

MOUJH

A woman with curly brown hair and red lipstick is the central figure. She is wearing a blue and red floral jacket with a black mesh sleeve. The background is a solid orange color. The word 'MOUJH' is written in large, colorful letters at the top, with paint dripping from the bottom of each letter.

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VIRTUAL VANITY

If you thought microblading your eyebrows made you both tech- and beauty-savvy, think again. Discover the augmented reality technologies and advanced at-home beauty gadgets that are in store for 2018

Words by Hafsa Lodi

Beautifying oneself has taken a high-tech turn, from assessing skincare needs to purchasing new cosmetics. Though driverless cars and drones that deliver coffee may be the headlining stories in the realm of tech, new beauty innovations, many of which were introduced at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas earlier this year, involve revolutionary concepts such as measuring your UV exposure through wearable tech, and getting tailored skincare advice from your bathroom mirror.

Numerous new beauty-meets-tech launches are aimed at improving the overall cosmetics shopping experience. Dropping by a beauty counter at a department store, having a face-to-face conversation with a professional make-up artist and sampling the product before leaving with a purchase, is a shopping process officially consigned to the past. Today, technologies like Modiface make it possible for shoppers to view products on themselves in real-time on a screen that incorporates augmented reality (AR) with photo-realistic make-up and hair simulation. Modiface has begun developing apps and in-store screens for brands like Estée Lauder, MAC Cosmetics and Sephora. In many Charlotte Tilbury stores, customers can use her Magic Mirror, an AR invention that shows the make-up artist's 10 signature looks on their own faces when they peer into the virtual mirror. With the click of a button, the

images can be transformed from day-to-night looks, and can also be emailed to each user.

These AR-powered devices are more than just glitzy displays of grandeur – they provide answers to dilemmas long endured by beauty shoppers. One such issue that women often face is finding the correct foundation shade for their skin. Sephora stores worldwide have collaborated with colour tool company Pantone to create Color Profile: a system that helps women find matches for their skin tones, from the various brands available at Sephora. In

regional stores, this range covers over 300 different products. “It’s important to know that foundations can come in yellow, red, beige, peach, and pink base undertones, because these colour elements are within skin tones making us warm or cool, so getting this wrong in your foundation can make it appear grey and ashy if it’s too light, or orange if it’s too dark,” explains Elodie Weisbein, marketing director of

Sephora retail services. “Studies show that women used to try at least seven different foundations and colours before finding the right one. Color Profile is time and money saving. It is really an innovative service.”

Perhaps even more in-demand than intelligent shopping assistants, are at-home beauty devices that can address anti-ageing concerns. For instance, the SkinScanner, produced by Neutrogena in collaboration with FitSkin, is a tool which, when affixed to your smartphone, can capture

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Elodie Weisbein

Photography: Folio ID - Mierawa-Kuska/Trunk Archive





HiMirror available at Himirror.com

detailed images of your skin, while recording wrinkles, pore size and moisture levels. Some of these gadgets simply analyse and record data found on the skin. Others have reparative capabilities and can target the personalised needs of a user. One of the most talked-about launches at CES was a futuristic face mask, conceptualised by Swedish beauty company Foreo. The new Foreo UFO puts traditional sheet masks to shame, providing a facial treatment from its handheld device in only 90 seconds. Paul Peros, the brand’s CEO, poses the question: “Face masks are the guilty pleasure of millions, but is lying under cold, wet sheets of paper the best we can do for 2018?” The Foreo UFO uses thermo-therapy to open the pores, T-sonic pulsations to allow for the absorption of the formulas and cryotherapy to seal them into the skin. LED light therapy can be used in three different colour settings: red to target anti-ageing, green to brighten the skin and blue to fight acne.

There’s also the Trinity Facial Toning Device by NuFace, famously used by Australian model Miranda Kerr. The tool uses microcurrent technology to help achieve the same effects as a face-lift and has extra attachments that can be used to target the lips and eyes. “It’s an award-winning skincare device designed to stimulate the facial muscles for a more youthful appearance,” explains Nora Al Ramadhan, a founding partner at Kuwait-based beauty boutique Apotheca Beauty. She lists NuFace at the top of her favourite beauty tech products. “As beauty entrepreneurs it is extremely important to always be up-to-date with the latest beauty trends and technological advances. It is a part of our jobs to be the first tryers and experimenters in the industry,” she says. At the new Apotheca Beauty boutique, Nora, along with her sisters Sarah and Dana, stock premium beauty brands,

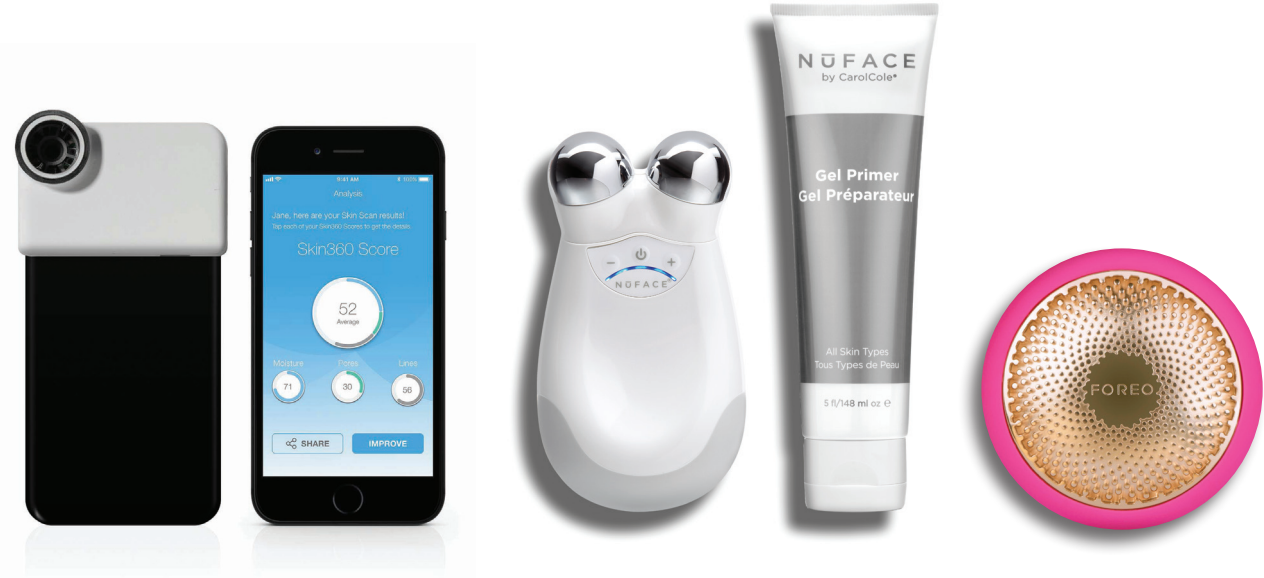


and at the back of the store, there is a skincare room equipped with a high-tech face scanner that measures red areas, brown spots, UV spots, wrinkles, texture, pores and porphyrins. “It’s called a VISIA face scanner, and it determines the person’s overall skin condition and age, providing a revolutionary new metric to guide the selection of skincare products and treatment options,” she explains. “We first discovered this face scanner in the Sarah Chapman clinic in London and then at Dr. Lancer’s clinic in Beverly Hills. Our first experience was nothing more than eye-opening and we knew we had to introduce this to our customers as well.” A much more simplified, portable version of this scanner is the HiMirror, which you can prop up on your vanity table or stick to your bathroom mirror. It promises to analyse your skin, provide skincare advice, order suggested products and track the results of your products. The newest version, which debuted at CES, is integrated

with Amazon’s intelligent personal assistant, Alexa. It’s safe to say that traditionalists may shy away from these new tech advances. Nora admits that while most customers at Apotheca Beauty are keen to try the face scanner, others remain hesitant. But, technology’s influence on skincare and cosmetics is hardly avoidable. Dubai-based beauty expert Haneen Odeh has tried out high-tech beauty devices from brands like Dior, Espada and Foreo, and explains that her generation has a thirst for new innovations. “I think growing up right at the cusp of where the internet age meets the analog age, allowed me to accept tech advances faster. We are a generation that seamlessly transitioned between landlines to mobile phones, clunky televisions to flat screens, and reading paper maps to using GPS on our iPhones,” she points out. While buying cosmetics was previously a personal affair, requiring you to experience products first-hand before opening your wallet, millennials these days will put their faith in computerised machines, or beauty bloggers and vloggers with millions of followers. All it will take is a positive (though potentially paid-for) review on Instagram to convince consumers to buy into the latest beauty-tech trends. But it’s important to see through the hype, as Haneen warns that some devices are not nearly as efficient, or safe, as they promise to be. “I’m personally not a fan of at-home laser removal devices,” she says. “First off, laser won’t get rid of hair completely,

whether that’s at home or in a clinic. Secondly, it can be a very dangerous thing to use if the person isn’t very knowledgeable. Certain skin types cannot tolerate laser hair reduction, and people can cause themselves severe burns.” Health and safety are of the utmost importance when it comes do dabbling with beauty tech. And although many of this year’s beauty innovations may seem like bulky and costly investments, targeting affluent individuals consumed by vanity, other launches are miniscule, and affordable by comparison, with a focus on wellbeing over glamour. L’Oreal for instance, has brilliantly unveiled a UV sensor that sticks onto a wearer’s fingernail, and tracks their sun exposure. The NFC-enabled sensor can be scanned with the user’s phone, where data will sync to its accompanying app, UV Sense, to tell the user if they’re spending hazardous amounts of time out in the sun. Set to release this summer, it will reportedly cost less than Dhs200. “I fully believe that utilising technology in our daily life shouldn’t be limited to just communication and transport,” says Haneen. “Mascara at some point was a game-changing technology when it was launched by Maybelline, and look at how many women use mascara today. Everything takes time to fully penetrate the market, but seeing the millennial consumer and their behaviour makes me believe that it’ll be easier and easier to embrace the innovations coming our way.”

THE TECH EDIT



Left to right: Neutrogena Skin360™, NEUTROGENA available at Neutrogena.com | Trinity Facial Toning Device, NUFACE available at Beautysolutions-me.com | UFO, FOREO available at SEPHORA