

Bridal feature 2002

Newest Bridal Fashion Trend - Buying Online

(MS) — These days, brides are using the Web for more than just planning their weddings, they are staying online to purchase their bridal gown, veil, bridesmaids' dresses, flowergirl dress, shoes, accessories and invitations. While this trend may surprise some, those in the know are not surprised at all.

Today's bride is Web-savvy, having grown up in the world of video games and cyberspace. She and her fiancé are probably paying for most or all of their wedding costs — approximately 65 per cent of engaged couples are. The bride, her parents and her bridesmaids are more likely than not living in different locations. It is no wonder that brides are shopping for and buying their wedding apparel online.

What should a bride know about purchasing online? Rachel Ambler, president of BrideSave.com, a full service online bridal store, advises the bride to demand the best from the online store. According to Ms. Ambler, the ten requirements for a good online store are:

- Fast and friendly response. Great customer service starts with a great attitude. Fast and friendly responses to e-mails and telephone calls are a must. Your online store should offer you personal consultations with trained bridal consultants. Only purchase from an online store that offers great customer service.

- Broad product selection. You should be able to choose from a variety of designers, styles and price ranges. Make sure that the online bridal store is an authorized dealer for the designers they sell.

- Online purchasing. While many bridal stores have Web sites, very few offer online purchasing. A good online store should offer you the convenience of online purchasing, so that you are able to purchase what you want when you want.

- An up-to-date, current Web site. An online store should update information on a daily basis, continuously adding new gowns and eliminating those that are discontinued.

- Easy searching. You should be able to easily find the item, style or designer you are looking for and have convenient access to different departments in the online store.

- Product information. A picture of the gown isn't enough. Your online bridal store should provide you with accurate product information, like designers size charts, fabric and color charts that can help you to make the right purchase.

- Guaranteed delivery time. Any bridal store should give you a guaranteed delivery time and should back that delivery date with a commitment.

- Shipping quality. You should require your online store to carefully inspect every item shipped. Sometimes there are imperfections in the gown and a good online store will catch those imperfections and remedy the situation with the designer before they ship the gown to you.

- Clear return and cancellation policies. Your online store should clearly provide you with their return and cancellation policies. Be sure to read those policies before you buy.

- No hidden charges. The price shown may not be the true price of the gown after you learn about the hidden charges. Many online stores tell you about their added on charges for shipping, handling, insurance etc. after you purchase. Confirm the total cost before you buy.

How do you find a great online bridal store? Ms. Ambler recommends that you talk to others who have shopped online for wedding apparel and visit popular online message boards like theknot.com and WeddingChannel.com to see what experiences other brides have had purchasing online. The books "Bridal Bargains" and "Cyberbride," by Allen and Denise Fields are also good resources for brides contemplating buying online. Also, visit BrideSave.com on the Internet.

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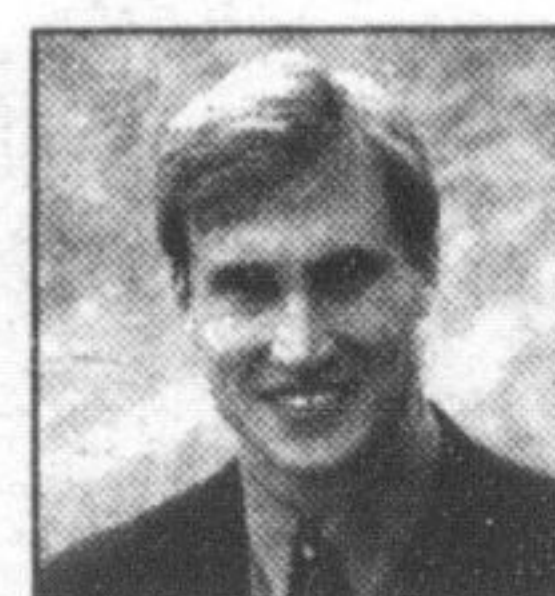
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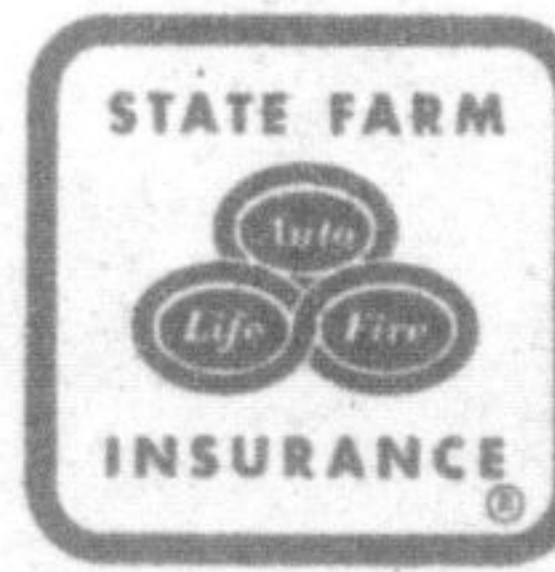


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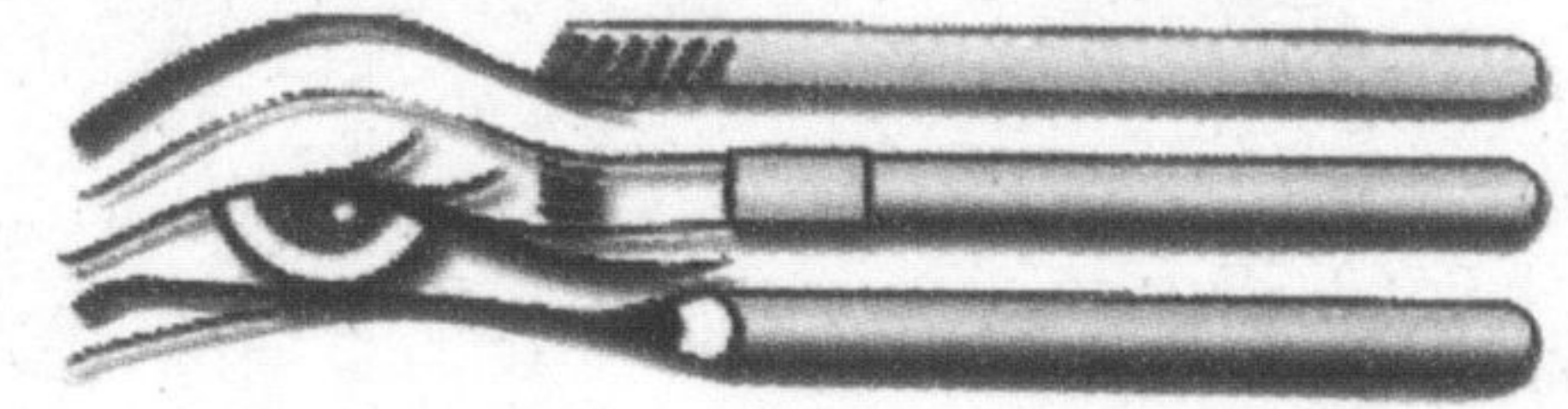


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