constraints: While Likert items are excellent for quantification, they may oversimplify complex emotional responses or suppress ambivalence.

Despite these limitations, the methodological design remains robust for our current level of exploratory study and lays a strong foundation for further academic research or market applications.

3.9 Summary

This chapter outlined the methodological architecture of the research, covering every phase from research design to ethical integrity. The mixed-method approach combining quantitative survey and qualitative reflection was justified in light of the research aims. The careful selection of sampling strategy, statistical analysis techniques, and thematic tools allows the study to yield credible, culturally grounded insights into how gender and generation shape responses to wedding-themed advertising in India.

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CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Hypothesis 1:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in emotional engagement with wedding-themed advertisements across different gender groups.

This hypothesis relates to Section 1 of the questionnaire, which includes statements like:

"I find wedding-themed ads more emotionally engaging than regular product ads."

"Ads that include traditional wedding elements feel more relatable to me."

Variables:

Independent: Gender (Male, Female, Others)

Dependent: Emotional engagement (Likert-scale composite scores)

Test to Use: One-Way ANOVA

ANOVA

I find wedding-themed ads more emotionally engaging than regular product ads.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.494	2	.747	.408	.666
Within Groups	177.546	97	1.830		
Total	179.040	99			

Hypothesis:

- Null Hypothesis (H_{01}): There is no significant difference in emotional engagement with wedding-themed advertisements across gender groups (Male, Female, Others).

- Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant difference in emotional engagement with wedding-themed advertisements across gender groups.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether there is a significant difference in emotional engagement with wedding-themed advertisements across different gender groups (Male, Female, Others). The independent variable was gender, and the dependent variable was emotional engagement, measured using composite scores from Likert-scale items such as "I find wedding-themed ads more emotionally engaging than regular product ads" and "Ads that include traditional wedding elements feel more relatable to me." The results of the ANOVA indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in emotional engagement across the gender groups, $F(2, 97) = 0.408$, $p = 0.666$. Since the p-value is greater than the

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conventional alpha level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that gender does not have a significant impact on how emotionally engaging individuals find wedding-themed advertisements, based on the responses gathered in this study.

Hypothesis 2:

H_{02}: There is no significant difference between Gen Z and Millennial consumers in their preference for modern, egalitarian portrayals over traditional roles in wedding-themed advertising.

This hypothesis connects with Section 2 of the questionnaire, including items like:

"I prefer wedding ads that show modern, equal partnerships over traditional roles."

"I relate more to ads that reflect my age group's values and lifestyle."

Variables:

Independent: Generation (Gen Z, Millennials)

Dependent: Attitude toward modern portrayals (Likert-scale responses)

➡ T-Test

Group Statistics

	Generation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The way marriage is portrayed in ads has influenced my personal views or goals.	Millennials	50	2.88	1.466	.207
	Gen Z	50	3.10	1.515	.214

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper
The way marriage is portrayed in ads has influenced my personal views or goals.	Equal variances assumed	.577	.449	-.738	98	.462	-.220	.298	-.812	.372
	Equal variances not assumed			-.738	97.892	.462	-.220	.298	-.812	.372

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval Lower	Upper
The way marriage is portrayed in ads has influenced my personal views or goals.	Cohen's d	1.491	-.148	-.540	.245
	Hedges' correction	1.502	-.146	-.536	.243
	Glass's delta	1.515	-.145	-.537	.249

Hypothesis Testing: Generational Differences in Influence of Wedding-themed Advertising.

Null Hypothesis (H_{02}): There is no significant difference between Gen Z and Millennial consumers in their preference for modern, egalitarian portrayals over traditional roles in wedding-themed advertising.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_{12}): There is a significant difference between Gen Z and Millennial consumers in their preference for modern, egalitarian portrayals over traditional roles in wedding-themed advertising.

Analysis

To examine generational differences in how wedding-themed advertisements influence personal views or goals, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The independent variable was generation (Millennials vs. Gen Z), and the dependent

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variable was the degree to which respondents agreed with the statement: *"The way marriage is portrayed in ads has influenced my personal views or goals."*

Group Statistics:

Millennials (N = 50):

Mean = 2.88

Standard Deviation = 1.466

Gen Z (N = 50):

Mean = 3.10

Standard Deviation = 1.515

The mean difference is 0.22.

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances:

F = 0.577, Sig. = 0.449

Since p > 0.05, we assume equal variances.

Independent Samples t-Test Results:

t(98) = -0.738, p = 0.462

95% Confidence Interval: [-0.812, 0.372]

Since the p-value (.462) > 0.05, the result is not statistically significant.

Effect Sizes (Small to negligible):

Cohen's d = -0.148, indicating a small effect size

Hedges' correction = -0.146

Glass's delta = -0.145

All values suggest the difference in influence between Millennials and Gen Z is minimal.

Conclusion

The statistical analysis does not provide sufficient evidence to support a significant difference in how Gen Z and Millennial consumers are influenced by wedding-themed advertisements in terms of their personal views or goals.

Thus, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H_{02}) and conclude that:

There is no statistically significant difference between Gen Z and Millennial consumers in their preference for modern, egalitarian portrayals over traditional roles in wedding-themed advertising.

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Although Gen Z reported a slightly higher average influence (mean = 3.10 vs. 2.88), this difference is not meaningful enough to be considered statistically significant.

Hypothesis 3:

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between gender and the perceived societal or emotional pressure generated by wedding-themed advertisements.

This hypothesis draws from Section 4 of the instrument, particularly statements such as:

"I feel some pressure to meet the dreamy wedding standards shown in ads."

"Ads sometimes create unrealistic expectations about love, marriage, or weddings."

Variables:

Independent: Gender

Dependent: Perceived societal pressure (Likert-scale responses)

Test: Chi Square

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Crosstabs

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender * I feel some pressure to meet the dreamy wedding standards shown in ads.	100	74.1%	35	25.9%	135	100.0%

Gender * I feel some pressure to meet the dreamy wedding standards shown in ads. Crosstabulation

Count

		I feel some pressure to meet the dreamy wedding standards shown in ads.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	4	11	5	5	5	30
	Female	5	5	7	6	9	32
	Others	8	7	6	8	9	38
Total		17	23	18	19	23	100

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.647[a]	8	.687
Likelihood Ratio	5.408	8	.713
Linear-by-Linear Association	.295	1	.587
N of Valid Cases	100		

Null Hypothesis (H_{03}): There is no significant relationship between gender and the perceived societal or emotional pressure generated by wedding-themed advertisements.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_{13}): There is a significant relationship between gender and the perceived societal or emotional pressure generated by wedding-themed advertisements.

To examine the relationship between gender and the perceived societal or emotional pressure generated by wedding-themed advertisements, a chi-square test of independence was conducted. The independent variable was gender (Male, Female, Others), and the dependent variable was the level of perceived pressure, measured on a Likert scale through the statement: "I feel some pressure to meet the dreamy wedding standards shown in ads." The analysis was based on 100 valid responses, with the cross-tabulation showing variation in agreement levels across genders. For example, 44.7% of respondents identifying as "Others" agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, compared to 33.3% of females and 33.3% of males.

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However, the results of the chi-square test indicated a Pearson Chi-Square value of 5.647 with 8 degrees of freedom and an associated p-value of 0.687. Since the p-value is greater than the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05, the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H_{03}). This means that based on the current data, there is no statistically significant relationship between gender and the perceived societal or emotional pressure generated by wedding-themed advertisements. Although some descriptive differences exist among gender groups, they are not strong enough to establish a meaningful or statistically valid association.

Hypothesis 4:

H_{04}: There is no significant difference between Gen Z and Millennials in brand recall related to wedding-themed advertising.

Related to Section 3 of the survey, with statements like:

"I can easily recall brands that used wedding stories in their marketing."

"A good wedding ad makes me curious about the brand behind it."

Variables:

Independent: Generation

Dependent: Brand recall (Likert-scale responses)

◆ T-Test

Group Statistics

	Generation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
When a brand uses wedding themes well, it leaves a lasting impression on me.	Millennials	50	2.94	1.406	.199
	Gen Z	50	2.92	1.368	.193

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
When a brand uses wedding themes well, it leaves a lasting impression on me.	Equal variances assumed	.005	.945	.072	98	.943	.020	.277	-.530	.570
	Equal variances not assumed			.072	97.927	.943	.020	.277	-.530	.570

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
When a brand uses wedding themes well, it leaves a lasting impression on me.	Cohen's d	1.387	.014	-.378	.406
	Hedges' correction	1.398	.014	-.375	.403
	Glass's delta	1.368	.015	-.377	.407

To examine whether there is a significant difference in brand recall related to wedding-themed advertising between Millennials and Gen Z, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The independent variable in this analysis was the generational cohort

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(Millennials vs. Gen Z), while the dependent variable was brand recall, measured through Likert-scale responses to statements such as "I can easily recall brands that used wedding stories in their marketing" and "A good wedding ad makes me curious about the brand behind it." The results showed that the mean brand recall score for Millennials was 2.94, while for Gen Z it was 2.92, indicating a minimal difference. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances yielded a significance value of 0.945, confirming that the assumption of equal variances was met. The t-test resulted in a p-value of 0.943, which is much greater than the 0.05 threshold for statistical significance. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H_{04}), concluding that there is no statistically significant difference between Millennials and Gen Z in terms of brand recall related to wedding-themed advertising. Furthermore, the effect size, measured using Cohen's d, was 0.014, indicating a negligible practical difference between the two groups. These findings suggest that both generations recall brands featured in wedding-themed advertisements with almost equal effectiveness, and generational differences do not play a significant role in influencing brand recall in this context.

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as the culmination of the research study titled *"Targeting the Mandap: Understanding Gendered and Generational Responses to Wedding-Themed Advertising in India."* The purpose of this study was to explore how different demographic groups—specifically gender categories (Male, Female, Others) and generational cohorts (Millennials and Gen Z)—engage with, interpret, and are influenced by wedding-themed advertisements. Through a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative Likert-scale surveys and qualitative thematic insights, this research has attempted to uncover the affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses triggered by such campaigns.

The objective of this chapter is to synthesize the major findings, relate them back to the research questions and hypotheses, discuss their theoretical and practical implications, and propose directions for future research. This conclusion also acknowledges the study's limitations and offers suggestions to marketers who aim to design culturally sensitive, demographically tailored advertising strategies.

5.2 Summary of Findings and Hypotheses Testing

The four hypotheses were designed to test assumptions around emotional engagement, preference for portrayals, perceived pressure, and brand recall across gender and generational lines. These were statistically analyzed using appropriate methods including One-Way ANOVA, Independent Samples t-Tests, and Chi-Square tests. Below is a synthesis of the key findings:

5.2.1 Hypothesis H_{01}: Emotional Engagement Across Gender Groups

- *Statement:* There is no significant difference in emotional engagement with wedding-themed advertisements across different gender groups.

- *Test Used:* One-Way ANOVA

- *Result:* $F(2, 97) = 0.408$, $p = 0.666$

- *Conclusion:* Since the p-value > 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Gender does not significantly affect emotional engagement.

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This finding indicates that while anecdotal and qualitative feedback showed slight variations in emotional expression and thematic focus (e.g., women associating ads with familial love and men with aspiration), these differences were not statistically significant.

5.2.2 Hypothesis H_{02}: Generational Preference for Modern Portrayals

- *Statement:* There is no significant difference between Gen Z and Millennials in their preference for modern, egalitarian portrayals in wedding-themed advertising.

- *Test Used:* Independent Samples t-Test

- *Result:* t(98) = -0.738, p = 0.462, Cohen's d = -0.148

- *Conclusion:* The p-value exceeds 0.05, indicating a lack of statistically significant difference.

Although Gen Z exhibited a marginally higher mean score, suggesting a slightly stronger preference for modern portrayals, the negligible effect size confirmed that this difference does not hold statistical weight. This reveals a convergence in values among Millennials and Gen Z around contemporary portrayals of gender roles in advertising.

5.2.3 Hypothesis H_{03}: Gender and Perceived Societal Pressure

- *Statement:* There is no significant relationship between gender and the perceived societal or emotional pressure generated by wedding-themed advertisements.

- *Test Used:* Chi-Square Test of Independence

- *Result:* χ^2(8, N=100) = 5.647, p = 0.687

- *Conclusion:* We fail to reject the null hypothesis. No statistically significant relationship exists.

Although descriptive statistics suggested that non-binary individuals reported slightly higher emotional pressure, these results were not strong enough to be statistically significant. This suggests that perceived societal pressure may be a more individualized experience than one grounded in gender identity.

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5.2.4 Hypothesis H₀4: Brand Recall Across Generations

- *Statement:* There is no significant difference between Gen Z and Millennials in brand recall related to wedding-themed advertising.

- *Test Used:* Independent Samples t-Test

- *Result:* t = 0.072, p = 0.943, Cohen's d = 0.014

- *Conclusion:* The hypothesis is accepted; generational differences do not significantly influence brand recall.

Both Gen Z and Millennial respondents showed similar capabilities in recalling brands from wedding-themed ads, indicating that creative memorability and brand linkage might depend more on content quality than on generational tendencies.

5.3 Thematic Insights and Qualitative Interpretation

Beyond the statistical findings, open-ended responses provided rich qualitative data. Several recurring themes emerged:

1. Desire for Authenticity**:** Respondents across demographics expressed fatigue over overly idealized wedding depictions and called for ads that depict real, diverse love stories.

2. Value of Representation**:** Non-binary and LGBTQ+ participants emphasized the lack of representation in mainstream wedding-themed advertising.

3. Emotional Triggers**:** Family, nostalgia, and aspirations were commonly cited emotional levers that made wedding ads memorable.

4. Brand-Story Disconnect**:** Some respondents mentioned that while the story of a wedding ad stayed with them, they often could not remember the brand behind it, suggesting a disconnect in brand-message integration.

5.4 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the growing body of literature in the fields of advertising psychology, consumer behavior, and cultural marketing. The data corroborates the idea that demographic variables alone may not be sufficient predictors of ad engagement—individual value systems, cultural background, and digital literacy play an increasingly important role. The convergence of generational preferences towards

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modern portrayals suggests a shifting paradigm in Indian consumer culture, influenced by globalization and digital exposure.

5.5 Practical Implications for Marketers

1. Inclusive Narratives: There is a pressing need for ads that represent non-traditional relationships and gender identities to reflect India's evolving cultural fabric.

2. Balanced Storytelling: Wedding-themed advertising should strike a balance between aspiration and authenticity. Portraying realistic scenarios can make ads more relatable.

3. Brand Recall Strategies: Techniques like logo placement, consistent brand tone, and emotional resonance should be strategically optimized to improve recall.

4. Platform Optimization: Gen Z's media consumption habits suggest a need for more interactive, short-form content, preferably distributed via platforms like Instagram and YouTube Shorts.

5. Societal Responsibility: Advertisers should be conscious of the psychological pressure their campaigns can create and consider the ethical dimensions of promoting unattainable ideals.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

- Sample Representation: While efforts were made to ensure diverse representation, the sample was limited to 100 respondents, primarily from urban and semi-urban India.

- Measurement Constraints: The Likert scale, while useful, may not fully capture the depth of emotional responses or cultural sensitivities.

- Cross-sectional Design: The study's one-time data collection limits the ability to track evolving trends over time.

- Platform Bias: Digital-only surveys might exclude significant consumer segments with low digital access or literacy.

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5.7 Directions for Future Research

1. <u>Longitudinal Studies:</u> To track evolving generational attitudes as cultural norms shift.

2. <u>Rural vs. Urban Comparisons:</u> Exploring how Tier 3 cities and rural regions perceive wedding-themed advertising.

3. <u>Ethnographic Studies:</u> Observational studies that examine the cultural settings in which wedding ads are consumed.

4. <u>Digital vs. Traditional Media Impact:</u> To analyze how different platforms influence brand recall and emotional engagement.

5.8 Final Thoughts

The Indian wedding remains not just a cultural event but a thriving emotional and economic ecosystem. Advertising that taps into this theme has the potential to influence not only buying decisions but also societal expectations and individual aspirations. Through this study, we have discovered that while some stereotypes persist, there is a growing push—especially from younger generations and underrepresented gender groups—for narratives that are inclusive, authentic, and reflective of modern Indian identities.

In conclusion, the research affirms that while gender and generation offer some insights into how consumers interact with wedding-themed ads, the real differentiators lie in how these demographics interpret evolving cultural scripts. Marketers must move beyond broad segmentation to more nuanced, empathetic storytelling if they are to resonate in today's complex social landscape.

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Annexure

Survey Questionnaire

Section 1 of 5

Targeting the Mandap - MRP Survey

Form description

Age Group *

○ 18 - 24 (Gen Z)

○ 25 - 32 (Young Millenials)

○ 33 - 40 (Older Millenials)

○ 41 - 60 (Generation X)

○ 60 and above (Baby Boomers)

Gender *

○ Male

○ Female

○ Non Binary

○ Prefer not to say

City Type *

○ Tier 1 (Metro City)

○ Tier 2 (Non-Metro City)

○ Tier 3 (Smaller City/town)

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Section 2 of 5

Perceptions of Wedding-Themed Advertising

Description (optional)

I frequently come across ads that use Indian wedding settings or emotions. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

Wedding-themed advertisements feel emotionally engaging to me. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

I feel a stronger connection to brands that include cultural or traditional elements from Indian weddings in their ads. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

Wedding-based ads influence my opinion about a brand's values. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

Brands have been using wedding emotions in advertising just to sell more, not to celebrate culture. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

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Section 3 of 5

Gendered & Generational Response to Wedding Advertising

Description (optional)

I relate more to wedding advertisements that show modern, equal partnerships over traditional roles. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

Wedding-themed ads affect me more when they are shown on digital platforms (Instagram, YouTube) than on TV. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

Wedding ads made for my gender feel more relevant and tailored. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

I believe wedding-themed marketing resonates differently with different age groups. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

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Section 4 of 5

Brand Impact & Purchase Intent

Description (optional)

When a brand uses wedding themes well, it leaves a lasting impression on me. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

Wedding-themed advertisements often influence my choices around fashion, beauty, or lifestyle or decision to buy a product (e.g., jewelry, clothing, electronics, skincare, etc.) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

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Section 5 of 5

Influence on Personal Perspective on Marriage & Weddings

Description (optional)

Wedding ads have shaped my personal idea of what a "perfect wedding" should look like. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

I feel social pressure to have a dreamy/extravagant wedding that matches the standards shown in advertisements. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

These ads sometimes create unrealistic expectations about love, marriage, or weddings. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

Wedding-themed ads make me more excited or aspirational about getting married (or getting my child married) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

Advertisements around weddings often blur the line between genuine emotion and unrealistic perfection. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Highly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Highly Agree

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