NEWS LESSON

A Test Drive at Somebody Else's 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	**prospective**	☐	A	judging how good or bad something is
2	**layout**	☐	B	a person who buys things or services
3	**reveals**	☐	C	shows something that was hidden or not clear
4	**consumer**	☐	D	the way things are arranged in a place
5	**observer**	☐	E	not known to you
6	**marketed**	☐	F	advertised and sold in a particular way
7	**assessing**	☐	G	likely to become something in the future
8	**unfamiliar**	☐	H	a person who watches something without taking part

3 Read

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

Prospective customers want to see a hall under real pressure, with guests arriving and staff working. The couple paying for the day never agreed to the inspection.

1 Wedding guests normally have a simple reason for attending: they know the people getting married. But in South Korea, some couples have been turning up at strangers' ceremonies with an entirely different purpose. They want to inspect the venue before spending a large sum on their own celebration.

2 The practice, sometimes described as an "undercover tour", allows prospective customers to see a wedding hall in action. Advertisements and official viewings can make almost any room look attractive. A real event reveals far more practical detail, such as the layout, the lighting and the parking.

3 Couples have understandable reasons for weighing everything up so carefully. Packages can be expensive, deposits are often large, and there is considerable pressure to get every detail right. Choosing a venue without seeing how it performs during a real ceremony may feel risky, particularly when backing out later would mean losing money.

4 Supporters of the practice present it as sensible research. Nobody would buy a car without taking it out for a drive first, they argue, and a wedding can cost a great deal more than a car. Critics reply that a test drive does not involve sitting at the back of somebody else's family occasion.

5 But the method also creates an awkward ethical problem. A wedding is not a public product demonstration. Invited guests may feel uncomfortable when unfamiliar people wander around, and the couple getting married may resent strangers using their celebration for research. The people paying for the event have not agreed to become part of somebody else's shopping trip.

6 There is a question of scale here too. One quiet observer at the back of a large hall might never be noticed, whereas a steady stream of visitors would change the atmosphere completely. Much of the discomfort comes not from the behaviour itself but from the thought of being watched by people who are assessing the room rather than celebrating with you.

7 Venues could easily reduce the temptation. Supervised visits during real events, arranged with the couple's permission, would give customers the same information without the secrecy. Honest video tours and clear, detailed pricing would also help couples compare one hall with another and book with some peace of mind.

8 The story is a reminder that consumer pressure can produce unexpected behaviour. When an occasion is marketed as the most important day of someone's life, prospective customers start treating every detail as a financial risk. The real challenge is finding out enough to feel confident without crossing a line and turning another person's celebration into your research project.

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. Cancelling a booking could cost couples money, which makes the choice harder. T F NG
2. Critics reject the car comparison because they think a wedding is cheaper than a car. T F NG
3. A South Korean venue has asked the police to stop the visits. T F NG
4. One quiet observer in a big hall might go unnoticed, but many visitors would not. T F NG
5. The writer thinks honest video tours would make it harder to compare halls. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

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

atmosphere	considerable	ethical	reluctance	resent	scale	secrecy	temptation

1. Many couples _____ having strangers watch their wedding without permission.
2. Organising a wedding for two hundred guests takes a _____ amount of time and effort.
3. Some people argue that it is not _____ to use another family's celebration for your own research.
4. The plan was carried out in complete _____ , and not even the staff knew about it.
5. The soft lights and live music created a relaxed _____ in the hall.
6. It is hard to resist the _____ to peek at a stranger's party when you are curious.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Before the ceremony began, the staff _____ the hall. (CLEAN)
2. Two visitors _____ to leave the hall yesterday. (ASK)
3. By next June, the couple _____ their venue. (BOOK)
4. Some couples avoid _____ a large sum before they have seen a real event. (SPEND)
5. The practice has _____ a lot of criticism online. (ATTRACT)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Many phrasal verbs have a one-word meaning, such as weigh up (consider) or look into (investigate). Learn the meaning with the particle.

across **along** **apart** **into** **off** **through** **up**

1. Couples should weigh _____ the costs carefully before signing a contract.
2. The high price put many couples _____ booking that hall.
3. The manager promised to look _____ how the visitors got in.
4. Please go _____ the contract line by line before you sign it.
5. Yesterday I came _____ an article about wedding crashers.

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

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 resent · 2 considerable · 3 ethical · 4 secrecy · 5 atmosphere · 6 temptation

6 Verb forms

1 had cleaned · 2 were asked · 3 will have booked · 4 spending · 5 attracted

7 Language focus

1 up · 2 off · 3 into · 4 through · 5 across

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