

MGT 6460 01-03 Marketing Communications: Advertising (2025F), Glossier Case, by Sparsh Singhal

Answer 1: Glossier's peer-to-peer (P2P) sales representative program has potential due to the influence peers have on buying decisions, with 60% of women influenced by peer recommendations and 25% of new customers acquired this way; however, since P2P referrals already occur naturally, paying reps risks damaging trust as customers might see friends' promotions as insincere, potentially generating negative PR. Moreover, only a quarter of reps actively create social content, most generate fewer than 25 orders, and the program requires extensive resources for recruitment, training, and compensation. This approach would initially stimulate affective responses (liking) but may backfire when customers realize reps are paid, changing the message's source from genuine peer to disguised brand, thus harming credibility.

Influencer marketing builds positive relationships by partnering with trusted influencers who lend credibility and validation to the brand (as they are popular and thought to have expertise), expanding share of voice and producing earned media. While expensive- especially with macro influencers and with some risk of partnering with controversial figures, influencer marketing effectively drives behavioural responses by encouraging purchases, supported by awareness (for new customers) and liking. Influencers keep consumers' trust even when customers know that they are being paid because they carefully choose brands that match their values to protect their reputation. Consumers believe influencers genuinely support the brands they promote (unless it does not align with the influencer at all and is completely unrelated – Classic Example: Kendall Jenner & Pepsi) since bad partnerships can harm influencers' own image.

Paid media, consisting of channels such as paid search, display ads, and traditional media, generates substantial awareness (cognitive) and brings a large influx of customers quickly as customers are essentially forced to view the advertisements; however, in the case of Glossier, it is costly (with a \$52.50 customer acquisition cost), has low margins (\$57 average order value), and fails to engage customers emotionally, risking dilution of brand identity as the messaging reaches beyond the core audience (highly prominent in traditional form of paid media but is less prominent in digital). It relies heavily on message (to check out the brand/product) and strategy (channels/vehicles used) but does not foster deeper liking or engagement as the communication may seem one-way, making long-term sustainability challenging.

Finally, the customer loyalty program focuses on the affective stage by offering rewards and benefits to loyal customers, fostering liking for Glossier, thus supporting retention and encouraging repeat purchases through personalized relationship-building focused on the receiver (loyal customer).

Answer 2: Glossier should invest in **influencer marketing** because it offers multiple advantages across the marketing funnel. People trust recommendations from influencers on vehicles like YouTube and Instagram since they view them as experts and pillars of their communities. Influencer marketing is an emerging trend widely adopted by brands, providing large reach with influencers' substantial followings. Compared to traditional paid media, influencer marketing can be more cost-effective, especially in contrast to paid ads where traditional ads such as print and outdoor ads have high costs (average CPM of \$40–\$50), while also generating greater engagement since influencers humanize the message, making the endorsement feel like a personal recommendation rather than a faceless brand advertisement. Influencers also allow specific targeting by choosing those whose audiences align with Glossier's target market, offering better precision than many paid media options, especially traditional ones, where targeting can be unreliable. (e.g. You cannot control who sees a newspaper or billboard). This approach helps both fill the marketing funnel by expanding the existing customer segment by bringing awareness to new customers and flow customers through the funnel by increasing liking and behavioral response (purchase) - hitting on all parts of the hierarchy of effects simultaneously. Additionally, influencer marketing generates more earned media than paid media as fans are more likely to share endorsements from their favourite influencers on social media (rather than a billboard), because it also elevates their own social image. Overall, influencer marketing's ability to build trust, engagement, precise targeting, and earned media makes it the strongest paid media choice for Glossier.

Answer 3: Showrooms provide Glossier with a valuable distribution strategy that positively impacts the relationship with consumers in multiple ways. They act as test environments to see if physical spaces work, offering a unique brand experience that encourages customers to visit, try products, and share their experiences online, generating earned media. People tend to trust products more when they can physically see and touch them, which builds liking and trust. Showrooms function as a form of owned media controlled by Glossier, allowing the brand to shape the customer experience fully, unlike retail through third parties. The stores create value for customers in the form of entertainment and community spaces, similar to Apple Stores, where customers often visit repeatedly for both social and shopping reasons. Showrooms help bring new customers into the awareness stage of the funnel and nurture existing customers through liking (earned media), though their earned media effect is somewhat less than pop-up stores. However, showrooms are expensive to maintain, less scalable than digital in terms of costs, and can generate negative earned media if customers' expectations aren't met. Additionally, since Glossier's core target is millennials who I believe are more reachable via digital channels, showrooms rank as a second priority after pop-up stores but remain valuable for increasing share of voice, driving purchases, and deepening the customer-brand relationship through direct, owned experiences.

Glossier's pop-up stores compared to permanent showrooms, are less expensive due to their temporary nature, allowing Glossier to create urgency among consumers. This temporary aspect encourages customers to make purchases digitally

after visiting, bridging offline and online experiences. Pop-ups generate more earned media than showrooms because their limited-time availability makes them more shareworthy, prompting visitors to showcase their experience to friends and on social media. Visitors to pop-ups are often already aware of the brand, so the pop-up experience deepens liking, builds emotional connections, and flows customers through the funnel stages- mainly affecting liking and behavioral response (purchase). Pop-ups also enable more effective segmentation as I believe millennials are willing to go out of their way for these exclusive experiences. Pop-ups serve as owned media because the brand controls the experience, while simultaneously generating earned media through user-generated content shared online. Though pop-ups require significant planning to meet high consumer expectations, their alignment with Glossier's goals, segmentation strategy, and financial feasibility makes them an essential platform to expand. This strategy helps Glossier gain share of voice in a cost-effective way and nurtures a deeper, more engaged customer relationship than other physical retail options. Therefore, I believe Glossier should definitely do more popups as their 1st priority.

Retail distribution through stores like Sephora offers Glossier the prospect of revenue growth and access to a vast customer base, as Sephora alone has around 400 retail locations alongside a strong e-commerce platform. It can simplify the sales process by making the products more physically accessible to consumers. However, retail presence risks diluting Glossier's unique brand image and exclusivity, as the brand would lose control over the customer experience and consequently the ability to create owned media. Without controlling the in-store experience, Glossier cannot effectively guide customers through the affective stage of the marketing funnel. While retail can generate earned media, this can be mixed or negative depending on the experience, further risking brand perception. By commoditizing the products and distributing them widely, Glossier might alienate its millennial core, as retailers like Sephora cater to many segments simultaneously, reducing effective targeting and engagement. Additionally, entering mass retail could force Glossier to compete on price, harming their ability to command premium pricing and transforming the brand into just another mass-market product. For these reasons, retail should be the last priority after Glossier has firmly established itself through owned and earned media channels, similar to Apple's strategy of focusing on building a cult-like brand before expanding widely. Retail would be best considered once Glossier has cemented its base and aims to increase market share.

Answer 4: Currently, Glossier utilizes its brand community as the sole driver of product development, with the community fueling innovation and shaping the brand's direction. Glossier actively involves its community in the creative process by gathering feedback from platforms such as their social media profiles and the "Into The Gloss" website, then developing products based on this input. This community-inspired research and development approach has enabled Glossier to launch products every six weeks, with initial products achieving instant success due to their alignment with customer needs and desires. As Glossier and its community grow larger, the brand will likely shift toward a more editorial approach to product development. With a larger customer base, situations will arise where the majority of customers want one change while a small portion (which would be significant considering size of the brand then) opposes it, making it challenging to satisfy everyone. Glossier must balance customer input with independent brand vision to avoid appearing as a brand that can't think for itself or lacks creative direction. As the community expands, processing every specific piece of feedback will become impractical due to volume and diversity of opinions. To manage this transition, Glossier will conduct test marketing on a smaller scale to evaluate the effectiveness of changes before rolling them out nationwide, reducing risk and ensuring products meet expectations. Given Glossier's financial resources and the critical importance of product quality to consumers, the brand may establish a dedicated research lab to drive innovation and maintain high standards. Additionally, as Glossier grows, customer expectations and standards will continue to rise, requiring the brand to consistently deliver excellence while balancing community input with strategic editorial control to sustain its identity and competitive edge.

Answer 5: The "best friends" relational template is not entirely the most effective approach for Glossier, because friendships are fragile- they take years to build but can be destroyed by a single mistake. If Glossier cultivates a friendship brand that emphasizes caring deeply about customers, a single scandal (e.g. an executive accidentally revealing that the brand prioritizes profit over customer care) could devastate the entire relationship and lead to substantial losses. In contrast, if Glossier maintained a purely product-focused mass brand identity like Maybelline, where customers care about the product but not the brand itself, such controversies would have far less impact on loyalty and sales. What excites me about this relationship template is the potential for repeat purchases and customer loyalty; people are willing to engage deeply and remain loyal to brands they feel connected to. This emotional connection likely translates to significantly higher customer lifetime value (CLV) for Glossier compared to competitors. However, what worries me about this approach is that social media operates as a two-way conversation between brand and customer. If Glossier sends messages that misalign with its established brand persona, customers who now perceive the brand as a friend will get upset. In a friendship dynamic, the receiver of messages isn't simply a customer but a friend, meaning message quality and strategy are critical. Bringing in another friend, such as an influencer, can enhance the relationship positively, but employing overly formal communication methods like traditional paid media that don't allow customers to respond can deeply upset them. Statistics show that 48.3% of 25-34 year-olds use social media primarily to connect with friends and family, indicating that if Glossier successfully positions itself as a friend within this demographic, engagement and interaction rates would be high. This requires Glossier to maintain consistent, authentic, and two-way communication that honors the friendship dynamic while carefully managing all brand touchpoints to prevent contradictions that could damage trust irreparably.

AI Usage

I used Perplexity AI to improve the quality of my writing (refining, not generating content) and shorten my work. All ideas, analysis, and arguments are my own. **Side note:** I do regret using this AI because of how many times it hallucinated content out of thin air which I had to delete constantly, and it would've been better to just write everything entirely by myself, but I did wanted to try it out.