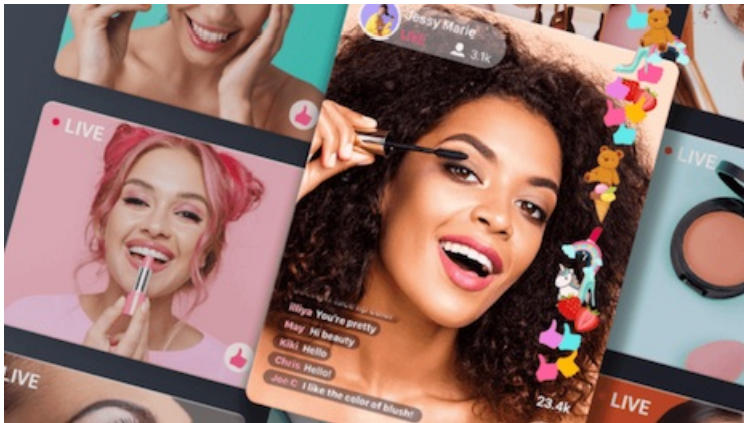


SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

Google's new beauty AR features raises bar for digitalization, ecommerce

December 18, 2020



Google worked with Perfect Corp. and ModiFace to develop the new technology. Image credit: Perfect Corp.

By NORA HOWE

Tech giant Google is rolling out a new feature allowing consumers to digitally try on cosmetic products through the search function on mobile devices.

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As the use of augmented reality (AR) technology and ecommerce has grown rapidly across many sectors especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Google is further developing the digitalization of the beauty industry. By using the front-facing camera on their phones, users will be able to visualize products on themselves as well as on models with similar skin tones.

"AR technology is going to continue to evolve and become more easily accessible to implement across on-site experiences, apps, and advertising," Alex Turner, senior strategist of paid search at **Tinuiti**, Orange County. "Google has already rolled-out AR-enabled advertising tactics for the beauty space with the Virtual-Try On YouTube ad unit.

"One leading cosmetics company has leaned into this technology and has seen stellar results with 167 percent lower cost-per-unique-user, 23 percent reduction in cost-per-conversion, and 14 percent increase in conversion rate compared to standard YouTube activations," he said. "The application of AR technology is going to grow from Google and should be enthusiastically adopted by leading companies to drive a more engaging shopping experience for prospects and loyal customers alike."

Google beauty

While online shopping and ecommerce have surged exponentially this year, many consumers still desire the in-store experience of closely examining and trying on products and seeking advice from store personnel. Now, Google is bringing a portion of that experience back to customers through its AR beauty feature.

Google worked with **Perfect Corp.** and L'Oreal-owned **ModiFace** to create the new feature. Over the past few years, the companies have been developing their own technologies using real product data from many brands, allowing them to create a range of digital experiences through mobile devices and other online and in-store integrations.



ModiFace uses real-time facial analysis and feature tracking for videos and photos. Image credit: ModiFace

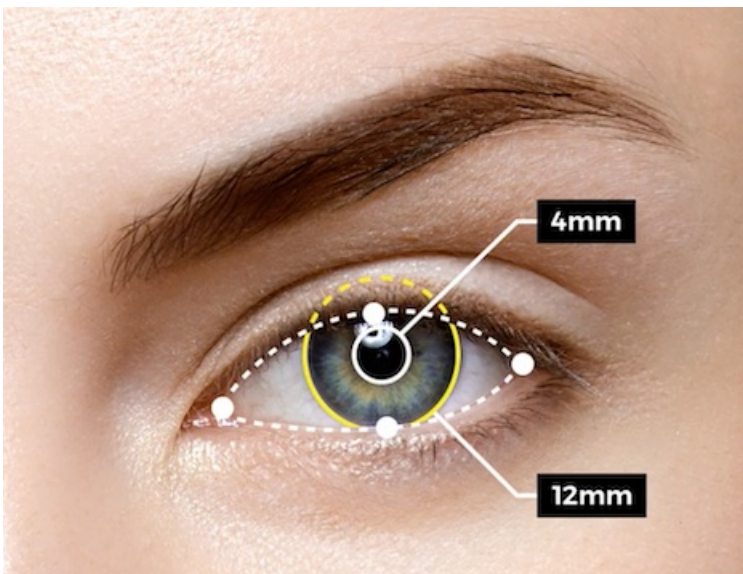
As Google's latest data partners, they are bringing a number of brands to Google Search's AR function such as Estée Lauder, L'Oréal and MAC Cosmetics.

The way the feature will work is similar to how other apps like Snapchat, Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube utilize facial data and filters. This is not Google's first attempt at virtual try-ons, as it launched AR makeup capabilities on YouTube in summer 2019 ([see story](#)).

To supplement the new augmented reality function, Google is launching a feature that will prompt Google app users to view a personalized collection of product recommendation videos produced by experts and industry leaders in different sectors including beauty and apparel.

Developed by Google's in-house video shopping platform [Shoploop](#), the goal of the feature is to introduce consumers to new products through short form video content.

Google has stood out as a discovery platform with programs like [Discover](#) which builds personalized content discovery for users separate from the search engine format. Through Discover, Google compiles and delivers content based on a user's previous interests and recommends similar content the user may be interested in similar to how social media algorithms serve user feeds.



Mobile Google users will now be able to test products before buying from the comfort of their phone. Image credit: ModiFace

Google's new AR and video features are scheduled to begin rolling out this week.

Evolution of AR

The beauty industry was making strides with augmented reality before the COVID-19 pandemic which has only accelerated use of the technology.

Last year, Vogue France blended technology with its content, allowing readers to test makeup on its Web site using AR. Using technology from Perfect Corp., readers of Vogue France were able to view makeup on images through the camera on their smartphones or computers ([see story](#)).

In December of 2019, French fashion house Dior debuted a 3Dior Makeup experience blending the world of cosmetics with the advancements of technology. In partnership with digital artist Ins Alpha, the 3Dior Makeup experience was an Instagram filter in augmented reality ([see story](#)).

"The application of AR technology allows for a much more cohesive shopping experience for new products," Mr. Turner said. "Beauty itself is a personal product that varies from person to person in terms of product satisfaction and desired shade and consistency.

"This aspect of the landscape often will reduce the likelihood of consumers branching out from what they know and love," he said. "Now with AR, consumers are able to try before they buy and experience how products will look before the point of purchase which was previously a barrier to branching to new brands or shades."

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