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## HOW THE WEDDING INDUSTRY IS GETTING MILLENNIALIZED

MILLENNIALS ARE POWERING THE TRENDS THAT ARE CHANGING WEDDING TRADITIONS, FORCING LONG-TIME INDUSTRY GIANTS TO RETHINK THEIR METHODS, AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MORE UP-TO-DATE STARTUPS...

They might be built on tradition, but weddings are swiftly changing in the era of Millennial brides and grooms, who still want the “I-dos” but have their own approach to the milestone—from the engagement to the getaway. While stunts avocado proposals [might make headlines](#), we’re talking about the bigger picture preferences of a generation of couples that are more likely to get married later in life, pay for their own weddings, and want to throw a memorable ceremony and reception that reflect their personalities. When we asked 18-35-year-olds what they most want their wedding to be, their top answers were “fun,” “personal,” “intimate,” and “unique”—while less than one in ten say they want their day to be traditional.

Millennials [have told us](#) all about the wedding trends they see on the rise as a result of their generation’s unique approach, from digital details to cake alternatives—and these new takes on tradition are shifting the massive wedding industry in ways both big and small.

### THE RING

Last year, we explored what [Millennials are looking for in engagement rings](#)—and how their inclinations are challenging the industry. Their [shifting definition of luxury](#) and status symbols, environmental and social concerns, and budgets have caused some real disruption, and while we find the majority still want a ring of some kind, they aren’t married (sorry) to the idea that that ring needs to be a big new diamond that costs a certain percentage of their salary.

They’re also open to non-traditional ways of finding that ring, shopping on Etsy, buying from smaller indie designers, and, of course, rule-breaking startups. Now, engagement rings are even getting [the Warby Parker treatment](#). Hayden Cudworth is a site that will ship five replica engagement rings or wedding bands to shoppers to try on at home, and show their “mother, best friend and sister.” Then, shoppers can customize their choice online to have the real thing shipped to them. The direct-to-consumer startup offers competitive pricing and a shopping experience tailored to a generation used to buying big things online and planning engagements as a couple.

### THE DRESS

Modern brides are demanding more affordable dresses [from indie brands](#)—and David’s Bridal is struggling to stay in vogue. According [to Insider](#), Moody’s dropped David’s Bridal rating to “negative” from “stable,” in February as “a reflection of the intense competition in the sector and casualization of both gowns and bridesmaids dresses.” H&M, ASOS, Reformation, and Anthropologie all offer [off-the-rack alternatives](#) to expensive and ornate wedding gowns. And though David’s Bridal has introduced a similar line, the dresses are less profitable. Some say marketing is the culprit because the staid brand needs to convince Millennial brides that they’re more than just a warehouse.

We recently [spoke with The Warby Parker of wedding dresses](#), Floravere, to find out more about the [shifting wedding attire industry](#). Floravere lets brides-to-be try at home and buy low-cost dresses, and then send them back for alterations—taking a piece of the market that David’s Bridal and other mass retailers are losing share of. The company delivers unique wedding dresses to the doorstep of soon-to-be brides about 10-15 weeks after purchase, a much faster turnaround time than bridal shops, which often make brides wait for six months. [Racked reports](#) that Floravere targets a “modern woman who’s very comfortable online and loves digital experiences.” But this digital brand also understands the need for some IRL interaction, so they have showrooms and pop-ups for brides who want to try before they buy. And when it comes to the styles, Floravere is appealing to the modern bride with social media trends, low-price points, and inclusive sizing.

## THE REGISTRY

Over half of 18-35-year-olds interested in marriage [tell us](#) they want to set up a registry online, more than those who tell us they want to set up a registry at a specific store. The digitalization of registries has been shifting the wedding gifting mainstay for some time—and it’s also created a new norm: the online fund registry. We began [covering the trend back in 2013](#), and it’s grown steadily since. Companies like Zola and HoneyPot have boomed in popularity, offering a personalized platform for their cash registries. More Millennials are opting for this more modern and flexible registry, which is bad news for stores like Bed Bath & Beyond and Williams Sonoma. Increasingly, young couples are asking guests to contribute towards their nest egg, travel, or anything they feel like buying themselves. As [Business Insider reports](#), these startups’ success with wedding registries is taking “a key customer acquisition tool” away from home décor stores. Of course, Millennials’ relatively advanced age when walking down the aisle is also at work here. Many in the generation have been living in a home together for years before getting married, and they just don’t need those traditional department store gifts anymore.

## THE EVENT

The latest Millennial wedding trend? Young people paying for their own weddings. Four in five Millennials [tell us](#) that the couple paying for the wedding themselves is in-style these days, and it’s not just happening in the U.S. A U.K. study from Bridebook [found that](#) the number of 25-35-year-olds who had financial help from their families for their big day is down 18%. The shift is partly due to Millennials’ rising age for getting hitched (meaning they’re financially prepared to pay), but also because they’re “approaching their own weddings much more as a party they are hosting for their loved ones, than vice versa.” Because the brides and grooms are more likely to pay for their event than ever before, they’re more likely to be making their own calls without the influence of the previous generation—which often means forgoing fussier traditions.

It may also be why destination weddings are trending with Millennials—they were the number six trend on [our list of new wedding traditions](#) Millennials have been seeing. As [Travel Weekly](#) outlined, unlike older generations, young couples want affordable, [Instagrammable](#), and “highly personalized” wedding retreats. They care about their guests’ experience, setting up group concierges to customize the trip for everyone involved. While they’re keeping costs down, “they are [still] a key demographic for any agency looking to increase its groups business,” emphasized the Apple Vacations president. One hotel manager also explained that Millennials’ destination weddings are “a balancing act for them to find the best price while keeping their standards Instagram-worthy.”

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