

Nestle Japan hiring 1,000 robots to sell espresso machines

October 29 2014



A file picture taken on June 28, 2014 shows Japanese mobile communication giant Softbank's humanoid robot "Pepper" displayed at a high-tech gadgets exhibition in Tokyo

Food giant Nestle said Wednesday that its Japan unit would hire 1,000 robots as sales clerks at stores across the country.

The first batch of the robots—a chatty humanoid called Pepper—will

report to [work](#) by the end of this year at outlets that sell coffee capsules and home espresso machines.

"From December, they will start selling coffee machines for us at big [retail stores](#)," said Nestle Japan spokeswoman Miki Kano.

"We are sure that our customers will enjoy shopping and being entertained by robots."

Pepper—which has already been at work, chatting with customers at wireless giant SoftBank's outlets—has proved an effective marketing tool for the Japanese mobile carrier, delighting managers who put it to work collecting customer opinions.

The 120-centimetre (four-foot) tall robot, which moves on rollers and has what looks like a tablet computer strapped to its chest, was unveiled in June by SoftBank president Masayoshi Son.

He billed it as an "emotional" robot that understands "70 to 80 percent of spontaneous conversations".

Pepper is set to go on the market from February for about \$2,000 apiece.

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Citation: Nestle Japan hiring 1,000 robots to sell espresso machines (2014, October 29) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-10-nestle-japan-hiring-robots-espresso.html>

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