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Dermatology on Flickr

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Abstract

Flickr, which was launched in 2004, is one of the oldest photo-sharing services online. The company, which was once at the forefront of the internet social media explosion, lost users and received criticism as its repeated acquisitions by other companies forced users to adapt to new owners. Now facing another acquisition by the online photo-sharing service SmugMug, the future is uncertain again for the once popular internet and mobile application service. Flickr, with its rapid rise in popularity, sudden halt in growth, and its gradual loss of users and popularity, has been repeatedly looked to as a lesson for other internet startups on the necessity of adapting quickly in the current internet age. Given the rise of social media use in the healthcare field, and the long-standing presence of Flickr on the internet, this study investigated the presence of dermatology-related content on Flickr and how the photo-sharing platform has applied to the visual field of dermatology, its dermatologists, and its professional associations.

Keywords: Flickr, social media, dermatology, dermatology journals, dermatology organizations

Introduction

Flickr was launched by Ludicorp in 2004 as a web-based, photo-sharing and management service [1]. It was sold to Yahoo in 2005, and the change was criticized for requiring Flickr users to login with a Yahoo email account and for its failure to bring about the modernization that its users had hoped for,

including a mobile application, which the company did not release until 2009 [1, 2].

In 2017, Yahoo (including Flickr) was sold to Verizon, which joined Yahoo with AOL, under Verizon's Oath branch [1, 2]. Then in April 2018, Flickr announced it was sold again to SmugMug, a small, web-based photo-management service that targets professional photographers, and one, unlike Flickr, that requires a subscription to use its online photo-sharing and management services [3].

Despite multiple changes in ownership, Flickr says it still has millions of registered photographers and daily users attracted by the draws of Flickr's services, including up to one terabyte of free data and the ability to upload high-quality images [4]. In March 2012, Flickr had 2.3 million mobile users in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom alone; however, public data about its current performance metrics is sparse [5, 6].

Given the rise of social media use in the healthcare field, and the long-standing presence of Flickr on the internet, this study investigated the presence of dermatology-related content on Flickr and how the photo-sharing platform has applied to the visual field of dermatology, its dermatologists, and its professional associations.

Case Synopsis

Data collection was performed by the first study author (SK) on July 7, 2018. A second author, RP, confirmed the methods and results. The top ten

Table 1. Active Flickr Accounts Retrieved via "Flickr and dermatology."^a

Flickr Album Name	Account Type	Number of Followers	Last Album Post	Account Exclusively Dedicated to Dermatology
PGT: PGT Cancer Dermatology, Oral Pathology, Mental Health Dental Tech	Academic –Queen Mary, University of London	69	May 19, 2017	No
Front Range Dermatology Associates	Private Practice	0	July 2, 2018	Yes
Continuous Medical Education – Department of Dermatology	Academic - BGS Global institute of Medical Sciences	1	Nov. 11, 2017	No
Adadvanceddermatology dermatology ^b	Personal Account	0	June 28, 2017	Yes
Drrendon dermatology ^b	Private Practice	0	Oct. 30, 2017	Yes
Rao Dermatology	Private Practice	0	March 18, 2017	Yes
Cosmetic Dermatology India	Private Practice	7	June 11, 2018	Yes

^aRepresents active accounts retrieved via the first 50 fifty search results on July 7, 2018. Accounts were considered active if they had public posts made within the last year.

^bAccount name; no albums existed under the account.

dermatology journals, professional organizations, and dermatological patient-centered organizations on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) were identified according to a 2017 study on social media usage by dermatologic organizations [7]. Google searches of "Flickr and dermatology" and "dermatologist* and Flickr" were also conducted, and the first 50 search results for each were analyzed.

Results

None of the top dermatology journals or dermatologic professional associations on social media had a Flickr account. One European professional organization, the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV) had a Flickr account; however, no posts had been made by the organization within the past year. When the word "dermatology" was searched in Flickr, 108 users with "dermatology" in their username or description were identified. Likewise, 25 users with "dermatologist" in their username or description were identified; two users were excluded due to lack of relevance upon further investigation. All of these users, with the

exception of EADV, were private dermatologists or dermatology practices. Additionally, four dermatology groups were identified on Flickr; however, none of them belonged to professional or academic associations.

A google search of "Flickr and dermatology" and "dermatologist* and Flickr" revealed none of the top organizations. The first 50 results on these searches were dominated by links to Flickr accounts by private dermatologists or their practices. Specifically, a search of "Flickr and dermatology" yielded 13 links to active Flickr albums or accounts in the first 50 results under the search. Seven of these accounts were active with public postings of photos within the past year (**Table 1**).

Conclusion

This study concludes that Flickr has primarily been used as a public photo platform for private dermatology practices and their doctors and has largely been ignored, with the exception of one European dermatologic organization, by most dermatologic journals and organizations. One

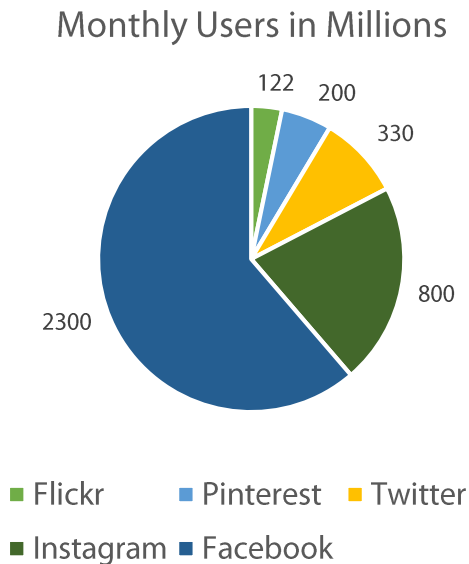


Figure 1. Monthly social media users in millions. The data was last updated in 2016 for Flickr, 2017 for Pinterest, 2017 for Twitter, 2017 for Instagram, and 2018 for Facebook. [8]

possible explanation for this finding is that Flickr is primarily used as a photo management service and has lagged behind more popular social media services, like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter, in terms of numbers of monthly users (see **Figure 1**), [8]. Additionally, with the recent acquisition of Flickr by SmugMug, the future use of Flickr by new users from the dermatology community is even more uncertain, as even the CEO and founder of SmugMug, Don MacAskill, publicly acknowledged that his plans for the company remain uncertain [2]. Flickr's purchase by this niche company, may mean its user base may change to align more with the current market of its parent organization — while more casual users seeking to connect with members and patients in the dermatologic community are drawn away to larger social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

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