

# Assessing the Skincare Needs of Asians on Reddit Dermatology Social Media Communities: An Observational Study

Rebecca K. Yamamoto BS BA,<sup>a</sup> Benjamin A. Tran MD,<sup>b,c</sup> Michael A. Cardis MD<sup>b,c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Georgetown University School of Medicine, Washington, DC

<sup>b</sup>Department of Dermatology, MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, Washington, DC

<sup>c</sup>Department of Dermatology, MedStar Washington Hospital Center, Washington, DC

## INTRODUCTION

Social media is becoming an increasingly popular information source for patients seeking medical advice on dermatologic conditions.<sup>1-2</sup> A popular platform is Reddit, an anonymous online forum with communities organized by different interests (subreddits). Medical dermatology subreddits are frequently used to request and disseminate information about dermatologic conditions, including advice tailored to Asian skin. Despite the rapidly growing Asian population, there is little research on dermatology social media trends among Asians. In this observational study, we describe the demographics and top skin concerns of Asians seeking dermatology advice on Reddit.

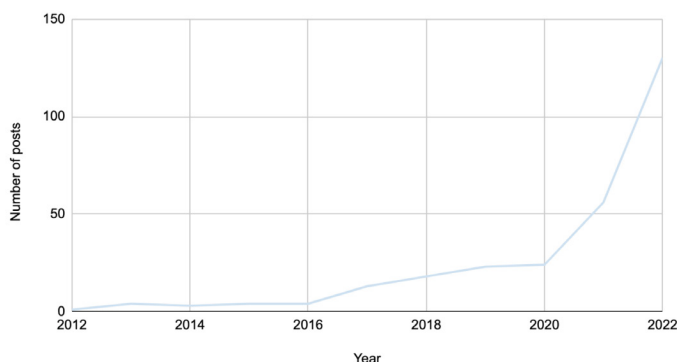
Subreddits were identified by searching for "Dermatology," excluding subreddits non-specific to dermatology or about dermatology training, specific conditions, and specific geographic areas. The top 5 subreddits were determined by the number of subscribers: r/SkincareAddiction (1.5 million), r/SkincareAddiction (1.2 million), r/SkincareAddicts (763k), r/Dermatology (58.8k), r/DermatologyQuestions (22.6k). All posts from August 12, 2011, to November 19, 2022, were screened by searching for "Asian" in each subreddit, excluding posts that were duplicates, advertisements, and where the author did not identify as Asian. The number of posts per subreddit and year, author characteristics (age, gender, Asian subgroup), and post details (skin concern, purpose of post, associated image posted) were collected and analyzed.

Two-hundred eighty (280) posts met the inclusion criteria (Table 1 and Figures 1-8). r/SkincareAddiction had the highest number of posts with 102 (36.43%). An upward trend in the number of posts was observed from 1 in 2012 (0.36%) to 130 in 2022 (46.43%). One hundred sixty-eight (168) posts (60%) identified age and most were between 18 to 25 years with 85 (50.60%). One hundred sixty-one (161) posts (57.5%) identified gender, with 82 (50.93%) males and 79 (49.07%) females. One hundred twenty-one (121) posts (43.21%) identified the Asian subgroup, with 70 (57.85%) South Asian, 24 (19.83%) Southeast Asian, 15 (12.4%) East Asian, and 12 (9.92%) mixed Asian. The top concerns of posts were hyper- and hypopigmentation in 74 (19.79%), acne in 50 (13.37%), and skincare routines in 41 (10.96%). The top purposes of posts (Table 2) were to seek treatment opinions in 184 (52.42%) and diagnosis in 77 (21.94%). 86 posts (30.71%) included a photo.

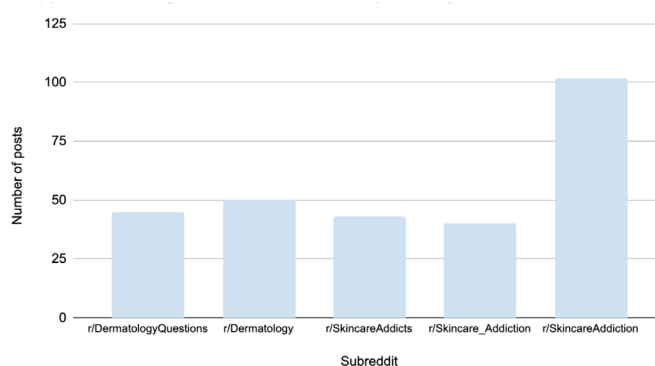
Asians are among a growing trend of individuals utilizing social media to seek dermatologic information. In this study, there was a recent surge over the past year (Figure 1) in Asians using dermatology subreddits to seek information about treatment and diagnosis, most commonly about dyspigmentation, acne, and skincare routines.

Social media provides opportunities to discuss skin concerns in an immediate, cost-free manner compared to the long wait

**FIGURE 1.** Number of posts per year.



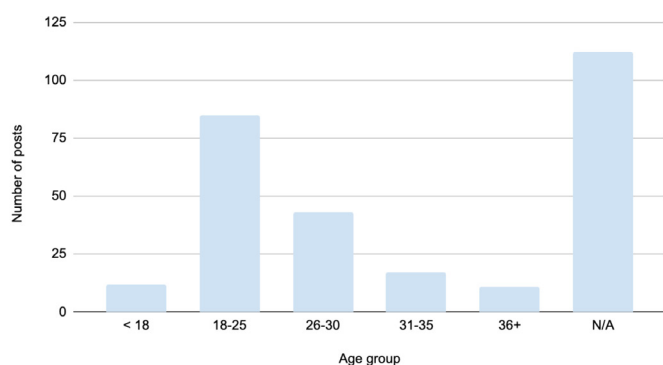
**FIGURE 2.** Number of posts by subreddit.



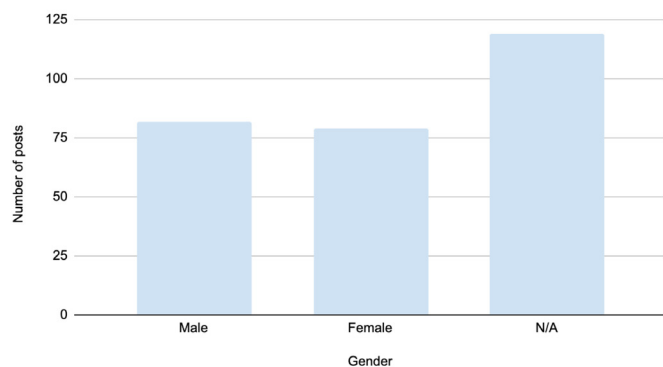
times and costs associated with dermatology visits. However, the spread of misinformation is a concern as few posts receive comments from verified dermatologists.<sup>2</sup> As social media influence grows, dermatologists can utilize these platforms to disseminate accurate medical information and identify prevalent needs in specific populations to enhance clinical practice.

Study limitations include the anonymity of Reddit since self-reported data cannot be verified, our search criteria not capturing all relevant posts, and the lack of a standardized method to categorize qualitative data. Future studies may focus on describing the skin concerns of Asians across other social media networks.

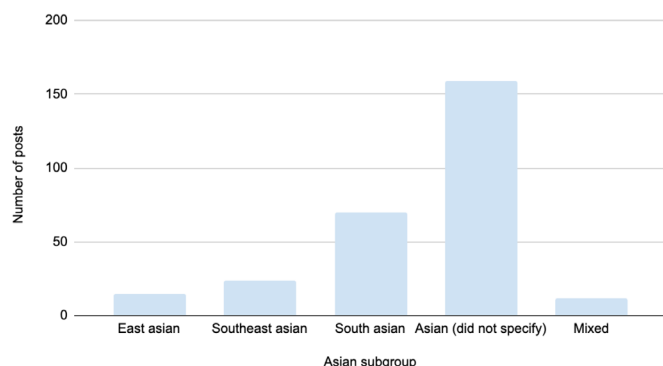
**FIGURE 3.** Number of posts by age group.



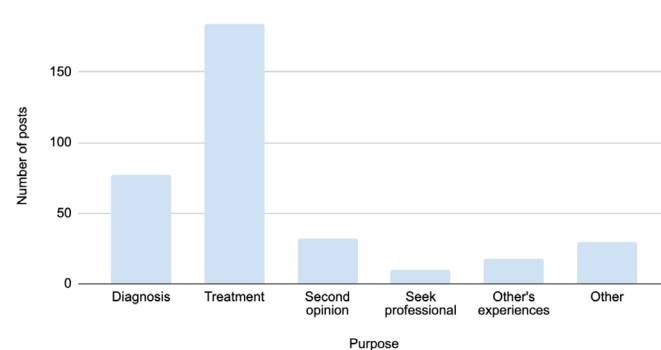
**FIGURE 4.** Number of posts by gender.



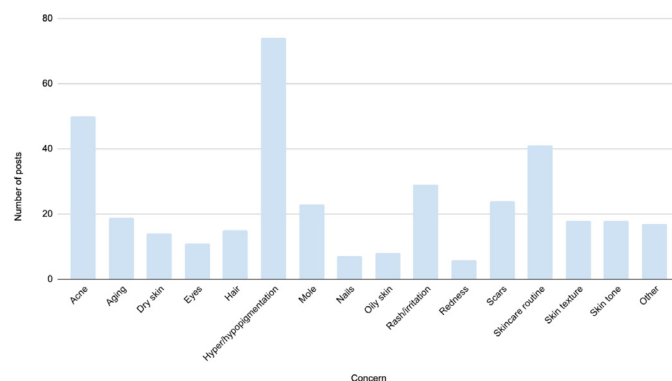
**FIGURE 5.** Number of posts by Asian subgroup.



**FIGURE 6.** Number of posts by purpose.



**FIGURE 7.** Number of posts by concern.



**FIGURE 8.** Number of posts with images.

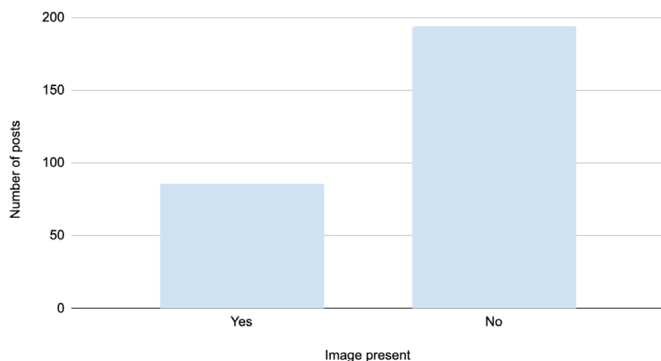


TABLE 1.

Characteristics of Reddit Posts				
# Posts by Subreddit	r/DermatologyQuestions	45	--	
	r/Dermatology	50	--	
	r/SkincareAddicts	43	--	
	r/Skincare_Addiction	40	--	
	r/SkincareAddiction	102	--	
# Posts by Year	2022	130	2016	4
	2021	56	2015	4
	2020	24	2014	3
	2019	23	2013	4
	2018	18	2012	1
	2017	13	--	
# Posts by Age Group	< 18	12	--	
	18-25	85	--	
	26-30	43	--	
	31-35	17	--	
	36+	11	--	
	N/A	112	--	
# Posts by Gender	Male	82	--	
	Female	79	--	
	N/A	119	--	
# Posts by Asian Subgroup	East asian	15	--	
	Southeast asian	24	--	
	South asian	70	--	
	Asian (did not specify)	159	--	
	Mixed	12	--	
	Diagnosis	77	--	
# Posts by Purpose	Treatment	184	--	
	Second opinion	32	--	
	Seek professional	10	--	
	Other's experiences	18	--	
	Other	30	--	
	Diagnosis	77	--	
# Posts by Concern	Acne	50	Rash/irritation	29
	Aging	19	Redness	6
	Dry skin	14	Scars	24
	Eyes	11	Skincare routine	41
	Hair	15	Skin texture	18
	Hyper/hypopigmentation	74	Skin tone	18
	Mole	23	Other	17
	Nails	7	--	
	Oily skin	8	--	
	Yes	86	--	
# Posts with Image	No	194		

TABLE 2.

Examples of How Posts Were Categorized Based on the Purpose of the Post	
Diagnosis	<p>"Is this melanoma or more likely an atypical mole?"</p> <p>"I have these dark marks on both hands and dryness in between hands. What can this be?"</p>
Treatment	<p>"Aging saggy skin and discolouration...any advice on how to deal with this?"</p> <p>"How to remove female mustache (upper lip hair) for darker skin?"</p>
Second opinion	<p>"I've seen a dermatologist who said the bumps are closed comedones and he put me on Tret .025% for 3 months and .05% for the past 7 months, but there's been zero changes to the bumps since February so I just wanted some other opinions before I see him again."</p> <p>"New dermatologist asks me to NOT use any moisturizers for my oily skin with acne... Should I seek a second opinion?"</p>
Seek professional	<p>"I have this large bump on my thigh...Should I get it checked out?"</p> <p>"Melanoma?...I know I need to get these checked, how urgent do you think it is?"</p>
Other's experiences	<p>"Anyone with experience of atrophy on the nose as a result of a cortisone shot?"</p> <p>"Good molecules brightening toner and discoloration correcting serum...Any personal experience with these two for PIH?"</p>
Other	<p>"I tried to only eat food that have high vitamin like green leaf, fruits, healthy fats and many other vegetables, fruits and meat... So the question is, will it lighten my skin?"</p> <p>"I also read that vitiligo can be caused by stress, and i have been severely stressed the past 10 months due to my job...if that's indeed the case will my coloring come back when I'm less stressed?"</p>

## DISCLOSURES

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

## REFERENCES

1. Reddy A. Skincare in social media: analyzing prominent themes in online dermatologic discussions. *Cureus*. 2021;13(5):e14890. doi:10.7759/cureus.14890
2. Chu B, Fathy R, Nobles AL, et al. Patient crowdsourcing of dermatologic consults on a Reddit social media community. *J Am Acad Dermatol*. 2021;85(1):226-227. doi:10.1016/j.jaad.2020.08.009

## AUTHOR CORRESPONDENCE

**Rebecca K. Yamamoto BS BA**

E-mail:..... rky5@georgetown.edu