

Market Minute 12/17/2025: 2025 Recap + Signals Revealed + Choosing Your 2026 Strategy

"Clarity does not come from doing more. It comes from deciding what matters." - Market Minute, 2025

Insight of The Week

As we close out 2025, this final Market Minute is less about prediction and more about perspective.

This year was not defined by chaos or sudden disruption, except maybe tariffs. It was defined by **signals becoming impossible to ignore**. Across spending data, booking behavior, demographics, and marketing performance, one message repeated itself: the wedding market has settled into a new normal, and it rewards clarity.

Think of 2025 as the **diagnostic year**.

Over the past eight months, we watched the industry move from post-pandemic recovery into a more mature, more selective market. Wedding volume softened slightly, but spending per wedding continued to rise. That contradiction confused many businesses, until the pattern underneath became clear.

The market is splitting.

What 2025 Revealed About the Wedding Market

2025 showed us where growth is happening - and where it is not.

Key signals we confirmed:

- Total wedding volume is normalizing, not collapsing
- Average spending per wedding continues to rise, projected to exceed \$34,000 in 2026
- Spending is uneven and increasingly polarized
- The middle of the market is losing relevance

This is where the **Barbell Strategy revealed itself**.

On one end:

- Deep Value couples prioritize efficiency, transparency, and speed
- Clear packages, visible pricing, fast responses, and mobile-first booking win
- Solo vendors and lean teams thrive here

On the other end:

- High Premium couples buy meaning, personalization, and peace of mind
- Luxury is defined by emotional value, not excess
- Craft, scarcity, and a strong point of view outperform flexibility

The middle - where businesses try to be affordable and premium at the same time - felt the most pressure in 2025. That pressure is the signal.

The New Couple Set the Rules

Millennials and Gen Z now make up more than 80 percent of marrying couples, and their behavior shaped nearly every trend we covered this year.

What mattered most:

- Couples research online before reaching out
- Price transparency influences who gets contacted
- Speed wins - responses within one hour dramatically improve booking odds
- Authenticity beats tradition and generic messaging

Couples rewarded businesses that respected their time, their budget, and their values. Friction, ambiguity, and slow follow-up quietly cost bookings all year long.

Technology Played a Supporting Role

AI did not replace the human element in weddings, and couples made that clear.

What worked in 2025:

- Using AI internally to save time and improve consistency
- Letting technology handle checklists, drafts, and workflows
- Keeping the human experience front and center in marketing

The most effective businesses used technology to protect their time, not to market novelty.

Why 2026 Is the Inflection Point

Here is the shift to understand clearly:

- **2025 revealed the barbell**
- **2026 forces the choice**

Staying in the middle becomes harder next year. Margins tighten. Conversion slows. Messaging gets ignored. Meanwhile, businesses that commit fully to value or premium make it easier for the right couples to say yes.

2026 is not about doing more. It is about alignment.

Your pricing, website, social platforms, inquiry flow, and messaging should all point in the same direction.

- Clarity will beat creativity.
- Positioning will beat volume.
- Speed will beat perfection.

Lead Boost

Before January arrives, run one simple audit.

Ask yourself:

"If a couple lands on my website tonight, can they tell who I am for, what I cost, and how to book me in under two minutes?"

If the answer is no, start here:

- Clarify your pricing so it reflects value or efficiency, not ambiguity
- Remove friction from your mobile inquiry and booking flow
- Write one clear positioning sentence and use it everywhere

Momentum in 2026 will not come from chasing trends. It will come from choosing a lane, removing friction, and showing up consistently for the couples you are best built to serve.

Thank you for reading Market Minute in 2025! We will see you in 2026.