

the

Wedding

report

SOUTH AFRICAN WEDDING INDUSTRY REPORT 2020

Crazy Grape
MEDIA

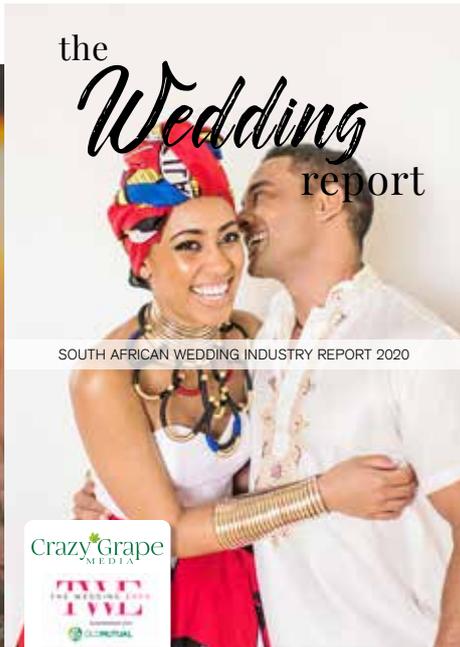
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Cover Image
Courtesy of Sarah and Jehan whose traditional South African wedding with a chic contemporary twist was crafted by Wedding Concepts – Wedding Planning & Design specialists. For more on Wedding Concepts visit www.weddingconcepts.co.za
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If you've ever planned, attended or serviced a wedding in South Africa, or indeed around the world, you'll appreciate the time, cost and attention to detail required to pull off a dream affair. Each wedding is as unique as the couple whose union is being celebrated.

The variety of moving parts which must come together to create a perfect day - from an extravaganza in the millions to an R80 000 affair - makes it an extremely challenging exercise to determine the extent and the value of this industry. Globally, the likes of Global Industry Analysts expects the value of the international bridal industry to top US\$80 billion (around R1.2 trillion) by this year. High margins and a willingness on the part of customers from both developed and emerging markets to pay for a unique and memorable occasion are key drivers.

But new trends are also emerging, including the enthusiasm for destination weddings and the rise of digital shopping and virtual planning. The impact of mega bridal events such as London Bridal Fashion Week in the United Kingdom, Barcelona Bridal Fashion Week in Spain and, in South Africa, the popular expos presented around the country by our sponsors, The Wedding Expo, are also proving to be industry game-changers.

In South Africa, a pitiful lack of attention has been paid to an industry which has the potential to create jobs and promote tourism and South

African cultures in all their exotic diversity.

While data may be collected in pockets, the broader tourism industry and national government in particular seem uninterested in putting a price tag on a sector that creates both jobs and business opportunities and has significant potential to attract both international tourists and those from the rest of the African continent.

This report marks the first attempt to try and understand the depth and value of the South African wedding industry. It is by no means definitive and future incarnations would benefit from additional input and support from the industry itself, from government and provincial and national tourism bodies. We hope this fusion of insights and data sparks a conversation about a sector replete with possibility and sorely in need of promotion, support and attention.

We hope you find this report as enjoyable to read as we've found the process of putting it together. Above all, we hope you come away with a more robust appreciation of the value of the wedding industry to South Africa.

Cara Bouwer
Publisher

Crazy Grape
MEDIA

At a glance

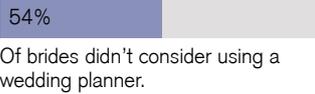


Weddings in South Africa

135 458

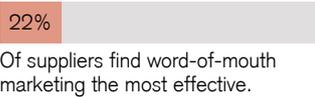
The number of civil marriages in South Africa in 2017*

TRENDS



51-100

The most popular size for a wedding party at 43%.



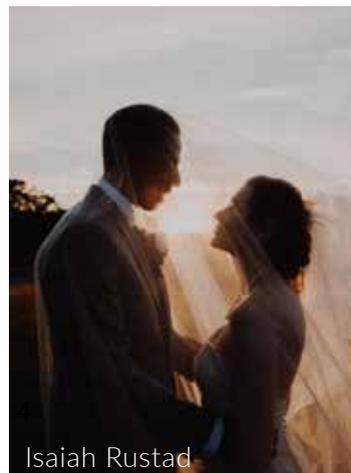
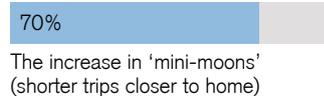
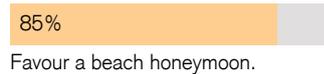
SA SPECIFIC



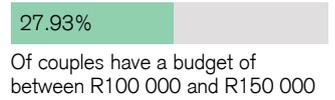
HONEYMOONS

30%

Average amount of budget allocated to the honeymoon.

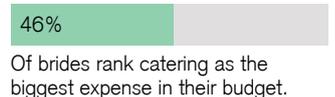
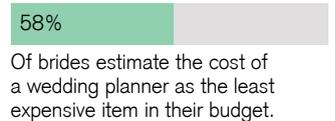
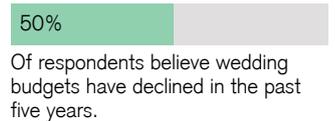


THE BUDGET



R8M

The largest wedding budget highlighted.



South Africa cashing in on destination wedding craze



The Cape Winelands. Beautiful beaches. Bush panoramas. Urban landscapes. When it comes to finding the perfect wedding location, South Africa has it all. Add to that the surging popularity of destination weddings and it's clear just how big an impact the wedding industry has on South Africa's tourism industry ... and on the economy.

Executive summary

- > South Africa is capitalising on the growing destination wedding trend with the world-renowned Cape Winelands taking centre stage.
- > Experts cite creativity, competitive pricing, great weather and magnificent locations as key to the country's global appeal.
- > The wedding industry has a massive impact on tourism and the South African economy, but government is yet to recognise this and come on board.
- > Despite its popularity, South Africa's wedding industry needs stricter regulations to standardise high-quality service.

"The destination wedding industry as a whole is literally exploding." So says Christina Holt, founder and MD of Wedding Concepts, a full-service wedding planning business which handcrafts luxury weddings for a select group of clients from across the globe. "South Africa is already a part of that because the country is being recognised as an incredible destination overall, and on the wedding side it's definitely growing."

Considering the myriad attractions the country offers, which include beautiful locations, great weather and a currency that benefits foreigners, South Africa is ideally placed to capitalise on this trend. Whether attracting couples from the rest of the African continent or from around the world, South Africa's wedding industry is undoubtedly a player in the destination wedding game.

A prime destination

The current trend is for couples to take a far more adventurous approach when it comes to their weddings, says Holt, speaking of the destination wedding explosion. "They're often established professionals and have lives that take them all over the world. They just want to break out of the rut and experience something new and exciting. In general, the destination wedding angle across the world has changed enormously over the last year, it's become a very popular thing to do."

But who, exactly, are these international clients?

Ille Fagrew, wedding consultant at Spier, the biggest accommodation and hotel property in Stellenbosch, says while one or two of Spier's international weddings a year are for couples from the African continent, most are from the United Kingdom. "A lot of guests generally come from overseas," she says. "On average there are around 100 guests. Indian weddings, which usually cater to around 250 guests and above are also becoming very popular in Cape Town, especially in the Winelands. These are usually for couples living in Dubai or Hong Kong – their guests travel from all over the world and spend significant time in South Africa."

Fagrew adds: "An Indian wedding itself is at least three days, and if it's a wedding from the United Kingdom it's usually a two-day event with a dinner before the wedding. Guests also usually choose to spend a few extra days in Cape Town or Franschhoek."

South Africa is certainly gaining prominence as an international wedding destination. Wedding Concepts was

recently named 'Best Planner in Africa 2019' at the annual Destination Wedding Planners Congress, which recognises excellence in the luxury destination wedding industry. Speaking of the award, Holt says: "This shows you that the industry is beginning to recognise businesses and countries like ours. We were a little bit off the beaten track 10 years ago, but that's no longer the case."

Holt herself is German which means she's ideally placed to market the country as a wedding destination to foreigners. "We've brought an understanding of a high-level service to Cape Town specifically but also across the country. One of the attractions for our clients is that they can have an international experience with an African flavour."

Holt adds that what makes weddings in South Africa so exciting today is the amount of creativity on offer. The country offers couples professional services, while the labour required to pull off an impressive affair is relatively inexpensive compared with international standards. "There are many customisation options to really do something bespoke and





Pexels, Qazi Ikram Ul Haq

personal, if couples want that. There's so much opportunity right at their fingertips," according to Holt.

Amanda Cunningham, MD at The Wedding Expo and Wedding Inspirations magazine, agrees. "There's just so much creativity in this industry," she says. "We have all the talent here. Whether we're talking

décor, flowers or photography, there's just amazing work being produced. We absolutely play in the global field of top wedding planners; we're right up there."

South Africa also boasts fantastic locations, with world renowned scenery. "It's been voted as one of the top countries you need to visit in your life, so it's that bucket list kind of travel destination," says Holt. "The hospitality sector has rubbed off on the wedding industry." The converse is true too, although not enough is being done to capitalise on the potential this offers, she adds.

"South Africa is not being represented quite enough abroad," explains Holt, "which is why I'm so passionate about being a wedding ambassador for the country."

Tourism's golden goose?

Tourism is a natural offshoot of destination weddings, so much so that Wedding Concepts established a travel division 10 years ago. "For each wedding, around 100 to 200 guests come to South Africa and most of them need help with their travel

Wedding planning and design by
www.weddingconcepts.co.za
 Photography by Tyme



arrangements, whether it's just a car rental, block bookings at hotels or a two-week trip through the country or broader continent," explains Holt. "They have the classic tourist experience and they come back because they fall in love with South Africa." Numerous wedding planners have branched into tourism, managing events around the wedding as well as guests' travel diaries and accommodation.

"The knock-on effect on tourism here is enormous," continues Holt. "Last year alone we serviced 3 000 people coming to our celebrations. Not all of them would have had an overlap with our travel service but if you look at 3 000 people, even if they're just spending two nights in the Winelands, it's huge. So, you can multiply the effect that one company like ours already has on this market. It's massive. The events industry, which includes weddings, contributes to the economy enormously." In 2018 alone, an estimated 8.6 million tourists came to South Africa, according to South African Tourism. Of those, 28 500 specifically stated that wedding attendance was their main reason for visiting, as recorded in the 2018 SA Tourism Departure Surveys.

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 Photography by Jenni Elizabeth

"South Africa
 is not being
 represented quite
 enough abroad,"

However, 'visiting friends and relatives' was noted as the biggest reason for international guests to visit South Africa in a first quarter of 2018 report entitled *Travel Patterns in South Africa*. This stood at 37.6% of all arrivals and 45% for arrivals from the rest of the continent. The 'visiting friends and relatives' category includes weddings, funerals and attending family events. Without a concrete breakdown, the exact number of wedding tourists may well be under reported..

As a whole, weddings in South Africa constitute a multibillion-rand industry, adds Cunningham. There's a dire need to get a handle on exact local and international spend – which would require the cooperation of wedding venues, planners, vendors and government; a seemingly mammoth task. "The industry's made up of lots and lots of small suppliers and then you have the bigger players," explains Cunningham. "The tourism part of it is massive. We can't quite get a handle on exactly how big it is, but we know it's huge. International brides who come here often get all their services here too, even their dresses."

A lack of official statistics around the wedding industry and the impact of tourism is something that bothers

many working in the industry. This is compounded by the fact that “there’s never really been a proper wedding association or official body”, explains Cunningham.

It’s not just tracking the numbers of international couples selecting South Africa as a prime wedding destination that is lacking, most weddings today have become global affairs, with friends and family living across the world and travelling to celebrate these special occasions. “In terms of the couples themselves, we have a large African contingent from the continent and obviously local couples seeking destination weddings within South Africa – for example, a Johannesburg couple coming to Cape Town,” says Holt. “Fifty percent of our couples come from outside Africa, though.”

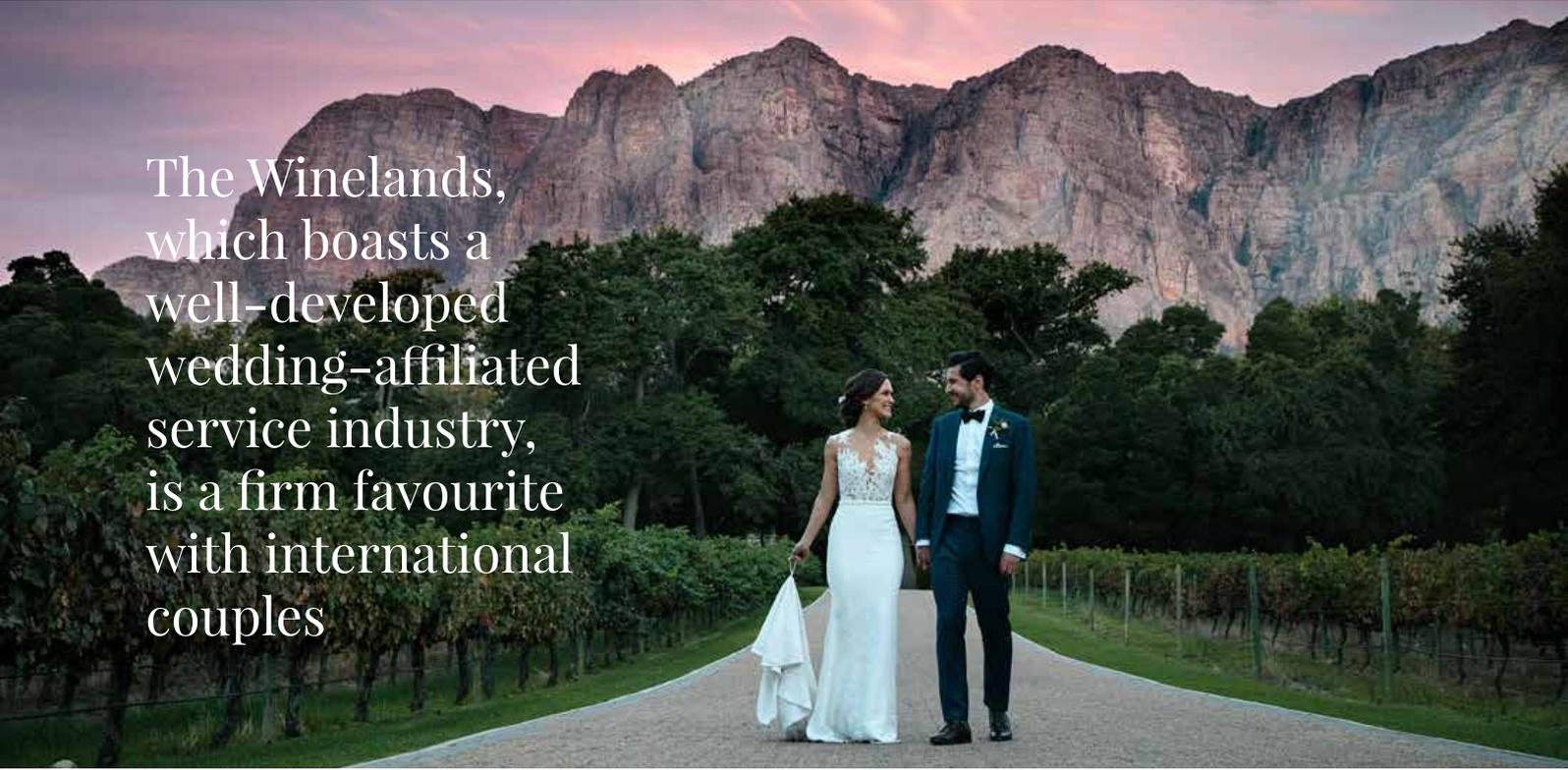
The cultural diversity of the couples themselves has also increased, says Holt. “Often the groom has grown up in one country and the bride in another. We also have South Africans who live abroad and then meet someone overseas and want to

come back to get married here.”

Crazy about the Cape

While there are appealing wedding venues throughout the country, the Cape Winelands feature prominently. “Cape Town is such a destination wedding place to come to,” says Melissa Tratschler, project manager at Aleit Weddings, a division of the Aleit Group offering luxury wedding planning and coordination services in the Cape and beyond. “Ninety-nine percent of our clients are international,” says Tratschler. “Couples usually come from Nigeria, Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, and all over Europe to have their weddings in South Africa.” Aleit Wedding clients generally have approximate budgets of between R600 000 to R1.2 million, although one wedding they planned cost a whopping R15 million.

Nicola Johnson, also a project manager at Aleit, explains the appeal of the Cape Winelands: “A lot of our clients who come from overseas either want a view of the



The Winelands, which boasts a well-developed wedding-affiliated service industry, is a firm favourite with international couples

vineyards, the mountains or the ocean. Considering everything the Winelands have to offer, that's one of the main areas we look at. The couples and their guests tend to stay in central Cape Town because it's a busy hub that has a lot to offer but they tend to move out to the Cape Winelands for the actual wedding day."

Others prefer to spend their visit in one place, opting for the likes of Cape Winelands favourite Spier, which offers 133 rooms and a myriad activities and restaurants which appeal to international couples and their overseas guests.

The Winelands, which boasts a well-developed wedding-affiliated service industry, is a firm favourite with international couples, says Fagrew. "When overseas people think Winelands, they definitely think Cape Town; and that's a pull factor," she says. While the bridal couple may have been here before, most of the guests haven't, which is great for tourism.

This has not gone unnoticed by the City of Cape Town and the provincial government. Briony Brookes, Cape Town Tourism's Communications Manager, says: "Being named Best African & Middle Eastern City by the Travel + Leisure World's Best Awards for the 18th year running, and a Top 10 Bucket List destination for Global Travellers, on top of the many other accolades Cape Town has to its name, means we're a firm tourist favourite," she says.

"However, when it comes to the wedding market the needs are a little different," says Brookes. "The ocean, mountains and Winelands that are key to our popularity in the global travel market certainly play a role in making us an attractive destination for weddings. What we offer in terms of world-class, five-star locations is also a major factor. Because we're a wedding destination venue for local and international couples, often the couple can't be as hands-on as they'd like when it comes to planning their special days. Being able to rely on the top-tier in-house services and wedding planners that our leading venues offer, alleviates some of the stress of wedding planning."

When it comes to the financial impact of this established industry on the Western Cape's economy, Brookes says there is "very little available in the way of data around weddings in the region" and "it's challenging to calculate the economic impact of weddings".

However, she adds that, on a yearly basis, local weddings constitute the key source of income and employment for venues over the wedding season.

SA vs The World

We ask the experts how the South African wedding industry stands up when compared to its international counterparts when it comes to trends, services and value for money:

Value for money: While the comparatively low value of the rand is

something that works in South Africa's favour when it comes to its appeal to international couples, the financial landscape is changing, says Tratschler.

"While we still offer value for money, we're finding that costs are increasing more and more because people don't want ordinary weddings, they can have an ordinary wedding anywhere," she says.

The state of the economy is also putting the wedding industry under pressure, says Johnson. "Overseas couples don't necessarily have higher budgets than local couples," she adds. "Local couples are often on par. It absolutely varies, there are a few factors that play a role with regards to a fixed budget. It's ultimately all up to the client, we deliver exactly what they want, offering guidance along the way."

"Our international clients are treating their guests to not only one day, but to three or four different events," adds Tratschler. "South African couples may spend a lot on the wedding, but they don't tend to spend money on pre or post-events. Our international clients may treat everyone to three or four different events, safaris, wine tasting, fancy meals and so on, so the money is split more."

"International budgets are differently shaped," agrees Holt. "Overall I think the industry here is on an international level but at a lower cost and that's something that's attractive to people. Costs generally have gone up enormously over the last few years but if you compare having a wedding in South Africa versus having an identical wedding in Dubai, London or New York, you're looking at spending three to six times as much in those countries."

Trends: When it comes to wedding trends, the local industry is more a follower than a leader, say most of the experts interviewed. "Trends here are very influenced by what's happening internationally," says Karen Short, founder and owner of award-winning events and catering company By Word of Mouth.

"The South African industry follows international trends but there are some

bigger wedding planners here who are trendsetters," adds Fagrew. "The rest of us try to play to their game."

South Africa is on both sides of the spectrum says Holt. "There tends to be a following here because a trend was seen somewhere else, especially on social media. At the same time, I think there's so much creativity and we do our own things here too."

Services: "We've tried to build a bridge between the beauty of South Africa and international service expectations, which needed to be refined a bit," says Holt. "It really is now a world-class destination on all fronts. We've got the most incredible industry talent across the board. Of course, there are some countries, the United States for example, that lead in certain areas, but overall South Africa compares in terms of global standards."

Aleit Weddings' Johnson agrees. "We need to stay on top of trends and offer what's available in the rest of the world," she says. "Each wedding is customised to the couple and we change our style based on their budget and desires. We ensure that we work with suppliers that meet our high-quality standards."

Seasoned wedding planner, Guy Granger, endorses this approach saying that services differ vastly from supplier to supplier, leaving some clients feeling ripped off because promises aren't always met. "The problem with the wedding industry in South Africa is that it's not regulated," he says. "This can lead to a lot misunderstanding especially around how much a wedding actually costs. My advice? Get a (reputable) planner - it'll be the best money you've ever spent."

About Crazy Grape Media



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