

Two countries united by a commoner



Allyson Stewart-Allen enjoys the commercial inventiveness that was sparked in the US by the recent royal wedding

WHO'D HAVE thought the republic of America would so enthusiastically want to rediscover its Britishness, embracing the idea of royal weddings, calamari hats and pageantry with such gusto, such preoccupation, such envy, such marketing opportunities?

A number of Americans and their brands celebrated the British milestone marriage of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge in various ways, some tasteful, some not.

The slimming product Slim-Fast, of all brands, launched a promoted tweet campaign in time to capitalise on all the excitement surrounding the royal wedding. Its promoted tweet can hardly be called a carefully targeted advertising scheme: the tweet was directed at anyone interested in William and Kate which, as we know from the TV networks, is anybody from urbane Brooklynites to Sydney royalists, plus a lot of people in a certain island in the North Atlantic. Did it work?

First, we should say, royal wedding enthusiasts were a bit surprised to find that the royalwedding hashtag on Twitter wasn't a naturally trending discussion topic on the big day: it was being promoted by Slim-Fast. Starting on 18 April Slim-Fast began promoting the #royalwedding hashtag until the two kisses on the balcony. The company's message: look good for your own wedding by trying the Slim-Fast diet and, while you're at it, check out the Slim-Fast Facebook page.

Usually, promoted tweets are intended to work with a sense of precision, not as a form of mass marketing. As web-marketing specialist Ben Acheson points out on his blog, Slim-Fast's strategy worked more like a billboard on a busy highway: 'It's random, not targeted, and it's not welcomed by the vast majority of recipients.' For sure, not everyone was thrilled with Slim-Fast's promoted tweet placement, especially spinster republicans. And no word from Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York, who used to front WeightWatchers.

It's safe to say that the #royalwedding highway was particularly busy. By the time the wedding started on Friday morning, 11.46% of all tweets on Twitter contained the #royalwedding hashtag. The results prove the strategy a success. From 28 April to the time of writing, Slim-Fast's Twitter followers increased from 930 to 1,356. The Facebook page saw a major increase, as the number of fans went from 16,000 on 18 April to 21,400 by 2 May.

Toys R Us was selling the Princess Catherine Engagement Dolls made by British-based Champions of British Style – for \$50 each.

The dolls were air-freighted to two New York locations and were sold, for a limited time, on the retailer's website.

The Baskin-Robbins Royal Wedding Ice Cream Cake fetched a cool \$29.99. The six-inch-diameter dessert is made from vanilla cake and chocolate mousse royale ice-cream. The white and blue roses are supposed to look a bit like an English garden. Baskin-Robbins and Dunkin' were selling the royal-wedding goodies to lots of folks who planned to host royal wedding parties in their homes or offices.

OTHER PRODUCT CATEGORIES

Graham & Brown, the upmarket wallpaper chain, was offering 20% off its Crowns & Coronets wallpaper line 'to celebrate the royal wedding'.

In need of a facial? For \$200, you can could get the 75-minute Royal Facial at the two Dallas-area locations of Renée Rouleau Skin Care. The facial is followed by English scones with berry jam, of course. The facial also included a scalp massage, said owner Renée Rouleau, 'because when you wear a tiara or crown, your scalp might get sore'.

Royal wedding memorabilia included the T-Mobile spoof on YouTube, and made-for-TV movie *William and Kate* which aired on 18 April starring British actress Camilla Luddington as Kate. And there were many more examples, ranging from the banal to the bizarre: Dunkin' Donuts launch of a Royal Wedding Donut described by the company as 'a heart-shaped donut filled with jelly and topped with vanilla icing and a chocolate drizzle' (offer available between 24 and 29 April); Madame Tussaud's giant congratulations greeting card available for signing at its Hollywood attraction; Pez candy created dispensers with the heads of each of the royal couple to offer its pellets; Kate Middleton's replica engagement ring is available on Amazon for \$29.99; and Papa John's has a Royal Wedding pizza, with the toppings arranged in a mosaic of the prince and princess.

Besides the royal couple's special relationship, the US-UK one is stronger, more profitable and wider than ever before. Americans seem to have rediscovered their Britishness as a result, and it's not going to ebb anytime soon. Why? Kate is very attractive, young and will have cute children to fill our tabloid and entertainment magazines. We like the British traditions, pageantry, protocols which we don't have. ■

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