

Snobby staff can boost luxury retail sales

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When it comes to luxury brands, the ruder the sales staff the better the sales, according to new research from the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business.

The forthcoming *Journal of Consumer Research* study reveals that consumers who get the brush-off at a high-end retailer can become more willing to purchase and wear pricey togs.

"It appears that snobbiness might actually be a qualification worth considering for [luxury brands](#) like Louis Vuitton or Gucci," says Sauder Marketing Professor Darren Dahl. "Our research indicates they can end up having a similar effect to an 'in-group' in high school that others aspire to join."

For the study, participants imagined or had interactions with [sales representatives](#) – rude or not. They then rated their feelings about associated brands and their desire to own them. Participants who expressed an aspiration to be associated with high-end brands also reported an increased desire to own the luxury products after being treated poorly.

The effect only held true if the salesperson appeared to be an authentic representative of the brand. If they did not fit the part, the consumer was turned off. Further, researchers found that [sales staff](#) rudeness did not improve impressions of mass-market brands.

"Our study shows you've got to be the right kind of snob in the right kind

of store for the effect to work," says Dahl.

The researchers also found that improved impressions gained by rude treatment faded over time. Customers who expressed increased desire to purchase the products reported significantly diminished desire two weeks later.

Based on the study's findings, Dahl suggests that, if consumers are being treated rudely, it's best to leave the situation and return later, or avoid the interactions altogether by shopping online.

More information: The study, *Should the Devil Sell Prada? Retail Rejection Increases Aspiring Consumers' Desire for the Brand*, will appear in the October 2014 edition of the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Provided by University of British Columbia

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