

Digital Marketing Strategy in Building Brand Awareness on Instagram of PT Skinplay Labs Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: The rapid growth of Indonesia's digital ecosystem and the expanding skincare industry have positioned Instagram as a key platform for brand development and consumer engagement. While many studies evaluate digital marketing effectiveness through quantitative indicators, limited research explores how marketing teams qualitatively conceptualize and execute strategies to build brand awareness. This study addresses that gap by examining the digital marketing practices of PT Skinplay Labs Indonesia (Skinplay), a local skincare brand targeting Generation Z consumers. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research collected data through participatory observation during a five-month internship, in-depth interviews with the marketing team, and analysis of content strategy documents, Instagram analytics, and campaign archives. The findings show that Skinplay applies an agile content framework supported by trend monitoring, social listening, and structured planning cycles. The brand emphasizes meaningful metrics, such as Save Rate and community conversion, over vanity metrics, reflecting a shift toward long-term brand-building priorities. One of the most notable results emerged from the "PLAYDATE Vol. 1 – Mission: Skinpossible" campaign, which integrated online and offline activation and produced a 62% increase in impressions from non-followers. This outcome indicates a substantial rise in exposure beyond the existing audience. Overall, the study concludes that Skinplay's combination of gamification, emotional storytelling, and community-based engagement effectively strengthens brand awareness and enhances competitive positioning within Indonesia's saturated skincare market.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Brand Awareness, Instagram Strategy, Skincare Industry, Community Engagement.



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INTRODUCTION

Brand awareness constitutes a fundamental dimension of brand equity and plays a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing decisions. As emphasized by Anshori (2020), brand awareness functions as an initial gateway to brand salience and brand resonance, influencing the formation of consumer loyalty over time (Ismanto & Adiwijaya, 2020). When consumers are familiar with a brand and able to recall it easily, they are more likely to develop positive associations and preferences. In highly competitive markets, brand awareness becomes an

essential strategic asset that allows brands to differentiate themselves from competitors offering similar products and value propositions.

This challenge is particularly evident in Indonesia's rapidly growing skincare industry. According to data from the Indonesian Food and Drug Authority (Badan POM RI, 2024), more than 1,100 domestic cosmetic companies are currently registered, reflecting intense market saturation and competition. As product differentiation becomes increasingly difficult based solely on functional attributes, brands must rely on strategic communication and branding efforts to secure consumer attention (Kementerian Perindustrian RI, 2024). Concurrently, the acceleration of internet adoption reaching more than 221 million users in Indonesia (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII), 2024; DataIndonesia.id (Katadata), 2025) has significantly shifted marketing activities toward digital platforms. Social media, in particular, has become a dominant space for brand communication, discovery, and engagement.

Among these platforms, Instagram has emerged as a highly influential visual medium that supports storytelling, emotional expression, and interactive brand–consumer relationships. Prior research suggests that Instagram's visual and narrative-oriented features enable brands to convey identity and values more effectively, fostering emotional resonance with audiences (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Visual content has also been shown to exert a strong influence on consumer engagement, especially within the skincare and beauty category, where aesthetics, authenticity, and perceived credibility play a crucial role in purchase evaluation (Iqbal & Bhatti, 2020). As a result, Instagram has become a strategic platform for skincare brands seeking to build awareness and trust in crowded digital environments.

The relevance of Instagram is further reinforced by the growing dominance of Generation Z as a key consumer segment. As a digitally native generation, Generation Z relies heavily on social media as a primary source of information when evaluating products and brands (IDN Research Institute, 2024; Jakpat Insight, 2024). Their consumption patterns reflect a preference for interactive, dynamic, and personalized digital experiences, as well as content that feels relatable and authentic. These characteristics are consistent with broader findings on Generation Z's expectations of digital environments, which emphasize participation, responsiveness, and emotional connection (Priporas et al., 2017). Consequently, brands targeting this demographic are required to adopt community-driven, engaging, and adaptive communication strategies rather than one-way promotional approaches.

Previous studies by Hidayat & Fitria (2021), Nuraini & Pratama (2022), and Ilhamsyah & Dewi (2025) have demonstrated that digital marketing activities positively influence brand awareness. However, much of this existing research relies primarily on quantitative indicators such as likes, reach, impressions, or engagement rates. While these metrics provide valuable insights into performance outcomes, they offer limited understanding of the internal strategic processes behind digital content planning, execution, and optimization. In response to this gap, recent digital marketing literature highlights the growing importance of strategic agility particularly the ability to adapt content, messaging, and formats based on continuous analytics and audience feedback (Kenton & Liang (2022)). This perspective is especially relevant for emerging brands operating in saturated markets, where responsiveness and innovation are key to sustaining visibility.

Within this context, Skinplay presents a compelling case for qualitative exploration. As a relatively young skincare brand, Skinplay actively leverages visual storytelling, gamification, and emotional narratives centered on the concept of “fun self-care.” Its Instagram strategy emphasizes relatability, community interaction, and audience participation, allowing the brand to build meaningful traction despite intense competition. This approach aligns with global findings suggesting that social media activities contribute not only to brand awareness but also to brand image formation and customer loyalty (Bilgin, 2018). Skinplay’s adaptive and iterative digital marketing practices therefore provide a valuable opportunity to examine how strategic content execution, engagement-driven communication, and analytics-informed decision-making operate in practice, warranting further academic investigation (Alalwan, 2018).

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine how PT Skinplay Labs Indonesia develops and implements digital marketing strategies to build brand awareness on Instagram. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of internal processes, decision-making patterns, and experiential insights rather than quantify numerical outcomes. The case study design enabled a detailed investigation of organizational practices within their real operational context.

The population consisted of internal stakeholders within the Digital Marketing Division of PT Skinplay Labs Indonesia. Purposive sampling was used to select individuals directly involved in strategic planning, campaign execution, and content performance evaluation. The selected informants were the Digital Marketing Lead, Social Media Coordinator, and Content Planner, each of whom had direct relevance to the brand’s Instagram marketing activities (Kotler & Keller, 2021).

Data collection took place at the office of PT Skinplay Labs Indonesia, located in Wisma Nugra Santana, Jl. Jenderal Sudirman, Jakarta Pusat. This site served as the center of the brand’s marketing operations and provided access to strategic meetings, digital archives, and real-time campaign workflows.

The instruments used in this study included a semi-structured interview guide, field observation notes, and access to internal documentation such as Instagram analytics dashboards, content calendars, creative briefs, and user-generated content archives. These instruments supported systematic data collection and ensured consistency across interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Data were collected over a five-month period, from 18 August 2025 to 18 December 2025, coinciding with the researcher’s internship. Three primary techniques were used: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participatory observation enabled the researcher to observe content planning, execution, and evaluation activities directly. In-depth interviews provided deeper insights into strategic reasoning and implementation practices. Document analysis complemented these techniques by examining performance analytics,

campaign archives, and other strategic materials to validate interview findings and observed processes.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework. The process included data familiarization, coding, theme generation, refinement, and interpretation. The analysis focused on recurring concepts related to strategic planning, engagement mechanisms, and metric evaluation in Instagram-based brand building. Methodological triangulation was employed by comparing insights from interviews, observations, and documents to strengthen credibility and reliability.

Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining formal permission from PT Skinplay Labs Indonesia to access internal documents and involve employees as informants. All participants received an explanation of the research purpose and provided voluntary informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, and no identifiable personal or proprietary information appears in the final report.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study illustrate how PT Skinplay Labs Indonesia implements digital marketing practices on Instagram to increase brand awareness, strengthen audience engagement, and optimize content performance. Thematic analysis produced three major themes: Adaptive Visual Communication Strategy, Community Engagement Mechanisms, and Data-Driven Content Optimization.

Adaptive Visual Communication Strategy

Skinplay consistently adapts its content formats such as Instagram Reels, product-focused visuals, and educational posts in response to evolving platform trends and measurable audience feedback (Fortune Indonesia, 2024). This strategic flexibility demonstrates an awareness of how different content types perform within Instagram's algorithmic environment. Previous studies have shown that visually engaging content significantly enhances user interaction and engagement on social media platforms (Iqbal & Bhatti, 2020). Consistent with this finding, Skinplay's internal performance reports indicate that Reels generate substantially higher engagement rates compared to static image posts, particularly in terms of reach, likes, comments, and shares.

This suggests that short-form video content is more effective in capturing audience attention and encouraging active participation, likely due to Instagram's algorithm prioritizing video-based formats and users' increasing preference for dynamic, easily consumable content. Furthermore, Skinplay's use of educational content alongside promotional visuals reflects a balanced content strategy that not only markets products but also builds credibility and value for its audience. These practices support prior research asserting that brand success on Instagram is closely linked to the ability to align content strategies with algorithmic mechanisms and audience behavioral patterns (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). By continuously evaluating engagement metrics and adjusting content

accordingly, Skinplay demonstrates a data-driven approach to social media management that strengthens brand visibility, audience interaction, and long-term digital presence.

Community Engagement Mechanisms

Interaction and audience participation emerged as central elements in building trust and fostering emotional connections between the brand and its followers. Skinplay actively engages with its audience by responding to comments, reposting user-generated content, and implementing participation-based campaigns such as customer testimonials, interactive questions, and feedback prompts. These practices encourage two-way communication and position the audience not merely as passive consumers but as active participants within the brand's digital ecosystem. Such engagement strategies contribute to a sense of belonging and shared identity, which are key components in cultivating long-term brand loyalty.

These findings are consistent with prior research indicating that brand communities on social media enhance user engagement through social identity and relational bonding mechanisms (Li et al., 2021). By acknowledging and amplifying audience voices, Skinplay reinforces emotional attachment and trust, which are essential for sustaining meaningful brand–consumer relationships. Observational data further revealed that relational communication characterized by empathy, responsiveness, and personalization—was more effective in generating perceptions of authenticity and loyalty than purely transactional or sales-driven promotional content (LKBN ANTARA, 2023). This suggests that audiences increasingly value genuine interaction and relational depth, supporting the argument that trust-building communication strategies play a crucial role in strengthening brand credibility and long-term engagement on social media platforms.

Data-Driven Content Optimization

Skinplay systematically integrated social media analytics such as reach, engagement rate, audience retention, and follower growth into its weekly content evaluation cycles. These quantitative indicators functioned as key performance metrics that informed a range of strategic decisions, including content scheduling, the allocation of paid promotion budgets, the feasibility of influencer or brand collaborations, and the maintenance of consistent brand messaging. By relying on empirical data rather than intuition alone, Skinplay was able to identify high-performing content patterns and optimize future posts accordingly.

This data-driven approach reflects the principles of strategic agility in digital content planning, as emphasized by Kenton & Liang (2022), where continuous monitoring and rapid adjustment enable brands to remain responsive within dynamic social media environments. Furthermore, it aligns with global research findings indicating that analytical insight and performance tracking significantly enhance Instagram marketing effectiveness (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Observational evidence showed that content tailored based on historical performance data resulted in more stable engagement levels and stronger follower conversion rates, suggesting improved audience relevance and message resonance.

Overall, these results demonstrate that Skinplay adopts an iterative marketing workflow that integrates creative content production, community-oriented communication strategies, and systematic data analysis. This holistic approach supports prior research asserting that effective social media marketing increasingly depends on the synergy between creativity and analytics (Arora & Sanni, 2019), and highlights the importance of evidence based decision making in sustaining long-term digital engagement and brand growth..

Interpretation of Key Findings

The findings of this study indicate that Instagram plays a strategic and multifaceted role in increasing brand awareness, particularly through adaptive content execution, active audience engagement, and continuous analytical evaluation. Skinplay's ability to adjust content formats, messaging, and posting strategies in response to platform dynamics and audience behavior highlights the growing importance of agile and responsive digital marketing practices (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2020). This emphasis on flexibility and real-time adaptation reflects broader findings in digital marketing research, which suggest that brands that continuously evaluate performance data and respond swiftly to change are more likely to maintain relevance and visibility in competitive digital environments Kenton & Liang (2022).

Interactive communication practices such as responding to comments, reposting user-generated content, and maintaining responsive direct messaging were shown to significantly enhance audience connection and trust. These interactions foster a sense of reciprocity and dialogue between the brand and its followers, reinforcing prior research that emphasizes the role of two-way communication in strengthening brand–consumer relationships on social media platforms (Maulana et al., 2019). Rather than functioning solely as a promotional channel, Instagram emerges as a relational space where engagement and interaction contribute directly to perceived brand authenticity.

The use of emotional storytelling and relatable visual elements proved particularly effective in resonating with younger digital consumers. Content that reflects everyday experiences, personal narratives, or emotionally appealing visuals was more likely to capture attention and encourage engagement. This finding is consistent with studies on visual communication, which demonstrate that emotionally driven and visually compelling content significantly enhances user interaction and engagement in social media contexts (Iqbal & Bhatti, 2020). Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of integrating adaptive strategies, interactive communication, and emotional visual storytelling to maximize Instagram's effectiveness as a brand awareness and engagement tool.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study are largely consistent with previous research examining the role of Instagram and social media in brand communication and audience engagement. In line with Alamsyah (2021), the results demonstrate that Instagram's emphasis on visual narratives particularly through emotionally appealing imagery and storytelling plays a crucial role in creating

emotional resonance with audiences. Such visual-driven strategies enable brands to communicate values and identity more effectively, thereby strengthening audience recall and emotional attachment.

The centrality of brand awareness identified in this study also echoes earlier findings by Anshori (2020) as well as Wardani & Anindity (2019), who emphasize that consistent content exposure and strategic messaging on Instagram significantly contribute to increasing brand recognition. Skinplay's strategic use of adaptive content formats, interactive communication, and storytelling further supports global evidence suggesting that social media activities positively influence both brand awareness and customer loyalty (Bilgin, 2018). This reinforces the argument that Instagram functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a long-term branding platform.

Moreover, the strong responsiveness of Generation Z to interactive and participatory content observed in this study aligns with research highlighting their expectations for dynamic, responsive, and socially engaging digital environments (Priporas et al., 2017). Generation Z users tend to favor brands that allow them to interact, express opinions, and feel acknowledged within online communities. In this context, Skinplay's emphasis on user participation through comments, reposts, and engagement-driven campaigns reflects an effective alignment with generational digital behavior patterns.

The prominent role of user participation is also consistent with literature that underscores the influence of brand communities in fostering engagement, trust, and loyalty (Li et al., 2021). By facilitating two-way communication and encouraging community involvement, brands can strengthen social identity and relational bonds with their audiences. Furthermore, the increasing importance of influencer marketing in the skincare industry is reinforced by prior studies indicating that influencers play a significant role in shaping brand credibility, engagement levels, and purchase intentions (Casaló et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Together, these consistencies demonstrate that Skinplay's Instagram strategy aligns closely with both national and international research, confirming the relevance and applicability of established digital marketing theories in contemporary social media practice.

Limitations and Cautions

This study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the research focuses on a single brand context, which inherently limits the generalizability of the results to other brands, industries, or market segments. While the findings provide in-depth insights into Skinplay's Instagram strategy, they may not fully represent the practices or outcomes of other skincare brands with different target audiences, resources, or positioning strategies.

The researcher's participation in the observation process may introduce subjective bias, particularly in interpreting audience interactions and communication dynamics. Although efforts were made to maintain analytical rigor, the qualitative nature of the study relies heavily on interpretation, which may be influenced by the researcher's perspective. Additionally, the qualitative approach does not directly measure quantitative performance indicators such as engagement growth rates,

conversion metrics, purchase intention, or return on investment. This limitation is consistent with concerns raised in previous studies regarding the constraints of qualitative social media research in capturing measurable marketing outcomes (Sari & Utami, 2022).

Given these limitations, future research is encouraged to adopt quantitative or mixed-method research designs to provide more comprehensive and generalizable findings. The inclusion of measurable indicators such as conversion rates, customer retention, brand loyalty, and long-term engagement growth would allow for stronger empirical validation of Instagram's impact on brand performance. Moreover, comparative studies involving multiple skincare brands across different market segments could offer valuable insights into whether strategies such as community engagement, emotional storytelling, and data-driven content optimization are consistently effective or vary depending on brand positioning and audience characteristics.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research is recommended to incorporate quantitative or mixed-method research designs in order to measure specific and objective performance indicators such as engagement growth, conversion rates, customer retention, and brand loyalty. The use of statistical analysis would enable researchers to assess the strength and significance of relationships between social media strategies and measurable marketing outcomes, thereby complementing the qualitative insights generated in this study.

Comparative studies involving multiple skincare brands are suggested to enhance the generalizability of findings. By examining brands with varying market positions, target audiences, and digital strategies, future research could determine whether key themes identified in this study particularly community-based engagement and data-driven content optimization are consistently applicable across similar product categories or are influenced by contextual factors. Such comparisons may also reveal best practices and strategic variations within the skincare industry.

Further exploration of influencer marketing strategies is also considered valuable, given the growing role of influencers in shaping brand perception and consumer behavior on social media. Prior studies indicate that influencers significantly affect brand credibility and purchase decisions in the skincare sector (Putri & Dewi, 2021). Future research could examine the effectiveness of different types of influencers, levels of authenticity, and collaboration formats to better understand how influencer-driven content contributes to engagement, trust, and long-term consumer relationships.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how PT Skinplay Labs Indonesia utilizes Instagram as a strategic digital marketing platform to strengthen brand awareness in the competitive skincare industry. The research explored the formulation, execution, and evaluation of Instagram-based marketing initiatives and identified three key mechanisms that contribute to brand visibility: adaptive content strategy, community-driven engagement, and insight-based optimization (Abdilah et al., 2022).

These findings highlight the importance of relevant content, interactive communication, and continuous data evaluation in enhancing brand recall and maintaining competitiveness in the digital marketplace.

The study contributes context-specific insights by illustrating how a local skincare brand applies real-time data interpretation and participatory communication within an iterative and flexible marketing workflow, rather than relying on a linear campaign model. However, the research is limited to a single case context and does not measure quantitative indicators of brand awareness or consumer behavior.

Future research should incorporate mixed-method or longitudinal approaches to evaluate measurable outcomes such as engagement growth, conversion rates, retention behavior, and customer loyalty. Comparative studies across multiple brands or categories may further strengthen theoretical understanding and provide a more comprehensive perspective on digital marketing performance in Indonesia's beauty and skincare sector (Euromonitor International, 2022).

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