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Why marketers should follow beauty brands' use of augmented reality

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Benefit Brow Genie maps user's eyebrows

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By **Brielle Jaekel**

Beauty brands have brought augmented reality from an interesting idea to an effective marketing tool on mobile this year by tapping into its ability to drive trial, a strategy which other marketers could benefit from following.

Retailers and brands such as L'Oreal and Sephora have connected with their audience more closely through augmented reality pushes in which users were able to test out and interact with products without having to enter stores. With many believing that this is just the beginning for the technology, brands should jump aboard now and focus on creating a convenient experience for consumers.

"We believe that we are in the early stages of augmented and virtual reality," said Bridget Dolan, vice president of **Sephora's** Innovation Lab. "Once you try on a lipstick virtually and say wait- I want to buy that shade,' and after you feel like you truly walked through a store you have never physically been to, you can see the power of what is to come with this technology.

"Our prediction is that AR technology will be embedded in all phones, and then real creativity will follow," she said. "With everything Sephora creates digitally, we always focus on utility, and by leveraging her phone in our stores it allows her to choose her own adventure.

"Augmented reality can truly help a client buy a product, by allowing her to try it on, boosting her confidence that she knows how to use it, or giving her an experience that informs more about how and why it was created."

Mobile makeover

A variety of brands such as Sephora, Sally Hansen, Benefit and L'Oreal have leveraged the pull of the growing technology to really connect with their audience. The possibility of beauty looks opens up a cohesive opportunity to incorporate augmented reality into marketing strategies.

For instance, L'Oreal launched its Makeup Genius app, which is considered the first makeup testing app, allowing customers to virtually test out makeup through mobile before purchasing. Since then a variety of makeup retailers have introduced similar tactics.

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Makeup brand Benefit released a mobile optimized that details how users should style their brows by virtually

transforming users' brows in pictures, to promote its brow-shaping products and services ([see more](#)).

Also, Lancome, Sephora Collection and Make Up For Ever were among the cosmetics brands featured in FaceCake Marketing Technologies' new cosmetic color search mobile app, ShadeScout, which is an outside party app that allows users to virtually test out makeup looks ([see more](#)).²

"Brands that will feature augmented reality with timesaving features like magic mirrors' and interactive displays will benefit the most in 2016," Ms. Rieser said. "Brands must continue to elevate their apps to include new trends in makeup, as well as, continue to create new and unique ways to interact with and benefit their consumers through the use of technology like augmented reality."

Sally Hansen allows users to create virtual manicures on themselves to test out nail colors through its own app. While the Matrix Color Lounge App creates a similar experience but for hair color, creating a virtual experience for beauty fans to test out a new hair style before making it permanent.

Augmented reality future

Sephora has made it a large part of its strategy, including a variety of tools tapping into augmented reality tech. For instance, users of its app can hover over model or founder images and instantly learn how to complete looks themselves, gain access to products and exclusive content, and is planning on rolling out a lip color-testing experience in the next year.

"I think we are just starting to see what Augmented Reality can do," said Terry Rieser, chief operating officer and co-founder of **Tag Creative**. "AR more than any other marketing tool allows a deeper engagement with the consumer."

"Brands who get on board with the technology sooner rather than later stand a good chance of benefiting the most from getting ahead of the curve and pushing boundaries," she said. "These tech tactics allow the consumer to customize and personalize to the nth degree, which is a huge trend right now."

"If we consider the on-the-go nature of the millennial market, AR technology also allows consumers to save the most important thing to them, time."

Final Take

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