

Title	結婚式の潜在価値 熟達ウエディング・プランナーが促進する結婚式サービスの価値創出プロセス
Author(s)	真保, 亜紀
Citation	
Issue Date	2020-03
Type	Thesis or Dissertation
Text version	none
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10119/16374">http://hdl.handle.net/10119/16374</a>
Rights	
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## Abstract

The latent value of wedding service:  
Process of value creation performed by expert wedding planners

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**Keywords:** latent value, bundled service, engagement, S-D logic, wedding planner

This research focuses on how resources are integrated when wedding ceremonies are held in Japanese hotels or wedding halls and aims to propose a conceptual model on how wedding ceremonies are able to develop and determine the service. This study has been examined by S-D logic perspective to explore the mechanism demonstrating the value of service for wedding ceremonies, from the change in perception of service value jointly created by a Wedding Planner (WP) and couples.

Nowadays various views on marriage, different from the ones in Showa and Heisei eras, have become quite obvious in Japanese society. There has been a tendency when a bride-to-be creates a wedding preparation account on social media and posts the process before the wedding ceremony with a hashtag “# bride-to be” and shares her thoughts of the ceremony with “# graduate bride”, which has had a great influence on the wedding market. In order to catch up with this phenomenon, there will be requirements of a new service value for wedding ceremonies.

Under such circumstances, the unbundling of services is accelerating in the market, and there has been a new tendency of transformation from the exchange of goods to the service dominant exchange concept in the discussion of value creation. Companies, disassembling the existing value chain, and specializing in specific areas have already been strongly represented in such areas as finance or music distribution. And this process of unbundling seems to be unstoppable.

However, it seems that in case of wedding ceremonies in Japan, packaged wedding services, provided by hotels and wedding halls, were established after the World War 2, and “absence of unbundling” seems to be a service value creating factor. The wedding planners, examined here, create resources through context and experience based on customer engagement and renewing relationships with their customers.

Through this improvement in operation, their resources become more competitive, and their services acquire greater wedding service value. Based on case studies, this research analyzes the process of resource integration that involves many different actors at the same time. We also try to understand how value propositions invite engagement and present an applicable model for the development of wedding service for wedding service industries.

The research examines four wedding planners who worked for more than 10 years in major hotels or wedding halls in Tokyo between 1980 and 2018 and were in charge of 700 to 4600 wedding couples. This study uses the following sources: semi-structured interviews, thank you letters, hand-made manuals, meeting notes and other materials.

The interviews are focused on "value proposition", "service exchange" in the co-creation process such as "relationship with customers", "inside or outside the organization", "development and operation of new services", "things considered for customer satisfaction".

The interview data have been examined by "Thematic Analysis" (Tsuchiya, 2016) from Boyatzis (1998). "Wedding Service Value"(Kim and Lee, 2014), "Five Properties of Engagement"(Chandler and Lusch, 2015) is also used as an analytical basis for this work.

From these cases, we found that a wedding ceremony holds the latent value (i.e. the value not anticipated before the wedding event) and "relationship value" as social capital, related to wedding actors in a deliberate value proposition. Thus, wedding service value combines explicit value such as social, aesthetic and monetary value as well as latent value such as relationship value.

Creating of wedding service experience is made possible through the "value proposition" inducing the engagement. This process plays an important role in creating service value and is inextricably linked with knowledge and skills of wedding planners based on unbundled service system. Wedding planners are able to bring their knowledge to induce "engagement" and turn the resource integration into providing the service experience.

Since many actors are involved in the process of preparing wedding at the same time, it is essential for a WP to promote engagement while providing bundled service. This process of value creation, performed by expert wedding planners, is expected to nurture and promote the ties between a couple and a community.