Need New Look? Online Makeover is fan-taaz-tic

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Thanks to a Jacobs School startup company whose site, Taaz.com went live today, the cosmetics counter isn't the only place to try out the latest makeup trends. The new way is easier, faster, and much more private. Anyone with a digital photograph can now apply more than 4,000 makeup products with the click of a mouse. It's all at www.taaz.com - the creation of two Jacobs School computer scientists turned entrepreneurs.

The computer scientists invented an algorithm for separating gloss from non-gloss in digital images - a technical feat crucial for taaz.com's patented approach to applying photorealistic makeup to images. It is also useful for more traditional computer vision applications like face

recognition.

Taaz.com is easy and free. Simply upload a portrait-style photograph and a computer vision system automatically identifies your eyes, nose, lips and cheeks. From here, you can apply thousands of makeup products from a wide range of brands to your digital portrait and experiment with new hairstyles and colored contacts. After trying a taaz.com prototype, one user went home and bought a new pair of colored contacts, says David Kriegman, a UCSD computer science professor and taaz.com co-founder.

Once you create a new look, you can share it with friends, post the picture in taaz.com's public gallery or upload it to social networking sites. To make shopping easier, you can print a list of what you tried on at taaz.com.

"With taaz.com, we take something very complicated -- giving digital portraits a photorealistic makeover -- and make it very easy," says Satya Mallick, a taaz.com co-founder with a fresh Ph.D. in electrical engineering from UCSD.

Mallick's dissertation focused on the gloss removal algorithm that led to taaz.com.

Kriegman, Mallick and third co-founder Kevin Barnes secured venture funding from iSherpa Capital in August 2007. They hired three recent UCSD grads. Kriegman credits the Jacobs School's von Liebig Center, UCSD's Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property Services, and CONNECT's Springboard program for helping the team develop and spin out their business, license the core technology, and secure venture capital.

Watch a two-minute demo of Taaz.com here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGE2zGQypbA

Source: University of California, San Diego