

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

What will 3D printed makeup mean for the beauty industry?

June 21, 2019



Mink is looking to provide consumers with tools to create their own makeup. Image courtesy of Mink

By SARAH JONES

As 3D printing gains more applications in the luxury business, a new consumer-facing tool aims to offer instant gratification and customization by bridging the gap between beauty inspiration and application.

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New York-based startup Mink is now selling a portable 3D printer to consumers, enabling them to take any photo and turn it into wearable cosmetics, positioning itself as an "endless beauty aisle." With the proliferation of beauty imagery thanks to social media, Mink is putting cosmetic creation at consumers' fingertips, potentially disrupting the traditional path to purchase in the category.

"Mink combines the endless variety of content from the Internet, the newness and relevance of social media and the convenience of the home, enabling users to choose, control and create the exact makeup they want anywhere, anytime," said Grace Choi, CEO/cofounder of **Mink**, New York.

Printed products

Mink, which says it is the first 3D printer for makeup, originally debuted in 2014 with a concept. Now a new version of the model is being made available to consumers through pre-order, with shipments reaching shoppers in fall 2020.

"Growth of online media and entertainment gave viewers the choice to select how and what content to consume," Ms. Choi said in a statement. "This choice allowed viewers to uniquely curate content, guided by their personal tastes, opinions and preferences.

"Mink brings that aspect of individuality and putting the user in the driver's seat to beauty," she said. "Beauty content continues to move to digital and away from traditional TV and print. Users are turning to these images for inspiration, creating an opportunity to leverage image color data and transform them into physical makeup."

The device is 8 inches by four inches, and weighs 2.2 pounds. The printer connects to devices via WiFi and a mobile application, enabling consumers to print from the Internet, their photo roll or social media.

Mink prints on special beauty sheets using a tri-color cartridge, which is said to be able to create 16.7 million hues. It

takes about 15 seconds for each sheet to be complete.

After printing, the product is immediately ready for application. Consumers can use their finger or a brush to pick up product and apply it directly.

Mink touts the sheets' portability and flexibility compared to traditional makeup packaging.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

Print makeup on-demand. Meet Mink, the world's first 3D makeup printer. Compact and portable, take it with you anywhere. Turn any image into makeup! 📷 : shot by the amazing @atomwinston

A post shared by Mink Beauty (@minkbeautyhq) on Jun 5, 201..

Instagram post from Mink

In addition to its small stature, Mink has a suggested retail price of \$395, making it fairly accessible for luxury beauty clientele, but potentially less out of reach of the casual aspirational buyer.

"The printer's price is pretty hefty," said Thomaï Serdari, brand strategist at **Brand Lux** and professor of luxury marketing, New York. "It is a considerable investment for the younger crowd – high schoolers and early college students – who are also the most experimental with trends and colors.

"On the contrary, young professionals who have more disposable income usually prefer to follow the trends as defined by beauty editors," she said. "While the latter may have deeper pockets, they are less willing to deviate from what is already established as fashion/beauty trend.

"Still, this presents a great opportunity for professional beauticians to experiment with different colors and educate their customers on what looks good on them. "

Ms. Serdari also noted the importance of the luxury in-store experience at driving beauty sales.

"Beauty is a fun industry because it affords an escape for very little money and feeds on young women's desire to discover new products," Ms. Serdari said. "This happens in a beauty store where the allure is created not only with new shades of colors for application but also with new types of packaging that makes it all very appealing and desirable.

"This type of experimentation is a lot of fun for groups of young women and maintains its allure even for older

demographics,” she said. “One wonders whether Mink can provide the same type of excitement at home.”



Mink Printer. Image courtesy of Mink

Mink's Ms. Choi says that the printer is expected to appeal to the digital-savvy beauty enthusiast.

The company plans to expand the printer's features in the future, including launching different types of sheets.

While Mink will help beauty consumers experiment, some experts do not see 3D printing supplanting traditional cosmetic labels.

“Consumers who buy into this system will likely experiment with Mink and then ultimately search for a full-size product that matches the shade they were experimenting with,” said Sheri Koetting, founder, brand strategist and creative director at [MSLK](#), New York.

“Technology like this has the ability to disrupt trend colors at mass and create more local, regional, micro trends,” she said. “It means more experimentation and more shades for a multitude of taste preferences, cultures and skin tones.

“Traditional luxury brands stand apart from DIY products like Mink. Consumers buy into luxury brands for the cachet and vision of the brand. No DIY movement will change that.

“This product is reaching a different need entirely. This inspires consumers to be their own artist, however, every artist needs other artists for inspiration and solitary. You could argue that many consumers wouldn't be as free to be self-expressive if they didn't have trailblazers out there paving the way for their creative freedom.”

Custom cosmetics

In the past few years, additive manufacturing, popularly known as 3D printing, has made waves in the way products can be produced today.

Since its conception in the 1980s, 3D printing has mainly been thought of as a way to manufacture industrial goods in a more efficient and cost-effective way. But recent developments have seen players in the luxury space experimenting with the unique properties of 3D printing, creating an interesting dichotomy between the industrial and mass-produced and the luxurious.

Three-dimensional printing allows brands to create items that are more efficient while retaining their luxury charm by allowing brands to create custom items for individual customers ([see story](#)).

As more luxury brands embrace 3D printing for their creations, Mink is an early mover in putting the technology into consumers' hands.

Previously, luxury beauty brands have sought to give consumers color control through activations. For instance, Estée Lauder hosted an event at Selfridges that enabled shoppers to combine different colors to blend a custom lip product.

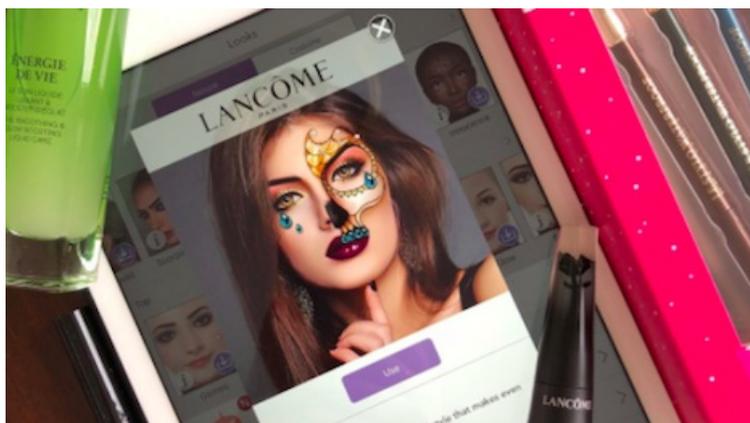
"3D printing as presented by Mink caters to current trends of personalization and customization that beauty companies are trying to address with personalized solutions through AI," Ms. Serdari said. "It also feeds into the DIY mentality and encourages consumers to be creative and unique while exploring a very personal expression of their identity.

"It promises to eliminate waste – of product but also of packaging – which appeals to the consumers who are more sustainability conscious," she said. "On the other hand, and while the ingredients are FDA approved, they are not organic or natural.

"It seems this will be the next barrier for a lot of beauty companies if they want to cater to the next generation of beauty consumers who pay attention to what they put in and on their body."

The beauty business has been embracing technology as a means to offer more experimentation.

Beauty brands have brought augmented reality from an interesting idea to an effective marketing tool on mobile by tapping into its ability to drive trial, a strategy which other marketers could benefit from following.



AR plays a major role in how consumers shop. Image credit: Lancôme

Retailers and brands such as L'Oreal and Sephora have connected with their audience more closely through augmented reality pushes in which users were able to test out and interact with products without having to enter stores. With many believing that this is just the beginning for the technology, brands should jump aboard now and focus on creating a convenient experience for consumers ([see story](#)).

"The world of beauty technology is shifting the way the consumer experiences product," said Aleni Mackarey, chief operating officer of [Base Beauty Creative Agency](#), New York. "3D printing offers another way for her to get in touch with her beauty exploratory without committing to one brand, one product or seeking professional advice.

"Today's consumer craves an interactive experience in her purchasing," she said. "Does she need another color in her eyeshadow palette? Maybe not. But will she take the opportunity to play with the 3D printer, be a part of the production of her product and enhance her collection? Yes.

"Traditional luxury beauty labels can stay relevant by upgrading their shopping experience with products like YouCam Makeup, which offer true-to-life virtual makeup and hair color effects, and implementing interactive try-before-you-buy options."