

CASE STUDY • MARKETING

Reviving a D2C Skincare Brand with Community-Led Marketing

How a small brand cut acquisition costs by building a customer community

ORGANISATION

Leafy Glow (fictional brand)

SECTOR

Direct-to-consumer beauty

PREPARED BY

Case writer: Your Name

01 At a Glance

Organisation	Leafy Glow (fictional brand)
Sector	Direct-to-consumer beauty
Location	Bengaluru
Challenge	Rising ad costs and falling repeat purchases
Solution	Community programme, content partnerships and a referral scheme
Timeframe	9 months

–38%

Acquisition cost (sample)

2.1×

Repeat purchase rate

9 mo

Programme duration

Organisation and outcomes are illustrative; figures are sample data for teaching and templating purposes.

02 Background

Leafy Glow launched three years ago with a range of plant-based skincare products sold through its own website and marketplaces. Early growth came almost entirely from paid social media advertising.

By the third year, competition had increased and the cost of acquiring each new customer had nearly doubled, while many customers bought only once.

03 The Challenge

The founders realised that the brand was renting attention rather than building loyalty. Without a change, marketing spend would keep rising faster than revenue.

- Customer acquisition cost rising every quarter
- Low repeat purchase rate
- Little customer feedback beyond reviews
- Heavy dependence on one advertising channel

We were paying again and again to reach people who already knew us.

— Co-founder, Leafy Glow (fictional)

04 Objectives

1. Reduce dependence on paid advertising.
2. Increase repeat purchases.
3. Turn satisfied customers into advocates.

05 Approach

The team designed a nine-month programme in three phases, testing small ideas first and scaling what worked.

Phase 1: Listen

Interviews with 40 customers and analysis of reviews revealed that customers valued ingredient transparency and skincare routines more than discounts.

- Customer interviews
- Review analysis
- Persona refresh

Phase 2: Build the community

The brand launched a moderated online community where customers shared routines and asked questions to an in-house skin expert.

- Weekly live Q&A
- Routine challenges
- Member-only early access

Phase 3: Reward advocacy

A referral programme rewarded members with products rather than discounts, and micro-creators from the community were invited to co-create content.

- Referral rewards
- Creator partnerships
- User-generated content library

Implementation Timeline

Period	Milestone	Notes
Month 1-2	Customer research	Interviews and survey
Month 3	Community launch	Soft launch to repeat buyers
Month 4-6	Content and live sessions	Weekly cadence
Month 7-9	Referral programme	Scaled after pilot

Period	Milestone	Notes

06 Results

After nine months the brand relied less on advertising and its customers were buying more often.

Metric	Before	After
Customer acquisition cost (₹)	820	510
Repeat purchase rate	18%	38%
Share of sales from referrals	3%	17%
Average rating	4.1	4.4

Exhibit 1: Key metrics before and after (sample data)

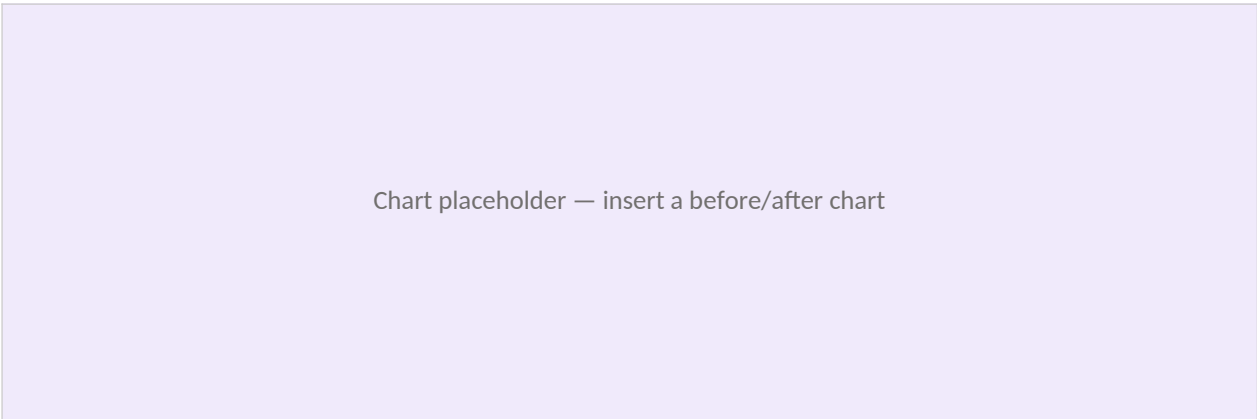


Exhibit 2: Trend over the implementation period (sample data)

07 Lessons Learned

Listen before you launch. Customer research changed the programme’s focus from discounts to education.

Start small. A soft launch with loyal customers created an engaged core.

Reward with value, not discounts. Product rewards protected margins and brand perception.

08 Analysis

What worked	What was difficult
• Clear customer insight • Consistent weekly content	• Moderating the community took time • Measuring influence on sales

Opportunities

- Expanding to regional languages
- Partnerships with dermatologists

Risks to sustain

- Community fatigue
- Dependence on key moderators

09 Discussion Questions

Use these questions for classroom discussion or self-study.

4. Why did paid advertising become less effective for the brand?
5. What role did customer research play in shaping the programme?
6. How would you measure the return on investment of a community?
7. What risks should the brand monitor as the community grows?

10 Conclusion

Leafy Glow showed that a small brand can reduce its dependence on advertising by investing in its customers. The lessons apply to any business where trust and education drive purchase decisions.