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The Impact of Short-Video Platform Engagement on Brand Communication Performance: A Case Study of Rhode

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Abstract. Short-video platforms are now a common channel for brands to reach consumers. For beauty brands, this is especially important, as its products can be vividly showcased through skincare routines, makeup tutorials and short visual clips. This paper examines the relationship between short-video engagement metrics and brand communication effectiveness, using Rhode as the main case. The paper focuses on common engagement data such as likes, comments, shares, saves, and views. These indicators can reflect how audiences respond to brand content and how far the content may spread. Rhode is a useful case because the brand grew quickly through social media attention, a simple visual style, and the public image of its founder. Using literature review and case analysis, this paper discusses how engagement data can help explain Rhode's brand visibility. The main argument is that engagement metrics are useful, but they should not be understood alone. A high number of likes or views does not always mean strong brand communication. Comments, shares, content quality, brand consistency, and consumer interest all need to be considered together. These indicators reflect audience responses to brand content and the content's potential reach.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Short-video Marketing, Brand Engagement, Digital Marketing Analytics, Rhode

1. Introduction

Social media has changed brand communication from one-way messaging to a more interactive process where consumers can respond, share, and create content. Driven by this paradigm shift, marketing research has increasingly focused on user engagement to explore audience responses to branded content [1]. Zx cThis shift is particularly noticeable on short-video platforms including TikTok and Instagram Reels. These platforms are built around quick attention, fast scrolling, and recommendation systems that respond to user behavior. Research on short-form video advertising shows that entertainment, usefulness, and social connection can influence consumer engagement behavior [2]. This means that engagement data are not only simple numbers. Instead, they help reveal whether brand content can capture public attention and drive audience interaction.

The beauty industry is especially suitable for this kind of analysis because beauty products are highly visual. Skincare and makeup products can be shown through routines, tutorials, texture demonstrations, and short lifestyle clips. Research also shows that aesthetic quality and

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entertainment can support customer engagement and strengthen brand outcomes [3]. Rhode is a useful case in this context. In 2025, e.l.f. Beauty announced a deal to acquire Rhode for up to $1 billion, and Rhode had generated $212 million in net sales in the twelve months ended March 31, 2025 [4]. Rhode subsequently launched at Sephora locations throughout the United States and Canada, attracting over 2 million unique searches on Sephora's website and mobile app in the prior year [5].

This paper explores the correlation between short-video engagement metrics and brand communication performance. It focuses on whether likes, comments, shares, saves, and views can help explain brand visibility and audience response. Meanwhile, it acknowledges that engagement metrics in isolation cannot fully reflect long-term brand development and success.

2. Short-video engagement and brand communication

2.1. Importance of engagement metrics

Engagement is often handled superficially in marketing practice. Many brands simply report the number of likes, comments, views, or shares their posts receive. However, engagement is more than a surface-level popularity number. A review of customer engagement and social media research indicates that engagement has emerged as an important concept, as it helps explain both the antecedents and consequences of consumer-brand interactions in digital environments [1]. In simpler terms, engagement helps show whether brand communication is only being seen or whether it is actually creating a response.

This difference matters because exposure alone does not always mean communication success. A video may reach many people, but if viewers do not react, comment, share, or remember the brand, its communication effect may be limited. Engagement enables brands to assess audience attention and determine whether content is compelling enough to drive behavioral responses. For this reason, engagement metrics are useful in digital marketing analysis.

Engagement is also closely linked to brand performance. Research shows that social media brand engagement behavior can affect brand attachment, brand attitudes, and purchase intention [6]. This is important because it suggests that interaction is not just a small side effect of communication. If consumers repeatedly interact with a brand's content, they may develop stronger familiarity with the brand and a more positive attitude toward it. For beauty brands, this process is even more critical, as consumers often require repeated exposure to build sufficient trust in a product to attempt it.

Additional research further finds that social media marketing capabilities are closely associated with brand equity and firm performance [7]. This means that the ability to use social media well can become part of a brand's competitive advantage. A brand that understands which content receives stronger response can adjust its strategy faster than a brand that only looks at traditional advertising results. In this regard, engagement metrics can help brands gain insights from audience behaviors and optimize their future brand communication.

At the same time, engagement should be interpreted carefully. Research on digital brand equity argues that brand performance in the digital era should not be evaluated only through current social media metrics [8]. Other critical indicators include brand awareness, search patterns, public sentiment, purchase intentions and sales performance. This point is especially relevant for this paper. A post can receive many likes but still fail to build long-term brand value. A brand can also build value through consistent recognition even if one single post is not viral. Accordingly, engagement should be regarded as one component within a broader brand communication system, rather than a comprehensive benchmark for brand success.

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2.2. Platform logic of short-video engagement

Short-video platforms make engagement especially important because of the way content is distributed. Users move quickly from one video to the next, and platforms often rely on signals such as watch time, likes, comments, shares, and repeated viewing. Because of this, engagement can influence visibility. It is not merely a passive outcome of content exposure. It can also become a driver of future exposure.

Research on short-form video advertising shows that video features influence consumer engagement behavior and can provide guidance for data-driven marketing decisions [2]. This is directly connected to the topic of this paper. If certain content features lead to stronger engagement, then brands can use this information to improve future videos. For instance, if product display videos gain more collections and comments than ordinary promotional clips, brands can confirm that audiences favor practical-oriented content. If founder-centered videos receive more shares, the brand may understand that personal image is important for spreading content.

Short-video platforms also reshape the emotional perception and behavioral logic of brand communication. Content is faster, more visual, and more closely tied to everyday routines. Users often decide within a few seconds whether to keep watching or move on. Because of this, short-video marketing depends heavily on platform fit. Research on TikTok and Gen Z suggests that TikTok can create a sense of connection and higher engagement, and that media engagement on TikTok has implications for brand engagement and purchase intent [9]. This does not mean that every brand on TikTok will succeed. Instead, it proves that this platform delivers outstanding marketing effects only when brands produce content in line with users' inherent media consumption habits.

This point helps explain why beauty brands often perform well in short-video spaces. Beauty-related content fits perfectly with short-duration and recyclable content presentation modes. A brand can show a product in use, place it inside a daily routine, connect it to a trend, or link it to a recognizable lifestyle. Short-video marketing research also suggests that brands and entrepreneurs use TikTok not only as an advertising channel, but as a strategic communication tool shaped by platform logic and audience habits [10]. In other words, the effectiveness of short-video marketing depends not only on what brands want to say, but also on whether the message fits the style of the platform.

For Rhode, this platform logic is important. The brand's products are easy to show in short clips. Daily skincare steps, lipstick product displays, macro close-up footage and founder-themed content are all well adapted to the visual-oriented and fast-paced content style of short-video platforms. This makes Rhode a useful example for discussing how engagement metrics and brand communication work together.

2.3. Engagement indicators and communication effects

A common flaw in informal marketing analysis is regarding all engagement metrics as equivalent. In reality, likes, comments, shares, saves, and views do not mean the same thing. Views usually show basic exposure. A single view only proves users have seen the content, yet it hardly stands for profound user interest. Likes are also relatively easy actions. They may show quick approval, mild interest, or simple recognition.

Comments require more effort. Users who leave comments tend to hold more intense emotional responses to relevant content. They may ask questions, share opinions, complain, praise the product, or join a discussion. For beauty brands, comments are especially useful because they may reveal

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consumer concerns, such as shade range, product texture, price, ingredients, availability, or comparison with other products. These comments can give brands more detailed feedback than likes alone.

Shares are different again because they help content move beyond the original viewer. When users share a video, they are not only reacting to it. They are helping distribute it to other people. This is important for brand communication because sharing can bring the content into new social circles. Studies on user interactive behaviors prove that diverse interaction modes exert distinct influences on brand operation results [6]. Accordingly, simply defining a piece of content as having high overall interaction is far from sufficient.

Studies on social media user engagement evaluation also hold that brands should adopt more refined evaluation methods instead of merely referring to aggregate data [11]. This point is useful for Rhode. If a Rhode video receives many likes but few comments or shares, it may show that users approve of the content but are not strongly involved. By contrast, videos with fewer likes but plentiful comments and reposts can generate greater communication value by boosting public discussion and content dissemination.

Saves should also be considered in beauty marketing. A save may show that the content has practical value. For instance, users tend to collect skincare procedures, product recommendations and makeup guides for subsequent viewing and reference. In this sense, saves may reflect a different kind of interest from likes. They may show that the content is not only attractive but also useful.

Overall, interaction indicators ought to be interpreted as diverse manifestations of audience behavioral tendencies. Comments show discussion. Shares show diffusion. Saves show future interest. When these metrics are studied together, they can provide a clearer picture of brand communication performance on short-video platforms.

3. Rhode case analysis in short-video marketing

3.1. Case selection: Rhode

Rhode serves as a typical research case as it integrates beauty industry attributes, celebrity influence, digital trends and commercial expansion. Beauty Independent's analysis of Rhode argues that the brand combined celebrity appeal with strong financial discipline, and that other emerging brands should not assume Rhode-level efficiency can be easily copied [12]. This view is insightful in revealing that Rhode's success hinges on more than mere online popularity. The brand also benefited from business discipline, product focus, and a strong awareness advantage.

The relevant article also emphasizes that Rhode recorded low marketing expenditure relative to its sales volume, and points out that the founder's inherent fan base enabled the brand to attract public attention in a more efficient way [12]. This is valuable for this paper because it shows that Rhode's communication strength is not only about content quality. It is also about how founder visibility, brand aesthetics, and product positioning work together in digital space.

At the same time, Rhode is not only an example of celebrity attention. The acquisition statement released by e.l.f. Beauty positions Rhode as a rapidly expanding multi-category beauty brand with outstanding DTC operational capacity [4]. According to the announcement, Rhode more than doubled its consumer base in the previous year and generated $212 million in trailing twelve-month net sales [4]. The same announcement also stated that Hailey Bieber would continue as Founder and serve as Chief Creative Officer and Head of Innovation [4]. This is significant in that it reveals Rhode's communication mode is closely bound up with founder personal image, instead of being

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limited to temporary celebrity endorsement. The founder remains part of the brand's creative and marketing direction.

Rhode also fits short-video platforms well from a content perspective. Its products feature intuitive visual presentation, highly identifiable packaging and minimalist and unified overall brand positioning. These qualities are important because research on social media content aesthetics shows that aesthetic quality and entertainment can support engagement and downstream brand outcomes [3]. In a crowded feed, recognizability matters. Rhode's clean visual language and skincare-centered image make the brand easier for viewers to remember.

3.2. Role of engagement in Rhode's communication performance

Interaction indicators can effectively interpret the operational performance of Rhode's content across short-video platforms. If Rhode were studied through a platform dataset, useful indicators would include views, likes, comments, shares, and saves. Views would reflect basic reach. Likes would show immediate approval. Comments embody users' in-depth participation and exploratory willingness towards content. Shares would indicate diffusion beyond the original audience. Saves may be especially important in beauty content because users may return to routines, tutorials, and product recommendations later.

In a basic data-driven research framework, view volume can be set as the dependent variable, whereas likes, comments and reposts serve as explanatory variables. This kind of structure fits the logic of short-video marketing research, where interaction data are used to understand what helps content travel and perform [2, 11]. A researcher could also compare different post types, such as founder-centered videos, product demonstrations, routine videos, trend-based content, and launch announcements.

Rhode seems likely to benefit from this kind of dynamic because its communication strengths align with short-video behavior. Founder-centered content attracts attention because Hailey Bieber is already a recognizable public figure. Routine-based skincare content helps viewers imagine everyday use. A clear aesthetic creates recognition across different posts. Combinedly, these elements endow user interaction with deeper value and form sustained circulation of audience attention and feedback.

Research on brand-generated and user-generated content also indicates that social media engagement mediates the link between content exposure and younger consumers' purchase intentions [13]. This is relevant to Rhode because the brand's audience is strongly connected to digital culture and beauty trends. Interaction is not only an aftereffect of seeing content. It can become one of the ways content shapes broader consumer behavior.

Rhode's online exposure is also closely linked to general market demand. After the acquisition announcement, Rhode launched in Sephora across the United States and Canada, and e.l.f. stated that the brand had generated more than 2 million unique searches across Sephora's site and app over the previous year [5]. This detail matters because search behavior often signals demand beyond social media interaction. If people are not only watching and liking Rhode content but also searching for the brand on a major beauty retailer's platform, then digital communication is likely moving into broader consumer interest.

This does not mean engagement alone created Rhode's success. Rather, engagement worked together with founder visibility, product appeal, retail demand, and brand consistency. For this reason, Rhode serves as an ideal research case to explore the correlation between short-video-based user engagement and brand communication effectiveness.

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3.3. Limits of the Rhode case

Though Rhode acts as a persuasive research case, it cannot be regarded as a universal template suitable for blind replication by all brands. Beauty Independent specifically warns that emerging brands should not assume they can replicate Rhode's results simply by copying low marketing-spend ratios or surface-level social media tactics. The article emphasizes that fame can accelerate awareness, but fundamentals still matter [12].

Such rational caution is essential for academic research and empirical analysis. Rhode had advantages that many brands do not have. The founder's visibility likely reduced the cost of awareness and helped the brand gain early attention. A new brand without this advantage may need much higher marketing spending to reach the same level of visibility. Therefore, Rhode's case should not be interpreted as proof that short-video engagement alone can create rapid business growth.

Meanwhile, Rhode's outstanding market performance also mirrors its sound operational execution capability. Public information suggests that the brand had a focused product lineup, clear visual identity, disciplined cost structure, and strong consumer demand [4, 12]. It proves that Rhode is a typical case whose online interaction volume and exposure level are firmly backed by solid commercial foundations. It is a good example of communication performance, but not a universal formula.

This limitation cannot be ignored, since social media data tend to oversimplify the actual process of brand success. A brand may appear to grow quickly online, but behind that visibility there may be product strategy, supply chain planning, founder influence, retail relationships, and financial discipline. For this reason, engagement metrics should be used carefully. They can show audience response, but they cannot fully explain why a brand succeeds.

4. Discussion

The Rhode case supports the argument that engagement metrics on short-video platforms are meaningful indicators of brand communication performance. On platforms shaped by recommendation systems, visible interaction does more than show popularity. It can strengthen visibility, encourage repeated exposure, and reinforce social proof. Studies on short-video advertising, TikTok user interaction and general social media engagement all point to the same conclusion: interaction matters because it connects content, audience response, and future communication reach [2, 6, 9].

At the same time, the Rhode case also shows why marketers should not rely on total engagement counts alone. The type of engagement matters. Comments and shares may reveal more about communication strength than likes because they indicate discussion and diffusion. Posts gaining numerous likes only reflect audience recognition, while those rich in comments and reposts can trigger wider public discussions and cross-group content circulation. Research on engagement measurement also supports the idea that brands need more detailed ways to evaluate customer engagement behavior [11].

For Rhode, this means the most useful future analysis would be to compare which kinds of posts produce which kinds of engagement. Content covering founder showcases, product displays, skill tutorials, new product releases and trend-related clips often yield divergent operational effects. A launch video may produce more shares because it feels newsworthy. A tutorial may produce more saves because it is practical. A founder-centered video may produce more comments because it

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attracts emotional or personal reactions. Classifying these diverse content categories can help scholars gain in-depth insight into Rhode's overall brand communication effects.

There is also a strategic lesson here. Many brands collect social media data, but they do not always use the data thoughtfully. Interaction numbers are often reported as evidence that content is "doing well," but this is not enough for serious marketing analysis. Data become more valuable when brands connect them to decisions about content design, positioning, and channel development. If specific content forms steadily gain plenty of comments and reposts, brands can take full advantage of these findings to optimize subsequent publicity strategies. If specific products consistently drive saves and search, the brand may have identified stronger long-term consumer interest.

Still, engagement should not be confused with full brand value. Research on digital brand equity argues that digital brand performance should also include wider signals such as awareness, search behavior, and sentiment [8]. This point fits Rhode well. Rhode's case is compelling partly because the brand's communication strength appears alongside other indicators, including sales growth, consumer base expansion, Sephora distribution, and search demand [4, 5]. Such objective evidence further strengthens relevant research conclusions, which proves that online public popularity is closely linked to the overall market development trend.

Overall, Rhode shows that engagement metrics can be useful when they are connected to a wider understanding of brand communication. They help explain how content becomes visible and how audiences respond. However, they should be used together with other evidence. A strong brand does not depend only on likes or views. It also depends on product relevance, brand meaning, consistency, and the ability to turn attention into demand.

5. Conclusion

This paper examined the relationship between short-video engagement metrics and brand communication performance through the case of Rhode. The discussion shows that engagement data can help explain how audiences respond to brand content and how content becomes more visible on short-video platforms. Key indicators including likes, comments, shares, collections and views respectively reflect distinct degrees of audience engagement. The Rhode case shows that strong digital communication is not created by one factor alone. The brand gained advantages from founder influence, unified visual branding, platform-adaptive content and high public enthusiasm. Its social media attention was also connected with broader market demand, including retail expansion and high search interest. At the same time, this paper shows that user engagement cannot be understood independently. A high number of likes or views does not always mean strong brand communication. Comments, shares, saves, content quality, brand consistency, and consumer demand all need to be considered together.

The primary shortcoming of this study is that it adopts case study method instead of first-hand platform data. Future research could collect Rhode's short-video posts from one platform over a fixed time period and run descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, or simple regression. This would make it possible to test which engagement indicators are most closely related to visibility and communication performance. Overall, short-video interaction statistics serve as practical references to interpret contemporary brand communication modes. However, they are most meaningful when they relate to a broader view of brand strategy, consumer behavior, and business performance.

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