

The Bridal Industry through the Pandemic  
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Prior to the pandemic, the bridal industry was a huge market. But when the pandemic hit, it caused a lot of uncertainty and the industry was forced to make drastic changes to adapt to the new way of life. The industry experienced a tremendous decrease in demand due to the lack of weddings, because of restrictions and fear causing people to cancel weddings.

The pandemic greatly affected the industry because going in person and trying on a wedding dress is typically a significant part of the wedding process, but this was no longer possible. Bridal stores instead offered Zoom fittings. Bridal runway shows were also moved virtually to social media. Some people even did virtual weddings. Backyard and courthouse weddings grew increasingly popular since people did not want large gatherings due to safety hazards. According to Julie Bonvillian, owner of Chez Lilli Bridal, there were more weddings in backyards and courthouses in the last 12 months than the last 18 years. Since people were having smaller weddings in backyards, they no longer felt the need to buy luxurious, expensive dresses; instead, they dressed down. People were buying dresses that cost anywhere from \$200 to \$1500, which is much less than dress purchases we typically see in the bridal industry. This has led to a new era of casual gowns. Designer Erdem Moralioglu recently released a new collection called “The White Collection”, consisting of casual bridal gowns. A lot of brides also chose the option of renting bridal gowns during the lockdown. A place in London offers a 5-day wedding dress rental for only 90 pounds. Many wedding dress designers also switched to becoming mask designers to fulfill new demands.

The wedding industry experienced a change in various cultures. Prior to the pandemic weddings were a big part of Indian culture. India is known for having some of the largest, most expensive weddings in the world. Pre-pandemic, weddings were typically 5-day celebrations consisting of around 500 guests. The daughter of the richest man in India had a wedding with a total cost of one million dollars. But when the pandemic hit there were no events, no retail, no shopping, and no business in India. 75% of weddings were rescheduled and 80% of those weddings made compromises. Prior to the pandemic, the average wedding in New Jersey was \$53,400 and in Rhode Island the average was \$49,800. During the pandemic the average costs decreased drastically because backyard weddings cost nowhere near those prices.

After surviving the pandemic, the bridal industry has begun preparing for the future. Kelly Faetanini offers at-home try-ons now. The bride selects her favorite dresses from the website, then she has a 30-minute consultation, followed by an hour try-on at home and a virtual fitting, and then the dresses are shipped to her. The downfall of this process is that each dress costs \$50 to try on and the client is only allowed to keep them for two days, so it is a rushed process. Due to normality starting to return to society, there will be a lot of weddings in 2022. The bridal industry is expected to experience the busiest wedding season in 2022 since 1984. The Pittsburg Botanic Garden, a popular wedding venue, is already booked for every weekend in 2022, even some Thursdays and Mondays, which are not typical days for wedding. They are even booked for most of 2024 already. The bridal industry must continue to prepare for the large demand in weddings and adapt to the rise of e-commerce.

