

Wish upon a bar (code)

The concept of the gift registry, where bridal couples choose presents they would like their guests to give them, is slowly nudging its way into the big fat Indian wedding

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On December 12, 2009, real estate agent Namrata Garg felt like a princess from a couple of centuries ago. Around 4 am in the cold Jaipur dawn, she looked out of the window of Samode Palace, which gave a strategic glimpse of her future.

She saw her would-be husband arrive majestically on an elephant flanked by six soldiers, a camel and a bevy of joyous guests who had been strictly instructed not to wear jeans or western clothes. Many of these guests had not only adhered to the prescribed dress code but, surprisingly, also lived up to the material expectations of the couple hosting the destination wedding. Soon after bidding the visitors farewell in a vintage maharaja-style car that said 'Just Married', Garg and her husband realised that almost 60 per cent of the guests had gifted them the very antique trunks, chests and artefacts that they had imagined sitting pretty in their new, unfurnished home.



intimate and the guest list included mainly the bride's close friends and immediate family," says Pereira. Another challenge, she adds, is that couples in India very often choose to live with the in-laws or joint family once married, so the house is already furnished. "Besides, the concept is well ahead of its time here," says

Aparna Dalal of lamhe.co.in, which is pitched as India's premier online gift registry service. Since its launch two months ago, the website, which offers a catalogue of gifts, including 'experience-based gifts' (like spa treatments, hotel stays or pet-grooming sessions), have received many enquiries for the registry service but the uptake has been really slow. The four founders of the portal are hoping to change this by conducting campaigns, running blogs, promising gift certificates for every gift bought, and even launching a customer helpline which will assure people that "they are not being ripped off".

Other online gift registries are underterred by the unenthusiastic response. "We have come across several informal 'wish lists' circulated by couples prior to their wedding," says Shweta Sahjwani, co-founder of the imminent Wishberry.in. "These cou-