

# TikTok and Black Skin: Is This a Missed Opportunity for Dermatologists?

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** A study by Villa-Ruiz et al (2021) found that educational videos dominate the content of dermatologic videos on TikTok with 25.8% of the videos being posted by board-certified dermatologists. We sought to examine if these results would differ when the search is adjusted to hashtags specific to black skin.

**Methods:** On October 12th, 2021, an investigator input #BlackSkinCare, #BlackSkinTreatment, #BlackSkinAdvice, and #BlackSkinCareTips in TikTok. #SkinOfColor was not searched as this term is used almost exclusively by dermatologists and could skew the results. After the total of 200 videos was obtained, the videos were then classified into categories regarding their content, and the skin concern and creator were recorded.

**Results:** Most of the videos were of educational content (57.1%), followed by personal experiences (23.2%). Clinical demonstrations/live procedures, business/advertisement, and entertainment/humor followed with 9.6%, 5.6%, and 4.5%, respectively. 54.5% of posts were about general skin care. 22.7% of posts addressed dark spots followed by acne (12.1%). Ingrown hair/razor bumps and skin texture/open pores followed, both with 3.5% each. 54% of videos were posted by vloggers or personal accounts. Board-certified dermatologists followed with 18.7% of the videos posted. Estheticians accounted for 16.2% and, lastly, business/industry comprised 8.6% of the videos analyzed.

**Conclusions:** When searching black skin, TikTok posts are mostly educational and were less likely to have been created by a board-certified dermatologist. The top skin concern specified was dark spots. These findings suggest that there is an opportunity for dermatologists to increase educational content relating to black skin on TikTok.

*J Drugs Dermatol.* 2023;22(7):698-700. doi:10.36849/JDD.7061

## INTRODUCTION

The role of social media in patient education cannot be overlooked, 80% of internet users in the United States have searched online for health information.<sup>1</sup> A recent study by Villa-Ruiz et al found that educational videos dominate the content of top dermatologic videos on TikTok. This group also reported that the majority, 48%, of those videos were posted by patients, followed by board certified dermatologists at 25.8%.<sup>2</sup> We sought to examine if these results would differ when the search is adjusted to hashtags specific to black skin. Additionally, such results would provide board-certified dermatologists with insight into the specific skin concerns for which Black patients seek educational content on social media. Previous studies have analyzed the sources of skin of color content on other social media platforms. One study found that board-certified dermatologists only accounted for 22% of the top posts relating to skin of color on Instagram.

In this study, most of the top skin of color posts were promotional (61.6%).<sup>3</sup> In regard to TikTok and skin of color, a recent study used hashtags generated from a list of common conditions from the skin of color website. Their search revealed that dermatologists were responsible for 20% of the content posted.<sup>4</sup> To our knowledge, there are no studies that analyze TikTok content when searching hashtags specific to black skin.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To determine what type of content is seen in the top posts on TikTok when using hashtags specific to black skin.
2. To report the top skin concerns that are discussed in TikTok videos related to black skin.
3. To determine who is posting dermatology TikTok videos related to black skin and what percentage of the posters are board-certified dermatologists.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

On October 12th, 2021, an investigator input the following hashtags into the TikTok application's search bar: #BlackSkinCare, #BlackSkinTreatment, #BlackSkinAdvice, and #BlackSkinCareTips. We did not use the search term #SkinOfColor as this term is used almost exclusively by dermatologists and could have the potential to skew the results. TikTok's pre-set search filters of "all time" for date posted and "relevance" for sorting were kept to mimic the results that users would come across when searching organically. With each search, the top 50 videos were copied into an Excel spreadsheet via a URL link to be analyzed later.

After the total of 200 videos was obtained, the videos were then classified into the following categories: educational content, personal experience, clinical demonstration/procedure, business/advertisement, or entertainment/humor. Videos that were unrelated to dermatology were excluded. Next, the skin concern addressed in each video was recorded. If a specific dermatologic concern was not addressed, the video was categorized as "general skin concern/not specified." Finally, the creator of each video was recorded. The identities of content creators were confirmed through biographic information in the bio and/or other linked social media profiles.

## RESULTS

### Content Type

Of the 200 TikTok videos collected, 2 were excluded as they were unrelated to dermatology. A total of 198 were further analyzed. 57.1% of the videos posted were educational content, followed by 23.2% containing personal experiences. Clinical demonstrations/live procedures, business/advertisement, and entertainment/humor followed with 9.6%, 5.6%, and 4.5%, respectively.

### Skin Disease/Concern

Most posts, 54.5%, were about general skincare and did not specify a skin disease/concern. 22.7% of the posts addressed dark spots which included hyperpigmentation, acne scars, and sunspots. Acne followed dark spots with 12.1% of posts addressing it as a concern. Ingrown hair/razor bumps and skin texture/open pores followed, both with 3.5% each. Finally, chemical burns, cysts/abscess, dark armpits, psoriasis, skin tag/moles, strawberry legs, and tinea versicolor all came in last with 0.5% each.

### Sources of Content

54% of the videos were posted by vloggers or individuals based on their personal accounts. Board-certified dermatologists were the second leading posters, with 18.7% of the videos posted. Estheticians accounted for 16.2% of the videos posted and, lastly, content posted by a business/industry comprised 8.6% of the videos analyzed.

TABLE 1.

Analysis of TikTok Videos Resulting from Hashtags Related to Black Skin	
Content Type	Number of Videos, n (%)
Educational	113 (57.1)
Personal Experience	46 (23.2)
Clinical Demonstration/Live Procedure	19 (9.6)
Business/Advertisement	11 (5.6)
Entertainment/Humor	9 (4.5)
Skin Disease/Concern	Number of Videos, n (%)
General Skin Care/Not Specified	108 (54.5)
Dark Spots*	45 (22.7)
Acne	24 (12.1)
Ingrown Hair/Razer Bumps	7 (3.5)
Texture/Open Pores	7 (3.5)
Chemical Burn	1 (0.5)
Cyst/Abscess	1 (0.5)
Dark Armpits	1 (0.5)
Psoriasis	1 (0.5)
Skin Tag/Mole	1 (0.5)
Strawberry Legs	1 (0.5)
Tinea Versicolor	1 (0.5)
Source	Number of Videos, n (%)
Vlogger/Personal Account	107 (54.0)
Dermatologist	37 (18.7)
Esthetician	32 (16.2)
Business/Industry	17 (8.6)

\*Dark spots include hyperpigmentation, acne scars, and sunspots.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to determine the sources of content related to black skin on TikTok. Previous studies looking at dermatology content on TikTok found that 25.8% of the top dermatology posts were created by board-certified dermatologists.<sup>2</sup> Another study reported that dermatologists were responsible for 20% of the skin of color posts on TikTok.<sup>4</sup> Our study found that when looking specifically at black skin, posts were less likely to be created by a board-certified dermatologist (18.7%). This finding suggests that there is an opportunity for dermatologists to increase educational content relating to black skin on TikTok.

It is encouraging that most of the dermatologic content relating to black skin on TikTok is educational (57.1%). This contrasts with the Instagram study where most skin of color videos were promotional (61.6%).<sup>3</sup> This finding, combined with TikTok's growing popularity, makes TikTok an excellent opportunity for

board-certified dermatologists to provide users with accurate information regarding dermatologic conditions in black skin, especially to reach individuals with limited access and resources to visit a board-certified dermatologist. Additionally, these data reveal which skin concerns in black skin are most popular on TikTok, with dark spots and hyperpigmentation being the leading concern. Overall, our study suggests that there is a need for more dermatology content on black skin from board certified dermatologists. More studies are needed to increase our knowledge of the role of TikTok in patient education for black skin.

#### DISCLOSURES

The authors have no relevant financial disclosures.

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