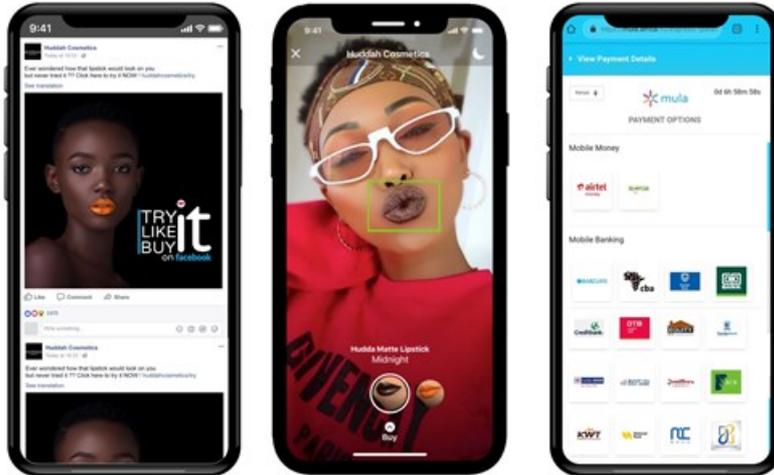


Africa's first AR experience on Facebook Messenger

Kenya's Huddah Cosmetics is the first social commerce merchant, powered by Mula, to launch product discovery through try-on experiences on Facebook Messenger with augmented reality. Pan-African Payments company, Celulant, has built this first AR experience in partnership with Facebook.



Huddah Cosmetics hopes to leverage off Facebook to provide a unique product discovery shopping experience for their customers.

Celulant has recently extended product offerings on its Mula payment platform to include Mula Shops - a simple and convenient online shopping experience for the rising number of micro-merchants (or Hustlepreneurs) on social networking sites.

Mula Shops integrates augmented reality into the Facebook Messenger where customers are able to discover and try products before they purchase. Brands that leverage social media as platforms for ecommerce can now give their customers a world class one-stop shop service from trial, to payment and delivery, all within Facebook and Instagram. This is a departure from the current disjointed social commerce experience.

Experience

Trying out a product in social commerce has previously been impossible. Augmented reality presents an opportunity for African brands and companies to build trust with consumers where “touch and feel” is often a pre-requisite before purchase.

For Huddah lipsticks, for example, the AR technology switches on the camera on your cellphone and engages the buyer to try different shades before making a choice and concluding the purchase through Mula seamlessly. Augmented reality presents an opportunity to push brand lift, deliver world class customer experience, brand interactions, improving conversion, and real-time purchase fulfillment.

According to Cellulant's chief product officer, Faizal Mirza, "No matter how you look at the future of innovation in Africa - the future is in providing a seamless experience in a space that is currently fragmented. This partnership with Facebook allows us to do so for a segment that is often neglected when considering the economies of scale in Africa.

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"This is the beginning of our journey to offering seamless, smart and connected digital payment experience to our customers across Africa. Fundamentally, we will be able to connect one of Africa's growing base of micro-merchants' gig economy aka 'hustle-preneurs' to their ever mobile and digital customers," explained Mirza.

The success of Huddah Cosmetics, a beauty company, is credited to its founder, Kenyan model and entrepreneur, Alhuda Njoroge, better known as Huddah Monroe. Born and raised in Nairobi, Huddah has captured the attention of the Kenyan masses and enjoys a huge following on social media.

Launched in 2016, Huddah Cosmetics provides a solution to long lasting day-to-day makeup needs for African women. "I started my company out of pure passion and vision to offer every woman a product that celebrate the diversity of African beauty. Huddah Cosmetics is for every woman who is strong-willed, outspoken and stands for what they believe regardless of what the society thinks," said Njoroge.

"I am excited to be the first hustle-preneur to work with Cellulant and Facebook as they launch Mula shops using Augmented Reality on Facebook Messenger. This is an opportunity for my company to give a unique online shopping experience of our beauty products to our customers in a way that has never happened before."

Innovative

A GeoPoll survey published in February this year found that a significant number of online shoppers utilise Facebook groups. At 32%, Facebook is the second leading online retailer in the main ecommerce regions. More and more, informal entrepreneurs are using this leading social media channel to sell through their groups or similar interest groups. With mobile phones having such huge penetration on the continent, e-commerce is an opportunity for online retailers to reach the youthful African consumer population, the survey reports.

Proud Dzambukira, the Facebook product partnership lead, Middle East and Africa, commented: "We're thrilled to be partnering with Cellulant and Huddah Cosmetics in a first for the continent, Augmented Reality (AR) in Messenger, a powerful and innovative tool to aid her customers discover, try and buy her range of cosmetics through Facebook and Instagram. With nearly one in two SMBs on Facebook building their business on Facebook, our platform can play a powerful role in enabling social commerce. We want to help drive innovation by supporting Africa's entrepreneurship ecosystem, and this is just one of the many ways."

Online hustle

This partnership with Huddah Cosmetics is in line with one of Cellulant's objective to empower youth and transform their

online hustle into a viable and scalable business by creating platforms that help grow their bottom-line.

As a payment platform, the company is investing in advancing Africa's economic footprint by building payments infrastructure that gives the customer the choice on how they manage and use their money. Ultimately, the payments infrastructure will power the success of millions of businesses by providing a simple and easy way to receive money from their customers.

Kenya is the first country to launch this new online experience with Nigeria, Tanzania and Rwanda to follow.

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