

Harmony: How do Vietnamese wedding planners manage to please everyone?

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An emphasis on harmony helps Vietnamese consumers navigate the perils of wedding planning to find ways to please everyone involved, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

"When there are disagreements about [wedding](#) plans, rather than arguing, bickering, or bargaining, Vietnamese consumers find ways to achieve harmony," write authors Thuc-Doan T. Nguyen (California State University, Long Beach) and Russell W. Belk (York University).

Planning a wedding is a complex task that involves cultural, family, and personal considerations. But according to the authors, Asian cultures may have an edge when it comes to smoothing out differences.

"Harmony is a key value in many Asian societies. Unlike the Western emphasis on individual preferences and compromises, Vietnamese families create ways to please everyone," the authors write.

This method of reaching consensus—even in potentially fraught situations like weddings—is what the authors call "[harmonization](#)."

Through a series of interviews with brides and grooms (and their parents) before and after their weddings, the authors found that Vietnamese wedding consumers do not discount their own interests. Rather, in achieving their self-interest, they simultaneously think of how it would also benefit others.

"Just because certain cultures emphasize social harmony does not mean

they are selfless," the authors write. "Asian values such as long-term mutuality and family loyalty promote harmony and help consumers find ways to make a consumption activity please everyone who is involved."

"The prevailing popular image of Asian consumers is that they are willing to make sacrifices for the sake of maintaining social [harmony](#). However, the experience of Vietnamese wedding consumers contradicts the myth that Asian [consumers](#) subsume individual interests to collective ones," the authors write. "Rather, they skillfully build wedding plans to create a harmonious whole that everyone involved can fully subscribe to."

More information: Thuc-Doan T. Nguyen and Russell W. Belk. "Harmonization Processes and Relational Meanings in Constructing Asian Weddings." *Journal of Consumer Research*: October 2013.

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