

MARKETING

Pinterest makes beauty inclusivity a priority with skin tone search options

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Pinterest's new features are focused on making the app more diverse and inclusive. Image credit: Pinterest

By DANNY PARISI

Social platform Pinterest has introduced new features focused on making its search and discovery features more diverse and inclusive.

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Pinterest users can now search for cosmetic and beauty products by skin tone, ensuring that "white" is not always the default assumed skin color of Pinterest's users, something that consumers of color have noted was prominent in the past. Pinterest's overall efforts are working towards making the platform a more welcoming place for users and creating a positive image for the brands that Pinterest works with.

"Any time and any way that we can open more doors to diversity and inclusion is a good thing it's how we continue to evolve as a society, and social media can play a big role in that direction," said Edward Balassanian, founder of **Strings**, a new social media platform. "The concept of social media connects and informs us in ways that we never could have imagined, and it gives us the opportunity to learn more about different cultures, ideas, fashionthe list goes on and on."

Mr. Balassanian is not affiliated with Pinterest but agreed to comment in an expert capacity.

Inclusive options

In contrast to the volatility of the discourse on Twitter and the constant scandals of Facebook, Pinterest is a platform not known for courting drama.

Instead, the platform has built up a reputation for openness and wholesomeness and the innocent sharing of interesting inspirational images.

But some users have noticed a troubling trend, one that is not unique to Pinterest but inherent to any algorithm-based engine.

When searching Pinterest for cosmetics products, the images returned are overwhelmingly of white people, particularly white women.

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Pinterest's skintone searching. Image credit: Pinterest

For people of color, cosmetics and beauty products often require shades and formulas that are different than for white people. Women of color using the platform would often have to indicate in their search that the products they were looking for were for them, whereas white women were considered the default.

Now, Pinterest is looking to make its algorithm more sensitive by prompting users to choose skin tone when searching skin products. A range of skin tone options are available, ensuring that customers can find products that are right for them.

At the same time, Pinterest has also redesigned its visuals to be more accommodating to users who may have vision impairments or other specific needs.

What is unique about Pinterest's approach to skin tone searching is the way in which the platform created the searching tool. By analyzing thousands of photos, Pinterest was able to analyze and sort skin tones by color value, similar to the way Pantone organizes color by hue and value.

As opposed to other skin tone sorting systems, which sort based on arbitrary factors such as race and ethnicity, Pinterest's model sorts based purely on colors, meaning that a tan Caucasian person and a light-skinned African American person could have similar skin tones instead of sorting by "white" or "black."

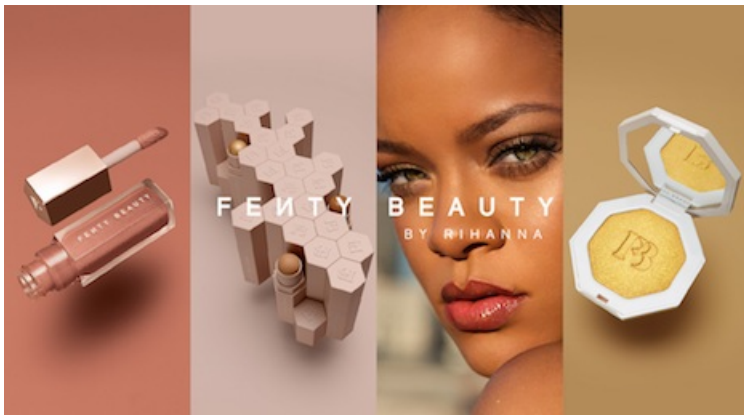
Pinterest brought in L'Oreal-owned beauty technology company Modiface to help build its skin tone sorting tool.

Matching tones

Skintone diversity is getting increasing attention in the beauty world. Pop star Rihanna's Fenty beauty line was designed specifically to combat such an issue.

Rihanna's mission for Fenty Beauty was to create beauty products for hard-to-match skin tones "so that women everywhere would be included," after she found it difficult to find products for her complexion.

In a statement shared to the Fenty Beauty Instagram account, Rihanna explained her cosmetic concept, saying, "I wanted [Fenty Beauty] to be something that girls love, for it to be respected by professionals and I wanted something that felt like me – reflective of makeup I love and I generally want to wear" ([see story](#)).



Rihanna worked with LVMH-owned Kendo on Fenty Beauty. Image credit: Fenty Beauty

This recent move will also be helpful for the many beauty brands that partner with Pinterest. At the same time that the brand is looking to improve its user experience, Pinterest has also been working to make the platform more appealing to brands.

Pinterest is expanding its recently launched Shopping Ads, looking to help more brands sell their products through its platform.

The new ad unit will allow brands to systematically create inventories of their buyable products for customers to browse in an automated and scalable way. While Instagram may be the preferred social media platform for luxury, Pinterest is still a valuable tool for fashion, home decor and other aspirational sectors ([see story](#)).

"Pinterest's newest inclusion features, similar to the different skin tone emojis, is not only a smart move but the right move," Mr. Balassanian said. "Diversity continues to be a critical issue for organizations across the board to address. People want to see themselves in the content they view and engage with, and for that to be a reality, social media platforms like Pinterest must find ways for its users to more easily access the content that matters to them."

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