

Entrant company name: **Smarts**

Entry title: **Asda - Love is in the Aisles**

Category: **Consumer Relations Campaign**

### **BRIEF, OBJECTIVES & BUDGET**

Asda briefed Smarts to create a Valentine's Day campaign that would cut through the seasonal noise, drive meaningful brand relevance and generate national coverage - all without relying on paid media at scale.

The core challenge: showcase Asda's personality - make Asda feel warm, witty and culturally relevant to singles, at a time when Valentine's Day marketing overwhelmingly speaks to couples.

Our specific objectives were:

- Generate significant national and consumer media coverage in the lead-up to Valentine's Day
- Secure at least 4 national, 1 broadcast, 10 regional, 3 consumer pieces of earned media coverage
- Drive organic social engagement and shareability
- Secure at least 100,000 impressions and 2% engagement rate from influencer content
- Position Asda as a brand with genuine cultural personality
- Deliver strong, measurable results against a lean budget of less than £16,000

### **THE IDEA, RESEARCH & PLANNING**

We started by digging into the UK public's real attitude towards love. We conducted consumer research that revealed two compelling truths: 87% of Brits believe meeting someone in real life is better than a dating app, and 64% admit they already have their eye on someone at their local supermarket.

This insight shaped the entire idea: rather than producing content about Valentine's Day, we gave singles a tangible, physical prompt to act on their feelings in the most ordinary place imaginable. The supermarket aisle would become a meet-cute waiting to

happen. We would help shoppers lighten the load and lighten the mood, turning a routine shop into a playful, social experience.

## **STRATEGY, CREATIVE & INNOVATION**

The strategy had three components: a newsworthy physical activation to generate earned media, a precisely chosen creator partnership to ignite organic social, and media seeding timed to build momentum as editorial appetite peaked ahead of Valentine's Day.

Our activation? The Red Basket. With Asda famous for embracing everything green - right down to its baskets - we introduced special red baskets into select Asda stores on Valentine's Day. The red basket gave singles a simple, non-verbal signal that they were ready to chat.

The stores we selected were where our research revealed people were most actively looking for love - Leicester, Liverpool and Glasgow. Maybe they just needed an opportunity to chat while browsing the bakery.

It was an idea rooted in genuine human insight: approachable, light-hearted, and immediately photogenic. No technology, no app, no gimmick, just a basket.

## **DELIVERY/IMPLEMENTATION OF TACTICS**

Media Relations: We created compelling assets to bring the story to life, capturing photography of the red baskets in action with two singles in-store and highlighted the top newsworthy stats from our research to provide insight into how the nation feels about dating. Armed with these visuals and insights, we seeded the story to national, broadcast, consumer and regional press in the week leading up to Valentine's Day, targeting both news and picture desks and lifestyle titles. The framing, 'Asda is the new Tinder', was irresistible to media seeking something upbeat and different.

In-store: Executing the activation at a store level generated real buzz, with both staff and customers praising the playful, interactive approach that made the stores feel alive with connection.

Creator Partnership: Through Smarts' Creator Hub, we identified Sophie Jones as the ideal partner. Known for her videos where she deliberately puts herself in awkward situations to boost confidence, Sophie was an authentic voice whose audience indexed perfectly with Asda's customer base. Armed with a red basket, Sophie filmed herself searching for a husband in Asda, capturing the idea in a funny, relatable way.

Community and Social Amplification: We monitored and encouraged organic conversation as Reddit threads and TikTok memes exploded without any paid push, allowing the idea to grow through genuine public enthusiasm.

## **MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION & IMPACT**

The results exceeded every objective and delivered impact at a scale rarely achieved through a single earned and organic campaign.

### **Earned Media:**

- Over 130 pieces of earned media coverage
- Featured in 12 national titles including The Telegraph, Daily Mail, The Sun, Independent, Metro, Mirror, Express and London Standard
- 14 consumer title features, including OK! and Trend Hunter
- 90 broadcast hits, including This Morning, Lorraine, GB News, Channel 5 Jeremy Vine, Heart Radio, BBC Radio 1, Capital FM and several regional BBC radio stations

### **Organic Social:**

- Sophie Jones's single Instagram Reel generated 4 million+ organic views and 230,000+ engagements in the first 48 hours
- Reaching 5.9 million views to date
- 190,000 organic shares
- A single TikTok post achieved 900,000 views, 75,000 likes and 52,000 shares
- Unprompted Reddit posts and TikTok memes spread the idea without any paid distribution
- Over 40,000 comments across social media posts, with several LinkedIn marketing commentators sharing and praising the work, calling it "genius" and "Asda at its best"

Business Impact: Love is in the aisles didn't just create social buzz, it delivered measurable commercial results.

Asda stores saw a noticeable increase in sales of the Valentine's Day meal deal, demonstrating a knock-on effect from the success of the red baskets, and all lines made a significant step on vs last year:

- Total event sales: +61% vs. plan; +£2.5m YOY
- Units sold: 3.1m (+69% vs. plan; +1.3m YOY)

- Sell-through: 94.7% (+3% vs. forecast & last year)
- Dine-In sales: +55% YOY
- Online sales: +107% YOY

Cultural Impact: The campaign generated the kind of authentic, uncoordinated public enthusiasm that money cannot buy - 750% increase in Buzz score (8th - 15th February).

Consumers weren't just consuming the content - they were writing new lines for the campaign themselves. The idea spread because it was genuinely funny and true, not because it was pushed.

'Love is in the Aisles' demonstrated that a simple, insight-driven idea - executed with precision timing and the right creator - can deliver results at scale that dwarf far larger budget activations. Love, it turns out, was already in the aisles, and the nation fell head over heels.