



Website Usability Evaluation and Design

Rhode Skin Website

Prepared for

Website Design and Development Team

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Executive Summary

The Problem

The Rhode Skin website serves as the brand's primary digital platform for presenting skincare products and communicating its philosophy of minimal skincare routines. The site reflects the brand identity through a clean visual design, neutral color palette, and product-focused imagery. While the website effectively communicates the brand aesthetic, several usability challenges hinder users' ability to navigate the site and locate product information.

Initial observations suggest that the website's navigation structure and product organization could be improved to enable faster product discovery. Some users may require additional time to locate ingredient information, understand how products fit into a skincare routine, or identify the most appropriate product for their needs. These issues are particularly relevant for new users who may not be familiar with the brand's product line.

Methods Used for Evaluation

The Rhode website was evaluated using multiple user experience research methods to understand user behavior and identify usability issues.

Methods used in this project include:

- Personas and Scenarios
- Interviews
- Surveys
- Card Sorting
- Diary Study
- Heuristic Evaluation
- Usability Testing

Using several research methods enabled the identification of usability issues from multiple perspectives and helped validate findings across studies.

Results of the Analysis

The research findings reveal that the Rhode website provides a visually appealing user experience but could benefit from clearer navigation and improved product discovery.

Across the studies, several usability issues were identified:

- Limited navigation categories
- Minimal filtering options
- Difficulty understanding product routines
- Additional scrolling is required to locate product information
- Mobile navigation requires extra steps

Users generally appreciated the website's clean design but indicated that clearer product organization and navigation could improve usability.

Solutions

Based on the research methods, several improvements are recommended.

These include:

- Expanding navigation categories based on skincare routines and product types
- Introducing filtering options to support faster product discovery
- Improving product education to explain ingredients and product usage
- Simplifying mobile navigation to reduce browsing friction

Implementing these improvements would enhance the usability of the Rhode website while maintaining the brand's minimalist aesthetic.

Website Overview

Purpose of the Website

The Rhode Skin website primarily serves as an e-commerce platform to showcase and sell skincare products while communicating the brand's philosophy of simple, effective skincare routines.

The website serves several purposes:

- Presenting Rhode's skincare product line

- Communicating the brand identity
- Educating consumers about ingredients and product usage
- Facilitating online purchases

The website design emphasizes simplicity and visual clarity, aligning with Rhode's brand identity.

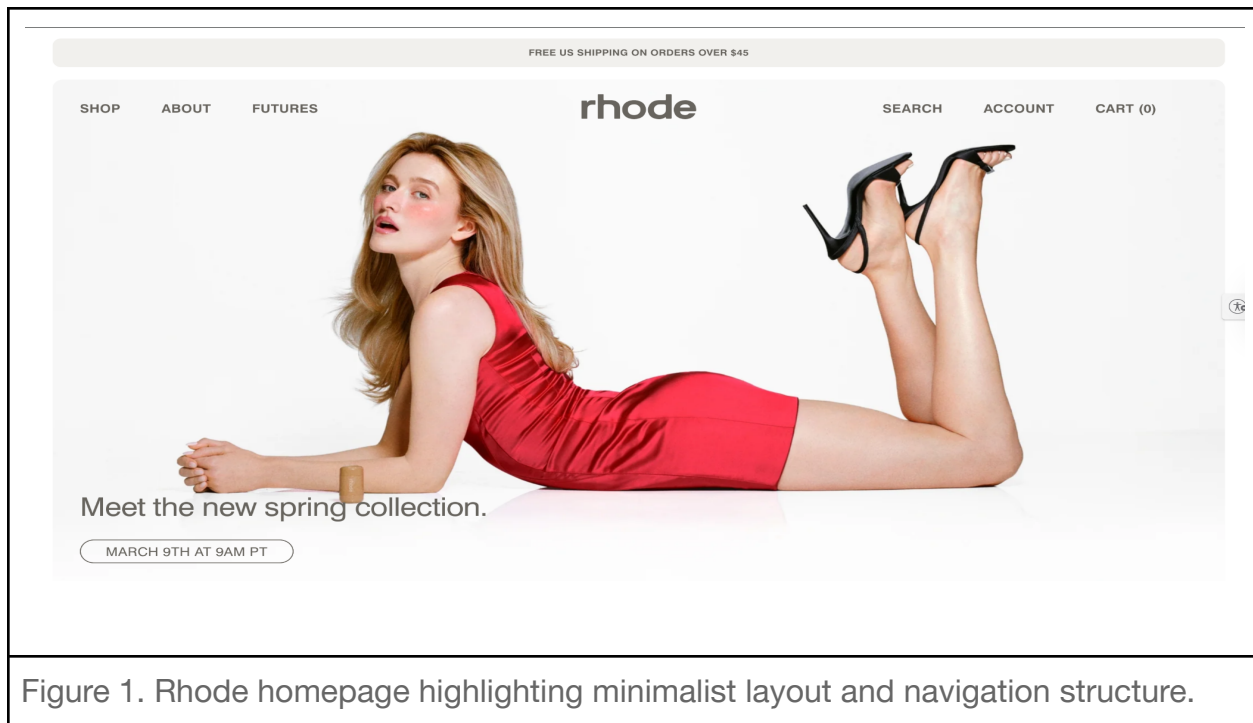


Figure 1. Rhode homepage highlighting minimalist layout and navigation structure.

Target Audience

The Rhode website serves multiple user groups.

Social Media Influenced Consumers

Many users discover Rhode products through social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. These users are often interested in simple skincare routines and rely on influencer recommendations when discovering new products.

Skincare Enthusiasts

This group tends to research skincare ingredients and product effectiveness before making purchases. These users value transparency and prefer brands that clearly explain product benefits.

Busy Professionals

Some users prefer efficient shopping experiences and are interested in quick product discovery and easy purchasing processes.

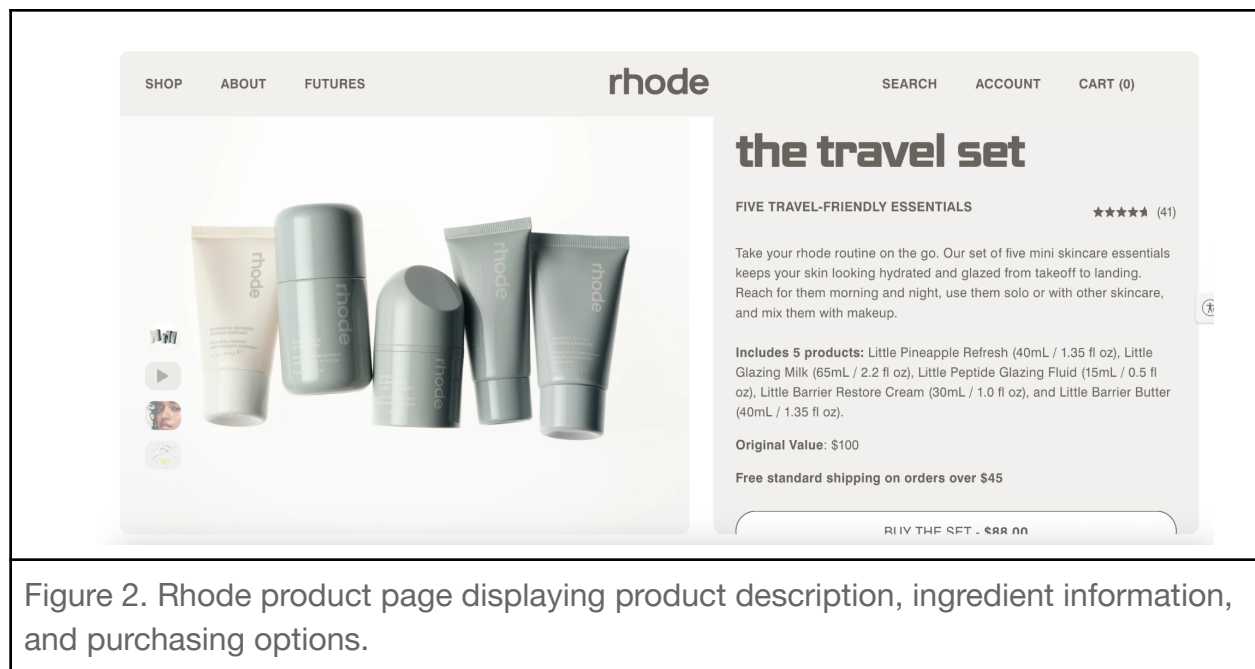


Figure 2. Rhode product page displaying product description, ingredient information, and purchasing options.

Identified Website Issues

The initial evaluation of the website reveals several usability concerns.

These include:

- Limited navigation structure
- Minimal filtering options
- Unclear product grouping
- Additional scrolling required to locate product details

These issues were explored further through the research methods described in the following chapters.

Competitor Analysis

To better understand how Rhode compares to similar skincare websites, a competitor analysis was conducted. Three competitor brands were evaluated:

- Glossier
- Summer Fridays
- Drunk Elephant

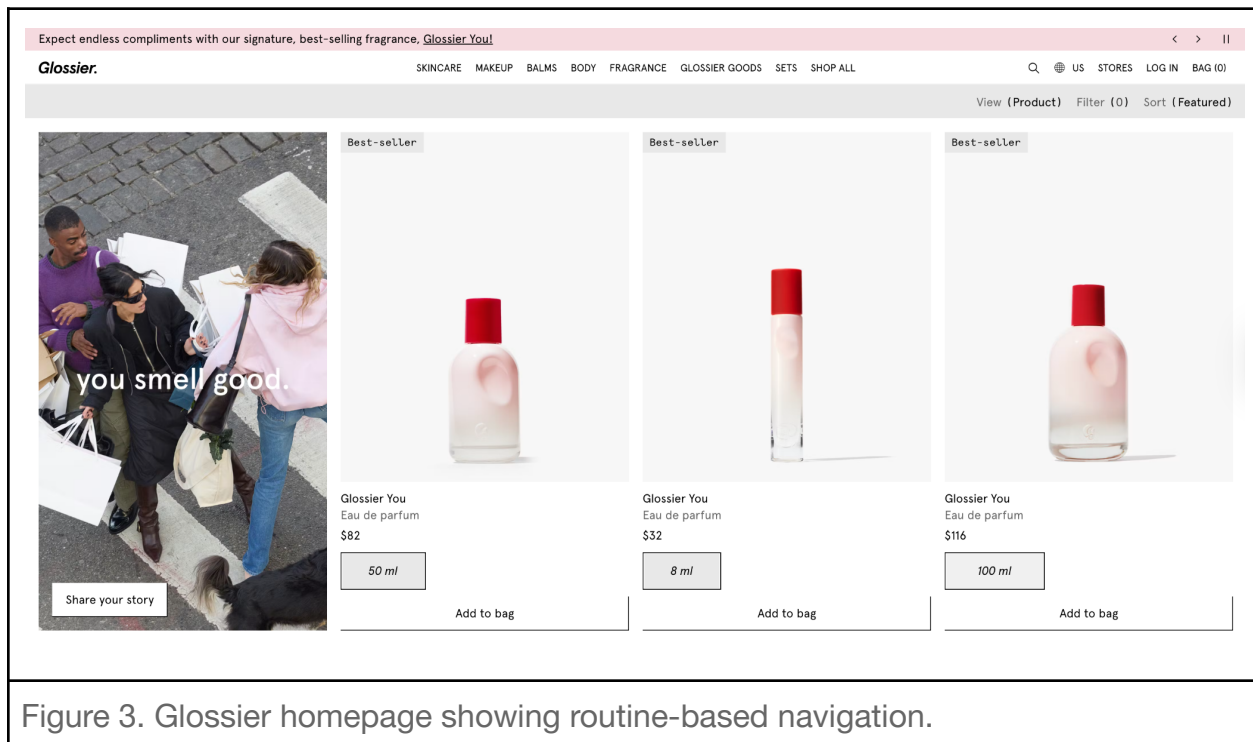


Figure 3. Glossier homepage showing routine-based navigation.

Glossier organizes its products by skincare routine and categories such as cleansers, moisturizers, and treatments. This structure allows users to quickly identify products that match their skincare needs

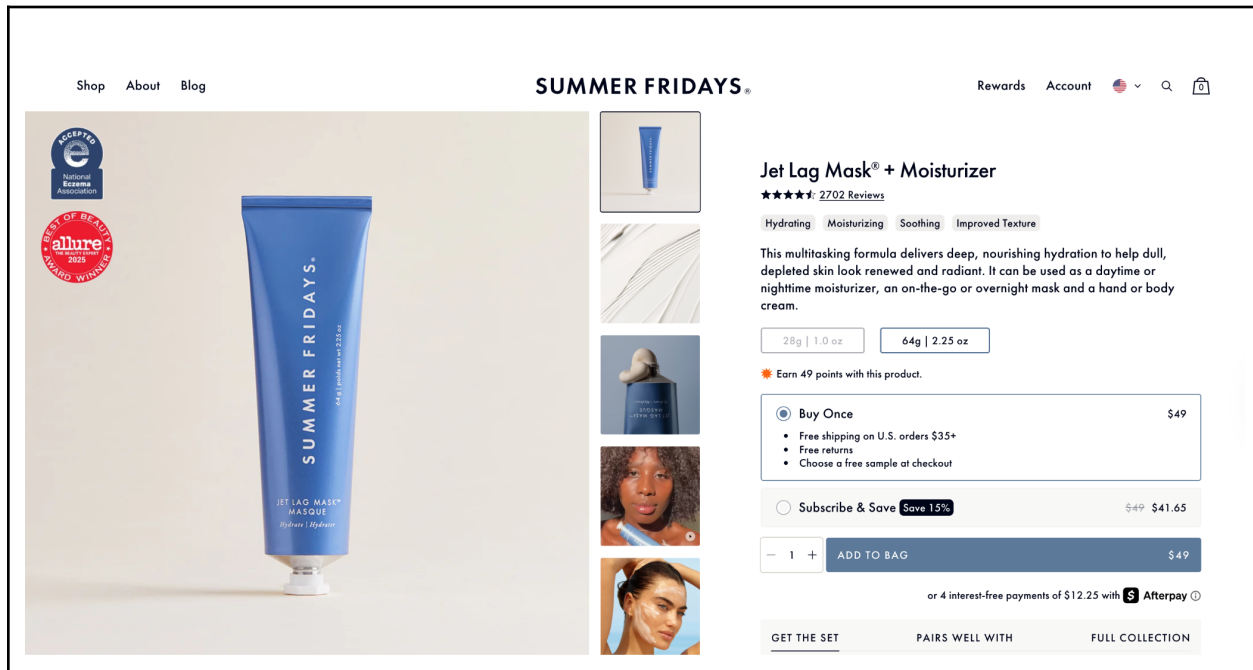


Figure 4. Summer Fridays product page emphasizes ingredient transparency.

Summer Fridays provide detailed product descriptions and ingredient explanations, helping users better understand how products work.

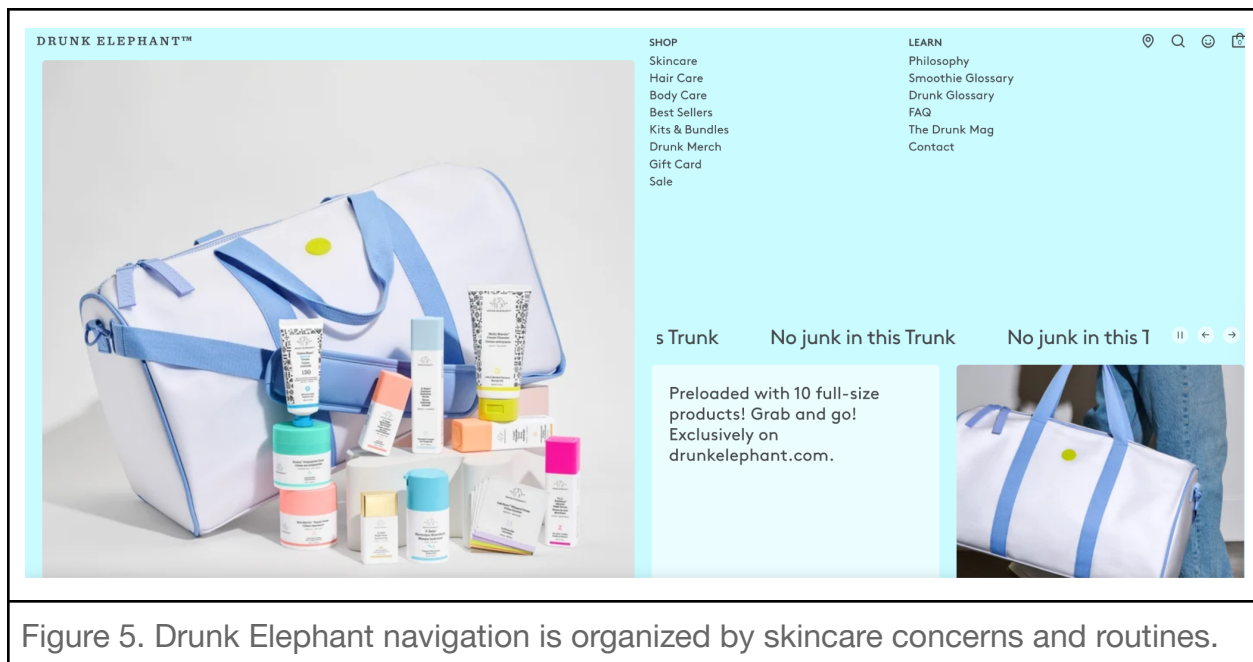


Figure 5. Drunk Elephant navigation is organized by skincare concerns and routines.

Competitive Insights

The competitor analysis revealed several design strategies that improve usability. These include:

- Routine-based navigation
- Filtering options for product discovery
- Clear ingredient explanations
- Structured product education

These insights informed the recommendation presented later in the report.

Personas and Scenarios

Personas were developed to represent key audience segments for the Rhode website.

These personas illustrate the goals, motivations, and browsing behaviors of potential users.

The personas include:

- Olivia Martinez - College Student
- Emma Collins - Minimalist Skincare Enthusiast
- Lauren Thompson - Efficiency-Driven Professional

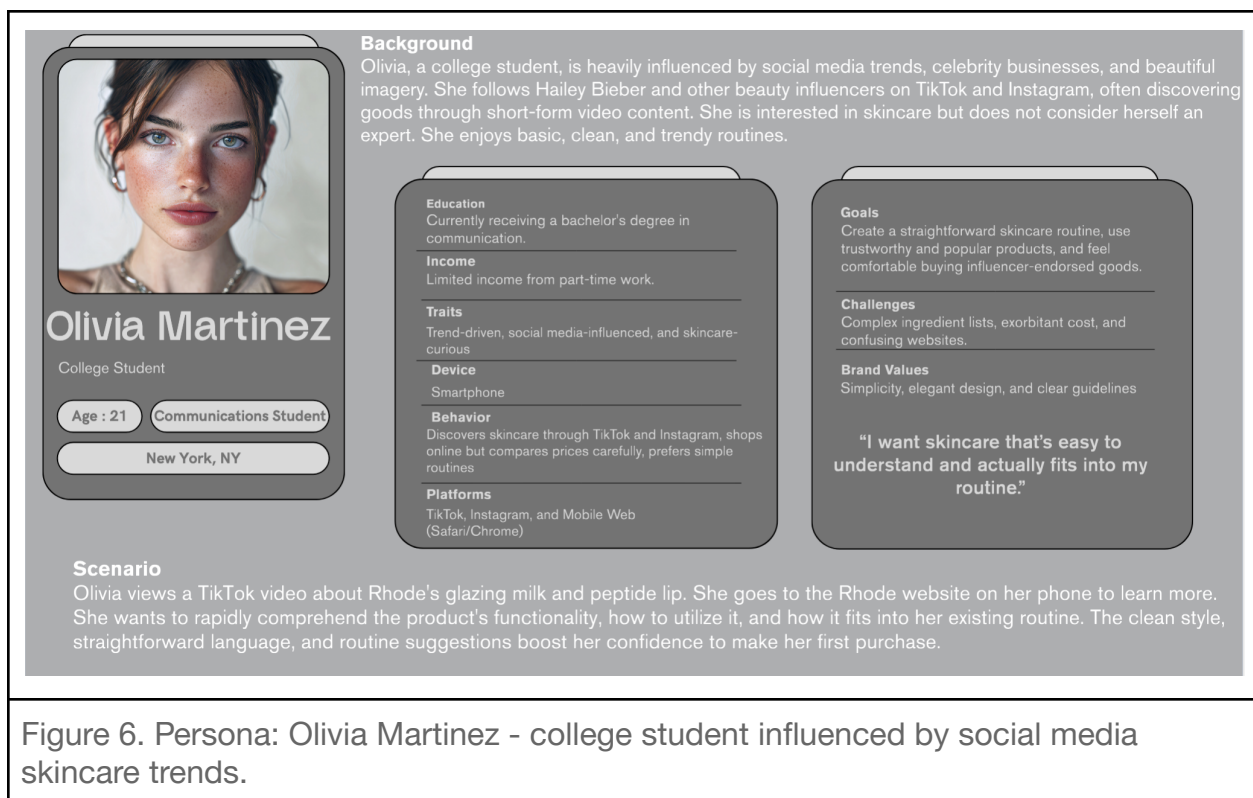




Figure 7. Persona: Emma Collins - Skincare enthusiast focused on ingredient transparency.

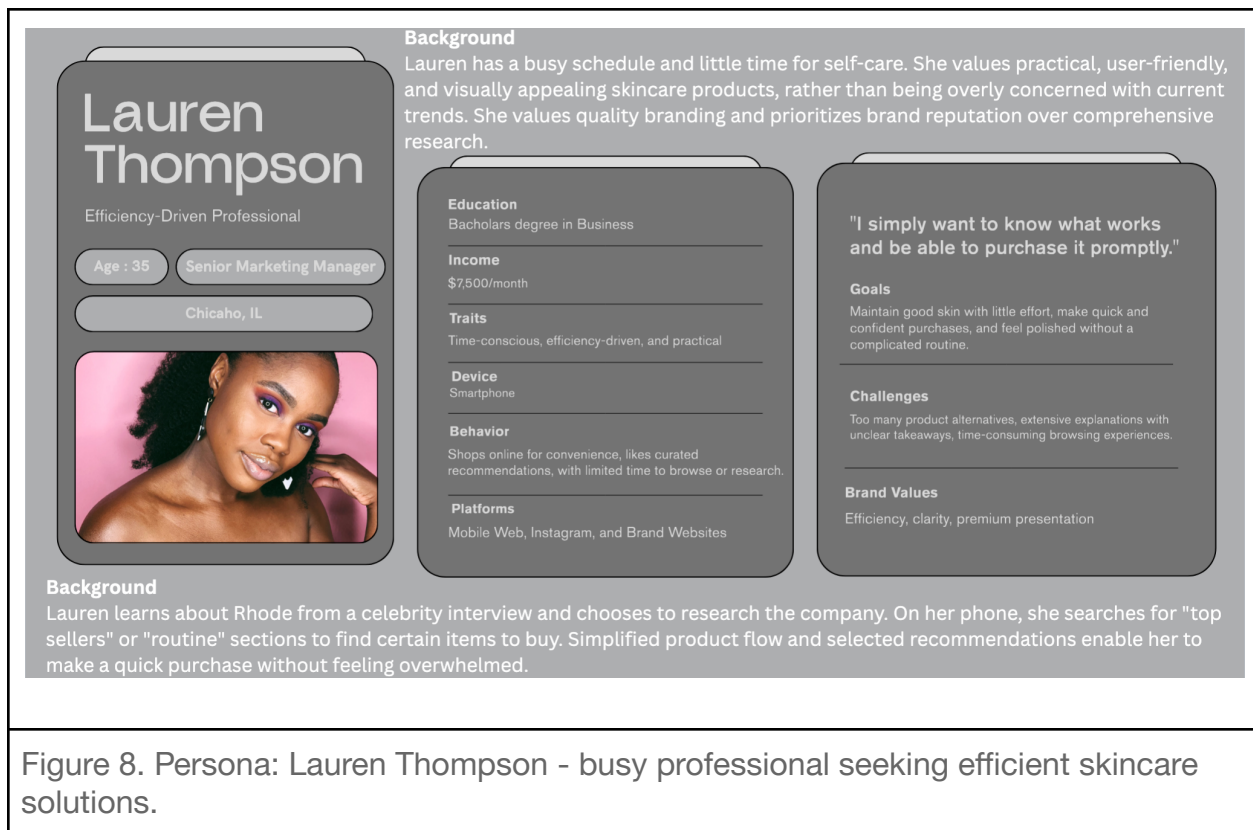


Figure 8. Persona: Lauren Thompson - busy professional seeking efficient skincare solutions.

Interview Study

The interview study was conducted to understand how users discover skincare products and interact with skincare websites.

Participants were asked questions about:

- Skincare habits
- Product research behaviors
- Preferences when navigating skincare websites

Body Participants will complete an entry after each visit to the Rhode Skin website.	
1. What prompted this visit to the website? a. (If intentional,) What were you hoping to accomplish? b. What made you decide to browse?	
2. Were you searching for something specific? a. (If yes,) Were you able to find it easily? b. (If no,) What did you explore instead?	5. Did the website increase your interest in purchasing? a. (If yes,) What influenced that decision? b. (If no,) What created hesitation?
3. Were you able to complete your goal? a. (If yes,) What helped make that possible? b. (If no,) What prevented you from completing it?	6. Did the website feel trustworthy and credible? a. (If yes,) What elements built trust? b. (If no,) What made you unsure?
4. How did navigating the website feel overall? a. (If positive,) What felt smooth or easy? b. (If negative,) What felt confusing or frustrating?	7. Compared to other beauty websites, how did this visit feel? a. What did Rhode do better? b. What did other sites do better?
At the end of each day: • Did today's website visits influence any purchasing decisions? a. (If yes,) How? b. (If no,) Why not? • Overall impression of today's interactions?	

Figure 9. Interview study question structure.

Interview Findings

The interview responses revealed several patterns.

Participants indicated that:

- Social media is a major source of skincare discovery
- Ingredient transparency increase trust
- Simple skincare routines are preferred

Survey Study

A survey containing 20 questions was developed to gather broader feedback regarding skincare behaviors and website usability.

The survey included three categories of questions:

- Demographic information
- Skincare habits
- Website usability preferences

1. What is your age range?

Under 18 / 18–24 / 25–30 / 31–40 / 40+

Age helps identify the main user group and ensures that the visual style and tone match the audience. Different age groups engage with digital interfaces in various ways.

2. What is your gender identity?

Female / Male / Non-binary / Prefer not to say

Understanding gender distribution helps create designs that are inclusive and ensure better representation in branding and imagery.

3. Where are you located?

United States / International

Location affects shipping expectations, language requirements, and accessibility features in the site design.

4. How often do you purchase skincare products online?

Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Often / Very often

This shows how familiar users are with e-commerce. It helps decide if onboarding or educational content is needed.

5. What device do you primarily use to browse beauty websites?

Phone / Tablet / Laptop / Desktop

Device preference directly affects responsive design priorities and mobile optimization.

6. How do you usually discover skincare brands?

Instagram / TikTok / Influencers / Ads / Friends / Retail stores

This shows entry points into the brand ecosystem and guides the connection between marketing channels and website design.

7. What is your main goal when visiting a skincare website?

Learning about products / Purchasing / Reading reviews / Finding routines

Identifying user goals helps shape navigation and prioritize content on the homepage.

8. How important is brand aesthetic when choosing skincare?

Not important / Somewhat important / Very important

Aesthetic preferences shape the path for visual design and branding focus.

9. Do you follow beauty influencers?

Yes / No

This shows how social proof and influencer integration play a role on the site.

10. How much research do you do before buying skincare?

None / A little / Moderate / Extensive

This tells us how much educational content and ingredient information should be available.

11. What factors influence your purchases most?

Price / Ingredients / Reviews / Brand reputation / Packaging

This decides which information should be highlighted on product pages.

12. Do you prefer minimalist or information-heavy websites?

Minimalist / Balanced / Detailed

This helps determine layout density and the presentation of content.

13. How important is ingredient transparency to you?
Not important / Somewhat important / Very important
This impacts where ingredient lists and explanations are placed and how visible they are.

14. How likely are you to purchase from a brand you've seen on social media?
Unlikely / Neutral / Likely / Very likely
This connects marketing exposure to buying behavior and guides the creation of features that build trust.

15. Do you prefer guided skincare routines or browsing independently?
Guided routines / Browsing freely
This decides if personalization features or quizzes should be prioritized.

Figure 10. Survey questionnaire used in the study.

Conclusion

This survey collects demographic and behavioral data to inform design choices that focus on the audience. The results will direct future changes to navigation, content layout, personalization, and visual design. Knowing what users want ensures that the Rhode Skin website is built around actual needs rather than assumptions.

Figure 11. Survey results highlighting user preferences for simple navigation.

Survey Findings

Survey responses suggest that:

- Most users browse skincare websites on mobile devices
- Simple navigation improves browsing efficiency
- Ingredient explanations increase purchasing confidence

Card Sorting Study

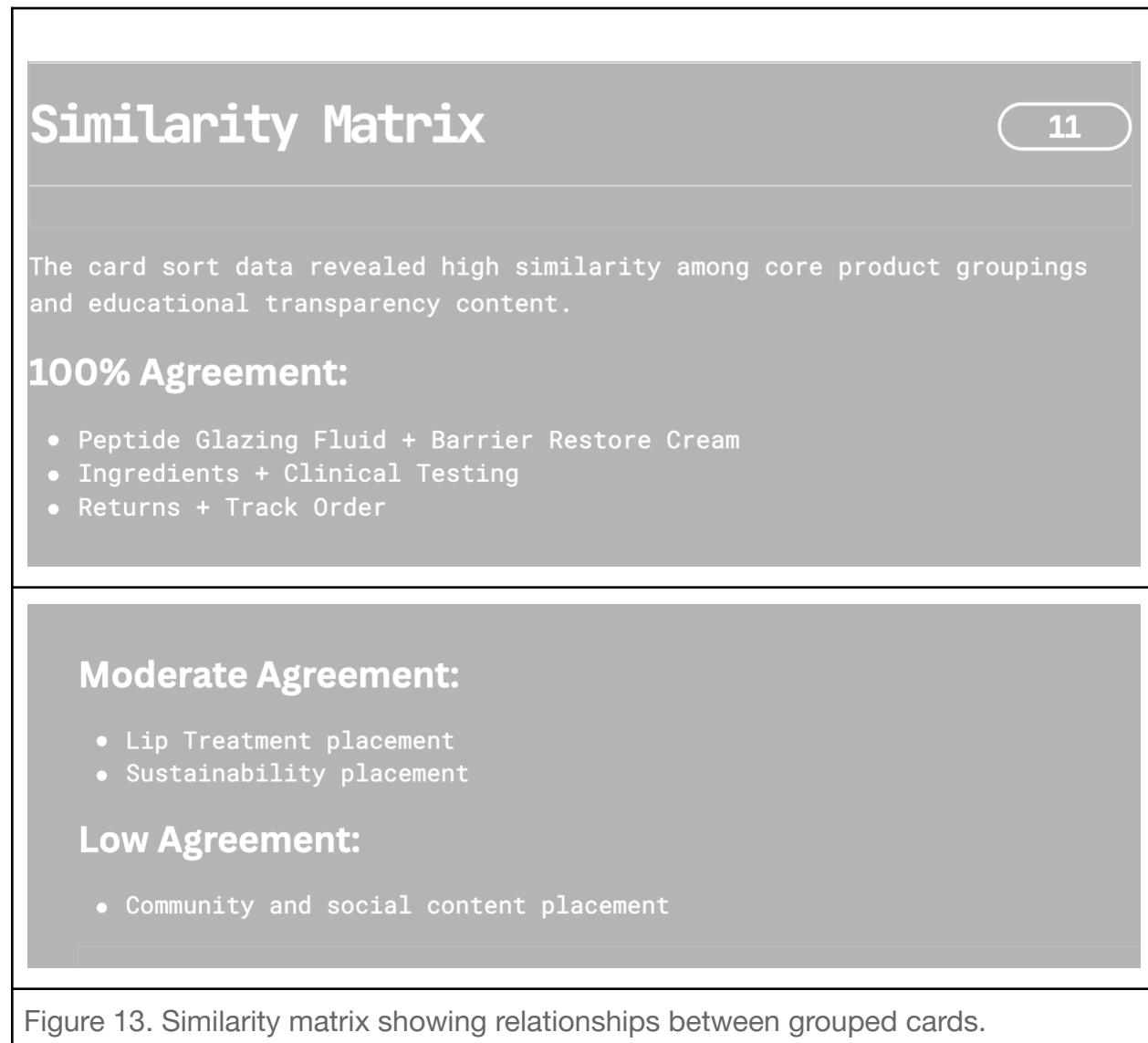
A hybrid card sorting was conducted to understand how users mentally organize skincare products and website information.

Participants sorted 30-40 cards representing website content into categories that made sense to them.

Three participants completed the card sorting activity.

1. One participant created 6 categories, one created 5 categories, and one created 8 categories.
2. All participants grouped the following together:
 - a. Core Skincare Products
 - i. Peptide Glazing Fluid
 - ii. Barrier Restore Cream
 - iii. Glazing Milk
 - b. Educational Transparency Content
 - i. Ingredients
 - ii. How to Use
 - iii. Clinical Testing
3. Participants disagreed on placement of:
 - a. Peptide Lip Treatment (Skincare vs Makeup)
 - b. Sustainability (Education vs About)
 - c. Community content
 - d. No participants added additional topics, but one suggested renaming "Learn" to "Skin Education."

Figure 12. Card sorting categories created by participants.



Card Sorting Findings

Participants commonly grouped products according to:

- Skincare routines
- Product types
- Skincare concerns

These findings suggest that the Rhode website navigation could be improved by aligning categories with user expectations.

Diary Study

The diary study examined how users interact with skincare websites over time.

Participants recorded their experiences researching skincare products and visiting brand websites.

Diary Tasks / Questions

Participants will answer the following after each visit:

1. What was the purpose of the visit? (Open-ended)
2. Was the goal accomplished?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Partially
3. Which device was used?
 - a. Mobile
 - b. Tablet
 - c. Desktop
4. How easy was navigation on a scale 1 to 5 scale? (1 being easy, 5 being very difficult)
5. Did any images or information stand out?
6. How long did the visit last?
7. Any frustrations or suggestions?

Figure 14. Diary study prompts used for participant entries.

Diary Study Findings

Diary entries revealed that many users discover skincare products through social media before visiting brand websites to learn more about ingredients and product benefits.

Heuristic Evaluation

A heuristic evaluation was conducted using Nielsen's usability principles.

Most usability issues identified were minor, although filtering functionality was identified as a more significant concern.

OVERALL SEVERITY SUMMARY

The Rhode website is consistent in its appearance and branding. Most usability problems are minor, but the biggest issue is the lack of filtering options. While the site looks good and is easy to navigate, improving efficiency tools and making user support more visible could improve usability and boost conversions.

Figure 15. Heuristic evaluation results organized by usability principle.

Usability Testing Report

Usability testing was conducted with three participants.

Participants were asked to complete five tasks on the Rhode Website.

Tasks included:

1. Locating a product
2. Identifying ingredient information
3. Learning how to use a product
4. Adding a product to the cart
5. Reviewing checkout steps

Participants were asked to begin each task from the homepage.

Task 1

Find and explore the Peptide Lip Treatment.

Task 2

Compare two products and determine which is best for dry skin.

Task 3

Add a product to cart and begin checkout.

Task 4

Locate Rhode's return policy.

Task 5

Find information about Rhode's brand philosophy and ingredients.

Figure 16. Usability testing task list.

Participant	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5
P1	0:32	1:48	0:55	1:21	0:44
P2	0:41	2:10	1:03	1:45	0:52
P3	0:29	1:36	0:48	1:12	0:39

Figure 17. Usability testing task completion results.

Usability Findings

Most participants were able to complete tasks successfully. However, some users required additional navigation steps to locate specific product information.

Final Recommendations

Based on the combined findings of the research methods, several improvements are recommended.

Improve Navigation Structure

Introduce clearer navigation categories organized by skincare routines and product types.

Improve Filtering Options

Provide filtering tools that allow users to quickly identify products that match their needs.

Improve Product Education

Simplify mobile navigation and reduce scrolling requirements.

Appendix

Interview questions

Survey questions

Card sorting raw data

Similarity matrix

Diary study prompts