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Google U.K. Beauty Event Focuses on Personalized Content

Leaders from Google, YouTube and Sephora talk about new consumer pathways.

By Fiona Ma on October 19, 2018



LONDON — The path to purchasing beauty products is becoming increasingly nonlinear, due to consumers who are smarter, more engaged and who know how to do their research.

To address the ongoing changes in the beauty landscape, Google U.K. brought together beauty brands, retailers and digital experts earlier this week for its first event, Connected Beauty.

During the panel, the online giant presented research — in association with data and insights agency Kantar — that looked at the routes to the beauty consumer and how brands can stay tightly connected to them, off-line and online.

Speakers included Yann Kerouedan, e-commerce director at Sephora, and Noel Paasch, creative experiments lead at YouTube, who emphasized the importance of creating personalized content to engage consumers across every touch point.

Sarah Brown, founder of the indie skin-care brand Pai, and Ami Christiansen, of perfume label Sana Jardin, spoke of the importance of connecting with consumers through value systems in order to stand out in a saturated market.

The Kantar research revealed consumers' increasing need for information as they look to discover the best products in the market.

They mostly look for this information digitally, with 23 percent actively searching product reviews on their mobile phones, even while in store, to inform their purchases. "We are seeing a lot of interaction, with information searches often being short and timely and meeting a question or a need," said Gabri Herrmann, director media and Internet clients at Kantar.

This raises opportunity — and the stakes — for brands, which are expected to create a seamless transition between the online and off-line experience and offer personalized, curated solutions. While online prepares the purchase, 75 percent of transactions still take place in brick-and-mortar stores.

According to Google, an increase in personalized information has spiked. Consumers are looking for products that target specific concerns. Searches for best face moisturizer for dry sensitive skin increased nearly threefold over the past year.

"People are more loyal to their individual needs and their personality rather than to a brand," added Herrmann.

Sephora also talked about its new web site design, which aims to marry content and digital strategy. The site is designed to put more focus on curation and enable the company to upload product launches faster without overwhelming the consumer.

A key feature rolled out on the web site is the brand's new search-engine tool. Sephora enables users to search for "personalized content," such as the right type of products for blonde hair or oily skin.

"The important part is around inspiration, so we're trying to push a lot of easy-to-read content across all touch points, whether that be on a mobile or desktop. We're doing this through editorial content and tutorials," said Kerouedan, e-commerce director at Sephora.

Content is the key to unlocking customer spending, but Paasch of YouTube admitted it is difficult to sift through the unending stream of content. "There are 400 hours of video uploaded to YouTube every minute," she said.

The solution for brands looking to cut through the sea of online videos lies in content made for grabbing attention, content that will "punch [viewers] in the face" with unconventional story lines.

"We're being told that people have the attention span of a goldfish, and that you have to get in and get out. But when you look at the way content is being consumed, it paints a different picture. Consumers know what they want, so it's not always about shorter but better," added Paasch.