NEWS LESSON

Would You Let Strangers Inspect Your Wedding?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you enjoy an event if you knew nobody there?
2. What makes a celebration feel welcoming?
3. Who should get to decide the guest list at a wedding?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**polished**	☐	A	a building and the land around it
2	**firsthand**	☐	B	something unusual that happens or is noticed
3	**premises**	☐	C	made to look smooth and impressive
4	**commitment**	☐	D	made to face something difficult
5	**confronted**	☐	E	learned by seeing or doing it yourself
6	**milestone**	☐	F	the plans or reasons in someone's mind
7	**phenomenon**	☐	G	an important event in a person's life
8	**intentions**	☐	H	a serious promise to spend money or time

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

South Korean couples facing expensive packages and anxious planning are observing strangers' ceremonies to judge a venue properly. An industry that sells a flawless day may have taught them to manage one like a project.

1 Choosing a wedding venue can mean spending a lot before seeing what a real celebration feels like there. In South Korea, some couples have tried an unusual form of research: turning up at strangers' weddings without an invitation.

2 The so-called undercover tour allows potential customers to observe a venue under real operating conditions. A polished showroom presentation may demonstrate the quality of the decorations but reveal little about the flow of guests, the competence of the staff or the atmosphere during a ceremony. For a couple facing an expensive commitment, firsthand observation can seem considerably more valuable than another glossy brochure.

3 The underlying logic is that of any cautious consumer. A hall is sold through photographs taken in ideal conditions, and photographs are precisely what a real wedding cannot be judged by. Sizing the place up while it is working, with guests arriving, music playing and staff under pressure, is the one test a marketing department cannot stage.

4 Critics are unpersuaded. The comparison with other large purchases breaks down, they would argue, at the point where the thing being inspected is somebody else's family occasion: the hall may be for hire, but the afternoon is not. Discretion, on that reading, is less a question of etiquette than of consent.

5 The practice nevertheless exposes a conflict between consumer information and personal boundaries. Wedding venues are commercial premises, but the ceremonies taking place inside them are private occasions. The customers carrying out an unofficial inspection have not secured the consent of the people whose celebration they are observing, however harmless their intentions may appear.

6 Their behaviour can also be read as a response to the anxieties of modern wedding planning. Couples are encouraged to produce a flawless event while being confronted with complicated packages, limited availability and high prices. Under such conditions, ordinary consumer caution can shade into something closer to surveillance, and a booking starts to feel less like a purchase than a leap of faith.

7 Businesses therefore have every incentive to offer greater transparency. Permission-based observation sessions, realistic recordings of ceremonies and clearer explanations of total costs would reduce the temptation to turn up unannounced. A venue confident that its service stands up to scrutiny loses very little by allowing customers to see it properly.

8 Couples choosing a venue, for their part, may need to accept that no venue can guarantee the perfect atmosphere, since an occasion depends at least as much on the people attending as on the room they are in. Research can establish how a hall functions; it cannot establish how an evening will feel, which is why couples eventually have to fall back on judgement.

9 What makes the phenomenon more than an amusing social-media story is the way it blurs the distinction between a personal milestone and a commercial product. If a wedding has become something to be researched like a car or a property investment, perhaps the industry itself has helped create the behaviour it now finds so awkward. Couples who have been taught to treat their celebration as a project can hardly be blamed for managing it like one.

Sources: Korea JoongAng Daily. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer treats photographs taken in ideal conditions as a poor basis for judging a real wedding. T F NG
2. The writer says critics see the issue mainly as a matter of etiquette. T F NG
3. Most couples who made undercover tours later chose a different venue. T F NG
4. The writer suggests that harmless intentions do not settle the question of consent. T F NG
5. The writer thinks thorough research can remove all uncertainty about a venue. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

blurs	consent	incentive	obligation	reluctance	scrutiny	surveillance	unannounced

1. The proposal did not stand up to _____ , and its flaws soon became obvious.
2. A small discount is rarely enough of an _____ for a shopper to wait three weeks.
3. Guests were startled when the inspectors arrived _____ in the middle of the ceremony.
4. Photographs of guests should never be shared online without their _____ .
5. Hidden cameras at every door were part of a _____ system that recorded the staff all day.
6. Online shopping _____ the line between browsing and buying, because one click completes the purchase.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. Despite the manager's reassurances, the couple remained _____ that the hall was worth the price. (PERSUADE)
2. Customers demanded greater _____ about how deposits were calculated. (TRANSPARENT)
3. Her _____ to sign the contract grew when she noticed the small print. (RELUCTANT)
4. The staff handled the awkward situation with great _____ . (DISCREET)
5. A long contract leaves little _____ if your plans change. (FLEXIBLE)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. At C1, many phrasal verbs need a fixed particle and often a preposition after them, such as stem from and boil down to. Learn the whole chunk.

along aside down from onto out through

1. The row stemmed _____ a misunderstanding about the guest list.
2. The whole argument boils _____ to one question: should strangers be allowed in?
3. The planner promised to iron _____ any last-minute problems before the ceremony.
4. The venue brushed _____ the complaints as exaggerated.
5. The deal fell _____ at the last minute when the venue raised its prices.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Would you invite a stranger if they helped pay for the party?
2. When does saving money change the meaning of a private celebration?
3. What would matter more at your ideal party: the guests or the setting?

9 Role-play: can we visit your wedding?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the bride or groom

You are at your wedding. A stranger has come to speak to you. Ask who they are and why they came. Decide if they can stay, leave, or stay with a condition.

Student B · the visiting couple

You are planning your own wedding and you came in secret to see the hall. Explain why you came and say sorry. Ask if you can stay for a short time.

Useful phrases

Excuse me, who are you?

We're planning our own wedding.

I'm sorry, we didn't mean to upset you.

It's a private day, so I'd rather you left.

Could we stay for ten minutes?

I'd feel better if you'd asked first.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the couple stay, and was that fair?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 C · 2 E · 3 A · 4 H · 5 D · 6 G · 7 B · 8 F

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 scrutiny · 2 incentive · 3 unannounced · 4 consent · 5 surveillance · 6 blurs

6 Word forms

1 unpersuaded · 2 transparency · 3 reluctance · 4 discretion · 5 flexibility

7 Language focus

1 from · 2 down · 3 out · 4 aside · 5 through

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