

A useful lens for talking about wedding spending

The goal is not to make families spend less; it is to help them see which expenses create experience and which merely purchase reassurance that they will not look cheap.

Subject: A sharper framework for discussing wedding spending

The most useful idea to carry into your social posts is that rising wedding budgets are often driven less by extravagance than by comparison.

Veblen calls this process "pecuniary emulation": each group looks to the next level above it for a model of what is respectable, then treats that model as a new baseline. Because the comparison is relative, there is no stable point at which a family feels finished. Every beautiful choice can quietly become evidence in a larger question: Will this look generous enough? Current enough? Appropriate beside what peers, relatives, or Instagram have shown us?

That gives you a way to discuss status spending without attacking luxury. Conspicuous consumption is not simply wasteful shopping; it is the use of valuable goods as visible evidence of wealth and reputability. An expense can therefore have two kinds of value: the experience it creates for guests and the status reassurance it provides to the host. The two may overlap, but they are not identical.

A practical post could invite families to examine each major decision through three questions:

- Does this materially improve comfort, hospitality, beauty, or shared memory?
- Would we still want it if no comparable wedding could see it?
- Are we choosing it because it expresses our taste, or because reducing it feels like a public loss of rank?

The last question matters because status-related spending tends to become habitual. Veblen argues that a standard of living is easier to raise than to lower: once an expenditure is tied to self-respect and social decency, retrenchment can feel like failure rather than choice. That helps explain why families may defend a costly convention even after its original purpose has disappeared.

There is also a productive tension worth preserving. You are not arguing that practical value is the only value. Beauty, ceremony, generosity, and symbolism matter. The point is to distinguish deliberate meaning from automatic escalation. Veblen's example of a costly hand-wrought spoon is useful here: price can begin to masquerade as beauty, making the expensive option feel inherently more refined even when its practical advantage is slight.

The next step is to build a short series around "experience value versus status value," using one wedding decision per post. Keep the tone observant, lightly ironic, and respectful. The strongest position is not anti-luxury; it is pro-conscious luxury.