



***Reddit
Hot Take:***

Distributed Trust

*How a new, emerging model of trust
is a reckoning for institutions and brands.*

TL;DR

From:

Community Management

To:

Community Participant

To win in a Distributed Trust world, the overall approach to community must change.

*There is no community to own, run or “manage.” **Corporate, brand-approved talking points from your website aren’t welcome.***

*Instead, engage **genuinely.***



TL;DR

Trust is becoming distributed among the hive mind of the anonymous.

I may discover something from an influencer, but I trust the unbiased reviews of people without self-serving incentives.



Marketer Implications:

Brands are still operating with Institutional Trust strategies in a Distributed Trust world. New approaches are required:

- 01. Don't Stress Perceptions.** *The more effort that goes into appearance (i.e. signals of hierarchy) the less trustworthy a brand becomes. Don't posture with authority. For starters, try self-awareness as it lowers skepticism.*
- 02. Only Be A Member.** *Trust forms with an exchange of value. Ask questions, request feedback and seek information... then reply with relevant contributions. Don't sell. Don't spout brand platitudes. Add to the community. And again. And again. Contributions compound.*
- 03. Hang.** *Not having a motive feels paradoxical, but it is what drives trust in a community. The most important thing to build trust is to demonstrate presence. Listen, then talk. Trustworthiness is earned, not bought.*

54% of Consumers believe brands don't actually want to hear their feedback. ...Conveying openness here is mandatory.



The Now, Next & Future of:
Distributed Trust



NOW: A NEW MODEL

DISTRIBUTED TRUST

TREND SUMMARY: *Fed up with #ad culture, hive-mind-anonymity is becoming the true badge of trust.*

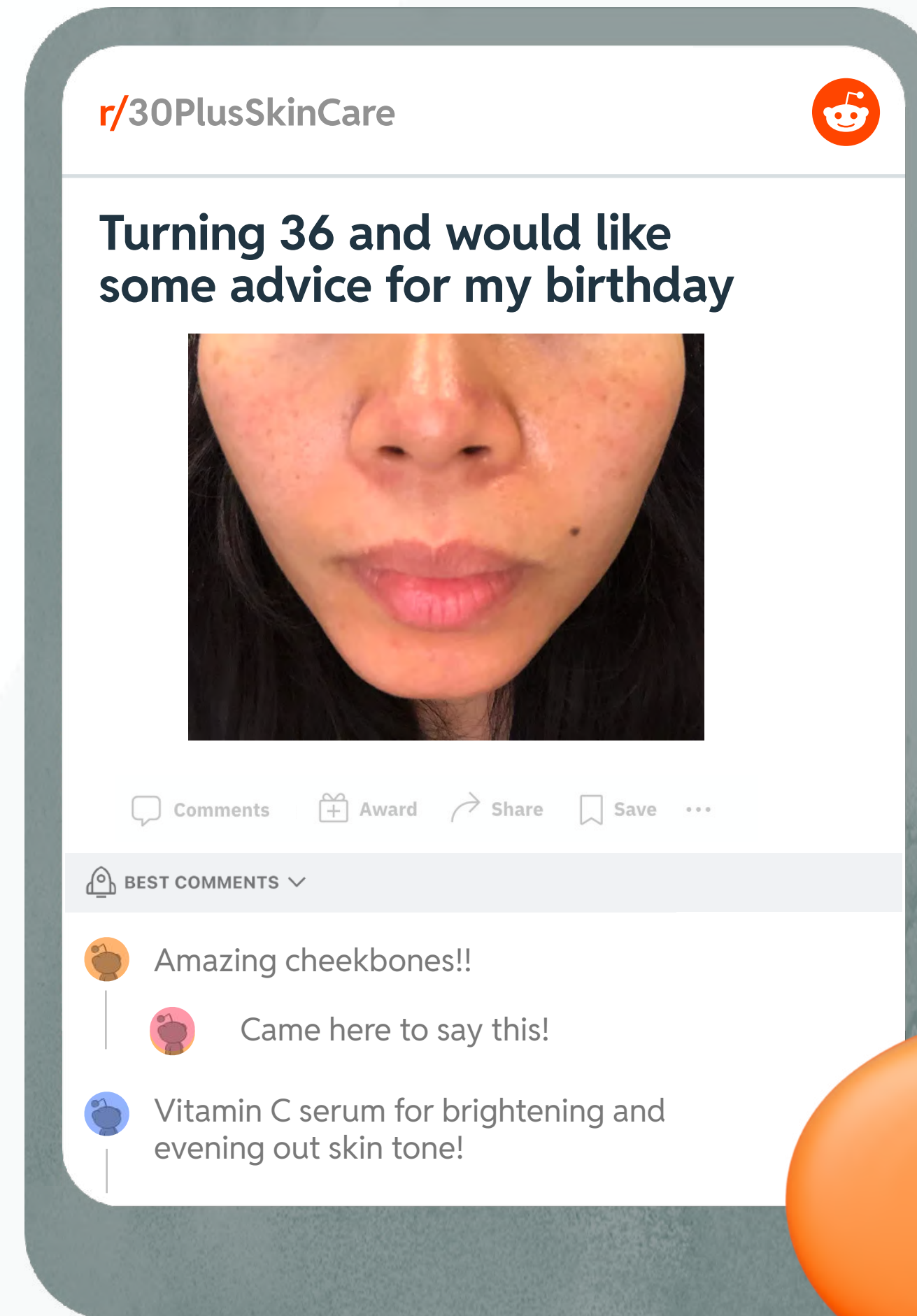
We've come a long way since being told not to get in a stranger's car. Now not only are we *encouraged* to strike up a conversation while doing so, but we're also seeking strangers' advice on which car to buy, which medication to take, or which product to wash our particular face with.

As we debate informations' credibility from politics to public health, sources of truth and their messaging has become incredibly polarizing *at best*.

As a result, it's *trust in the stranger* that's flourishing. Most evident when it comes to which brands, products, and services to purchase next, we're seeking collective anonymity to engender trust.

It's a hive mind of information without bias, agenda, or commercial incentive.

SOURCE: Reddit, 2022



Trust in **strangers** continue to **increase**,
while trust in **institutions** continues to **fall**.



82%

Of people believe **reviews**,
feedback, or **discussions** are
important when researching
a purchase online

44%

Of people share they are
more trustworthy of
strangers online today
compared to previous years

19%

Of U.S. consumers have trust
in **social media ads**.
It's the least trusted form of
media despite representing
~1/5 of total ad spend.



THE ORIGIN OF:

AN EVOLUTION IN TRUST

We started with **Institutional Trust**: big, powerful organizations broadcasting messages to the masses, all at once. But these entities weren't always relevant nor honest. They were gatekeepers: centralized, opaque and biased.

Next came **Influencer Trust**: more familiar, local, relatable faces. But again we were wrong to wholly trust... #Sponsored. Capitalism seeped in. On to Micro Influencers: personalities small enough that brands couldn't get to them. Wrong again. Selling out seemed inevitable.

Distributed Trust is the latest evolution (Many-to-Many). Bygone are the days of listening to a single source. Now, consumers pool their intelligence together. Unlike old Yelp or TripAdvisor reviews, they rigorously cross-reference experiences and efficacy, unpacking claims within more trustworthy communities.

From: Top-Down Influence, **To:** Lateral Influence

+730%

Growth of mentions of “**Shill**” and “**Shilling**” YoY from 2020-2021

+109%

Growth of mentions of “**Reliable**” and “**Reliability**” from 2019-2021

Skepticism
Who's trustworthy?

+644%

Growth of (largely negative) mentions of “**Influencers**” from 2019-2021

+3.3 M

Annual views to **r/HailCorporate**, a community calling out the hidden ads



THANKS, STRANGER

Consumers have never been more fed up with false brand promises. So, they're taking matters into their **own hands**.

They're doing the homework from researching ingredients to fact-checking ads, and then sharing their results.

There's power and safety in numbers...

72%

Of consumers agree that it's becoming **harder** to trust brands' claims

77%

Of consumers are **thankful** for strangers' product and service recommendations



“ A new recipe for trust is emerging that once again is distributed amongst people...This is just the beginning, because the real disruption happening isn't technological. ”



— Rachel Botsman
TED Speaker & Author Who Can You Trust?



NEXT: WHAT'S COMING

TRUST AS A DISTRIBUTED LEDGER

Ironically, anonymity was once thought to curb trust, but now actually it promotes it.

When hierarchy and status are removed via anonymity, we know the recommender has nothing to gain. It's low-stakes, unbiased and selfless. There's no ulterior motive. They answer honestly because when it's *their* turn to ask for advice, they want genuine answers too. They reply openly because it's an *investment* for them.

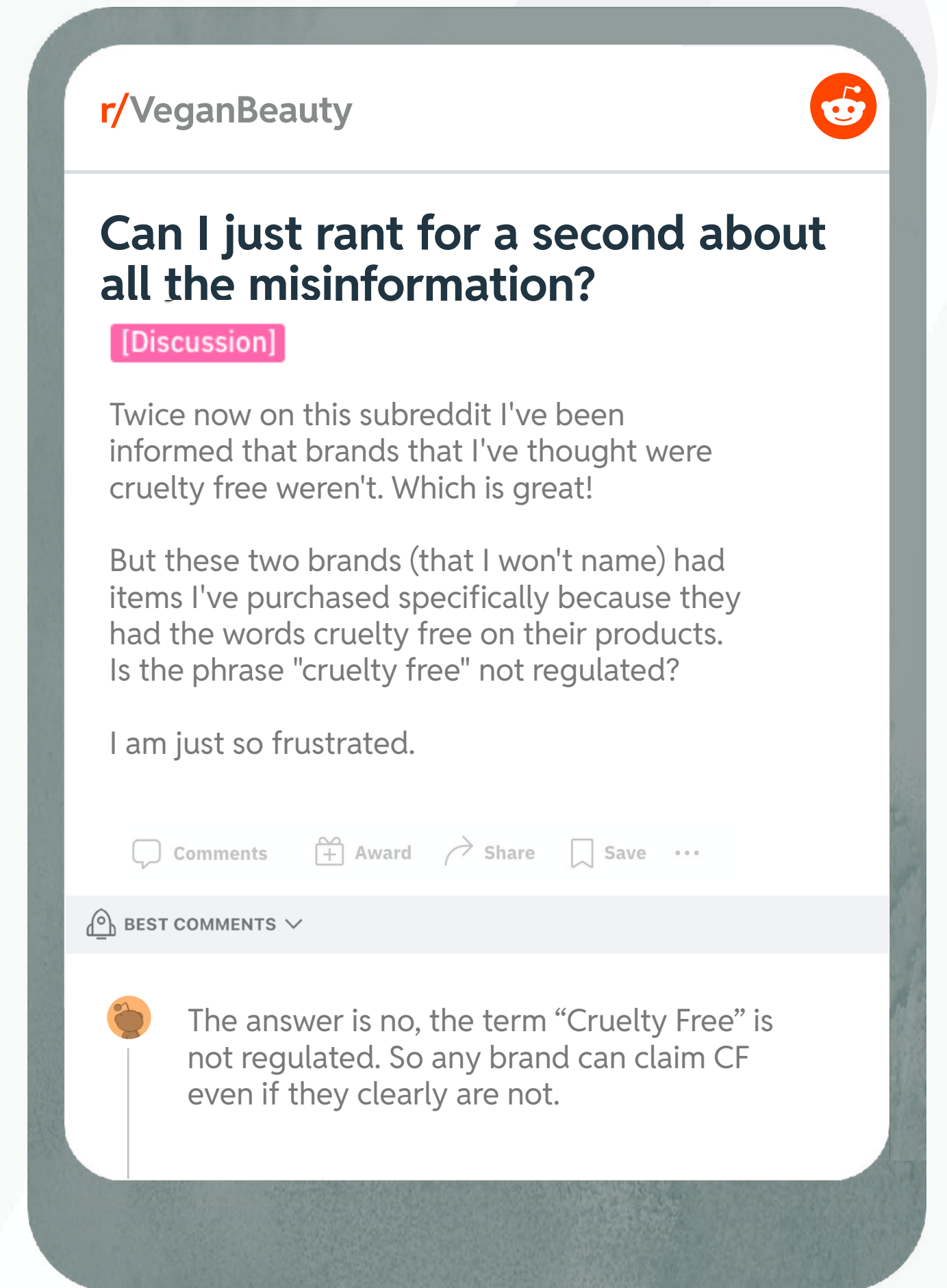
When a makeup brand claims to be cruelty free, but a Vegan Beauty Community does the research to reveal that claim to be false—and then recommends which brands to purchase instead—that's a trustworthy community in action.

In a sense, our communities are mirroring another online revolution: the blockchain. It's information distributed, unanimous and immutable. **The hive provides a self-sustaining fact check that no one actor can topple.**

SOURCE: Reddit Internal Global Data, 2019-2022

+ 72 %

Mentions of "Trust" have increased across the entire platform YoY the last two years



THIS ALL GOES BEYOND PRODUCTS...

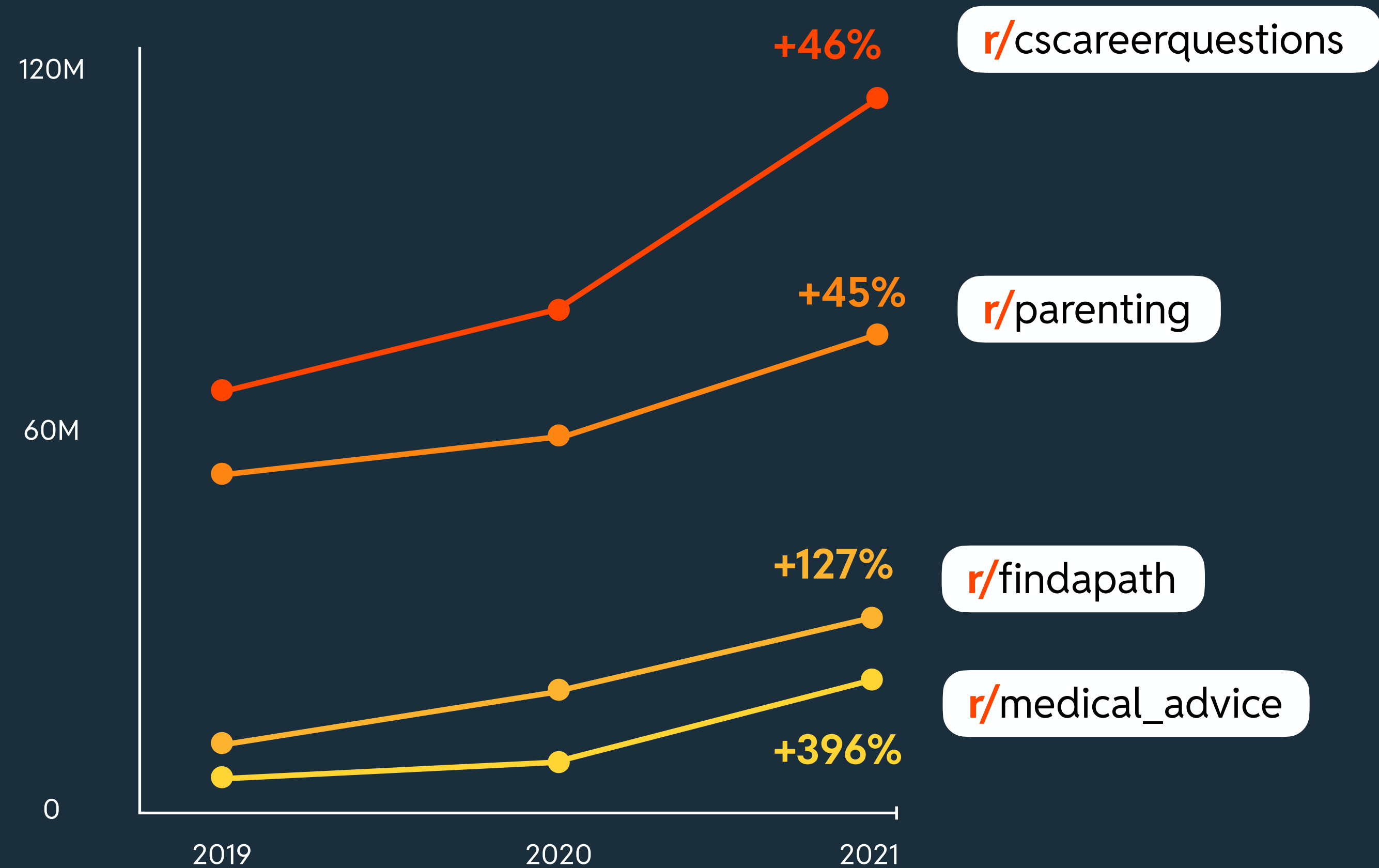
Over time, we'll witness Distributed Trust engulf many of our lives' questions.

We're already seeing more people amend Google searches with **+ Reddit** to see what the crowd thinks.



The future is advice fulfilled from the hive-mind—spanning plant health, to our health.

Screenview Increases of Advice Communities



FUTURE: WHERE IT'S HEADED

MAKE WITH THE COMMUNITY

For anyone with a motive (ahem, brands), this is foreign, scary territory. This new model of trust changes everything from messaging engagement to product development strategy. How do you participate?

Creators today discuss “Building in Public.” This signals transparency—inviting fans along and folding them in.

If organizations are serious about trust, fandom and community building, they have to do the work like the others in the community. You can call it initiation, or you can see it as respect—doing the same work as the others.

Brands must see themselves as *equals* within communities. Create *with* the community and share *with* the community.

De-construct innovation cycles and seek feedback 24/7. Don't stop updating and contributing.

From: Test & Learn, **To:** Build Together

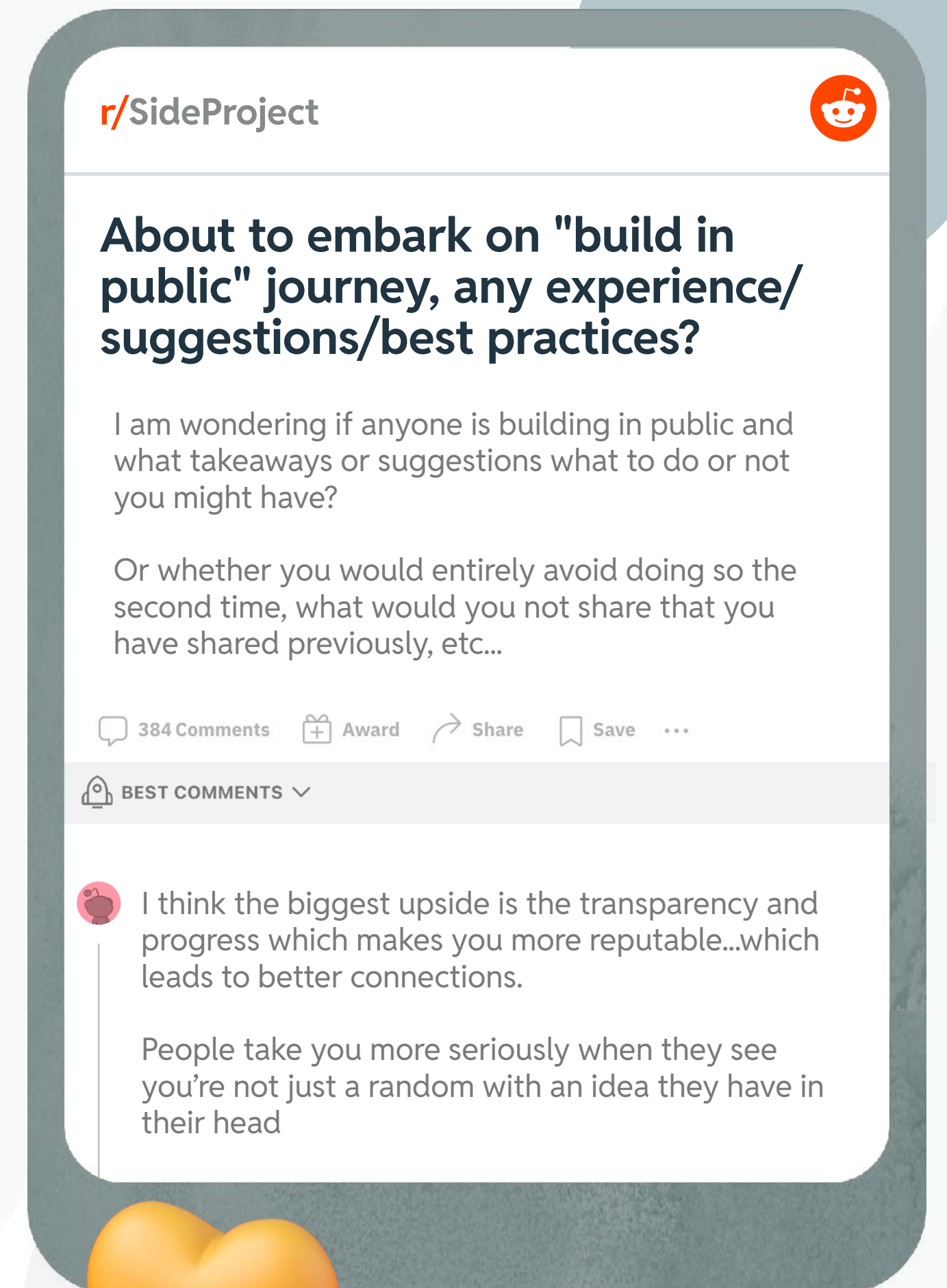
SOURCE: Reddit Internal Global Data, 2019-2022, Suzy Primary Research, February 2022 (n=500)

+ 25%

Mentions of “**Build in Public**” QoQ, a popular phrase for entrepreneurs who are hoping to foster community and integrate feedback in real-time

78%

Of consumers wish brands requested their feedback more often, while **77%** wish they made it easier to share it



A complex network diagram with numerous nodes and connecting lines, rendered in black and white against a dark background. The lines vary in thickness, with some being significantly thicker than others, creating a sense of depth and connectivity.

Thanks!

Want to Learn More?

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A “Hot Take” is Reddit’s unique *POV* on an **emerging cultural trend**.

We’ll unpack:

- What’s the trend?
- **Now:** Where it’s coming from?
- **Next:** What comes next?
- **Future:** How does it reveal the future?
- What should you do?

