

## In The Raw: The Naked Truth about Cafés for Pets

The temperatures may regularly register over 100 but Phoenix is a city where being “cool” is serious business. A local jazz station is called the Coyote, complete with call sign KYOT. My Florist is actually the lunch spot of choice; and Scottsdale’s new boutique hotel, The James just attracted four pages in *Travel and Leisure*.

The newest Scottsdale destination for the hip is In the raw, a combination juice bar, café and dog patio. From its “yappy hour” to its “pooch party” menu, In The Raw is becoming a destination for people who want to take their dogs with them when they go out. Inspired by her sister’s doggie day care business in Miami, named Phoebe and Friends, Brenda Milton, owner of In The Raw, is using creative marketing to build a brand with franchise potential. The Halloween party sports a red-carpet runway for 65 dogs to model their costumes and vendors who cheerfully pop samples into the canines trick or treat baskets. Last year, the party it attracted 300 people and pets.

The *Arizona Republic* recently reported that there are 62.9 million dogs in the United States and 55 percent of their owners regard themselves as more than that, one pet-supplies business now begins its radio spots with “Attention, pet parents.”

Some 41 percent of dog owners take their animals on vacation. Supplies giant Pet Smart opened a hotel for animals in nearby Tempe and has rolled out 10 more in-store facilities nationally.

Not to be underestimated is the market power of the owners of the nation's 76.7 million cats. The *New York Times* recently reported that Meow Mix is opening a temporary store on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan called the Meow Mix Café. It will promote the company's new "wet category" of animal food. Dry sales already top \$2 billion.

This marketing trend, which *New York Times* advertising guru Stuart Elliott refers to as "pop-up retailing" allows brands to be showcased for short periods in places with high visibility. Similar retailers are appearing in Europe as well as throughout the United States.

For Brenda Minton, branding is about developing a distinctive destination. In little more than a year, In The Raw is already such a hot spot, attracting crowds from outside the immediate neighborhood. Minton is still developing her concept, but the loyalty--both of customers and canines—suggests her idea is destined to be a "howling success."

---

**Ian Fowler** is a corporate communications and branding expert, with over 18 years in senior corporate positions around the world.

---

© 2004 g-Think. All rights reserved.