

With the spending capacity of people increasing, not only the youth but even the middle-aged are increasingly spending on Valentine's Day

Sountrita Pahari, director, (Food and beverages), Novotel Hyderabad Airport

# LOVE BIZ GETS BIGGER AND BETTER

SESA SEN @Chennai

HERE is no official estimate of the size of India's Valentine's Day market in 2017. According to a 2014 estimate by the Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (Assocham) – the latest figure available – the market was worth around ₹22,000 crore that year. The figure denotes the amount of money people spent on Valentine's Day to buy anything from expensive watches, fancy jewellery, expensive teddies and, of course, rose – the quintessential V-Day flower. According to experts, the market would be much more than that, by now.

With this year's V-Day, which falls on February 14, everyone from e-tailers to local florists is betting on the business of love to

take in some extra moolah. Retailers are eagerly looking up to this event a boost in sales after a lull period of business in the months following demonetisation.

"With the spending capacity of people increasing, not only the youth but even those in the middle age are increasingly spending on Valentine's Day," says Sountrita Pahari, director (food and beverages) at Novotel Hyderabad Airport. He adds that already, bookings have started for V-Day and there seems no impact of demonetisation as cash is back in flow and even online payments are accepted by most of the establishments in hospitality sector.

Echoing similar sentiments, Kiran Vastreddy, senior vice-president, Paytm says that consumer spending during V-Day is increasingly going digital, and a substantial chunk of V-Day business will move online in the future.

The cash crunch following demonetisation has not restrained love birds as florists have reported higher footfalls. "Hundreds of delivery orders have already come from across the city," says a spokesperson at Ferns and Petals, Cunningham Road, Bengaluru. Flower exports usually peak ahead of V-Day. Sadasivan, who works for the Agri-Horticultural Society of India, says, "Roses are being exported in huge volumes and the process started at least three weeks ago. The maximum demand is from south-east Asia this time. This is the reason why the prices will be at least 60-70 per cent more on Valentine's Day. People are buying roses irrespective of the price and we expect to see a spurt in demand on that day."

The business of love is a profitable one, say industry players. "Valentine's Day is getting monetised year-on-year as marketers make the best of the day and the days that precede it. On this occasion, offline purchases are low-value purchases, while the biggest value is being reaped in by online companies, as they are able to spur digital demand," says Harish Bijoor, marketing and brand expert and founder of Harish Bijoor Consults.

For gift retailers like Archies, this is also an occasion to sell expensive products, which otherwise take time to move off the racks. "Every year, we see a spurt in sales of the premium variety of gifts during V-Day," says an Archies official in Bengaluru.

(With inputs from *Pranod Thomas, Deepthi Nandan Reddy and Oindrila Sarkar*)

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