

'Cool girls' valuable online ad targets

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In the social hierarchy of high school, the cool girl reigns supreme, with those around her trying to be like her. This common imagery is not only true but is valuable information for advertisers, according to a recent study by Jupiter Research.

In "Reaching Elusive Audiences: Marketing to Cool Girls Online," Jupiter analyst David Card takes on the idea of "cool girls" that are influential in their social circles and how advertisers can better reach them.

Card found that while cool girls don't differ much from normal ones in viewing personal pages, playing games or e-mail, they are more likely than normal girls to be attracted to online activities centering on music, fashion and photos.

The study separated cool girls as those who responded affirmatively to the statement "a lot of people want to be my friend." About 18 percent of surveyed participants, which were girls ages 13 to 17, fell into the cool-girl category.

Among other notable behavior differences, the study found that cool girls are significantly more likely to respond to online advertising by making a purchase online or offline, or registering for a discount or sweepstakes.

Emily Riley, an analyst at Jupiter Research, said that this is key information for companies trying to market to young people.

"Cool girls typically make more purchases than their non-cool peers, especially in typical teen retail segments like clothes and music," she said.

Riley also noted that more than one-third of cool girls said that their parents take their opinion into account in family purchases. Riley said that this means household marketers like home-electronics companies should also try to market to cool girls.

"Sales-oriented marketers should use the Web to target cool girls and offer them the ability to research and purchase products," Riley said. "Advertising on style sites, music sites and social sites are great ways to find these girls."

Elsewhere in the study, Card found that cool girls are often asked for advice by peers on fashion, music and other topics. The study noted that marketers who catch the attention of cool girls can harness their social influence.

"Cool girls communicate heavily with their peers," Riley said. "So an advertiser working on a viral advertising campaign should target cool girls, as they typically make recommendations to friends, chat on IM and talk on the phone more than their peers."

However, the survey found, cool girls rarely use mass communication forms like blogs or message boards, instead communicating with those that they know.

Riley said this information should be particularly useful to viral advertisers and companies in the fashion or music industries but may not be notable for many marketers.

"If an advertiser does not have a clearly defined goal, or their goal does

not fall into these categories, they should test various targets, not just cool girls," she said.

However, Riley noted that the overarching themes of this study can have some generalized use in online marketing.

"While we don't have a 'cool adults' population defined, what it does show is that people use the Web for both purchase and brand decision-making as well as peer-to-peer communication," she said.

"So advertisers can leverage the Web not just for 'click for sale' campaigns but also for the fact that people communicate to each other online and make product recommendations."

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