Google uses augmented reality to let users try on cosmetics

Google is launching a digital “try it on” experience for some cosmetics-related queries using augmented reality, the company announced Thursday. It is working with data partners ModiFace and Perfect Corp to visualize thousands of eyeshadow shades and lipsticks from brands such as L’Oreal, MAC Cosmetics, Black Opal and Charlotte Tilbury. The feature is launching this week in the US.

Image: Google.

How it works. When you search for certain eyeshadow or lipstick products on the Google app, the knowledge panel may contain a swatch of shades, which can be viewed on different models of varying skin tones.

You can also try the products on virtually. The experience uses your mobile device’s front-facing camera and augmented reality to apply the cosmetics to your face.

Product recommendations in Shopping and Discover. In the announcement, Google also said that product recommendations from beauty, apparel, and home and garden enthusiasts and experts may appear in the Google Shopping section and Discover feed for mobile users.

The company provided two examples of what that may look like, featuring professional makeup artist Jonet and candle brand Homesick Candles (both links are only viewable on mobile devices). The recommendations contain paid ads for the associated products.

Why we care. This augmented reality feature may make the Google app a more appealing shopping destination for users researching cosmetics to buy. It also presents marketing opportunities for cosmetics manufacturers. The product knowledge panel itself contains organic shopping listings, which may facilitate traffic to online retailers.

Zooming out a bit, this application of augmented reality showcases a practical use for the technology, bringing a "physical experience" of a product to digital and giving customers a more detailed idea of what they're buying.

The recommendations that may appear in Google Shopping and Discover feeds could apply to a multitude of sectors, and may enable brands to leverage influencers within the mobile Google Shopping experience and in Discover feeds.

About The Author

George Nguyen is an editor for Search Engine Land, covering organic search, podcasting and e-commerce. His background is in journalism and content marketing. Prior to entering the industry, he worked as a radio personality, writer, podcast host and public school teacher.

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