
THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN BEAUTY RETAIL'S FUTURE

By Robyn Novak

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Technology is elevating and personalising the in-store beauty experience, but is it enough? Robyn Novak, vice-president and creative managing director of FRCH, questions what's missing.

The Lush Spa Experiment film by Mill+



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Watch this video at <https://www.lsnglobal.com/opinion/article/22943/the-essential-ingredient-in-beauty-retail-s-future>

‘ A global shift that allows for freedom of expression through beauty must be driven by a categorical transformation of the personal service model. ’

— Robyn Novak, vice-president and creative managing director, FRCH Design Worldwide

Remember when a personalised beauty experience was defined simply by a department store assistant asking, ‘Are you a warm or a cool?’ or ‘Which 1, 2, 3 (dry, normal, oily) regimen best meets your needs?’ The personal approach to beauty retail has taken quite a leap since then and, arguably, is still in the midst of its makeover.

Beauty can now be defined as Beauty IRL – Beauty in Real Life – which began with a major market mindset shift from a focus on beauty exclusives in the form of limited-edition promotions and product offers, to one that is more strategic where one size *does not* fit all.

With a marketplace that's being transformed by the influence of technology, today's products and services have turned beauty into a phygital industry, setting an all-time precedent for tailored experiences.

For example, body-focused brands are elevating the in-store moments by extending their reach to include not just consumers' bodies, but their minds and souls. At the Lush Spa on London's Regent Street, visitors can select a package of their choice with coordinating meditative visuals, essential oils and playlists curated in line with their wellbeing experience.

Taking this one step further, Lush has even worked with creative studio Mill+ to capture the personal biometric data of customers' spa experiences, turning them into two-minute **artistic visualisations** of their physical response.

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Skin360 SkinScanner by Neutrogena, Las Vegas

When it comes to cosmetics, however, the in-store experience is on the brink of a dramatic shift led by technology. Exemplified by Shiseido's acquisition of MATCHCo, a beauty app that enables customers to create customised foundation, and **Giaran**, an AI-driven beauty software company that creates interactive, personal beauty experiences, the future of beauty retail will be shaped by algorithms, with on-the-spot products made before our eyes, and for our skin only.

One could argue, however, that a global shift that empowers the individual – allowing for freedom of expression and experience in beauty – needs to be driven by a categorical transformation of the personal service model in the beauty category itself.

With the age of **Algorithmic Beauty** upon us, AI and data mining might make for a more robust foundation, and open-sell might be playful, but ultimately they don't deliver a *personal* experience. A human element will always be needed when it comes to beauty. It's simply too intimate and too individualised an industry to solely rely on technology.

Instead, future in-store experiences may use technology, but not necessarily showcase it. Invisible, sophisticated systems will support a future of human-centric beauty retail that is focused on more formalised and personalised consultations. Dedicated spaces will support one-to-one, human connections where multi-sensory moments are brought to life with the help of emotionally intelligent beauty experts.

How will personalised beauty and the in-store experience evolve from here? Access is key, experience is a must, and radical developments in technology will continue to push products and services to an entirely new level. There is an exciting opportunity for personal beauty that lies somewhere between the blurred lines of offline and online spaces, powered by phygital, personal service in environments that serve as a canvas for meaningful and memorable consultations.

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