



Valentine's Day

Jewelry for Valentine's Day Putting The Sparkle in with the Sweet

By Williesha Morris

Flowers and candy are some of the most popular purchases for lovers on Valentine's Day. But when customers want something extra special or more personal, they start shopping for jewelry, clothing and other gift items. Jewelry and gift shop owners employ multiple marketing techniques to ensure that Valentine's Day includes gifts that are unique and maybe have a bit of sparkle as well.

Donna Massengale, owner of Sophie's Fine Gifts & Collectibles in Chickamauga, Ga., said Vera Bradley-branded products are big sellers around Valentine's Day. This brand produces multiple items, mainly purses and backpacks. Other popular store items include chalk paint and outdoor gifts such as bird feeders and planters.

Massengale's secret to getting more sales beyond Valentine's Day is capitalizing on the year-round tourism industry in the Tennessee Valley, since the store is located near Chattanooga. A railroad tour makes a stop into the city, "so we pick up a lot of tourists," Massengale said. She said they could have 150 to 350 customers on a Saturday in their 1,850-square-foot store in just a two-hour period.

"It is great and they (the railroad) brings in a lot of people," she said. They also rely on traditional adver-



A selection of jewelry pieces available at Sophie's Fine Gifts & Collectibles in Chickamauga, Ga. Vera Bradley-branded products are big sellers around Valentine's Day.

tising, word of mouth and blogging on their website to draw in customers.

The key to keeping her customers happy and bringing them back is featuring new products and increasing the volume of existing jewelry and other gifts. This year Massengale brought in a new line of Lottie Dottie-branded jewelry in time for Christmas 2014 and Valentine's Day 2015. The jewelry features interchangeable pieces, so that means customers will return to her store to purchase additional pieces for future gifts.

Gullah Gourmet in Charleston, S.C., specializes in products centered around food, including clothing and bags. President **Debbie Nelson** said since men can be difficult to shop for for Valentine's Day, one of her favorite products is the Hot Sauce trio, with the names On a Wing and a Prayer, Hot On He Tung, and Up Pop the Debil.

"The card that we attach to this says, 'To the hottie in my life,'" Nelson said. At \$28.95, it's an affordable option. They also offer gourmet meals for their customers to prepare at home for their Valentines.

Both Tesori Gifts and Décor's owner **Marty Lee** and Bling's Assistant Manager **Marietta Cummings**

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said they utilize social media as a means of advertising. Facebook is essentially Tesori's primary online storefront year-round. They post content regularly and include photos and videos of their products such as clothing, purses and shoes, as well as sales listings and contest information.

Lee also takes advantage of traditional marketing for her Hutchinson, Kan., boutique and gift shop. This includes both radio and local television advertising. They even draw on the windows of the two-story, 5,000-square-foot store to attract more customers.

"Jewelry probably would be one of our biggest things, and gift certificates," Lee said.

Cummings also noted jewelry as a top seller for Valentine's Day in the Garden City, Kan., store. Bling has its own website along with social media profiles on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Customers can browse and purchase jewelry and gifts directly from their website or go to one of five brick-and-mortar retail stores in the state that sell Kansas State University branded apparel, dresses and shoes among other gift items.

Terri Wischerath, owner of Zinnia in Mount Pleasant, S.C., has observed shopping trends change over the past decade. Her shop features items such as pottery, fragrances, handbags, as well as jewelry, which is



Hot sauce packaged with colorful labels is appealing to shoppers at Gullah Gourmet in Charleston, S.C. An attached card that reads "To the hottie in my life" makes this a perfect Valentine's Day gift for men.

quite popular for Valentine's Day.

"I think the way that folks are shopping now for Christmas, (customers are) going all out," she said. Since customers spend a lot of money for gifts during the Christmas holidays, Valentine's Day presents are "smaller, more intimate pieces they can have with the flowers." This includes jewelry from brands such as Chrysalis and La Vie Parisienne, which don't have steep price tags.

She makes good use of her 700-square-foot shop, bringing in more than \$350,000 annually. Because Wischerath's online slogan for the store is "Always Something

New," she attributed her success to after-holiday sales, which creates room for new products and promotes a clean and fresh store environment. She will bring in fresh flowers to get her employees and customers in the mood for spring.

While traditional advertising and marketing strategies are still an extremely vital part of maintaining and growing sales for Valentine's Day, gift shop owners are also making their mark online. They are primarily using Facebook, along with other social media, as a way of reaching out to customers and introducing them to their products. Shop owners also make sure to have new product on the shelves, so customers can purchase a unique gift for their Valentines year after year. ❖

SHOW PHOTOS

Seen at ASD



Jann and Jeff Driscoll from For Art's Sake, Marietta, Ga.

Seen at Atlanta



Rich Stevens of Dog Snorz.