

Wedding Industry Trends

2008

Consumer and Industry Trends
by The Wedding Report

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Wedding Industry Trends

This report covers consumer and industry trends with a focus on the overall wedding industry. Consumer trends look at what consumers are talking about and searching for, while industry trends look at what the industry is pushing as trends.

Overall Trends

- Designers are pushing wedding dresses with alternative styles and necklines, but brides still favor the strapless gown.
- The biggest trend for bridesmaids' attire is the wear-again dress.
- Couples still prefer traditional white wedding cakes, but custom-designed cakes are becoming popular.
- Consistently designed invitations, save-the-date cards, programs, escort/place cards, menus, and thank-you cards are becoming trendy.
- Cinematic videography is a new and exciting alternative to standard photography and video services.
- Online photo showcasing, which allows couples, their family and friends to view, share and purchase wedding photographs is a rising trend.
- Extravagant weddings that include big gowns, multiple wardrobe changes, towering lush floral centerpieces, gilded place settings, seven course meals, and elaborate desert displays are expected for 2008.
- 1980's fashion styles are popular, including textured dresses, bright colors, wide belts or sashes, big jewelry, and cover bands.
- White gold and platinum wedding rings continue to outpace yellow gold.
- Currently in style are antique wedding rings for men and women, as well as exaggerated, big, bold jewelry.
- Destination weddings are growing in popularity due to all-inclusive packages offered by resorts and easy planning through their websites.
- High-end kitchen gear and practical cooking items are currently popular wedding gifts.

Wedding Attire

Tiered wedding gowns continue to be quite popular and are part of a bigger trend of textured gowns designed with pleats and ruffles for a more romantic look. In addition, the gowns shown on runways this year offer a range of silhouettes, proportions, as well as extravagant and unusual fabrics. While designers have tried to veer away from strapless wedding dresses,

customers are still demanding them.¹ Mermaid dresses are currently quite fashionable, but strapless gowns continue to be a favorite for brides, as they provide elegance and prestige while working well with most figures.² However, they are currently competing against a variety of other styles, including halter and off-the-shoulder necklines, slip and lace-up bustier bodices, as well as beaded straps.³ Halter and V-necklines are growing in popularity and tend to be more flattering for various body shapes.⁴

Steel gray is replacing chocolate brown as the hottest accent color for 2008, and vintage style wedding dresses made with fabrics like chiffon and tulle are also expected to be quite popular.⁵ In addition, beaded straps, keyhole halter necklines and lace sleeves are stylish new accents to wedding dresses this year. In fashion shows for spring of 2008, designers emphasized the waists of their dresses or accented them with wide belts. Bridal gowns are expected to follow suit with designs that highlight the waist or draw attention to it by using bold color sashes. In addition, silver and metallic colored dresses and accents are becoming popular, and yellow gowns are expected to make a splash on the wedding scene, a color that is fresh, energetic and summery.⁶

Destination weddings continue to be one of the hottest trends, and designers are responding to brides' increasing demand for more sophisticated styles.³ Since beach weddings are becoming increasingly popular, the demand for lighter, simpler wedding dresses is also appearing. One designer who fills this niche is Nicole Miller, whose gowns are casual, lightweight and affordable.⁷ In addition, Vatana Watters' collection reflects the preferences of these brides, particularly with her use of fine French laces and fabrics like organza, shantung, silk charmeuse and satin. These light and featherweight fabrics are ideal for beach and tropical weddings.³

Brides are also beginning to show sensitivity towards their bridesmaids by choosing gowns that stem away from the classic style of bridesmaid dresses. Popular trends include knee-skimming hems, which automatically increases the dress's wearability, unstructured shapes, and bright, bold colors like electric blue, hot pink and canary yellow. Cool colors are also trendy, including metallics, such as silver, copper, bronze and pewter.⁴ Nicole Miller's bridesmaid dresses are popular, as well, since they are not necessarily traditional in style and can be worn to other occasions in the future.⁷ The executive vice-president for merchandising of David's Bridal has also seen a trend in the wear-again dress, a gown that is not really a bridesmaid dress. They vary from knee-length to tea length and are often inspired by the red carpet cocktail dresses of celebrities, including plunging necklines and custom details. Gowns today are also more casual and free-flowing.⁸

¹ Tighter and brighter for 2008, *News & Observer*, Jan 7, 2008.

² www.weddingchannel.com

³ Destination brides marry in style, *Daily News*, Oct 20, 2007.

⁴ Stylish solutions for bridesmaids, *USA Today*, Jan 9, 2008.

⁵ www.theknot.com

⁶ 2008 Wedding Trends, www.about.com.

⁷ Here comes the bride. *Honolulu Advertiser*, Nov 3, 2007.

⁸ The bride made me buy this, *New York Times*, Jan 10, 2008.

Another new trend in attire is Disney's Princess line, a \$4 billion business that's on its way to becoming the most successful marketing venture ever. Originally created in 2000 as a line of clothes marketed towards girls and tweens, it now includes an entire line of wedding dresses inspired by princess characters. Starting at \$1,000, these gowns are designed to appeal to the working and middle-class woman interested in trading up, since princesses in fairy tales usually come from humble beginnings. Kristie Kelly, who designs the line, says that Belle is stylish sophistication. She's someone who could be a doctor or lawyer but is still a romantic at heart. Jasmine is bohemian chic and adventurous, Cinderella is classic glamour, Snow White is sweet elegance and Ariel is a sultry sexier bride.⁹

Wedding Cakes

Women who post their wedding cakes on website forums are currently displaying a preference for traditional plain white cakes, either round or square, sometimes with decorative frosting. A few cakes are also accented with actual ribbons of color wrapped around each tier. In addition, monogrammed wedding toppers are still quite trendy. Other trends include the addition of real flower petals to cakes instead of the costlier sugar frosting versions. Cake top jewelry is also currently stylish; for example, adding gems to monogram toppers. In addition, asymmetrical tiered wedding cakes create a fresh and modern sculptured look.¹⁰

One baker claims that bold colored cakes are becoming trendy, while many couples still prefer traditional all-white wedding cakes. She also mentions that white cake under the icing is the most popular choice, followed by chocolate and red velvet.¹¹ Elegantly styled cupcakes continue to be a popular alternative to traditional wedding cakes.¹²

Custom-designed cakes are also in demand as brides strive for uniqueness. The most popular requests include cakes with intricate designs, lace and scrollwork, as well as cascades of sugar flowers. Fresh flowers are replacing traditional toppers and some couples choose expensive porcelain figures that sit next to the cake instead of resting on top. Brides are also able to choose from flavorful icings, fillings, exotic flavors and all-natural, organic or vegan ingredients. When the budget allows, brides are opting for a bridal shower cake, as well, which is usually much more colorful.¹³

Wedding Flowers

⁹ Princess Power, *Newsweek*, Dec 3, 2007.

¹⁰ www.brides.com

¹¹ Wedding cakes take center stage in new Martha book, *Connecticut Post*, Jan 22, 2008.

¹² Cupcakes runneth over, *Star-Ledger*, Jan 9, 2008.

¹³ The sky is the limit for wedding cakes, *Newsday*, Oct 21, 2007.

Alternatives to traditional vases for reception centerpieces include antique watering cans for a country theme or large conch shells for a tropical wedding. Brides are also adorning their bridesmaids with flowered wreaths for their hair instead of the traditional bouquets. In addition, unstructured ribbon-tied bouquets are currently very popular, especially vivid monochromatic tones.⁵ Another idea is the use of beads, brooches and jewelry to dress up a ribbon-wrapped bouquet.¹⁰

Wedding Invitations and Stationery

Many couples are continuing to go the do-it-yourself route when it comes to invitations and reply cards, as they attempt to save money for other wedding expenses. Black and white traditional invitations remain trendy, but brighter and bolder colors are also currently in style. Some couples are adding photographs of themselves to the invitations, while others see this development as tacky. Many people are also talking about highly customized invitation websites. It seems some couples are willing to spend more money if they feel they are buying unique, high-quality invites.

One owner of a fine stationery business has been seeing couples experiment with color, texture, size and patterns in sophisticated layers. Another insists that the pocketfold invitation, which unfolds to reveal the reception card, reply card, envelope, and directions, is the biggest local trend. Many couples are also choosing to customize and personalize their invitations, save-the-date cards, escort and place cards, menus, ceremony programs and thank-you cards so that they are all designed consistently.¹⁴

Some couples prefer originality when mailing their wedding invitations, like sending beach themed invitations in sand-filled bottles in cardboard mailers. Other ideas include sending elegant messages with couture invitations featuring French silk ribbons, handcrafted jeweled brooches and essential oil scents. On the other hand, couples can save money by creating a wedding website that includes logistics like parking, accommodations and directions instead of including costly enclosures in the invitation. Some couples find it unnecessary to send save-the-date cards unless the wedding is taking place at a popular time or a faraway destination.¹⁰

Wedding Photography

Just as Trash-the-Dress style photography--which incorporates more outlandish creativity and artistry into bridal portraits--began catching on in recent years, new developments in cinematic videography are taking place. While couples could have a family member or friend videotape the events, some are willing to add the expense of an experienced videographer who can turn their wedding footage into a film-like creation. Edited for maximum emotional impact, some believe these videos come closer to the actual 'feeling' of the day than a straightforward

¹⁴ Couples use stationery to send customized messages, *Wedding Supplement*, Winter 2007.

documentary that replays the action but does little to evoke how it felt to actually be there. For brides who want their wedding to feel like a movie, hiring a cinematic videographer appears to be a great way to relive their special day as if it were.¹⁵

Having disposable cameras available on the tables during the reception is still quite popular as it allows the guests to be creative with candid shots throughout the evening. Other trends include using Infrared film, which creates glowing dreamy auras and dramatic color schemes, as well as fisheye lenses, wide-angled lenses that create a distorted, rounded view resulting in unique, eye-catching photographs. Also quite popular is online photo showcasing, which allows couples, their family and friends to view, share and purchase wedding photographs online in as little as a few days or weeks after the wedding.²

Wedding Receptions

New trends in wedding reception ideas include using feathers or hanging candles as centerpieces instead of the standard flower and candle displays. Some couples are using traditional vases that hold tall tree branches ornamented with hanging candles. Many people are also talking about using picture slideshows during the reception, which includes photographs of the bride and groom growing up, as well as their courtship and life together thus far. Some choose to stop the reception to play the slideshow, while others are opting to have it run continuously on a screen throughout the evening.

Vibrant colors and tableset designs, including tinted glassware are a current trend in receptions.² Yellow and grey accent colors are expected to be incorporated into wedding color schemes this year, and white is also predicted to make a strong comeback, displayed in white orchid centerpieces and solid white wedding cakes.¹⁶ In addition, winter weddings with wonderland themes are an alternative to the usual summer wedding.⁶

Other forecasts in 2008 include extravagant weddings inspired by Sophia Coppola's fashionable movie about Marie Antoinette. These events are likely to include big gowns, multiple wardrobe changes, elaborate place settings, hand-painted invitations, lush floral centerpieces, champagne-tasting bars, seven course meals, elaborate desert displays, as well as the hiring of '80s cover bands. Centerpieces are predicted to go from low and simple to lush and towering, in order to compliment the gilded place settings and brocade linens. Sampling bars are also a rising trend, including wine and cheese stations and champagne tasting before the reception begins. Other predictions include 'green' celebrations by earth-conscious couples who want to serve locally grown food and wear bio-friendly wedding gowns made of 100 percent silk or cotton.¹⁶

¹⁵ Trashing the dress . . . on film and video, *EventDV*, Nov 2007.

¹⁶ The Knot reveals 2008 wedding trends, *National Jeweler*, Jan 2008.

Wedding Rings and Jewelry

White gold and platinum wedding bands have now outpaced yellow gold by two to one in popularity. Platinum is especially popular because of its purity, rarity and durability. In addition, men's rings are getting bigger and more intricate, with a rise in demand for engraved patterns, such as scrollwork or filigree. Men are also choosing rings that incorporate diamonds into the bands, particularly burnished-set stones that are set flush with the band instead of raised.⁵

Ring designers are seeing colored gems and engagement rings with extra diamonds surrounding the larger stone as popular styles. Settings with elaborate and raised stones, and twisted wedding bands are also trendy.⁵ Colored stones and stacked wedding bands are alternatives to the traditional engagement and wedding band combination. Piling wedding bands on top of one another creates a striking look and paves the way for future anniversary additions, as well. Recycling wedding rings is another growing trend, whether it be passing down family heirlooms or melting the metal of older rings and using it in a newly designed creation.¹⁷ Vintage-style bands and antique rings are also quite trendy for 2008. Detailed designs include scroll-like engraving, microset (tiny half-point) diamonds, delicate milgrain work, raised beaded edges, and filigree.⁵

Antique rings with cushion and Asscher-cut diamonds, which were very stylish in the 1920s, are currently popular among brides. These diamonds are square-shaped and designed to reflect candlelight while drawing the eye into the stone. These cuts also complement pavé-set bands, which are currently trendy, as well. Big, bold jewelry is also quite popular on the fashion runways this year, including wide bracelets, chandelier and long, thin shoulder-skimming earrings, as well as larger-than-life necklaces, such as chokers with six strings of pearls.²

Destination Weddings

According to one survey, destination weddings have increased by 400 percent in the last ten years,¹⁸ representing about ten percent of the total market.¹⁹ Caribbean and Mexican locales, where resorts often offer complete packages, continue to be trendy among destination wedding planners. The Mayan Riviera and the city to its north, Cancun, is one of the most popular places for tropical weddings. Currently, trips to European cities, which are farther away and now more expensive due to the current Euro-to-dollar exchange rate, have decreased in popularity. All-inclusive packages are also much less common in Europe.²¹

Other popular destinations include Jamaica, the Bahamas, Aruba, Hawaii, Florida, the Carolinas, Lake Tahoe and Las Vegas.¹⁹ Many resorts in these areas are beginning to offer wedding and honeymoon packages for various styles and budgets. These packages are appealing to couples who want to avoid stress and not have to do a great deal of planning.²¹ Some resorts have

¹⁷ Lore of the Rings, *Honolulu Advertiser*, Nov 9, 2007.

¹⁸ Destination Weddings - daunting or delightful?, *Greenwich Post*, Oct 25, 2007.

¹⁹ Destined for happiness, *Wedding*, Winter 2008.

completely altered their websites to accommodate couples who are planning weddings. For instance, the San Juan Marriott Resort designed their website to serve wedding planners and do-it-themselves couples by providing all the information necessary to choose everything from appetizers to accommodations. The website also includes a list of specialized local vendors and couples are able to make all their decisions at their computer with the click of a button.²⁰

Couples are also able to spend less money on attire, hair, makeup and jewelry due to the casual style of destination weddings.²² Other advantages include a longer period of time spent with close family and friends, including extra outings and events, instead of one hectic day. While some guests might not be able to afford to attend, others are excited to add a vacation to their trip for the wedding. Couples often also use the money they save on the wedding to plan a reception back at home at a later date to accommodate those who were unable to make the trip.²¹

Honeymoon

Couples are using websites like tripadvisor.com to plan their honeymoons. These sites offer customer reviews of specific destinations, hotels and resorts, as well as discussion forums. Couples can also view photographs and videos, find out about vacation packages, things to do in the area, and other travel information.

Wedding Favors

Common wedding favors include Jordan Almonds, whose bittersweet taste is said to signify life, and the sugar coating is added to ensure a sweeter marriage. Traditionally, couples have given guests five almonds to represent health, wealth, longevity, fertility and happiness.²² Other current trends for favors include items that are both beautiful and functional, such as edible treats, personalized wine bottles, and potted herbs or plants.²

Wedding Gifts

Many modern couples prefer practical gifts such as barbecue tools and ice cream bowls as opposed to traditional items like china. Casual entertaining trends also suggest that unpretentious serving items will be seen on registries more often than things like sterling silver.²³ Other popular registry trends include essential items for entertaining, such as glassware, tableware, serveware and accessories like wine openers. Premium kitchenware gifts are also in high demand.²

²⁰ New website makes destination weddings easy, *Business Wire*, Nov 6, 2007.

²¹ A (big) day at the beach, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Dec 9, 2007.

²² Thank-yous of note, *Indianapolis Star*, Jan 1, 2008.

²³ 'I do' gifts made easy, *Journal Gazette*, Jan 29, 2008.

Gift cards are a popular gift choice for weddings and all kinds of other occasions. Couples especially like gift cards because they can choose gifts that they want or didn't receive at the wedding. Since newlyweds are usually trying to save money and don't have a lot of space for tons of gifts, gift cards are an easy alternative for guests who have trouble choosing what to give.²⁴

Charity registries are also growing in popularity as some couples choose to forgo gifts altogether and ask guests to make donations to their favorite charity.²⁵

²⁴ The perfect gift, *Hattiesburg American*, Jan 19, 2008.

²⁵ WeddingChannel.com 2008 Celebrity Wedding Trends, *Business Wire*, Jan 15, 2008.