

The Wedding Industry: A Cultural and Economic Mirror of China Today

Emily K. Tankersley, History B.A. Candidate
CSU Stanislaus Honors Program



INTRODUCTION

I am examining **changes in Chinese values and practices due to modernization and Westernization**, to see how it impacts purchasing/economic trends, with **special focus on relationships, families, marriage and weddings**, to gain a better understanding of what emerging markets are to be found and focused in China today. I hope to analyze the **interplay of relationships and economic trends** in modern China, focusing specifically on the **boom in the wedding industry** – now the world's largest – and the cultural aspect of **trying to maintain traditional Chinese culture while marrying it with modern Western culture** in both weddings and marriages. This will be a study of cultural interplay and maintenance, booming market trends, and the greater economic and political shifts that are shaping them.



Old meets new in China

CONTACT

Emily K. Tankersley
CSU Stanislaus
etankersley@csustan.edu

RESEARCH QUESTION

If family and marriage values are changing in China, what markets are emerging to meet the needs produced by these changes?

How are changes in family and relationship values and wedding/marriage practices impacting market trends in China?

What does this tell us about the changing values and ideas of the culture, for now and for the future?

It has been established that values are changing as China moves from a central economy to a capitalist economy, with modernization and with the influence of the West over the past three decades. How this is manifesting and being witnessed in the practices of modern Chinese weddings and marriages will be the focal point, as will examining how Chinese and Western traditions are mixing to give insight to the cultural interplay.

METHODS

Study of **journal articles** and books related to these topics will be employed, as will review of newspaper features and other articles. A **survey** will also be employed to gather data from Chinese people, mostly aged 18-35 – around the standard marrying age in China – as well as in the 50+ age range to establish an idea of differences in thought and attitudes across generations.

The survey will explore **value shifts** and **ideas of importance**, as well as habits and practices. The survey will be conducted via popular Chinese social media sites. Sample questions might include:

- What do you spend your money on?
- What is important in a romantic relationship?
- What do you look for in a marriage partner?
 - What must you have for your wedding?
- What material possessions do you need to own before you get married?



Traditional Chinese wedding attire

BACKGROUND

Due to the One-Child Policy (enacted in 1980), weddings are even more important in Chinese society and more money is spent on them, since the parents have only a single child to pay for. Chinese are getting married later so that they personally have time to save up the money necessary to contribute to the wedding and to pay for/purchase the items that are expected at time of marriage (most importantly – and most expensively – is owning a home). Love is also playing a much more significant role than ever before in the choosing of marriage partners (on the rise since the 1980s), and weddings are now focusing more on the couple rather than on their families as a whole. Western traditions and dress are being incorporated into marriage ceremonies, and sometimes even replacing traditional Chinese wedding customs.

Wedding Industry in China:
Revenue 2014: **\$22 billion**
Annual Growth 2009-2014: **5.1%**
Increase in average marriage age: **2.5 years**



Modern Western wedding attire

EXPECTED CONCLUSIONS

This research will produce results that detail the form of emerging market trends. Preliminary research indicates that the shift from a central economy to a market economy, joined with a shift from a focus on Confucianism and a central government to Western ideas and capitalism, has a strong impact on relationships, weddings and marriage practices and that these changes are creating **new avenues of business** in modern China, **especially in the wedding industry**. Having the data on these emerging markets and trends will be especially useful for anyone interested in **doing business in China** – either for insight into healthy markets to invest or become involved in, or for those who are interested in the economy overall. It will also be useful from a **cultural** standpoint when examining the **marriage of Chinese and Western traditions in modern China**.



Shuangxi – "double happiness" – the traditional character for marriage

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