

Acne-related TikTok Videos in Finnish Lack Accurate Information

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To the Editor,

Young people are increasingly using social media not only as a source for everyday information but as a resource for health-related concerns. With over 1 billion active users, TikTok is particularly favoured by young people (1). In a Turkish study, as many as 75% of adolescent acne patients reported using social media to seek medical information (2). This study aims to analyse the quality of acne-related information available on TikTok in Finnish and determine the type of content and creator.

We searched TikTok for videos using the application's classification algorithm on 22 December 2023, and recorded the videos for later analysis. We used the Finnish hashtags #akne, #akneiho, and #aknenhoito (corresponding to "acne", "acne skin", and "acne treatment"). Inclusion criteria required that the video was in Finnish, contained at least 1 of the hashtags, and was related to acne. Data extracted from each video are outlined in **Table I**. The accuracy of the information provided in the videos was evaluated using evidence-based literature (3) and the videos were classified into 5 categories (Table I).

In total, 119 video posts were identified, and of those, 50 videos (published between March 2021 and December 2023) met the inclusion criteria. Overall, 94.0% of the content creators were female. The largest group of content creators were beauty professionals (30.0%). Personal narratives accounted for the majority of the videos (50.0%). Importantly, just over a tenth of the videos were primarily educational (12.0%). The only group to produce educational content were beauty professionals: a third of their videos were mainly educational. In general, most videos (42.0%) primarily addressed "other treatments". In addition to the main content, a variety of sub-contents could be found in many videos. When the accuracy of all the videos was analysed, 10.0% were categorized as being supported by "high certainty evidence". Over a third (36.0%) of the videos contained either "both accurate and inaccurate information" or the content had "no certainty of evidence" (Table I).

Our analysis revealed a limited number of Finnish-language TikTok videos related to acne with varying quality. A significant proportion of the videos were produced by non-professionals and presented claims based on low scientific evidence.

Previous research on acne-related social media content, especially TikTok videos, has primarily focused on

English-language content (4, 5). An important contradictory difference found in our study is the background of the content creators: in US studies, a significant number of videos have been produced by certified dermatologists and other physicians (4, 6). The absence of physicians as content creators in Finland may be attributed to several factors, with cultural differences and the organization of healthcare likely playing the biggest role.

Recommendations for the treatment of acne emphasize the role of medical treatments (3) and, in turn, dermocosmetics are not addressed. Despite this, "other treatments" such as natural products and facial cleansing or peeling products received a lot more attention as a topic.

Several studies have found that acne-related TikTok videos are lacking in quality and much of the provided information is not supported by evidence (4, 5). This aligns well with our results regarding Finnish video content. In nearly a fifth of the videos (18.0%), the content was not supported by evidence. In addition, the accuracy of the information provided varied greatly between the videos overall as well as between different content creator groups. Interestingly, one US study has similarly found that it is not only videos produced by non-physicians that contain shortcomings, but physician content creators can in some cases also provide incomplete information (5).

More than half of the videos (56.0%) received more than 10,000 views and several reached over 50,000 views, which can be considered a significant audience in the context of Finnish-language videos. However, we found that high viewing rates and the accuracy of the information shared did not correlate. Even though minor content creators appeared to share the most reliable information, they had the lowest number of views.

The main limitation of this study is its small sample size. As there were less than 20 content creators in each group, the differences between groups may originate from only a few videos.

This study found that acne is clearly a topic of interest for Finnish-speaking TikTok users. While Finnish-language content serves a significantly smaller audience compared with English-language content, the number of views for the videos analysed in this study suggests that the Finnish audience is interested in finding information about acne on social media in their native language. Unfortunately, this study showed Finnish TikTok videos related to acne to be of relatively poor quality, which corresponds with other studies (4, 6–8). It is considered

Table I. Creators, contents and number of views of the videos

Content creator	Total <i>n</i> = 50	Beauty professional ^a <i>n</i> = 15	Social media influencer (> 10,000 followers) <i>n</i> = 13	Minor content creator (<10,000 followers) <i>n</i> = 14	Registered nurse <i>n</i> = 2	Other ^b <i>n</i> = 6
Main purpose of the video						
Educational	6 (12.0%)	5 (33.3%)	0	0	0	1 (16.7%)
Commercial	19 (38.0%)	6 (40.0%)	5 (38.5%)	2 (14.3%)	1 (50.0%)	5 (83.3%)
Personal narrative	25 (50.0%)	4 (26.7%)	8 (61.5%)	12 (85.7%)	1 (50.0%)	0
Main content of the video						
Pathophysiology	2 (4.0%)	2 (13.3%)	0	0	0	0
Predisposing factors	2 (4.0%)	2 (13.3%)	0	0	0	0
Medical treatment	5 (10.0%)	1 (3.7%)	2 (15.4%)	2 (14.3%)	0	0
Dermocosmetics ^c	5 (10.0%)	0	2 (15.4%)	2 (14.3%)	0	1 (16.7%)
Device-based treatments ^d	2 (4.0%)	0	0	2 (14.3%)	0	0
Other treatments ^e	21 (42.0%)	8 (53.3%)	5 (38.5%)	2 (14.3%)	1 (50.0%)	5 (83.3%)
Worsening factors	1 (2.0%)	1 (6.7%)	0	0	0	0
Psychological effects	5 (10.0%)	0	2 (15.4%)	3 (21.4%)	0	0
Blemishes and blackheads	0	0	0	0	0	0
Makeup advice	2 (4.0%)	0	0	2 (14.3%)	0	0
Other ^f	5 (10.0%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (7.1%)	1 (50.0%)	0
Sub-contents of the video						
Pathophysiology	8 (16.0%)	2 (13.3%)	5 (38.5%)	0	0	1 (16.7%)
Predisposing factors	6 (12.0%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (7.7%)	3 (21.4%)	0	1 (16.7%)
Medical treatment	11 (22.0%)	3 (20.0%)	3 (23.1%)	4 (28.6%)	0	1 (16.7%)
Dermocosmetics ^c	4 (8.0%)	0	3 (23.1%)	0	1 (50.0%)	0
Device-based treatments ^d	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other treatments ^e	8 (16.0%)	4 (26.7%)	1 (7.7%)	2 (14.3%)	0	1 (16.7%)
Worsening factors	10 (20.0%)	5 (33.3%)	2 (15.4%)	2 (14.3%)	0	1 (16.7%)
Psychological effects	6 (12.0%)	2 (13.3%)	3 (23.1%)	1 (7.1%)	0	0
Blemishes and blackheads	5 (10.0%)	3 (20.0%)	1 (7.7%)	0	0	1 (16.7%)
Makeup advice	2 (4.0%)	0	1 (7.7%)	1 (7.1%)	0	0
Other ^f	5 (10.0%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (7.7%)	3 (21.4%)	0	0
Accuracy of information						
High-certainty evidence	5 (10.0%)	0	1 (7.7%)	4 (28.6%)	0	0
Moderate-certainty evidence	15 (30.0%)	7 (46.7%)	3 (23.1%)	5 (35.7%)	0	0
Both accurate and inaccurate	9 (18.0%)	5 (33.3%)	2 (15.4%)	0	1 (50.0%)	1 (16.7%)
No certainty of evidence	9 (18.0%)	3 (20.0%)	1 (7.7%)	1 (7.1%)	1 (50.0%)	3 (50.0%)
Lacks verifiable claims	12 (24.0%)	0	6 (46.2%)	4 (28.6%)	0	2 (33.3%)
Number of views						
0–500	0	0	0	0	0	0
500–1,000	1 (2.0%)	1 (6.7%)	0	0	0	0
1,000–5,000	12 (24.0%)	3 (20.0%)	0	7 (50.0%)	0	2 (33.3%)
5,000–10,000	9 (18.0%)	4 (26.6%)	2 (15.4%)	3 (21.4%)	0	0
10,000–20,000	10 (20.0%)	2 (13.3%)	4 (30.8%)	2 (14.3%)	1 (50.0%)	1 (16.7%)
20,000–50,000	5 (10.0%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (15.4%)	0	1 (50.0%)	0
> 50,000	13 (26.0%)	3 (20.0%)	5 (38.5%)	2 (14.3%)	0	3 (50.0%)

^aBeautician or Bachelor of Beauty and Cosmetics. ^bPharmacies, other commercial entities, and unclassified sources. There were no videos published by physicians. ^cOver-the-counter beauty products sold in Finnish pharmacies. ^de.g. microneedling and light therapies. ^ee.g. natural products, facial cleansing products, other facial creams and peels. ^fe.g. acne-related pigmentation and acne scar treatments.

of great importance for Finnish physicians and preferably dermatologists also to become interested in creating reliable video content on TikTok concerning acne.

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