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Sephora boosts augmented reality shopping with real-time facial recognition

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Sephora's Virtual Artist feature

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LVMH-owned Sephora is bringing live 3D facial recognition to the existing Virtual Artist feature on its application and Web site, a move expected to boost conversion rates through more accurate facial tracking and rendering.

The augmented reality feature currently allows users to upload a still selfie to virtually try on various products that can be purchased from Sephora, but the new update will allow users to view themselves moving in real time with the digital makeup, with more effective technology. The update comes from the developer ModiFace after a survey of non-Modiface and non-Sephora apps showed that a 22 percent drop in conversion rates occurred when the virtual products did not line up or appear correctly on the user's face.

"We believe the ability to see yourself with products can impact sales online," said Parham Aarabi, CEO of [ModiFace](#). "We now have significant data and test cases to back this up.

"And thus the integration on Sephora will, based on our expectation, result in increased conversions and user engagement," he said.

ModiFace is rolling out the software update to Sephora first, with many more retailers and brands to soon follow.

Beauty and mobile

Augmented reality has made a big splash recently for beauty brands and retailers, with many such as Sephora driving sales by allowing users to try on products through cameras on mobile and online. Research has shown that while these endeavors can significantly drive sales for beauty retailers, if the technology does not hold up, neither will sales.

Sephora's Virtual Artist will now include updated technology to combat these lost sales, as well as a more interesting user experience with live 3D movement. Now that more and more mobile apps are leveraging real-time augmented reality, those that require uploading a selfie may seem outdated.

Originally as a reflection of augmented reality's growing role in beauty, Sephora brought the technology to a wide audience via its Virtual Artist app feature that enabled users to virtually try on different lip shades in January ([see more](#)).

Users are now comfortable with an experience during which they can see how the virtual products appear on their

face while they move. Sephora's inclusion of the new experience will provide a more fun and comprehensive experience.

The new tech update will also focus on providing the least amount of steps possible during the user experience, as ModiFace's research shows that more clicks result in less conversions. For instance, one simple click has a conversion rate of 84 percent, but four clicks only see a rate of 10 percent.

The current 2D Sephora app is reportedly performing well and ModiFace expects the 3D version to perform even better.

Sephora and mobile

The new update is one of many endeavors Sephora is taking on to ensure a completely personal shopping experience while on mobile.

For instance, Sephora also just debuted on the messaging app Kik is a reflection of the push towards conversational commerce through chatbots and how to drive sales with one-to-one experiences on mobile that mimic in-store interactions ([see more](#)).

"The unique aspect of this launch is the web-based live 3D try-on capability, which looks very realistic," Mr. Aarabi said.

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