

MBAE306 Research Methods

In the digital economy, what role did social media marketing strategies play in engaging customers and driving sales for Rhode Skin from 2022 to 2025?

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Abstract

This study assesses the impact of social media marketing strategies of Rhode Skin on sales growth and customer engagement between 2022 to 2025. A qualitative case study approach and secondary data analysis is used where the findings highlighted the significance of influencer marketing, educational communication and user-generated content in driving brand awareness, business success and customer trust.

The findings identified three key themes: social media engagement strategies, influencer marketing and consumer behaviour and consumer trust and relationship building. The study revealed that influencer collaborations, interactive content, educational skincare communication, and authentic brand messaging significantly contributed to customer engagement and purchasing intentions. Overall, Rhode Skin's effective use of social media supported brand visibility, consumer trust, and commercial success.

1. Introduction and Background

The digital economy has transitioned the skincare industry significantly by changing how brands communicate with customers along with promoting their products. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube become powerful marketing channels which allow businesses to directly engage with customers and influence their purchase decisions (Sindhuja, Panda & Krishna, 2023). Customer engagement through influencer collaborations, user-generated content and interactive communication have a huge contribution in making business performance and brand loyalty stronger (Shen & Prompanyo, 2025). Rhode Skin was founded in 2022 by Hailey Bieber which rapidly established itself as a leading skincare brand through social media marketing. The brand uses influencer partnerships, digital storytelling, community-focused engagement and educational content related to skincare for connecting with customers, especially Millennials and Generation Zs (Müller, 2025).

This study assessed the role of social media marketing approaches of Rhode Skin which drives its sales growth and customer engagement between 2022 and 2025. The study aims to analyse the effectiveness of these strategies in enhancing customer engagement and trust, business performance and brand awareness within the digital economy.

Research Question

Within the digital economy, what role is played by social media marketing strategies in driving sales and engaging customers for Rhode Skin from 2022 to 2025?

Hypotheses

H1: Social media marketing strategies of Rhode Skin positively impacted sales growth and customer engagement between 2022 and 2025.

H2: Creator collaboration and influencer marketing have a huge contribution to customer loyalty and brand awareness of Rhode Skin.

H3: User-generated content, interactive features of social media and educational skincare content influenced purchasing decisions of customers by enhancing trust towards the products of Rhode Skin.

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2. Methodology

This study adopted a *qualitative research methodology* utilising a *case study approach* for examining the social media marketing strategies' role in driving sales and engaging customers for Rhode Skin from 2022 to 2025. A qualitative methodology is appropriate for this study because it supports an in-depth understanding of social events along with enabling researchers to explore complicated social phenomena within the real-world context and human centric, in-depth insights (Lim, 2025). Therefore, in this case this methodological approach helps in providing in-depth insights related to complicated marketing strategies and how these strategies engage customers. A case study design is employed as it enables in-depth assessment of one or more specific organisations or cases and their activities in a particular setting and also allows flexible data collection methods (ANNAMALAH, 2024). This approach is appropriate for assessing social media marketing strategies of Rhode Skin and how these contribute to sales performance and customer engagement.

This research exclusively depends on *secondary data* collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, company reports, industry reports, business news and marketing analyses published between 2022 and 2026. Secondary data is chosen because it provides comprehensive information related to the marketing strategies, business growth and customer engagement practices of Rhode Skin. The collected information is then analysed through *thematic analysis* which is a widely used qualitative method for the identification, analysis and reporting of repeated patterns, meaning or ideas (themes) (Ahmed et al., 2025). Thematic analysis enables the identification and interpretation of themes in relation to customer engagement, influencer marketing, sales growth and educational and user-generated contents.

3. Literature Review

Social media marketing has become an important aspect of business strategy in the digital economy through platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and TikTok which allow brands to directly engage with their customers. According to Shen and Prompanyo (2025), one way that social media marketing boosts customer engagement is by facilitating and further enhancing the visibility of two-way communications. By developing communications with and establishing customer relationships, brands are able to embed their marketing within a customer-focused network and foster greater engagement. Further, **influencer marketing** has become one of the most influential social media strategies, especially in the beauty sector because customers perceive influencers as trustworthy and authentic thus depending on them for product recommendations. According to Ao et al., (2023), influencer credibility has a huge impact on purchase decisions and attitudes of customers, especially among younger customers who follow skincare and beauty content online. Similarly, research by Benevento et al., (2025) found that influencer-generated content has positive influences on customer trust, purchasing behaviour and brand awareness through the creation of emotional connections between brands and customers. Influencer collaborations along with content partnerships are successfully utilised by Rhode Skin for the enhancement of credibility and viability in the competitive skincare market and the brand uses three major platforms for influencer activity as seen in figure 1 (Modash, 2026).

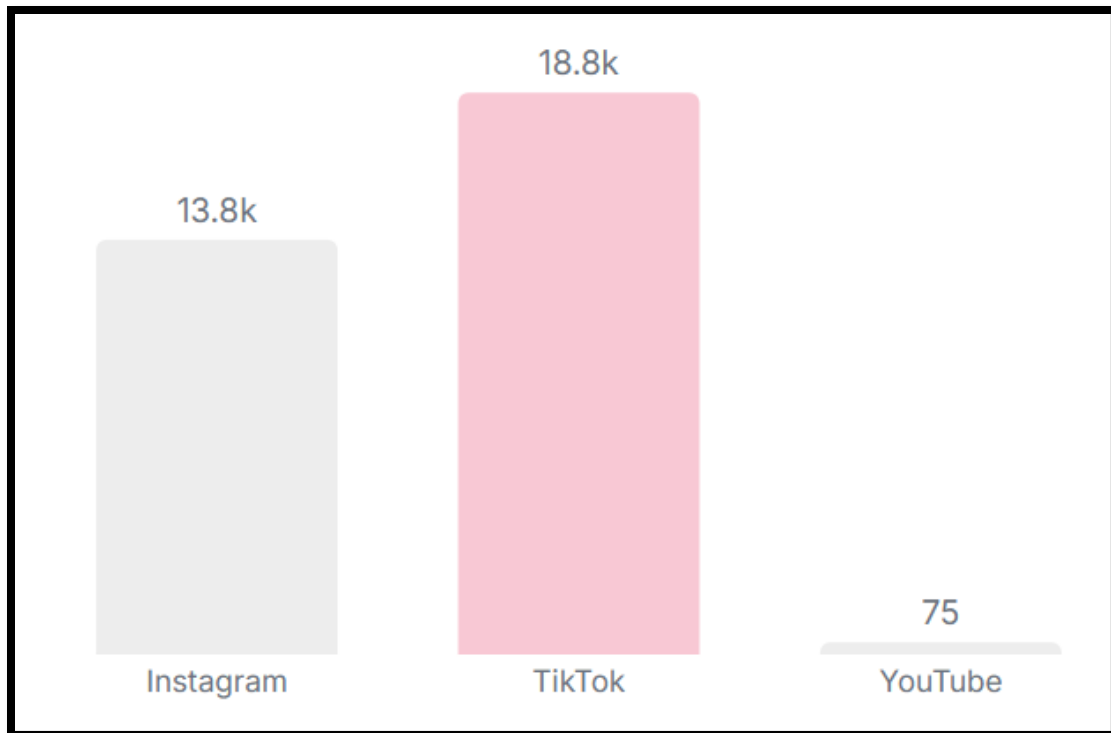


Figure 3.1: Influencer Activity of Rhode Skin by Platform

(Source: Modash, 2026)

Another critical aspect of social media marketing is **user-generated content** which includes customer reviews, product demonstrations, social media posts and testimonials created by customers. According to Bertaglia et al. (2025), Customer relies more on reviews rather than the advertisement as reviews are reflecting the real scenarios and experiences of customers. Additionally, the adoption of user generated content also helps in enhancing trust and authenticity of the products and companies. In relation to this, Rhode Skin builds community and increases its brand credibility by encouraging customers to post about their results on social media and by reposting individual accounts on social media (Zote, 2025).

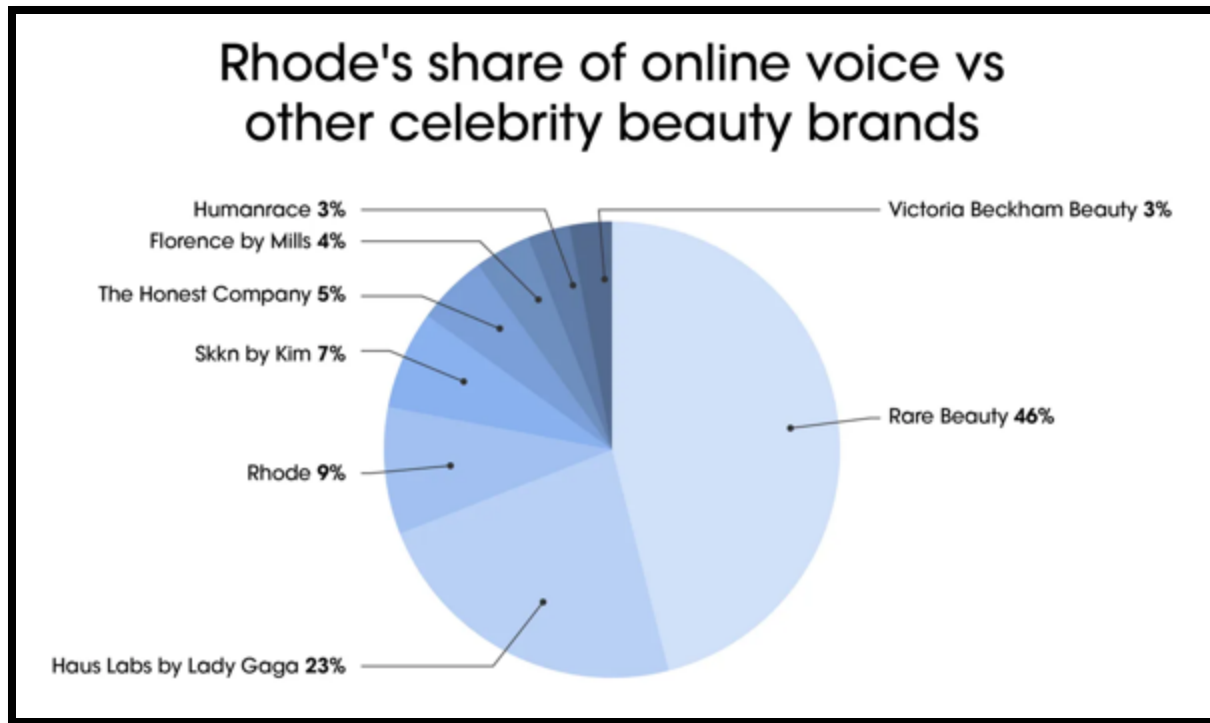


Figure 3.2: Rhode's share of online voice is higher in comparison to other celebrity beauty brands

(Source: Chitrakorn, 2023)

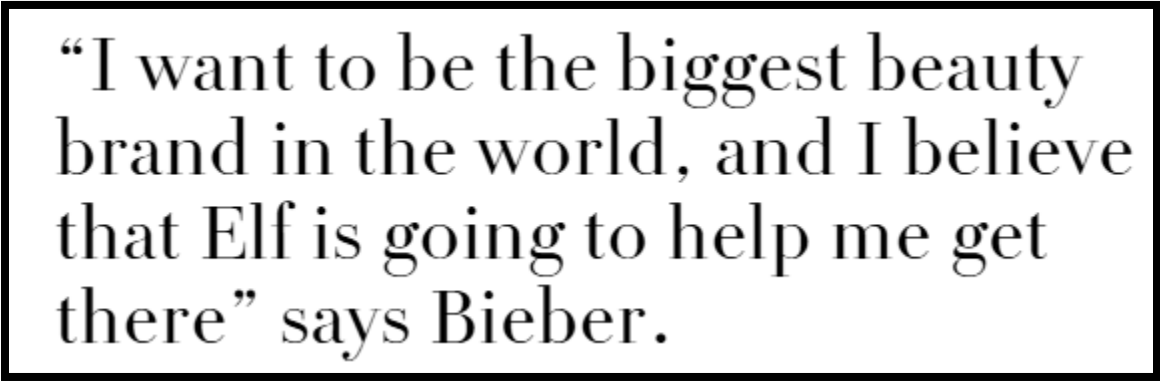
Influencer-generated and **educational content** are important in the skincare industry as it shapes the purchase decisions of customers. According to Singh & Agrawal, (2024), expertise, trustworthiness and credibility of beauty content creators impact purchase decisions and customer behaviour. This study also emphasised on trust as a key factor which mediates the link between purchasing behaviour of customers and communication. Educational content is published by Rhode Skin which has explanations regarding ingredients, product application and skincare techniques (Rhode, 2026).

According to Shen & Prompanyo, (2025), brands that integrate educational communication, community-building strategies and influencer marketing are likely to achieve higher levels of sales growth and customer engagement. The rapid growth of Rhode Skin

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provides this evidence as the brand generated around \$212 million sales in 2025 and was acquired by e.l.f. beauty at a value of \$1 billion (e.l.f. Beauty, 2025).

Overall, this research addresses a crucial research gap by evaluating how social media marketing is leveraged by Rhode Skin for customer engagement and driving business growth in the digital economy.



“I want to be the biggest beauty brand in the world, and I believe that Elf is going to help me get there” says Bieber.

Figure 3.3: Bieber’s statement on Rhode Skin’s acquisition by e.l.f. Beauty

(Source: Scott, 2025)

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

Based on the objectives and methodology mentioned in the proposal, the findings and discussion have been structured with the usage of a thematic analysis that considers five articles used in the Literature Review. These themes directly align with the objective of the study that involves the examination of the ways via which the marketing strategies of social media used by Rhode Skin enhanced customer engagement and driving of sales in the digital economy from 2022-2025.

4.2 Data-Extraction Table and Thematic Analysis

Auth or(s)	Key Findings	Initial Codes	Theme
Shen & Prom pany o (2025)	Marketing with the help of social-media improves the performance of brand with the usage of interactive content, storytelling, building of community, and personalised engagement	Digital storytelling, engagement with community, performance of brand, and developing interactive content	Engageme nt strategies with the help of social- media
Ao et al.	Influencer marketing increases the engagement of customers alongside	Credibility of influencer, intention of	Influencer Marketing

Auth or(s)	Key Findings	Initial Codes	Theme
(2023)	industry-wide purchasing intentions significantly	purchase, engagement, trust	and Behaviour of Consumer
Berta glia et al. (2025)	Self-disclosure of influencers improves audience trust and authenticity, thereby improving long-term engagement	Transparency, authenticity, trust, and self-disclosure	Trust of consumers and building of relationshi ps
Singh & Agra wal (2024)	The beauty and skincare influencers, impact the Gen-Z consumers highly, which in turn increases the purchase intentions majorly.	Gen Z engagement, impact of influencers, purchasing behaviour	Marketing of influencer and behaviour of consumers
Garg &	Parasocial interaction and the credibility of influencer positively affect	Trust, credibility, parasocial	Trust of consumers

Auth or(s)	Key Findings	Initial Codes	Theme
Baks hi (2024)	the purchase intentions and trust in beauty markets.	relationships, and purchase intention	and building of relationshi p

4.3 Emergent Themes

- ***Theme-1: The engagement strategies of social-media***

The literature shows that the successful brands of skincare create customer engagement with the help of interactive posts, educational content, storytelling, and online communities. As per the findings of Shen and Prompanyo (2025), a strong brand performance is generated when social-media is aptly utilised by consumers who actively want to be involved with brand conversations. The usage of skincare tutorials, Instagram reels, polls, demonstration of products, and live-sessions by Rhode Skin reflects these practices of engagement that have been identified in the literature.

- ***Theme-2: Influencer marketing and the behaviour of consumers***

The research by Ao et al. (2023) and Singh and Agrawal (2024) shows that influencer marketing improves purchasing and engagement intentions of consumers, especially Gen-Z. Their results suggest that, at the very least, the partnerships of Rhode Skin with content creators and influencers amplify the awareness of the brands and message to the masses to improve their

purchasing behaviours. The reliance of the company on Creator-led Campaigns and partnerships with influencers resonates with these results.

- ***Theme-3: Building of consumer trust and relationship***

Garg and Bakshi (2024) and Bertaglia (2025) focus on the strengthening of purchasing decisions and consumer trust by highlighting the importance of building transparency, conducting para-social interactions, and authenticity. Influencers who disclose their personal experiences openly create stronger connections of emotions with their audiences. The emphasis of Rhode Skin on developing authentic routines of skincare, relatable content of influencer, and ingredient education appears consistent with these mechanisms of trust-building.

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5. Discussion and Interpretation

The findings support the proposition of Rhode Skin's strategies of social-media marketing strongly due to their major contributions in the improvement of customer engagement and growth of sales from 2022-2025. The thematic analysis suggests that the success of Rhode Skin was not based exclusively on the endorsement of celebrities, but on the strategic involvement of forging partnerships with influencers, social-media's engagement techniques, and emphasising on content that builds trust.

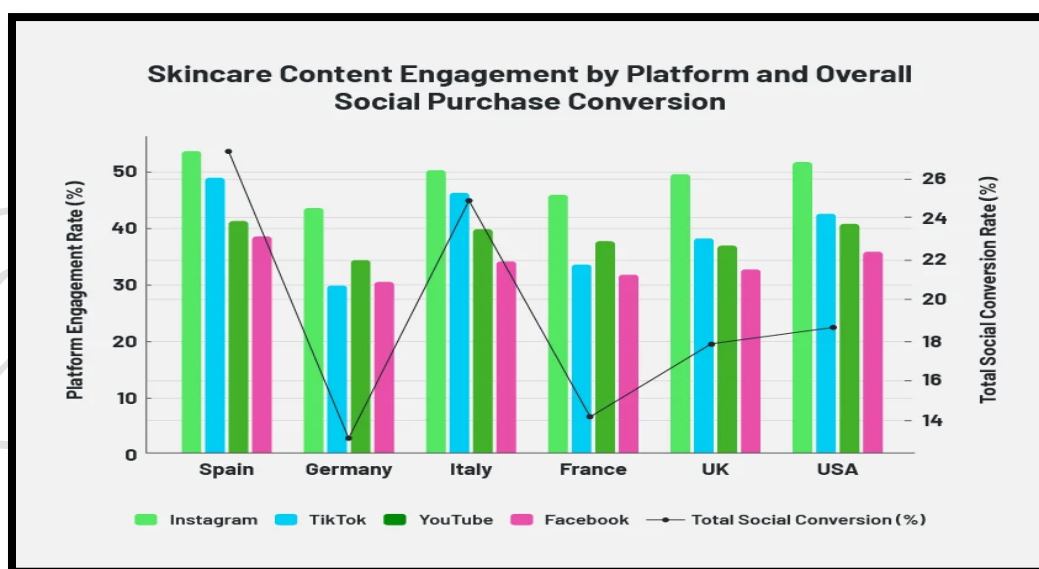
The first theme has demonstrated the effective utilisation of platform-specific features such as TikTok videos, Instagram reels, quizzes, polls, and educational content by Rhode Skin in order to develop two-way communication with customers. This is backed by Shen and Prompanyo (2025), who argued that interactive environments of social-media strengthen brand-customer relationships by motivating active participation. Such an interpretation supports the emphasis of the company on digital storytelling and engagement with the community, and in the process, helping to maintain continuous interactions with the consumers.

The following theme highlights the necessity of influencer marketing in driving the behaviour of consumers. Findings of Ao et al. (2023) suggest the presence of a significant positive relationship between the intention of purchasing and marketing of influencers. This is backed up by Singh and Agrawal (2024), who observed similar effects amongst the Gen-Z consumers in the industry of skincare. The collaboration of the company with content creators, influencers, and advocates of beauty likely expanded the visibility of the brand and encouraging the adoption of products amongst the young consumers (Concepcion, 2025). These findings resonate with the 2nd hypothesis, which proposes the contributions of influencer marketing in the

improvement of brand awareness and the loyalty of consumers. However, recent findings of Bhadouria (2025) demonstrate mixed results, which reveal that most countries such as Italy and Spain trust influencers and their skincare routine but countries such as America, France and Germany who are quite sceptical in trusting the same.

Figure-5.1: Skincare content engagement by platform and overall conversion of social purchases in 2025

(Source: Bhadouria, 2025)



The 3rd theme emphasises on the aspects of authenticity and trust as they are perceived to be major proponents in driving the engagement of consumers. As per Bertaglia et al. (2025), influencer self-disclosure improves the trust of audience. On the other hand, Garg and Bakshi (2024) demonstrated the creation of stronger intentions of purchasing via forging para-social relationships with the help of credible influencers. Educational content, transparent interactions, and user-generated strategy of content developed by Rhode Skin appear to have reinforced the confidence of consumers in the brand. These findings resonate with the 3rd hypothesis, which

suggests that interactive social-media and educational content make a positive impact on the trust of consumers alongside their behaviour of purchasing.

Cumulatively, the findings also resonate with Hypothesis-1 by indicating that the activities of social-media conducted by Rhode Skin positively impact the sales performance and customer engagement. The combination of influencer partnerships, engagement-centric content, and authentic communication have created a digital ecosystem that improves the relationships with consumers and facilitate the decisions of purchasing.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined the importance of the strategies of social-media marketing to improve the engagement of customers and driving the growth of sales for Rhode Skin between 2022-2025. By utilising a qualitative case-study approach and conducting a thematic analysis of secondary literature, the findings have identified three primary themes, which include the formulation of engagement strategies via social-media, impact of influencer marketing on customer behaviour, and developing consumer trust and building of relationships. The evidence suggests that the company has successfully utilised interactive content, educational skincare content, collaborations with influencers, and developing user-generated content in order to enhance customer relationships and improve the visibility of the brand. Furthermore, the literature has demonstrated that authenticity, credibility of influencers, and conducting para-social interactions influenced the intentions of purchasers and trust of consumers significantly, which was specifically evident amongst the Gen-Z customers. Overall, the study has concluded that the strategic utilisation of social-media platforms by Rhode Skin contributed to its commercial success and rapid growth significantly. This highlights the necessity of building

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trust, digital engagement, and influencer marketing as the major proponents of garnering competitive advantage in the contemporary industry of skincare.

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