

Changing the Face of Augmented Reality Makeup Shopping



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A platform to try on makeup without leaving the retailer's website

Recent data shows that 73 percent of women do the bulk of their shopping online via desktop and laptop computers. But when shopping for makeup, it's difficult to know if you're getting the colors that are on the screen, or if they'll be completely different when they come to the door.

One new technology is challenging the assumption that makeup can't be purchased online. CAKE is an extension of the company FaceCake Marketing Technologies, a leading producer of augmented retail. FaceCake's CEO Linda Smith saw a major need here and her team developed the new product.

"CAKE is an augmented reality experience that functions online and in-browser where you get a personalized product view," Smith says. "When you go on the product page, CAKE AR, or CAKE, as we're calling it, not only allows you to see a picture of the product, but also you have the option to view that product on you."

This new technology could be featured in every online department store and cosmetic company if word gets out. Smith said that she had the idea because she loves shopping online and saw a need for something like this.

"As a female CEO of a true tech company, I have a unique position because when I shop for clothes and makeup I do it all online," Smith told me in an interview. "So, really it's more out of what I would like to see and what I feel that women would like to see when shopping online."

Emerging, In-Browser Technology

It's the first HTML5 in-browser reality augmented experience of its kind and can be used for multiple websites and products. All it takes is a webcam and an internet connection, and consumers can see the effects of makeup without

leaving the page. It doesn't require any downloads, plug-ins, extensions, or user input, and works with mobile browsers as well. It engages instantly and even allows the viewing of different shades and alternate personalized product views.

"You're not leaving the site you're on. You're integrated in the shopping experience. You just have this other option for personalized product view, which I always felt was critical for augmented reality."

It's simple and easy for brands to partner with the software. All they need to do is embed a small snippet of code into the page, and the augmented reality platform will be instantly integrated into their website. The technology is immediately appealing to shoppers because of the easy integration and multiple applications.

Now, augmented reality is becoming a reality, and since we're a circular solution, a true platform that can work online, in-store, on your mobile device, we're having a tremendous amount of reach out of brands wanting the full solution or a part of the solution. They want to have a circular solution.

Cargo Cosmetics is one brand that has already embedded the software into their system, partnering with FaceCake to spread the word about this new and exciting product. The system allows users to view different Eye Shadow Singles and plumping Essential Lip Colors as if they were trying on the product when looking in a mirror. You'll be able to see not only the color of the lipstick on your own image, but also see the plumping effects of the lipstick.

It's easy to use for consumers. I took the opportunity to test out the product on Cargo's website, and found the product to be very agreeable. I didn't have to leave the page or download any software to access the product. It loads instantly when you click "Try" on Cargo's website, and as long as you enable your computer's camera, it will show a clear picture of your face.

The colors accurately stay on the designated area, even when you move your head. The eye shadow is surprisingly well-set and the lip color matches the shape and contour of your lips perfectly.

Future Expansion

As Linda described to PSFK, this technology is just in its beginning stages. It actually began in-stores, and has since merged into an online experience:

We started with doing more of an in-store kiosk and we've done that before. We had a great response to that because it's very easy to try products on and see the product on, but when you think about makeup, you're not going to try on 12 or 13 different lipsticks at the mall, and you won't try it on your lips. You'll try it on your hand, maybe trying two or three, but you'll never try multiple colors. We've found that when we use a makeup mirror or something like that, there's an average of 32 try-ons and you can get specific recommendations for your skin-tone, your face shape, and your eye color.

In the future, Cargo won't be the only retailer utilizing the product. Though Smith couldn't name any of the brands they currently working with, she did say, "We're in discussions with a major retailer, one of the largest retailers in the country about having them on basically every makeup counter they have."

She also said that the hope is to move on from just makeup to jewelry, handbags, and eventually clothing. "We're working with some jewelry brands right now and other makeup companies. And a really neat aspect of our future is handbags where you can stand up and see what the handbags look like when you're looking at accessories. Any product or service that you would benefit from being able to see on your own image, we're going for that market. We're starting with primarily makeup and jewelry at the moment."

How This Could Change the Online Shopping Experience

The online shopping world is massive. It's difficult to determine what products will work best for you, and once those products are shipped, they might not be what you envisioned. CAKE helps you to narrow your choices and come home with something that you'll actually use.

“One thing about shopping online is that there are so many choices that what we do helps you drill down the choices and help you find what you’re looking for,” Smith says. “But beyond that, you can make sure that what you’re looking at and what you’re going to buy online is going to work for you.”

FaceCake currently has a patent on the ability to market products back to users on their own image, so that gives them fairly broad coverage. It won’t be long before CAKE has a corner on the market for this particular aspect of online shopping.

“This is the future of shopping,” Smith says. “I do believe it will become an expected part of shopping to be able to have these kind of enhanced experiences and then also be able to see recommendations, not only the visualization of the product, but also the recommendations of a product that we bake into it, and social shopping is also baked into it so you can share with your friends and they can see it on themselves.”