

Study finds more attractive real estate agents mean higher prices, profits

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At least for real estate agents, it turns out that beauty is indeed more than skin deep.

A recent study of physical attractiveness and how it impacts real estate brokers' pay and productivity shows that the more attractive the real estate agent, the higher the listing price of the home for sale.

Those listings lead to higher sales prices, meaning that [beauty](#) enhances an agent's wage, said the report co-authored by Frank Mixon, professor of economics at Columbus State University's Turner College of Business.

He collaborated on the article, "Broker beauty and boon: a study of physical attractiveness and its effect on real estate brokers' income and productivity," with Sean P. Salter, from the Jennings A. Jones College of Business at Middle Tennessee State University and Ernest W. King from the College of Business at the University of Southern Mississippi. The article was published in the Applied [Financial Economics](#) journal last year and recently featured in the [Wall Street Journal](#).

To reach their conclusions, the professors asked 402 people to look at photographs of [real estate](#) agents. The pictures were taken from the agents' websites. Respondents were asked to rate each individual depicted for "physical attractiveness or beauty" on a scale of one to 10, with one representing "very unattractive" and 10 representing "very attractive."

Researchers then compared those figures to Multiple Listing Service data regarding transactions for properties that were listed between June, 2000 and November, 2007. Researchers looked at listing prices, sales prices and the time properties spent on the market before the sale was completed.

In general, the research found that the agents who were rated more attractive had listings with higher prices and larger commissions, which comes from higher sales prices for attractive agents.

"Given the nature of the brokerage system, this confirms our theory that beauty enhances an agent's wage," the researchers wrote in the report.

"The results weren't surprising to me," Mixon said. "There is a growing literature in economics that relates physical attractiveness to productivity in the workplace, and to all sorts of choices people make."

But while prices were found to be higher for more attractive agents, the research noted that things may equal out in the long run because agents who were rated "less attractive" had more listings and more sales. The researchers note that this may "suggest that more attractive [agents](#) may be using beauty to supplement, rather than to complement, other productive activities."

Mixon, who also is studying the impact of [physical attractiveness](#) in other areas, said it is important to note that "attractiveness is not the 'be all, end all' - it just helps to tip the scales when competitors are otherwise equally talented or skilled."

Provided by Columbus State University

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