

**IMPACT OF FIRMOGRAPHICS, EXPERTISE,
CONSTRAINTS AND CONSTRAINT MANAGEMENT
METHODS ON WEDDINGS ORGANIZED BY WEDDING
PLANNING FIRMS IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA.**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for a Degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my beloved family who supported me each step of the way.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CRT	-	Current Reality Tree
EMBOK	-	Event Management Body of Knowledge
ISES	-	International Special Events Society
KMO	-	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
LVCVA	-	Las Vegas Convention and Visitor Authority
MICE	-	Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Events
SME	-	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMART	-	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-Bound
TOC	-	Theory of Constraints
UKAWP	-	United Kingdom Association of Wedding Planners
WBS	-	Work Break-Down Structure
WTTC	-	World Travel and Tourism Council

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Constraints	Anything that hinders the wedding planning process from yielding results as expected by wedding planners.
Firmographics	Characteristics of an organization that can be used to develop a firm's profile including firm age, number of employees and number of product lines.
Performance	Accomplishment of research, design, planning, execution and coordination and execution of wedding plans.
Performance outcomes	Success or failure of the wedding planning process to meet the goals and expectations of stakeholders involved in the wedding planning process.
Planning expertise	Skills, competencies and abilities of wedding planners to organise a wedding.
Wedding	A marriage ceremony accompanied by additional festivities.
Wedding Planner	A person who is contracted by an engaged couple to research, design, plan, coordinate and execute and evaluate a wedding ceremony.
Wedding planning firm	An organisation contracted by an engaged couple to research, design and plan, coordinate, execute and evaluate a wedding.

ABSTRACT

Special events, particularly weddings have long been part of Kenyan culture. The organization of this key milestone involves elaborate budgets, numerous stakeholders and varied tasks. Pursuant to these elaborate demands, a large number of couples are turning to wedding planning firms to wholly or partially plan and execute the event. However, little appears to be known about management and practices within these firms in Kenya. The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of firmographics, expertise, constraints and constraint management methods on weddings organized by wedding planning firms in Nairobi County, Kenya. Therefore, and the objectives of this study were to profile wedding planning firms, determine planning expertise, constraints to the wedding planning process and approaches to constraint management. The study was carried out in Nairobi County in Kenya and adopted a descriptive research design. A convenient listing of thirty one wedding planning firms formed the sampling frame. Research instrument was pretested in three randomly selected firms. Wedding planners from the remaining twenty eight firms were respondents for the main study. The researcher received a response rate of eighty two percent. Data was systematically collected through semi structured interviews. Quantitative data was summarized using descriptive statistics. Mann Whitney U-Test tested for significant differences in expertise and constraints among wedding planning firms based on the duration of operation firmographic. Multiple regression was used to determine the impact of constraints on the overall wedding planning process. All qualitative data was organized into themes, analyzed manually and conclusions drawn. The study established that wedding planning firms had been in operation for between one and fifteen years. Fifty two percent of firms had less than five years of operational experience. Additionally, firms had an average of six permanent and ten temporary employees. In descending order, respondent firms also organized conferences and conventions (85%), business and corporate events (75%) festivals (25%) and sports events (10%). The services offered to clients in descending order of popularity were identified as wedding execution and coordination (95%), design (87%), management of wedding finances (84%), research on event goals (57%) and measuring event success (53%). Fifty nine percent of wedding planners recorded above average performance in thirteen out of fifteen tasks within the wedding planning process. Sixty and ninety six percent of firms exhibited below average performance in monitoring standards and debriefing staff respectively. However no significant differences ($p > .05$) were noted in expertise in wedding planning based on the duration of operation. Variables that influenced the outcome of the wedding planning process were identified in descending order as lack of information to improve business performance (70%), poor cash flow (30%), unreliability of suppliers (26%), unavailability of facilities (23%), low demand for services (22%), lack of equipment of satisfy demand (17%), lack of materials to satisfy demand (8%), limited staff skills (8%), inadequate staff numbers (4%) and restrictive firm policies (4%). No significant differences ($p > .05$) were noted in constraints to the wedding planning process based on the duration of operation. The model derived using multiple regression further indicated that constraints identified accounted for 94.7 percent of the variance in the wedding planning process. Firms maximized resources and increased resource capacity to assure event success. The study therefore recommended that wedding planning firms continuously monitor and evaluate planning tasks in order to identify constraints. Furthermore, firms should develop policies to further assist in utilization, support and increased access to constrained resources.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Events are non-routine occasions that enlighten, celebrate, entertain or challenge the experience of a group of people (Shone & Parry, 2004). Over the past several decades, the number, diversity and popularity of events have grown spectacularly (Getz, 2012). Jago (1997) attributes this growth to increasing levels of average disposable income, frequent, short-term holiday breaks and increased interest in experiential travel, authenticity and culture. Accordingly, these occasions have enabled destinations to improve their tourism product offerings, enhance attractiveness, expand the tourist season, spread tourism geographically and animate static attractions and facilities resulting in urban renewal and development (Veres, Clark, & Golbourne, 2008). In addition, the burgeoning industry has created job opportunities and increased demand for local products (Monroe, 2006).

Destinations such as Las Vegas in the United States have been able to supplement tourism earnings from entertainment, casinos, dining, nightlife and attractions by promoting conventions and special events through the Las Vegas Convention and Visitor Authority (LVCVA) (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). LVCVA maintains that Las Vegas has also strongly positioned itself as a destination for both elaborate and no frills weddings and hosts over 100,000 nuptial ceremonies each year (Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, 2014). This is indicative of the potential held by convention destinations for hosting special events such as weddings.

Entrepreneurs in Kenya has since ventured into events including Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Events (M.I.C.E.) (GoK, 2007). This notwithstanding, special events

such as weddings, funerals and initiation ceremonies have long been celebrated by many tribes across Kenya (Sobania, 2003). However, it has only been in recent times, that the professional organization of special events particularly weddings have grown in popularity among Kenyans (Noella, 2011). Notably, the involvement of event planners for this important milestone has been attributed to management of a wide range of service related activities, numerous stakeholders, increased budgets and limited time availability (Goldblatt, 2005). Pursuant to the elaborate demands associated with wedding planning an increasing number of couples are turning to accredited wedding organizers (Shone & Parry, 2004).

The increased demand for wedding planning services has created numerous opportunities for wedding planners, caterers, scenic designers, florists and display artistes (Monroe, 2006). High income expectations and innovative potential (Santarelli & Vivarelli, 2006) coupled with limited employment opportunities for a growing labor force in Kenya (KIPPRA, 2009) have both pulled and pushed entrepreneurs into venture into wedding planning.

The Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) describes an event manager's job as overseeing and arranging every aspect of the event including researching, planning, organizing, implementing, controlling and evaluating the design, activities and production of events (Bodwin, Allen, Harris, McDonnell, & O'Toole, 2012). This requires expert assessment, selection, monitoring, communication and documentation at each phase of the planning process (Silvers, Bodwin, O'Toole, & Nelson, 2006). However, this process can only achieve the desire outcome for the event if focus is placed on continuous improvement, creativity, ethics, integration and strategic thinking (Silvers, 2007).

Therefore professional practices and a premeditated design approach should be applied to maximize performance (Matthews, 2008).

According to Schragenheim and Dettmer (2001) all business processes are inhibited from attaining their goals by a constraint. Constraints may be in the form of activities, operations and process with inefficient capacity to satisfy market demand or policies rules and procedures that stifle flexibility (Reid, 2007). Subsequently firms consistently assess problems, design and implement improvement policies and evaluate results with the aim of improving performance (Dettmer, 1997).

Markedly, overall performance of the wedding planning sector may be improved by grouping firms based on firmographics to reflect industry practices, identify critical needs and offer continuous improvement recommendations for segments that have been operating for different periods with varied product lines and employee numbers (TRBC, 2009). Through the adoption of constraint management methodologies, wedding planners can increase their professional credibility and decision making processes leading to consistent event success, increased earnings, optimal business performance and increased competitiveness.

1.2 Problem Statement and Justification

Events need to be well understood (Malhotra, 2002; Getz, 2008) given the contribution they make towards job creation and their impact on varied stakeholders. Since each event is unique in terms of management, settings and people involved, an enquiry into best practices is essential to attaining benefits associated with events (Sven, 2010). Such enquiries into the events sector have been done in the United Kingdom (Gould, 2011),

Singapore (Henderson, Foo, Lim, & Yip, 2010), Canada (Lang Research Inc, 2006) and The United States of America (Litvin & Fetter, 2006). Aside from the increased attraction of entrepreneurs to business start-up in wedding planning in Kenya (Noella, 2011), little appears to be known about management and best practices used by wedding planning firms notwithstanding the impact of these variables on realising individual wedding and overall business goals, customer satisfaction and business longevity.

While previous studies have focused on authenticity and socio-cultural effects of event tourism, research into event policy, planning, business and management have remained largely unexplored (Getz, 2008, p. 409). Notably, focused research into these themes is vital given that susceptibility to failure of event planning firms is driven by their lack of formalization, standardization, accountability and continuous improvement practices (Silvers, 2004). Given that businesses with similar characteristics in Kenya are susceptible to failure within the first three years of conception (Bowen , Morara, & Mureithi, 2009), the Kenyan government has acknowledged the need to understand and strengthen operations within these businesses (KIPPRA, 2009).

Therefore, this study sought to fill this gap by profiling wedding planning firms, determining planning expertise of wedding planners, variables that limit firm performance and approaches to performance enhancement of new products particularly events such as weddings. Failure to communicate the aforementioned aspects could result in reduced professionalism and continual challenges in event execution that would likely affect customer satisfaction and earnings from special events (Monroe, 2006).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of firmographics, expertise, constraints and constraint management methods on weddings organized by wedding planning firms in Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- I. To determine the firmographics of wedding planning firms in Nairobi County.
- II. To evaluate expertise in performing wedding planning tasks among wedding planners in Nairobi County.
- III. To identify constraints that restrict successful wedding organization in wedding planning firms in Nairobi County.
- IV. To establish approaches used to manage constraints that influence the wedding planning process among wedding planning firms in Nairobi County.

1.5 Hypotheses

- H0₁: The expertise in performing wedding planning tasks in Nairobi County is not significantly different among wedding planning firms.
- H0₂: The constraints that restrict successful wedding organisation in Nairobi County are not significantly different among wedding planning firms.
- H0₃: Constraints have no significant impact on the wedding planning process in Nairobi County.
- H0₄: Approaches used to manage constraints are not significantly different among wedding planning firms in Nairobi County.

1.6 Significance

Firstly, the results identified wedding planning tasks performed poorly by wedding planners, causes of weak performance and recommended methodologies for effective management to assure event success resulting in increased professionalism in planning and execution of events. Secondly, the results sensitize the government, development partners and stakeholders on the importance of creating an enabling and sustainable business environment that supports operations and continuous improvement within wedding planning firms. The findings also provide additional knowledge to existing literature on wedding planning in Kenya by establishing the impact of specific constraints on the wedding planning process and recommending measures to halt their adverse impact on event outcomes.

1.7 Delimitations/ Scope of the Study

The scope of the study was influenced by the following:

- There existed no formal database of all wedding organization firms in Kenya. The study therefore used a convenient listing of wedding planning firms. Generalization of results was therefore done with caution.
- The study limited itself to wedding planning firms in Nairobi County Kenya.

1.8 Limitations

A limitation of this study was that constraints to the wedding planning process and continuous improvement were identified based on constraints proposed by the Theory of Constraints (TOC). Constraints proposed by other continuous improvement theories were excluded.

1.9 Assumptions

The following assumptions were noted:

- This study was based on the assumption that the process of organizing a wedding by event organizers was restricted by one or more constraints. This supposition was based on the TOC which viewed resources available for managers and organizations to carry out operations as limited.
- Managers of wedding planning firms have an oversight role in the wedding planning process therefore have an understanding of expertise, constraints and constraint management methods within their organizations.

1.10 Conceptual Framework and Measurement of Variables

According to TOC, processes such as wedding planning are influenced by one or more factors under the firms' control. Consequently, constraint management methodologies need to be carried out to enhance performance and assure the desired outcome at the end of the process. Figure 1.1 diagrammatically illustrates the relationship between independent, moderating and dependent variables examined by the study.

1.10.1 Independent Variables

1.10.1.1 Firmographics

Firmographics were identified as independent variables that caused variations in the wedding planning process, and constraints faced by wedding planning firms. Respondents were asked to state the duration of time the wedding planning firm had been in operation and the number and type of employees that the firm contracted.

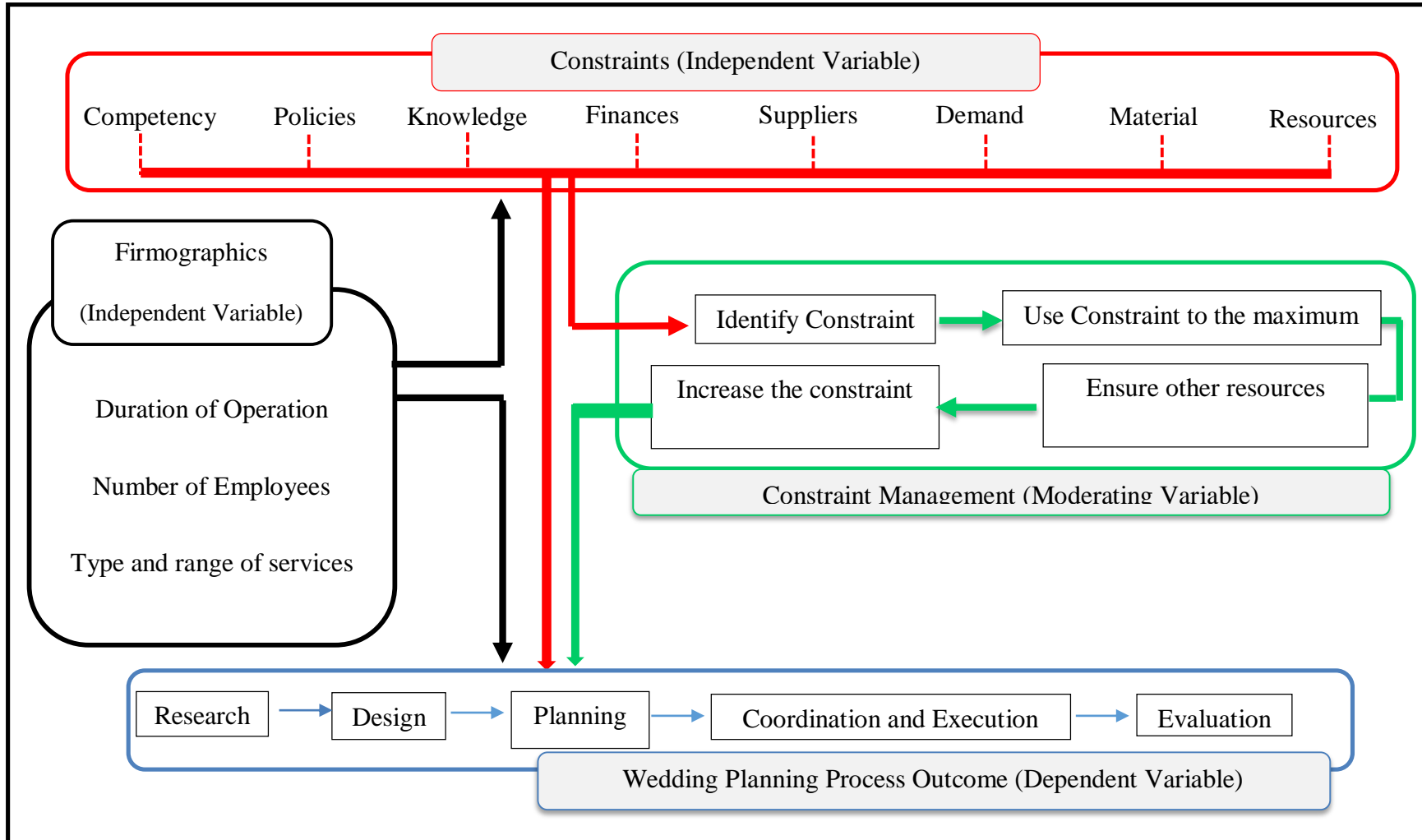


Figure 1.1: Modified Conceptual Framework: TOC approach to assessing the impact of Firmographics and Constraints on the Wedding Planning Process (Source: Researcher, 2014)

Other questions included additional events that the firm organised and the types of products and services that they offered clients. The responses to the aforementioned firmographic questions were summarised using frequencies, range, mode and mean. Additionally, selected firmographic data was used to group firms and test for differences in planning expertise and constraints faced using the Mann-Whitney *U* test.

1.10.1.2 Constraints

Constraints were also identified as independent variables that cause variation in the wedding planning process. The policy and managerial constraints that were included in the conceptual framework were adopted from TOC. These comprised of market constraints, resource constraints, material constraints, supplier constraints, financial constraints, knowledge constraints, competency constraint and policy constraints.

The researcher developed a three point Likert scale that required respondents to rate demand for their products and services, availability of staff, equipment and facilities within the firm to satisfy demand, ability of the firm to obtain materials in the correct quantity and quality to satisfy demand, reliability of suppliers in responding to orders, availability of cash flow, information to improve business performance, availability of staff skills and presence of rules, regulations and business practices that enhance performance. Multiple regression was then used to establish the impact of constraints on the wedding planning process.

1.10.2 Moderating Variable

Constraint management methodologies were identified as moderating variables given that they influence the effect of constraints (independent variables) on the wedding planning process (dependent variable). According to TOC, constraint management

encompasses identification of constraints, exploitation of constraints, subordination of everything above the constraint and elevating constraint capacity. The researcher posed an open ended question to respondents requiring them to describe how they managed to use resources and procedures that they had identified as limited to plan weddings and get the desired event outcome. The responses provided were then analysed thematically to determine whether the constraint management methodologies used the four steps to eliminate constraints.

1.10.3 Dependent Variable

The wedding planning process outcome was identified as the dependent variable given that it was influenced by constraints (independent variable) and firmographics (independent variable). This process was broken down into 5 stages namely, research, design, planning, coordination and execution, and evaluation. Respondents were asked to rate their adeptness in carrying out tasks associated with the five stages of wedding planning on a five point Likert scale with the aim of identifying challenging stages. The Likert items on task performance were then summed up and the computed variable used as the dependent variable in testing for a relationship between planning expertise and constraints faced by wedding planning. The computed score was also used as the dependent variable in multiple regression which established the impact of constraints on wedding planning expertise.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed literature on event tourism, typology of events, event planning knowledge, skills and processes, wedding planning stages and tasks, understanding and improving business performance and the impact of firmographics on performance. A summary of the gaps identified in the literature review was included at the end of the chapter.

2.2 Event Tourism

The word “Event” is derived from the Latin word “*eventus*” which is translated as happenings out of the ordinary (Sven, 2010). In the tourism context Goldblatt and Nelson (2001, p. 181) define an event as “a unique moment in time celebrated with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs.” According to the International Special Events Society (ISES) events are one of the world’s fastest growing and economically lucrative industries (Sven, 2010).

According to Getz (2012) the number, diversity, and popularity of festivals and special events have grown spectacularly over the past several decades. Jago (1997) attributes the growth of the special events industry to increasing levels of average disposable income, frequent, short-term holiday breaks and increased interest in experiential travel, authenticity and culture. The interactions within the setting, people and management systems are unique to every type of event (Getz, 2008).

2.3 Typology of Events

Events may be subdivided into different genres including business and corporate events, meetings and conventions, festivals, sports events, cause related and fundraising events, entertainment and leisure events and government and civic events (Shone &

Parry , 2004). The typology for events is based on size (Mules & Faulkner, 1996), drawing power, production or program (Getz, 2005) and generic grouping (Jago, 1997).

2.3.1 Corporate and Business Events

Corporate events are those produced by corporations (Getz, 2005). These include sales conferences, product launches, and management meetings, training courses, business presentations and annual general meetings (Allen, 2009). Majority of these events are organized by corporate event planners found in marketing, corporate communications and human resources and are required to have a clear understanding of corporate culture (O'Toole & Mikolaitis, 2002). The preferred venues for corporate and business events include out-of-town hotels, city centre hotels and residential conference centres (Busines Tourism Partnership, 2003).

The adoption of business and corporate events by destinations can generate a substantial amount of revenue (O'Toole & Mikolaitis, 2002). According to the UK Events Market Trends Survey 2010, the business and corporate events market was worth 18.8 billion in the United Kingdom in 2010 (Conference and Business Events worth 18.8 billion, 2011). However, there has been a notable decline in the volume of events in this segment attributed to increased use of technologies such as internet for communication, teleconferencing and videoconferencing among participants in this segment thus reducing the need for face to face communication (Busines Tourism Partnership, 2003).

2.3.2 Conferences and Conventions

A convention, congress or conference is defined as a meeting hosted or sponsored by an association or body on a regular or ad hoc basis (Rogers, 2008). These events are usually held by professional groups, religious organizations, educational and scientific bodies or political groups to provide educational and networking opportunities for

attendees (Tretyakevich, 2010). Professional planners are employed by corporations, associations, hotels, resorts and convention centres to market and host meetings and conventions (Getz, 2005).

Conferences and conventions are a fast growing industry due to the increased importance placed by attendees on accessing updated news and events that can lead to professional development within their sectors of operation (Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007). Notably, there is worldwide increase in competition for attendees given that numerous destinations that host these events have well developed infrastructure and attractive convention and conference packages (Tretyakevich, 2010).

2.3.3 Festivals

Falassi (1987) describes festivals as inversions from daily routines “where people do something they normally do not; they abstain from something they normally do. Additionally, they carry to the extreme behaviours that are usually regulated by measure; they invert patterns of daily social life” (Harnish, 2006). Festivals introduce a range of events to the yearly calendar that allow locals to break their regular schedules and remind themselves of how things were done in the past (Jago, 1997). These events are produced primarily for local consumption and are managed by volunteers (Robertson & Frew, 2013).

The number, diversity and demand for festivals have grown enormously over the last few decades due to increases in average levels of disposable income and increasing interest in authenticity and culture (Getz, 2008; Prentice & Andersen, 2003). According to Travel Smart Ltd (2013) events in the Kenyan Festival calendar have grown tremendously to include the Arts Festival and Kijani Festival, Dugong Festival in Lamu, Lamu Malindi Festival, Sigana International Storytelling festival, Kenya Music

Festival, Maralal Camel Derby Festival, Concours d'Elegance, Kenya International Film Festival and Mombasa Carnival . Festivals are organized by a committee usually composed of volunteers and may or may not hire an event coordinator three or four months before the festival (Tum, Norton, & Wright, 2006).

2.3.4 Sporting Events

Sporting events range in size from large scale international events to small scale local tournaments and competitions (Edexcel Limited, 2010). The growth of sporting events can be attributed to increased media attention (Hudson, 2003). These events include mega sports events such as the Olympic and Paralympic games as well as calendar sports events (Ferdinand & Kitchin, 2012). Kenya participates in and hosts a substantial number of large scale international events and small scale local tournaments and competitions in football, rugby, cricket, athletics, volleyball, basketball and golf in members clubs, sports grounds, stadia and academic institutions (GOK, 2010).

These events are organised both by sports and non-sport organisations in collaboration with sports customers who have committed themselves to sporting organisations, merchandise and activities (Ferdinand & Kitchin, 2012). However, the challenge to organizing sporting events lies in negotiation with government bodies, sourcing for funding, infrastructure provision, effective marketing and appropriate pricing (Henderson, Foo, Lim, & Yip, 2010). Furthermore organizational and technical complexities render the organization of sporting events at international, national and local levels challenging (Emery, 2002).

2.3.5 Other Events

Other events hosted by destinations include cause-related and fundraising events, entertainment and leisure events and government and civic events (Getz, 2005). Cause-

related and fundraising events are produced for charity, social or political causes either to raise money or generate support while government and civic events such as rallies inaugurations, investiture and Very Important People (VIP) visits though small usually attract a lot of attention (Shone & Parry, 2004). Additional entertainment and leisure events such as concerts, exhibits and award ceremonies may be organized periodically or on-time or scheduled regularly.

2.3.6 Weddings

Weddings can be the most complicated events to organize as they involve multiple stakeholders, numerous suppliers and service related activities as well as the formal nuptials (Shone & Parry, 2004). McKenzie and Davis (2010) argue that planning a wedding requires multiple tasks and times that may be intertwined in ways that make both their representation and their execution highly complex. Although the day of the actual event may consist of the wedding ceremony itself followed by a reception and buffet the planning may take several months and involves large numbers of people (Shone & Parry, 2004). Because of such complications and also due to the growing length of days, size of budgets, widened scope and limited time availability, Goldblatt (2005) argues that people are turning to event planners to organize this important milestone.

2.4 Event Planning Knowledge, Skills and Processes

The Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) framework describes the skills and knowledge that are essential for the creation, development and delivery of the event (Bodwin, Allen & Harris, 2012). EMBOK is a framework that consists of phases, processes, core values and domains as illustrated in figure 2.1.

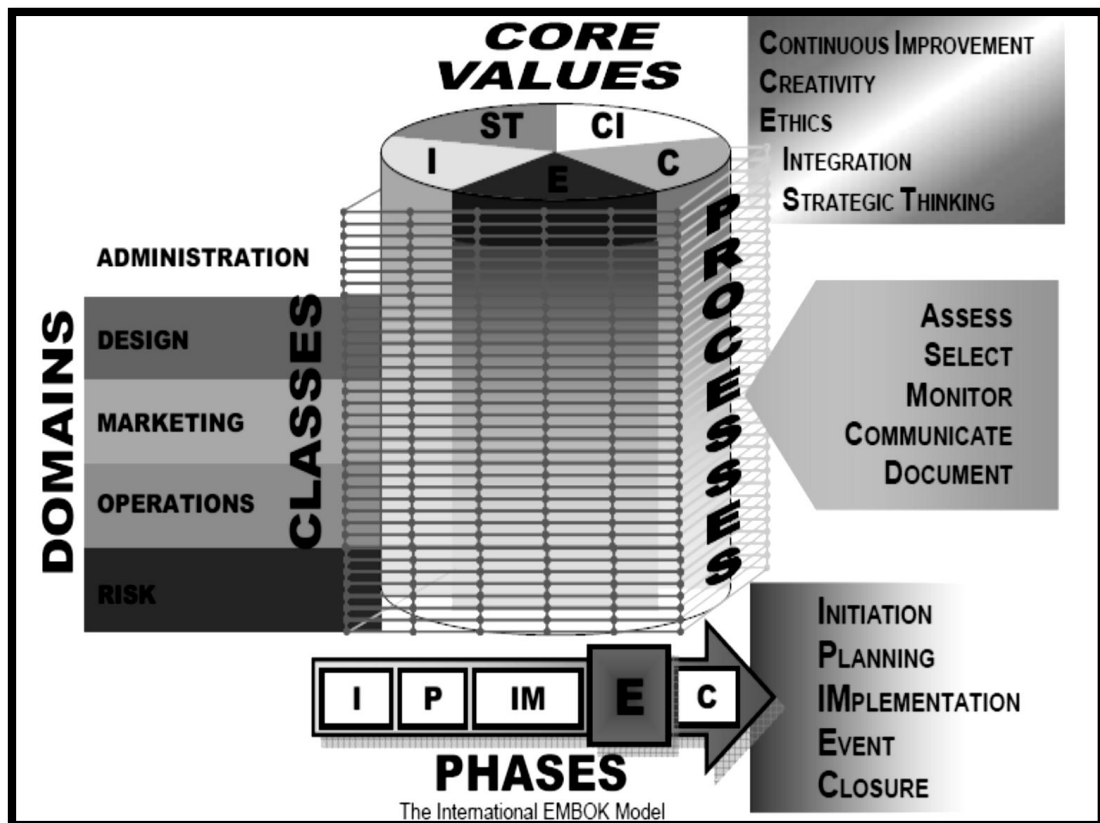


Figure 2.1: The International EMBOK Model

(Source: International EMBOK Executive, 2005)

Event planning comprises of five steps namely initiation, planning, implementation, the event and closure (Silvers, Bodwin, O'Toole & Nelson, 2006). These phases are derived from project management terminology and modify the five phases of event organization defined by Goldblatt (2005) and Monroe (2006) as research, design, planning, coordination and execution and evaluation.

Secondly, the process facet of EMBOK is based on acceptable process systems that enable event planners to keep up with the evolving nature of events (Silvers *et al.*, 2006). The processes include assessment, selection, monitoring, communication and documentation (O'Toole, 2007). Thirdly, the core values facet emphasizes that continuous improvement, creativity, ethics, integration and strategic thinking be part of every phase and process that leads up to the event (Silvers, 2007).

Lastly, the domains facet represents the functions performed by an event management firm (O'Toole, 2007). These include administration, design, marketing, operations and risk (Matthews, 2008). The administration domain deals with the allocation, direction and control of resources used for the event (Silvers *et al.*, 2006). The design domain translates the events goals and objectives into elements of the event such as catering, program production, themes and entertainment (Bodwin *et al.*, 2012). The marketing domain deals with the development and management of the marketing plan, materials, merchandising, promotions, public relations, sales and sponsorship for events (O'Toole, 2007). The operations domain concentrates on attendees, communications, infrastructure, logistics, participants, site and technical aspects brought together for the event (Bodwin *et al.*, 2012). The risk domain deals with the protective obligations, opportunities and legalities including compliance, decision management, emergency management, health and safety, insurance and security for the event (O'Toole, 2007).

An investigation of the domains, core values, process and phases of EMBOK for any event can enable event planning professionals to identify gaps in their expertise and experience (Silvers, 2007). The framework was used by Silvers and Nelson (2005) to assess competency in financial management for meetings and events. The aforementioned study endorsed focus on core values and process facets of the EMBOK model to ensure that financial goals under the administration domain were met.

2.5 Wedding Planning Stages

Successful events go through five stages namely: research, design, planning, coordination and execution and evaluation (Goldblatt J. , 2005; Monroe, 2006). Wedding planners' services offerings are usually related to performing individual or combined tasks in the aforementioned stages. Research is the first stage which involves

determining goals, objectives, needs and expectations of event stakeholders thus forms the background for decision making in all operations (Sven, 2010).

The second stage is design which entails the creation of an environment to satisfy stakeholder needs thus achieving the objectives of the event. This is a creative process that brings together different ideas that contribute to uniqueness of the event (Sven, 2010). At the end of this phase the planner puts together a program, budget and concept proposal (Matthews, 2008). It is also during this phase that feasibility studies, SWOT analysis, site and venue comparison and selection are done (Allen, O'Toole, McDonnell, & Harris, 2008).

Planning is the third stage in events management that involves the management of scarce resources such as time, money and human resources (Goldblatt J. , 2005). The amount of time available for planning and for actual production of the event can dramatically affect the cost and success of the event (Silvers, 2004). The event manager must allocate time for pre-event client meetings, site inspections, meetings with vendors, communication and contact preparations, actual event time for arrival through to departure, and post-event billable time (Monroe, 2006). The more complex the event, the more likely it is to be labour intensive in organization and operation (Shone & Parry, 2004).

Coordination and execution go hand in hand to bring the event to life. To orchestrate the event, the event planner has to coordinate human resource volunteers, negotiate vendor contracts, coordinate logistics integration between participants, service the stakeholders and monitor quality standards (Goldblatt J. , 2005). The last stage is event evaluation which measures success and improves the organization of future events (Monroe, 2006). According to Reid (2011) evaluation can take place during the

planning process or at the end of the event. This gives the event organizer background, feedback and experience in human relations, counselling, organization, financial management and negotiation (Allen *et al.*, 2008). Eventually this will influence organization of the next event (Goldblatt J. , 2005).

2.6 Wedding Planning Tasks

2.6.1 Determining Stakeholder Goals and Objectives

In planning a wedding there are multiple stakeholders other than the bride and groom who have varied goals. Goldblatt (2005) suggests several goals for participating in and organizing events namely: religious requirements, demonstration of political power of a ruling class, social reasons that reaffirm ones status and membership in social groups, educate people about history and culture and commercial reasons to generate funds. Event managers are therefore required to identify and balance a wide range of stakeholders' needs and objectives (Berridge, 2007). Once this stage is concluded the event planner develops a statement of work which is a document including the event objectives, list of stakeholders, the draft budget, the scope of the event, schedules and outlines of responsibilities (Bodwin, Allen, Harris, McDonnell, & O'Toole, 2012).

2.6.2 Creating Customized Events and Proposal Development

Once the goals, needs and expectations of stakeholders attending the event are identified, the couple then settles on the tone for the wedding as elegant, romantic, spiritual, casual, festive or themed (Bain, Gawne, & Radford, 2011). The wedding planner can make creative suggestions to the couple that will increase the cohesiveness of event (Lluch & Lluch , 2011). Once the tone for the event has been determined formal aspects such as décor, the attire, the ceremony and the food are decided on by the couple under the wedding planner's guidance (Bain *et al.* , 2011).

All these ideas are then compiled by the wedding planner and represented in a way that will assist staff in task performance. Bodwin *et al.* (2012) advocate for the use of project management tools and particularly the Work Break-Down Structure (WBS) which aggregates the tasks to be performed under headings such as venue or site, finance, décor and catering among others. Subsequently, tasks that fall under each heading are then listed exhaustively. Once this has been done, this information is then presented to the couple in the form of a proposal.

2.6.3 Budget Preparation

The budget is put together based on the style of the wedding, number of guests and the type of the reception the couple intends to have (Bouchard, 2003). Wedding planners assist couples with budget preparations by providing a budget summary illustrating the percentage and amounts allocated to each aspect of the wedding such as music, entertainment, catering and transportation among others (Daniels & Loveless, 2007). In most cases the largest portion of the budget is the reception which can take up as much as 40% of the budget (Bouchard, 2003). The wedding planner also ensures that the couple indicates who will pay for what expense as well as timelines for coming up with the money (Nixon, 2007).

2.6.4 Putting Together a Program

According to O'Toole and Mikolaitis (2002) there are two types of programs required by an event manager namely the operational event program and the program of events. The operational event program is a detailed document that identifies tasks to be performed and assigns responsibilities within the event planning team. According to O'Toole (2007) the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) which was used in proposal development can also be used to identify tasks to be performed prior to, during and after the event. Shone and Parry (2004) further suggests that this information be represented

in the form of a Gantt chart which provides visually appealing, easy to follow schedule of tasks and performance timelines.

The program of events outlines details of the day of the ceremony (DeLaubenfels, Weber, & Bamberg, 2010). Specifically, it contains the order of the ceremony, names of the bride and groom, names of participants according to their importance processional songs and hymns, directions to the reception and any additional notes (Cox & Franz, 2007). Moreover the program thanks guests and contributors to the event, reiterates the theme of the event using words, symbols, quotes and images, sets the mood before the event begins and makes any announcements (Riley, 2008, p. 27).

2.6.5 Time Management

Time management is critical to the planning process given that most events take place within a fixed time scale (Shone & Parry, 2004). The wedding planner has to estimate the duration it will take to organize and execute the entire event using available resources (Project Management Institute, 2008). During this period the planner develops a time plan that has to allocate time for specific tasks such as pre-event client meetings, site inspections and vendor meetings (Goldblatt J. , 2005).

The wedding planner may meet the couple/ client an average ten times prior to the event (Contemporary Bride, 2013). During preliminary meetings with clients the planner finds out clients details, the number of attendees, aspects the planner should handle, when and where the client would like to hold the event (Daniels & Loveless, 2007). Subsequent meetings that take place nine to six months before the event include tasks such as finalization of guest lists, select and making deposits with vetted and selected vendors and service providers (Allen, 2004). During the last eight weeks prior to the event, the planner finalizes and confirms all plans made with vendors and makes

necessary payments, confirms guest attendance and tally the final guest list (Daniels & Loveless, 2007).

2.6.6 Site Comparison and Selection

The venue for the wedding is usually selected based on the size, style and ambiance; whether the couple wants to have the ceremony at a special location or at the same site as the reception, commute time for the couple and guests (Viau, 2011, pp. 68-70). The planner then advises the couples on venue selection based on budgetary allocations and wedding packages that accompany shortlisted venues (Bywater, 2007). Wedding venues include ballrooms, mansions and historic buildings, private members clubs, art galleries, ranches rustic farms, urban lofts, homes, gardens, beaches, boats and wineries (DeLaubenfels *et al.*, 2010).

2.6.7 Negotiation of Vendor Contracts

Daniels and Loveless (2007, p. 104) define vendors as “individuals or entities receiving payment for goods and services that pertain to the implementation of the wedding.” These include caterers, photographers and videographers, musicians and Disc-jockeys, florists, transport coordinator and jewellers. Vendors should provide a list of references that can vouch for their ability to deliver quality service based on performance during past events (DeLaubenfels *et al.*, 2010). Wedding planners should be able to negotiate discounts for the couple and/or kick-backs for themselves with vendors they have worked with before (Daniels & Loveless, 2007). Vendors on the other hand aim to provide services and products of exceptional standards to ensure wedding planners continue to recommend their services to future clients (Lluch & Lluch, 2010, p. 19).

2.6.8 Coordination Tasks

Prior to the wedding, the planner may perform coordination tasks such as helping clients select vendors and confirm contracts and make down payments on time (Daniels & Loveless, 2007). During the event, the wedding planner can oversee as many aspects of the wedding as the bride requires (Peragine, 2008). These include coordination of all vendors and their employees by directing them on how and where to set up, transportation of guests and participants and directing the couples relatives and friends in activities such as taking photographs (Wilkolaski & Phillips, 2006).

2.6.9 Post Wedding Evaluation

Evaluation enables the wedding planner to (1) obtain feedback on tasks carried out successfully or poorly (2) prioritize package deals to include necessary services or eliminate unnecessary ones (3) criticism can help the planner's products stay fresh based on current needs (4) provides information on the target market (Daniels & Loveless, 2007). Information on event's success can be achieved by debriefing with the client at the end of the event (Moran, 2009). The client can provide information that will assist in planning future events and feedback can be shared with vendors the planner works with regularly. The wedding planner can also request for feedback from the vendors who collaborated on the event (Daniels & Loveless, 2007).

2.7 Understanding and improving business performance

Organizations are always striving to attain goals, do better in the future and surpass client expectations (Reid & Cormier, 2003). Theory of Constraints (TOC) is a management philosophy that is used to understand and improve business performance (Boyd & Gupta, 2004) resulting in increased efficiency and responsiveness to customer demands in a competitive and dynamic marketplace (Reid, 2007). TOC views every business as a chain of interrelated processes that are geared towards that attainment of

an organizational goal. The weakest link within the process can limit the performance of an entire operation (Schragenheim & Dettmer, 2001). Consequently, firms need to identify the constraint, decide how to exploit the constraint, subordinate everything else to the constraint, elevate the system constraint and return back to step one to prevent inertia (Figure 2.2).

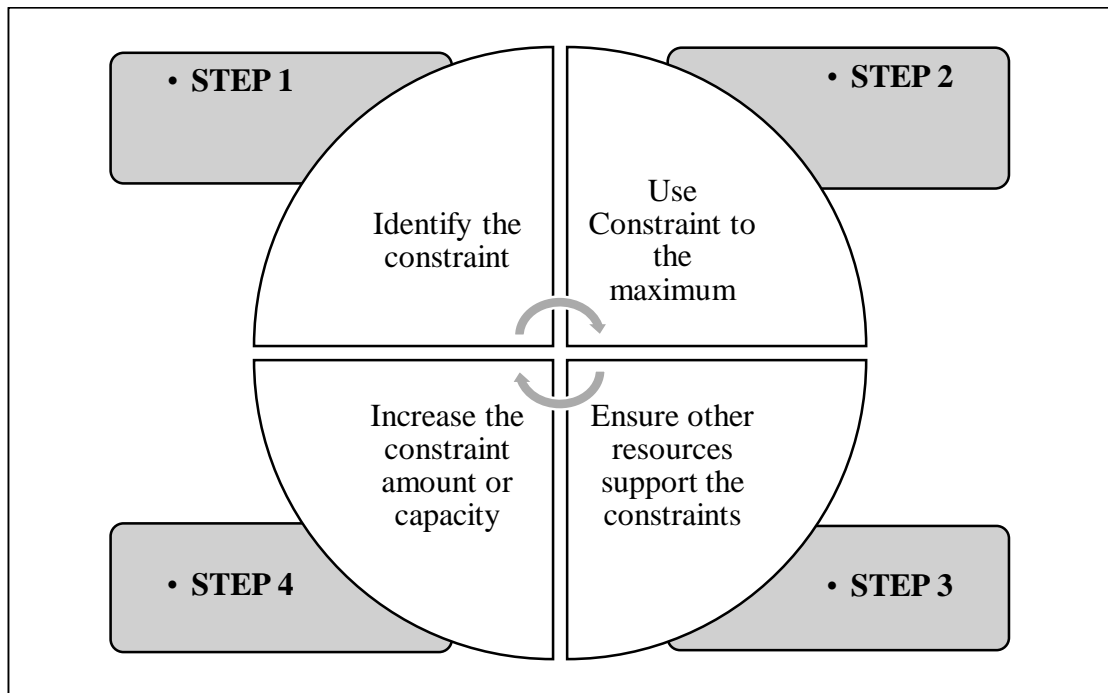


Figure 2:1: Improving Business Performance Using TOC

(Source: Goldratt, 1988)

2.7.1 Identification of Constraints

It is important to identify constraints and prioritize them according to their impact on the goals of an organization (Schragenheim & Dettmer, 2001). Initially, Rahman (1988) grouped constraints as either physical or managerial. While physical constraints occur when a given activity, operation or process in the system has insufficient capacity to fully satisfy market demand, managerial constraints occur in the form of policies, procedures, rules and methods that limit an organizations operational capability or restrict its flexibility in meeting the system goal (Reid, 2007). Schragenhiem and

Dettmer (2001) further classified physical and managerial constraints into seven basic categories: market, resource, material, supplier, financial, knowledge, competence and policy constraints. Though two or more constraints often appear to be acting concurrently, there is usually only one single restriction or limiting factor that is often caused by constraint (Boyd & Gupta, 2004).

2.7.1.1 Market Constraints

Market constraints are concerned with lack of demand for a product or service (Schragenheim & Dettmer, 2001). Archer (1980) defines demand in economic terms as the quantity of a commodity or service that a community is willing and able to buy during a given period. According to Middleton and Clarke (2012) demand for tourism products and services may be determined by factors in the macro business environment such as economic factors, demographic factors, geographic factors, socio-cultural attitudes, mobility, government regulation, media communications, information and communication technology, environmental concerns and international political developments and terrorist actions. Expressly, Shone and Parry (2004, p. 26) indicated that demand for event tourism is driven by social and psychographic factors including the need for social integration, interaction between individuals and communities, mutual support, bonding and reinforcement of social norms.

In addition to the aforementioned determinants of demand Pfister and Tierney (2009) argue that service features have a strong influence on demand. While demand for basic services results from customers having no choice, anticipated, augmented and possible services attract customers due to superior service offerings and value (Pfister & Tierney, 2009). Events by the very nature of their description offer unique experiences that appeal to a variety of people (Goldblatt & Nelson, 2001, p. 181). Wedding planners therefore have to ensure that they offer superior, customized service offerings

and orchestrate events that are of value to stakeholders and surpass client expectations (Bain *et al.* , 2011).

2.7.1.2 Resource Constraints

Entrepreneurs combine factors of production to create products and services that meet market demand (Tribe, 2012). In economics these inputs include natural resources, labour, capital and entrepreneurship (Gitman & McDaniel, 2008). Resource constraints are concerned with lack of people, equipment or facilities to satisfy demand or services (Schragenheim & Dettmer, 2001). Though tourism demand often fluctuates, resource supply is relatively fixed (Evans, Campbell, & Stonehouse, 2003). Lack of resources due to unavailability or unaffordability can hamper growth and expansion of the business (Nissanke & Aryeetey, 1998).

The shortage of skilled personnel in the tourism and hospitality industry can be attributed to the challenge of attracting and retaining staff (Leigh, Webster, & Ivanov, 2012). Keep and Mayhew (1999) assert that this challenge is caused by characteristics of the tourism industry including low wages, unfriendly shift patterns, poor or non-existent career structures, informal recruitment practices and lack of trade unions.

Wedding ceremonies and receptions can be held in one or multiple locations such as: religious grounds, hotels, inns, aquariums, resorts, members clubs, ballrooms, parks, gardens, country clubs, historic estates and atriums (Bain *et al.*, 2011). The wedding planner advises the couple on venue selection based on the capacity of grounds, rental costs, service charges and taxes and restrictions and special requirements of hiring a venue (Daniels & Loveless, 2007). Despite the availability of a large number of venues that may meet the aforementioned criteria, some are available only to couples who belong to associated communities (Daniels & Loveless, 2007). Additionally, the array of venues is further limited when a large number of venues offer packages including

catering and sound which further limit the ability of the couple to customize the event (Bouchard, 2003).

Smith and Smith (2007) identified poor access to prime materials by firms as a major cause of business failure in the SME sector. Material constraints are a result inability to obtain required materials in the quality or quantity required to satisfy the demand for products and services. According to Ronen, Pliskin and Pass (2006) material constraints result from a shortage of materials seasonally, during peak times or at all times and/ or as a result of unforeseen events. Access to materials is further aggravated by poor cash flow to obtain materials of the quality and quantity required.

2.7.1.3 Supplier Constraints

Tourism suppliers operate independently but are highly dependent on each other (Inkson & Minnaert, 2012). Suppliers in wedding planning include caterers, calligraphers, balloon artists, décor companies, entertainment companies, florists, invitation designers, lighting companies, linen specialists, makeup artists, power suppliers, rental companies, tent companies, transportation providers, videographer and wedding cake designers (Moran, 2009). The wedding planner selects suppliers based on service specifics, pricing, and quality of goods, inventory selection, references, client list, and years of experience in business, service area, staffing capabilities, professionalism and responsiveness to inquiries (Moran, 2009, p. 107).

Supplier constraints are caused by unreliability of a supplier in responding to orders (Schragenheim & Dettmer, 2001). Sadgrove (2005) attributes supplier unreliability to financial, quality or internal control problems within the suppliers company. Firms should therefore not rely on one supplier and institute a warning system (Sadgrove, 2005). Moran (2009) encourages wedding planners to archive brochures or information

on all vendors, maintain a list of vendors who can support varied themes and request for references when working with new vendors.

2.7.1.4 Financial Constraints

According to TOC, financial constraints are defined by insufficient cash flow to sustain an operation (Schragenheim & Dettmer, 2001). Longenecker, Moore, Palich, & Petty (2006) define cash flow as money flowing into a business through sales revenue, debt or equity financiers and money flowing out of the business through purchases and operating expenses. Cash flow problems may be attributed to insufficient over drafts; delinquent debtors, overinvestment, underinvestment, delinquent suppliers and buyers credit (Reid, Jacobsen, & Anderson, 1993). Lownes-Jackson, Olorunniwo, Flott, & Ellzy (2003) identified other financial constraints as inability to obtain outside funding, insufficient capital, heavy operating expenses, poor money management, inability to obtain trade credit, insufficient trade credit and inability to meet financial obligations. Businesses in the tourism sector are susceptible to financial constraints given the fluctuations in demand, deferred payment by clients and economic fluctuations in the macro business environment (Getz, Carlsen, & Morrison, 2004).

Cash flow forecasts can be used to anticipate surpluses or deficits in finances (Tassiopoulos, 2008). Notably, cash flow forecasts should be done after carefully analysing competitors, markets and determining profit margins (Getz *et al.*, 2004). Additional ways of improving cash flow include: collecting payments cash on delivery, issuing invoices on time when credit is given, giving viable discounts for prompt or advance payments, facilitating use of credit card and online payments, management of debtors, leasing and hiring equipment rather than purchasing it, reducing personal drawings and matching repayment schedules to receipt of funds (Tassiopoulos, 2008).

2.7.1.5 Knowledge Constraints

Knowledge is an important asset for all business as it provides a strong platform upon which firms can gain competitive advantage by enhancing organizational capabilities (Schiuma, 2012). Knowledge constraints are caused by lack of information to improve business performance (Schragenheim & Dettmer, 2001). Despite the vast amount of trade-related information available and the possibility of accessing national and international databases, many small enterprises continue to rely heavily on private or even physical contacts for market related information. This is due to inability to interpret the statistical data (Muteti, 2005) and poor connectivity especially in rural areas. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2012) SMEs need to team up and partner with larger organizations to promote and facilitate knowledge sharing for improved performance.

2.7.1.6 Competence Constraints

Competence constraints are defined by limited skill levels necessary to perform tasks required to remain competitive. Skill requirements for wedding planners include: the ability to coordinate and consolidate resources, creativity and vision, calculated risk taking, tolerance for ambiguity, problem solving skills, strong management and organizational skills (Peragine, 2008). Planners coordinate and supervise the activities of interns, friends and relatives, professional organizations and trained staffing agencies (Moran, 2009).

According to Kayanula and Quartey (2000) there are numerous institutions providing training and advisory services that aim to bridge the skill gap. However some entrepreneurs cannot afford to upgrade their skills while others do not find it necessary due to complacency (Abor & Quartey, 2010). In addition to these factors Panagiotakopoulos (2011) identified staff poaching, inability to diagnose competency

needs and low employee enthusiasm for skill upgrades as a contributors to lax competence development in firms. Consequently, management opts to employ skilled employees rather than develop their in-house competence base.

2.7.1.7 Policy Constraints

Lastly, policy constrains are rules, regulations and business practices that inhibit progress of a system by restricting the systems productive capacity (Watson, Blackstone, & Gardiner, 2007). Policies rules, regulations and guidelines direct an organization towards achieving its mission and vision by providing a framework for decision making and action plans with an organization (Policies and Procedures, 2013). Policies also relate set objectives to personnel and physical resources (Sekhar, 2010). Policies may be formulated at various levels of the organization either by top management, owners of the enterprise or at departmental level by supervisors or heads of department (Agarwal, 2008).

Agarwal (2008) further identified five types of policies that originate from various sources namely: originated policies, implied or traditional policies, policies by fiat, appealed policies and externally imposed policies. While originated policies are formulated by top management, implied or traditional policies are not formally sanctioned but guide decision making based on a precedence. On the other hand, a policy by fiat is a policy announced by the top manager in a capricious manner and can be changed as often as is suitable. Additionally, appealed polices result from decisions made by superiors in the organization in the absence of or inadequacy of existing policies. Lastly, policies may be imposed on a firm by external sources including the government, trade unions, chambers of commerce and community.

2.7.2 Exploitation of Constraints

Deciding how to exploit the constraint ensures management focus on eliminating all waste or non-productive time and activities at the constraint (Reid, 2007). Managers exploit the constraint by making every minute that a constraint is operating, as effective as possible in moving the system toward its goal. Exploitation is further achieved through changes in organizational procedures and policies that are currently used to manage the constraining factor rather than making changes that involve significant monetary outlays (Schrageheim & Dettmer, 2001).

2.7.3 Subordination of everything else above the Constraint

Subordination focuses on managing the non-constraining system elements or resources so that their behaviour is synchronized with and fully supportive of the strategy being utilized in the management of the constraint (Reid, 2007). Subordination of non-constraints focuses managerial attention on utilizing their capabilities to support performance increases in the constraint. This involves changes in practices or policies and can be implemented without incurring major increases in expenses (Schrageheim & Dettmer, 2001). Another approach to subordination is to operate the non-constraining resources in such a manner as to assure that the constraint will never be without something productive to do (Reid, 2007).

2.7.4 Raise Constraint Capacity

The constricting resource may be elevated by increasing its amounts which involves an outlay of capital to acquire and/or operate additional manpower and/or equipment to enhance the constraint's capability (Reid, 2007). Schrageheim and Dettmer (2001) suggest performing a careful situational analysis before implementing action plans to alleviate an existing internal constraint because a new constraint might surface that is more difficult and/or expensive to manage than the existing one.

2.7.5 Preventing Inertia

Once the constraint has been eliminated, it is important to go back to step one and identify the new constraint that emerges as soon as the old one has been eliminated (Reid, 2007). These new constraints act as a new weak link that has a negative influence on the organisations goals. Consequently, they have to be eliminated using the initial four TOC steps (Schrageheim & Dettmer, 2001). Preventing distractions from goals and focusing resources on managing constraints assures sufficient leverage to attain the desired performance outcomes (Reid & Cormier, 2003).

2.8 Firm Profile and Performance

When analysing survey results, it is often helpful to be able to segment those results by different firmographic data (Henning, 2008). Firmographics refer to the characteristics of an organization that can be used to develop a firm's profile and reflect industry practices by grouping correlated companies together (Cox & Blackstone, 2001). These include business descriptors such as firm age, number of employees and number of product lines (TRBC, 2009). Consequently, firmographic segmentation that focuses on the aforementioned business descriptors enables the researcher to identify critical needs of each segment that operates in any industry based on these characteristics (Hague, 2013).

2.8.1 Formation of New Enterprises

The formation of new firms is beneficial for economic growth and employment generation in both developed and developing countries (Van Stel, Carree, & Thurik, 2005). Business start-up may be triggered by income expectations, favourable economic conditions and high innovative potential (Santarelli & Vivarelli, 2006). A report by the United States Department of Labour's Bureau of Labour Statistics listed the average annual salary of an event planner as \$49,840 in 2011 which translated into

an average of \$23.95 per hour (Wagner, 2013). As a result of the perceived financial returns, the Bureau of Labour Statistics projected an increase in the number of event planners from 71,600 in 2010 to 102,900 by 2020 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012-13). Getz and Petersen (2004) identified autonomy and lifestyle as additional motivators for some entrepreneurs in the tourism sector.

Economic conditions for business start-up are related to availability of capital, labour, raw materials; size, composition and purchasing power of target market; and suitability of infrastructure (Kumar, Poornima, Abraham, & Jayashree, 2003). An increasing number of citizens from both developed and developing countries have been demanding more from their leisure time over the past 30 years (Pfister & Tierney, 2009). A recent assessment revealed that the rising awareness of health proposes the reduction of stress and increase in physical fitness thus increasing demand for events and recreational activities in the United States (Pfister & Tierney, 2009).

According to Shane (2003) the availability of capital and opportunity exploitation leads to the formation of new firms. Financers to entrepreneurial ventures provide risk capital, connect entrepreneurs to the supply chain and assist in the development of new ventures. Notably, the unavailability of finance for growth and business start-up has continuously plagued the SME sector in Kenya. The availability of labour is critical for new business development (Kumar, Poornima, Abraham, & Jayashree, 2003). In Kenya, labour market constraints are ranked low on the list of impediments to entrepreneurial activity and growth of firms given the growing labour force and limited employment opportunities (KIPPRA, 2009). However the labour market in Kenya is characterized by inadequate education and stringent regulations that threaten the growth and operation of enterprises (Iarossi, 2009).

According to Shumpter (1934) the entry of new firms is characterized by a large majority of *imitators* and few leaders or *innovators*. Santarelli and Vivarelli (2002) further postulate that this mix of entrepreneurs could result in variable post entry performance. Notably, the entry and exit of firms are positively correlated implying that the likelihood of survival for firms is particularly low resulting in firms continuously entering and exiting the market (Santarelli & Vivarelli, 2006). Jovanovich's Bayesian model (1984) postulated that efficient firms grow while inefficient ones fail and decline. Similarly, younger firms are doomed to failure given that they are likely to make more entry mistakes (Santarelli & Vivarelli, 2006).

2.8.2 Duration of Time Business has been in Operation

Firm age is best determined by identifying the year of startup or listing which specifies ownership and capital structure (Shumway, 2001). An investigation of the impact of firm's age on performance is relevant for both theory and practice and enables firms to put in place measures to constantly renew themselves (Loderer & Waelchli, 2009). It is this renewal that enables firms to survive over time.

According to Chandler (1962) firms go through different stages with time that individually require strategies and structure for success and growth. These stages were identified as birth, survival, success/ decline and renewal. First is the birth stage during which firms set the direction for future business development. In order to survive the firm needs to be innovative to keep up with customers' needs while making profits. During this stage, the performance of the research and development team, the production and finance functions are vital for firm survival.

Secondly is the survival stage which is characterized by the organisational leaning effect and increased competitiveness. In response to changes in the business

environment there is an increase in production, new recruitment and the development of strong brands. Firms can improve their chances of survival by adopting cost reduction through the effect of learning curves. The third stage is success which is characterized by superior financial performance by firms relative to competitors. However there is a notable decline in learning capabilities that could lead to deterioration in firm growth after success. Arguably, firms that rebuild their learning capabilities are able to avoid the decline stage.

Alternatively, the third stage may be the decline stage which is characterized by reduced learning abilities, declining profits and reduced market share. In addition external factors such as the emergence of new competitors, fierce competition and falling prices further exacerbate survival. Likewise, internal factors such as overstaffing, increased costs and falling prices provoke the demise of firms at this stage. These challenges can only be overcome if firms implement thorough transformative changes resulting in the last stage renewal.

2.8.3 Relationship between Duration of Operation and Performance

On one hand a stream of research suggests that older firms have learnt from past experience and are not prone to the liabilities of uncertainties therefore perform better. On the other hand some researchers suggest that older firms are prone to inertia and bureaucracy rendering them inflexible to change thus reducing performance (Majumdar, 1997). In a study on factors that influence SME growth and performance in Nigeria, Woldie, Leighton, & Adesua (2008) hypothesized that older firms grew faster and performed better than younger ones. This hypothesis is supported by Arrow (1962), and Ericson and Pakes (1995) who assert that over time, firms are able to recognize their strengths and maximize opportunities by standardizing, coordinating, speeding up processes, reducing costs and improving quality. In stark contrast, Storey

(1994) noted that younger SME's grew more rapidly and performed better than older ones in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. This view is supported by Loderer and Waelchli (2009) who propose that older firms have lower margins, higher cost, slower growth, older assets and reduced research and development and investment.

The aforementioned impacts of age on performance are governed the *liability of newness* and the *liability of adolescence theories* (Lopez-Garcia & Puente, 2006). The *liability of newness* argument by Stinchcombe (1965) claims that time required to build capabilities and accumulate knowledge and resources influences firm growth and survival over time. Consequently, new firms are more prone to failure than older ones. On the other hand the *liability of adolescence theory* advances that new firms take time to learn about their efficiency or lack thereof. Consequently, firms can operate for a period of time while utilizing its endowments to develop capital, establish structures and adapt to the environment (Bhattacharjee, 2005). However, as time goes by firms learn that they are not efficient and consequently exit the market.

2.8.4 Number of Employees and Form of Employment

Human resources are a critical element in any sector; particularly tourism and hospitality where human interaction is integral to the development and delivery of quality services which in turn impacts on marketing, financial effectiveness and operational efficiency in firms (Baum, 2012). However, employment in the tourism industry is characterized by low wages, unfriendly shift patterns, poor or non-existent career structures, informal recruitment practices, lack of trade unions and difficulties in staff recruitment and retention resulting in obscure attitudes towards investment in human capital, inflexible employment practices and untenable approaches to its development in the tourism industry (Jithendran & Baum, 2000).

Firm performance may be enhanced or diminished depending on the employment mode used (Lepak, Takeuchi, & Snell, 2003). Pfeffer & Baron (1998) suggest that employment models may either be internal or external. Lepak and Snell (1999) expand this classification by proposing four employment models on which firms may be dependent on. First is *knowledge based employment* where firms focus on developing staff skills knowledge and capabilities over time. Second is a *job based employment* mode which requires employees to possess requisite skills and readily perform specific tasks without additional firm investments. Third is *contract work* which encompasses contracting external individuals to perform specific tasks given their skill set. Lastly are *alliances or partnerships* which though similar to contract work are more long term. Currently, numerous firms rely on external labour which includes temporary employees, independent contractors and consultants (Matusik & Hill, 1998; Rousseau, 1995; Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Hite, 1995). External employment arrangements increase firms' flexibility to labour demands thereby increasing the ability to handle long term and short term projects without the costs associated with permanent staff (Kalleberg, Reskin, & Hudson, 2000). In addition to this, external employment enhances resource or functional flexibility and ultimately performance. On the other hand some scholars suggest that externalization of labour can impede a firm's commitment to development and retention of core skills and competencies that assure a competitive edge and improve performance (Lepak *et al.*, 2003).

When internal knowledge based employment is the main model, existing staff can perform a wide range of tasks (Cordery, Sevastos, Mueller, & Parker, 1993) and can contribute to tasks that go beyond their job descriptions in exchange for job security and developmental initiatives (Lepak *et al.*, 2003). On the other hand the contract model enables firms to reduce fixed costs while increasing flexibility to market

demands (Davis-Blake & Uzzi, 1993). Ultimately, when internal and external models are used together, firms are able to develop a stable yet adaptable work environment (Davis-Blake & Uzzi, 1993). Lepak *et al.* (2003) specifically propose the use of a combination of knowledge based and contract work to enhance firm performance rather than the use of one or none of these models.

2.9 Consumption of Service Offerings

The black box model attempts to explain the impact and interaction between various stimuli and consumer purchasing behaviour (Keegan, Moriarty, & Duncan, 1992, p. 183). The stimuli cited in the model can be grouped into marketing stimuli and environmental stimuli. While marketing stimuli is generated by firms, environmental stimuli originates from social factors based on the economic, political and cultural circumstances of a society (Tyagi & Kumar, 2004). However, it is the buyer's characteristics that influence the perception of stimuli (Sahaf, 2008). The decision making process then determines what purchasing behaviour is undertaken (Smith & Taylor, 2004).

According to Pride and Ferrel (2007) and Hansen (2005) consumers go through a five stage decision making process namely: problem or need recognition, information search, and evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post purchase evaluation. Firstly, problems or needs may be triggered by internal or external stimuli. After need or problem recognition, the consumer searches for information on the service from personal, commercial, public or experiential sources. Thirdly the information gathered is used to compare different alternatives before a purchase decision is made. After purchase, the consumer re-evaluates the chosen alternative to determine whether performance of the service was at par, exceed or was below set expectations. This last stage informs future purchase decisions and provides feedback to the service provider.

Pride and Farrel (2007, pp. 177-179) hypothesized three types of consumer purchase behaviour. First is routine response behaviour which occurs when buying frequently purchased low cost items that require minimal information search and decision effort. Second is limited decision making which implies that consumers know the type of product they want but are attempting to select a brand therefore take a moderate amount of time to search for information and deliberate. Third is extended decision making which takes place when purchasing unfamiliar, expensive or infrequently purchased products and services. Consumers spend a substantial amount of time searching for information before purchasing products.

2.10 Summary of Identified Gaps

This chapter reviewed literature under the following subtopics: event tourism, typology of events, event planning knowledge, skills and processes, wedding planning stages and tasks, understanding and improving business performance and the impact of firmographics on performance. Gaps identified are discussed under the aforementioned themes.

Firstly, majority of research into events has concentrated on larger events (Jago, 1997). Notably, this study focused on smaller special events that have not attracted much research attention despite their ability to attract many entrepreneurs (Sven, 2010). It is important to understand each event as each exhibits unique settings, people and management systems (Getz, 2008). This is particularly important for Kenya to understand the wedding planning events sector as it continues to attract numerous entrepreneurs.

Secondly, policy, process and management themes are underexplored in event research (Getz, 2008, p. 409). By understanding the events domains, phases, core values and

processes, individual event planning firms can influence policy formulation while accurately informing planning and management. Additionally, performance within these firms can further be understood, enhanced and assured by identifying constraints, making maximum use of the constraint, ensuring other resources support the constraint and increasing the constraints capacity. However, this adoption of this process in the identification and elimination of constraints has largely been limited to manufacturing firms yet it can be applied in service sectors (Schragenheim & Dettmer, 2001). Rahman (1988, p. 353) suggests that “future research be directed toward analysing case studies in the service sector.”

Finally, the use of business descriptors in the identification of critical needs of individual segments has had limited application within the event planning sector. Notably, recommendations based on firmographics can collectively improve performance of firms with similar traits, business challenges and constraint management strategies (Hague, 2013). The overall result would be strengthened operations within wedding planning firms.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the specific methods and procedures used in data collection and analysis. This chapter focuses on research design, the study location, target population, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, pretesting, validity and reliability, data collection and analysis techniques and the conceptual framework used in the study.

3.2 Research Design

This study used a descriptive research design that to establish expertise, constraints and constraint management methodologies among wedding planning firms. Descriptive research designs focus on identifying defining characteristics and problems among a population while examining what occurs naturally without manipulation (Rovai, Baker, & Ponton, 2013).

3.3 Study Area

This study was carried out in Nairobi County. Nairobi was selected for the study given that it is the largest city in Kenya with over 3 million inhabitants living within 692 km² (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Moreover, the city contains 30.2% of accommodation facilities in the country and is a transport hub (World Bank, 2010). The selection of this location based on these reasons was supported by Veres *et al.* (2008) who found that large cities host majority of events given that they contain numerous support services, venues and attractions required for events. Therefore based on the aforementioned factors Nairobi which is the largest city in Kenya was selected as the study location.

3.4 Target Population

The target population consisted of a convenient listing of wedding planning firms in Nairobi. Given that there is no formal data base of wedding planning firms in Kenya, the researcher obtained an online listing of wedding planners in Nairobi (Appendix 1).

3.5 Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was used to select managers from wedding planning firms to participate in the study as respondents. According to Blankenship (2010, p. 86) purposely sampling experts ensures that the research efforts are focused on gathering rich data on the topic under study. For this reason managers of wedding planning firms were selected as respondent given that they oversee and coordinate all aspects of the event management process and had required information on the study objectives.

3.6 Sample Size

The sampling frame containing 31 wedding planning firms (Appendix 1) was used. Since the population was small, a census was conducted. Out of the 31 firms sampled, 3 firms were randomly selected to pre-test the research instruments while the remaining 28 firms provided respondent wedding planners from whom data was collected.

3.7 Research Instruments

In order to collect information, the researcher developed and employed the use of an interview schedule (Appendix 4). This instrument included open ended and closed ended questions that gathered information on the company profile, stage of event organization at which clients approach the firm, the firm's ability to carry out wedding organization tasks, variables that influence performance and methods used to manage performance issues.

3.8 Pre-Testing

The purpose of the pre-test was to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the research instruments and to assist in making adjustments to enhance reliability and validity of the study findings. The data collection instruments were pretested at three wedding planning firms randomly selected from the sampling frame (Appendix 1). Three event managers were purposely sampled from each of the wedding planning firms. Appointments were made to conduct interviews. The research instruments were then analysed for reliability and validity.

3.9 Reliability and Validity

Firstly, quantitative data collected from the pre-test was used to determine the reliability of research instruments using the internal consistency technique. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to evaluate internal consistency of fifteen questions from the Likert scale of planning adeptness and eight questions from the Likert scale on constraints respectively. According to Dwyer, Gill and Seetaram (2012), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0.7 is deemed as acceptable.

The subscale on planning adeptness appeared to have good internal consistency of $\alpha=.789$. All items on planning adeptness appeared to be worthy of retention. However, the Likert scale on constraints had a low Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha=.443$). The researcher therefore increased the number of items in the scale to improve the alpha level in the final research instrument. In addition to this the researcher also dropped items where the alpha if deleted was higher than the overall alpha as another way to improve the alpha level.

Interview schedules from the pre-test were then given to events management lecturers at the Technical University of Kenya to establish construct and content validity.

Questions in the interview schedule were then revised to improve clarity of instructions, ease of scoring responses as well as the ease with which respondents could answer questions while ensuring the responses given would meet the study objectives.

3.10 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained consent to collect information from Kenyatta University Graduate School (Appendix 2) and General Managers (Appendix 3) of wedding planning firms sampled for the study. Appointments were made to conduct semi-structured interviews at respondent firms. Additionally, oral consent was obtained from respondent managers prior to starting the forty five minute semi-structured interview. The questions included in the interview schedule (Appendix 4) were administered by the researcher and responses recorded.

3.11 Data Analysis

The interview schedule contained both closed and open ended questions. The responses to these questions were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques.

3.11.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Raw data was systematically collected and organized for analysis. The responses were then coded, tabulated and edited for analysis. All quantitative data was analysed using a computer based statistical package. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize quantitative data using frequencies. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to test for differences in planning expertise and constraints among wedding planning firms. The use of Mann-Whitney U test was suitable for the data sets on expertise and constraints given that this data was ordinal. In addition, firmographic data divided the respondent firms into two groups based on the duration of operation. Accordingly, this enabled the

researcher to give recommendations on policy and practice for wedding planning firms based on the duration of operation.

Multiple regression was then used to establish the impact of constraints on wedding planning given that it accounts for the impact of more than one independent variable simultaneously. Beta standardized regression coefficients are used to measure how strongly each constraint influenced the wedding planning process. Therefore all constraints proposed by TOC were included to determine the true effect constraints have on the wedding planning process. Consequently, this was in line with TOC which aims to establish which constraint lacks the most yet is vital for wedding planning to be successful.

Table 3. 1: Summary of Quantitative Data Analysis Techniques

		Descriptive statistics	Bivariate Statistics	Multivariate Statistics
Objectives	Firmographics	Mean, Range		
	Wedding planning expertise	Frequencies		
	Constraints to wedding planning	Frequencies		
Hypotheses	Differences in planning expertise among wedding planning firms		Mann-Whitney <i>U</i> Test	
	Differences in constraints among wedding planning firms		Mann-Whitney <i>U</i> Test	
	Impact of constraints on the wedding planning process			Multiple Regression

(Source: Researcher, 2014)

3.11.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Firstly, the researcher reviewed all raw qualitative data from which relevant challenges faced by respondents during the wedding planning process and constraint management methodology were retained and all other texts discarded. Secondly, repeating ideas from the data set were established by searching for similar phrases that were used by respondents to communicate the same idea. Thirdly, repeating ideas that had something in common were then organised into themes that had TOC theoretical constructs on eight constraints and the four step constraint management methodology. Lastly, the data was presented in theoretical narratives that reconciled participants' responses with TOC constructs.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The findings of the study presented and discussed in this chapter are in relation to firmographic traits of wedding organization firms, wedding planning adeptness of firms, constraints faced by wedding planning firms, constraint management methodologies used by wedding organization firms, differences in planning expertise and constraints faced based on firmographics and the impact on constraints on wedding planning expertise.

4.2 Overview of Findings

With regard to firmographics, the study first established that wedding planning firms had been in operation for between 1 and 15 years. Notably, 52% of firms been organizing weddings for less than 5 years. Secondly, firms had an average of 6 permanent and 10 temporary employees respectively. Additional events organized by wedding planners in descending order were conferences and conventions (85%), business and corporate events (75%), festivals (25%) and sports events (10%). The study also revealed that wedding planning firms offered a range of planning services that were tailored to the clients' demands. The service they offered the most was wedding execution and coordination (95%) followed by design (87%), management of finances (74%), research clients' goals and expectations (57%) and measuring event success (53%).

The study findings also indicated above average performance by over 59% of wedding planners in thirteen out of fifteen tasks within the wedding planning process. However, study findings indicated that 60% and 96% of firms exhibited below average performance in monitoring standards and debriefing staff and clients respectively. Constraints faced by wedding planning firms were identified as inadequate information

to improve business performance (70%), insufficient cash flow (30.4%), and unreliability of suppliers in responding to orders (26.1%), unavailability of facilities to satisfy demand (23%), low demand for services (22%) and unavailability of equipment to satisfy demand (17%).

In addition to these findings the hypotheses were tested. Firstly, there were no significant differences in expertise and constraints faced by wedding planning firms ($p > .05$) therefore the first and second hypothesis were accepted. The model derived from the data further indicated that constraints influenced 94.7 per cent of the overall event outcome therefore the third hypothesis was rejected.

4.3 Response Rate

Out of the thirty one firms included the study, three firms were randomly selected for the pre-test and contact established with the remaining 28 firms. Ultimately, the researcher obtained a response rate of 82% (from 23 firms which participated in the study). According to Rubin and Babbie (2009) a response rate above 60% and above is considered to be acceptable. Similarly, a study on wedding statistics in 2010 in the United States had an 80% response rate (Jaeger, 2010). Therefore, the researcher considered the responses acceptable for analysis and reporting.

4.4 Firmographic Data

Firmographic data on wedding planning firms is presented under the following subtopics: duration of operation, employees within firms, number of branches, additional events organized and the nature of products and services offered.

4.4.1 Duration of Operation of Wedding Planning Firms

The duration of operation of wedding planning firms is presented in Figure 4.1. The youngest firm had been in operation for 1 year while the oldest had been in operation

for 15 years. Notably, the standard deviation (3.233) indicated that majority (n=23, 86.9%) of the firms had between 2 and 8 years of experience. Additionally, the average age of wedding planning firms was 5 years.

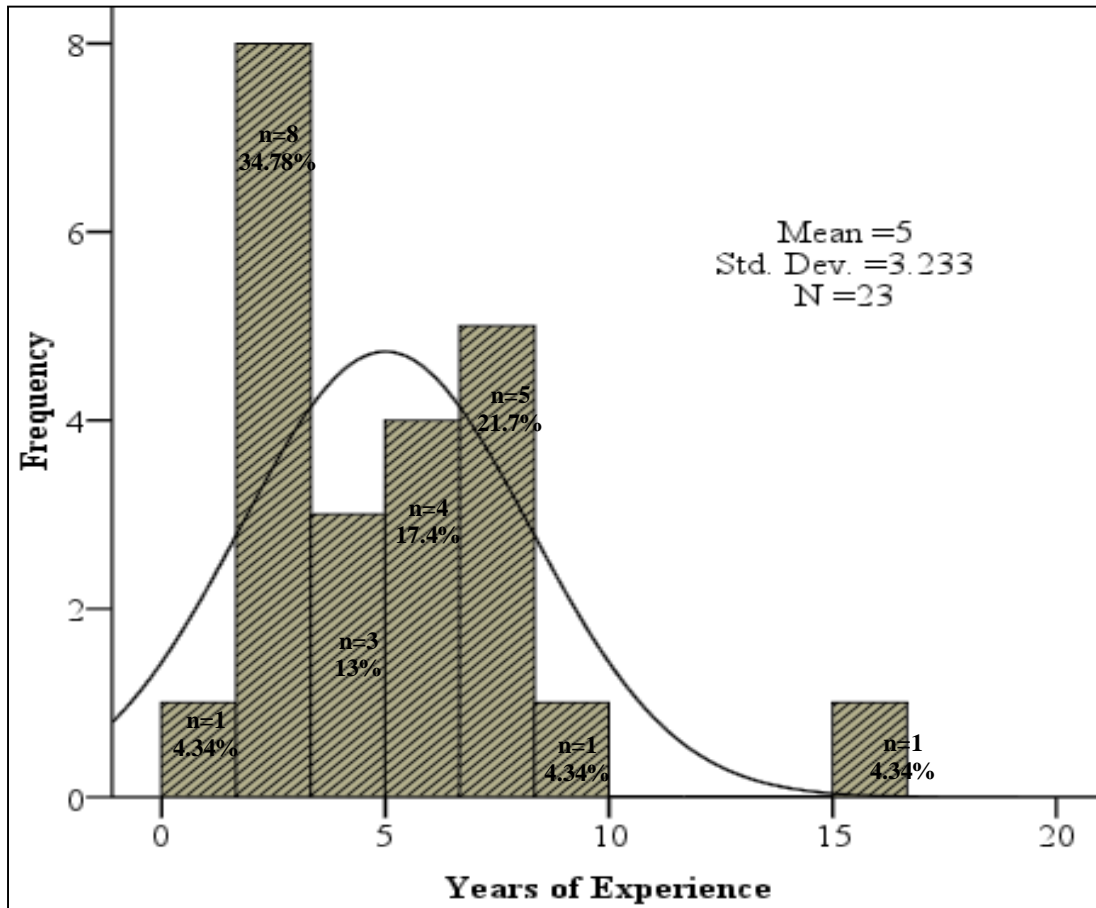


Figure 4. 1: Age wedding planning firms

(Source: Research Output, 2014)

The study revealed that fifteen years was the longest duration that wedding planning firms sampled had been in operation while the youngest firm had only been in operation for a period of 1 year. This indicated that the wedding planning industry in Kenya though not at its infancy stage could still attract new entrants seeking to maximize revenues from demand for event planning services. According to Santarelli and Vivarelli (2006) industries can consistently attract new entrants due to their ability to offer lucrative revenues to entrepreneurs and favourable economic conditions. The

special events industry has grown in popularity among Kenyans who are looking for unique experiences (Noella, 2011). This has created opportunities for both event planners and service providers.

This increase in local demand corresponds with the trends in developed and developing countries for events to fill up leisure time (Pfister & Tierney, 2009). If this assertion is anything to go by, the number of new entrants may continue to rise over time. This finding was consistent with forecasts by the Bureau of Labour Statistics in United States of America that project an increase in the number of wedding planners from 71,600 in 2010 to 102,900 by 2020 (Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2012).

Secondly, Figure 4.1 illustrates an inverse U shape, in which majority of firms (n=23, 86.9%) had been in operation for between 2 and 8 years. This implied that between 2003 and 2010 businesses in Kenya may have had a supportive operating environment. Markedly, it was between 2003 and 2007 that economic growth accelerated from 2.9 percent in 2003 to 7.1 percent in 2007 before the political crisis of December 2007 (KIPPRA, 2009).

The factors that contributed towards a stable business environment during that period were informed by the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERS). This affirms Kumar et al (2003) assertion that favourable economic conditions favour business start-up. The Kenya Vision 2030 was then set to guide economic transformation between 2008 and 2030 (KIPPRA, 2009). Arguably, the consistent presence of the aforementioned factors in the implementation of Kenya Vision 2030 could further prolong the lifespan of new firms in Kenya and particularly wedding planning firms in Nairobi County.

Thirdly, more than half of the respondents (n= 12, 52.17%) had been organizing weddings for less than 5 years while (n=11, 47.82%) had over five years of experience. This finding implied that wedding planning firms reached the decline stage of the business life cycle at the five year mark. This decline can be attributed to compromised learning abilities, profit reduction, loss of market share and stiff competition. This assertion is supported by Chandler (1962) who observed that firms that were able to rebuild their learning capabilities were able to avoid the decline stage. Arguably, firms that managed to succeed after five years had implemented transformative changes resulting in superior financial performance and increased market share relative to competitors.

This finding is consistent with a study on SME challenges in Kenya by Bowen, Morara, & Mureithi (2009) who reported that 74.3% of SMEs in Nairobi had been in operation for less than 5 years while the remaining 25.7% had more than 5 years operational experience. The aforementioned study identified the cause of the decline as entrepreneurial burnout which was consistent with the observation of Longnecker, Petty, Moore and Palich (2006) that burnout may lead to loss of interest by entrepreneurs who instead look for other ventures. Certainly, burnout can reduce the firms' rigor for learning and continuous improvement which was consistent with the findings of this study.

4.4.2 Number of Employees in Wedding Planning Firms

The number and type of employees firms used to organize weddings are summarized in table 4.1. The study revealed that wedding planning firms employed an average of 6 and 10 permanent and casual staff respectively. Markedly over 91.3% (n=21) of firms had less than 10 permanent employees and 17 temporary staff.

Table 4. 1: Distribution of the Number of Permanent and Casual Employees in Wedding Planning Firms in Nairobi County

	TYPE OF STAFF					
	PERMANENT EMPLOYEES			CASUAL STAFF		
Number of staff	Actual number of firms (n)	Actual number of staff	%	Actual number of firms (n)	Actual number of staff	%
1	3	3	13.0	-	-	-
2	5	10	21.7	-	-	-
3	2	6	8.7	-	-	-
4	4	16	17.4	1	4	4.3
5	-	-	-	4	20	17.4
6	1	6	4.3	1	6	4.3
7	2	14	8.7	4	28	17.4
8	1	8	4.3	3	24	13.0
9	2	18	8.7	-	-	-
10	1	10	4.3	-	-	-
11	-	-	-	3	33	13.0
14	-	-	-	3	42	13.0
16	-	-	-	2	32	8.7
17	1	17	4.3	-	-	-
18	-	-	-	1	18	4.3
20	1	20	4.3	-	-	-
23	-	-	-	1	23	4.3
Total	23	128	100.0	23	230	100.0
Average		6			10	

(Source: Research Output, 2014)

The findings indicated that wedding planning firms used a combination of permanent and temporary/ short-term staffing arrangements. This suggested that wedding planners were able to create a stable yet adaptable working environment that suited the labour demands of individual weddings. Consequently, firms were able to operate the business with staff who handled routine and/or long term business activities while casual staff were engaged to handle one-off tasks with short and fixed timeframes.

According to Cordery, Sevastos, Mueller and Parker (1993) internal employees are able to perform tasks that go beyond their job descriptions in exchange for job security and staff development while external staffing can enhance resource and functional flexibility within firms. This arrangement is in tandem with Davis-Blake and Uzzi's (1993) proposition of using a proportionate combination of internal and external staff to enhance firm performance through skill and competency availability. The combination of models in the correct ratio are likely to influence performance of firms in the long run.

However, the number of casual staff was almost twice that of permanent employees. This suggested that wedding planning firms relied heavily on external employment models. Notably, this can be attributed to the very nature of weddings which may take a long time to plan but require a sizeable number of staff to execute tasks simultaneously on the day of the event. On one hand, this increased the firms' flexibility to labour demands for weddings, yet it also posed challenges for firms in retention of core skills and competences that had been developed in casual staff.

This trend was also observed in studies on employment models used by firms by Matusik and Hill (1998), Rousseau (1995) and Tsui *et al.* (1995). These studies revealed that firms used a higher proportion of external staff in order to reduce costs connected with permanent employees when the firm largely handled short-term projects.

4.4.3 Additional Events Organized by Wedding Planners

Additional events organised by wedding planning firms are represented under the following subtopics: conferences and conventions, business and corporate events, festivals and sporting events. These findings were as shown in Figure 4.2.

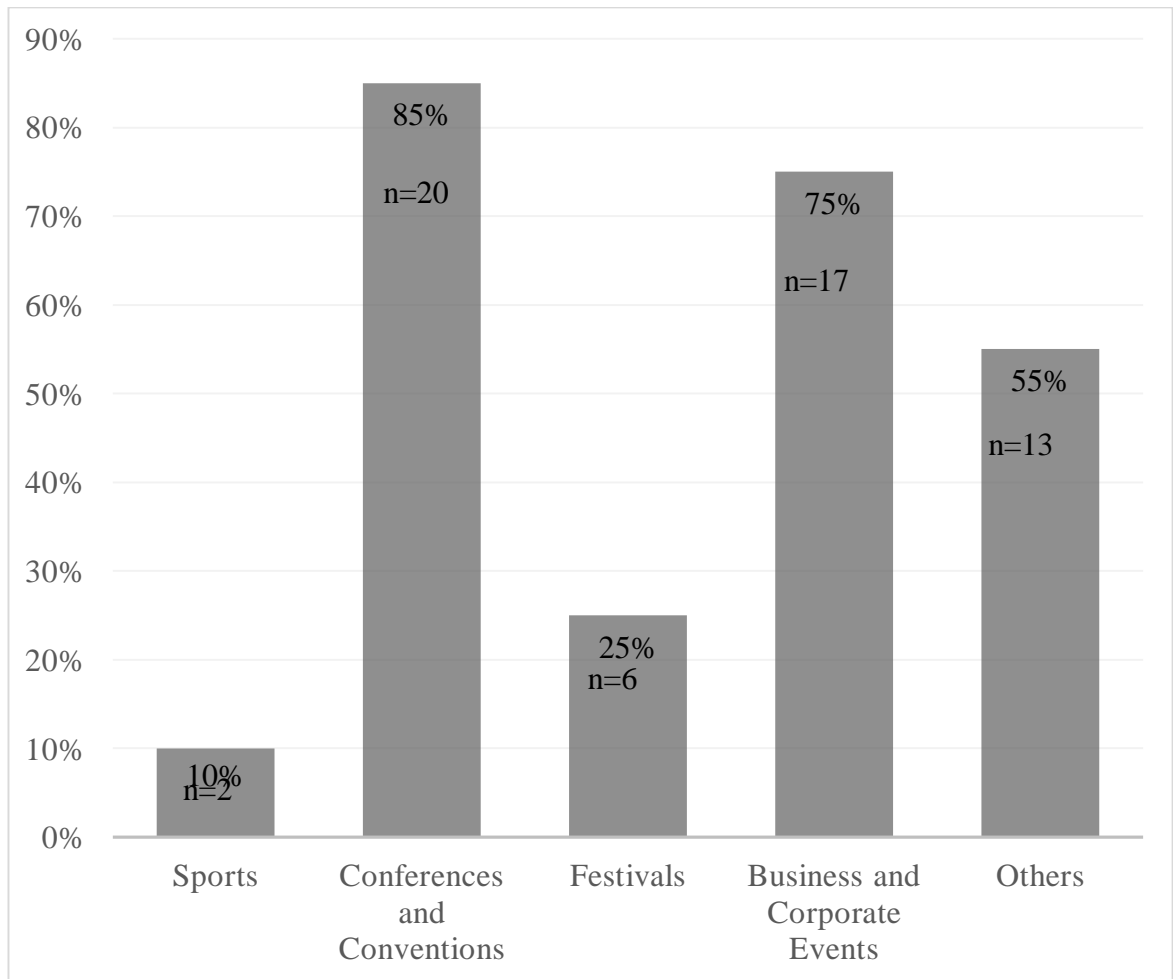


Figure 4. 2: Other Events organized by Wedding Planners

(Source: Research Output, 2014)

4.4.4.1 Conferences and conventions

Conferences and conventions placed highly (85%, n=20) as additional events planned by respondent firms. This suggested that the aforementioned events were increasingly popular in Nairobi thus provided opportunities for professional event planners. The popularity of these events results from increased demand for these events by attendees from professional groups, religious organizations, education and scientific bodies and political groups seeking news updates and networking opportunities (Tretyakevich, 2010).

In response to these demands, an increasing number of corporations, associations, hotels, resorts and convention centres are seeking professional planning services to assure event quality (Getz, 2005). The demand and earnings from conferences and conventions are replicated in the United Kingdom where this segment of events earned £7.3 billion in 2011 (Meetings Professional International Foundation, 2013). This shows the potential of this sector to contribute substantially to tourism earnings.

4.4.4.2 Business and Corporate Events

Majority of the respondents (75%, n=17) also indicated that they organized business and corporate events. This finding suggested that the constantly growing Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Events (MICE) sector in Kenya and the business community placed great emphasis on professional event planning for destination competitiveness and outstanding events of high quality. Though literature indicates that these events are usually organized by corporate event planners originating from within corporations, the move to use external event planning services has been on the increase (O'Toole & Mikolaitis, 2002).

This may be attributed to demand for events that are striking, unique, memorable and professionally organized. Furthermore, an increasing number of firms are outsourcing activities that are not part of their core business. On one hand, this move ensures that scarce resources within the firm are used efficiently. On the other hand, this provides an opportunity for event planners to prepare proposals and bid to organize corporate and business and events.

However the volume of corporate events is dependent on the health of the economy and market changes. This suggests that only vibrant economies with stable business environments will be able facilitate business growth which translates into opportunities

for conferences and conventions for key sectors of an economy. Moreover technological advancements including the use of the internet, telecommunications and video conferencing for sales conferences, product launches, management meetings, training courses and business presentations may render face to face communication which is the highlight of corporate events obsolete (Business Tourism Partnership, 2003). Notwithstanding, destinations such as the United Kingdom which have embraced the use of technology still gain substantial revenue from business and corporate events. Definitively, this implied that attendees of these events still placed strong emphasis on face to face communication to assure credibility in communicating with stakeholders.

4.4.4.3 Festivals

Only 5% (n=6) of wedding planning firms were involved in planning festivals. This finding implied that in comparison to other events, festivals in the country did not provide lucrative revenue generating opportunities for wedding planners. The fact that festivals are largely organized by volunteers may deter event planning firms from getting involved in the planning process that consumes scarce resources and does not generate income. This is consistent with Anttonen, Klemm, & Sarrivaara (2004) who noted that event organizers are interested in events with short-term gains that can make a financial contribution to the business.

Voluntarily planned events usually attempt to offset event costs associated with promotion, hospitality, media, coordination, logistics and security (Pauline & Pauline, 2009). Given that event planners earn between \$25,000 and \$75,000 annually (Goldblatt, 1997), focus shifts to events that can be organized for a fee. These include events that ranked highly in Figure 4.2 such as business and corporate events and meetings and conventions.

4.4.4.4 Sporting Events

Only 10% (n=2) of the respondents planned sports events. Certainly, this finding suggested that though sporting events were numerous in Kenya, few (10%, n=2) wedding planning firms were able to effectively bid to organize these events. This can be attributed to challenges in managing the large number of stakeholders involved, resource and technical complexities that are an integral part to the organization of sporting events.

In order to overcome these challenges, the planning of these events involves collaborations between bodies such as Kenya Primary Schools Sports Association (KPSSA), Kenya Secondary Schools Sports Association (KSSSA), Kenya University Sports Association (KUSA), and the Commissioner of Sports. However, the current arrangement blocks planners who are not affiliated with any of the aforementioned sports bodies.

4.4.4 The Nature of Products and Services Offered By Wedding Planning Firms

The nature of products and services offered by wedding planning firms is discussed under the following subtopics: demand for coordination and execution services, demand for design services, demand for services related to time, human resource and financial management, demand for services related to measuring event success and demand for services related to setting goals and determining needs and expectations. These results are summarized in Figure 4.3.

4.4.5.1 Demand for Coordination and Execution Services

Majority (95.7%, n=22) of wedding planning firms indicated that they were contracted by couples to coordinate and execute the event on the final day (Figure 4.3).

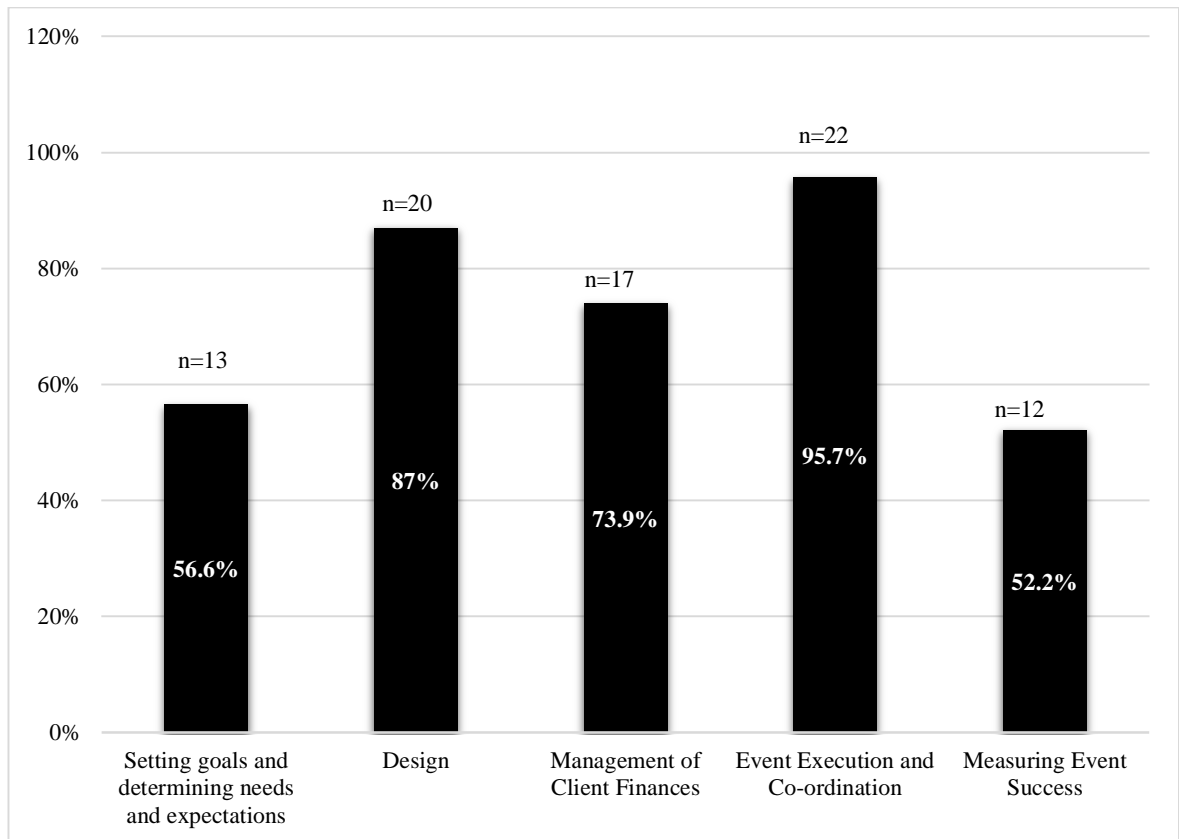


Figure 4. 3: Services offered by Wedding Planning Firms

(Source: Research Output, 2014)

This indicated that there were clients who felt that they were likely to benefit from the planners expertise in managing the wide array of tasks, logistics and coordinating suppliers and human resources on the final day. Notably, wedding days are usually abuzz with activities that at times need to be handled simultaneously and in a timely manner. Interestingly the main stakeholder of the event (the couple) is usually unable to perform any of the tasks personally on the final day. It is against this backdrop that couples largely opted to contract planners who were involved in planning, had experience and resources to effectively carryout crucial tasks. These findings are similar to those of a survey of over 12,000 brides in the United States in which 53% of brides who hired wedding planners did so to ease coordination and execution of the event on the final day (The Knot Wedding Network, 2012).

4.4.5.2 Demand for Design Services

The second highest service couples contracted wedding planners to perform was design. Eighty seven (n=20) of wedding planning firms indicated that couples also contracted them to design the actual event (Figure 4.3). This implied that a large percentage of couples valued a unique and memorable event. This may partly be attributed to clients' expectations that a wedding should be a reflection of an individuals' personality, lifestyle, values and attitudes and even occupation. This is supported in literature by the black box model of consumer behaviour which acknowledges the impact of consumer characteristics on service or products purchase decisions (Keegan, Moriarty, & Duncan, 1992, p. 183).

Markedly, Monroe (2006) corroborates that wedding planners are usually creative given that most of them started off as displaying artists, florists and scenic designers who used effective design and business practices to rise to the top of their profession by designing distinctive events. Therefore with the strong background in design wedding planners should be able to theme events that reflect consumer characteristics.

Demand for design services was also established in the Wedding Market Survey by the Bridal Association of America which indicated that though majority (55%, n=1,249,943) of weddings were traditional, over 21% (n=477,251) of weddings were unique (Bridal Association of America, 2006). Contracting a wedding planner during the design phase can bring together different ideas that can contribute to the event (Sven, 2010).

4.4.5.3 Demand for Time, Human Resource and Financial Management Services

The third highest service couples contracted wedding planners (73.9%, n=17) to perform was time, human resource and financial management (Figure 4.3). This

implied that clients placed a great deal of importance on taking a planned approach to resource management by contracting a wedding planner. This finding and its implication supported Goldblatt's (2005) assertion that failure to deliberately adopt a planned approach to resource management for projects with high levels of complexity such as weddings could result in substitutions, additions and deletions which consume time, finances and effort (Goldblatt, 2005). Since wedding planners organized weddings regularly, they developed standardized tools and techniques to manage various elements of the event. Notably the use of checklists and project management tools such as Gantt charts and Work Breakdown Structures enabled planners to identify all elements required to host the event, determine human resource requirements for the event, and assign timelines for the performance of tasks.

The adoption of these tools and techniques was necessary given that planning may take several months and involve large numbers of people including: families, friends, venue management, caterers, florists, dress hire companies, musicians, care hire companies, religious authorities and civil registrar among others (Shone & Parry, 2004). In the United States of America, couples and their planners usually have between 12 and 16 months after announcing the engagement to plan the wedding with a budget of between \$70,000 and \$13,000 (Jaeger, 2011).

4.4.5.4 Demand for Services Related to Measuring Event Success

Conversely, measuring event success ranked low (52.2%, n=12) in comparison to other planning tasks that clients contracted wedding planners to perform (Figure 4.3). This finding suggested that couples felt that weddings were one-off occasions and therefore they did not need to go over the outcomes given that they assumed they were only consuming the services of the wedding planner only for the one wedding. For that reason any information gathered from measuring event success would not be used by

the couples for future purchasing decisions as weddings were regarded as one-off milestones in society. The planners therefore carried out this task in the clients' absence. Unfortunately, lack of input from the client on the outcome of the event may influence the ability of the firm to assess its performance and work towards improving events in the future (Daniels & Loveless, 2007).

4.4.5.5 Demand for Services Related to Setting Goals and Determining Needs and Expectations

Only 56.6% (n=13) of wedding planners indicated that they were contracted by couples to set goals and determine needs and expectations prior to planning a wedding (Figure 4.3). This implied that almost half (43.4%, n=10) of the couples set their goals on their own without the wedding planner. Though this seemed disconcerting, Pride and Ferrel (2007) postulate that this sort of behaviour is common when consumers purchase infrequently used, expensive and unfamiliar services.

By their very nature, event planning services fall into this category given that weddings are special events. In this case, a substantial amount of research was done by the couple on their needs and expectations as well as the alternatives available for fulfilling those needs and expectations. Consequently, couples approached the wedding planner after informally determining the needs, goals and expectations for the wedding. The outcome of this stage, largely determined the tasks the couple contracted the wedding planner to perform.

Notably, failure to formally communicate set goals to the wedding planner can have a negative impact on subsequent stages of planning the event. It would likely result in low morale among the planning team and challenges in evaluation and control of the event. Additionally, failure to collectively set goals with the wedding planner and the

planning team can lead to an imbalance in meeting the wide variety of goals for wedding attendees. Furthermore, couples lack expertise that comes with organizing weddings, they were likely to set inappropriate goals that are not specific, measurable, attainable and realistic and time bound (SMART). Collectively, the adverse effects of informal goal setting can result in failure on the day of the event.

4.5 Expertise in Performing Wedding Planning Tasks

The findings on expertise in task performance by wedding planning firms are discussed under the following subtopics: determining stakeholder goals and objectives, creating a wedding environment tailored to clients specifications, putting together a proposal, budget preparation, putting together a program, site comparison, site selection, creating time for pre-event client meetings, creating time for site inspections, creating time for vendor meetings, negotiation of vendor contracts, coordination of logistics and integration among participants and coordination of human resources. These results are represented in Figure 4.4.

4.5.1 Identifying Stakeholder Needs, Goals and Expectations

Majority (81%, n=19) of wedding planners exhibited above average proficiency in identifying stakeholder goals, needs and expectations. This implied that the planner worked closely with the couple during this first stage and was therefore able to tailor the event to their needs. Bitner, Faranda, Hurbert and Zeithaml (1997) articulate the importance of active client participation to assure customized service output. Ideally, planners utilized preliminary sessions with the couple to determine what they expected from the event, why they were hosting the event, who was likely to attend and where and when the event would be held.

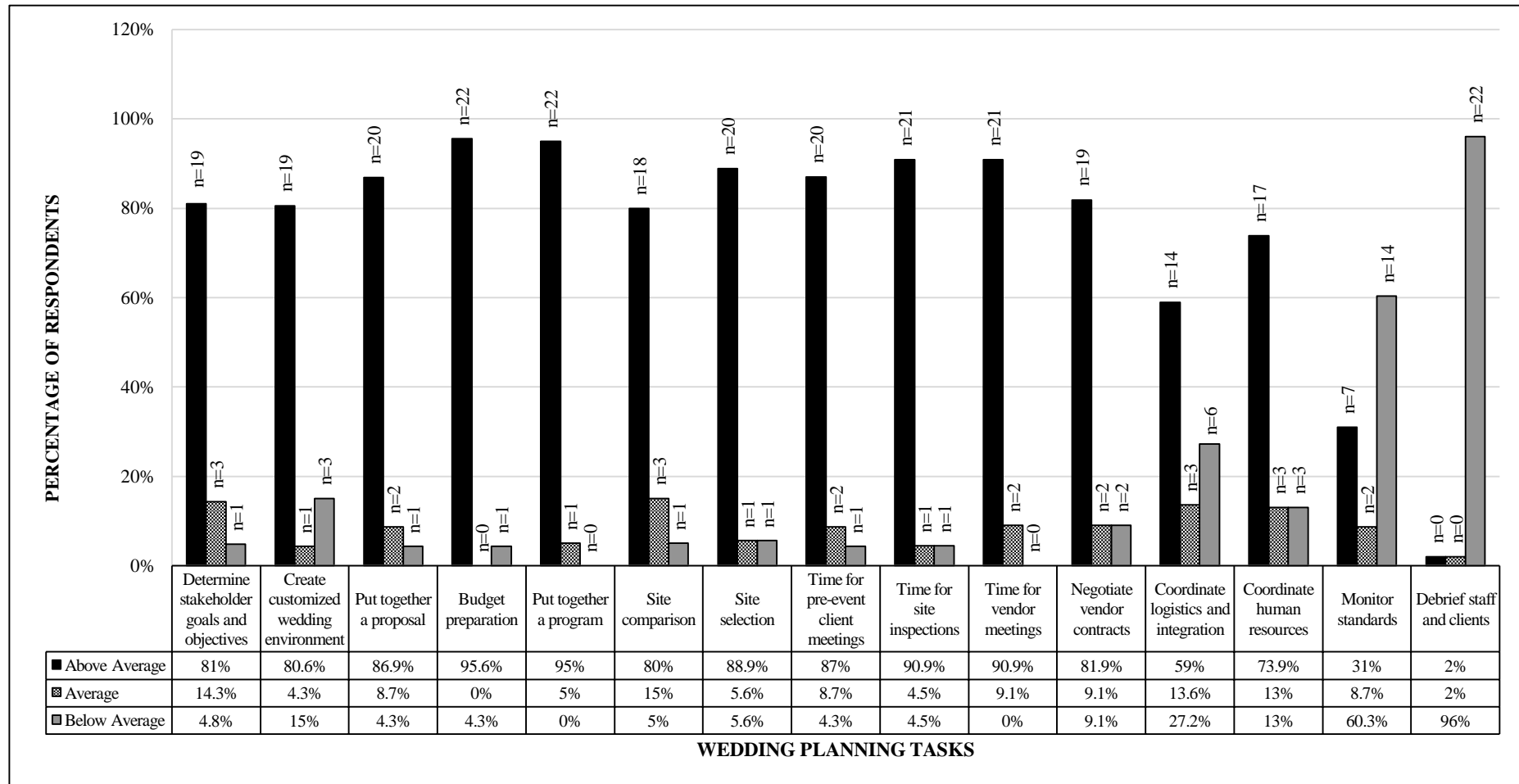


Figure 4. 4: Expertise in Performing Wedding Planning Tasks

(Source: Research Output, 2014)

According to O'Toole and Mikolaitis (2002) the statement of work derived from preliminary meetings defines the roles and responsibilities of the event planner. Therefore it is consequential that couples answer the aforementioned questions.

Notably, in the identification of stakeholders wedding planners included questions on the needs, goals and expectations of other stakeholders attending the event other than the couple. These included the couples families and network of friends. Berridge (2007) supports the importance of identification of stakeholders needs for event success and acknowledges the role of the planner in balancing a wide range of needs and expectations.

The high level of expertise exhibited in the performance of this task can be attributed to the ability of planners to use experiences from past events to develop and prioritize goals and objectives. Subsequently, wedding planners were able to establish direction, identify expected results and enhance teamwork and individual performance. Failure to adequately perform this task may be caused by the inability of some planners to get clients to articulate all their needs.

4.5.2 Design

Creating a wedding environment tailored to the couples' goals was also performed very well by majority (80.6%, n=19) of the planners. This implied that wedding planners were able to create weddings that were unique for each couple based on their vision. This may be attributed to the strong creative abilities of wedding planners. This is affirmed by Monroe (2006) who credits wedding planners with an array of creative skills based on past careers as florists, scenic designers and display artists.

In addition, successful completion of this task was enabled by firms involving clients in the development of goals and objectives and the tone and theme of the event that were then included in the proposal prepared by the wedding planner (Bain *et al.*, 2011;

Lluch & Lluch , 2011). A study by Kale, Pentecost and Zlatevska (2010) on designing and delivering captivating experiences at conventions reiterates the need for event planners to employ creativity and innovation in order to create enjoyable experiences and gain competitive advantage.

4.5.3 Proposal Development

Majority of firms (86.9%, n=20) also indicated that they developed proposals for weddings exceptionally. This implied that wedding planners were able to use the statement of work developed during preliminary meetings with clients to determine the elements required to deliver the event. It was therefore likely that wedding planning firms had developed and used standardized templates which captured the tasks that needed to be performed for each of the elements.

This affirms O'Toole and Mikolaitis (2002) assertion that the statement of work from the client should inform the development of the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) for the event which identifies and groups' tasks that need to be performed in order to deliver the cited elements of the event. Notably, the use of wedding planning templates can ensure that all elements of the event are covered. However, heavy reliance on templates can in the long run stifle creativity which is an essential part of special events.

4.5.4 Budget

The study also revealed that 95.6% (n=22) of the firms prepared budgets well. Firstly, this implied that planners were well acquainted with how to develop, categorize and track changes in expense categories, and handle contingencies and unexpected expenses. The high level of proficiency can be attributed to exceptional performance of preceding tasks particularly event proposal development which informed the

development of expense categories such as décor, entertainment, lighting, tenting and temporary shelter and catering among others.

Bouchard (2003) recognized that the contents of the proposal developed in the design phase ease the allocation of funds to each aspect of the wedding. Moreover, the use of standardized templates developed over time may be able to guide the planner in ensuring that an adequate percentage of the budget is allocated to each aspect of the wedding money (Nixon, 2007).

4.5.5 Program Development

The high level of expertise in program development (95%, n=22) implied that planners were able to assign responsibilities to teams and individuals and put in place action plans that prioritized and scheduled activities to be held prior to the wedding, on the day of the wedding and after the event. The high level of expertise in program development was also attributed to exceptional performance of preceding tasks particularly proposal development which indicated key elements needed to deliver the event in the WBS.

Bodwin *et al.* (2012) affirm that the use of project management tools such as the WBS inform the development of an operational events program. The operational events program lists the activities to be performed by the event planner and his team in the form of a Gantt chart which is also another project management tool. Therefore, it followed that preparation of the program of events which is distributed to people attending the wedding was derived easily from the operational program. Once more, the use of standardized templates whether in soft copy or hard copy ensure that the details of the program are captured accurately (Riley, 2008; DeLaubenfels *et al.*, 2010).

4.5.6 Site Comparison and Selection

Site comparison and selection for weddings were tasks that were performed particularly well by majority (80%, n=18 and 88.9%, n=20 respectively) of wedding planners. This implied that wedding planners were familiar with a range of venues that differed in location, cost of using facilities and size. Certainly, a large percentage of event venues in the city utilized various platforms to showcase what their facilities had to offer. Information on space dimensions, payments required and additional facilities available in a range of venues was accessible from the venue management's website and from adequate representation at bridal fairs. Additionally, contact information on a range of venues was available from telephone directories and could be used for further inquiries regarding dates when the venue was available, policies on caterers, security, refunds and cancellations.

This finding concurred with Veres *et al* (2008) who indicated that large cities offer a variety of venues to host events. These include ballrooms in hotels, mansions in the suburbs, historic buildings, private members clubs, art galleries and gardens (DeLaubenfels *et al.*, 2010). These venues differ in size, style and ambiance (Viau, 2011) and offer additional products and services related to aspects of the wedding such as sound, catering and security (Bywater, 2007). With these four factors in mind and the availability of information on venue offerings, wedding planners could easily advice couples on the venue best suited for the wedding.

4.5.7 Time Management

The findings also indicated that majority of wedding planners were able to allocate enough time for pre-event client meetings, site inspections and vendor meetings (87%, n=20; 91%, n=21 and 91%, n=21 respectively). This implied that planners were able to accurately prepare and adhere to time plans therefore got tasks such as guest list

preparation and finalization, site comparison and selection, vendor vetting, selection and payment done within the set time frame.

Certainly the use of checklists indicating the time and assigning responsibilities largely assisted in management of time in wedding planning. This confirms McKenzie and Davies (2010) assertion on the benefit provided by checklists in ensuring that all tasks are performed in good time for the event to be a success. Markedly, the timeliness of the wedding planner in meeting these deadlines could determine whether the preferred vendor or venue for the event is secured.

4.5.8 Negotiation of Vendor Contracts

Majority of wedding planners (81.9%, n=19) were also able to negotiate vendor contracts readily on the clients' behalf. This implied that there was a cordial working relationship between members of the wedding industry supply chain. This relationship may have been enhanced when a planner recommended a client to the vendor or in the event that the vendor gives the planner a commission for channelling clients in their direction. According to DeLaubenfels *et. al* (2010) a pleasant business relationship is beneficial to both the planner and the vendor. Arguably, poor relationships within the supply chain could result in event failure.

4.5.9 Coordination of Human Resources, Logistics and Integration among Participants

Though more than half of wedding planners showed above average performance in coordination of human resources and logistics and integration among participants (73.9%, n=17 and 59%, n=14 respectively) the remaining percentage struggled with these tasks. This implied that the wedding planner and his/her team likely faced

challenges on the day. Given that multiple tasks are carried out simultaneously on the day of the event, foresight in the assignment of tasks and responsibilities is paramount.

According to McKenzie and Davies (2010) tasks on the day of the event may individually be coherent when documented. However, the tasks become unduly complex when the need to be managed together within a fixed time frame as the event proceeds. This indicates the need for struggling planners to have a wider skill set to facilitate coordination (Allen *et al.*, 2008). Wedding planners therefore need to revamp their skills in communication, stress management, leadership, conflict resolution and multitasking (Goldblatt, 2005).

4.5.10 Evaluation

Tasks associated with evaluation namely monitoring of standards and debriefing of staff and clients presented challenges for majority (60.3%, n=14 and 95.6%, n=22) respectively) of wedding planners and who consequently recorded a below average performance. This implied that wedding planners are not able to obtain feedback on tasks carried out successfully or poorly, stay abreast by identifying trends and needs of the target market. These firms have poor mechanisms used to obtain feedback from key stakeholders namely: the client, guests, vendors and staff.

First and foremost, obtaining feedback from clients and guests was challenging given that weddings took place within a fixed time frame and it was difficult to access them for post event evaluation. This finding is supported by Reid (2011) in a study on event stakeholder management in rural events which asserts that time for a thorough consultation is usually limited. Moreover, it is unethical to carry out evaluations on these two stakeholders during the event they are in the process of participating in (Daniels & Loveless, 2007).

Secondly, obtaining feedback from staff was also challenging given that majority of staff who execute weddings are temporary staff. Research by Lepak *et al.* (2003) indicates that these employees show low commitment to improvement of business processes given that they are only in the establishment for a short time. Therefore getting them to participate in an evaluation process to monitor standards and improve task performance is highly unlikely.

4.6 Identification of Constraints to Wedding Planning

The study established constraints to business performance illustrated in Figure 4.6. The constraints are discussed under the following subtopics: demand for products and services, availability of staff, equipment, facilities, materials in the correct quality and quantity to satisfy demand, reliability of suppliers in responding to orders, cash flow to sustain the operation, availability of information to improve business performance, staff skills to carry out set tasks and firms rules and regulations.

4.6.1 Information to Improve Business Performance

The findings of the study as shown in figure 4.5 indicated that majority (69.6%, n=16) of wedding planning firms lacked adequate information to improve business performance. This suggested that decisions regarding productivity, market access and strategic planning were usually poorly informed and could result in business failure. Respondents indicated that they mainly obtained information from customers, competitors, business associates, print and broadcast media and electronic sources. However, competitors were unwilling to share information on best practices as they felt they would be disclosing their secrets to competitiveness. Furthermore, planners were unable to evaluate the outcomes of the event with clients and guests and consequently had difficulties in determining whether clients' expectations had been met. Subsequently, continuous improvement was a challenge.

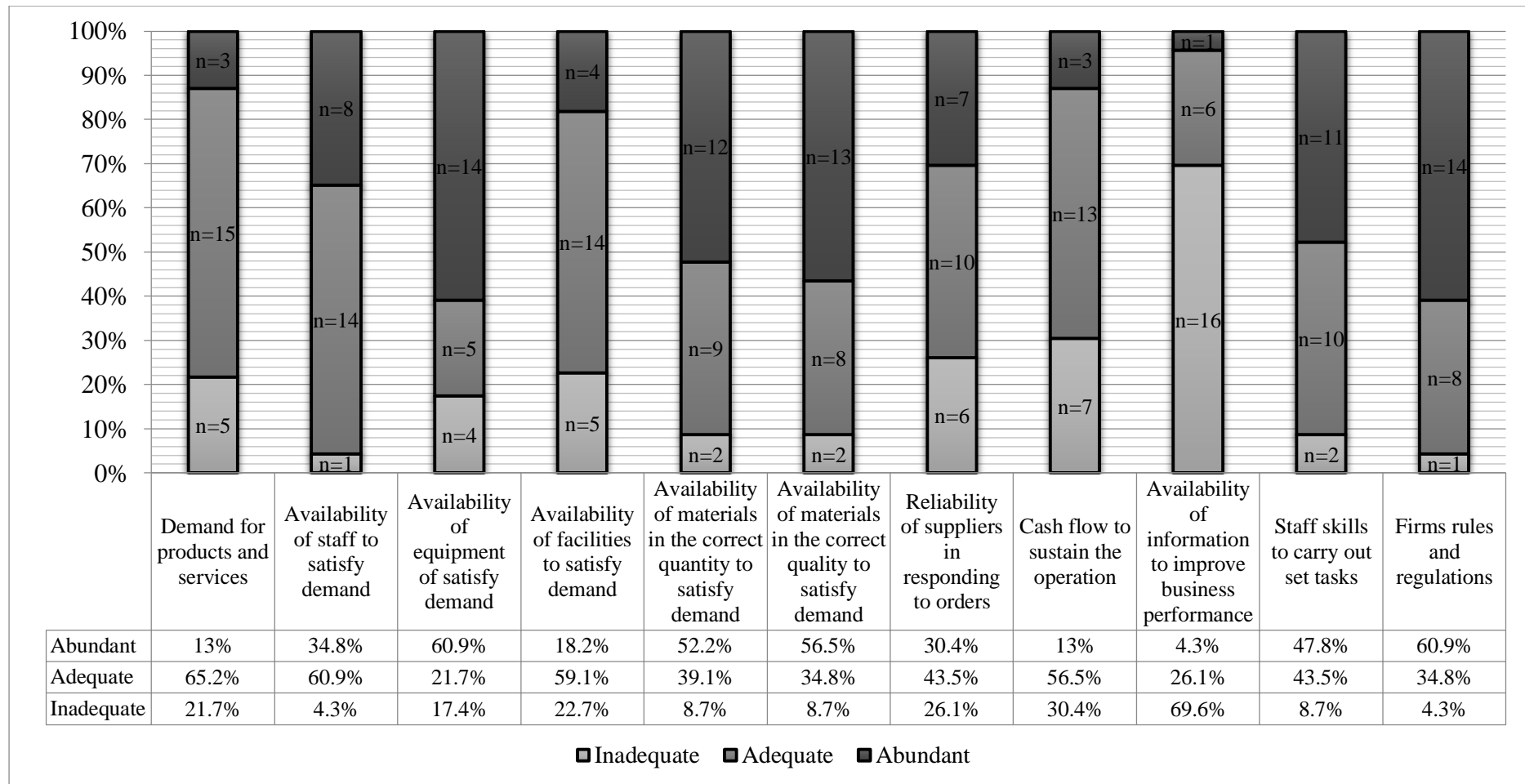


Figure 4. 5: Factors that Limit Performance of Wedding Planning Firms

(Source: Research output, 2014)

A study on SMEs in a neighbouring country Uganda revealed a consistency in lack of information in SMEs across all sectors which was consistent with previous findings on information constraints plaguing a large percentage of businesses in developing countries (Okello-Obura, Minishi-Majanja, Cloete, & Ikoja-Odongo, 2008). In addition Okello-Obura *et al.* (2008) noted that information was difficult to access given that there were few sources, information was limited in scope, cumbersome to access and was available in a non-integrated manner. Wedding planners also indicated that the absence of a formal industry association for wedding planners and suppliers has contributed to the current vacuum in information. The absence of this formal industrial association has the potential to hamper market development and strategic planning and can negatively influence growth and survival of wedding planning firms (Bowen *et al.*, 2009).

4.6.2 Cash Flow to Sustain Operation

As presented in figure 4.6, 30.4% (n=7) of wedding planning firms attributed challenges in wedding planning to lack of cash flow. This finding implied that money flowing into the business from sales revenue was insufficient to cover purchases and operating expenses. The interviews revealed that tension existed between planners and clients when it came to payment for services. As one wedding planner stated:

“When you work with a couple for six to twelve months on an event that is as personal as a wedding, a relationship other than the business kind is created. The planner therefore believes the client is operating in good faith when he asks for an extension on payments.”

In most cases planners stated that clients prioritized tangible products higher than they did intangible ones. Consequently, most of couples preferred to pay for intangibles such as planning services after the event once the outcomes of service offerings were

experienced. The financial tension was further aggravated by the reluctance of couples to meet up with the planner after the events conclusion. Consequently, wedding planners were unable to secure balances due to them as a result of unavailability or inaccessibility to clients after the event. This assertion concurred with Getz *et al.* (2004) on the negative impact of deferred payments on cash flow.

4.6.3 Reliability of Suppliers in Responding to Orders

Despite the symbiotic relationship between wedding planners and suppliers 26.1% (n=6) respondents indicated that they had problems with supplier reliability as shown in figure 4.6. This implied that wedding planners could not guarantee consistency and quality services from suppliers. The interviews revealed that planners occasionally had to deal with suppliers sourced for independently by the client or a wedding committee. One planner observed:

“Some of our clients independently source for suppliers on the recommendation of a friend or relative. Unfortunately the output of these suppliers is unpredictable and we cannot guarantee our client the best.”

This statement revealed the frustration for the wedding planner when he or she was not involved in merging specification of tasks and expected output from suppliers with the clients' goals, needs and expectations. Given that the output of the event is dependent on cohesiveness of all planning aspects (Daniels & Loveless, 2007), the outcome of the event can be compromised when all parties in the planning process are not actively involved in laying out terms for product and service provision by suppliers.

Notably when wedding planners have not worked with a supplier before, it is difficult to ascertain whether their internal constraints will present challenges in product or service provision for the wedding being organized. In order to counteract uncertainty

when dealing with suppliers, DeLaubenfels *et al.* (2010) propose an inquiry into supplier reliability based on the output they gave past clients in their database.

4.6.4 Availability of Facilities to Satisfy Demand

The findings of the study indicated that 22.7% (n=5) of wedding planners felt that facilities that could host weddings are largely unavailable as presented in figure 4.6. This implied that the venues were in short supply in relation to the demand that existed for them. Respondents indicated that couples were still fixated on hosting weddings at churches, schools, hotels and recreational gardens. Unfortunately, the number of these facilities has not been increasing in response to demand for them. This finding was in contrast to the assertion by the Kenya Tourism Guide (1999) that tourist facilities have been increasing at 4% annually in order to meet demand.

According to Bain *et al.* (2011), wedding planners need access to a range of destinations that can cater to individual couples wedding themes for both the wedding ceremony and reception. Therefore, it fell on planners to recommend alternative venues to host weddings such as country clubs and members clubs. Daniels & Loveless (2007) attributed challenges in accessing facilities such as country clubs and members clubs to mandatory requirements by venue operators that facilities can be used by members only. Furthermore, Bourchard (2003) argued that some facilities only allowed couples to use their venues for events when they paid for additional packages that included catering services and sound. This limited the appeal of some venues to couples who intend to customize their event.

4.6.5 Demand for Products and Services

As shown in figure 4.6, 21.7% (n=5) wedding planning firms had challenges related to attracting demand for services. This implied that firms were unable to consistently

attract the clients and generate revenue throughout the financial year. With regard to attracting clients, respondent firms indicated that Kenyans perceived their services as a luxury that could only be afforded by a few. This finding concurred with statistics from United Kingdom Association of Wedding Planners (UKAWP) in 2011, where only 11% of brides sampled indicated that they would use a wedding planner while 33.89% of brides felt that planners were expensive (Gould, 2011).

In reality, couples did not understand the benefits of hiring a wedding planner such as: saving time (spent on sourcing for quotations, vetting and selection of vendors), saving money (planners can negotiate discounts and enforce budget restrictions set by the couple), creating schedules and handling crises (Daniels & Loveless, 2007). Unless the benefits of contracting a wedding planner are appreciated by couples, the demand for their services will continue to remain low. This assertion is in stark contrast to Pfister and Tierney (2009) affirmation that augmented service features can stimulate demand.

Seasonality of demand was another market constraint to wedding planning. This implied that the flow of business and financial earnings was lopsided. Planners indicated that couples mainly got married in the months of December and August when family and friends were available. Furthermore, weddings took place mainly on Saturday and Sunday and rarely on weekdays.

This confirmed Shone and Parry's (2004) assertion that special events are usually organized when people are available to offer mutual support and reinforce social norms. Similarly seasonality of demand was also experienced in the United States where June (10.8%) was the most popular month for weddings followed by August (10.2%), May (9.8%), September (9.6%) and October (9.4%). Seasonality challenges are

synonymous to businesses in the tourism industry that deal with fluctuations in demand (Mok, Sparks, & Kadampully, 2009).

4.6.6 Availability of Staffs to Satisfy Demand

As presented in figure 4.6, 95.7% (n=22) of respondents indicated that their firms had access to an adequate number of staff for events. This implied that the labour market was highly saturated and provided requisite manpower during both peak and trough wedding seasons. According to KIPPRA, though Kenya has a rapidly growing labour force, few employment opportunities exist and particularly for the youth (KIPPRA, 2009).

Consequently wedding planning firms fill the void by creating short term employment opportunities for youth in the labour market. This affirmed Bowdin *et al.* (2008) assertion that short term employment opportunities were viable from events given that the smaller events such as weddings are short lived. A study by Lockstone, Junek and Mair (2008) in Australia revealed that the events industry in Australia at the time was a viable creator of employment opportunities.

4.6.7 Material Constraints

The findings of the study indicated that 82.6% (n=19) and 91.3% (n=21) of wedding planners were able to access equipment and materials in the correct quality and quantity respectively (Figure 4.6). Notably, the remaining 17.4% (n=4) and 8.7% (n=3) of respondents who were unable to access equipment and materials respectively were likely to face challenges in event execution which may result in business failure. This finding implied that planners could orchestrate events of different themes due to the availability of a wide range of materials.

Consequently, customization of events to suit the couple's demands was easy to realize. For firms that faced material constraints, the planners acknowledged that materials were available but the firm lacked sufficient cash flow to obtain them. Similarly, Nissanke and Aryeetey (1998) noted the adverse effect of lack of resources due to unavailability or unaffordability on business growth.

4.6.8 Firm Rules, Regulations and Policies

Majority of the respondents (95.7%, n=22) indicated that the firms' policies, rules and regulations were suitable which implied that current rules, regulations, guidelines and procedures that wedding planning firms employed facilitated the achievement of organizational goals. This finding was in stark contrast to TOC which identifies policy constraints as the largest factor that prevents firms from achievement of goals (Rahman, 1988). Goldratt (1988) further affirmed that policies though difficult to identify were usually the main cause physical constraints that limited operational capability within organizations.

4.6.9 Abundant Staff Skill Levels to Carry out Set Tasks

Majority of respondents (91.3%, n=21) indicated that their staff possessed skills to perform requisite tasks. This implied that wedding planners and their staff are creative, able to coordinate and consolidate resources, work in an ambiguous environment and solve problems because they have strong management and organizational skills. This finding was supported by Peragine (2008) who indicated that the possession of multiple skills was essential to planning successful weddings.

Respondents indicated that they recruited operative staff who had prior experience with event execution. Furthermore, managerial staff were required to have obtained vocational training from an accredited programs such as Certified Wedding Specialist.

This finding concurred with Shone and Parry's (2004) affirmation on staff skill requirements considered by wedding planning firms during the staff recruitment stage. However, this finding disagreed with Leigh *et.al* (2012) assertion that there is a shortage of skilled personnel in tourism and hospitality firms given that firms were reluctant to invest in the development of staff skills. Notably, further research is required to ascertain which of the two positions was correct and specifically if event firms had invested in formally training wedding planning staff.

4. 7 Hypotheses Testing

H0₁: The expertise in performing wedding planning tasks is not significantly different among wedding planning firms.

A Mann-Whitney *U* test was conducted to test the hypothesis that there was no significant difference in expertise in task performance of firms that had been operating for less than 5 years and firms that have been operating for more than 5 years. The Z scores and the significance levels were indicated in Table 4.2. The results of the test were non-significant, $p > .05$ (Table 4.2) therefore, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis that there was no significant difference in wedding planning expertise among firms that were below or above the five year mark. This suggested that despite the stage firms had reached in the product life cycle, the firms were able to take advantage of positive attributes amassed during that stage to enhance task performance.

On one hand, older firms were able to perform tasks well given that they had learnt from past events. These firms had standardized procedures for handling the wedding planning tasks and were therefore able to perform tasks well by enhancing coordination, resource allocation and timeliness of task completion.

Table 4. 2: Mann-Whitney *U* Test Results for Differences in Expertise in task performance among wedding planning firms based on Age of the Firm

Planning Tasks	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Determining stakeholder goals, objectives, needs and expectations	44.50	80.50	-.29	.77
Creating a wedding environment tailored to clients specifications	55.50	146.50	-.22	.82
Putting together a proposal	45.00	136.00	-1.09	.27
Budget preparation	55.50	100.50	-.26	.79
Putting together a program	37.00	73.00	-.81	.41
Site comparison	38.00	74.00	-.57	.56
Site selection	32.00	60.00	-.34	.73
Creating time for pre-event client meetings	41.50	132.50	-1.38	.16
Creating time for site inspections	42.00	133.00	-.84	.40
Creating time for vendor meetings	38.50	129.50	-1.17	.24
Coordination of human resources	52.00	88.00	.00	1.00
Negotiation of vendor contracts	51.50	142.50	-.03	.96
Monitoring standards	42.00	78.00	-.78	.43
Debriefing staff after the wedding	33.00	99.00	-1.03	.30

(Source: Research Output, 2014)

On the other hand, younger firms had found innovative ways of performing tasks and were flexible to change, therefore were able to perform planning tasks as well as firms that had been operating for over five years. However, additional research required to establish if younger firms had been established by individuals who had previously worked in the older firms.

This finding is also supported in literature by Chandler (1962) who affirmed that young firms are able to find innovative ways to perform tasks while older firms benefited from

the learning effect. This finding drew a distinction from a study on SME performance in Nigeria by Woldie *et al.* (2008) who established that older firms performed better than younger ones given that firms were able to maximize their operational strengths and readily take advantage of opportunities. In contrast, Storey (1994) noted that in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, younger firms performed better than older ones given that their skills, knowledge and ability were not obsolete.

H0₂: The constraints that restrict successful wedding organisation are not significantly different among wedding planning firms.

A Mann-Whitney *U* test was conducted to test the hypothesis that there was no significant difference in constraints faced by wedding planning firms that had been operating for less than 5 years and firms that have been operating for more than 5 years. The Z scores and the significance levels are indicated in Table 4.3. The results of the test were non-significant, $p > .05$ (Table 4.3). Consequently, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis. This implied that wedding planning firms that had been operating for more than five years and those that had been operating for less than five years were affected by similar constraints.

On one hand, younger firms took time to learn of their inefficiencies, build capabilities and accumulate knowledge and resources. This put younger firms at risk of facing a multitude of constraints. This finding was supported in literature by the liability of adolescence and liability on newness theories (Stinchcombe, 1965) which postulated that younger firms were prone to resource, competency and knowledge constraints. On the other hand, older firms were also prone to constraints given that their skills, abilities and knowledge became obsolete with time.

Table 4. 3: Mann-Whitney *U* Test Results for Differences in Constraints faced by firms based on Age of the Firm

Constraints	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Demand for firms products and services	45.50	136.50	-1.05	.29
Availability of staff to satisfy demand	55.00	146.00	-.27	.78
Availability of equipment to satisfy demand	54.00	145.00	-.34	.73
Availability of facilities to satisfy demand	45.50	123.50	-.69	.48
Availability of materials in the correct quantity to satisfy demand	54.50	145.50	-.29	.76
Availability of materials in the correct quality to satisfy demand	53.50	144.50	-.37	.70
Reliability of suppliers in responding to orders	30.50	121.50	-1.99	.06
Cash flow to sustain the operation	54.00	145.00	-.33	.73
Availability of information to improve business performance	48.00	93.00	-.86	.39
Staff skill levels to carry out set tasks	47.00	92.00	-.85	.39
Firms rules, regulations and policies	42.00	87.00	-1.27	.20

(Source: Research Output, 2014)

This view was supported by Loderer and Waelchli (2009) who proposed that characteristics of older firms particularly, lower margins, higher costs, slower growth, older assets, reduced research and development and lower investments made firms prone to financial, resource, competency and knowledge constraints. The findings contrasted findings by Oshagbemi (1983) on firm survival in Nigeria which established that financial constraints, competency constraints and demand constraints were highly prevalent among younger firms.

H0₃: Constraints have no significant impact on the wedding planning process.

The seven constraints were then entered into regression analysis to determine the relative impact on the overall wedding planning process (dependent variable). Stepwise multiple regression was selected because it took into account the exploratory power of more than one independent variable simultaneously. Table 4.4 reported the significant constraints from the stepwise regression model.

Table 4. 4: Impact of Constraints on the Wedding Planning

AdjustedR ² / Sig	Constraints	β	T	Sig T
.947/.027	Financial constraints	.445	8.180	.000*
	Resource constraints	.306	7.071	.000*
	Competence constraints	.247	3.739	.002*
	Supplier constraints	.238	4.414	.001*
	Material constraints	.231	4.185	.001*
	Policy constraints	.170	2.470	.027*
	Market constraints	.109	1.619	.129
	Knowledge constraints	.035	.613	.550

Source: Research Output, 2014)

The F statistic for the regression model was 54.814 with a p value of .000. This indicated that constraints (independent variable) were significant predictors of the outcome of the wedding planning process (dependent variable).

As it can be seen in Table 4.4 constraints proposed by TOC explained 94.7 per cent of variance in the overall wedding planning process. Consequently the null hypothesis was rejected given that several constraints had a significant impact on the wedding planning process. This finding concurred with TOC which postulates that only a few factors prevent a system from achieving its goals (Boyd & Gupta, 2004). Notably, 5.3

percent of the variance in the wedding planning process can be explained by other factors, thus prompting the need for further research into factors that hinder planners from achieving event goals.

Table 4.7 also illustrates significant factors in the model identified in descending order as: financial ($\beta=.445$; $p=.000$), resource constraints ($\beta=.419$; $p=.000$), competence ($\beta=.247$; $p=.002$), supplier ($\beta=.238$; $p=.001$), material constraints ($\beta=.231$; $p=.000$) and policy constraints ($\beta=.170$; $p=.027$). The higher the β coefficient, the larger the impact the constraint had on wedding planning.

Financial constraints ($\beta=.445$; $p=.000$) accounted for the largest percentage of variance in the overall wedding planning process. Financial constraints are caused by lack of sufficient funds to cover purchases and operating expenses. This shortage can have adverse effects on the first three stages of the wedding planning process namely research, design and planning. The tasks carried out during these stages such as program preparation, site comparison and selection as well as securing vendors and other service providers require a significant capital outlay. Consequently, Nixon (2007) assertion on the importance of setting timelines for raising finances to meet costs stipulated in the budget should be followed strictly both by the client and the event planner.

Secondly, resource constraints ($\beta=.419$; $p=.000$) also contributed to variance in the overall wedding planning process. Resource constraints are caused by lack of staff, equipment or facilities to satisfy demand due to unaffordability or unavailability. Firstly, permanent and additional temporary staff members are required during the planning and execution phases of the wedding organisation process. Human resources are required to perform multiple tasks that are entwined and at times need to be

performed concurrently. Principally, it is the performance of these tasks brings the event to life as represented in the event proposal (McKenzie and Davis, 2010, p. 788).

Secondly, unaffordability or shortage of equipment for specific elements cited in the event proposal and availability of facilities to prepare for and host the event can influence interpretation and execution of the event theme developed during the design phase. For this reason, Bywater (2007) recommends that planners and couples holistically evaluate shortlisted venues and packages offered to determine whether these fit the event proposal requirements.

Thirdly, competence constraints ($\beta=.247$; $p=.002$) accounted for the third largest percentage of variance in the overall wedding planning process. Competence constraints occur when the wedding planning firm has limited skills to perform tasks. The skills gap affects every facet of the wedding organisation process from research to evaluation. Peragine (2008) proposed that wedding planners should have a skill set that includes creativity, calculated risk taking, tolerance of ambiguity, problem solving and strong managerial and organisational skills.

Supplier constraints ($\beta=.238$; $p=.001$) also accounted for the fourth largest percentage of variance in the wedding planning process. Supplier constraints occur when the vendors and service providers are unreliable in responding to orders. These inconsistencies hinder wedding planners from guaranteeing quality products and services to their clients. Ultimately, the execution of tasks on the day of the wedding and the attainment of goals set for the wedding at the beginning of the event planning process may be compromised. Consequently, Moran (2009) encourages wedding planners to maintain a list of vendors and service providers who are reputable and can support varied themes.

Material constraints ($\beta=.231$; $p=.000$) also contributed significantly to the variance in the wedding organisation process. Material constraints occur when the quality and quantity of materials needed to execute a wedding are unattainable. Failure to get materials that meet the specifications set out during the wedding design and planning stages can result in challenges in actualisation of the wedding theme and specific tasks on the day of the event given that not all elements of the event can be realised in the manner in which they were stated in the wedding planners' proposal. This finding supports findings by Smith and Smith (2007) on the adverse effects of material shortages on the ability of SMEs to meet set goals.

Lastly, policy constraints ($\beta=.170$; $p=.027$) accounted for the smallest percentage of variance in wedding planning. Policies constraints occur when the rules, regulations and guidelines for procedures within an organisation inhibit the attainment of the event and organisational goals. Implicitly, firms needed to develop policies rules and regulations for administration, design, marketing, operations and risk management domains identified in the EMBOK model. This will ensure that tasks carried out within the domains and phases facet are supported by an efficient framework.

Essentially, policies and procedures inform the processes facet of the EMBOK model which according to Silvers *et al.* (2006) enable event planners to keep up with the evolving nature of events by facilitating assessment, selection, monitoring, communication and documentation of tasks. According to TOC the absence of this framework can result in physical constraints that limit operational capability within firms (Rahuman, 1998; Goldratt, 1988).

4.8 Constraint Management Methodologies

Below are the causes of action adopted by wedding planners to counteract the impact of constraints on the event planning process.

4.8.1 Access to Information to Improve Business Performance

Wedding planners indicated that they accessed information on how to improve business performance mainly from the internet. This implied that wedding planners were able to access information on trends and industry practices from practitioners all over the world. Walters and Lancater (1999) acknowledged the importance of the internet as a source of information that can inform new product development for existing and new markets. This finding concurs with Dutta and Evrad (1999) findings on uses of the internet for researching information in 80 companies located in six European countries.

In addition, firms carried out market research when funding was available with the aim of identifying current trends in wedding planning. This finding implied that wedding planning firms were unable to consistently carry out research and gather information to improve performance. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2012), partnerships between small firms can overcome this challenge and facilitate knowledge sharing.

4.8.2 Financial Constraint Management

The study revealed several ways in which wedding planners managed financial constraints. Firstly, firms took bank overdrafts and used personal savings to keep the business afloat during the low seasons. Secondly, wedding planners supplemented their income by organizing additional events such as corporate events, meetings and conventions. This implied that wedding planning firms acquired additional financial resources to enhance the constraints capacity given that financial constraints were

attributed to insufficient cash flowing into the business during low seasons. This constraint management methodology was a replica of step four of the TOC model that requires the constraint capacity to be elevated in order for a system to reach its set goal (Dettmer, 1997). In this case, for the event to have a successful outcome, wedding planning firms need to have sufficient cash flow.

4.8.3 Supplier Constraint Management

In order to overcome supplier constraints, wedding planners used two approaches. Firstly, planners kept a list of suppliers with whom they had worked with before. These suppliers had a previous relationship and good rapport with the planners. Moreover, they had a track record and the planner therefore felt confident in recommending them to the couple. The criteria for selection of suppliers concurred with those stipulated by Moran (2009) which require that planners be vetted on the basis of references, years of experience and professionalism.

Secondly, the planners ensured that contracts between the supplier and the couple were drawn up and the parameters for delivery set. This indicated that wedding planning firms instituted a policy on supplier management to safeguard the firm and couple from delivery problems with suppliers. This constraint management mechanism also follows the TOC model which requires that organizations policies and procedures regarding constraints be changed or implemented to fully support the strategy behind constraint alleviation (Goldratt, 1988).

4.8.4 Market Demand

The interviews revealed the approaches currently employed by wedding planners to overcome market constraints were related to demand and seasonality of business. In order to increase demand for their services, planners opted to market themselves

aggressively at local bridal fairs and exhibitions such as the bi-annual Samantha Bridal Fair. The aim of participating in these fairs and exhibitions was to showcase service offerings which would stimulate demand. This concurred with Pfister and Tierney (2009) assertion that demand for augmented products and services can be stimulated by increasing awareness on product or service features. However wedding planners who participated in these fairs and exhibitions still indicated that despite increasing their presence at these fairs, demand for planners is still relatively low.

In addition to fairs and exhibitions, planners also generated articles and features in local bridal magazines targeting couples who were yet to take their nuptials such as The Eve Bridal Magazine and The Samantha Bridal Magazine. Also firms attempted to increase their presence online through websites, pages in social networking sites and blogs. In the United States over 80% of couples do their weddings research online and over 7.5 million bridal magazines are purchased each year (NMOA, 1999). When these two media are combined, wedding planners are likely to reach a wide audience.

With regard to seasonality of demand, wedding planners advised clients to select off-peak seasons citing favourable discounts from suppliers and availability of materials during those periods. As a result planners noted an increase in the number of weddings in Nairobi being held on Fridays and during the month of February. This finding supports Baum and Lundtorp (2001) claim of enhanced value for money experienced by people who opt for tourism experiences during low seasons. This action is further supported by Harrison (2008) who indicated that couples could save as much as 10-20 percent when they held weddings during off peak season (November 1 and April 30) in the United States.

4.8.5 Staff Competencies Constraint Management

The study revealed that constraints related to staff competencies were overcome by having a standard staff list which consisted of employees who could be trained prior to the event. Moreover, wedding planners evaluated the performance of staff after every wedding to determine who was eligible to participate in the next event. This finding implied that though firms relied heavily on external employment models, wedding planners still remained committed to building skills for competitive advantage regardless of whether staff were employed on a temporary or permanent basis. Consequently, this finding differs from Lepak *et al.* (2003) findings where firms that employed a large percentage of staff on contract illustrated low commitment towards development of skills.

4.8.6 Resource Constraint Management Methods

The study revealed that wedding planners attempted to access more facilities, equipment, and staff before competitors when demand was at its peak. Facilities and equipment were usually acquired by lease or on short contracts for staff by making reservations before the peak season begun. With regard to material resources whose supply is usually fixed, wedding planners encouraged couples to host events during off peak seasons when materials such as flowers were readily available. Resource constraint management methods coincided with TOC assertion that all constraints should be utilized to maximum capacity so long as they are available and that all other functions in the business should facilitate the functioning of that constraint (Schrageheim & Dettmer, 2001).

4.8.7 Policy Formulation

Respondents indicated that once the cause of failure for a particular event was revealed after monitoring and evaluation, policies were revised in order to ensure all events in

the future yielded the desired outcome. This finding is supported by Agarwal (2008) who ascertained that policies that were periodically reviewed and modified helped firms remain dynamic and responsive to changes in the business environment.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the contents of the first four chapters. In addition it includes a summary of major findings, conclusions drawn, recommendations for policy and practice and recommendations for further research.

5.2 Summary of Major Findings

The study established that wedding planners had an average of five years' work experience with 52% of firms having been in operation for less than 5 years. Wedding planning firms also employed staff on a permanent and temporary basis but had a tendency to contract a larger percentage of temporary staff in comparison to permanent staff. In addition to wedding planning, respondent firms revealed that the range of events they produced went beyond weddings including conferences and conventions, business and corporate events, sporting events and festivals.

The study also revealed that planners were largely contracted to carry out wedding coordination and execution tasks on the day of the event. In contrast fewer firms were involved in determination of the clients' goals, needs and expectations and post event evaluation which are critical to the wedding planning process. As a result wedding planners indicated that they faced challenges in creating an environment tailored to clients' needs, monitoring standards as well as event coordination and execution.

The study also revealed a high adeptness in the performance of planning tasks by wedding planners in Nairobi County. Markedly, tasks whose performance was below par were identified as debriefing and monitoring of standards after the event. The first

hypothesis was tested and accepted therefore establishing that there was no significant difference in expertise held by wedding planners based on the duration of operation.

Major constraints faced by wedding planning firms were identified as inadequate information to improve business performance, insufficient cash flow, and unreliability of suppliers in responding to orders, unavailability of facilities to satisfy demand, low demand for services and unavailability of equipment to satisfy demand. The second hypothesis was tested and accepted therefore establishing that there was no significant difference in constraints faced by wedding planners based on the duration of operation. Additionally, stepwise multiple regression was used to test the third hypothesis which was ultimately rejected as finance, resource, competence, supplier, material and policy constraints were established to have a significant impact on the event outcome.

Finally, the study established that firms attempted to manage different constraints in different ways. The strategies used included: sourcing for information to improve business performance over the internet and by conducting market research; financial constraint elimination by sourcing for additional funds and organizing additional events to increase cash flow during low seasons; supplier constraint management by working with credible suppliers with whom contracts had been signed and terms of delivery defined; increasing demand for services by participating in fairs and exhibitions, generating features in the media and encouraging clients to hold weddings during low seasons; staff competencies were improved by training both permanent and temporary staff; resource constraint management by encouraging clients to host weddings during off peak seasons when resource supply was unconstrained and review of policies rules and recommendations after monitoring and evaluation.

5.4 Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were drawn:

- Since professional wedding planning continues to attract new entrants, it appears to be a lucrative business.
- Over reliance on temporary staff can pose challenges related to retention of core skills and competencies which were likely to compromise service delivery in future weddings.
- Wedding planning firms had neither reached maturity nor accumulated enough resources therefore firms favored the organization of revenue generating events against events that were organized voluntarily and consumed limited resources.
- Wedding planners offered a highly customized product.
- Wedding planners were able to research, plan, design and execute events with a high level of expertise.
- Failure to monitor and evaluate events were an impediment to continuous improvement given that little feedback was available for improvement of task performance.
- Performance outcomes of wedding organization firms were influenced by inadequate information, insufficient cash flow, unreliability of suppliers in responding to orders, unavailability of facilities to satisfy demand and low demand for products and services.
- Duration of operation had no significant impact on expertise and constraints faced by wedding planning firms.
- Firms managed different constraints adequately by ensuring that resources were fully utilized and increasing the constraint capacity.

5.5 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- Wedding planning firms need to use a combination of internal and external employment models to enhance flexibility in staff numbers and skill and competency retention.
- Wedding planning firms should monitor and evaluate research, design, planning and evaluation phases to enable continuous improvement.
- Wedding planning firms need to form clusters in event hubs such as Nairobi to enable sharing of information, organization of major events and improved marketing.
- Wedding planning firms need to develop policies focused on the elimination of financial and supplier constraints that negatively influence cash flow and reliability in service delivery respectively.

5.6 Recommendations for Further Research

The study examined constraints caused by variables in direct control of the firm's management. Futures studies into variables influencing event success may focus on:

- The identification of additional constraints not included within the TOC framework that influence the wedding planning process.
- Establishment of constraints faced by firms that organized other events such as conferences, civic events and sports events among others.
- Perceptions on constraints from additional stakeholders involved in the wedding planning process.
- An inquiry into constraints faced by wedding planners in other cities in Kenya

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APPENDICES**APPENDIX 1: LIST OF WEDDING PLANNERS (SAMPLING FRAME)**

	WEDDING PLANNING FIRM		WEDDING PLANNING FIRM
1	Milele Weddings and Events Ltd	16	Bride big day
2	Aura Creations	17	Lavida Events
3	Bliss Events and Wedding Planners	18	West breeze hotel
4	Ruthediza events	19	The Essen Lync
5	Beltons	20	Cocos Kenya
6	Divine Weddings Ltd	21	Mawenzi Gardens
7	House of brides	22	Gowns and roses
8	Malaika Brides	23	Buridani divas
9	Nairobi Wedding bells	24	Weddings and more
10	Sparkle events Kenya	25	Seraphic Events Management
11	Elegant weddings and event planners	26	Cool breeze gardens
12	Glamour Events	27	Expat events and décor
13	Glitterati Events	28	Fine Weddings
14	Function Masters	29	Westminster Events Centre
15	Reenaul events	30	Kenya Wedding Center

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE COVER LETTER

Christine Olanga,
T129/12745/2009,
Department of Hospitality and Tourism
management,
Kenyatta University,
P.O.BOX 43844, 00100,
NAIROBI.

.....
.....
.....

Dear Sir/ Madam,

**RE: REQUEST FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH AT
YOUR ESTABLISHMENT**

I am a master’s student from the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management in Kenyatta University. I am carrying out a study on the **Impact of Constraints on Wedding Organization by Wedding Planners in Nairobi, Kenya**. This study aims to communicate factors that restrict performance among wedding planning practitioners and recommend methodologies for effective management to assure events success. Furthermore, this study intends to sensitize stakeholders in the tourism industry on the importance of developing a collective vision and enabling business environment to support the growth of wedding organization beyond the domestic market.

Kindly assist me by answering these questions as accurately as possible. Confidentiality of any information given is assured and will be used for research purposes only.

Thank you.

Christine Olanga.

APPENDIX 4: WEDDING PLANNER'S INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INSTRUCTIONS:

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTS. TICK THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER IN THE SPACES PROVIDED. GIVE EXPLANATIONS FOR YOUR ANSWERS IN THE SPACES PROVIDED WHERE APPLICABLE.

PART A: COMPANY PROFILE

1. How long has this company been organizing weddings? (months, years)

2. How many employees work for this organization at all branches?

Permanent _____

Temporary _____

3. Aside from weddings, what other events does your company organize?

(Please indicate your response by ticking the appropriate response below)

Business and corporate events

Exhibitions and festivals

Festivals

Marketing events

Cause related and fundraising events

Entertainment and leisure events

Government and civic events

Sports events

Meetings and conventions

4. Which of the following aspects of wedding organization does your firm perform on behalf of its clients?

Please indicate your response by ticking the appropriate response below.

Concept research and idea generation

Design of an environment to satisfy client needs

Management of the client's finances allocated for the wedding

Wedding execution and coordination

Measuring success of the wedding after the event

5. Rate your firm's ability to carry out the following tasks.

Please indicate your response by ticking the appropriate response below.

Planning Tasks	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Determining stakeholder goals, objectives, needs and expectations					
Creating a wedding environment tailored to clients specifications					
Putting together a proposal					
Budget preparation					
Putting together a program					
Site comparison					
Site selection					
Creating time for pre-event client meetings					
Creating time for site inspections					
Creating time for vendor meetings					
Coordination of human resources					
Negotiation of vendor contracts					
Coordination of logistics integration among participants					
Monitoring standards					
Debriefing staff after the wedding					

6. A. Does your firm face any challenges when planning weddings?

B. Mention the challenges faced during wedding planning as indicated in question 7(A) above.

7. Rate the availability of the production factors within your firm.

Please indicate your response by ticking the appropriate response below.

	Inadequate	Adequate	Abundant
Demand for your firms products and services			
Availability of staff to satisfy demand			
Availability of equipment to satisfy demand			
Availability of facilities to satisfy demand			
Availability of materials in the correct quantity to satisfy demand			
Availability of materials in the correct quality to satisfy demand			
Reliability of suppliers in responding to orders			
Cash flow to sustain the operation			
Availability of information to improve business performance			
Staff skill levels to carry out set tasks			
Firms rules, regulations and policies			

8. What action(s) has your firm taken to improve its performance and ensure success at organizing weddings in future?