

Animal Rights According to Teens

Teen girls feel strongly about animal rights, but they also feel strongly about their right to style, according to a recent survey from Smart Girl Internette.

Smart Girl, a market research firm devoted to teen and tween girls, asked teens about their feelings on animals in an anonymous online survey.

The survey uncovered a surprisingly moderate trend. Although teen girls are familiar with a wide variety of animal rights organizations and report strong opposition to cruelty to animals, many girls say eating and wearing animal products is part of the cycle of life. Girls are especially lenient about using products from cows because cows specifically are raised for our consumption and are not endangered in any way.

The vast majority of teen girls are meat eaters, though their reasons range from needing protein to not having "enough willpower to quit eating meat." Those who are vegetarians also are divided - many simply don't enjoy the taste, while a few say eating meat goes against their religion or their commitment to animal rights. One girl reports she even reached the point where she didn't want to eat plants for fear of violating their rights, but realized she had to have something to live on.

A majority are opposed to radical animal rights behavior, though, and activities like throwing red paint on fur wearers get an overwhelming thumbs down. While 36% of respondents accepted such behavior as the result of passionate devotion to animals, 48% objected to destroying someone else's property because of personal beliefs.

"They distinguish the difference between caring about abusive mistreatment of animals and necessity," says Karen Readey, Smart Girl's director of research. "They're very smart, and they think it through."

Retail Repercussions

Girls are more than just smart, though. They're fashion-conscious, which explains a widespread acceptance of leather. Smart Girl asked teens whether they'd wear an animal-friendly alternative to leather. Sixty-nine percent report they'd opt for the alternative, but they overlook the existence of materials like vinyl, Readey says.

"Leather is huge, and it will be again this fall," says Sarine Shehebar, a fashion assistant for Teen magazine. "Girls feel more comfortable wearing leather [as opposed to other animal products]."

That's not to say girls are enthusiastic consumers of all animal products. Given a choice between animal products like fur and snakeskin and faux products, even if both were equally priced, most girls would opt for faux, Shehebar says, because they're more fun and more humane.

A Double Standard

While girls may not always adhere to animal rights principles in their own lives, it never hurts for teen manufacturers and marketers to do so. Food, cosmetics and fashion all can win teen loyalty by touting animal kindness or support for animal-related causes. In fact, creating an entire campaign around animal rights or another cause could be your ticket to differentiating yourself from the competition.

The 1999 Cone/Roper Cause-Related Teen Survey found 78% of teens have purchased a product that helped benefit a cause and 85% will continue to buy products from those companies. Building your own cause related marketing campaign or partnering with companies like Cone Inc., a strategic marketing firm that will build one for you, can make your brand a favorite among teen girls.

Girls view buying your product as something they can do to make a difference. "Social causes, especially those aimed at improving conditions for people, animals or the environment, evoke strong responses in girls," says Beth Miller, a research analyst with Girl Games Inc., a Web site for girls. "When [an] opportunity is offered where a girl can do something that will have an impact, that

makes her feel powerful." (Smart Girl: Karen Ready, 212/233-2330 ext. 12; Teen: Sarine Shehebar, 212/229-4803; Cone Inc.: Carol Cone, 617/227-2111; Girl Games: Beth Miller, 512/478-1158)

Teen Girls' Favorite Animals

1. Dog
2. Cat
3. Horse
4. Tiger
5. Dolphin

Source: Smart Girl Internette

The Gender Question

Are girls really more sensitive than boys? When it comes to causes, they are. Girls are more likely to switch brands to one that supports a cause, tell their friends about a company's commitment or feel they can make an impact through volunteering, according to the Cone/Roper Cause-Related Teen Survey.

* 60% of girls vs. 51% of boys will switch brands for a cause;

* 87% of girls vs. 73% of boys will recommend a cause-oriented company; and

* 82% of girls vs. 67% of boys think their volunteer work makes a difference.

When deciding on a product, both boys and girls value:

Quality	89%
Cause	66%
Low Price	62%
A friend has it	57%
Advertising	50%
Celebrity Endorsement	26%

Source: Cone Inc. and Roper Starch Worldwide Inc.

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