The success factors of Instagram marketing for wedding planner businesses
The Austrian market

Master Thesis

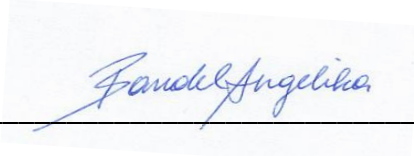|	
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Abstract

The success factors of Instagram marketing for wedding planner businesses

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Instagram is becoming increasingly important for marketing a wedding planner service, as the platform is being used as a source of inspiration from potential customers. Social media is a successful way to increase visibility of a business, demonstrate the expertise as wedding planner and generate new customers. The aim of the research of this thesis is to show which factors contribute to a successful Instagram marketing strategy for an Austrian wedding planner. Therefore, a qualitative study is conducted on the current use of social media by wedding planners. The study utlises semi-structured interviews which are then evaluated using Mayring's content analysis. The outcome is divided into three major categories, which are then interpreted. According to the findings, Instagram and social media have a significant impact on the interaction between consumers and businesses. The core findings revealed that it is necessary to define a clear strategy, provide a high level of engagement with consumers and deliver diverse, high-quality content in order to succeed in the thriving industry. Further research in the field of social media marketing in relation to wedding planner services could examine new social media platforms such as TikTok.

Keywords: Instagram marketing, social media marketing, wedding planner

Abstract

Die Erfolgsfaktoren von Instagram Marketing für HochzeitsplanerInnen

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Instagram wird im Hinblick auf die Vermarktung von Dienstleistungen für Hochzeiten immer wichtiger, da die Plattform von Personen im heiratsfähigen Alter unter anderem als Inspirationsquelle genutzt wird. Social Media Marketing ist ein erfolgreicher Weg um die Bekanntheit von Unternehmen zu steigern, die eigene Kompetenz als HochzeitsplanerIn aufzuzeigen und Kunden zu gewinnen. Das Ziel der vorliegenden Studie ist es aufzuzeigen, welche Faktoren dazu beitragen eine erfolgreiche Instagram Marketing Strategie für österreichische HochzeitsplanerInnen zu entwickeln. Es wird zunächst eine qualitative Studie über die aktuelle Nutzung von Social Media mit HochzeitsplanerInnen durchgeführt. Hierfür werden halbstrukturierte Interviews gemacht, die mit Hilfe der Inhaltsanalyse nach Mayring ausgewertet und anschließend interpretiert werden. Die Studie macht deutlich, dass Instagram und Social Media einen großen Einfluss auf die Interaktion zwischen KonsumentInnen und Unternehmen haben. Zentrale Ergebnisse der Arbeit haben gezeigt, dass es notwendig ist eine klare Strategie zu definieren, ein hohes Maß an Customer Engagement zu zeigen und vielfältige, qualitativ hochwertige Inhalte zu liefern, um in dieser aufstrebenden Branche erfolgreich zu sein. Weitere Forschungen im Bereich des Social Media Marketings in Bezug auf die Dienstleistung als Hochzeitsplaner könnten neuere Social Media Plattformen, wie zum Beispiel TikTok, untersuchen.

Keywords: Instagram marketing, social media marketing, wedding planner

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Introduction

Technological advances have changed the wedding planning sector. Today, couples use their smartphones and social media to showcase their lives and plan their weddings. This significantly changed the way of how wedding business owners navigate their business and engage with clients. Due to the constant access of inspiration on social media or Instagram, the expectations of weddings that meet the societal standards are higher than ever before. Expensive weddings have become more important than ever before and the social pressure for pompous weddings has also increased. At the same time weddings were never that absent from traditions, cultural standards and official control as nowadays (Carter & Duncan, 2017, p. 4).

However, the ultimate goal for couples is to create the perfect day, which requires a great deal of time and effort. It requires hiring different services providers and services like the venue, photographers, videographers, florists, stylists and many more. Therefore, couples often trust a third party who is in charge of the planning process. A professional wedding planner assists with planning, designing, and managing a customer's wedding. Depending on which services the wedding planner offers she or he can be hired either for the whole wedding, just for parts of the planning or only on the special day itself (Boey, 2008, p.211). Successful wedding planners maintain good relationships with other vendors in this industry, since the planner has to deal with all of them (van Beeck & Horn, 2011, p. 27).

While the wedding industry is already highly developed in countries like China, Indonesia (Samoedra, 2021, p. 579) or the US it is still rather relatively underdeveloped in Austria. According to McCain (2022) the wedding business in the US is a multi-billion Dollar industry. In China the wedding market accounted for 1.7 billion Yuan in 2021 (Blazyte, 2021).

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In Austria wedding planning is a relatively young industry that is still establishing itself on the market and yet does not represent a separate business sector. There are more than 100 wedding planners in Austria and the market is expected to grow further. In the destination wedding market, especially Austria is a highly demanded target compared to other European countries. That is due to the fact that people are interested in eco-friendly weddings. With the numerous parks, vineyards and natural scenery Austria offers a great location to satisfy the consumer's expectations (Future Market Insights (FMI), 2022).

The wedding market globally is a very diverse market since there are various traditions across countries and cultures (McCain, 2022). Therefore, the demand for services within the market varies around the globe. For professional wedding planners, it is necessary that they adapt their services and brand identity to attract customers. Especially, through new technology, like social media, the wedding market does not have any geographical boundaries anymore. In fact, social media is making an important contribution to the wedding industry. Not only for gaining customer all over the world and plan destination weddings, but also as a source of inspiration. One platform that stands out regarding wedding related topics is Instagram. It is considered as the most relevant platform to promote marriage events. Additionally, it is becoming more and more important to share life moments with a greater audience (Lee et al., 2011, p. 137). Due to the characteristics of Instagram, it is a great platform to upload photos and text with the ability to put a caption beneath the image (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016, p. 94). Thus, weddings are seen as important events in society that forces some people to compete with the social standards. By posting pictures of their big day people are able to satisfy their needs through gathering feedback from followers on their social media channels (Batool et al., 2021, p. 1).

From a business perspective, Instagram offers a great opportunity to foster a personal relationship between a brand and its followers. With over 1.2 billion million users and 95 shared photos and videos per day, Instagram has become a crucial marketing platform for all kinds of businesses (Green et al., 2018, p. 1). Instagram appeals primarily to a young user group and is often used by companies as an instrument for an emotional presentation of the brand. Moreover, the platform is used to increase the identification of the brand (Judt & Klausegger, 2019, p. 739).

A comprehensive review of literature revealed that there are not many scientific studies that deal with the wedding industry, especially in Austria. There are studies that discuss the wedding industry in Indonesia (Nabila & Irwansyah, 2021; Nadiyah & Mansoor, 2022), the US (Blakely, 2008; Halliday, 2021), the UK (Carter & Duncan, 2017; Damacena et al., 2018) or China (Lo et al., 2021), but not in regard to Instagram marketing. Nevertheless, as it is regarded as a growing industry, particularly driven by social media, further theoretical elaboration is needed. As there is a lack of research on this topic, this master thesis aims to generate new scientific results by examining success factors of Instagram marketing to promote wedding businesses in Austria. Therefore, the following research question will be addressed in this thesis:

"What are the success factors of Instagram marketing for wedding planner businesses in Austria?

To answer this question this research intends to provide new scientific findings regarding the usage of Instagram marketing in the Austrian wedding planner market. First, an in-depth understanding of the issue of Instagram is established, since this is the foundation for developing a marketing strategy. This is relevant to demonstrate how the usage of Instagram

can enhance company success, particularly for small businesses. Following that, the wedding industry is reviewed and examined in regard to social media. Subsequently, qualitative research is conducted in which experts, in this instance wedding planners, are interviewed. The instrument was chosen to efficiently obtain insider information in a certain field. This study is evaluated and interpreted using Mayring's qualitative content analysis. There are several aspects that contribute to the effectiveness of Instagram marketing. Personal branding, a network of partners, and social media know-how, such as the implementation of a marketing strategy, are examples of these factors. Additional external factors are the growth of the sector in general, as well as pricing structure on the Austrian market. The purpose of this research is to investigate how Austrian wedding planners can maximize their business potential by using Instagram.

1 Literature Review

1.1 Instagram – An overview

Instagram is a social media platform that allows its users to take videos, photos and stories for sharing their life moments, privately or publicly (Alkhowaiter, 2016, p. 59). Additionally, the images or videos can be shared on other social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and TikTok (Green et al., 2018, p. 1). Instagram does not only provide advantages for private users to communicate and learn new ideas, but also for businesses and marketeers, in order to market their products or services. According to (Lim et al., 2020, p.934) the focus on Instagram lies on people and evoking emotions to build a relationship with the brand or the product which leads to strengthening the brand image. According to Singh (2020, p.379), the platforms simple design accentuates the visual aspects of a brand solely. Therefore, it offers brands a place to share distinctive messages and to express them visually. That is important to note since user's intention on Instagram is to search for inspiration, creative ideas or unique imagery.

In 2021 were 1.12 billion people worldwide who used Instagram as a social media platform, and the number is expected to grow in the next couple of years (Dixon, 2023). Thus, by 2025 it is estimated that there will be 1.44 billion monthly Instagram users, which accounts for 31.2% of total internet users worldwide. In Austria, there were about 3.15 million Instagram users in February 2022, which account for a third of the Austrian population (Turulski, 2022).

1.2 Instagram trends

Social media in general and its applications, like Instagram, are developing quickly and have an impact on how people communicate with each other and how they perceive information (Lim & Childs, 2020, p. 45). In the past couple of years there was a general shift towards a visual-oriented content rather than text-intensive content which also explains that Instagram, as an image based social media platform, has grown so fast (Li & Xie, 2020, p. 56). Thus, according to Kilian & Kreutzer (2022, p. 9) especially video marketing with Instagram stories, Reels and IGTV (Instagram-TV) have gained relevance. For instance, IGTV has specifically been developed to watch videos on smartphones in a vertical format.

Another trend in the last couple of years was the opportunity to conduct social commerce on Instagram. It is possible for the company to directly add a store function to the business profile on Instagram. This makes it easier for consumers to directly purchase a product, when browsing through the company page on Instagram (Instagram for Business, 2023). What is more, there is a relatively new feature of Instagram which is called the "explore page". This offers companies the possibility to be better found by potential new clients as well as to generate a greater reach in a short period of time (Instagram for Business, 2023). One of the major trends that firstly appeared in 1992 and became relevant in 2020 with the rebranding of Facebook to *Meta* is the Metaverse. There is no clear definition for the term, but Hwang & Chien (2022, p. 1) suggests that metaverse is a 3D digital virtual world that enables people to interact and communicate with each other, represent themselves through their avatars and learn from each other in a virtual environment. This is also an important addendum for social media platforms like Instagram, since it adds immersion to it and offers new learning experiences in the virtual world (Ng, 2022, p. 195).

1.3 Advantages and disadvantages of Instagram marketing for businesses

Instagram was launched in 2010 and had grown rapidly over the last decade. As per (Alkhowaiter, 2016, p. 59) its outstanding success is correlated to the fact that photos and videos have become a "key social currency online". Hence, the application plays an important role not only for entertainment but also for businesses. They can benefit in several ways from this platform.

First, it is possible to increase the brand awareness through the social media platform. As already mentioned before, the focus on Instagram lies on the people and their emotions that are evoked with visual content. A brand or a business is only successful when it is acting like a person, then the brand becomes indispensable (Faßmann & Moss, 2016, p. 15). Secondly, Instagram offers the opportunity to build real connections and relationships with customers. By the amount of engagement it is likely that companies are able to find out whether their customers appreciate their content, and in a further step their product or service, or not (Singh, 2020, p. 382).

Moreover, it is possible to set up a business through Instagram in a cost-efficient way since it is free to use. This is especially interesting for small businesses or startups that just commenced their business and have limited resources. However, the challenge of implementing a strategy is to do it effectively on Instagram (Lemel, 2021, p. 1).

Additionally, the platform offers a cheap and innovate way to place advertisements for acquiring new customers. In the age of social media, it is especially important for small businesses to adapt their advertising strategy to the digital era. At the moment there is one particularly successful advertising tool, the so-called Reels. These are up to sixty seconds videos that creators use to evoke emotions and entertain customers (Holder, 2022, p. 55).

Finally, when a company engage in social media marketing it is important that it is aware of the fact that it is hard to keep control over their brand messages. It could easily go in the wrong direction and a brand can become a negative viral sensation (Virtanen et al., 2017, p. 471).

1.3.1 Influence of Covid-19

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the relevance of social media marketing has increased significantly. Moreover, Covid-19 had also an impact on the social media behaviour of consumers, especially regarding the purchase behaviour as well as the decision-making process (Mason et al., 2021, p. 15). In particular, the pandemic forced people to social distancing, isolation and lockdowns, whereby companies were looking for new strategies to stay in their customer's mind. During that time the consummation of digital media and especially social media increased significantly due to the fact that people spent more time at home. Finally, Dias et al. (2020) came to the conclusion that social media encouraged the end of the pandemic, because people still had the opportunity to socialize even when they had to stay at home (Dias et al., 2020). Especially Instagram was a great platform to stay in touch with its customers, as the engagement is usually high. Brands tried to use Instagram to convey positive messages, for staying in consumers' minds through that time (Francisco et al., 2021, pp. 20–21).

1.4 Purpose of Instagram marketing

Numerous research on Instagram marketing in various situations has previously been conducted. Salunke & Jain (2022, p. 134) have reviewed the literature about Instagram marketing from 2015 until 2021. They have divided the research frameworks into four

different categories, which are described as follows: Instagram features and usage, source, marketing objectives and consumer characteristics.

According to Virtanen et al. (2017) Instagram is a popular marketing tool for businesses, due to its characteristics of visual content. Moreover, it enhances businesses to provide visual storytelling rather than presenting textual content or information (Faßmann & Moss, 2016, p. 16; Virtanen et al., 2017, p. 461). Consequently, the idea is to initiate a prompt reaction from users by commenting or liking the post. A company should focus on engaging with its customers and find out what content is appealing and valuable (Virtanen et al., 2017, p. 461). Instagram is a great platform to encourage electronic word of mouth (eWOM) as it only requires consumer to share the companies' content. This helps to encourage other people to follow the company, to influence customers' attitudes and loyalty, and thus indirectly helps to boost the business success. For businesses it is important to apply an Instagram marketing strategy where eWOM pushes the company's success (Latiff & Safiee, 2015, p. 18; Leung et al., 2015, p. 151). It is recommended, especially for small companies, to increase the number of Instagram followers as quick as possible, in order to be identified as credible on the platform (Virtanen et al., 2017, p. 461).

Moreover, another factor that is important to note is the Instagram algorithm, which constitutes an opportunity to increase prospective customers and recognize trends on the market. Then it is possible for business owners or marketeers to promptly adapt and determine their marketing strategy (Agung & Darma, 2019, p. 747). Another important aspect in the digital context is the conviction of the customers regarding advertisement. Traditional marketing does not work as it used to do, since it is possible to ignore advertisements for instance through adblockers. In contrast, customers value the opinions of

other customers or prominent personalities like influencers. Influencers play a huge role when it comes to purchase decisions and electronic word of mouth (Salunke & Jain, 2022, p. 135). Customers increasingly like to seek the opinions of other consumers and influencers in order to make a purchase decision. As a result, influencers play a growing role in altering customer impressions of a brand's products or services. For instance, in the wedding market, an influencer can be any kind of wedding vendor (Kumar & Kuldeep, 2023, p. 2).

Social Media marketing in general is cost-efficient and effective in promotion of a product or service and thus, to increase turnover and sales plus strengthen the value of the market. In other words, it helps companies to achieve their marketing objectives. Instagram marketing in particular assist them to acquire new clients, generate leads, increase brand awareness, strengthen the brand image and build traffic for webpages (Salunke & Jain, 2022, pp. 136–137).

Regarding website traffic Instagram tends to generate more valuable traffic than other social media platforms. This is because, if a customer is making the effort to click on the link in the bio, it means that she or he is sincerely interested in reading or watching the content (Singh, 2020, p. 382). What is more, the social media platform is constantly changing, therefore it is important to be aware of trends for applying innovative marketing and advertising strategies (Salunke & Jain, 2022, p. 131).

Lastly, it is crucial to take the consumers' opinion or behaviour into account when using Instagram marketing. This can help to assess a specific stance towards a product or a service. Additionally, it facilitates companies to reach out to potential or new customers with common characteristics (Salunke & Jain, 2022, p. 137).

1.5 Features of Instagram

In the following chapter, the numerous formats of Instagram will be explained in more detail as well as how they can be used to advantage in the marketing strategy.

1.5.1 Reels

As already mentioned before, Reels are an up to 60 seconds long video format, which were launched in 2020 (Imran, 2022, p. 74). According to Holder (2022, p. 56) it is important that the content of Reels is rather emotionally driven than information based. Reels evoke people's emotions when there is a personal narrative being told and when the content includes likable characters. This helps in creating positive feelings and staying in customers minds. Consequently, the user is able to form a positive emotional attachment with the brand which can lead to a higher interaction. In other words, customers are more likely to share the content of the brand or eventually buy the product or service, when they are emotionally appealed. Reels open new doors for businesses and the way they interact with each other, plus they provide a considerable amount of data. The engagement of users, like sharing, commenting, or liking helps to collect and analyse the data. The platform then encodes all kinds of data that are gathered. After data processing the content is personalized and played out individually to users according to Instagram's recommendation system, which is based on Artificial Intelligence. This in turn leads to users spending more time on the platform and also creates value for the company or brand. The value thus increased can contribute to the brand the platform and the users (Imran, 2022, pp. 74–75).

1.5.2 Hashtags and tags

Another feature that is widely used in Instagram marketing is the hashtag (#). Hashtags are used to follow same interest base. For businesses as well as for individual users it can be beneficial for self-branding purposes by increasing their visibility. However, it is important to note for companies not to overexploit the usage of hashtags, since it can send the wrong signal of brand noise rather than sharing useful content. Moreover, when choosing the right hashtag for the brand or the business it is recommended to find out whether the hashtag is only linked to valuable content. By this way costly mistakes and harm of the brand can be prevented (Adegbola et al., 2018, p. 6).

A similar feature to the hashtag is the tag (@). By using the tag it makes it easy for users or brands to engage with the content, however according to research the level of interaction through tags is limited (Adegbola et al., 2018, p. 7). Both hashtags and tags can increase reach and visibility of a business, for instance by using wedding-related popular hashtags and tagging public figures (Nabila & Irwansyah, 2021, p. 6).

1.5.3 Stories

In 2026 Instagram has launched the transient feature, the so-called stories. It can be a picture or a short video in a vertical format that is automatically disappearing within 24 hours. Stories are adapting to the fast-paced consumer behaviour (Ko & Yu, 2019, p. 127). In order to give consumers, the option to rewatch the stories, Instagram invented the "Highlights", which can be permanently saved like a folder. This feature can be a useful indicator to show customers who is behind the brand and what the brand is all about. Businesses can benefit from Instagram stories in various ways. For instance, through content marketing, which covers all the organic and free of charge posts of a company. Companies

often like to use this tool to share behind the scene insights or to interact with its users. Instagram Stories have opened new ways of doing marketing. It offers the opportunity to an innovate way of storytelling and enables to start direct conversations with followers (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019, p. 3). Thus, it is possible to place advertisements through Instagram Stories. Additionally, the company can profit from the feature by sharing content through partnerships with other brands or influencers in order to reach a larger community (Grau & Zerres, 2018, p. 53).

1.5.4   Instagram Live

Instagram Live is a tool which can be used to strengthen one's authenticity towards customers, because what is said can no longer be revised. Another benefit is that Instagram followers of the brand get a push-notification when an account is going live, which will automatically lead to more attention (Marquardt & Kaspers, 2020, p. 329). Moreover, Instagram Live can be used as a tool to combine offline and online marketing, since if there is an event where the company takes part it is easy to also let the online followers be part of it. However, this needs a considerable preparation regarding rights, storyline and the audio transmission (Marquardt & Kaspers, 2020, p. 340).

1.5.5   IG-TV (Instagram Television)

IG-TV was launched in 2018 and was developed to watch videos on smartphones. It offers videos in the vertical format (Kilian & Kreutzer, 2022, p. 9). The idea was to implement videos with classical length and longer videos than Reels are (Schach, 2022, p. 140). It is also a competitive tool comparing with other platforms like YouTube. For businesses the feature

offers a great possibility to tell their story in more than 60 seconds videos (Marquardt & Kaspers, 2020, pp. 329–330).

1.5.6 Instagram Direct

Instant messaging makes it possible for business to directly interact with each other or with its customers. With the messaging services it is possible to connect with the consumer each step of the customer journey and strengthen the personal relationship. Thus, it is possible to privately share photos, videos or Reels within the messaging service (*Instagram Features*, 2022).

1.5.7 Advertising on Instagram

There are several ways to place an advertisement on Instagram. First of all, it is possible to put an advertisement in the story feature. Therefore, the advertiser creates an additional story in the same design as the other stories are the only difference is the labelling of "advertising" on the screen. On the picture or video format the advertiser can lead the consumer to more information about his service or product through clicking on the link (Belanche et al., 2019, p. 70). It is well recognized that more dynamic social-media forms, such as Instagram Stories, improve consumers' attitudes toward advertisements more than more static ones, such as the Instagram Wall. Furthermore, past research has linked creative techniques to consumer engagement, notably dynamic visual communications (Belanche et al., 2019, p. 84). According to Belanche et al. (2019, p.84), Instagram Stories, such as augmented reality stickers, may lead to more favorable feelings regarding its advertisements than those appearing on Facebook. The Stories format builds on previously breakthrough interactive advertising forms such as skippable video commercials. The way Stories are

viewed may be comparable to YouTube, where video advertising appear as extra dynamic material inside the navigation experience but may be avoided once the user has spent some time analyzing the information. These elements may be more immediately associated with story advertisements than with wall ads.

Secondly, it is possible to promote individual posts that are popular. Hence, it is necessary to determine the target group and the amount of budget which can be spent for them.

Another form of advertisement on Instagram are campaigns that can be set up through the Meta Business Suite. This is a tool where it is possible to manage certain marketing and advertising on Facebook and Instagram.

Regarding placing an advertisement on Instagram, a company has various options of different formats to do so. Moreover, it is possible to precisely target their customers and adapt or optimize them, in order to get better business results. It is important to note that when placing an advertisement on social media, a business or a brand should precisely evaluate this combination of channels. By this way it is possible to efficiently address different target groups and effectively invest in an advertising strategy (Belanche et al., 2019, p. 71).

1.6 Instagram algorithm

The Instagram algorithm was launched in 2018 which adopted artificial intelligence. It helps the cross-reference content and show content according to the user's needs. Moreover, the Instagram algorithm filters Instagram users that are cheating by using auto followers or auto comments systems for instance (Agung & Darma, 2019, p. 743; Holder, 2022, p. 55). This is necessary to prevent companies to increase their popularity through the usage of bots, which are paid social metrics including likes, comments and followers. These bots are

computer software that is able to automatically carry out tasks online. These bots took over and in 2016 they created more traffic than people, which correlates to fake engagement. As Instagram is one of the most important social media networks it is imperative to maintain a healthy environment on such a significant platform. This is made feasible by the machine learning algorithm that recognizes fake accounts on Instagram (Akyön & Kalfaoglu, 2019, pp. 1–2). Nevertheless, the Instagram algorithm also creates controversy since it is a complex system (Agung & Darma, 2019, p. 743; Holder, 2022, p. 55). For instance, it is challenging for businesses to increase the engagement of users that are already following their account. In this case, the Instagram algorithm categorizes the content of the account as not relevant and is altering the content to the user's interest. Another challenge to keep up with the Instagram algorithm is the user behaviour, as users often spend less than two seconds on viewing a post (Shah et al., 2021, p. 381). Companies can benefit from the Instagram algorithm since it is possible to reach a wider and more suitable audience. Additionally, the algorithm can help businesses to have a good outline on the marketing activities of competitors (Agung & Darma, 2019, pp. 743-746).

1.7   Instagram and purchasing decisions

Consumers are spending more time on social media and partaking in activities such as making friends, generating content, and sharing information, which has modified the service consumption process (Song & Yoo, 2016, p. 94). Customers commonly discussed their experiences, which might serve to impact the purchase intentions of other customers, either positively or adversely (Naeem, 2019, p. 574). The purchase decision is a method of reviewing a product or service that customers use as an important factor for consideration before purchasing it (Suharto et al., 2021, p. 1). The change in the service consumption process has

resulted in a greater emphasis on two-way communication platforms in order to contact online consumers and capitalize on word-of-mouth. Social media has a positive association with customers' purchasing decisions, but not all elements are equally important. Functional and monetary advantages have a beneficial influence, but socio-psychological benefits have no association. Hedonic advantages have a link with buying decisions (Song & Yoo, 2016, p. 94).

Nowadays, businesses frequently utilize social media platforms as a marketing strategy to develop brand recognition and awareness as well as to draw in and interact with customers. The so-called "micro-influencer" landscape has been established by Instagram. They use electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in order to draw in possible new clients. It is also conceivable to claim that micro-influencers already have a significant impact on how consumers decide what to buy (Peres & Silva, 2021, p. 103).

1.8   Instagram – a visual-oriented platform

For social media marketing, visual storytelling has become an integral part of this term. Visual storytelling is a story being told with the help of visual media and aims consumers to become immersed in a narrative that is being told. The media engagement can be a response to different formats like photographs, videos or illustrations. (Lim & Childs, 2020, p. 35). The goal of storytelling is to gain attention from new audiences, to entertain current followers and to form new ways of thinking. The value of good storytelling can be measured by how well complex or multifaceted ideas are conveyed to different audiences (Nicoli et al., 2021, p. 159). According to H. Lim & Childs (2020, p. 45) visual storytelling is contributing to a strong brand communication on Instagram, as the platform offers an interactive environment. When executing a communication strategy there has been a shift towards an experiential approach

of delivering a brand message (Lim & Childs, 2020, p. 33). Additionally, when a business is successfully generating positive engagements with its followers or the general public, it can lead to higher brand loyalty (Nicoli et al., 2021, p. 159). Or as Lim and Childs (2020) suggest *"a self-brand connection as a relational outcome of photo narrative on Instagram"* (pp. 36-37). That means so-called "brand-attached" customers contemplate the concept of a brand to be part of themselves. As a result, they show a significant amount of engagement with the brand, such as repurchasing or promoting the product or service (Lim & Childs, 2020, p. 36).

The transformation achieved by this style of engagement is narrative persuasion. Narrative persuasion differs significantly from the traditional form of customer engagement, since transporting stories influences individuals mentally and evoke emotional responses (van Laer et al., 2019, pp. 135–136). Hence, individuals are likely to consume stories for entertainment, to escape reality and to improve their daily lives. Regarding advertisements it is stated that narratives are more likely to transport warm feelings than an analytical form of advertisement (van Laer et al., 2014, p. 804). Additionally, the narrative transportation effect has the ability to stay and perhaps grow over time, allowing for larger returns on ad spend (van Laer et al., 2019, pp. 135–136).

1.9   Instagram marketing strategies

It is necessary to include social media in a modern communication strategy. This is significant because customers are sharing their experiences on social media, and the knowledge gained from these experiences can contribute to optimize the product or service to meet the demands of the consumer (Adeola et al., 2020, p. 548). Compared to traditional marketing communications, which means any form of offline media, social media offers the opportunity to connect with its customers in real-time format. As customers act as co-

creators of the brand, they should be included when a marketing strategy is being developed (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 1).

Prior research has already discussed social media marketing strategies at length (Jami Pour et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021). Thus, those researchers often discussed social media channels in general, rather than concentrated on one platform (Jami Pour et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021).

When conceptualizing a social media strategy, it is important for companies driving customer engagement to yield exceptional marketing results (Li et al., 2021, p. 54). A form of engagement can be different features on the platform to like, comment and share content. These likes and comments are a sign of the consumers involvement with the brands post, which helps businesses to reach the objectives of their social media content marketing strategies (Cuevas-Molano et al., 2022, p. 73).

As already mentioned prior there are trends towards images and other visual contents. This can influence certain factors like brand awareness, increasing traffic, conversion, share and more. Therefore, it is necessary to comprise this trend in the social media strategy of a business (Virtanen et al., 2017, p. 471). Especially, Instagram is widely recognized for its visual elements and its user's proclivity for using mobile devices. Due to this characteristics companies may choose to utilize diverse content tactics to interact with customers on Instagram compared to other social networking sites (Zhang & Su, 2022, p. 5).

Moreover, another important strategy to market a business on social media is a personal branding strategy. Personal branding is considered to be someone's reputation and image, which is the secret of influence, opportunities and growth. Especially in a digital age where information travels immediately and continually, branding becomes important,

weather it is for business or personal purposes. As we are living in the 21st century we are connected globally, which makes our competition not only local but international. In order to be competitive and represent oneself as a strong personal brand, it is essential to develop a strategy and a plan of action. The goal of personal branding, is building a highly valuable brand equity through a marketing image (Viţelar, 2019, pp. 259–260).

Another successful strategy to engage with potential customers is through influencer marketing. Social media influencers are well-known online personalities that have built a loyal follower base by maintaining an authentic online character. By packaging and sharing genuine personal tales that incorporate images, videos, and activities with the interactive features of social media, influencers build a strong online presence. Influencer marketing can increase the brands social media presence by using the influencers connections and relationships with their followers. Through influencer marketing brands are aiming to place their products or services in an authentic way. Therefore, brands or companies choose influencers based on their organic content that they place their products or services according to their content strategy (Tafesse & Wood, 2021, pp. 1–3).

Furthermore, another strategy that business can apply within their Instagram marketing plan is the so-called growth strategy. In order for a company to extend its business a growing technique can be applied, which can be either organic or inorganic, whereas organic growth means without paid advertising. The "Follow/Unfollow" approach is the more popular and often used growth technique. It is a technique that involves just three easy steps: following, waiting and unfollowing (Bellavista et al., 2019, pp. 1–2). According to Bellavista et al. (2019, p. 3) there are some important strategies which need to be implemented over a long period of time in order to be successful:

- Interact with engaging followers.

- Consistently adapt the "Follow/Unfollow" strategy.

- Regularly post new content.

- Use relevant hashtags (#) and high-quality content.

- Boost the algorithm by engaging with likes, comments and posts.

- Share other profiles.

- Maintain consistency over a long period of time.

- Set objectives and analyse the growth.

1.9.1 *How to measure Instagram marketing activities*

The measurement of social media marketing in general is a mystery compared to the traditional return of investment. Social media marketing requires a different measurement approach because it does not only include monetary returns, which can be easily measured. It includes qualitative data, such as brand awareness, which cannot directly be attributed to an increase in sales (Alhaimer, 2019, p. 3). Therefore, it is necessary to identify goals of social media marketing and then to determine metrics for measuring those goals (Alhaimer, 2019, p. 4).

Effectiveness and performance are the key to a successful Instagram marketing strategy. There are several ways to measure social media marketing depending on the objective of the individual company. For instance, when the goal is to increase brand awareness, it is a possibility to use the number of followers and the engagement rate to determine the level of approval of the brand (Virtanen et al., 2017, p. 472). Anyhow, in order to implement a successful marketing strategy, it is crucial to set SMART goals. Thus, it is

necessary to actively and constantly measure the performance of marketing activities in order to achieve the objectives. For this purpose, two different types of metrics can be applied, which are vanity metrics and conversion metrics. Vanity metrics are an output of social media marketing that is not directly linked to the company goals. They include the number of followers or the reach. The conversion metrics can be directly linked to the company goals, for instance a follower that has converted to a customer (Sutherland, 2021, pp. 148–150).

As for today there are many tools that can be used to measure the impact of social media marketing. Specifically for Instagram the native measurement tool of the business profile, which is called "Insights", provides all the relevant metrics for monitoring the marketing activities (Sutherland, 2021, pp. 155–156). As mentioned before, Instagram has several ways to measure performance, including the number of followers, likes and comments per photo. However, Instagram users are able to game the system by purchasing followers and likes from third-party sources, which is lowering the reliability and trustworthiness of the performance metrics (Begkos et al., 2020, p. 589). Influencer marketing, on the other hand, gives brand managers very little control over the material that Influencers post and the context in which it appears, because they produce the content themselves. Therefore, only broad parameters can be outlined. As long as the influencers' honesty and trustworthiness are maintained, this modest degree of control is tolerated (Jan-Frederik & Link to external site, 2019, p. 3).

2 Wedding Industry

In recent years there has been a shift from traditional family functions like birthday-parties or wedding to being absorbed into the market economy. Due to the hectic and demanding lifestyles of today's couples, people choose to hire wedding planners to support the organisation of weddings (Blakely, 2008, pp. 639–642).

The average cost of a wedding in Austria with a number of about 100 guests is according to industry experts in the range of 25.000 to 30.000 Euros. For foreign couples the expenses for a wedding in Austria are about 50.000 Euros. The favourite destinations for weddings are Vienna, Lower Austria and thirdly Styria. The top locations in Vienna are Palais Schönburg, Castle Schönbrunn and winery Cobenzl (BVZ, 2019). As the average budget for a wedding is raising every year the wedding marketing is increasing (Kurniawan & Nova, 2019).

In Austria the wedding market is slowly recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Statistik Austria (2022) there were 41.195 marriages in 2021. In general, the number of marriages was higher in 2021 than in 2020, however it was significantly lower than before the pandemic. In 2022 the number of marriages has continued to rise up to 46.000 per year. Moreover, most of the weddings in Austria are taking place in Vienna, which correlates to the population.

Since the 1st January, 2019, it is legal in Austria to marry someone of the same gender, which opened up a new market to the wedding industry. Prior to this change, registered partnerships were the only legal arrangement available to same-sex couples. That also means that marriage for all made everyone equal in each pertinent ways (Mohr, 2023).

2.1 Service providers in the wedding industry

A wedding celebration is a very personal event because it represents a couple's most important day. It is a once-in-a-lifetime event for the participants, which are therefore emotionally charged. This sometimes makes the course of the celebration unpredictable. Hence each actor's performance, such as the photographer, will be a contributing factor for the success of the wedding (Damacena et al., 2018, p. 1396). In the process of planning and implementing a wedding value-cocreation of different stakeholders play an important role. In the case of a wedding value-cocreation happens multiple times along the process, which means all actors have a significant impact on the customer satisfaction (Damacena et al., 2018, p. 1405). Hence, the ability of a wedding planner to build a network of partners and vendors is essential to be successful, whether it is local or international (Bertella, 2017, p. 8). Generally, a wedding planner business cannot function without a surrounding network. It is possible to select the service providers according to the consumer's needs (Nadiyah & Mansoor, 2022, p. 3627).

As per Nadiyah and Mansoor (2022, p. 3627) there are several core vendors that are crucial for a wedding planner business. These include wedding décor, catering, music entertainment, hair- and make-up artist, venues, officiant and photographer or videographer. In the extended network the following vendors are important wedding attire boutiques, stationary suppliers, cake artists, florists and jewellers. As these stakeholders all contribute to the success of the service of a wedding planner they are essential for a sustainable business.

Moreover, numerous factors impact customers' desire to hire a wedding planner, including the industry's complexity, the need to change consumer opinion and create trust,

and the need to convey their feelings and expectations. According to research, people's intentions of hiring experts for wedding arrangements are being influenced by ongoing societal pressure, which shows a negative image of society. Wedding planners must create strategies to generate revenue while also assisting customers in coping with societal pressure. They should also consider innovations to replace pricey services with less expensive ones in order to satisfy their budget and reduce the impact of societal pressure (Kashyap et al., 2020, pp. 74–75).

2.2 Wedding planner businesses in Austria

In Austria the wedding planner industry is quite young and belongs to the professional association for leisure- and sport companies. This association also represents 38 other organizations, which include event agencies. Wedding planners in Austria aim to satisfy their clients' needs and wishes from either national or foreign couples. Mostly their services include the organization of wedding, wedding proposals, engagement parties and anniversaries (WKO, 2020). Currently, there are about 100 wedding planner businesses on the Austrian market and it is further developing (OTS, 2019).

2.3 Trends in the wedding industry

A limited amount of literature on the subject of wedding trends, and therefore, in the main, research results from Deloitte were used for this topic. As already mentioned, the wedding industry in India is quite well developed and therefore has been further explored and provides a useful point of comparison with the market in Austria. Especially after the covid-pandemic there was a trend towards intimate weddings instead of extravagant weddings. Additionally, the way people travel has changed towards an eco-friendlier way of

tourism. Wedding travels like a honeymoon are booked rather in domestic locations rather than in international locations (*Demystifying The Indian Consumer Behaviour*, 2023).

There is a general shift from traditional wedding to personal and unique experiences, which is telling their own story. Therefore, couples, especially millennials, are looking for unconventional wedding venues. Wedding tourism is an expanding international sector. In this regard, the term "wedding tourism" refers to the influxes of tourists who travel to attend weddings held in locations where neither one of the couple lives (Bertella, 2017, p. 1). Especially, destination weddings are trending globally. This trend is important since people tend to be influenced by their own personal preferences regarding wedding and marriage related decisions. Therefore, companies or businesses get the opportunity to extrinsically influence future couples' personal values. As the financial factor plays a crucial role it is possible to steer people in a direction and convince them of the benefit of a destination wedding is. Today everything needs to be a unique experience, which can be a valuable influencing factor for this trend (Mazozo & Fitchett, 2019, p. 9). Social media marketing is critical for attracting destination weddings. Before choosing on a place for their wedding, aspiring couples want to learn everything about it. They desire a personal connection to the area as well (Chungyalpa, 2022, p. 73).

Another important factor that needs to be considered when offering services in the wedding industry is sustainability in relation to various elements in the wedding planning process. These include the choice of buying an eco-friendly wedding dress or of using organic flowers and food that helps to decrease the usage of dangerous chemicals (Kwon, 2017, p. 597). According to a survey from Statista (2022) Germans indicated that sustainability influences their wedding decisions about décor. In addition, about 32% of the participants

made sure to use high-quality organic ingredients or served the guests regional and seasonal food (Statista, 2022).

Furthermore, advances in technology in general have a huge impact on all industries. The wedding industry is one of several sectors that has grown while sustaining its operations by utilizing technology. For instance, an Indonesian company has created a one-stop shopping and marketplace for the wedding industry, offering business strategies and convenience to brides, grooms, and vendors. It also creates opportunities to support sustainability and reduce economic inequalities by making wedding references accessible to everyone, not just higher socio-economic groups (Nabila & Irwansyah, 2021, p. 1).

Moreover, smart tourism represents a significant development in tourism technology, because it may enhance the traveller's experience. Smart tourism is aiming to satisfy the needs of tourists, to increase tourist satisfaction, and to improve resource sharing and intense utilization (Li et al., 2017, p. 295). Applications have been created for event managers to assist with planning events, managing guests, managing weddings, managing invitations, and monitoring the program. The use of these technologies may increase consumer satisfaction (García Revilla et al., 2023, p. 57).

3   Impact of social media on the wedding industry

Digitalization and especially the era of social media had a huge effect on the wedding industry, as it established the connections between service providers and their customers (Batool et al., 2021, p. 1). According to Myung & Smith (2018, p. 695) the usage of smartphones for wedding preparation has been one of the most significant wedding trends. Social media has created a new picture of how weddings should look like. There are a myriad of marriage related posts every day (Batool et al., 2021, p. 1). The social pressure of creating the perfect day is driving people to let professionals take over. The social networking sites Facebook and Instagram have had a huge impact of how people see their own wedding. It has shifted from a personal and intimate affair to an important social event (Singh & Motwani, 2022, p. 2712). Social media posts of celebrities or friends have a great influence on users. It is not a new discovery that people are encouraged to buy designer clothes for their wedding after viewing Instagram images. Furthermore, social media greatly promotes innovations in wedding festivities such as bridal showers and bachelor parties. Furthermore, individuals are persuaded to follow extravagant trends during weddings, such as destination weddings or themed celebrations (Batool et al., 2021, p. 7).

From a customer point of view, weddings contain an emotional element and transfer a lot of values and culture. Especially a large wedding represents status and prosperity in today's society. Some people even devote a lot of money in their weddings, and others belonging to a lower class try to follow their path. Large, extravagant weddings of people from the higher socio-economic groups set trends by sharing their wedding photos and videos on Instagram, and using hashtags. Lower socio-economic groups aspire for such extravagant events and devoting their lives to save money for them or their children's big day (Batool et

al., 2021, p. 2). For instance in India the influence of social networking sites had a huge impact on the minds of their customers when making decisions about certain things, like the venue or the décor (Singh & Motwani, 2022, p. 2711).

There are many ways where brides and grooms are using social media to their advantage. It can be a source of inspiration and it is possible to directly get in touch with suppliers or vendors through their channels. Thus, it is possible to share wedding photos or videos on social media platforms for other users, and as well to create own memories (Singh & Motwani, 2022, p. 2711).

As already mentioned before, in Austria people are spending about 25 to 30 thousand Euros for their wedding. In earlier times the parents of the bride took over the costs of the wedding usually. Today it is common that the couple is splitting up the costs (OTS, 2019). As of social media the trend of big, impressive weddings is raising and leads to an increase in wedding expenses (Myung & Smith, 2018, p. 695).

Furthermore, from a business point of view, social media makes it possible for wedding organizers to reach a much broader audience without any borders, in order to gain new customers (Novianti et al., 2019, p. 2). Business owners have the opportunity to invest in social media platforms in order to develop relationships with consumers and to establish or promote their products or services through viral content or other consumer engagement activities (Myung & Smith, 2018, p. 695). Wedding planners are also able to effectively advertise their businesses on social media by using reviews, tags, and comments. When tagging the customers in the posts, wedding planners are more likely to gain awareness through electronic word of mouth (Chungyalpa, 2022, p. 68). Especially, destination weddings are significantly impacted by social media. Many couples are looking for increasingly unique

experiences that will make their destination wedding extraordinary due to the impact of opulent visual imagery. Thus, couples use the opportunity of a destination wedding for a unique vacation and share their content on social network platforms (Chungyalpa, 2022, p. 65).

Moreover, according to Statista (2022), in Germany, Instagram is the second most important source of inspiration platform, related to weddings after Pinterest. Pinterest is an online and mobile application that allows users to search for photos using keywords and includes links to each image's original source website. Pinterest seems as though it has had a significant influence on the wedding business. Wedding-themed boards have grown in popularity, with Pinterest estimating that there are tens of thousands of such boards populating the social networking sites (Mowzer, 2016, p. 25). However, it is crucial to make use of platforms like Instagram or Pinterest to engage with its customers and to advertise wedding-related services (Ko & Yu, 2019, pp. 699-700).

4   Research question

Social media has not only changed the ways in which individuals connect, engage, and interact with each other, but also how people are conducting business. Social media, particularly Instagram, has a significant impact on the wedding industry from both the perspective of service providers and customers, on the one hand. A study that specifically examines the influencing elements of Instagram marketing on the wedding market does not yet exist, at least not in Austria. In order to determine and assess the status quo of the Instagram marketing activities in the Austrian wedding planner industry a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter is required. According to the researcher's knowledge, no study identifies the success factors of Instagram marketing in the Austrian wedding planner industry. Therefore, this thesis aims to answer the following research question:

- What are the success factors of Instagram marketing for Austrian wedding planner businesses?

4.1   Research objective

The research objective is to identify the success factors of Instagram marketing for Austrian wedding planner businesses. On the one hand this study aims to investigate an industry that is not well known yet, especially in the scientific context. In Austria and generally in Europe the wedding market is growing, but still did not get much attention, which is among the aim of this thesis. On the other hand, the purpose is to find out in what ways Instagram marketing is influencing the success of wedding planner business in Austria. This should contribute to the general knowledge about Instagram marketing techniques of small business owners, in particular for wedding service providers. It should provide businesses a general idea of what they ought to include in an online marketing strategy and how to implement it

into practice. On the basis of the results of the research question this thesis aims to provide practical insights for wedding planners in order to further develop their social media presence and be more successful as an entrepreneur. The outcome can also be relevant for other service providers in the wedding industry in general. Additionally, this research can contribute to the to the profession of wedding planner becoming more widespread and better recognized in Austria and Europe.

5   Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodological approach undertaken to discover the success factors of Instagram marketing for wedding planner businesses in Austria. To be precise, the aim of this research as well as the methodological approach will be examined in greater detail. It will present the sample which was chosen and will set out the method utilised for data collection along with the process of data analysis. Finally, it will discuss limitations associated with this study.

5.1   The objective of the study

The study focuses on the success factors of Instagram marketing for small wedding planner businesses in Austria. To serve this aim, the following steps were followed. First, a literature review was accomplished by various keywords, including Instagram marketing, social media marketing strategies, business success and wedding planner. Secondly, an observation of Instagram accounts was pursued, which were followed by semi-structured interviews.

5.2   Qualitative approach

The use of qualitative research methods has its origins in the social sciences, which is an interpretive method (Cypress, 2015, p. 356). In this thesis a qualitative approach was chosen since it offers the possibilities of discovering individual experiences, phenomena or processes. The goal of this research technique is to get a deeper understanding of how people interpret these attributes and what their motivations or motives behind their behaviour are (Kalof & Dan, 2008, pp. 79–80). The wedding planner industry in Austria is a quite new sector

and not well researched yet. Therefore, a qualitative approach is used in this thesis to obtain greater knowledge and insights into the industry.

5.3 Data collection

In line with the qualitative approach, data were gathered through an observation of Instagram business profiles and expert interviews using an interview guide. In the following chapter the semi-structured interview, the sampling methodology and the data analysis process will be described in detail.

5.3.1 Semi-structured Interview

The instrument that is used in the study are semi-structured interviews. Interviews are a useful and precise tool to gain deeper understandings into an individual's experience, opinion and motivation. Moreover, the sample group's diverse professional, educational, and personal backgrounds precluded the implementation of a standard interview format (Barriball & While, 1994, p. 330). The semi-structured interview typically has an interview guide that includes open-ended questions. They are subdivided in broader categories which are pre-defined from the literature or observations (Busetto et al., 2020, p. 3). This particular instrument was chosen, because it has proven to be versatile and flexible. That helps the interviewee to respond with follow-up questions based on the participant's statements (Kallio et al., 2016). In the data collection process the interviewer is able to learn within the interviews and therefore adapt questions in the process (Busetto et al., 2020, p. 3).

In the frame of this investigation the expert interview was deployed. Expert interviews are characterized with reference to the individuals being interviewed. This method is used in the explorative stage of a study, since it is possible to efficiently gather insider knowledge in

a specific area (Bogner et al., 2009, p. 2). The identification of an expert is identified by the researcher, which is an individual who has a profound knowledge in a specific field of expertise. The status of the expert defined by the quality of his position and knowledge (Bogner et al., 2009, p. 18).

The following section will provide a short description of the interview guide that was utilized in this thesis. The interview guide represents a research tool for qualitative interviews, which is used to explore a topic carefully and systematically. It helps to follow a thread through the interview. The interview guide is structured in such a way that there are questions directly related to the research question and questions related to the central question (Jamshed, 2014, p. 87). At this point it should be mentioned that the questions in the interview guide are primarily based on the literature review. Nevertheless, there are individual questions which were constructed by the researcher. The interview guide in this thesis consists of four different sections. In the first section personal data about the interviewee and their professional background will be asked. In the second section there will be questions about their general knowledge and usage of social media for their business. These questions include knowledge about channels, objectives, and customer engagement. In the third section they will be asked about their Instagram marketing activities in greater detail. This encompasses questions about the used Instagram features, relationship with clients or their strategy. The last section is used to gather insights relating to their wedding planner business and their use of Instagram marketing.

The appendix contains the interview guide which includes all questions and sub-questions (see Appendix 1).

5.3.2 *Sampling methodology*

The sampling method that is used in this thesis was the non-probability sampling, which indicates that the chance of an individual being chosen for the sample cannot be predicted. Hence, it is possible that this sampling technique can lead to a selection bias of the study (Acharya et al., 2013, p. 332). The non-probability sampling method includes convenience sampling, consecutive sampling, purposive sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling. Within the scope of the study expert sampling was chosen as a form of purposive sampling. In the purposive sampling method, the selection is based on the researcher's knowledge and how they assess the fit of the participant to the study. This in fact can have a negative influence on the sampling technique since the preconceived notions of the research can have an impact on the result.

In the context of this thesis the interviews were contacted directly per WhatsApp, per Instagram or through recommendations from other wedding planners. To be eligible for this study, it is necessary that the interviewees are actively and professionally working as a wedding planner in Austria, weather they are operating only in Austria or internationally (see Table 1). All the interviews within this study were conducted online with Google Meet. This is justified in order to meet the objectives of the study which is to investigate the success factors of Instagram marketing in the Austrian wedding planner industry. In total 10 wedding planners were interviewed within a timeframe of five weeks.

To justify the sample of 10 interviewees there were two different approaches used, which are theoretical saturation and information richness. Saturation refers to the point in data collection, when no new insights are found and data start to repeat, indicating that an appropriate sample size has been achieved. For qualitative research to be robust and valid,

reaching saturation has become an essential component (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022, p. 2). There are numerous different approaches of how many samples are appropriate in qualitative research. For this research the approach of Hennink and Kaiser (2022, p. 8) will be the indication, which considers that a small sample size between 9 and 17 interviews can in fact represent the whole dimensionality of people's experiences in the area of expertise.

In qualitative research saturation is employed as a criterion for stopping data collecting. In particular, saturation occurs when no further data are discovered from which the sociologist may derive category attributes. As the researcher repeatedly witnesses identical incidents, he or she gains empirical confidence that saturation is reached (Saunders et al., 2018, pp. 1894-1895). Overall, before starting the investigation of the study, it is difficult to define a given sample size for scientific research. Instead, it should be viewed as an iterative process depending on the researcher's interpretation and assessment. Throughout the data collecting process the researcher determines how much data saturation has already been attained and how much is still required to satisfactorily answer the research question of the study (Sim et al., 2018, p. 12). During the data gathering process in this study the researcher assessed the findings on a continuous basis. Upon the completion of 10 interviews, the researcher came to the conclusion that they had already offered a high density of relevant and significant information. This indicates that the sample size would be adequate for this study. A full sample description which offers more information about the sample can be seen in Table 1:

Table 1:

Sample description

Participant information			Business details		Interview details	
Expert ID	**Gender**	**Participant background**	**Type of wedding service provider**	**Location**	**Duration**	**Interview format**
E1	female	Over 5 years years of experience	Wedding planner	Austria	31.04 minutes	Online (Google Meet)
E2	male	3-5 years of experience	Wedding planner and wedding speaker	Austria	41.01 minutes	Online (Google Meet)
E3	female	1-3 years of experience	Wedding planner	Austria	21.20 minutes	Online (Google Meet)
E4	female	1-3 years of experience	Wedding planner	Austria	20.43 minutes	Online (Google Meet)
E5	female	1-3 years of experience	Wedding planner and wedding speaker	Austria	29.12 minutes	Online (Google Meet)
E6	female	3-5 years of experience	Wedding planner	Austria	36.13 minutes	Online (Google Meet)
E7	female	3-5 years of experience	Wedding planner	Austria	21.33 minutes	Online (Google Meet)
E8	female	1-3 years of experience	Wedding planner	Austria	29.10 minutes	Online (Google Meet)
E9	female	Over 5 years of experience	Wedding planner	Austria	35.17 minutes	Online (Google Meet)
E10	female	1-3 years of experience	Wedding planner	Austria	19.10 minutes	Online (Google Meet)

Note. Information about the participant, their business background and the interview. Own illustration.

5.4 Data analysis

In this thesis a qualitative content analysis was conducted, which can be characterized as a research method that looks at information obtained from communication (Mayring, 2014, p. 11). This is a form of inductive or deductive data analysis. Inductive data analysis means that the researcher is developing a theory or identifying different themes, by studying

and revising the research questions or study objectives. (Cypress, 2015, p. 358). In the frame of this study raw verbal documents in the form of semi-structured interviews and recordings are the subject. Furthermore, an inductive content analysis is an applicable method for research where there exists little to no research about the phenomenon (Armat et al., 2018, p. 219). The deductive data analysis approach is used, when previous findings already exist, and codes are developed in advance based on the theory. In the context of this study a combination of approaches was applied. Certain codes were drawn from the gathered data material, while others were derived from theory (Armat et al., 2018, p. 220).

In particular, the data analysis was carried out using Mayring's qualitative content analysis. The idea of this analysis to designate to certain categories to further interpret them by following a specific schemata (Mayring, 2014, p. 10). In the following section it will be examined how this method will be applied in the research. The aim of the content analysis of Mayring is to analyse communication material like Instagram posts or transcribed interviews in a systematic way to answer a certain research question (Mayring, 2014, p. 43).

For the data analysis the collected data through observations of interviews has to be transcribed (Busetto et al., 2020, p. 4). Hence, after reviewing the wedding planner's Instagram channels and conducting the interviews, the first step of the data analysis was to transcribe the audios into written form in order to prepare them for the subsequent analysis. The transcript is a central point of the qualitative content analysis. In order to prevent information loss, it is necessary to define rules for transcribing the interviews. For this thesis the pure verbatim protocol was chosen. That means the transcript includes every single utterance from the recorded interview (Mayring, 2014, p. 45).

The second step of the analysis was to find similarities and differences in the data, which then are put in different categories or themes. The outcome of this process is influenced by the researcher's own interpretation of the material (Graneheim et al., 2017, p. 30). The last step of the content analysis is to group the data and thus reduce the number of categories by combining similar themes and put them in broader categories. That means the goal is to take the data from specific arguments or perceptions and put them to a general statement (Graneheim et al., 2017, p.30).

Another important factor of assessment when executing a qualitative content analysis is to comply with certain quality criteria. These include objectivity, which means to separate the findings from the person who is making the study. Another quality criteria is reliability, which means to ensure stability and precision of the measurement also needs to be a consistent measuring method. The last criteria is validity, what refers to the extent to which the measurement represents an accuracy (Mayring, 2014, p. 107).

The data analysis was conducted with MAXQDA, a software that assists in the examination of qualitative data as well as text analysis (*MAXQDA*, 2023). The qualitative content analysis of Mayring is a systematic and rule-based procedure, which will be presented in the following chart (Figure 1).

Figure 1:

General content- analytical procedural model

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Definition of the material                  │
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                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│           Analysis of the situation of origin            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Formal characteristics of the material          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Direction of analysis (author, sociocultural background, impact...?)  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        Theoretical differentiation of the question       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  ● Determination of the appropriate analysis technique (summary,  │
│         explication, structuring?) or a combination       │
│           ● Definition of the specific process model      │
│  ● Determination and definition of the categories/category system  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Definition of the analysis units (coding, context, evaluation unit)  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  ● Analysis steps according to the process model using a category system  │
│  ● Re-checking of the category system by applying it to theory and material  │
│         ● Renewed material flow in the event of changes   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Interpretation of the results in relation to the main problem and question  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        Application of content analysis quality criteria   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Note. Individual steps of the content analysis method of this study. Adapted from Qualitative

Inhaltsanalyse: Grundlagen und Techniken by Mayring (2008, p. 62)

5.5 The category system as a foundation for analysis

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the category system is the essential element in the qualitative content analysis of Mayring (Mayring, 2008, p. 43). Three main phases are involved in the fundamental approach to the building of the deductive category system :

1. Definition of categories: categories are defined by determining which text pieces belong to which category.

2. Anchor examples: For reaching unique text passages form the interviews are provided as examples.

3. Coding rules: To prevent issues in delimitation between the categories, rules are defined in order to create clear classifications (Mayring, 2015, p. 97).

The structure of the category scheme is based on the theoretical foundation of this thesis as well as the structure of the interview guideline (see Appendix 2).

6 Empirical study

The findings of this thesis will be presented in the following chapter. Mayring's content analysis approach was used to structure and assess the data material gathered through observations and semi-structured interviews. This method helped to identify the most important statements and divide them into different themes to further assign them to different codes. These fundamental statements of the organized data will then be discussed more precisely. The chapter will be structured in three thematic sections to ensure a comprehensible presentation. These sections will be oriented toward the theoretical part of this study and hence, toward the interview guide. The specific codes that are thematically connected are to be provided within these subsections. Moreover, quotations from the interview transcripts were translated from German into English to ensure a fluid reading flow.

6.1 Wedding Industry

This thematic area of the wedding industry shows the individual viewpoints of the status quo of the wedding industry in Austria, including wedding trends, the profession as a wedding planner and the market in general.

6.1.1 Wedding market in Austria

First of all, as already mentioned in the literature review the wedding planner sector in Austria is thriving (E2) and continuously expanding. Moreover, Austria is an attractive destination for weddings due to its great landscapes and traditions. Expert 9 noted that *"On the one hand, Salzburg has great locations with the mountains, which simply have an amazing view, but which also convey this rustic style in a modern way"* (E9, personal communication, 4th of April 2023). Although Austria has a lot to offer, it still cannot compete with other

wedding locations, such as Mallorca, which is known for flying the entire wedding party there (E9).

However, the profession of a wedding planner is not widely accepted. According to expert 4, the profession of wedding planner has a poor reputation, since it is still perceived as a cliché. Many people recall an American film that portrays the profession negatively since the function of wedding planner is not taken seriously. Another wedding planner in Austria suggests that potential clients simply do not understand the extra value that this service may provide (E2). *"I think that is not yet really arrived in Austria, because when a bride and groom realize that a wedding planner just use an incredible amount of knowledge and also time saving"* (E2, personal communication, 21st of March 2023). In order to improve the image of this profession, wedding planners in Austria have joined forces and advocated for an official "TÜV" certification (E2). This is a two-stage certification program for wedding planners that employs an unbiased and standardised approach to assess wedding planner competence and confirms it with a TÜV AUSTRIA personal certificate (*Wedding Planner – TÜV AUSTRIA | TÜV Österreich*, n.d.). In line with the interviewees the majority of Austrian wedding planners are self-employed single entrepreneurs. Some wedding planners in Austria solely work on a part-time basis. This might potentially lead to differences in the price of services in Austria. The pricing range is frequently quite broad, and there is still little transparency (E10).

6.1.2 Trends in the wedding industry

As already stated in the literature review social media has a great impact on accelerating trends in the wedding industry. There are various sources, where wedding planners in Austria attempt to keep up with trends. Expert 3 argued that *"To keep up with the trends it is important to make use of social media yourself"* (E3, personal communication, 22nd

of March 2023). This entails obtaining ideas from other wedding planners on various social media platforms. Regarding social media channels, wedding planners mostly use Pinterest and Instagram as a platform for getting information on latest trends (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E9). As claimed by expert 2 and expert 3 TikTok is the best social media platform for discovering new trends.

In addition, expert 1 stated *"You look on Pinterest, for example, where I look for lots and lots of inspiration when I'm making concepts, but also on social media itself there are always images that I simply save or (ahm) yes, sometimes I also find it exciting to say that you're moving away from these trends and coming up with something completely new"* (E1, personal communication, 9th of March 2023).

Furthermore, industry magazines or newsletters from major publishers are an effective way to keep on the pulse of time (E9). Aside from the various platforms, other nations are trend setters as well. According to the respondents, these countries are the United States, Germany (E9) and the United Kingdom. (E8). However, as expert 1 and expert 2 are stating it is crucial to recognize and create own trends and be the trendsetter oneself. Moreover, different sources of information are wedding meetups, which are networking events within the industry (E2) and wedding fairs (E2). According to the statement of expert 6, wedding couples do not follow any trends. There are certain trends or tradition that are always on the horizon, when it comes to planning of a wedding. Expert 10's strategy is to stay away from wedding industry trends and instead be guided by other sources. Inspiration can also come from common places or objects, such as a restaurant table setting, a trip, or children's toys.

6.2 Social Media Marketing

This thematic area covers the general social media marketing behaviour of wedding planners in Austria. It encompasses their biggest challenges, their strategic approach, and their objectives and analysis.

6.2.1 Social media channels

Regarding social media channels, every interviewee stated that they use Instagram as a marketing channel. According to expert 1, expert 2 and expert 9 Instagram is their main channel. On the one hand Instagram is utilized by wedding planners because it is a common channel (E6), particularly due to the visual orientation of the platform (E1), and on the other hand because the target audience may be located there (E3). Expert 6 added that Instagram is an ideal tool where you can express your creativity by experimenting with colours and making an appealing feed. *"Yes, so I started kind of classically with Facebook and Instagram. Instagram is still the main channel"* (E2, personal communication, 21st of March 2023). Moreover, Facebook is also a popular channel among the participants, but it is only utilized in passing. As per expert 1, Facebook used to be the most successful channel. TikTok is still an unexplored channel for many people in the industry, despite the fact that its potential is being recognized (E1, E5, E9). According to expert 3, this channel is the most successful one in terms of client acquisition. Most respondents find Pinterest to be an intriguing channel, however it is not used that much as an inspiration channel and as well as not so much for selling the service as a wedding planner itself (E9). Apart from social media the most interesting and successful channels for wedding planners are the own website, Google and word-of-mouth communication (E1, E5).

6.2.2 Challenges with social media

Most of the interviewees argued that one of the most significant obstacles for the implementation of social media marketing is a shortage of time. The lack of material is a barrier for many wedding planners to better navigate the social media environment. According to expert 4, this is frequently due to brides and grooms refusing to transfer picture rights, rather than the lack of wedding material. Another factor that makes using of social media challenging is a lack of knowledge concerning various topics related to digital marketing. According to expert 5, promoting the service alone is a full-time task that can only be accomplished with existing expertise and time resources. Furthermore, financial considerations make it difficult for lone entrepreneurs to effectively market their businesses on social media. In particular, the challenge is to transport the brand message with little resources as possible (E7). As expert 5 mentioned that *"I think lack of time and lack of knowledge about the content or lack of resources from real or from people who are really extremely knowledgeable in the field just approach it differently than we do and do now with our limited time resources"* (E5, personal communication, 27th of March 2023). Expert 9 argues that convincing ones own audience that it requires the services of a wedding planner is challenging. A wedding planner has to present him- or herself professionally and explain how he or she provides value. And, as expert 10 points out, the human component is still quite important, particularly in the service industry. As a result, conveying one's individuality through social media is representing another challenge. The price structure, particularly in Austria, is highly diverse, making it difficult to make the work transparent. In Austria, unlike in the United States, the wedding planner gets paid directly rather than through a commission. Savings are then generated through collaboration with service suppliers (E9).

6.2.3 *Social media objectives, strategy, and analysis*

Most wedding planners lack a structured procedure for setting objectives, strategizing, and analysing social media efforts. One significant purpose that has evolved is to achieve reach and attention (E3, E5, E6). As a service provider, customer acquisition via social media is also a relevant goal (E1). Expert 3 mentioned that all enquiries come exclusively through social media channels. For expert 4 and expert 2 social media is a tool for increasing awareness and visibility of the business. Furthermore, it is important to deliver a message to the consumer while marketing a wedding planner service (E2*). Expert 5 argued that *"And exactly that is actually reach is a very big point and actually it is actually currently our only or our main goal yes"* (E5, personal communication, 27th of March 2023). Building trust with potential consumers or service providers is a key aspect of a social media strategy (E3). The Instagram business account should serve as the business's business card, inspire prospective customers, or lower the bar for contacting the wedding planner using publicly available information (E7).

6.3 Instagram Marketing

The thematic area of Instagram marketing regards to features and activities in the wedding planner industry in Austria. It covers different ways of how to effectively use Instagram as a tool to promote a wedding planner business.

6.3.1 *Self-promotion*

As previously said, the service of a wedding planner is highly personal. As a result, it is essential to establish a degree of closeness with the consumer or potential customer (E6, E7). That is why it is critical to maintain open communication with followers and, above all,

communicate at eye level (E9). Expert 6 believes that it is critical to accompany the consumer on his or her journey in order to convey sympathy. There are several methods for advertising someone's personality on Instagram. On the one hand, it was mentioned to directly speak to the camera using Stories and tell others about your own person (E5) and show them real life scenarios (E9). It was stated to also save these in the highlights to have them available at all times. Secondly, one can create a regular feed post. Personal posts about the face behind the brand are often seen to be the most well-received (E1, E4).

Of course, some people face difficulties in promoting themselves. Speaking straight at the camera and going for it might be challenging for certain individuals (E6). As well, it is difficult to portray emotions through social media. Expert 1 for example, stated that it is tough to portray the humorous side to clients. Additionally, expert 3 mentioned *"To show my work, so that people who are interested also know, okay, this is how the processes work, this is how it could also look in my planning, and also to show competence, that is, to show that I really know about the subject, I know what I'm talking about, and I know what I'm doing. And I think this mixture of these three things is incredibly important on social media and Instagram, especially to get across, also in the Stories, that people just see every day, okay, she knows what she's doing. Maybe she's also likeable and that's exactly why we want to work with her"* (E3, personal communication, 29th of March 2023).

6.3.2 Partner network and cooperations

Wedding planner service providers are vital for success as evidenced by the literature review. The selection of service providers with whom a wedding planner works is thus critical. Disk jockeys, confectioners, musicians, photographers, and others are among the relevant service providers. Expert 6 believes that they must be reliable and trustworthy partners, who

can be relied on and whom others are delighted to recommend. Wedding planners often do not collaborate with wedding vendors to sell their services through social media. One expert noted that she has partnered with a service provider, who serves a similar target group. This can work successfully if implemented in an inconspicuous manner, decreasing the barrier to interaction. According to expert 6, it is generally a heartfelt endorsement. Expert 3 mentions, among other things that an unwritten rule in the wedding industry is to advertises oneself mutually through the channels. Especially at joint photo shoots or joint weddings, entrepreneurs link each other and demonstrate their collaborations. It is essential that the material is properly placed on Instagram (E9, E10). Working with good partners is more or less an added benefit for the own business and another reference that can have an positive impact on social media channels (E1). Nonetheless, it is critical not to reveal too much about oneself and one's partner network in order to avoid handing over one's hard-earned network to potential consumers (E4). As stated by expert 4 *"our hobbyhorses are the service providers. So it's always like how do I do it best now? On the one hand, you want to link them, of course, and you want them to get something out of it, but on the other hand, you don't want to serve them to potential brides and grooms right away"* (E4, personal communication, 22nd of March, 2023)*.* Lastly, it is possible that the partners will open new doors to clients or rather provide referrals (E7). According to expert 10 word of mouth is still the most effective approach to gain clients and should hence be prioritized. Expert 9 has already had a successful relationship with a blogger who has not only increased reach and clients, but has also done educational work regarding the profession of wedding planner through her channels. It is also possible to collaborate with local influencers to broaden the reach (E6).

6.3.3 Use of features and formats on Instagram

New features are continuously being added to and taken away from Instagram. The Instagram algorithm in particular has a significant impact on which features businesses should use to attain a broad reach. The respondents indicated that stories, reels, and feed posts were the most commonly used Instagram features. (E1, E2, E4, E7). After looking at the Instagram company account it was discovered that hashtags are used by every single wedding planner surveyed. Reels are especially well-liked, since they have a wide reach and also encourage interaction with followers (E2, E4). Reels, however, demand a lot of work and time to produce (E4).

Particularly popular is the Story function (E1, E2). This increases the reach while also enabling interactive features like response stickers, audio, and the "This or That" function. The stories can also be shared by other service providers or couples (E4). *"I prefer to use Stories, because they have the most reach, for me, but clearly, I also find posts important"* (E1, personal communication, 9th of March 2023). Almost no wedding planner that was participant of this study uses the advertising function, because on the one hand, they do not have the required expertise or time and, on the other hand, they have a lack of budget that can be used over a longer period of time. (E5). The so-called Instagram Live is essentially used or at least desired, but the audience is still missing in order to be efficient. The function was not used further because, according to their own information, there are not enough viewers, or the viewers are partially made up of service providers with whom they already collaborate (E3).

6.3.4 Customer engagement

Expert 3 argued *"So I always write individually a message I have such a small structure okay what info that should simply be inside so but I find that important that you are there*

individually to each situation, because maybe the message also contains any information and that's just important to me that you always have this personal care" (E3, personal communication, 22nd of March 2023). Wedding planners need to interact with customers even though it is a one-time service. The first impression is particularly important in this situation. This implies that it is crucial to reply as soon as possible to requests that come in through Instagram or other platforms. A detailed email or a like on Instagram are both acceptable forms of feedback. It is possible to personalize the answer and reply directly to the request, depending on how much information is provided in the request. Even if the request originates on Instagram, it is typically sent straight to the email account. Both expert 3 and expert 1 claim to have a pre-written email response framework that allows for quick responses. It is crucial that the customers already feels like they will receive individualized attention for this highly personal occasion after making their request. The time factor also plays a major role in community management, but it is still important to respond to appreciative comments and thus at least signal a willingness to exchange (E9).

6.3.5 Content strategy for wedding planners

As it was already mentioned in the theory, content marketing is the foundation for creating lasting client relationships. Customers want to be entertained, thus, it is crucial to post quality material, claims expert 1. The issue of what content to share is, of course, another consideration. The majority of wedding planners make sure there is a variety of topics. According to expert 7, is particularly crucial to communicate the own quality of work and the of the service, which is also a difficult challenge. It's all about determining what the bride and groom want to see so that they can recognize the wedding planner's identity (E10). A wedding planner is selling emotions. Expert 6 claims that the natural way is the most effective one to

communicate emotion with followers. Decorations, images of wedding couples (E6), styling (E5), advice on planning a wedding (E3), inspirations (E3), and the promotion of someone's own service are common types of content (E3).

In addition, expert 9 noted *"So basically I'm someone who as an unsolicited person passes on a lot of information and tips, which makes life easier for a wedding couple in the planning phase"* (E9, personal communication, 4th of March 2023). Experts also talk using Instagram for integrating followers into their daily job duties, as well as reveal potential mishaps that can happen during the process of planning a wedding. In addition, it is important to make personal postings to the wedding planner himself, as was already discussed earlier (E4). Moreover, expert 5 argued that *"Exactly, so we have picked out the most important topics that are pending in the wedding planning, all services, fashion, styling, daily schedule, budget, so everything that is related to the topic of wedding planning, we have thought about so over topics"* (E5, personal communication, 29th of March 2023). The content's quality is very important for the content strategy (E1). This applies to the general aesthetic as well as the specific images or videos (E6). Most wedding planners collaborate with skilled photographers and service providers in order to demonstrate excellent quality (E6). Regardless of the matter whether a wedding planner works with professional photographers or videographers, it is important to demonstrate authenticity, and the visuals are representing the personal image (E9). Expert 3 claims *"I think it's important, I think that I mean, you know it now also, that the algorithms on social media pay attention to aesthetics pay attention to good exposure. Things that just don't look that professional and don't look that high quality are not given to the outside. That means I'm already looking at it. Does the light fit? Fits, no idea, the background is there now anyway not full the chaos in the*

background, that makes just with qualitatively high-quality and of course that the content also has a certain quality" (E3, personal communication, 22nd of March 2023).

6.3.6 Success factors of Instagram on wedding planner business

Instagram has been demonstrated to have a good impact on wedding planner businesses in Austria in a number of different ways. For starters Instagram allows them to meet potential wedding industry partners and service providers (E4, E7). The social networking platform offers the opportunity to get to know wedding couples in a purposeful way and create trust with them (E3). According to expert 6 the goal for success as a wedding planner is to transport and sell emotions. This is possible through the platform, as it provides deep insights into their work. Nonetheless, clients find it difficult to recognize the planners' own signature on Instagram (E10). Expert 10 claims the more private the material is, the more effective Instagram marketing becomes.

Expert 1 believes that Instagram provides the ability to obtain feedback on one's own work, which is especially useful because it allows one to determine which content is most well-received. Thus, expert 1 stated *"But what it does to you anyway, it gives you feedback and that's really valuable. For the things that you show, so you have direct feedback, did people like that? (ahm) How is it received? And yeah, do I put it on the website or not?"* (E1, personal communication, 9th of March 2023).

Furthermore, Instagram also represents a source of inspiration that makes it easier for customers to already gather ideas for the wedding. In this case the work for wedding planners is easier, because they already come to the initial meeting with creative ideas (E6). The disadvantage of this is that Instagram may sometimes generate excessive expectations in brides and grooms that do not align with their own budget (E5, E9). *"You notice more and*

more the reality and Instagram, which is completely different and ahm that gaps as far apart as the customers' wallets" (E10, personal communication, 18th of April 2023). Additionally, Instagram frequently offers too many possibilities, making it harder for brides and grooms to do judgments (E5).

Apart from inspiration, this platform also allows for direct exchange between partner or potential clientele. It is important to always communicate at eye level and, above all, on a human level. It shouldn't matter how much money a bride and groom have at their disposal, you should give every client the feeling of being the most important one (E10). Moreover, it is possible to raise and talk about problems and engage in conversations about topics that might be important to many service providers in the business. Others' ideas can be supported by implementing them and spreading them around the network. Here, it is essential that the ideas be genuine and not copied from other wedding planners (E9*). Expert 9 continues by stating *"I just became aware of whoever came up with this idea and I think it's so great, and I want to get right on it and add my own story"* (E9, personal communication, 4th of March 2023).

Additionally, Instagram allows wedding planners to reach international clientele, which is especially important for those who provide destination weddings in Austria or other countries (E1).

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7   Discussion

In the upcoming chapter the findings will be summarised and interpreted and brought in context to the literature review of this study. Based on this process, the research question of this thesis will be answered. Additionally, a number of limitations of this study, recommendations for future research and implications for theory and practice will be stated.

In this section the following leading research question of the study should be answered: "What are the success factors of Instagram marketing for Austrian wedding planners?"

First of all, research suggests that social media, in particular Instagram has an enormous impact on the Austrian wedding industry. Based on the literature and the findings of the empirical study it was turned out that the consumption of Instagram has changed the way customers are gathering information regarding their weddings. This can either have a positive influence since customers are more creative when it comes to their desires and ideas. Nevertheless, it can have a negative influence, because expectations sometimes become so high due to the endless access to inspiration on social media that they can no longer be realised in the real world, with a limited budget.

The results show that Instagram is the main social media channel for all interviewees when they are promoting their wedding planner business. This confirms that the visual-oriented platform is the most successful platform for marketing this service. As Harris and Bardey (2019, p. 10) suggest the most significant component in determining popularity on social networking sites is appearance, and a more attractive profile will be more effective in both online and real situations. Instagram is frequently used for networking, and the more visually appealing an account, the more likely it is to be successful. Hence, wedding planners

believe that aesthetics are important, which means the Instagram profile and feed serve as a company's business card.

The results claim that building trust and transferring emotions is essential to successfully promote a wedding planner business. Lim and Childs (2020, p. 34) suggest that visualization increases the mental replication of experience, which is leading to emotional reactions of the viewer. According to the interviewees, bringing clients on their own journey, might help to build trust in the brand. This involves representing oneself on the platform and disclosing personal information. That sort of content is usually the most popular among followers. Authenticity and proximity are essential key words for the success of Instagram marketing. Furthermore, it is essential to discover a means to interact on a human level via social media. Interaction with consumers is especially vital when providing a once-in-a-lifetime service. According to the experts, it is important to respond quickly to consumer replies, even if it is simply a like or a comment on an appreciating message from a customer or partner. Adegbola et al. (2018, p. 233) stated in the literature that Instagram provides a unique platform for businesses to use postings for consumer interaction and marketing.

In order to successfully promote the wedding planner service on Instagram it is crucial to have the right partners in the network. The findings show that wedding planners should have trust in their own service providers and be able to refer them without hesitation. Moreover, as previously stated in the literature, collaboration with service providers adds value to the service as a wedding planner and helps significantly to its success. For example, if partners connect to their Instagram account, it may not only serve as a wonderful reference, but it can also open new doors for clients or other service providers. As already mentioned in the literature the use of social media has a substantial impact on e-WOM, trust, and brand

recognition (Seo et al., 2020, p. 1). Thus, it makes sense to affiliate with partners that have a similar target group in order to employ the followers which have already been built up for new interactions.

As it is already stated in the literature review Instagram is a fast-changing environment and it also changed how people communicate and retrieve information (Lim & Childs, 2020, p. 45). This is relevant when choosing the right formats to be able to effectively promote the wedding planner service. According to the participants Reels and Stories are among the top formats which drive the most visibility and reach. This aligns also with the theory, as video formats have especially gained relevance when it comes to market products or services (Kilian & Kreutzer, 2022, p. 9). Thus, as already indicated in the literature, Reels are successful because they are emotionally driven, with a personal narrative and likable characters to create positive feelings and stay in consumers' minds. This can lead to a higher interaction with the brand, and customers are more likely to share content or make a purchase. Additionally, Stories are an effective tool to market the business and thus can be used to promote a brand in full screen mode, motivating customers to take action (Eiring, 2021, p. 143).

Furthermore, a contributing success factor in the Instagram marketing strategy is to use the right content. It is important for one's Instagram success to have a defined content plan and to maintain her or his authenticity and credibility (Eiring, 2021, p. 143). In regard to promoting a wedding service it is necessary to use a good variety of content. The quality of the videos or photos should be the top priority in the content strategy. This can be maintained by collaborating with experts. As mentioned by an expert, the quality and aesthetic of the content has an impact on the Instagram algorithm. This statement is also confirmed by Eiring

(2021, p. 146), who declares that the algorithm always performs a detailed quality check by examining a post in the feed of an account. Wedding planners must transfer their own quality of work and service through presenting a variety of content. According to the experts this can consist of information about themselves, tips and tricks regarding planning a wedding, share inspiration. Inspiration can include photos or videos from the bridal couple, decorations, locations, wedding gifts and much more. In order to show authenticity, it is also possible to involve followers in one's own daily working life and to reveal errors that occur while working life or during the process of planning a wedding.

As already mentioned in the literature and in the interviews, Instagram can be used as a tool to increase the awareness of the profession of a wedding planner. The profession and added value of a wedding planner in Austria are still not yet as well acknowledged like in other countries, thus there is still need for clarification. This might also be a game changer in terms of promoting the service in general and pushing the industry forward. Thus, Instagram is a great platform to join forces with other vendors in the industry to get more attention. The fact that the platform has no geographical boundaries is essential in promoting the services of a wedding planner (Novianti et al., 2019, p. 2). This means it is possible to use Instagram to reach customers all over the world. Because destination weddings are becoming more and more popular among wedding couples, this chance may be leveraged to reach an international audience and broaden the offer to a greater audience. Even if the wedding couple is unfamiliar with the destination, Instagram and storytelling could assist alleviate the barrier of performing a wedding in another country by providing unique insights and demonstrating the benefits of the location.

In order to successfully promote the wedding planner business, it is crucial to stay ahead of trends or to create new trends. Therefore, using social media can be a great way to keep up with them. As Batool et al. (2021, p. 8) stated Instagram is popular among the general population for pushing exclusive wedding trends. Additionally, one should constantly keep an eye on countries that are already more advanced in this industry, such as the United States, Indonesia or the United Kingdom, to see what is going on there. However, it should not be omitted that being the trendsetter is valuable. This could also attract a lot of attention as other service providers talk about it and follow the trend themselves. Nevertheless, couples often do not want to follow the latest trend and prefer traditional weddings and aspects, which should be factored into the content strategy. This is especially important in Austria, where traditions have a significant impact and are also an attractive factor for a wedding destination.

There are certain obstacles to overcome that one faces when promoting the wedding planner service via Instagram. As demonstrated by the results, time is a critical resource that stands in the way of most self-employed people as the biggest challenge. As a result, using Instagram as a marketing tool requires careful planning and a good strategy. This implies that the target audience has been identified and goals for the marketing activity have been defined. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge and skills in the field of social media makes it difficult for self-employed people to effectively market their business on social media. Even though, according to the interviews wedding planners do not use Instagram analytics in a proper way, it is necessary to check your analytics on a regular basis. That way it is possible to discover the target group, the best time to post and what types of engagement is the most appealing. Another barrier to success often are the limited financial resources. However, as

already mentioned in the literature review social media marketing is an affordable and efficient way to market products or services, helping companies to increase turnover and sales, generate leads, increase brand awareness, strengthen the brand image, and build traffic for webpages (Salunke & Jain, 2022, pp. 136–137). The effectiveness of the Instagram marketing strategy is not directly related to financial expense, rather, it is about using resources efficiently.

7.1 Limitations

This master thesis contains a number of limitations. First of all, a limitation would be the absence of use of scientific journals in the field of the wedding industry. Particularly in the wedding related literature, as relatively little research has been conducted in the sector.

Moreover, it is possible that the results are influenced or biased, because the interviews were conducted in German and the research study was written in English. In contemplation of conducting the analysis the data had to be translated into English. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that information was lost or properly replicated throughout the translation process.

Other limitations primarily appear due to constraints on methodology of this research study. In relation to that the study's general subjective research method should be stated. In qualitative research, researchers frequently interact with flexible realities, where the respondents' arbitrary opinions may influence the entire study (Chowdhury, 2015, p. 143). Additionally, it will be challenging to assess the quality of the paper since it is related to the insight and interpretation of the researcher, which heavily rely on subjective judgement (Dixon-Woods et al., 2004, p. 223). The researcher developed both inductive and deductive categories, as was already described in the method section. It is important to keep in mind that different researchers may have used different methods when creating and dividing the

inductive categories. The researcher's perspective was the only one taken into account and used to interpret the findings. It is possible that other studies have concentrated on different topics and factors. Therefore, the researcher's expertise and potential subject-related bias may have influenced the final outcome.

Furthermore, as the sample was selected using a non-random technique, a selections bias must be expected as a limitation of this study (Acharya et al., 2013, p. 332). Additionally, due to the interviewees' evaluation of their own wedding planner business and social media presence and due to a direct interaction with the researcher, a social desirability bias (Nederhof, 1985, p. 1) cannot be ruled out and can represent another limitation.

A further limitation that needs to be considered in the results of this thesis is that the interviews were only conducted with wedding planners. Therefore, it cannot be generalised to a broader field of interest. In-depth interviewing is less focused with generalizing to a wider population of interest (Dworkin, 2012, p. 1319).

7.2 Recommendations for future research

More research should be conducted on this subject because there is an absence of scientific research on the wedding industry and wedding preparation in general. In addition, researchers should also dedicate themselves to the topic in connection with social media in the future. Especially in Austria or in other European countries, it would be exciting to conduct an analysis on the status quo in the wedding industry. Since the LGBTQIA+ community is also becoming increasingly important, it would be interesting to evaluate this target group separately. The individual service providers in the industry and wedding trends could be researched more closely. This would help to identify gaps and possibly support the industry

to continue to grow in the future. A further interest would be to closely investigate the impact of local or celebrity influencers on the wedding industry and wedding trends.

Another opportunity for future research would be to conduct studies in the wedding industry in relation to social networks other than Instagram. In particular, as Pinterest is the most important source of inspiration towards wedding related images it would be interesting what impact the platform would have on the industry. Thus, as TikTok is a quite new but fast-growing platform in the social media world, it would be of interest to closely look at the changes that occur in the industry due to the platform.

Lastly, future research would benefit from analysis of the Instagram marketing techniques from other countries or regions, where the profession as a wedding planner is already more established than in Austria. They can represent pioneer strategies for promoting the service on social media channels. In particular, countries like the US, where the industry is much more advanced, can provide new concepts and approaches. They can enable wedding service providers or individual entrepreneurs with high-involvement services in making their social media marketing strategy a success.

7.3   Implications for theory and practice

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study has theoretical and managerial implications that are based on the literature review and on the findings of this thesis. It complements the research field of Instagram marketing in general and in particular regarding wedding planner services. Additionally, it can be used as an impulse for further research work in the field of the wedding industry. In general, the wedding industry and the profession of wedding planner are scarcely little researched. However, it will be interesting to follow this emerging industry in future, especially because it is very much driven by constantly evolving

and changing technology. This thesis contributed to the success factors of Instagram marketing of wedding planner businesses.

As a practical implication the integration of the success factors in the Instagram marketing strategy would be particularly suitable for similar businesses. To be more specific, this study reveals some suggestions regarding Instagram marketing strategy in terms of features, content, customer engagement, self-representation and collaborations with partners. This study gives individual entrepreneurs ideas on how to represent themselves on the social media platform and what to consider. Furthermore, the study provides recommendations on which features should be used on Instagram and which advantages they bring with them. Generally speaking, an efficient mix of features leads to success, but it is important to keep up with the latest applications and technical developments. At the moment effective features on Instagram would be Reels and Stories. With regard to content, general recommendations can be taken from the thesis, such as the importance of providing insights into everyday's working life. Especially, for the bridal couple it is essential to get to know the face behind the wedding planner brand, since it is a very personal service. However, this study proved that the quality of the content plays an essential role The reason for this is that the Instagram profile, including photographs or videos, serves as the company's business card. Furthermore, the choice of partners with whom one cooperates is an important factor. They can contribute significantly to the overall outcome of the wedding planners' job, and they may serve as valuable references as well. Hence, they can significantly extend reach of the business and can acquire new customers through electronic word of mouth. Moreover, this study shows how to interact with consumers on Instagram, and it states that individuality and time is an important factor in the process. Thus, already a small effort of engagement can

yield extremely positive results. Furthermore, the work gives special insights into how Instagram marketing can positively influence the wedding planner business. With few resources is also possible to set up a wedding planner business in Austria with the help of Instagram. Additionally, a suggestion to all wedding planners in Austria is to use the platform to raise awareness of the profession in order to drive the industry forward.

8   Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to determine and evaluate the status quo of the wedding industry in Austria on the topic of social media marketing. More precisely, the study investigated the success factors of Instagram marketing for Austrian wedding planner businesses. In order to answer the research question, firstly, a literature review of relevant topics related to the research question was undertaken, and secondly a qualitative research study in the form of semi-structured interviews was conducted. Within the framework of the theoretical development of the topic the social media platform Instagram and the current situation of the wedding planner market in Austria was investigated. It was shown how social media, especially Instagram, can have a positive impact in a wedding planners business strategy. Based on the theoretical part of this thesis an interview guideline was developed, which ultimately assisted in gathering the empirical study findings. Learnings suggest that social media has changed the way consumers interact with service providers and thus with the businesses (Agnihotri et al., 2016, p. 172). Following the investigation and the literature review, some notable findings emerged.

Firstly, In the social media world, it is necessary to constantly adapt to changes in new technologies or applications within the platform. New formats and features are constantly being developed and must be included in the social media strategy in order to match the Instagram algorithm. The study also demonstrated that visual formats, in particular, are appealing and can create a wide reach. The focus is primarily on video formats such as reels, which can transmit an essential brand message in a short amount of time and in an interactive manner (Holder, 2022, p. 56).

Secondly, the study revealed that especially content is an important factor for the success of the Instagram strategy. The combination of high quality, variety content, especially personal insights, can have a positive impact on the business. Authenticity and proximity, as well as finding methods to communicate on a human level, are crucial for Instagram marketing success. This involves representing oneself on the platform and sharing personal information, which is very popular among followers. The ultimate goal is to generate awareness and to gain new customers through Instagram marketing. Therefore, it is necessary to convey a narrative that evokes emotions in customers and builds trust in the brand or the business.

Moreover, Instagram analytics should be monitored on a regular basis in order to meet the objectives. Setting SMART goals and measuring the efficacy of marketing operations with vanity metrics and conversion metrics are important. There are several methods available to assess the effectiveness of social media marketing, including Instagram's native measuring tool "Insights." Only by monitoring Instagram analytics it is possible to determine the optimal time to post, the target audience and what type of engagement is most effective (Sutherland, 2021, pp. 148–150).

In general, Austria still has some catching up to do in the wedding sector. Although the market is growing the profession of wedding planner does not yet have the recognition it deserves. To keep the industry thriving there is always a need to educate consumers about the additional value of a wedding planner. Therefore, Instagram represents a great platform to advocate the profession as a wedding planner not only in Austria but across the globe.

Through this qualitative research the Instagram marketing activities of Austrian wedding planners were investigated, and it became evident it is possible to market a business

through the social media platform. In order to be successful on Instagram it is necessary to define a clear strategy, provide a high level of engagement with consumers and deliver diverse, high-quality content (Bellavista et al., 2019, p. 3). This requires first establishing marketing objectives, in this instance sales and reach. The target group has to be determined (Belanche et al., 2019, p. 71), as well as it has to be evaluated whether it can be reached through the chosen social media platform (Haenlein et al., 2020, p. 11). It is also vital to take into account the resources of time and money while developing a strategy. Then it is possible to create a precise and accurate content plan. This includes identifying general subject topics and planning and developing content around these blocks, such as Instagram stories or feed posts. To provide high-quality material, it is necessary that the content has a personal touch and is unique. When implementing a marketing strategy for Instagram and across all other channels, it is critical to maintain a consistent message.

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Appendix

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Appendix 1

Table A 1:

Interview guideline English

Topic	Question	Additional question
Icebreaker	Why did you start working in the wedding planner industry?	
Person	How long have you been a wedding planner?	
	Are you self-employed or employed?	How many employees do you have?
	How long have you been working in this industry?	
	Where is your main location?	Do you operate only in Austria or also internationally? If so, where?
Social Media behaviour	Which social media channel are you using?	Why did you choose these platforms?
	What are your social media marketing objectives?	How do you measure the goals? Which KPIs?
	How do you interact with a potential client on social media?	
Instagram marketing	What tools and features do you use on Instagram? IGTV, Reels, Feed, advertising, Q&As etc.	How often are they used?
	Do you have collaborations with other service providers to promote your products?	If so, could you please describe them?
	How do you present yourself through social media to build a relationship with clients or potential clients?	
	What are you objectives with your Instagram marketing activities?	How do you measure them?

	Do you pursue a strategy for your Instagram marketing activities?	
	Which target group do you address on Instagram?	How did you define your target group?
Instagram marketing in the wedding planner industry	Which social media channel would you consider the most important channel to promote your service?	
	Social media is influencing trends in the wedding industry. How do you stay up-to-date with wedding trends?	
	What challenges do you see in promoting your services as a wedding planner via social media, especially in Austria? (Know-how, time, target group?	
	What content do your post for your customers on Instagram?	Do you have a content plan?
	How do you interact with potential clients on Instagram?	
	What do you think makes you, as an entrepreneur or brand, successful on Instagram?	
	What are the special things to consider when promoting a service as a wedding planner via Instagram?	
Closing question	Do you have anything else to add? Can you recommend any other wedding planners who are available for an expert interview?	

Note. Interview guideline for expert interviews in English. Own illustration.

Appendix 2

Table A 2:

Interview guideline German

Thema	Fragestellung	Weitere Fragen
Icebreaker	Wie sind Sie dazu gekommen in der Wedding Planner Branche zu arbeiten?	
Person	Wie lange sind Sie bereits als Wedding Planner tätig?	
	Sind Sie selbstständig oder angestellt?	Wie viele Mitarbeiter haben Sie?
	Wie lange arbeiten Sie bereits in dieser Branche?	
	Wo ist ihr Hauptstandort?	Operieren Sie nur in Österreich oder auch international? Wenn ja, wo?
Social Media Verhalten	Welche Social Media Kanäle haben Sie in Verwendung?	Wieso haben Sie sich für diese Kanäle entschieden?
	Welche Ziele verfolgen Sie mit Social Media Marketing?	Wie messen Sie die Ziele? Welche KPIs?
	Wie interagieren Sie mit einem potenziellen Klienten über Social Media?	
Instagram Marketing	Welche Tools und Features verwenden Sie auf Instagram? IGTV, Reels, Feed, Werbung, Q&As etc.	Wie häufig werden diese verwendet?
	Haben Sie Kooperationen mit anderen Dienstleistern, um Ihre Produkte zu vermarkten?	Wenn ja, wie sehen diese aus?
	Inwiefern präsentieren Sie sich selbst über die Sozialen Medien, um die Nähe zu den Klienten aufzubauen?	
	Was sind Ihre Ziele speziell mit Ihren Instagram Marketing Aktivitäten?	

	Haben Sie eine Strategie für Ihre Instagram Aktivitäten?	
	Welche Zielgruppe sprechen Sie auf Instagram an?	Wie haben Sie diese Zielgruppe definiert?
Instagram Marketing in der Wedding Planner Branche	Welchen Social Media Kanal, würden Sie als den wichtigsten Kanal für die Vermarktung von Ihrer Dienstleistung sehen?	
	Social Media beschleunigt die Trends in der Branche. Wie bleiben Sie up-to-date mit den Wedding Trends?	
	Welche Herausforderungen sehen, Sie Ihre Dienstleistung als Wedding Planner über die Sozialen Medien zu promoten, speziell auch in Österreich? (Know-how, Zeit, Zielgruppe?)	
	Welchen Content posten Sie für Ihre Kunden auf Instagram?	Haben Sie einen Contentplan?
	Wie interagieren Sie mit potenziellen Klienten über Instagram?	
	Was denken Sie macht Sie, als Unternehmer*in bzw. als Marke, erfolgreich auf Instagram?	
	Was gibt es besonders zu beachten, wenn man ein Service als Wedding Planner über Instagram promotet?	
Abschlussfrage	Haben Sie sonst noch etwas hinzuzufügen? Können Sie noch weitere Wedding Planner empfehlen, die für ein Experteninterview zur Verfügung stehen?	

Note. Interview guideline for expert interviews in German. Own illustration.

Appendix 3

Table A 3:

Coding tree

Category	Definition	Anchor example	Coding rule
C1: Wedding market in Austria	This category describes all statements toward the wedding industry in Austria.	*"However, the profession of wedding planner is not widely accepted. I think that is not yet really arrived in Austria, because when a bride and groom realize that a wedding planner just use an incredible amount of knowledge and also time saving"* (E2, personal communication, 21st of March 2023). *"Because the prices are not communicated in Austria. And when bridal couples then ask various planners and they offer the same service for 50% less than you or others, that is the biggest challenge"* (E10, personal communication, 18th of April 2023).	Positive and negative aspects regarding the Austrian wedding market.
C2: Trends in the wedding industry	This category comprises how wedding planners keep up with fast-changing trends in the wedding industry.	*"You look on Pinterest, for example, where I look for lots and lots of inspiration when I'm making concepts, but also on social media itself there are always images that I simply save or (ahm) yes, sometimes I also find it exciting to say that you're moving away from these trends and coming up with something completely new."* (E1, personal communication, 9th of March 2023).	Specific thematic fields influencing new business opportunities perceived by the respondents.
C3: Social media channels	In this category wedding planners elaborate what	*"Yes, so I always started so classically with Facebook and Instagram. Instagram is still the*	Social media channels in use and the experts'

	kind of social media channels they are using and what their motives for different channels are.	main channel” (E2, personal communication, 21st of March 2023).	rationale regarding the choice.
C4: Challenges with social media	This category describes all the challenges that wedding planners are dealing by using social media.	*“I think lack of time and lack of knowledge about the content or lack of resources from real or from people who are really extremely knowledgeable in the field just approach it differently than we do and do now with our limited time resources”* (E5, personal communication, 27th of March 2023).	Challenges that the interviewees face with the use of social media in general and in particular regard to the promotion of the service as a wedding planner.
C5: Social media objectives, strategy and analysis	This code includes all statements towards the objectives, strategies and analyses regarding social media activities.	*“And um exactly that is actually reach is a very big point and actually it is actually currently our only or our main goal yes”* (E5, personal communication, 27th of March). *“….that people take notice of me”* (E7, personal communication, 29th of March 2023)	Personal understanding of the respondents concerning marketing goals, marketing strategies and analysis.
C6: Self-promotion	This category includes all statements about how wedding planners promote themselves on their social media channels.	*“To show my work, so that people who are interested also know, okay, this is how the processes work, this is how it could also look in my planning, and also to show competence, that is, to show that I really know about the subject, I know what I'm talking about, and I know what I'm doing. And I think this mixture of these three things is incredibly important on social media and Instagram, especially to get across, also in the Stories, that*	Personal assessments of the experts in relation to the relevance of transporting one's personality on Instagram.

		people just see every day, okay, she knows what she's doing. Maybe she's also likeable and that's exactly why we want to work with her" (E3, personal communication, 29th of March 2023).	
C7: Partner network	This category explains the importance of have the right partners.	*"our hobbyhorses are the service providers. So it's always like how do I do it best now? On the one hand, you want to link them, of course, and you want them to get something out of it, but on the other hand, you don't want to serve them to potential brides and grooms right away.".* Lastly, it is possible that the partners will open new doors to clients or rather provide referrals (E7, personal communication, 29th of March 2023).	Individual assessment by the experts concerning the relevance of having partners and vendors in the wedding industry.
C8: Use of features and formats on Instagram	This category describes all the relevant features and tools for promoting a wedding planner business.	*"I prefer to use Stories, because they have the most reach, for me, but clearly I also find posts important"* (E1, personal communication, 9th of March 2023). *"…all the features in the Instagram Story, such as question and answer stickers, music, stickers, etc."* (E3, personal communication, 29th of March 2023).	Instagram formats in use and the experts' positive and negative aspects regarding their choice.
C9: Customer engagement	In this category it will be elaborated on how wedding planners interact with its customers on Instagram.	*"so I always write individually a message I have such a small structure okay what info that should simply be inside so but I find that important that you are there individually to each situation, because maybe the message also contains any information and that's just important to me that you*	Ways of interaction of experts with customers/followers that are crucial to be successful.

| | | *always have this personal care and ..”* (E3, personal communication, 22nd of March 2023).

“I get new customers through the service providers I have worked with” (E9, personal communication, 4th of April 2023). | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **C10: Content strategy for wedding planners** | This category comprises various statements towards the content strategy for wedding planners. | *“Exactly, so we have picked out the most important topics that are important for wedding planning, all services, fashion, styling, daily plan, budget, in other words, everything that is connected to the topic of wedding planning, so we have thought of a number of topics”* (E5, personal communication, 22nd of March 2023).

“Quality is 100% the most important thing, so I also notice, depending on how good the photographers were at the wedding, what the reactions are to the photos” (E1, personal communication, 9th of March 2023). | Relevant factors that contribute to the success of a content strategy according to the experts. |
| **C11: Success factors of Instagram marketing on the wedding planner business** | The code is assigned when it is mentioned that Instagram marketing has a positive influence in the wedding planner business. | *“But what it does to you anyway, it gives you feedback and that's really valuable. For the things that you show, so you have direct feedback, did people like that? How is it received? And yeah, do I put it on the website or not?”* (E1, personal communication, 9th of March 2023). | Key factors named by the respondents driving success of Instagram marketing. |

Note. Coding tree including the definition of codes, anchor examples and coding rules. Own illustration.