

JEWELRY

## Hublot's Digital Boutique brings in-store curation to online shopping

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*Hublot's Digital Boutique aligns online and offline commerce. Image credit: Hublot*

By DANNY PARISI

Swiss watchmaker Hublot is unveiling a digital boutique that aims to make the online shopping experience more compatible with what customers would see when going into a physical store.

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The Hublot Digital Boutique allows any customer the ability to discuss the intricacies of different products with Hublot sales associates in real time, just as they would if they went into the store. The digital boutique is part of a larger trend in physical retail that sees brands more closely integrating their online and offline experiences.

"We've all have seen a steady increase in interest in omnichannel experiences," said John Bancroft, senior consultant at [FitForCommerce](#), Short Hills, NJ. "Why? Customers demand it today.

"Our latest annual survey of 120 retailers/brands across 20 verticals uncovered that nearly every vertical is placing an increased emphasis on omnichannel consistency. The insight here, however, is that every retailer and customer journey is unique.

"Retailers need to craft a consistent experience for their customers, but they have an opportunity to transcend the traditional retail experience by leveraging digital strategies and tools in retail. At the same time, our retailers can lift their online businesses by leveraging brick and mortar strengths so the solution should focus on leveraging digital to elevate the retail experience, not simply to replicate an experience that may or may not translate fully across customer touchpoints."

Mr. Bancroft is not affiliated with Hublot but agreed to comment in an expert capacity.

### Digital boutique

For a luxury brand such as Hublot, one of the core aspects of the customer experience is entering into a lavish boutique and working directly with attentive sales associates to arrive at the perfect product.

This experience is essential for luxury consumers, who expect that brands will cater to their specific needs in real time throughout the purchasing process.



*The Digital Boutique in action. Image credit: Hublot*

But one of the main problems retailers have had to face since the arrival of ecommerce is how to create this sort of luxury in-store experience in an online transaction.

Hublot is seeking to solve that problem with the Hublot Digital Boutique. With this project, customers who shop online are able to select their closest Hublot boutique and speak remotely, either through Skype or FaceTime, to a Hublot sales associate who will guide them through the shopping experience just as they would in stores.

The brand spent considerable time and resources perfecting the digital boutique so that it would offer the exact same caliber of shopping experience online as one would receive when entering a Hublot boutique.

### **Commerce and marketing**

Hublot's latest effort is in line with a growing trend in the luxury business to bridge online and offline experiences.

For example, jeweler Engage Studio has come up with a novel solution for helping customers get high-end service for their jewelry purchases online.

When customers purchase a piece of jewelry from the company, they first have a long consultation with the studio. Then, digital renderings of the piece are sent to the customer for examination.

Finally, Engage Studio will send the client a cubic zirconia replica of the piece so they can examine its dimensions, color, weight and other parameters that are not easily communicable online ([see story](#)).



*Hublot's announcement of digital boutique. Image credit: Hublot*

Similarly, YouCam Makeup, the mobile application that lets users virtually "try on" different cosmetic products through the use of their mobile devices' camera, is expanding its experiences with live consultations.

A new feature previewed at SXSW in Austin, Texas allows consumers to video chat one-on-one with beauty experts through the app. The feature is meant to further enhance the app's utility and make it an essential companion for beauty lovers and the brands that YouCam is hoping to court ([see story](#)).

With the Digital Boutique, Hublot is looking to bring that same sort of personalized experience to online shopping.

"Mimicking experiences across channels is not bad, but leveraging strengths across each channel is the key to success," Mr. Bancroft said. "Omnichannel consistency is becoming a table stake, but the innovators and differentiators are providing superior experiences that match the retailers' unique customer journey.

"FitForCommerce recommends starting with the customer journey and leveraging the world of digital to best enhance the brick and mortar branded retail experience."

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