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Feature

### Valentine's Day Spending: Cost of Romance

14 February is a day set aside to celebrate love and romance by thousands of people in Fiji. This is the day of the year when millions around the globe find a way to show their loved ones that they care.

And, this special day, *Valentine's Day*, will remain a popular gift-giving event which is a real money maker for the businesses even when consumers are frugal with their budgets.

It is also worth noting that consumers are pressured with over-commercialisation of Valentine's Day, resulting in anxiety to find the best gift for that someone special.

Gift-givers are expected to spend on that perfect gift that fits their budget, whether it's flowers, jewelry, clothing, cosmetics, perfumes, an evening out or simply a greeting card.

There will be instances of discounts, special giveaways and promotions going on in towns/cities with traders using music, lights and red decorations to lure consumers to make most of the deals on offer.

But consumers are advised not to fall under the spell and be driven by emotions as this special day is not about a high cost romance extravaganza.

Instead, Valentine's Day is celebrated to express the profound love for that special someone by doing something special such as taking out time for the loved one, acknowledging that person and giving a bountiful attention to him or her. These are priceless gifts.

While, it would be amazing to receive a diamond necklace or new big flat screen television from the one you love, you don't have to cut out romance because of limited funds. More often than not, the thought behind a gift means more than the gift itself.

We take a look at some gift ideas and shopping tips which can help you cut cost on your romance.

- **Be wary of advertisements** – look out for ads that seem too good to be true. Ask the right questions and as many as you can about an advertised deal or promotion. Make a habit of properly inspecting the goods before buying. There will be so many gift ideas floating around, do not get trapped – Go for the quality and practicality not the sweet deals!

- **Indulge in traditional accompaniments** –while it is a tradition to gift roses to your loved ones especially on Valentine’s Day but you may consider going contemporary, thus, gifting a bouquet of orchid and ginger flowers which is readily available in the market and is affordable. With, chocolates, downsize it - give a bar of chocolate instead of a box
- **Make your own card** which is more meaningful than a purchased one
- **Stay in** – consider cooking and serving each other’s favorite dishes for dinner
- **Make use of technology** – tech savvy consumers who cannot find time to catch up with that special one in person due to distance can plan a *cyber-date* via Skype and using Apps such as Viber, Skype, etc. to spend time with each other.
- **Buying online** - be vigilant if you are indulging in online shopping to surprise your loved ones with presents. Given the recent number of complaints over unscrupulous online traders hoodwinking customers. Consumers must use this is typically indicated with a padlock icon and a web site address that begins with “https:” instead of “http:”
- **Ask for and keep receipts** after purchase in case problems arise with the goods than you can always seek redress.

The Council is reminding consumers to be cautious, practical and wise as they plan the day by focusing on the true meaning of the occasion.**Remember - focus on the essence of the occasion by spending time with the special one.**

Wishing all consumers a happy yet cautious Valentine’s Day!