Shiseido Revitalizes Experience Optimization Strategy With AB Tasty

The cosmetics giant has perfected the blend of beauty and data science. Now Cynthia Bevilacqua, who leads EMEA e-commerce CRO & digital product roadmaps, wants to harness it.

When it comes to the beauty industry, competition is fierce. New brands pop up every day and that means legacy brands need to evolve or risk getting left on the shelf.

With a company philosophy rooted in the artful blend between beauty and science, Shiseido has fully embraced digital transformation in pursuit of being the leader in the data-driven beauty industry.

Today, the company works with AB Tasty to optimize e-commerce experiences for brand Shiseido and NARS in the EMEA region. Just one year into the partnership, Shiseido is now actively running around 11 tests per month across six markets.

But it wasn't always like this.

At the start of 2022, Shiseido wanted to transform their existing but constricted experimentation strategy into an intuitive and scalable optimization program. The product team was eager to reach a new level of A/B testing capabilities as well as better optimize the time and resources spent on implementation and execution.

Cynthia Bevilacqua, digital product and user experience manager at Shiseido, knew it was time for a change. "This was March 2022, so the CRO mindset was new. We were doing some

ORIGINAL   VARIATION

Place alternative payment options closer to "add to cart"

Offering payment installments is one way to motivate users to add more items to their cart. Even if a user doesn't take advantage of the offer, having the option helps alleviate hesitancy around pricing.

The team at Shiseido wondered whether moving the Klarna payment copy block closer to the "add to cart"

CTA could improve the click rate. With an A/B test targeted to the NARS and brand Shiseido UK markets, the team tested placing the price, Klarna copy and CTA closer together.

This small layout change led to a massive improvement with 129% increased clicks on "add to cart" for mobile and 159% for desktop.

| 📱 MOBILE		🖥️ DESKTOP	
↑ **129%** clicks on "add to cart"	↑ **24%** clicks across all payment options	↑ **159%** clicks on "add to cart"	↑ **72%** clicks across all payment options

Boost engagement with a higher visibility virtual try-on CTA

Shiseido collected insights that showed customers who interacted with a feature during their decision-making process had a tendency to convert.

Focusing on the French market, the team set up a variation giving the virtual try-on CTA a complete makeover. A small image, camera icon and brighter button color helped increase the CTA's visibility on the product page.

Compared to the original CTA (which saw an average of 10% click rate), the revamped virtual try-on button saw a whopping 95% increase in clicks. "Add to cart" clicks also increased by 73% for those who used the feature.

ORIGINAL

VARIATION
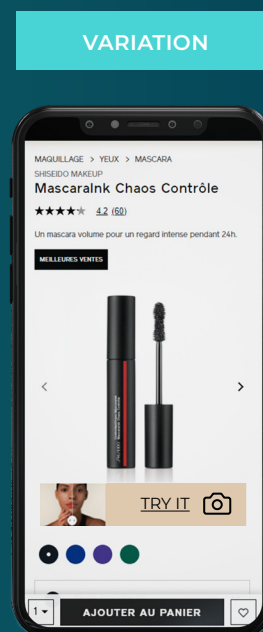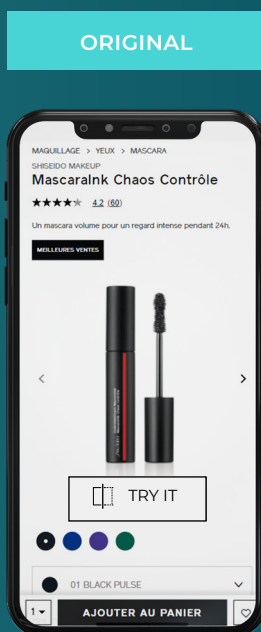
↑ 95%
clicks on
virtual try-on

↑ 73%
clicks on "add to
cart" for virtual
try-on users

↑ 16%
overall clicks on
"add to cart"

↑ 61%
in transaction rate

A/B tests, but it was limited to three or four tests in one year," she recalls. "Up until this point, optimization was not a core focus. And I really wanted to change that."

New partner. New mindset.

Cynthia was looking for more than a tool; she wanted a partner who could take Shiseido higher.

Working with AB Tasty, Cynthia and her team found the right partner to build a conversion rate optimization (CRO) strategy that would match Shiseido's vision of a data-driven, innovative beauty company. The team wanted to shift stakeholders' approach to testing — from opinions to company-wide adoption of a data-oriented experimentation mindset.

"We want to make sure that our internal stakeholders are being challenged in their thinking with our wealth of data insights. It's

important to make sure that whatever goes into the global roadmap is something that can either improve the user experience or the company's business goals," Cynthia explains.

This renewed way of working brought about a new excited energy for the e-commerce team. Thanks to AB Tasty, Cynthia's team received 1:1 support and proven use cases to ease the pain points that Shiseido wanted to address. As a low-code solution, AB Tasty gave Cynthia and her team the autonomy they were craving.

Cynthia says the impact was immediate: "AB Tasty empowered us with knowledge of what we could do and pushed us toward the kind of achievements that we didn't think were possible."

Building a regional vs. global strategy

A large global footprint requires

a lot of cross-team collaboration. From their vantage point within the regional division, Cynthia's team fields incoming requests from their local markets while also balancing strategic brand ideas from the global HQ in Tokyo.

With oversight on A/B testing and CRO strategies for the Shiseido EMEA region, Cynthia's next hurdle would be setting a strategy for experimentation across each of the region's unique markets. More frequent testing enabled by AB Tasty meant simply replicating any test in a new country wouldn't cut it if they wanted to grow strategically.

"When we made the switch to AB Tasty, we wanted a partner who could help us with specialized testing in each market. We knew a one-size-fits-all did not work for our brand. You cannot say that because a test works well in the UK, that it will equally be successful in France or Germany because the consumer

> Now, we feel that we're ready to accelerate with AB Tasty by using the data intelligence from the past year to really drive our experimentation strategy.

Cynthia Bevilacqua, digital product and user experience manager at Shiseido

behavior can be quite different across each market."

To sift through the prioritization of rolling out tests to new regions, Cynthia leveraged AB Tasty's testing capabilities to implement internal processes. First, evaluating hypotheses through testing and data. Then, successful tests are added to the development roadmap, while the learnings from unsuccessful ones are shared with regional stakeholders and a new round of iterations starts.

"This process helps us ensure that we are not wasting valuable resources and bandwidth. AB Tasty not only enables us to quickly validate the hypothesis with data, but they also help us to say 'no' to a request because the data shows it's not beneficial to the end customers."

Celebrating a culture of experimentation

After a year of working with AB Tasty, the team at Shiseido is thrilled by the tangible results and internal adoption of a CRO mindset. Since moving from four tests per year to over 10 tests per month with AB Tasty, Shiseido has significantly improved the customer experience. The success from 2022's experimentation rollout resulted in an opportunity for Cynthia to grow the expertise of her team, notably on strategic decision-making and roadmap management.

"The partnership we have with AB Tasty's customer success team is great because we strategize together about our objectives. They feed us different ideas for testing and understand what's working from other clients. It is fuel to get us thinking about our roadmap and what we

should try to implement next."

The experimentation mindset also fits perfectly into Shiseido's desire to be a key player among data-driven beauty companies. With stakeholders invested in the testing mindset, Cynthia's team is empowered to continue testing ideas first before rolling them into a development roadmap.

"The test-and-learn approach is important to have because it's not about what you think. 'I think' is not something we can use. We need data to tell that story," Cynthia explains. "And now, this is our new reality with AB Tasty."

Deepening the partnership with AB Tasty

One learning that Cynthia's team is incorporating into their 2023 strategy is giving tests more room to breathe in order to collect better data. Launching fewer tests and running them for a longer duration of six weeks with a minimum detectable effect (MDE) calculation allows the team

to gather accurate data to inform the actions for the next iteration.

Entering year two of the partnership with AB Tasty, Cynthia is looking to unlock the next level of experience optimization by expanding the solution to Shiseido's other EMEA brands. For Shiseido's mature markets, the team plans to introduce personalization campaigns and build more mature testing. And by encouraging digital to local market teams to incorporate experimentation and the testing-first mindset, Cynthia is further driving Shiseido's data-driven beauty company vision.

"Initially, we were focused on setting up the team for success through processes and an embedded CRO strategy. Now, we're ready to accelerate with AB Tasty by using the data intelligence from the past year to drive our global experimentation program," Cynthia says. "We won't test just anything — we need to always make sure our tests are addressing a user pain point." ■

WINNING TOGETHER
5 tips for operational excellence

It's not easy (or practical) to tell someone their opinion is wrong. That's why Cynthia Bevilacqua, digital product and user experience manager at Shiseido, advocates for using experience optimization platforms like AB Tasty to deliver data-driven decision-making from individual team members all the way up to stakeholders. It's essential to sustainable growth.

Here are five tips to optimize team operations:

1 Monthly meetings, interactive testing

2 Quarterly meetings with stakeholders

3 Clear KPIs and tracking dashboard

4 Gradual evangelization to other teams

5 Tie to business performance or customer pain points