

Ikea Shanghai frowns on elderly daters who occupy cafeteria



Sina Weibo: CCTV News

Sad news for elderly lonely hearts in Shanghai: they can no longer look for love in Ikea.

The Swedish furniture giant's Shanghai store has seen a strange phenomenon of senior citizens descending upon its famed cafeteria to socialise and even find partners.

Locals said it occurs twice weekly, usually on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

China's state broadcaster CCTV News reported that the elderly patrons would often buy a cup of coffee or some bread and "spend an entire day just chatting with others".

They are believed to be part of a dating community, making use of their Ikea membership cards.

This week, Ikea put a stop to it by imposing a strict "no food, no seating" rule to discourage senior citizens from occupying canteen seats for "extended periods".

- [China cracks down on dating websites](#)
- [Man waits 10 days in Chinese airport for 'lover'](#)

The elderly patrons are known to spend long periods in Ikea's Shanghai canteen - with minimal purchase

The notice at Ikea Shanghai has been shared widely among netizens on Chinese social media

In a notice posted at the entrance of the Ikea Shanghai Restaurant, staff identified a "match-making group" and accused it of "uncivilised behaviour".

"The situation has adversely affected the dining experience and security of most of our customers," it said, adding that it had received public complaints about "spitting" and "quarrels and fights".

"It is having a negative implication for our canteen's operation. From today, the restaurant will only be for people who purchase their food first."

The news has attracted attention from netizens on Chinese social media, with many in support of the elderly.

"They are harmless," wrote Ed Ed Chiu in a reply to a [post](#) by CCTV News on the popular Chinese micro-blogging Sina Weibo platform.

Weibo user Lee Xin slammed the move as a "draconian measure" and said it was cruel to elderly patrons.

"What wrong are they doing? They are lonely and are probably hoping to find some company again. If anything, the store should practise empathy and at least sympathise with these old people," she said.

- [Who will take care of China's elderly people?](#)

Customers have been criticised for their behaviour in Chinese Ikea stores

The move was criticised by some elderly patrons, who spoke to local media outlets.

"We've been to fast food outlets like McDonald's - but there are barely any peers there," said an 86-year-old man who went by the name of Qiu.

Mr Qiu told the state-controlled Global Times newspaper: "We feel like aliens - surrounded by youngsters. If there is another place in Shanghai where elderly people can gather, we are more than ready to pay twice as much and travel further."

Where will lonely hearts go in Shanghai?

But others online voiced support for the store's management, praising its efforts in "maintaining store policy".

"Intolerable behaviour," said one Weibo user. "I'm with the management on this. It's deplorable how people are caught photographed sleeping on Ikea displays, what more spitting and swearing in public? This should not be tolerated at all."

Another user Lao Gao from Beijing wrote: "To everyone romanticising this, please also consider that the store has an image to uphold while protecting the interests of other paying customers. It is ugly behaviour to take up seats for such long durations while you make others wait."

Reporting by the BBC's Grace Tsoi in Hong Kong and Heather Chen in Singapore.