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Customers don't like a pretty face



Customers could become self-conscious if served by an attractive sales assistant, a study showed.

Photo credit: Raygun/ Corbis

Employing attractive staff in a shop can reduce takings because they tend to make socially inept customers flee, according to research.

Scientists monitored a shop selling figures from Japanese comics and noted that men known to be obsessed with computers were less likely to go in if they saw an attractive woman behind the counter. However, 80 per cent of a sample group of 164 men went in if a less attractive saleswoman was working.

The 57 per cent who entered the shop when the attractive woman was there were less inclined to speak to her and verbal communication never lasted for more than 90 seconds. Forty per cent of the men bought a figure from the attractive saleswoman, whereas 56 per cent did so from the less attractive one.

Lisa Wan, of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said: "Attractive service providers can lead consumers to become self-conscious or embarrassed. This is especially true when the provider is of the opposite sex. Even when the attractive salesperson is the same sex, consumers may feel a sense of inadequacy through self-comparison."

"In either case, the shopper may avoid interacting with physically attractive providers, rendering the salespeople ineffective."

Further studies have found that female shoppers are drawn to less attractive salesmen when buying feminine hygiene or other products deemed embarrassing. Men buying condoms or haemorrhoid treatments were likely to seek out less attractive saleswomen.