

RESEARCH

Infinite commerce is the future of beauty marketing: research

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By JEN KING

NEW YORK – Senior executives from Chanel and Procter & Gamble at the Luxury Interactive 2013 conference said that trends in the beauty retail market forecast a move toward infinite commerce.

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The jointly conducted Fashion Institute of Technology Graduate Program research study moderated by Stephan Kanlian, professor and chairperson at the [Graduate School of FIT](#), highlighted what the future has in store for the fragrance and personal care market sector. Keeping digital trends top of mind will help brands maintain relevance.

“Infinite commerce, if done properly, causes the consumer to be empowered,” said Katherine Voyten, vice president of marketing at [Procter & Gamble](#), New York.

“This breakthrough concept that says that each of you can become a retailer on your own requires operational and structural changes,” she said.

The research team represented fragrance and personal care brands and focused on the emerging Asian market as the region continues to increase its dominance in the global market. The team studied global beauty commerce trends with a main focus on China, Japan and Singapore.

Beauty in the eye of the beholder

The Beauty in a Digital World study showed that the beauty sector is behind other market sectors such as electronics in ecommerce. Only five percent of beauty purchases are purchased online, while 95 percent of products are purchased in bricks-and-mortar stores. In the study, the researchers set out to answer why beauty has not caught up to where other business is taking place.

The study showed that beauty marketers are making consumers work too hard to get the products they want. The future of beauty commerce is not just based online and in-store but everywhere a consumer is.

Consumers are looking for convenience such as same-day delivery, curated online and mobile content, and the customization of shopping anywhere.



Moderator Professor Kanlian with Ms. Voyten (left) and Ms. Edelman

Online and offline models have become more similar as high-touch and high-technology blur the line between the two.

This blend of 24/7 omnichannel experience, or infinite commerce, is composed of three key drivers: the continuous desires of consumers, technology and the consumer option of touch when needed.

To exist in an infinite commerce market, retailers must take available technology a step further. Adding an iPad at the beauty counter will no longer be enough to engage consumers properly.

“Infinite commerce allows the consumer to be in charge,” Ms. Voyten said.

“It is a continuous process where a consumer can shop wherever they are,” she said.

By elevating the in-store environment with technology, consultations will be personalized to sync with individual needs.

The traditional bricks-and-mortar format will remain, but the study saw a move toward

smaller pop-up or freestanding boutiques rather than the impersonal and overwhelming big box store.



Procter & Gamble and research team member Ms. Voyten

There will likely be a move toward high-touch in-store experiences that will be enhanced by products such as Google Now, which is a sort of personal assistant platform that generates customized recommendations based on the user's interactions.

For example, if a consumer tells Google Now that she is planning a vacation, it will aggregate product recommendations, such as sunblock, that can be then delivered right to the consumer's home.

Beauty needs to be easily shoppable and on-demand for consumers. The research showed that consumers see a product, snap a photo and place an order instantly via millions of points of distribution.

Infinite possibilities

By following the trends found in the Beauty in a Digital World research study, marketers will create a continuous process where the consumer is in-charge and able to customize their experience.

Although the role of bricks-and-mortar locations will change, it will remain a vital aspect of the beauty experience.

"Bricks-and-mortars will be a crucial experience, because beauty is a high-touch experience," said Lauren Edelman, marketing director of **Chanel**, New York.

"Technology will get closer to consumers who want both experiences," she said. "The study found that consumers want to travel seamlessly between the two worlds."

The role of the beauty adviser will be equally important but the dynamics of the job will be changed as the beauty market moves more toward digital.

"The nature of role of beauty adviser will change, but the human experience is important," said Procter & Gamble's Ms. Voyten.

"Beauty advisers will become more like data analysts than service providers," she said.

“You cannot outsource the human component.”

Final Take

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