



Faculty of Design

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Value Metamorphosis: Investigating the impact of COVID-19 on Indian weddings as a system

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Value Metamorphosis: Investigating the impact of COVID-19 on Indian weddings as a system

Relating Systems Design (RSD 10): Playing with Tensions

Aditya Sharma, Hemul Goel and Sanika Harshe



Scale of the Indian Wedding Industry



The estimated worth of the Indian wedding industry is USD 50 billion, second only to the United States according to KPMG.¹

It is a common practice for people to be hired as "human-props" at weddings in Delhi, India



Scale of the Indian Wedding Industry



People waiting in queue for the buffet- an indication of the number of guests

Going by current standards, an average Indian spends about one-fifth of their lifetime earnings on the wedding of their children.²



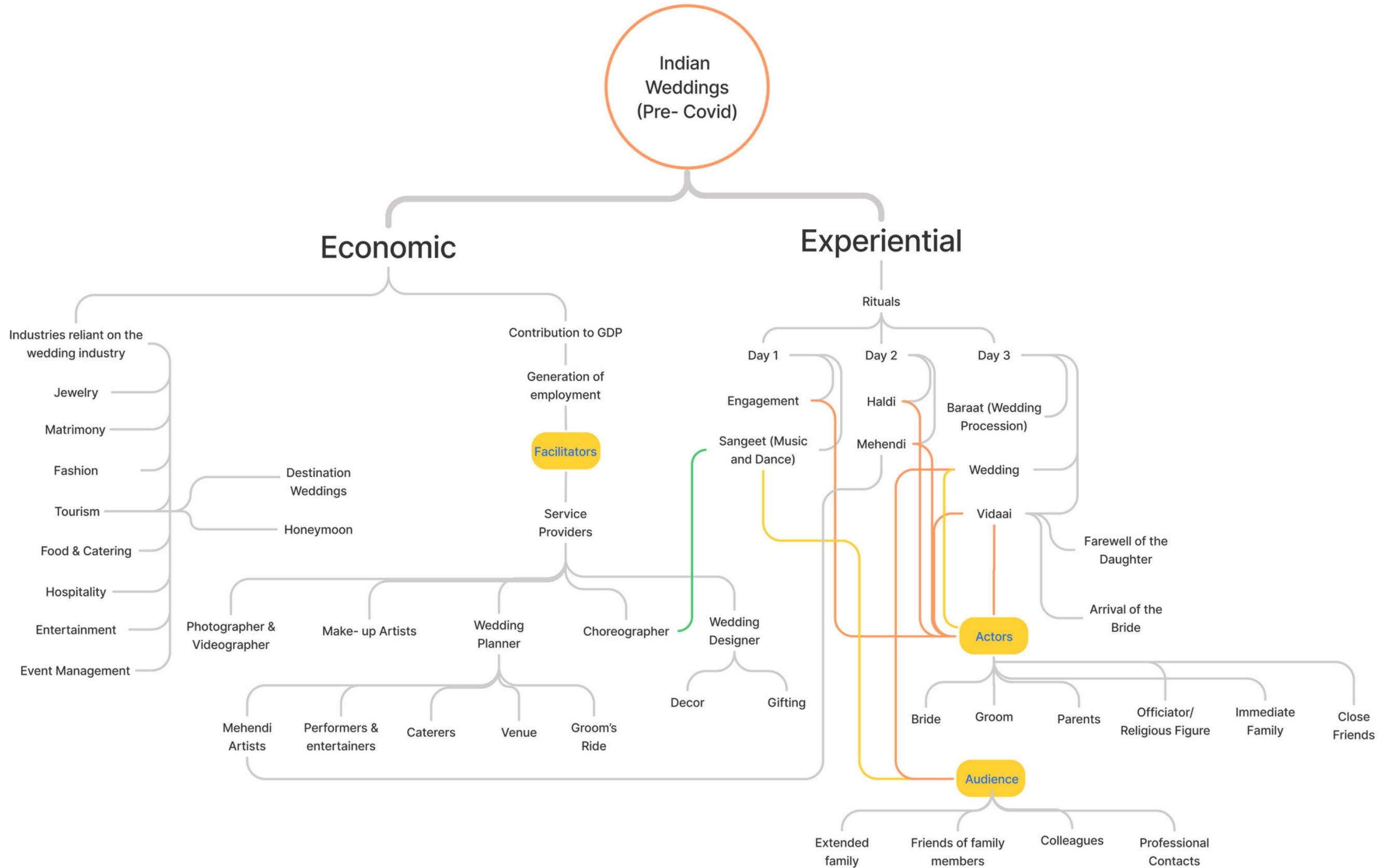
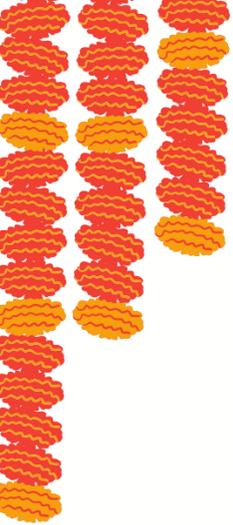
Scale of the Indian Wedding Industry



India celebrates about 10 million weddings per year and each wedding lasts anywhere between 3-7 days.³

A picture of a "baraat"- a procession where the groom's guests dance to the wedding venue while the groom follows on a horse, to make a grand entry



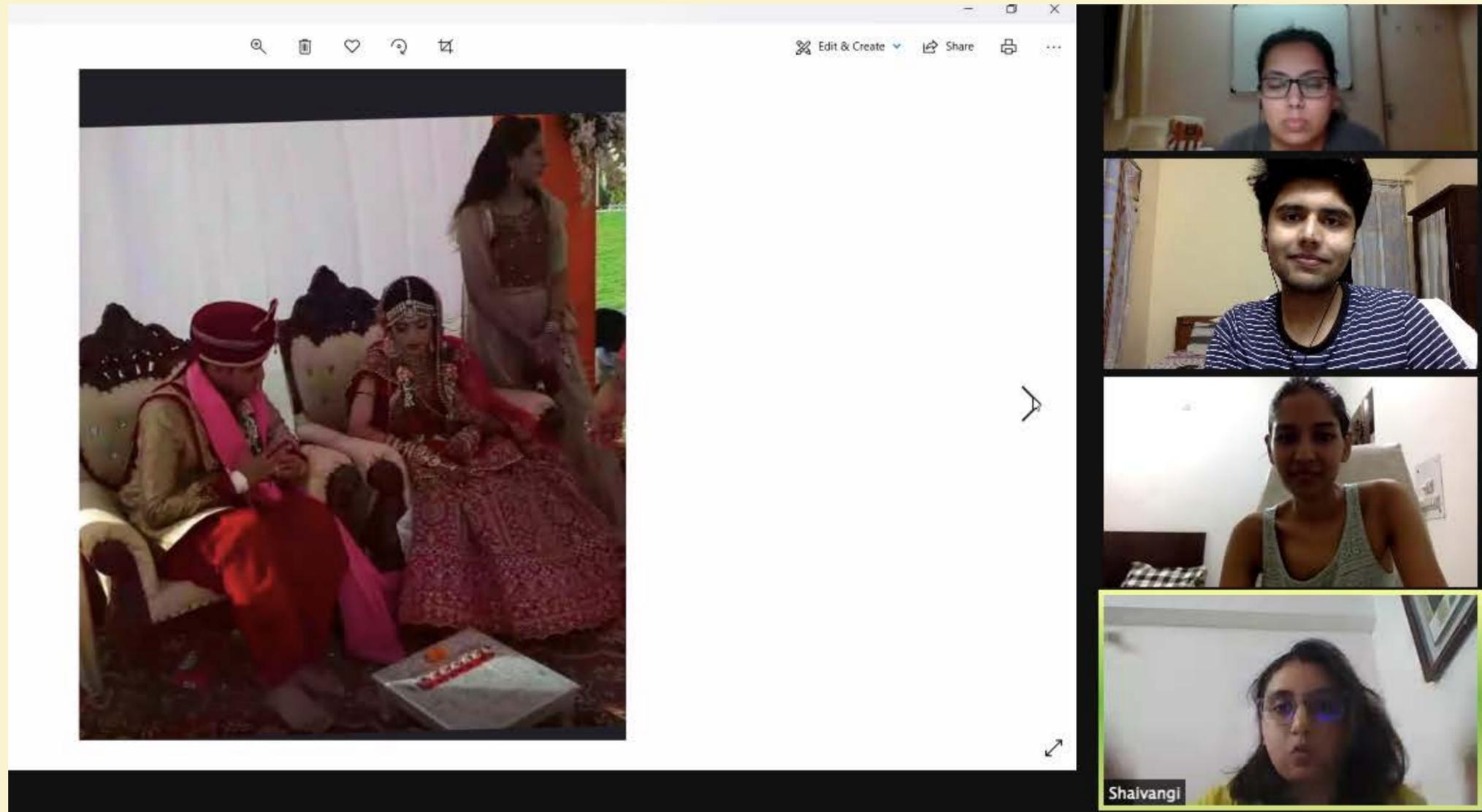




Taking a systemic view of weddings, we set out to understand the impact of the pandemic as an external force on the social system.



Methodology



A mixed-method approach was followed to devise methods for primary research to generate systemic insights about social systems using ethnographic tools like in-depth interviews supplemented with photo-elicitation (n=10).

A participant (who attended a wedding virtually), sharing her experience of the event by recalling memories through sharing images she captured





Methodology



Parents of a bride being interviewed

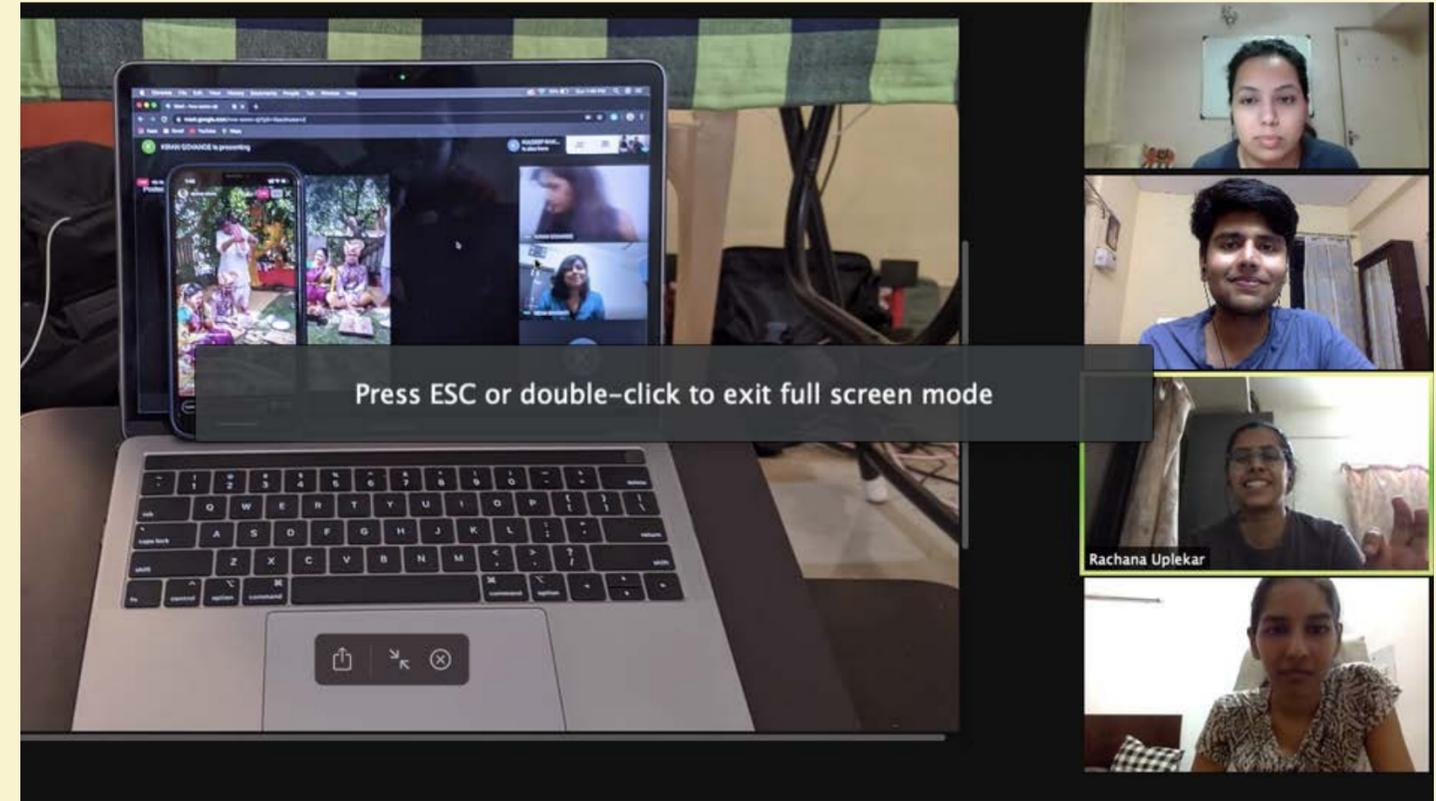


Photo-eliciting responses from an attendee who attended a wedding virtually



The sample included brides, grooms, parents and guests who attended the weddings in-person and virtually.

This was followed by a questionnaire (n=10) that was sent out to industry experts like wedding designers and planners.





Findings



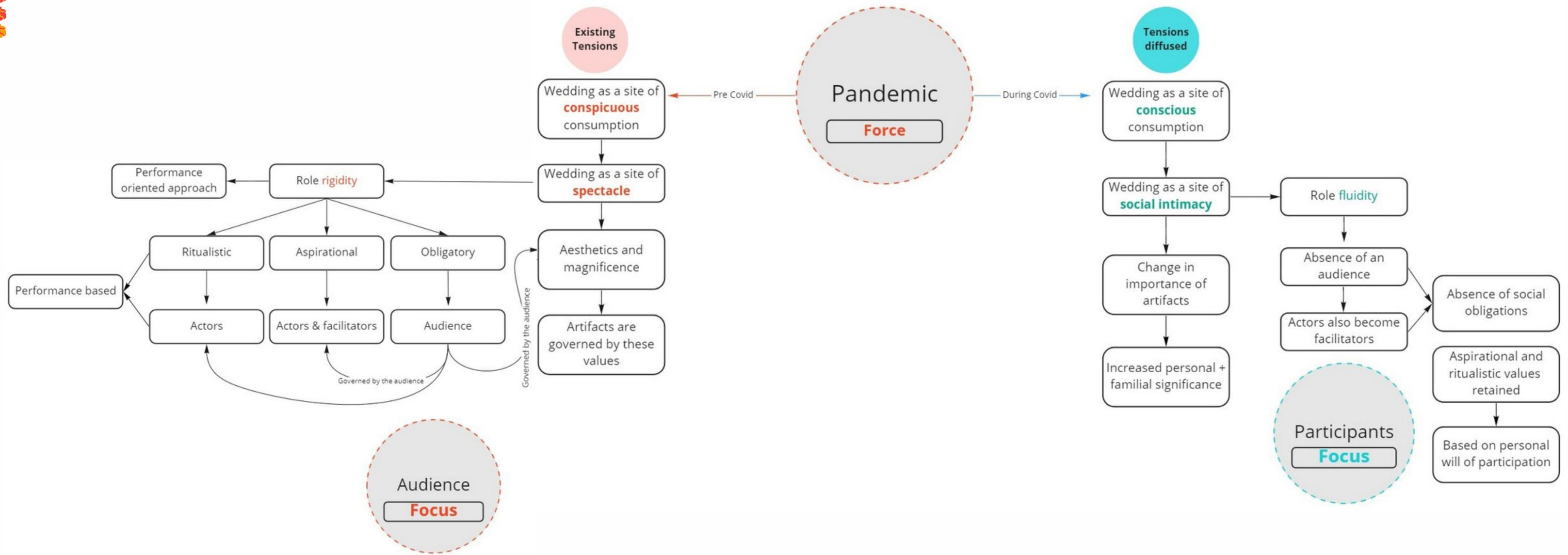
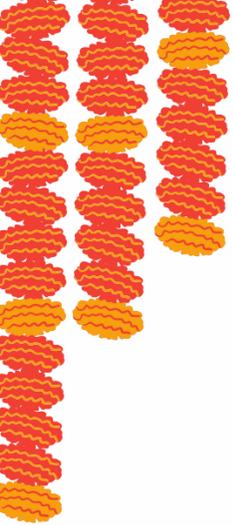
On the basis of the interactions with performers across the spectrum, values linked to a new class of weddings based on conscious consumption can be identified.



These values have emerged as a common trend and are meant to inform the experience of performers and the event in a post-covid world:

1. Mindfulness
2. Intimacy
3. Personalisation







Findings: Mindfulness



Friends of a couple performing on a virtual *sangeet*- a dance function usually held on the day before the wedding

"The guest list became smaller and hence everything was downsized. We did not have to care about what to wear, since there were not many people to see us in our finery. We can always use our wedding budget for investing in a better house for ourselves."

- **Groom B**





Findings: *Intimacy*

"We wanted to throw a big celebration, after all, our only daughter was getting married and we are socially obliged to invite colleagues, friends, relatives..But the COVID wedding experience turned out to be special and somehow more personal. We did not have to think about hosting all the guests and will cherish this memory forever as something relaxed and personal."

- Father of Bride C





Findings: *Personalisation and Shift in Roles*



"My mother hand-embroidered masks with our initials, they served as memorabilia." - **Bride A**
"We just DIY-ed the decor, hand sewed cushion covers out of stray fabric and made wall hangings."
- **Bride B**





Next steps: Exploring parallel value shifts



Intimacy, personalisation and mindfulness form our lens for further research where we look for shifts in parallel social systems like healthcare, education and remote working among other examples.

Personalisation of virtual spaces?

Doctor-patient intimacy during virtual consultations?

Remote employee engagement?

Peer-to-peer connection outside online classrooms?

Teacher-student relationship in online classrooms?





References

1. Digital Classifieds In India 2020, 21 September 2016, A study by KPMG in India & Google
2. Digital Classifieds In India 2020, 21 September 2016, A study by KPMG in India & Google
- 3 Lal, N. (2021, January 31). The financial burden of weddings on India's poorest families. Business and Economy | Al Jazeera. Retrieved October 25, 2021, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/1/31/the-financial-burden-of-weddings-on-indias-poorest-families>.





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