

The ethical way of life....what's in for me?

Contributed by Mintel
Wednesday, 21 March 2007

The ethical way of life....what's in for me?

So you thought England was a 'green and pleasant land', well think again. Latest research from MINTEL finds that despite high awareness of key environmental concerns, as many as six out of ten (60%) British adults are not fully switched on to green and ethical issues.

Today, one in five adults (20%) has been classified by Mintel as 'Too Busy to Care'™. These consumers are simply too busy to take these issues into consideration, and are apathetic towards green concerns.

A further 17% are suffering from 'Green Overload', having become cynical about the whole movement. They feel that there is little that they, as consumers, can do to make a difference and that companies are using the issues to make themselves look good. Finally, confusion also seems to be running high, with a further one in four (23%) adults 'Confused but Willing' and simply unsure of what they need to do to lead a greener, more ethical way of life

"There have been an increasing number of media reports highlighting the complexities of environmental concerns and the difficulties that operators in the market face. But our research shows that for many consumers too much information and mixed messages are causing them simply to 'switch off'™. Although there are no easy solutions to many of the environmental and ethical dilemmas, which face society today, most consumers clearly need to be presented with simpler messages," explains Angela Hughes, Consumer Research Manager at MINTEL.

At the other end of the spectrum one in four (24%) adults is 'Keen to be Green' and are very conscious of, and conscientious about, green and ethical issues, always trying to do more. Meanwhile, 'Greener-than-Thou' (16%) clearly feel that they are doing all they can on the green front.

"When Mintel examined green and ethical consumerism back in 1990 it was young family aged adults who were most environmentally aware and our research shows that these green consumers have carried their ethical attitudes with them into later life. But worryingly, today's young families seem to be taking less of an interest in these matters, which raises concerns about the future of the green movement. Clearly younger people would benefit from better education when it comes to matters of the environment," comments Angela Hughes.

It's all about me

When it comes to motivations for deciding whether to take environmental and ethical issues into consideration in daily life, saving money on bills comes out as the most important factor, with almost half (46%) of adults citing it as a motivation for change. Meanwhile, 41% would make green changes as long as it did not cost them too much money, while some three in ten adults (32%) would be more ethical if there were direct benefits to them, such as the food tastes better or was healthier. Overall as many as three-quarters (74%) of adults are driven to action if the changes will somehow improve their personal lives as well as the environment.

"For the majority of Brits, simply improving the environment is not enough of an incentive to introduce greener and more ethical ways of living. It is clear that those promoting green or ethical products and services, will need to highlight the personal benefits these changes will make to people's lives and not just focus on the wider picture," comments Angela Hughes.

Meanwhile, almost six in ten (59%) adults are willing to make changes if they can be sure that it will really make a difference, that companies are doing their bit, local authorities are dealing with issues efficiently or that other countries are taking the issues seriously.

Shedding light on a greener home

When it comes to changes that the Brits have introduced in steps towards greener living, more than 6 in 10 (62%) adults claim to take active steps to save energy in the home, by switching off lights and not leaving appliances on stand-by overnight, while 54% use energy-saving light bulbs. Just under half (48%) say they wash clothes at a lower temperature or use energy saving cycles on domestic appliances and almost four in ten (38%) take into account the energy-efficiency rating when purchasing domestic appliances.

Around one in four Brits (26%) say they try to avoid using the car for regular journeys, unless absolutely necessary, while one in five (21%) buy ecologically-friendly paper-products and 17% buy ecologically-friendly cleaning products.

Recycle, recycle, recycle

Amongst the key issues that do seem to be hitting home, recycling comes out on top, with almost seven in ten (68%) British adults acknowledging the need to recycle. Next on the list of consumer concerns is climate change, with just over half of Britons (53%) expressing concern over this issue. The use of child labour (48%), the need for renewable energy (44%) and forest destruction (40%) make up the remaining top five concerns.

Green and Ethical Consumer - A Mintel first

Mintel's Green and Ethical Consumer report is the first to include real life consumer video footage provided by Vox Pops, bringing to life Mintel insights and consumer analysis. By introducing video, Mintel reports will offer a truly three-dimensional picture of UK consumers.Â

About Mintel

Mintel is a worldwide leader of competitive media, product and consumer intelligence. For more than 35 years, Mintel has provided key insight into leading global trends. With offices in Chicago, London, Belfast and Sydney, Mintel's innovative product line provides unique data that has a direct impact on client success. For more information on Mintel, please visit their Web site at www.mintel.com.