

Psy-Connection Project Proposal by TSE Sammee

“心膚級” Healing inside out: a one-stop platform for skincare and mental well-being

Background

Acne from stress, self-consciousness from adverse skin conditions, appearance anxiety, ‘hiding’ behind face masks and concealers..... These are prevalent issues that some of us may have faced, are facing, or have observed in people around us. Skincare and mental well-being are both indispensable parts of our everyday lives; but are we aware of how our skin condition ties in with our mental health, and do we take steps to care for both aspects?

Significance of the project

In recent years, multiple well-being practices and treatment approaches have emerged based on the idea of the mind-body connection, including mindfulness and lifestyle medicine (LM) for preventing, alleviating, and treating mental health conditions. Particularly, lifestyle medicine highlights the relation of everyday habits including sleep, diet, and exercise to our mental health. It has received increasing attention in the Hong Kong population with evidence of its efficacy in treating symptoms of depression (Wong et al., 2021). However, not much attention has been placed on the relation between our skin and well-being.

Studies have shown that having acne and dealing with persisting skin conditions such as eczema can take a toll on one’s self esteem and extend its impact to one’s social life (Yang & Kourosh, 2018). Meanwhile, stress has been deemed a substantial underlying factor for acne-prone skin in adults (Zouboulis & Böhm, 2004). Healing from unpleasant skin conditions and finding a remedy can be a frustrating and lonely process. Professional skincare services are generally expensive and inaccessible for the average individual, including dermatological consultations and aesthetic and beauty services. There is undoubtedly a variety of skincare products available on the market, but finding something that works well for one’s skin can involve a lot of trial-and-error, cause tremendous stress and even financial burden. Sometimes, the role of stress on one’s skin is overshadowed by ‘quick fixes’, while pressure to look ‘flawless’ due to societal beauty standards (Dimitrov et al., 2023) and fear of judgment can add to the stress faced by each individual, causing a vicious cycle to persist.

Additionally, ‘skincare influencers’ have become popular on social media sites including Instagram, Youtube, and Tiktok, but the heavy load of information and skincare trends also provide a hotbed for misinformation alongside unhelpful comparisons of skin conditions. Each person’s skin is unique, just like one’s emotional needs. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but there are options that can be explored and perhaps comfort and

relief can be provided during times of distress and frustration. 心膚級 will be a first-of-its-kind local platform tailor-made for skin and mental health concerns that offers both informational support and emotional support.

Rationale and objectives

Overall, the project sheds light on the connection between skin health and mental health, highlighting the idea that both domains in our lives are worthy of our time and attention. “心膚級 - Healing Inside Out” will be a free-of-charge, one-stop platform for users of all ages to seek comfort, clarification, and companionship for issues related to skin health and mental health without shame or judgment. As the name suggests, it is hoped that the platform can offer ‘a breath of fresh air’ where self care remedies can be explored and take “steps” towards healing both internally (mental well-being) and externally (skin). One key goal is to offer clarity amongst the overload of information on the Internet while helping users to identify their needs and restructure unhelpful beliefs about one’s self image, so that they can feel comfortable in their skin and embrace the healing process.

While this project focuses on developing an online platform, it would be ideal to introduce more interactive elements related to skincare and mental health at a later stage, such as a mobile application and online workshops. Ultimately, user experience and feedback will play a huge part in determining what features are to be added and introduced.

To further increase accessibility and audience reach, website content will be available both in English and Cantonese eventually. Cantonese content and information about local resources will be prioritised in earlier stages to cater to the Hong Kong audience. However, for the purpose of this proposal, English is primarily used in the website prototypes.

Expected features of the online platform (See Appendix 1 for prototypes)

Skincare and wellbeing resource bank “Wellness Catalogue”	The resource bank is set up to make it convenient for users to access useful information for their concerns. Practical support will offered in the form of resource lists that direct the user to relevant support, such as free services and consultations available. Another form of resource would be informational sources that introduce methods of dealing with conditions they are facing, such as soothing ingredients for acne, and dermatologist-approved products for relieving eczema. Basic steps of using the Wellness Catalogue:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Short surveys (simple screening <u>not</u> for diagnosing purposes) will be completed to identify the user’s needs and condition - Suggest content and options based on their preferences - Outline fact-checked sources and resources that guide users in finding suitable remedies for what they are facing - General well-being and self-confidence boosting exercises for all users, such as guided exercises based on mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) (Ju et al., 2022) - For users struggling with self-image and low self-esteem, evidence-based self-help cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) exercises (e.g. identifying maladaptive thinking, cognitive restructuring) (Coull & Morris, 2011) will be recommended
<p>Skincare diary and mood tracker</p>	<p>Mood-tracking is a simple self-help exercise for boosting one’s mental well-being. It encourages the individual to become mindful of their feelings and emotions. Its effectiveness on youth has been supported by Dubad et al. (2017) and adults with mood disorders have also benefited from the practice of digital self-monitoring of mood (Faurholt-Jepsen et al., 2016). The skincare diary also shares a similar rationale by tracking changes in skin condition to better observe patterns and facilitate understanding of one’s needs. Prompts will be provided to guide users in noting down their observations. These can be saved as progress records in their account if the user chooses to sign up in the platform.</p> <p><i>The prompts will include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Summarising feelings about the day</i> ● <i>Skin condition in relation to mood and stress</i> ● <i>Identifying ingredients that benefit or irritate your skin</i> ● <i>Environmental influences e.g. weather, workload</i>
<p>Articles</p>	<p>Informational articles will be uploaded regularly to foster understanding of different aspects of skincare and mental wellness. The articles will provide various perspectives of current socially-relevant topics with evidence-based sources.</p> <p><i>Topics may include:</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Acne in adults and stress-induced acne</i> ● <i>Stigma surrounding eczema</i> ● <i>Perceptions of beauty and self image</i> ● <i>Social implications of skin conditions: Bullying, social anxiety (Gao et al., 2023)</i> ● <i>Embracing flaws and imperfections</i> ● <i>A critical look into skincare trends (e.g. 10-step skincare)</i> <p>The goal is to facilitate understanding of the general public regarding the connection between skin and well-being. It would also encourage users to be critical of the information they are exposed to and offer renewed perspectives and perceptions of skin ‘imperfections’.</p>
Message box	Available on website for content requests, feedback, and enquiries.
Peer support space (Interactive blog)	Peer support is an evidence-based method to enhance the efficacy of mental health interventions (Burke et al., 2019). This space may be launched at a later stage to encourage interaction between users who are struggling with similar skin/ mental health conditions to promote a sense of companionship. This could facilitate exchange of ideas and experience that may offer insight and hope to users experiencing similar situations. Strict monitoring would be necessary to ensure the platform remains a safe space for all users, with measures in place to deter unhealthy comparisons and malicious comments.

Proposed timeline of events

Date	Activity	Medium
Early-Mid May 2024	Launch of social media account	Instagram
	Conduct survey on common skincare concerns and its relation with one’s mental well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Struggles when dealing with skin conditions ● Barriers to finding suitable remedies ● Desired types of resources and content 	Instagram, Google Forms

	Preview and promotion of upcoming website launch	Instagram
Late May 2024	Preliminary launch of website with introductory articles, wellness catalogue, and message box (<i>First article idea: "Skin and mental health - how are they related?"</i>)	心膚級 Website
Aug 2024	Online workshop: self image, embracing imperfections	Zoom
Oct 2024- Nov 2024	Opinion collection and preparation for peer support space - Decide on protocols and measures to safeguard appropriate use of peer support space	Instagram, survey on 心膚級 Website
Dec 2024	Launch of peer support space on website	心膚級 Website
Ongoing	Collect feedback on website features, utility, and user experience, and content requests	Instagram, survey on web
Biweekly	Articles on skin and mental health topics	心膚級 Website
	Resource bank update (new resources upon requests)	心膚級 Website

Expected Budget

Item	Price (HKD)	Potential source(s)
Website set-up	\$6000-7000	WordPress, Wix.com, Squarespace
Workshop instructor and administrative costs	\$1000/workshop	A mental health professional available for hire

Expected Outcomes

It is expected that the platform will become an accessible medium for local users facing struggles in their mental health and skin conditions to seek solace and find practical solutions to aid them in their healing journey. With support from department funding if fortunately selected, along with continuous user feedback and evaluation, a comprehensive guide of resources and a greater variety of features may be developed to foster continuous use of the platform and raise awareness of the connection between skin and mental health.

Appendix I: Platform prototype

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Healing inside out

Your one-stop platform to skincare and mental wellness

Get Started

A breath of *fresh air...*
Your *safe space*
for skin concerns
and self care.

This platform is purely for informational purposes and is not meant to substitute professional diagnosis of any skin or mental health condition. When in doubt, please seek advice from licensed professionals.

Free of charge and free of pressure

Open to public, no hidden charges, no mandatory subscriptions.

Evidence-based information

Too much information on the internet - don't know which to trust? We condense information and check for credible sources to help you make efficient and informed decisions.

Gain insight into your own condition

Our skincare diary and mood tracker offer space and guidance to tune in with your needs to boost your overall well-being.

Explore resources for your needs

Our wellness catalogue may provide some direction for what remedies and methods may help you fulfill your needs in skincare and self care.

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Log in/ Sign up

What's on your mind today?



Check-in

Mood Tracker

Skincare Diary

My Progress



Connect

Peer Support Space



Learn

Article of the week

Your Wellness Catalogue

Identify your needs

Guided Breathing

Acne remedies

Free services

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your perspective matters.
tell us what you think.

general enquiries

user feedback form

content requests

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