



Romance can raise your business profile

Valentine's Day is here again with its annual injection of love and romance. Or is it just a marketing filler between Christmas and Easter when not much else is happening retail wise?

How did it come about?

It's origins lurk in the misty past where (according to Professor Lenski from the University of Colorado), Valentine's Day began as "a raucous annual Roman festival where men stripped naked, grabbed goat- or dog-skin whips, and spanked young maidens in hopes of increasing their fertility".

While this might sound like any Friday night out in Warrington, it was the Church who pegged it to St Valentine, around AD270. February the 15th to be exact.

But even in these cash strapped times, National Geographic report that the average American consumer will spend \$102.50 on gifts, meals and entertainment which is \$20 down on last year – probably cutting back on the goat skin whips!

92% will spend \$67 on their spouses, the rest on kids, friends, co-workers and pets (?) creating some \$14.7Bn in retail sales. 190M cards will be exchanged and 46% Americans will swap Valentine's Day candy. In Britain, romance is a £1.98 card from Tesco's and/or a box of After Eights.

What is love?

Helen Fisher, an anthropologist at Rutgers University in New Jersey, talks about love in terms of three distinct brain systems:

- Sex drive – evolved to get you out there
- Romantic love – evolved to focus your mating energy on one person at a time
- Attachment – tolerate that person long enough to raise a child together as a team – how romantic!

Dr Fisher (who's obviously never been to Warrington on a Friday night) adds that Valentine's day "encompasses only two of these three brain systems: sex drive and romantic love, but "once you start giving the dog a valentine, you are talking about a real expression of attachment as well as romantic love". Am I missing something?

Of course, we're more romantic in Britain.

In earlier times, unmarried girls used to wake up well before sunrise on Valentine's Day and stand by the



window as they believed they would marry the first man they saw or someone who looked like him, within the year.

Nowadays it's a bit different. PRLog say that while money is tight, a company, Mystic Charms (<http://www.MysticCharms.co.uk>) are reporting a big boost in Valentine's Day sales for their "Inspired by Angels" range which includes ingredients for performing spells for love, romance, wealth and success plus psychic phone lines (wouldn't you know what they were going to say before they said it if it was psychic?)

The point is that people are in a better frame of mind around Valentine's Day (mostly) so it is a good time to do a cheeky Valentine's Day related promotion not so much for love and romance but as a way to raise your business profile.

This is viral advertising and it's quick and cheap to shoot a short, funny video, upload it to YouTube, and email it to your contact list. This is the perfect way to create an online buzz using Valentine's Day as the link for doing so.

And it's just so more convenient to email a loved one an image of roses without even buying them!

Words like "being on thin ice", "d-i-v-o-r-c-e" suddenly spring to mind.

Come on Britain. Start being more romantic - and don't let it go to the dogs.

Be prepared. Be persuasive. Make it happen.

Best wishes,

Gerry

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