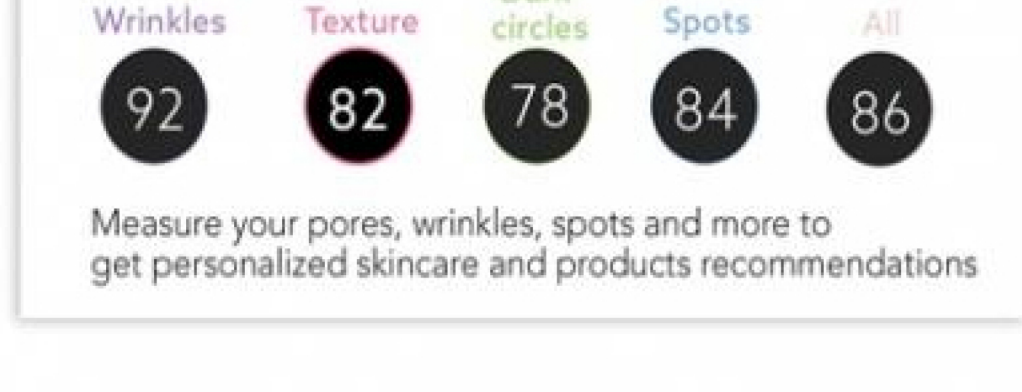


COVER STORY

How AI, AR are redefining beauty retail

VIRTUAL SKIN ANALYZER

Analyze your skin condition, find out the best skincare recipe for you.



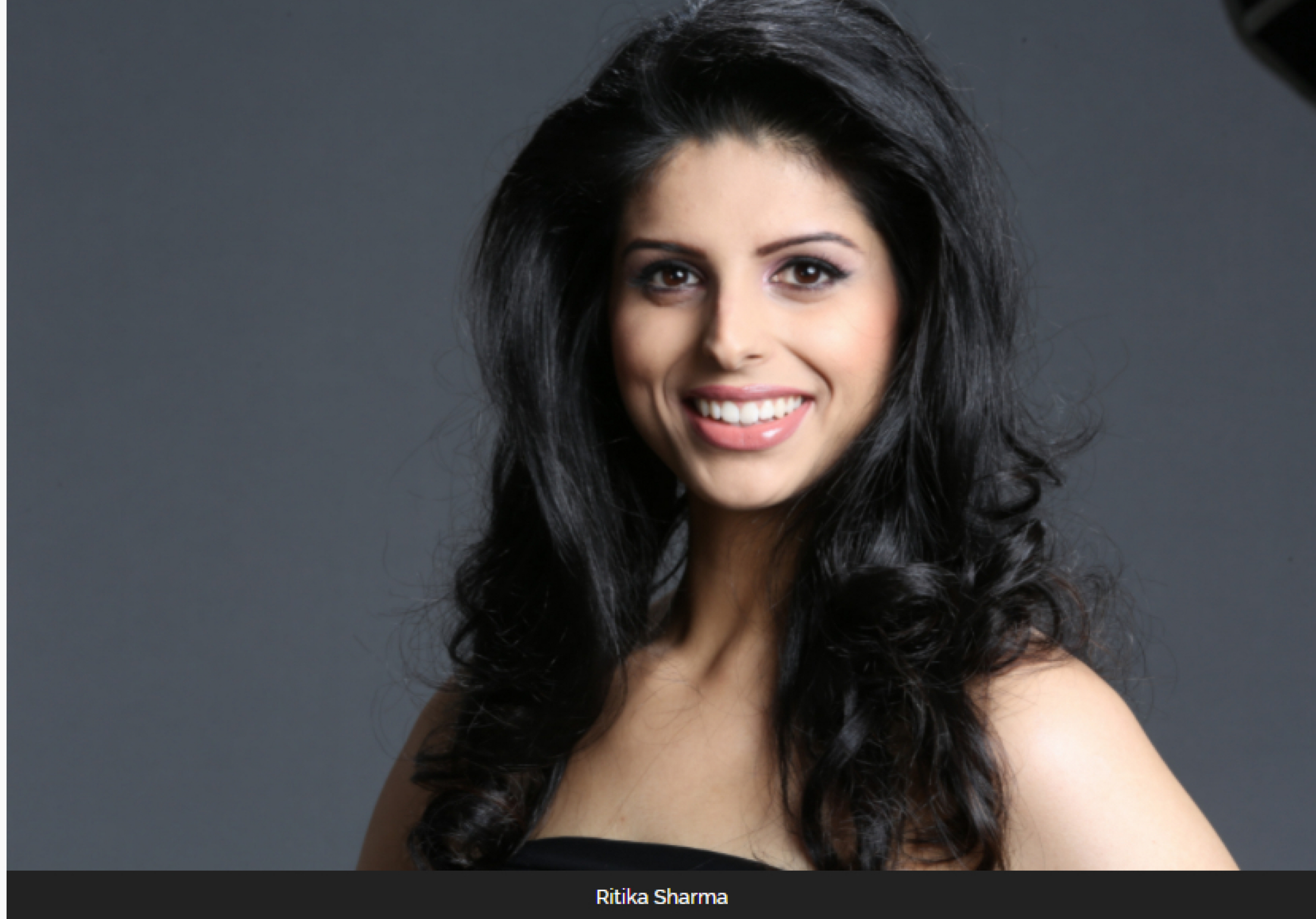
TRY ON

Boddess.com invested in its own in house proprietary AR/VR skin diagnostic and make up try on tools, hand-picked artist talent in areas of hair, skin and make up to give you the best in beauty

By Puja Gupta

The beauty and wellness company recently launched a new e-commerce platform Boddess.com. which synergizes cutting-edge digital technology with personalised product curation to bring to consumers the convenience of online shopping with individualised attention.

IANS*life* spoke to Sharma to know how Augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI) are redefining the concept of beauty tech and if it's the future.



Ritika Sharma

Excerpts:

How are you using AI and AR technologies at Boddess?

Sharma: Our teams have spent the past few months building out our machine learning database of skin types in partnership with leading dermatologists in India. We took thousands of high resolution images of men and women, tagged their skin condition with our proprietary collection of skin metrics (things like hydration, wrinkles, dark spots, skin age etc.). While we do this collection, we make sure to train our algorithms on a diverse array of skin colours, ages, and ethnicities. We then train our algorithms on this data set, and build supervised machine learning models to improve this algorithm every week. The more images we collect, the better it gets.

What does this mean for the Boddess customer? Because of our obsession with customer experience and our technological investments in the ML powered AR/VR tech stack, we can hyper-personalise the app to each individual as they use the app more and more. Through the Make Up try on, users can try on all kinds of products like lipsticks etc. without leaving their house, or applying actual makeup. Our Virtual Skin Analyser analyses a user's skin every time they submit a photo, and recommend products especially for their skin type. We serve personalised product recommendations, and learn each user's skin as they use the app.

What is the end goal?

Sharma: My goal is to help customers make informed, product decisions, letting them find the joy in discovery, learning, and engagement. This is why Boddess invested in its own in house proprietary AR/VR skin diagnostic and make up try on tools, and hand-picked artist talent in areas of hair, skin and make up who are on board full time. The future of experts and how experts powered with data will be the future of how we buy products. We are not limited to an online platform, but truly believe the physical retail experience being at the heart of our business too. This is why, customers will meet us in person at their go-to shopping mall locations in Delhi and Mumbai. And we can't wait to meet them.

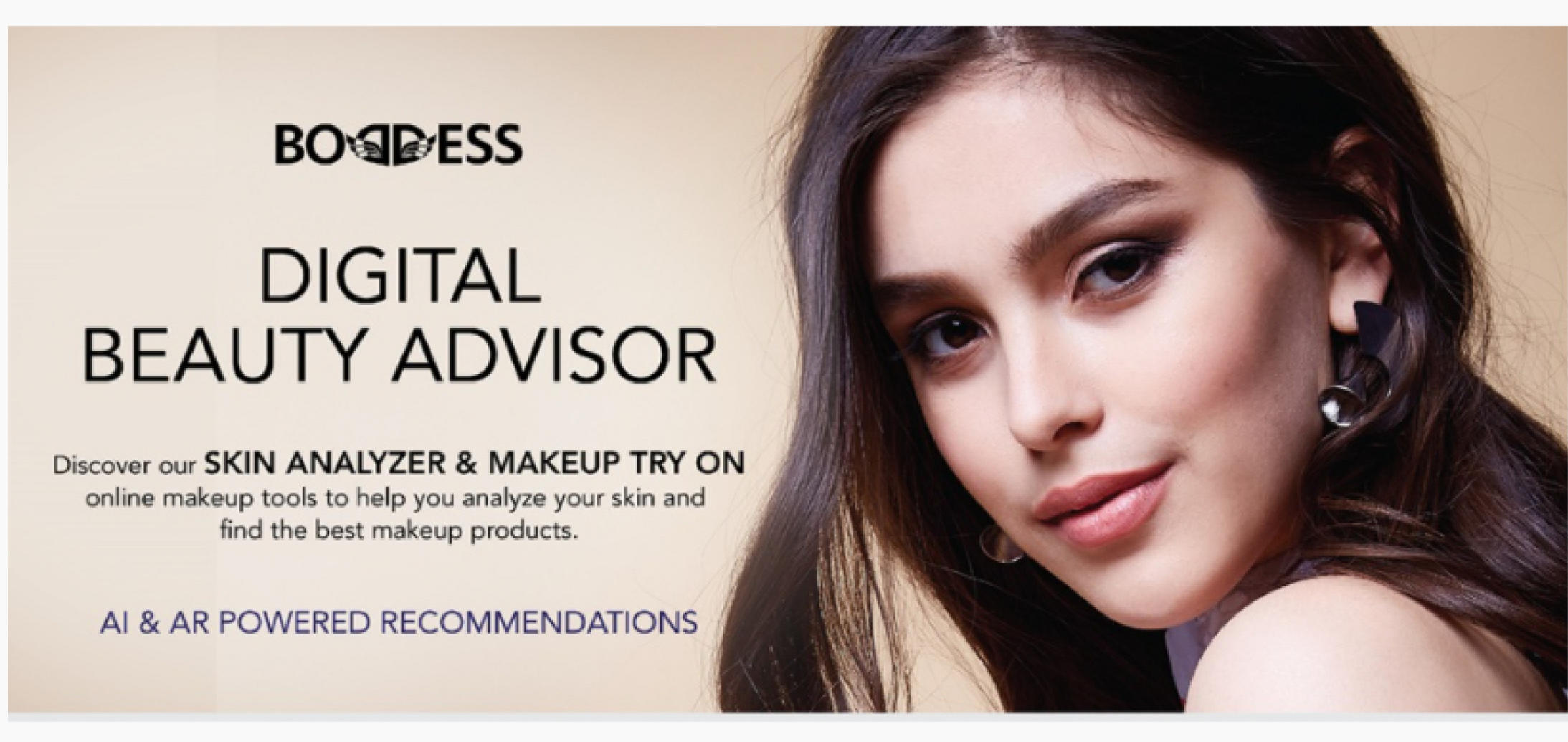
The pandemic has pushed brands to take the new digital initiatives in order to reach their consumers virtually. Comment.

Sharma: The pace of innovation in beauty tech is accelerating. I believe that innovation happening in beauty retail today doesn't fully solve the customer's requirements. Customers are not looking for the fastest or cheapest product anymore, but a product that works for them and one they can rely on rain or shine. I spent a lot of my career in brick and mortar retail with exposure to technology and digital transformation. I am stunned by the scale and reach technology provides. I want to combine the two to hit the sweet spot – and that's where the future of retail is. There is a real opportunity in how we think about beauty retail to better personalise through technology and data.

What's your opinion on AR and AI? Will it be the new normal for the beauty industry?

Sharma: At Boddess, we recognize that people's relationship with the traditional salons may have fundamentally changed post Covid. The use of technology for trying, discovering and personalizing products and routines – is disrupting in-person beauty consultations, and product testing for customers. AR/VR is the next evolution in product try on. Boddess launched its own state of the art technology in March 2020; The Boddess Virtual Pro allowing customers to accurately diagnose their skin condition, 'try on' make up virtually, get recommended product solutions and enable their decisions, all from the comfort of their homes. The Boddess Virtual Pro Skin Diagnostic tool assesses Wrinkles, Fine Lines, Blemishes and Inflammation, Pigmentation, Sensitivity/Redness, Pores, Dark Spots and Circles. The Virtual Make up Tool allows customers to choose SKUs across all Colour Cosmetic brands including Lip, Eye, Foundation, Blush and Eye Products, in real time. Boddess Virtual Pro is also launching the Eyebrow Virtual Pro soon.

Today's consumers are drowning in content across social platforms, tips from friends and family, commercials and so much more. Through Boddess Edit, we aim to make sense of that content with our Beauty Experts. For example, some of our content focuses on detoxifying beauty routines with homemade masks made from food ingredients, exfoliating treatments few times a week that are customized, and all-natural without preservatives. We are going back to basics. In terms of Make Up, customers are now focused on purchasing products that have a high impact on video calls like bronzers and brow enhancers.



You launched the brand during the lockdown, was it a strategic decision to launch in an unstable economic situation?

Sharma: The beauty industry has been resilient over the past decades with generations of loyal customers, with high bounce back rates post crises. Today, while in store sales are difficult to replicate online, more luxury brands are exploring new channels to distribute and better offers to acquire new customers. In addition, rise of digital, platforms and marketplaces are increasing vigorously, and the pace of innovation with new products and brands is at an all-time high.

The entry barrier is lowered and the only way to outshine competitors is to be simply brilliant both on product and communication fronts. In addition, DIY for hair and nails has observed a tenfold spike with tremendous growth in content consumption. Beauty overall will remain strong and attractive compared to other categories in the long run- and won't require re-invention completely. Rather the Beauty Industry will continue to accelerate its digital and technology trends that were already in place.

With Covid limiting physical interactions in stores, AR/VR is the next evolution in product try on.

You are also going to launch the mobile application, are you not?

Sharma: We are now meeting our amazing customer where they are, with our latest mobile app launch. The Boddess Beauty mobile app puts the entire world of Boddess and its brands in the palm of your hand. The app will expand the ways our customers can reach our every growing portfolio of products and brands, as well as utilise our cutting edge AR/VR technologies. We're so excited for them to get their hands on it.

Boddess AR/VR – personalize your looks directly from the app and get product recommendations. This is easier to use on a phone because of your camera quality and configuration, makes it more accessible to all users. Boddess Rewards – our loyalty program allows users to earn points while they shop, engage with our content and use out AR/VR tools – and redeem their points towards discount on purchases

Through the Make-Up try on, users can try all kinds of products like lipsticks, blush, foundation, eyeshadow, etc. without leaving their house or actually testing the makeup. The app's Virtual Skin analyser analyses a user's skin every time they submit a photo and recommend products especially for their skin type. The app is assembled to serve personalized product recommendations, and learn each user's skin as they use the app. We aim to reach a larger audience through the app and it is made it available to download on both IOS and Android app stores.

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