

A Comparative Study of Marketing Approaches of Wedding Organizers in General Santos City

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Abstract

The wedding industry in General Santos City has undergone significant changes, with increasing client demands and evolving trends, making it essential for wedding organizers to refine their marketing strategies. However, several research gaps exist in understanding the marketing strategies, pricing models, professionalism, and accreditation of local wedding organizers. This study explores the marketing strategies, wedding packages, and pricing of selected members of the GenSan League of Event Organizers in General Santos City. The study aims to explore the multiple wedding organizers affiliated to the GenSan League of Event Organizers (GLEO), comprehend the marketing strategies employed by these organizers, and analyze the kinds of wedding packages available, along with their particular inclusions. The pricing, wedding packages, and marketing strategies of a GenSan League of Event Organizers members. The study used a qualitative research approach, asking wedding organizers follow-up questions on social media and conducting in-person interviews. Findings reveal that wedding packages are commonly designed for a minimum of 100 guests, based on local venue standards. Key marketing strategies include word of mouth (70%), participation in wedding expos (25%), and social media marketing (5%). Additionally, client acquisition is largely driven by personal referrals, followed by exposure in bridal fairs such as "I Do with GLEO: A Wedding Expo," with minimal online marketing efforts. According to the study's findings, traditional methods like word-of-mouth and community exposure still dominate ways to attract customers in the local wedding industry, even though digital marketing is becoming more and more influential. Additionally, professionalism and accreditation from groups like GLEO are essential for building reputation and trust among wedding organizers.

Keywords: Accreditation, Client Acquisition, Event Expos, Marketing Strategies, Wedding Organizers

1. Introduction

Marriage has long been regarded as a significant milestone—often seen as both a religious and cultural requirement—social, political, financial, and cultural factors have historically shaped wedding preparations, influencing traditions and expectations. However, in today's landscape, the growing influence of social media platforms—such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter—has dramatically transformed wedding planning. While time-honored staples like the wedding gown, the

bouquet, and heartfelt ceremonies and speeches remain foundational, weddings in 2025 have evolved into more personalized and dramatic affairs. This year highlights the trend of couples embracing their individuality, breaking away from rigid traditions to create celebrations that reflect their unique identities. What was once a traditionally intimate and family-centered event has transformed into a modern, highly curated experience—one increasingly shaped by aesthetics, social media trends, and the desire for digital visibility (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2024).

Across the globe, the wedding industry has undergone substantial transformation, adapting to cultural shifts, digital trends, and economic pressures. In countries like the United States, one recurring challenge is the rising cost of weddings, which has led many couples to seek more budget-friendly, DIY options or elopements instead of traditional large-scale ceremonies (Smith, 2019).

In the Philippine context, aside from regional developments, the lack of professional regulation and standardization among wedding planners has been a longstanding concern. Many clients encounter issues with unaccredited or inexperienced organizers, leading to inconsistencies in service quality and trust (Reyes, 2018).

The wedding industry in the Philippines has evolved significantly over the past decade, particularly in regional urban areas like General Santos City. According to Panganiban (2020), the growth of professional event management services in the country has contributed to the emergence of structured and client-oriented wedding organizing businesses. In Gensan, event organizers often collaborate under formal groups such as the Gensan League of Event Organizers (GLEO) to promote standardization, training, and collective marketing (Mercado, 2020).

Gensan League of Event Organizers (GLEO), the Premier Organization of Accredited & Legally-operating Event Organizers in General Santos City recognized by the Local Government of General Santos, Department of Tourism & CEMCDO. GLEO-affiliated planners benefit from stronger supplier networks, access to large-scale bridal fairs, and co-branded promotions that enhance trust among clients (Torres & Lim, 2019).

In order to better understand the wedding planning sector in General Santos City, this study will focus on organizers who are members of the Gensan League of Event Organizers (GLEO). By providing a variety of customized services and packages, it highlights how these organizers help make weddings extraordinary.

Objectives of the Study:

The study aims to:

1. Explore the different wedding organizers operating in General Santos City, including those affiliated with GLEO.
2. Understand the promotional strategies used by these wedding organizers.
3. Examine the types of wedding packages offered, including the specific inclusions.

2. Literature review:

Recent studies have investigated the influence of content marketing on trust, word-of-mouth, and purchase intention in the context of wedding organizers in Malang Raya. Using a quantitative experimental survey, the study found that strategic content marketing—particularly when incorporating visually appealing designs, informative messaging, and authentic customer testimonials—significantly enhanced potential clients' trust and their intention to purchase services. The findings highlight the critical role of social media content in strengthening marketing effectiveness and client engagement within the wedding planning industry. The study emphasizes how social media content can improve marketing efficacy and client engagement in the wedding organizing industry (Rahmawati et al., 2022).

Recent studies have also highlighted the importance of community engagement and culturally aligned marketing strategies in the event planning industry. For instance, Chinomona (2020) found that event service providers with strong community ties and well-established professional networks tend to operate more efficiently and deliver higher-quality services. Similarly, Espinoza and Mercado (2021) examined the effectiveness of community-based events and regional marketing approaches in secondary cities. Their research showed that, especially when it comes to wedding preparation, matching marketing strategies with local cultural norms and expectations greatly increases consumer trust and involvement. In the regional event planning industries, these results highlight the importance of cultural awareness and community inclusion in establishing trust and enduring client relationships (Chinomona, 2020; Espinoza & Mercado, 2021).

In a qualitative case study, Putri et al. (2021) examined how Premiere Wedding Organizer in Indonesia responded to stagnating sales by shifting from traditional marketing approaches to a more dynamic, Instagram-centered strategy. By maximizing Instagram's features—such as visual storytelling, interactive content, and authentic client testimonials—the organizer enhanced audience engagement and built stronger trust with potential clients. Such insights are particularly relevant to understanding how wedding organizers in regional areas like General Santos City craft and adapt their marketing strategies to remain competitive and client-focused.

Expos and bridal fairs play a pivotal role in the marketing efforts of wedding service providers. According to Lopez (2021), these events offer organizers the opportunity to directly interact with potential clients, showcase their services, and build brand trust. Expos serve as interactive platforms where clients can compare vendors, experience service previews, and make informed decisions. Moreover, wedding expos foster immediate engagement, which helps service providers generate leads, strengthen customer relationships, and establish market credibility. This form of experiential marketing is especially effective in increasing visibility and enhancing client confidence in the wedding planning process (Lopez, 2021).

Yuliani et al. (2022) examined the marketing communication strategy of Sakha Wedding Organizer in Bogor, Indonesia during the new normal period. Despite economic challenges, the organizer successfully maintained client relationships and promoted services by utilizing digital and mass communication platforms, particularly Instagram and WhatsApp. This study highlights how digital tools can support visibility, client engagement, and business continuity in the wedding industry.

According to recent studies, attending events like wedding fairs and expos can help increase brand awareness and customer interaction in the event planning sector. According to Lopez (2021), these events serve as interactive marketing platforms where clients can engage directly with service providers, explore premium offerings, and form trust-based connections. Participation in such expos helps organizers showcase their services, collect feedback, and build credibility—especially valuable in highly competitive regional markets.

A study by Singh et al. (2021) examined how digital authenticity influences customer engagement in small event planning businesses. The findings showed that clients respond more positively to authentic marketing content, such as real-event photos, behind-the-scenes stories, and genuine client testimonials. These strategies helped build emotional trust and enhanced the credibility of event organizers in competitive markets.

3. Methodology:

In order to investigate the marketing strategies of wedding organizers affiliated to the Gensan League of Event Organizers (GLEO) in General Santos City, this study used a qualitative methodology. Understanding how these organizers market their services, the kinds of packages they provide. In person interviews with a small group of GLEO-affiliated organizers who are actively involved in the local wedding business were used to gather data. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, helping identify common strategies, and unique practices. This approach allowed the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of how GLEO organizers operate and communicate their services.

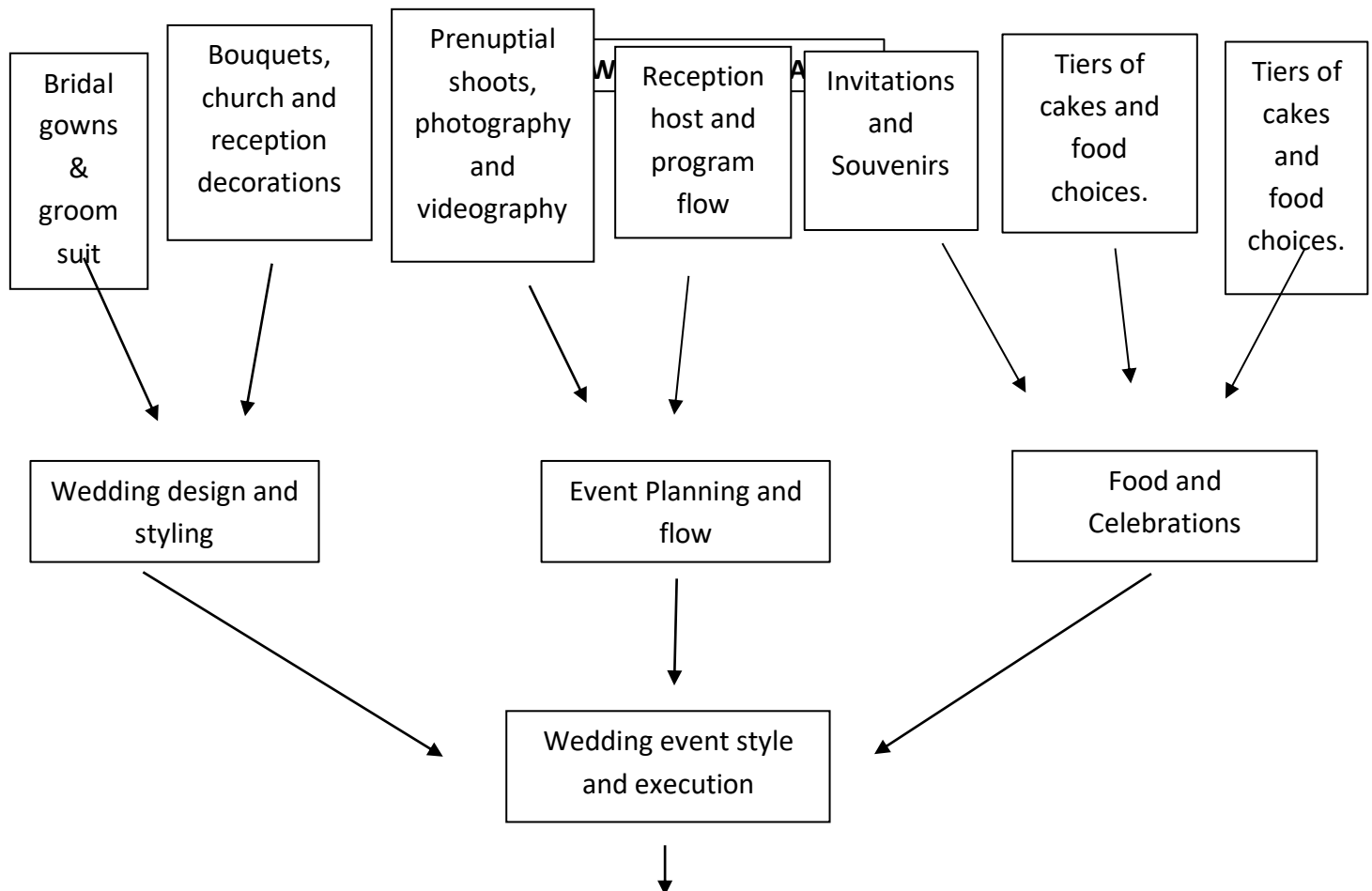
This study used a descriptive phenomenological approach, to examine the marketing strategies of wedding organizers in General Santos City who are members of the Gensan League of Event Organizers (GLEO). Purposive sampling was used to choose the participants, with an emphasis on ten GLEO-affiliated wedding organizers who are actively engaged in the regional wedding market.

The primary research tool was semi-structured interviews. These interviews were done face-to-face; each participant was scheduled for an appointment at a time and place that worked for them as part of the data collection process. The goals of the study were explained to participants before each interview, and their informed consent was acquired. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. In order to do this, the transcribed interviews had to be coded, recurrent patterns had to be found, and these had to be grouped into themes pertaining to communication strategies, marketing strategies, and distinctive services offered. Regarding ethical considerations, the study complied with the following guidelines: informed consent, confidentiality, respect for participant privacy, and voluntary participation.

Figure 1: Inductive thematic analysis

Wedding Package Themes – GLEO-Affiliated Organizers in General Santos City

(Memento, Event Petals by Ariel Mamites, JR & Quenny Bridal Couture)



Through Braun and Clarke's inductive thematic analysis, Essential features were categorized into more general categories including personalization, design, coordination, and hospitality. These included invitations, styling, decorations, photography, logistics, and food. An important part was played by organizers like Event Petals by Ariel, who provided longer hotel stays and more personalized cakes and invitations, than two other organizers. Overall, the results show how every feature, from event flow to visual styling, contributes to a grand and emotionally fulfilling

Table 2: Comparative Matrix

Wedding Packages Inclusions	Event Petals by Ariel Mamites	JR & Quenny Bridal Couture	Memento
Price (100 pax)	215,000-355,000	260,000-465,000	
Invitations & Souvenirs	30 pieces invitations 2 hours unlimited regular photo booth.	30 pieces invitation cards & 30 pieces giveaways	
Wedding Apparel (Bridal Gown, Groom Suit, & wedding essentials)	Bridal Gown, Groom suit, maid of honor, best man, 3 bridesmaids, 3 groomsmen, & wedding car.	Bridal Gown, Groom suit, maid of honor, best man, 3 bridesmaids, 3 groomsmen, 3 bearers, 3 flower girls & wedding car.	Bridal Gown, Groom suit, maid of honor, best man, 3 bridesmaids, 3 groomsmen, & wedding car.
Decorations (Church & Reception)	Stage backdrop, tables, bouquets and corsage.	Overall design for the banquet area,	
Photography (Prenuptial shoot, On-the-day documentation, and videography)	Prenuptial shoot, on-the-day documentation, 100 printed pictures, and flash drive for the final output.	Prenuptial shoot, on-the-day documentation, and videos.	Prenuptial shoot, on-the-day documentation, and videos.
Hair and Make-up (Prenuptial & on-the-day)	HMUA for the prenuptial shoot, HMUA on-the-day for 7 pax	HMUA for the prenuptial shoot, HMUA on-the-day	HMUA for the prenuptial shoot, HMUA on-the-day
Host & Program Flow	Yes, with performer (Band)	Yes, with performer (Band)	Yes

Food (Cake, Lechon, & Wine)	Four tiers icing cake, lechon 35 kls., & wine.	Three-layered cake, lechon, & wine.	Three-layered cake, lechon, & wine.
Coordination & organizing	Yes	Yes	Yes

4. Results and Discussion:

In today's wedding landscape, planning a wedding has become gradually difficult due to growing trends, changing timelines, and the several legal requirements that couples must accomplish. From setting a date to securing and submitting the necessary documents, the process can be overwhelming. As a result, many couples turn to professional wedding organizers to make sure that their vision is realized with minimal stress. These organizers play a vital role in streamlining the planning process, offering arranged packages, handling logistics, and providing expert guidance to help couples achieve their ideal wedding experience.

The purpose of this study is to examine the marketing approaches of wedding organizers operating in General Santos City, particularly those accredited with the GenSan League of Event Organizers (GLEO). The goal was to provide understanding to engaged couples and industry stakeholders regarding how wedding organizers promote their services, attract clients, and structure their wedding packages.

The study involved members of GLEO, comprising ten (10) officially registered and LGU-recognized wedding organizers. However, due to availability and consent limitations, only three (3) organizers agreed to participate through face-to-face interviews conducted on April 1, 2025. To complement the information gathered, follow-up questions were sent through their official social media accounts.

The research mainly focused on understanding the organizers' marketing strategies, the composition of their wedding packages, and their pricing systems. A consistent observation among the respondents was the standardization of wedding packages based on a minimum guest count of 100 attendees. This benchmark, suggested by most hotels and event venues in General Santos City, allows for a more manageable and budget friendly event execution. Organizers stated that planning for a minimum of 100 guests provides a composed approach to operational efficiency, service quality, and logistical coordination.

In terms of marketing strategies, findings revealed that the organizers engage a combination of traditional and modern approaches to reach potential clients. Word of mouth remains the dominant method, with approximately 65% of clients acquired through personal referrals and recommendations. About 30% of new clients are gained through participation in bridal fairs and community events, while only 5% are obtained through online marketing efforts, particularly through Facebook promotions. These figures indicate that, despite the growing significance of digital platforms, personal connections

and exposure through physical events continue to play a significant role in client acquisition within the local wedding industry. Organizers highlighted that trust, built through direct interactions and referrals, holds greater influence compared to purely online marketing strategies. This observation is consistent with the findings of Herrera and Santos (2020), who emphasized that in service-based industries, especially those involving life milestones, relational marketing often outperforms digital outreach in establishing trust and credibility.

Through Braun and Clarke's inductive thematic analysis, essential features of wedding events were categorized into wider themes, namely personalization, design, coordination, and hospitality. These features included invitations, styling, decorations, photography, logistics, and food. An important observation was the role played by organizers like Event Petals by Ariel, who offered longer hotel stays and more personalized cakes and invitations compared to two other organizers. This highlighted how enhanced personalization and service differentiation contribute significantly to client satisfaction. Overall, the findings prove that every element, from event flow to visual styling, plays a vital role in creating a grand, consistent, and emotionally fulfilling wedding experience.

Inductive thematic analysis was used to identify and categorize patterns evolving from the strategies employed by wedding organizers when delivering services and packages. Through interviews and a review of promotional materials, frequent themes were revealed, illustrating the main approaches organizers use to meet client expectations. As shown in Figure 1, the core wedding packages identified as common to all organizers included bridal gowns and groom suits, bouquets, church and reception decorations, pre-nuptial shoots, photography and videography services, reception hosting and program flow, invitations and souvenirs, as well as tiered cakes and food options. These core packages were categorized into three general areas: wedding design and styling, event planning and flow, and food and celebration essentials. All of these aspects combine to form the overall wedding event style and execution, highlighting the difficult coordination and thoughtful personalization required to deliver successful and memorable weddings.

In table1, a table presents a comparative analysis of the wedding packages offered by three (3) different wedding organizers, specifically designed for 100 guests. The table highlights important features of each package, including price, invitations and souvenirs, wedding apparel, decorations, photography, hair and make-up, host and program flow, food, and coordination and organizing services. Upon review, it was observed that the three wedding organizers offer almost similar packages, with only minor differences in certain areas. Minor differences in pricing were also noted, though overall, the offerings remained relatively consistent across all three organizers. This observation aligns with Nguyen and Patel's (2022) findings, which suggest that event service providers often streamline offerings to maintain operational efficiency and meet typical client expectations.

The findings suggest that whether couples choose a wedding organizer or not, and whether they opt for a luxurious celebration or a simple, intimate gathering — be it a church or civil wedding — every individual deserves to experience the true meaning of a wedding. While the goal is often to have a perfect and memorable celebration with loved ones, the demands and difficulties involved in wedding planning have led many to seek the help of professional wedding organizers. Their main role is to ease

the burden of preparation and to ensure that the event is well-coordinated and successful, allowing couples to focus on the emotional and symbolic importance of their special day.

Regardless of the differences in preferences, scale, or status, the essence of a wedding remains the same: a celebration of love, commitment, and unity shared with the people who matter most. This conclusion echoes the sentiments of Mendoza and Alcaraz (2021), who noted that wedding professionals serve as emotional anchors and logistical experts, making the event more meaningful and less stressful for couples.

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