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Trends in Global Bridal Industry: Emergence of Online Bridal Stores and Survival of Brick-And-Mortar Stores

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The growing global bridal industry and the different trends, traditions, and aspects of specific countries' bridal industries are explored in this paper. It outlines western and eastern practices and how globalization contributes to their spread. A deeper focus is dedicated to the United States' bridal industry and the issues brick-and-mortar bridal boutiques face as more brides have started shopping at online bridal stores. The relationship between brick-and-mortar and online bridal stores is explored based on various propositions about the bridal industry's emerging challenges. Each proposition is evaluated according to each retail format's reaction.

Trust issues in the retail environment, convenience, selection of bridal gowns in different retail formats, incorporating a social experience into both brick-and-mortar and online bridal stores, and the spread of cultural traditions were some of the critical concepts for both brick and mortar and online stores. The pandemic impacted the bridal choice of retail format, among other changes it caused in consumer behavior. Online shopping spread fast for bridal gowns, influencing the globalization of western bridal trends in developing countries (Wei, 2021). Even though traditional stores are still prevalent in countries such as China, Brazil, or Mexico due to the trust in brick-and-mortar establishments, the spread of information and designs made online bridal shops popular (Fonseca & Mezabarba, 2019).

The day a bride shops for her dress is very emotional for her and her entourage. It is usually a right-of-the passage providing a unique social experience (Roozen & Ktidis, 2019). Brick-and-mortar and online stores have different roles in this complex social and traditional interaction. There are multiple ways to purchase a dress that will serve the brides' increasing desires for variety in expressing themselves. Online stores may have the advantage of helping brides incorporate new trends and other cultures' traditions. Brick-and-mortar stores may design the shopping day to enhance the social experience.

Furthermore, as women in the US choose to marry later in life or have multiple marriages, the type of retail experience they desire has been changing and favoring online shopping for convenience (Fry, 2012). This trend also has an impact on simpler bridal gown designs, indicating that the bridal market is very fragmented and open to changes. This conceptual paper addresses the gaps in bridal research, provides managerial implications, and addresses the challenges faced by brick-and-mortar and online retailers specific to the bridal context.

Keywords: *bridal industry, online bridal retail stores, brick-and-mortar bridal retail stores, bridal shopping experience, bridal trends*

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