

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

## AR tools glean self-reliant beauty, skincare consultations

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*Augmented reality can be a powerful tool for retailers if they use it right. Image credit: Sephora*

By JEN KING

As beauty counter foot traffic continues to slow, the use of augmented reality has the potential of recreating the in-store experience through inclusion and personalization.

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When comparing augmented reality and virtual reality, AR has emerged as a more practical option for retailers to develop since the technology relies on smart mirrors or consumers' personal smartphones rather than a clunky, and often expensive, headset. Valued at \$237 billion, the beauty sector has embraced AR as a method to create try-on experiences at the cosmetics counter, and more often, from the comfort of a consumer's home.

"The integration of AR technology in the beauty shopping experience allows consumers to easily discover and try on new products that empower them, so they can feel confident in their beauty purchases," said Adam Gam, vice president of marketing at [Perfect Corp.](#), New York.

"For the brands and retailers, it's an opportunity for them to develop a more insightful dialogue with the consumer to help elevate their sales process," he said. "AR has completely transformed how beauty consumers shop. It allows the opportunity for the digital and physical worlds to come together to create a unique, confident and exciting shopping experience."

### Augmented reality's place at the counter

Color cosmetics, which saw a recorded growth of 8.4 percent in 2016, has been the main source of the beauty industry's rise over the last five years. Aside from the products themselves, digital has been driving the sector's acceleration, as more beauty products are purchased online ([see story](#)).

Beauty marketers have long had success online due to consumers' interest in YouTube tutorials, colorful campaigns found on social media and the slew of luxury brands that sell cosmetics online.

The established online presence of leading beauty marketers and retailers has been enhanced further through augmented reality, which requires nothing more than a smartphone.

For some consumers, the idea of using a tester lipstick, for instance, on anything other than the top of her hand, is

off-putting, especially in high-traffic stores. But, germaphobia aside, being able to try on a selection of lipsticks matched to her complexion, on her own time or while in-store, is an appealing offer answered by augmented reality.

"[In a year AR will be] everywhere. In stores, Web sites and in apps," said Parham Aarabi, CEO of **ModiFace**, New York. "On messaging bots, in popular apps, in social networks. Everywhere.

"The technology will also be better, more realistic and accurate, more informative and predictive," he said. "But that will not be as noticeable as the fact that AR is becoming a default technology layer for the entire beauty industry."

LVMH-owned beauty retailer Sephora has been a pioneer in leveraging augmented reality to facilitate product trials. Since launching its Virtual Artist in 2016, consumers have used AR to try on hundreds of millions of color cosmetics combinations digitally.

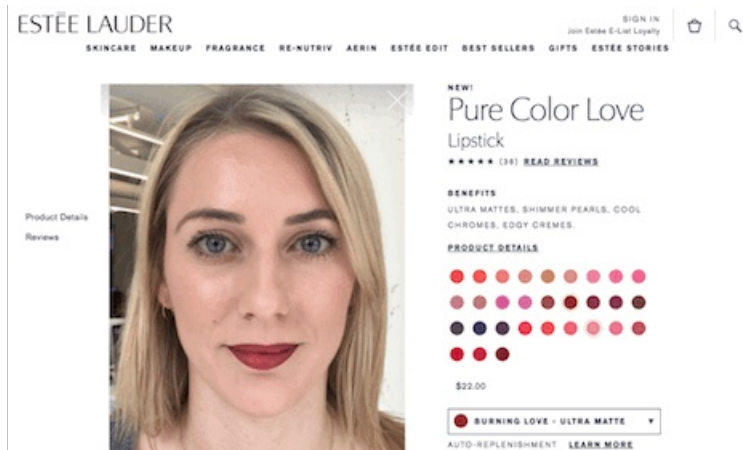


*Sephora's Virtual Artist also suggests full looks in addition to product recommendations. Image credit: Sephora*

Sephora's Virtual Artist is available across cosmetics categories including lipstick, eyeshadows and face products such as blush and highlighter. The expanse of options allows consumers to apply a full face of makeup to create a desired look or try a new trend.

Also, using Virtual Artists' AR functions, a consumer can choose her skin tone and overlay a look designed by a Sephora makeup artist on her own face to see how it will look. Leveraging ModiFace's technology the looks appear on the user's face in 3D, allowing her to turn her head and see the look from different angles ([see story](#)).

Beauty marketer Estée Lauder Cos. also leverages ModiFace's AR technology to enhance its online experiences for a number of its premium cosmetics including the Estée Lauder flagship brand and Smashbox.



*Estée Lauder's Pure Color Love lipstick AR experience, powered by ModiFace. Image credit: ModiFace*

In July, Estée Lauder launched a conversational chatbot through Facebook Messenger that lets consumers try on products through AR.

The chatbot offers recommendations and answers questions as customers search for lipstick and other cosmetics. Additionally, ModiFace technology lets a customer project an augmented reality version of Estée Lauder products onto her face using a smartphone's camera ([see story](#)).

Perfect Corp., the firm behind the YouCam Makeup mobile application that allows AR try-ons of Dior, Estée Lauder, YSL Beauty and Guerlain products, among many others, found that its users are 1.6 times more likely to buy beauty products than non-users. YouCam users also spend 2.7 times more on cosmetics than non-users ([see story](#)).

ModiFace's own research supports Perfect Corp.'s survey results, finding that being able to test-drive products from anywhere has helped boost conversions up to 84 percent ([see story](#)).

"Beauty products are extremely personal. It is about the look, feel, texture and the way it matches your face, complexion and features," ModiFace's Mr. Aarabi said. "Personalizing products helps customers make better decisions that they will be happier about. And, as a byproduct, it increases sales."

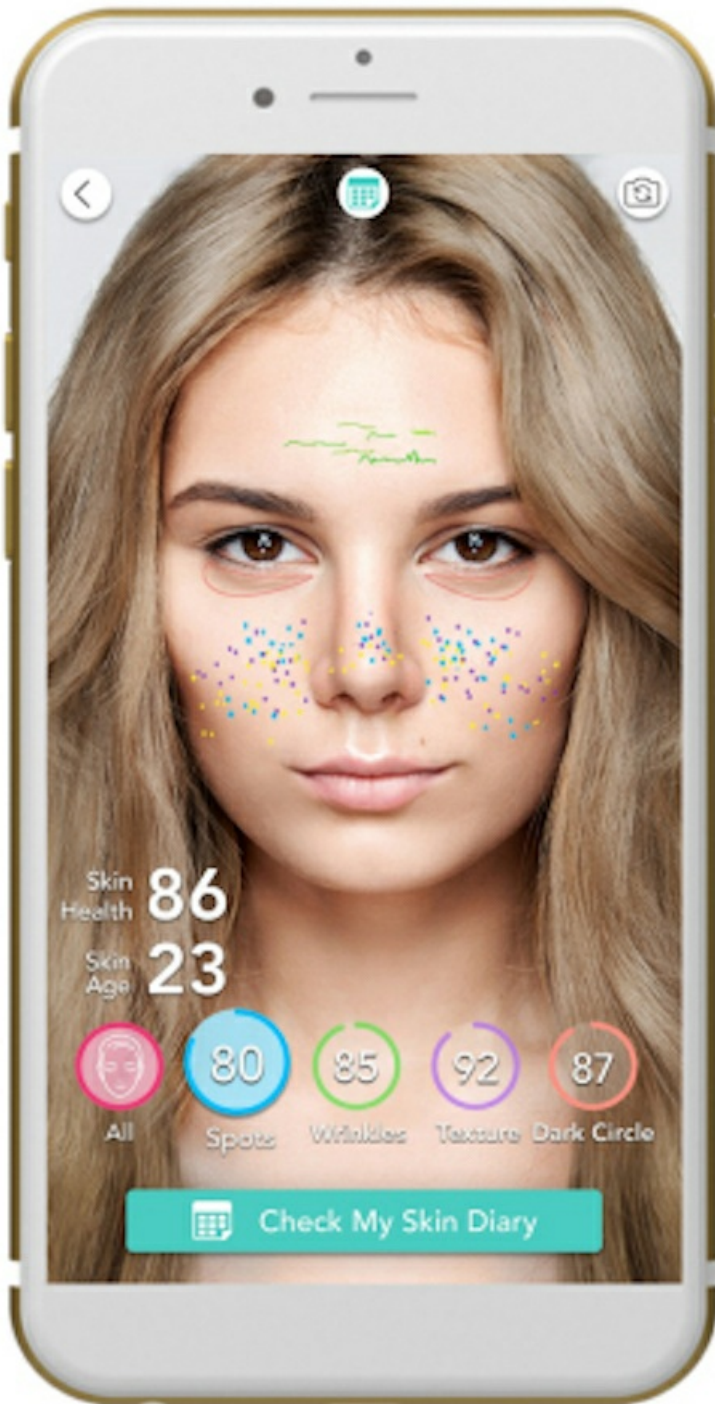
#### Putting skincare regimens to the test

With AR's potential for colored cosmetics established, the technology is being expanded to additional categories in the personal care sector.

In August, Perfect Corp.'s YouCam Makeup launched an AR skin diagnostic tool to guide consumers to a "flawless" complexion.

The skincare diagnostic tool lives within the YouCam Makeup app and gives users a real-time skin analysis by picking up signs of skin health such as wrinkles, spots, texture and dark circles.

Using AR facial recognition, artificial intelligence and deep learning, the skincare tool evaluates the skin's condition. By balancing lighting conditions and normalizing the environment, the tool can track changes in skin condition over time.



*Perfect Corp.'s YouCam Makeup Skin Dairy tracks complexion issues. Image credit: Perfect Corp.*

By snapping a selfie with the skincare tool, users can create and save a Skin Dairy on the app to monitor their complexion and provide a skin health report that includes skin age and relative skin scores compared to other users in a similar demographic. Also, the diagnostic tool can be useful in telling consumers if a skincare regimen is effective.

"Unlike makeup products which have instant and visual benefits/effects, it is difficult to determine whether our skincare regimen is actually performing," Perfect Corp.'s Mr. Gam said. "With this new tool, we can now better understand whether our skincare products are actually living up to their claims and adjust our routine based on the results garnered from this real-time skin analysis.

"This new innovative way to track our skin health is allowing us to create a ritual, and with this ritual we are able to easily identify key factors affecting our glow," he said.

Similarly, ModiFace recently introduced a Web-based skin assessment platform that analyzes a user's skin condition using AR to recommend products and treatments.

Per Retail Dive, ModiFace's tool is built in HTML, allowing skincare brands to integrate the technology onto their

own Web sites.

For skincare brands, helping to identify areas of improvement, such as hydration, aging or wrinkles, consumers can better select products to benefit their skin's specific needs for a flawless complexion.

"AR apps continue to evolve the beauty journey whether its discovering new looks and trends or even the ability to purchase AR helps connect consumers, influencers and retailers," Perfect Corp.'s Mr. Gam said.

"In addition to our advancements in AR facial recognition technology, AI and deep learning are being rolled out to evaluate the skin's condition and make product recommendations," he said.

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