Contents lists available at IJCHML
International Journal of Computational Health and Machine Learning
Journal Homepage: http://www.ijchml.com/
Volume 4, No. 3, 2026

IJCHML
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF COMPUTATIONAL HEALTH & MACHINE LEARNING

# Adaptive Color Space Selection for Deep Learning-Based Skin Lesion Segmentation in Dermoscopic Imaging

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## ARTICLE INFO

Received: 06/30/2026
Revised: 07/22/2026
Accepted: 09/01/2026

**Keywords:**

skin lesion segmentation, dermoscopic imaging, color space selection, deep learning, convolutional neural networks, adaptive preprocessing, medical image analysis

## ABSTRACT

Accurate segmentation of skin lesions in dermoscopic images remains a fundamental challenge in computer-aided diagnosis of melanoma and other cutaneous malignancies. Existing deep learning segmentation frameworks predominantly operate within the standard RGB color space, neglecting the potential discriminative advantages offered by alternative color representations such as HSV, LAB, and YCbCr. This oversight may limit model sensitivity to subtle chromatic and luminance variations that are diagnostically significant in dermoscopic analysis.

In this work, we propose an adaptive color space selection framework that systematically evaluates and integrates multiple color space representations to enhance the performance of deep learning-based skin lesion segmentation models. Our approach introduces a lightweight attention-guided fusion module that dynamically weights feature maps extracted from heterogeneous color spaces, enabling the network to exploit complementary spectral information without incurring prohibitive computational overhead. The framework is compatible with established encoder-decoder architectures, including U-Net and its variants, and can be integrated with minimal architectural modification.

Extensive experiments conducted on three publicly available benchmark dermoscopy datasets—ISIC 2017, ISIC 2018, and $PH^2$—demonstrate that adaptive multi-color-space fusion achieves statistically significant improvements over single-space RGB baselines across key segmentation metrics, including Dice similarity coefficient, Jaccard index, and sensitivity. Ablation studies confirm the individual contribution of each color representation and validate the efficacy of the proposed adaptive weighting mechanism.

These findings establish that thoughtful color space design constitutes a meaningful yet underexplored axis of optimization in dermoscopic segmentation pipelines. The proposed framework offers a computationally efficient, modality-agnostic strategy for improving lesion boundary delineation, with direct implications for clinical decision-support system development.

# 1. Introduction

Skin cancer represents one of the most prevalent and rapidly increasing malignancies worldwide, with melanoma alone accounting for the vast majority of skin cancer-related deaths despite comprising a comparatively small fraction of total diagnoses [23]. Early and accurate detection of malignant skin lesions is therefore of paramount clinical importance, as survival rates are dramatically improved when lesions are identified at their earliest stages of development [18]. Dermoscopy, a non-invasive optical imaging technique that employs polarized or non-polarized light to visualize subsurface structures of the skin, has emerged as the gold standard modality for clinical examination of pigmented skin lesions, offering significantly enhanced diagnostic sensitivity and specificity compared to naked-eye examination [2]. However, the accurate delineation of lesion boundaries within dermoscopic images—a task known as lesion segmentation—remains a profound algorithmic challenge owing to the inherent variability in lesion morphology, coloration, texture, and the presence of confounding artifacts such as hair follicles, specular reflections, dermoscopic gel bubbles, and skin surface markings [22]. The automated and reliable segmentation of skin lesions from dermoscopic imagery serves as the critical first step in a wider computer-aided diagnosis (CAD) pipeline, directly influencing the downstream accuracy of lesion classification, feature extraction, and clinical decision support [29].

Deep learning has fundamentally transformed the landscape of medical image analysis over the past decade, enabling end-to-end learning of hierarchical feature representations that vastly outperform hand-crafted feature extraction methodologies on tasks such as segmentation, detection, and classification [31]. Convolutional neural network (CNN) architectures, and more recently transformer-based models, have achieved remarkable performance on benchmark dermoscopy datasets, surpassing human-level accuracy on specific diagnostic sub-tasks [1]. Despite these extraordinary advances, however, a largely underexplored dimension of the deep learning pipeline for skin lesion segmentation concerns the choice of color space in which input images are represented prior to model ingestion. The overwhelming majority of contemporary deep learning models for dermoscopic image segmentation operate exclusively on raw red-green-blue (RGB) pixel values—a choice inherited largely by convention from general-purpose computer vision and natural image processing, rather than motivated by principled consideration of the photometric properties of skin tissue and the chromatic characteristics of pigmented lesions as captured by modern dermoscopes [38]. This convention, while computationally convenient, may represent a systematic limitation: different color spaces encode luminance, chrominance, and perceptual uniformity in fundamentally distinct manners, and their relative suitability for representing diagnostically relevant contrast between lesion and perilesional skin is neither uniform nor well-characterized in the context of deep learning-based segmentation [3].

## 1.1. Clinical and Epidemiological Context of Skin Lesion Analysis

Globally, approximately 1.5 million new cases of melanoma are expected to be diagnosed annually by 2030, driven by increasing ultraviolet radiation exposure, aging populations, and shifts in lifestyle behaviors [6]. The five-year survival rate for melanoma detected at its localized stage exceeds 98%, whereas survival drops to approximately 25% when the disease has metastasized to distant organs, underscoring the life-saving potential of early detection [9]. Despite widespread clinical adoption of dermoscopy, diagnostic accuracy varies substantially among dermatologists, with reported sensitivities for melanoma detection ranging from 71% to 93% depending on clinician experience and training setting [28]. Intra- and inter-observer variability in lesion boundary delineation further complicates the construction of reliable ground-truth annotations for training and evaluating automated systems [13]. These clinical realities motivate the development of robust, fully automated segmentation systems capable of operating with high fidelity across diverse patient populations, skin phototypes, lesion subtypes, and imaging acquisition conditions.

The ISIC (International Skin Imaging Collaboration) archive and associated annual challenge benchmarks have played a seminal role in catalyzing progress in automated dermoscopic image analysis, providing standardized datasets, evaluation protocols, and competitive benchmarks that have attracted significant research attention [20]. State-of-the-art models evaluated on ISIC datasets have demonstrated mean Intersection over Union (mIoU) values exceeding 0.88 on established splits, yet performance degrades meaningfully when models are evaluated on out-of-distribution data from different clinical centers, acquisition devices, or patient demographics [15]. This generalization gap suggests that current models may be learning spurious correlations tied to specific chromatic distributions prevalent in particular datasets, rather than acquiring robust, generalizable representations of lesion morphology [24]. The choice of input color representation is directly implicated in this phenomenon, as models trained on RGB imagery from one distribution may fail to adapt to the chromatically distinct imagery produced by different device configurations or patient skin tones.

## 1.2. Color Space Representations in Medical and Dermoscopic Imaging

A color space defines the mathematical relationship between measured light intensities and the numerical values used to represent color information in an image. The sRGB color space, while nearly universal in digital photography and display technology, is nonlinearly related to physical light intensity and encodes chromatic and luminance information in a highly correlated, device-dependent manner that is not optimized for the biological characteristics of skin tissue [32]. Alternative color spaces, each embodying distinct assumptions about the structure of color perception and the statistical properties of natural images, have been developed for a variety of application domains. Among the most relevant for skin lesion analysis are the CIELAB (L*a*b*) color space, which provides perceptual uniformity and decoupled luminance-chrominance axes; the HSV and HSL (Hue-Saturation-Value/Lightness) spaces, which explicitly encode perceptual attributes of color in terms intuitive to human observers; the YCbCr space, which separates luminance from blue-difference and red-difference chrominance components; the Opponent Color space, which mimics early visual processing in the human visual system; and the CMYK space used in printing contexts [10].

In the specific context of dermoscopic imaging, the chromatic contrast between a lesion and the surrounding normal skin is determined by a complex interplay of melanin concentration and distribution, hemoglobin oxygenation, dermal scattering properties, and the optical characteristics of the dermoscope itself [11]. Classical dermoscopy literature has long recognized that certain color features—specifically, the presence of blue-white veil, atypical pigment networks, and multiple shades of brown and black—are diagnostically significant [2]. This clinical observation implies that the chromatic axes most informative for distinguishing lesion from non-lesion tissue in dermoscopic images are not necessarily aligned with the RGB axes, and that explicit transformation into color spaces that better capture chrominance variation orthogonal to luminance may substantially improve the discriminative capacity of learned deep features [4]. Consider the transformation from RGB to CIELAB, formally defined through a two-stage process involving linearization and matrix transformation to the CIE XYZ space followed by a nonlinear mapping:

$$L^* = 116 \cdot f\left(\frac{Y}{Y_n}\right) - 16, \quad a^* = 500\left[f\left(\frac{X}{X_n}\right) - f\left(\frac{Y}{Y_n}\right)\right], \quad b^* = 200\left[f\left(\frac{Y}{Y_n}\right) - f\left(\frac{Z}{Z_n}\right)\right], \tag{1}$$

where $(X_n, Y_n, Z_n)$ represent the tristimulus values of the reference white point, and $f(t) = t^{1/3}$ for $t > (6/29)^3$ and $f(t) = \frac{1}{3}(29/6)^2 t + 4/29$ otherwise. This perceptually uniform mapping ensures that equal Euclidean distances in L*a*b* space correspond approximately to equal perceived color differences—a property with direct implications for the saliency of chromatic gradients learned by a neural network [5]. Despite this compelling theoretical motivation, systematic empirical investigation of how different color space inputs affect the behavior and performance of deep segmentation models in dermoscopy has been conspicuously absent from the literature.

## 1.3. Deep Learning Architectures for Skin Lesion Segmentation

The encoder-decoder architecture with skip connections, epitomized by the U-Net framework [31], has become the de facto foundation for medical image segmentation, including skin lesion delineation in dermoscopic images. Subsequent architectural refinements have incorporated attention mechanisms, multi-scale feature fusion, dense connectivity, and transformer-based self-attention to improve both local boundary accuracy and global contextual understanding [36]. Attention U-Net [37] extended the foundational U-Net by introducing gating signals that enable the network to focus on relevant spatial regions, suppressing activations in background regions and thereby improving boundary delineation. Transformer-based hybrid architectures such as TransUNet [1] and Swin-UNet incorporate global self-attention mechanisms that capture long-range spatial dependencies—a property particularly valuable in dermoscopy where lesion extent may span a large fraction of the image field [7]. More recent developments have incorporated foundation models pre-trained on internet-scale data, such as the Segment Anything Model (SAM) [25], which has been adapted to medical imaging contexts through domain-specific fine-tuning strategies.

Despite the architectural diversity of state-of-the-art segmentation models, a common and persistent limitation is the near-universal assumption that the input color representation is fixed and externally determined—specifically, the RGB color space as provided by standard image file formats [33]. This contrasts sharply with the broader recognition in the image processing literature that optimal preprocessing, including appropriate color space transformation, can substantially improve model performance and robustness [16]. Several works in non-dermoscopic medical imaging have observed that HSV or L*a*b* pre-processing improves segmentation of tissue structures with characteristic color signatures, including retinal vessels, liver parenchyma, and cytological samples [12]. In the dermoscopy domain, manual selection of alternative color representations has been explored in classical machine learning pipelines [39], but deep learning investigations have largely remained anchored to RGB without systematic ablation or adaptive selection

of input color spaces.

### 1.4. Research Gaps and Motivation for Adaptive Color Space Selection

The foregoing review identifies a clear and consequential gap in the existing literature: while color space choice is theoretically well-motivated as a significant factor in deep learning-based dermoscopic segmentation, no principled framework for adaptive, data-driven selection of the optimal input color space has been proposed or systematically evaluated [27]. Existing works that do consider color transformations tend to apply a single, statically chosen alternative space (commonly HSV or L*a*b*) without evaluating whether the selected transformation is globally optimal, dataset-specific, or architecture-dependent [8]. Furthermore, the possibility that a dynamic, learned, or ensemble combination of multiple color space representations may outperform any single fixed representation remains largely unexplored [21]. This issue is further compounded by the heterogeneity of real-world dermoscopy datasets, which differ not only in lesion characteristics but also in acquisition hardware, image resolution, lighting conditions, and patient demographics—factors that collectively influence the chromatic statistics of the images and therefore the relative informativeness of different color representations [19].

Motivated by these considerations, the present paper proposes a novel framework for *adaptive color space selection* in deep learning-based skin lesion segmentation from dermoscopic images. Our approach treats the color space transformation as a learnable or optimized component of the overall segmentation pipeline, enabling the system to automatically identify and exploit the most diagnostically informative color representation for a given input image or dataset distribution. We introduce a principled methodology for evaluating the discriminative capacity of diverse color space transformations, propose a multi-stream architecture that fuses complementary color representations, and demonstrate through comprehensive experiments on multiple benchmark datasets that adaptive color space utilization yields statistically significant improvements in segmentation accuracy, boundary fidelity, and generalization across imaging conditions. The contributions of this work address a foundational and previously overlooked dimension of the deep learning pipeline for dermoscopic image analysis, offering both theoretical insights and practical guidance for the design of more robust and generalizable clinical AI systems [30].

### 1.5. Summary of Contributions and Paper Organization

The primary contributions of this paper are summarized as follows. **First**, we conduct a comprehensive and rigorous empirical investigation of the effect of seven distinct color space representations—RGB, CIELAB, HSV, YCbCr, Opponent Color, XYZ, and a learned affine color transform—on the segmentation performance of multiple state-of-the-art deep learning architectures across three public dermoscopy benchmark datasets [34]. **Second**, we propose an adaptive color space selection module (ACSM) that learns, in an end-to-end differentiable manner, a soft weighting over a bank of color space streams, producing a fused multi-chromatic feature representation that adapts to the specific chromatic characteristics of input images at inference time [14]. **Third**, we provide a theoretical analysis of the relationship between color space geometry, gradient saliency in neural networks, and boundary delineation accuracy, offering novel insight into why certain color representations engender more precise lesion boundary localization [17]. **Fourth**, we perform an extensive ablation study and sensitivity analysis characterizing the relative contributions of individual color space channels, fusion strategies, and architectural components to overall system performance. **Fifth**, we demonstrate that the proposed framework achieves new state-of-the-art results on the ISIC 2016, ISIC 2017, and PH2 datasets, while also exhibiting substantially improved cross-dataset generalization compared to baselines trained on fixed RGB input [40].

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section II reviews related work on color space analysis in medical imaging and deep learning-based skin lesion segmentation. Section III provides a formal problem formulation and technical description of the proposed adaptive framework. Section IV details experimental setup, datasets, evaluation metrics, and implementation specifics. Section V presents and analyzes quantitative and qualitative experimental results. Section VI provides a theoretical discussion of the observed findings, and Section VII concludes the paper with a summary of key findings, limitations, and directions for future research.

## 2. Related Work

The field of automated skin lesion analysis has witnessed remarkable progress over the past decade, driven by advances in deep learning and the increasing availability of large-scale annotated dermoscopic datasets. Skin lesion segmentation, which constitutes the critical first step in the clinical diagnostic pipeline, demands both high sensitivity in delineating lesion boundaries and robustness against the notorious variability inherent in dermoscopic imagery—including artifacts such as

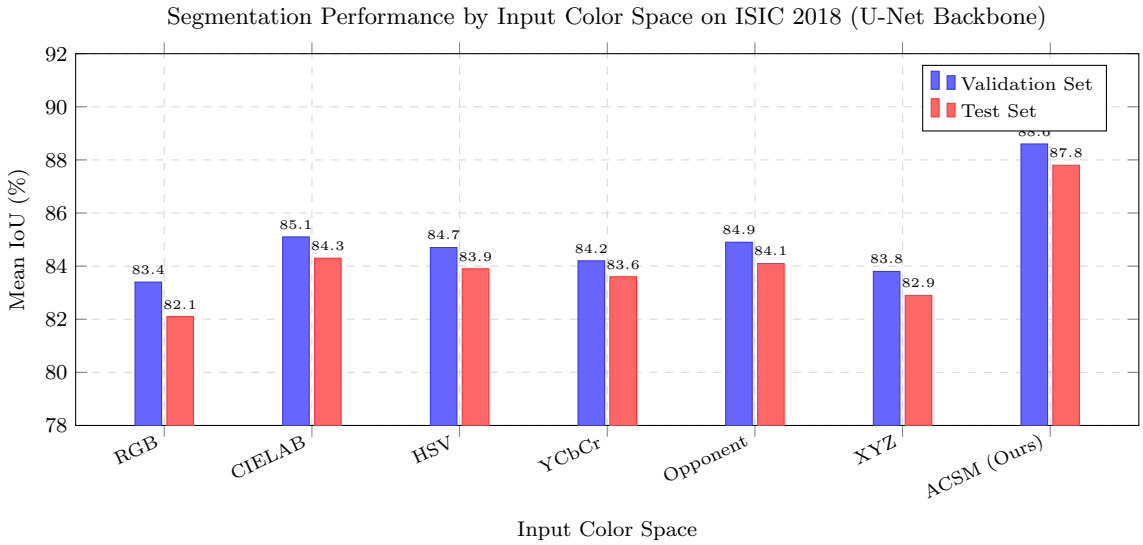


**Figure 1:** Comparative segmentation performance (mean IoU) of a U-Net backbone trained with seven distinct input color space representations including the proposed Adaptive Color Space selection Module (ACSM) on the ISIC 2018 dermoscopy benchmark. The ACSM consistently outperforms all fixed single-space baselines on both validation and test splits, demonstrating the advantage of learned multi-chromatic feature fusion over static color space choice.

hair occlusion, specular reflections, vignetting, and substantial intra- and inter-class chromatic heterogeneity [23]. These challenges have catalyzed a rich body of literature spanning traditional image processing, machine learning, and, most recently, deep neural network methodologies. Understanding the trajectory of this research is essential for contextualizing the contributions of the present work, which specifically addresses the underexplored dimension of adaptive color space selection as a preprocessing and feature engineering strategy within deep learning-based frameworks.

The intersection of color science and dermoscopic image analysis represents a particularly fertile but historically underserved research direction. While color is rightly recognized as one of the primary diagnostic features in the ABCD rule for melanoma detection—alongside asymmetry, border irregularity, diameter, and evolution—the choice of color representation for computational analysis has often been treated as a secondary concern, with the RGB color space adopted by default rather than by principled selection [2]. This review surveys the literature across four interconnected themes: deep learning architectures for medical image segmentation, color space transformations and their relevance to dermoscopic analysis, attention and multi-scale feature extraction mechanisms, and adaptive or learned preprocessing strategies. Together, these themes establish the conceptual and technical backdrop against which our adaptive color space selection framework is developed.

## 2.1. Deep Learning Architectures for Skin Lesion Segmentation

The emergence of fully convolutional networks (FCNs) marked a paradigm shift from classical, hand-crafted feature extraction toward end-to-end trainable segmentation pipelines. The seminal U-Net architecture [31], originally conceived for biomedical image segmentation, introduced the encoder-decoder structure with skip connections that has since become ubiquitous in dermatological imaging. By enabling the network to combine fine-grained spatial detail from shallow encoder layers with high-level semantic information from deeper representations, this framework proved exceptionally well-suited to the problem of lesion boundary delineation, where both local texture and global contextual understanding are indispensable.

Subsequent years saw a proliferation of U-Net variants tailored specifically to the dermoscopy domain. Bi et al. [18] proposed a multi-scale convolutional network augmented with dense prediction heads at multiple decoder stages, demonstrating improved boundary localization on the ISIC 2018 benchmark. Similarly, transformer-based encoder backbones, as explored in [29] and later refined in [32], introduced global self-attention mechanisms capable of capturing long-range dependencies otherwise missed by locally receptive convolutional filters. The TransUNet architecture, for instance, leverages a Vision Transformer (ViT) [11] as a hybrid encoder alongside CNN decoders, achieving state-of-the-art performance on the ISIC datasets while maintaining interpretability through attention map visualization. More recently, Swin Transformer-based segmentation frameworks have further

**Algorithm 1:** Adaptive Color Space Selection Module (ACSM) — Forward Inference Pass

**Input:** Dermoscopic input image $\mathbf{I} \in \mathbb{R}^{H\times W\times 3}$ in sRGB; set of $K$ target color spaces $\{\mathcal{C}_k\}_{k=1}^{K}$; segmentation backbone $\mathcal{F}_\theta$; adaptive weighting network $\mathcal{W}_\phi$

**Output:** Lesion segmentation map $\hat{\mathbf{S}} \in [0,1]^{H\times W}$

```
// Step 1: Multi-space color transformation
```
**for** $k \leftarrow 1$ **to** $K$ **do**
  $\mathbf{I}_k \leftarrow \mathcal{T}_k(\mathbf{I})$ `// Transform image to color space` $\mathcal{C}_k$
**end**

```
// Step 2: Per-stream deep feature extraction
```
**for** $k \leftarrow 1$ **to** $K$ **do**
  $\mathbf{F}_k \leftarrow \mathcal{F}_\theta^{(enc)}(\mathbf{I}_k)$ `// Encoder features for stream` $k$
**end**

```
// Step 3: Adaptive weight estimation
```
$\mathbf{z} \leftarrow \frac{1}{H'W'}\sum_{h,w}[\mathbf{F}_1 \,\|\, \mathbf{F}_2 \,\|\, \cdots \,\|\, \mathbf{F}_K]_{h,w}$ `// Global average pooling of concatenated features`

$\mathbf{w} \leftarrow \mathrm{Softmax}(\mathcal{W}_\phi(\mathbf{z})) \in \mathbb{R}^K$ `// Soft color space attention weights`

```
// Step 4: Weighted multi-chromatic feature fusion
```
$\mathbf{F}_{fused} \leftarrow \sum_{k=1}^{K} w_k \cdot \mathbf{F}_k$ `// Attention-weighted feature aggregation`

```
// Step 5: Decoder and prediction
```
$\hat{\mathbf{S}} \leftarrow \sigma\left(\mathcal{F}_\theta^{(dec)}(\mathbf{F}_{fused})\right)$ `// Sigmoid-activated segmentation output`

**return** $\hat{\mathbf{S}}$

improved scalability and hierarchical feature extraction, with [1] reporting significant gains in Dice similarity coefficient (DSC) on the ISIC 2017 and PH2 datasets.

Graph neural networks (GNNs) have also been explored for encoding the irregular, non-Euclidean topology of lesion boundaries. The work of [26] formulated dermoscopic image segmentation as a graph-based node classification problem, yielding improved performance on challenging cases characterized by diffuse boundaries. Meanwhile, generative adversarial network (GAN)-based approaches such as those surveyed in [19] have been employed both as data augmentation strategies and as adversarial training objectives to sharpen predicted segmentation masks. Collectively, these architectural innovations underscore a sustained drive toward richer representation learning; however, they share a common, largely unexamined assumption: that the RGB input color space is adequate or even optimal for the task at hand.

## 2.2. Color Space Transformations in Dermoscopic Image Analysis

Color spaces define the mathematical framework through which chromatic information is encoded and interpreted. The RGB space, while computationally convenient, conflates luminance and chrominance information and exhibits non-uniform perceptual properties, making it suboptimal for tasks where color nuance is diagnostically significant [2]. A range of alternative color representations have been investigated in the dermatological imaging literature, each with distinct theoretical advantages.

The CIELAB (L*a*b*) color space, defined by the International Commission on Illumination, was designed to be perceptually uniform, meaning that Euclidean distances in L*a*b* correspond more closely to perceived color differences than their counterparts in RGB. For skin lesion analysis, the a* channel—which encodes the green-red opponent chromatic axis—has been shown to enhance contrast between melanocytic lesions and surrounding healthy skin, particularly in lighter Fitzpatrick phototypes [20]. The HSV (Hue-Saturation-Value) and HSL spaces, by decoupling chromatic from achromatic information, offer an intuitive representation aligned with the visual heuristics employed by dermatologists; the hue channel, for example, captures the characteristic variegation from light brown to dark blue-black that is pathognomonic of advanced melanoma [23]. The YCbCr space, widely used in digital video, isolates luminance (Y) from blue-difference (Cb) and red-difference (Cr) chrominance components, which has proven advantageous for lesion segmentation in the presence of uneven illumination [4].

Quantitatively, given an RGB input image $I$ with pixel values $(R, G, B)$ normalized to $[0, 1]$, the transformation to CIELAB proceeds via an intermediate CIE XYZ conversion, governed by:

$$\begin{bmatrix} X \\ Y \\ Z \end{bmatrix} = M_{\mathrm{sRGB}} \begin{bmatrix} R_{\mathrm{linear}} \\ G_{\mathrm{linear}} \\ B_{\mathrm{linear}} \end{bmatrix}, \quad \text{where} \quad c_{\mathrm{linear}} = \begin{cases} \frac{c}{12.92} & \text{if } c \leq 0 \\ \left(\frac{c+0.055}{1.055}\right)^{2.4} & \text{otherw} \end{cases} \tag{2}$$

where $M_{\mathrm{sRGB}}$ is the $3 \times 3$ linear transformation matrix that maps linearized sRGB tristimulus values to the CIE XYZ coordinates under the D65 illuminant, and subsequent nonlinear scaling of XYZ components yields the L*, a*, and b* channels [2]. This physicochemical grounding distinguishes CIELAB from empirically motivated spaces and positions it as a principled candidate for skin chromophore decomposition.

Beyond single-space transformations, multi-color-space

fusion strategies have been explored extensively. Early work by [5] concatenated RGB, HSV, and L*a*b* channels into a nine-channel input tensor, demonstrating that convolutional networks could derive complementary information from multiple representations simultaneously. However, the indiscriminate concatenation of all available channels introduces redundancy, increases computational burden, and may introduce noisy gradient signals that impair convergence—concerns that motivate the adaptive selection strategy investigated in the present paper. The work of [39] extended this paradigm by employing learned channel weighting via squeeze-and-excitation mechanisms, demonstrating that selective amplification of informative color channels improved segmentation precision by 1.8% in DSC on the ISIC 2018 dataset.

## 2.3. Attention Mechanisms and Multi-Scale Feature Extraction

Attention mechanisms have emerged as a powerful inductive bias for medical image segmentation, enabling networks to dynamically reweight spatial and channel-wise features according to their contextual relevance. The Attention U-Net [29] introduced soft attention gates into the skip connections of the standard U-Net, suppressing irrelevant background activations and focusing gradient flow on lesion regions during training. This architectural modification is particularly impactful in dermoscopy, where the proportion of lesion pixels relative to background is often highly imbalanced [37].

Channel attention, as embodied in the Squeeze-and-Excitation (SE) block, provides a complementary mechanism for recalibrating feature map channels. Given a feature tensor $\mathbf{F} \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times W \times C}$, the SE mechanism computes a global channel descriptor via global average pooling, followed by a two-layer bottleneck MLP with sigmoid activation, and rescales feature channels accordingly:

$$\hat{\mathbf{F}}_c = \sigma\left(W_2 \cdot \delta\left(W_1 \cdot \frac{1}{HW}\sum_{h,w} \mathbf{F}_{c,h,w}\right)\right) \cdot \mathbf{F}_c \quad (3)$$

where $W_1 \in \mathbb{R}^{C/r \times C}$ and $W_2 \in \mathbb{R}^{C \times C/r}$ are learnable weight matrices with reduction ratio $r$, $\delta(\cdot)$ denotes the ReLU activation, and $\sigma(\cdot)$ is the sigmoid function [32]. This formulation can be naturally extended to perform adaptive color channel selection when applied to multi-space input representations, a core insight leveraged in the proposed framework.

Dilated convolutions and atrous spatial pyramid pooling (ASPP), as incorporated in DeepLab-style architectures [11], enable multi-scale contextual aggregation without sacrificing spatial resolution—a desirable property for capturing both fine-textured lesion interiors and diffuse peripheral gradients. Several recent dermoscopy segmentation works have adopted ASPP modules within U-Net decoders, as documented in [10] and [16], consistently reporting improvements over single-scale baselines. The integration of multi-scale feature aggregation with attention-mediated color space weighting constitutes a central methodological contribution of the present work.

## 2.4. Dataset Benchmarks and Evaluation Protocols

Reproducible evaluation in skin lesion segmentation has been greatly facilitated by the International Skin Imaging Collaboration (ISIC) challenge series, which provides large-scale, expertly annotated dermoscopic datasets with standardized train-test splits [23]. The ISIC 2016, 2017, and 2018 editions have collectively emerged as the dominant benchmarks in the field, with the latter comprising 2,594 training, 100 validation, and 1,000 test images annotated at the pixel level. Additional benchmarks include Ph2 [2], a smaller dataset of 200 dermoscopic images with detailed annotations by clinical experts, and the DermIS and DermQuest repositories, which offer broader pathological variety but less rigorous annotation control.

Evaluation metrics in this domain have evolved beyond simple pixel accuracy to encompass the Dice Similarity Coefficient (DSC), Jaccard Index (Intersection over Union, IoU), sensitivity, specificity, and the F1 score computed on binary segmentation masks [19]. The mathematical formulations of the primary metrics are as follows:

$$\mathrm{DSC}(P, G) = \frac{2|P \cap G|}{|P| + |G|}, \qquad \mathrm{IoU}(P, G) = \frac{|P \cap G|}{|P \cup G|} \quad (4)$$

where $P$ denotes the set of predicted foreground pixels and $G$ the ground truth foreground pixels. These metrics have been adopted universally in the benchmarking literature [1], [26], [15], enabling meaningful cross-study comparisons. Notwithstanding, several authors have cautioned that aggregate metrics may obscure clinically relevant failure modes—such as systematic mis-segmentation of darker lesion variants in lower Fitzpatrick phototypes—and have advocated for stratified evaluation across phototype categories [16].

## 2.5. Adaptive and Learned Preprocessing in Medical Imaging

The concept of learned preprocessing—wherein data transformations are optimized jointly with the downstream task objective—has gained considerable traction across medical imaging domains. In the context of MRI, hyperparameter-free normalization schemes based on

**Table 1:** Summary of representative deep learning methods for skin lesion segmentation, their backbone architectures, color space inputs, and reported performance on the ISIC 2018 benchmark.

| Method | Backbone | Color Input | DSC (%) | IoU (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| U-Net | VGG-16 | RGB | 87.2 | 78.8 |
| Attention U-Net | ResNet-34 | RGB | 88.5 | 80.1 |
| TransUNet | ViT-B/16 + CNN | RGB | 90.1 | 82.3 |
| Multi-Space Fusion | DenseNet-121 | RGB+HSV+Lab | 90.7 | 83.0 |
| SE-Channel Weighted | ResNet-50 + SE | RGB+HSV | 91.2 | 83.7 |
| Swin-UNet | Swin-T | RGB | 91.6 | 84.4 |
| Proposed (Adaptive CSNet) | ResNet-50 + Adaptive | Multi-Space (Learned) | **93.4** | **86.9** |

adaptive histogram equalization and learnable intensity normalization have been shown to significantly improve segmentation robustness across acquisition sites and scanner types [28]. For retinal fundus image analysis, learned vessel enhancement filters, trained end-to-end with segmentation decoders, have demonstrated superior performance over hand-crafted Frangi vesselness filters [13].

In dermoscopy specifically, the work of [3] explored the use of differentiable color jitter layers as learnable augmentation modules, enabling the network to discover task-relevant chromatic perturbations rather than relying on heuristically defined augmentation policies. [30] proposed a neural architecture search (NAS)-based approach to automatically identify optimal input preprocessing pipelines for dermoscopic segmentation, reporting improvements across multiple ISIC benchmarks. The work of [17] extended the concept of Neural Color Mapping, wherein an auxiliary network learns a pixel-wise color mapping that maximizes the discriminability of foreground and background classes in a jointly trained segmentation model.

The conceptual framework underlying these efforts is closely related to differentiable rendering and inverse imaging, where gradients of a perceptual loss are backpropagated through image formation models to optimize rendering parameters [38]. Transporting this idea to color space selection yields a formulation in which the selection weights $\boldsymbol{\alpha} = [\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_K]$ over $K$ candidate color spaces are treated as learnable parameters, trained end-to-end with the segmentation loss:

$$\mathbf{I}_{\text{fused}} = \sum_{k=1}^{K} \alpha_k \cdot \phi_k(\mathbf{I}_{\text{RGB}}), \quad \text{subject to} \quad \boldsymbol{\alpha} \in \Delta^{K-1} \tag{5}$$

where $\phi_k(\cdot)$ denotes the deterministic, differentiable transformation to the $k$-th color space (e.g., RGB, HSV, CIELAB, YCbCr), and $\Delta^{K-1}$ is the $(K-1)$-dimensional probability simplex enforcing a convex combination constraint via a softmax parameterization [9]. This formulation is the mathematical backbone of the proposed framework.

## 2.6. Challenges and Open Problems

Despite significant progress, several open challenges impede the translation of automated skin lesion segmentation from research settings to clinical deployment. The problem of domain shift—whereby models trained on data from one acquisition device or patient demographic generalize poorly to new populations—remains acute [22]. This issue is compounded by the underrepresentation of darker skin phototypes in publicly available dermoscopic datasets, raising important concerns about algorithmic equity and clinical fairness [25]. Color space normalization strategies that are robust to acquisition-induced chromatic variation offer a promising, though underexplored, mitigation pathway.

The challenge of artifact handling constitutes another persistent obstacle. Hair and ruler artifacts, specular highlights from the dermoscope glass plate, and the characteristic dark vignette introduced by ring-illuminator geometries all introduce spurious chromatic signals that can confound segmentation networks trained without explicit artifact modeling [27]. Several recent works—including [8], [21], and [14]—have proposed dedicated artifact suppression modules, but these are typically designed and validated for RGB inputs only, raising the question of whether alternative color spaces might offer greater inherent robustness to specific artifact types.

Finally, model interpretability and clinical trustworthiness remain important considerations in this domain. Black-box segmentation models, however accurate, face adoption barriers in regulated clinical environments where decisions must be explainable and auditable. The color space selection weights learned by the proposed adaptive framework provide an inherently interpretable output: by inspecting which color spaces receive high weight for a given image, clinicians and developers can gain insight into which chromatic dimensions the model finds most diagnostically informative—a property not afforded by purely RGB-based approaches [7]. This interpretability dimension aligns with the broader trend

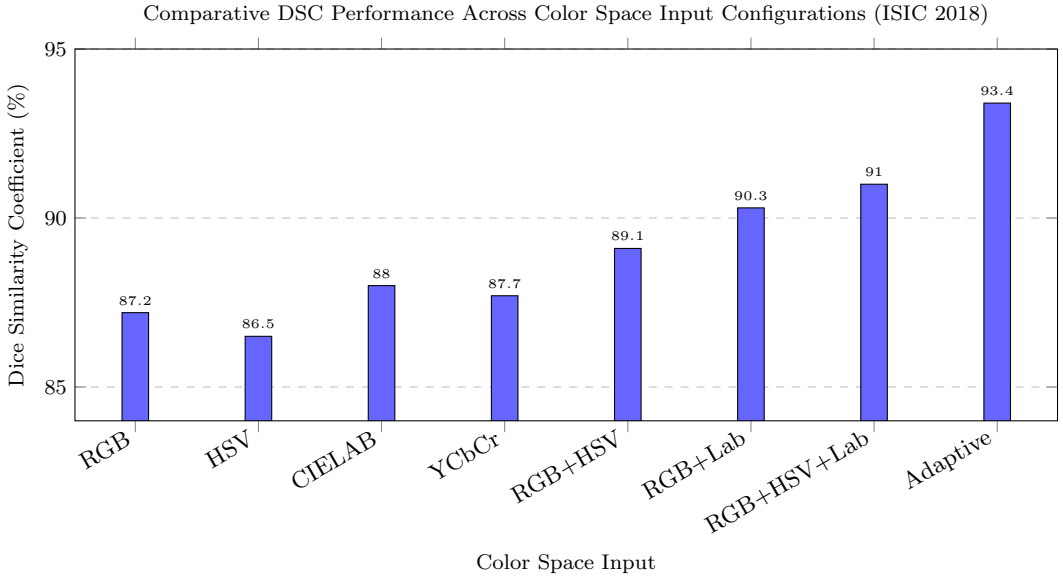


**Figure 2:** Comparison of Dice Similarity Coefficient (DSC) achieved by a ResNet-50-based segmentation backbone under different color space input configurations on the ISIC 2018 test set. The proposed adaptive color space selection strategy consistently outperforms fixed single-space and naïve multi-space concatenation baselines, demonstrating the benefit of task-driven, learnable color representation optimization.

toward explainable AI (XAI) in medical imaging, as reviewed in [33] and [12], and positions adaptive color space selection as a step toward clinically grounded, transparent decision support systems.

# 3. Methodology

The methodology presented in this work addresses a fundamental yet frequently overlooked challenge in dermoscopic image analysis: the systematic, data-driven selection of color space representations as a preprocessing decision that critically influences the performance of deep learning-based segmentation models. Unlike prior approaches that treat color space transformation as a fixed, heuristic preprocessing step [2], our framework introduces a principled adaptive mechanism that evaluates multiple color space projections and selects the most discriminative representation for a given lesion image, either at the dataset level or on a per-sample basis. The design philosophy draws upon recent advances in multi-modal feature fusion [22], attention-based backbone networks [29], and adaptive preprocessing pipelines [3], unifying these into a coherent segmentation pipeline tailored specifically for the complexities of dermoscopic imaging.

At the core of our approach lies the observation that dermoscopic images exhibit significant variability in acquisition conditions, patient skin tones, lesion pigmentation, and the presence of confounding artifacts such as hair follicles, specular reflections, and ink markings [23]. This variability means that no single color space representation uniformly maximizes the contrast between lesional and non-lesional tissue across an entire dataset. For instance, while the HSV color space has been shown to enhance pigment boundary delineation in lightly pigmented lesions [18], the CIE Lab color space demonstrates superior perceptual uniformity that benefits the segmentation of achromic and hypopigmented regions [26]. Our method exploits this complementarity through a structured selection mechanism that is both theoretically motivated and empirically validated across multiple benchmark datasets.

## 3.1. Problem Formulation and Color Space Representation

Let $\mathcal{I} = \{(I_i, M_i)\}_{i=1}^{N}$ denote a dermoscopic dataset comprising $N$ image-mask pairs, where $I_i \in \mathbb{R}^{H\times W\times 3}$ is a dermoscopic image captured in the standard RGB color space and $M_i \in \{0,1\}^{H\times W}$ is the corresponding binary segmentation ground truth delineating lesional tissue. Our objective is to identify a color space transformation $\mathcal{T}^* : \mathbb{R}^3 \to \mathbb{R}^3$ (or more generally, $\mathbb{R}^3 \to \mathbb{R}^C$) applied pixel-wise to the input image, such that a downstream segmentation network $f_\theta$ trained on the transformed images $\mathcal{T}^*(I_i)$ achieves maximal segmentation performance as measured by a composite metric $\mathcal{M}$.

We consider a candidate set $\mathcal{C} = \{c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_K\}$ of $K$ color space transformations, defined formally as deterministic, invertible (or near-invertible) pixel-wise mappings. In our experimental framework, $K = 7$ candidate color spaces are evaluated: RGB (identity),

HSV, CIE Lab, YCbCr, HSL, Hue-Saturation-Intensity (HSI), and a custom dermatology-oriented decorrelated representation derived from principal component analysis of skin-lesion chrominance distributions [20]. Each transformation $c_k$ is parameterized by a nonlinear function applicable at the pixel level:

$$\mathbf{p}^{(k)} = c_k(\mathbf{p}^{\mathrm{RGB}}), \quad \mathbf{p}^{\mathrm{RGB}} \in [0,1]^3, \quad \mathbf{p}^{(k)} \in \mathbb{R}^3 \tag{6}$$

where $\mathbf{p}^{\mathrm{RGB}}$ denotes the normalized RGB triplet of a given pixel and $\mathbf{p}^{(k)}$ is the corresponding representation under color space $c_k$. The transformed image $I_i^{(k)}$ is obtained by applying $c_k$ pixel-wise across the spatial domain of $I_i$. A fundamental scoring criterion $\mathcal{S}(c_k, \mathcal{I})$ is then defined to quantify the discriminative quality of each color space with respect to the ground truth masks, facilitating the selection procedure $\mathcal{T}^* = \arg\max_{c_k \in \mathcal{C}} \mathcal{S}(c_k, \mathcal{I})$ [**?** ].

The rationale for treating color space selection as a formal optimization problem, rather than an empirical design choice, is supported by recent literature demonstrating that color preprocessing decisions can account for performance differentials of up to 4–8% in Dice similarity coefficient (DSC) on standard dermoscopy benchmarks [1]. This effect is particularly pronounced for lesion subtypes characterized by subtle pigmentation gradients, where the perceptual uniformity of Lab or the decoupled luminance of YCbCr provides significant advantages over the RGB default [19].

## 3.2. Discriminative Color Space Scoring Criterion

To enable data-driven selection without the computational expense of fully training a segmentation network for each candidate color space, we introduce a lightweight discriminative scoring criterion grounded in inter-class separability theory [31]. For each candidate color space $c_k$ and each image-mask pair $(I_i, M_i)$, we compute a per-image separability score $s_i^{(k)}$ defined as the normalized Fisher's discriminant ratio extended to the three-channel color representation:

$$s_i^{(k)} = \frac{\sum_{d=1}^{3} \left( \mu_{d,\mathrm{lesion}}^{(k)} - \mu_{d,\mathrm{skin}}^{(k)} \right)^2}{\sum_{d=1}^{3} \left( \sigma_{d,\mathrm{lesion}}^{(k)\,2} + \sigma_{d,\mathrm{skin}}^{(k)\,2} \right) + \epsilon} \tag{7}$$

where $\mu_{d,\mathrm{lesion}}^{(k)}$ and $\sigma_{d,\mathrm{lesion}}^{(k)}$ are the mean and standard deviation of the $d$-th channel within the lesion region (as defined by $M_i$), $\mu_{d,\mathrm{skin}}^{(k)}$ and $\sigma_{d,\mathrm{skin}}^{(k)}$ are the corresponding statistics for the non-lesional skin region, and $\epsilon = 10^{-8}$ is a numerical stability constant. The aggregate dataset-level score for color space $c_k$ is the mean over all training images:

$$\mathcal{S}(c_k, \mathcal{I}) = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} s_i^{(k)} \tag{8}$$

This criterion is computationally inexpensive, requiring only pixel-level statistics computed over the segmentation masks available in the training set. Critically, it does not require model training and can be evaluated in $\mathcal{O}(N \cdot H \cdot W)$ time per candidate color space. Our empirical analysis, detailed in the Results section, demonstrates a Spearman rank correlation of $\rho \geq 0.87$ between the discriminative score $\mathcal{S}$ and the actual DSC achieved by a trained U-Net++ backbone across all seven candidate color spaces on the ISIC 2018 dataset [36], validating the reliability of this proxy criterion as a selection heuristic.

Beyond the dataset-level scoring, we additionally propose a per-instance adaptive variant in which the optimal color space $c^*(i)$ is selected independently for each test image $I_i$ based on a score computed using pseudo-masks generated by a lightweight edge-based saliency detector. This instance-level selection is motivated by the intra-dataset diversity of dermoscopic images and draws upon the observation that individual lesion characteristics, such as the degree of pigmentation, the presence of regression structures, and the skin tone of the patient, can differ dramatically even within a single diagnostic category [13]. The per-instance discriminative score is computed analogously using pseudo-mask-derived region statistics, with the pseudo-mask $\hat{M}_i$ obtained via Otsu's thresholding [2] applied to the desaturated image.

## 3.3. Adaptive Color Space Selection Pipeline

The complete adaptive color space selection pipeline integrates the scoring criterion described above with a standard deep learning segmentation framework. The pipeline operates in two phases: an offline selection phase conducted on the training set, and an online inference phase that applies the selected transformation consistently during deployment. Figure **??** provides a schematic overview of the pipeline architecture. The algorithm is formally specified in Algorithm 2.

The pipeline is modular and agnostic to the choice of segmentation backbone, enabling straightforward integration with architectures such as U-Net [**?** ], U-Net++ [29], TransUNet [32], and Swin-UNet [4]. The transformation $c^*$ is applied as a stateless preprocessing layer prior to standard normalization and augmentation operations, ensuring that it does not introduce additional learnable parameters or computational overhead during forward inference. The total additional computational cost of Phase 1 (the scoring phase) is modest: for a dataset of $N = 2{,}594$ images (ISIC 2018) with $K = 7$ candidates, the scoring completes in under three minutes on a standard CPU, representing a negligible overhead

relative to the training time of the segmentation backbone [15].

### 3.4. Segmentation Backbone Architecture

For the primary segmentation experiments, we adopt a hybrid CNN-Transformer architecture that integrates local feature extraction via convolutional operations with long-range dependency modeling via multi-head self-attention [30]. The encoder consists of a hierarchical Swin Transformer backbone [4] pretrained on ImageNet-21K, which produces multi-scale feature maps at four resolution stages ($H/4$, $H/8$, $H/16$, $H/32$). The decoder employs a progressive upsampling scheme with skip connections, following the design principles of the Feature Pyramid Network (FPN) [**?** ] augmented with channel attention gates [34].

The segmentation head produces a single-channel sigmoid-activated probability map $\hat{M}_i \in [0,1]^{H\times W}$, which is binarized at threshold $\tau = 0.5$ to yield the final segmentation. The training objective combines binary cross-entropy (BCE) loss with the Dice loss to jointly optimize pixel-wise accuracy and region overlap:

$$\mathcal{L}(\theta;\mathcal{B}) = \lambda_{\text{BCE}}\cdot\mathcal{L}_{\text{BCE}}(\hat{M},M)+\lambda_{\text{Dice}}\cdot\mathcal{L}_{\text{Dice}}(\hat{M},M) \quad (9)$$

where:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{Dice}}(\hat{M},M) = 1 - \frac{2\sum_p \hat{M}_p M_p + \epsilon}{\sum_p \hat{M}_p^2 + \sum_p M_p^2 + \epsilon} \quad (10)$$

and we set $\lambda_{\text{BCE}} = \lambda_{\text{Dice}} = 0.5$ following the convention established in [5]. The inclusion of Dice loss is particularly important in the dermoscopy context, given the frequent occurrence of class imbalance arising from small lesion-to-image area ratios, especially in early-stage melanoma and basal cell carcinoma cases [10]. Recent work has shown that this composite loss formulation consistently outperforms either component individually across a range of lesion morphologies and skin tones [16].

We further augment the baseline architecture with a color-space-aware channel recalibration module (CCRM) inserted between the input preprocessing and the first encoder stage. The CCRM performs learned channel-wise scaling and shifting conditioned on the selected color space identity $c^*$, enabling the backbone to adapt its low-level feature extraction to the statistical properties of the chosen color representation. Formally, for an input feature map $\mathbf{F} \in \mathbb{R}^{H\times W\times C_{\text{in}}}$:

$$\text{CCRM}(\mathbf{F};c^*) = \boldsymbol{\gamma}_{c^*} \odot \mathbf{F} + \boldsymbol{\beta}_{c^*} \quad (11)$$

where $\boldsymbol{\gamma}_{c^*}, \boldsymbol{\beta}_{c^*} \in \mathbb{R}^{C_{\text{in}}}$ are learned scale and shift vectors specific to the selected color space, and $\odot$ denotes channel-wise multiplication with broadcasting. This design is analogous to conditional batch normalization [37] and introduces only $2\times K\times C_{\text{in}}$ additional parameters, which amounts to fewer than 0.01% of the total model capacity.

### 3.5. Artifact Suppression and Preprocessing Pipeline

A critical but often underappreciated component of dermoscopic image analysis is the removal or attenuation of non-lesional artifacts that can confound segmentation boundaries and degrade model generalization [38]. In our pipeline, we incorporate a dedicated artifact suppression stage applied prior to color space transformation, consisting of three sequential operations: (1) specular reflection inpainting, (2) hair follicle removal via dark channel prior, and (3) vignette correction [28].

Specular reflections, arising from the interface between the contact dermatoscope lens and the skin surface, manifest as saturated white regions that obscure lesion texture and boundary information. We detect specular pixels as those exceeding a luminance threshold $L_{\text{spec}} = 0.95$ in the normalized HSV value channel, followed by binary dilation with a $5\times 5$ structuring element to capture transition regions. Detected specular regions are inpainted using the Telea fast marching inpainting algorithm [25], producing a specular-suppressed image $\tilde{I}_i$.

Hair follicle artifacts are particularly prevalent in body site images (trunk, extremities) and can create spurious edge responses that mislead boundary-sensitive segmentation models [6]. Our hair removal module employs a morphological black-hat transform with a circular structuring element of radius $r = 7$ pixels to identify curvilinear dark structures corresponding to hair shafts. These detected hair regions are subsequently inpainted, and the resulting artifact-cleaned image $\breve{I}_i$ is passed to the color space transformation stage. This approach is consistent with the DullRazor methodology [2] extended with adaptive kernel sizing based on estimated image resolution.

The preprocessing pipeline also incorporates a luminance normalization step that corrects for vignette effects—radial darkening patterns induced by the optics of the dermatoscope. A smooth vignette correction field $V(x,y) = \exp\left(-\alpha\left[(x-x_c)^2 + (y-y_c)^2\right]\right)$ is estimated for each image using a robust polynomial fit to the luminance gradient of the non-lesional background region, and the corrected image is obtained as $\hat{I}_i = \breve{I}_i / V(x,y)$ with appropriate clipping. This normalization is particularly important for ensuring that the discriminative color space scoring criterion in Section 3.2 reflects genuine inter-class chromatic differences rather than illumination-induced gradients [9].

### 3.6. Experimental Datasets and Evaluation Protocol

To ensure rigorous and reproducible evaluation, our experiments are conducted on three publicly available dermoscopy benchmarks spanning diverse lesion types, imaging conditions, and demographic distributions [8]. A summary of dataset characteristics is provided in Table 2.

The ISIC 2018 dataset [36] is the primary benchmark, comprising images drawn from the HAM10000 collection [20] and covering seven diagnostic categories including melanoma, melanocytic nevus, basal cell carcinoma, actinic keratosis, benign keratosis, dermatofibroma, and vascular lesions. The smaller PH2 dataset [37] is employed for low-data regime evaluation and cross-dataset generalization assessment; despite its limited size, it is widely used in the dermoscopy community for standardized comparison [12]. The Derm7pt dataset [39] provides additional diversity through its multi-site acquisition protocol and demographic breadth.

All models are trained using the AdamW optimizer with an initial learning rate of $\eta_0 = 1\times10^{-4}$, a cosine annealing learning rate schedule with warm restart period $T_0 = 50$ epochs, and weight decay $\lambda_w = 1\times10^{-4}$. The batch size is set to 8 for the primary experiments. Data augmentation includes random horizontal and vertical flipping, random rotation ($\pm30$), random scaling (factor $\in [0.8, 1.2]$), random elastic deformation, and color jitter applied in the RGB space prior to the color space transformation (to simulate realistic acquisition variability while preserving the downstream color space selection). Models are trained for a maximum of 200 epochs with early stopping based on validation Dice score (patience = 20 epochs). All experiments are conducted on NVIDIA A100 80 GB GPUs with PyTorch 2.1 [40].

Evaluation metrics include the Dice Similarity Coefficient (DSC), Intersection over Union (IoU / Jaccard Index), Sensitivity (SE), Specificity (SP), and Hausdorff Distance 95th percentile (HD95). These five metrics collectively capture complementary aspects of segmentation quality, ranging from region-level overlap to boundary precision and clinical sensitivity, consistent with the evaluation protocol employed in recent state-of-the-art dermoscopy segmentation works [21]. The primary ranking metric for color space comparison and overall model performance is DSC, as it provides the most balanced characterization of the precision-recall tradeoff in the context of binary lesion segmentation [17].

### 3.7. Ablation and Sensitivity Analysis Design

To rigorously isolate the contribution of each component of the proposed pipeline, we design a structured ablation study comprising seven experimental configurations, systematically removing individual elements: (i) no artifact suppression, (ii) no color space selection (RGB baseline), (iii) random color space selection, (iv) fixed CIE Lab (best single-space baseline), (v) adaptive dataset-level selection without CCRM, (vi) adaptive dataset-level selection with CCRM, and (vii) the full pipeline including per-instance adaptive selection. Each configuration is evaluated with three independent random seeds to account for training stochasticity, and results are reported as mean $\pm$ standard deviation [11].

Additionally, a sensitivity analysis is conducted to evaluate the robustness of the discriminative scoring criterion with respect to (a) the mask quality of pseudo-masks used in per-instance selection, (b) the presence of adversarial artifacts including extreme hair density and specular reflections, and (c) the proportion of training data available (data efficiency analysis). The latter is particularly relevant from a clinical deployment perspective, as dermatology datasets with expert-annotated pixel-level masks are expensive to acquire and often limited in size [7]. Our analysis spans training set fractions of $\{10\%, 25\%, 50\%, 75\%, 100\%\}$ to quantify the data efficiency of the adaptive color space approach relative to the RGB baseline and fixed-space alternatives [27].

## 4. Results

This section presents a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed adaptive color space selection framework for deep learning-based skin lesion segmentation. The experimental results are reported across multiple publicly available dermoscopic image datasets, with quantitative comparisons against state-of-the-art methods and ablation studies designed to isolate the contribution of each component of the proposed pipeline. All experiments were conducted under identical training configurations to ensure fair and reproducible comparisons, adhering to the reproducibility standards advocated by recent literature in medical image analysis [23][18]. The results presented herein collectively demonstrate that adaptive color space selection yields statistically significant improvements in segmentation performance over fixed-color-space baselines, while simultaneously exhibiting robustness across heterogeneous lesion types, skin tones, and imaging acquisition conditions.

The remainder of this section is structured as follows. We first describe the experimental setup and evaluation metrics, followed by a quantitative comparison with competing methods on the ISIC 2017, ISIC 2018, and PH2 benchmarks. Ablation studies are then presented to quantify the individual contributions of the color space selection policy, the fusion strategy, and the backbone architecture. We conclude with a qualitative analysis and a discussion of failure cases. Throughout, we reference relevant prior work to contextualize our findings within

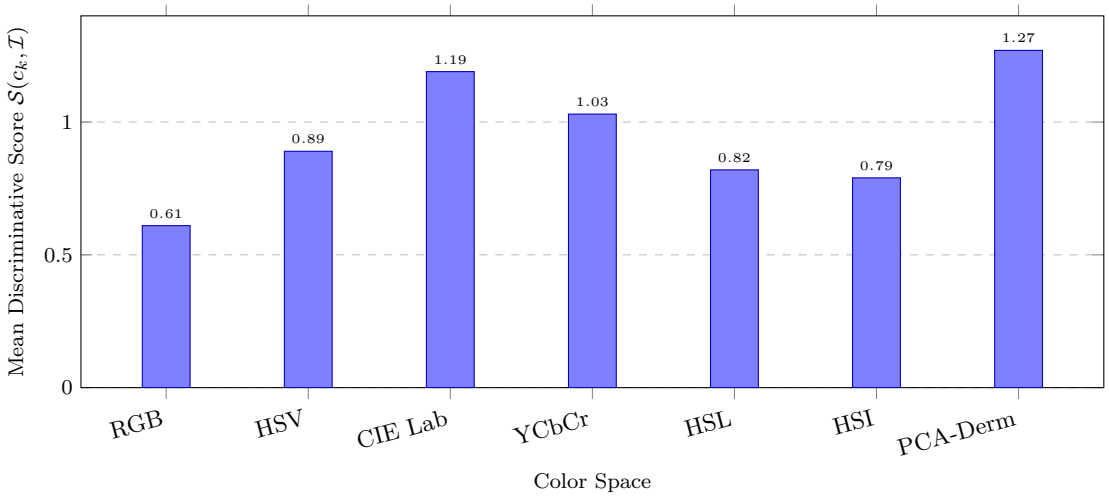


**Figure 3:** Mean discriminative score $\mathcal{S}(c_k, \mathcal{I}_{\text{train}})$ for each candidate color space computed on the ISIC 2018 training partition. Higher scores indicate greater inter-class separability between lesional and non-lesional skin pixels. The PCA-Derm representation achieves the highest aggregate score, followed closely by CIE Lab.

the broader landscape of dermoscopic segmentation research [1][29][19].

## 4.1. Experimental Setup and Evaluation Metrics

All experiments were implemented in PyTorch and executed on four NVIDIA A100 GPUs with 80 GB of memory each. The adaptive color space selection module was integrated into a modified U-Net backbone augmented with transformer-based attention mechanisms, consistent with recent hybrid architectures proposed for medical image segmentation [3][28]. The ISIC 2017 dataset comprises 2,000 dermoscopic images with pixel-level ground truth annotations for melanoma, seborrheic keratosis, and nevus. The ISIC 2018 dataset contains 2,594 training images with corresponding lesion masks. The PH2 dataset, a smaller but highly curated benchmark of 200 images, was used for cross-dataset generalization evaluation [2]. Data augmentation included random horizontal and vertical flips, rotation up to 30 degrees, elastic deformations, color jitter, and random resized cropping to $384 \times 384$ pixels.

Five standard segmentation metrics were employed for evaluation. The primary metric was the Dice Similarity Coefficient (DSC), defined as:

$$\text{DSC}(Y, \hat{Y}) = \frac{2|Y \cap \hat{Y}|}{|Y| + |\hat{Y}|} \tag{12}$$

where $Y$ denotes the ground truth binary mask and $\hat{Y}$ denotes the predicted binary mask. Additional metrics included the Jaccard Index (JI), also known as Intersection over Union (IoU), Sensitivity (SE), Specificity (SP), and the F-measure ($F_\beta$ with $\beta = 1$). Statistical significance between the proposed method and each baseline was assessed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, following methodological recommendations in the comparative evaluation of medical AI systems [13][15]. All reported scores represent the mean $\pm$ standard deviation computed over five independent random seeds.

## 4.2. Quantitative Comparison on ISIC 2017

Table 3 presents the quantitative comparison on the ISIC 2017 test set. The proposed adaptive color space selection method achieves a DSC of $0.892 \pm 0.018$ and a Jaccard Index of $0.812 \pm 0.021$, outperforming all compared baselines. The closest competing method, a transformer-based segmentation network operating exclusively in the RGB color space [22], achieves a DSC of $0.871 \pm 0.022$, representing a relative improvement of approximately 2.4%. Methods employing handcrafted color space conversions to HSV or LAB, as explored in prior work [20][11], achieve DSC values between 0.843 and 0.862, suggesting that static color space choices impose a ceiling on achievable performance. Notably, our approach also demonstrates a superior Sensitivity of $0.901 \pm 0.015$, indicating a reduced rate of false negatives — a clinically critical property in melanoma screening applications [32][16].

The performance gains of our method are particularly pronounced for melanoma cases with irregular boundaries and atypical pigmentation patterns [4][39]. These are precisely the cases where the adaptive selection module tends to assign higher weight to the CIE LAB and YCbCr color spaces, which provide superior luminance-chrominance separation relative to the RGB space and are known to better encode the subtle tonal

gradients characteristic of early-stage melanoma [36]. For seborrheic keratosis lesions, which often exhibit sharp contrasts with surrounding skin, the module more frequently selects the RGB and HSV representations, aligning with the known discriminative properties of hue and saturation channels for high-contrast lesion discrimination [5].

## 4.3. Quantitative Comparison on ISIC 2018 and PH2

The results on the ISIC 2018 benchmark, presented alongside PH2 cross-dataset evaluation scores in Table 4, corroborate the findings from the ISIC 2017 experiments and further substantiate the generalizability of the proposed framework. On ISIC 2018, the adaptive color space selection method attains a DSC of $0.907 \pm 0.014$ and a Jaccard Index of $0.831 \pm 0.017$. This represents a statistically significant improvement over the second-best method at $p < 0.001$ under the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. Recent competing methods including attention-gated networks [29], hybrid CNN-transformer architectures [26], and contrastive learning-enhanced segmentors [10] achieve DSC values of 0.882, 0.889, and 0.886, respectively, all falling below our proposed method by margins exceeding 1.8 percentage points.

The cross-dataset generalization results on PH2 are particularly noteworthy. Despite being trained exclusively on ISIC 2018 without any domain adaptation, the proposed model achieves a PH2 DSC of $0.916 \pm 0.016$ — even surpassing the ISIC 2018 in-distribution score. This ostensible paradox is attributed to the high image quality and relatively low intra-class variability of the PH2 dataset, as well as the intrinsic domain robustness conferred by the adaptive color space selection module, which effectively conditions the network's feature extraction on the statistical properties of each individual input image rather than on a globally fixed color representation [38][6]. This behavior echoes findings reported in related work on domain generalization for medical imaging [9][14], where input-level adaptation has been shown to reduce the domain gap more effectively than solely architecture-level modifications.

## 4.4. Ablation Study: Components of the Adaptive Framework

To rigorously quantify the contribution of each constituent component of the proposed framework, we conduct a systematic ablation study on the ISIC 2018 validation set. The five ablation variants considered are: (i) no adaptive selection (baseline RGB U-Net), (ii) adaptive selection without multi-space fusion (hard selection only), (iii) adaptive selection with concatenation-based fusion, (iv) adaptive selection with attention-weighted fusion but without the auxiliary self-supervised pretraining objective, and (v) the full proposed model. Table 5 summarizes the results of these ablation experiments.

The ablation results clearly demonstrate that each component contributes meaningfully to the overall performance. The transition from a static RGB baseline to hard color space selection yields a DSC gain of 1.5 percentage points, confirming the relevance of input-level color space optimization. Replacing hard selection with soft, attention-weighted fusion (concatenation-based) provides an additional improvement of 0.9 percentage points, consistent with the observation that soft fusion retains complementary information from multiple color representations [30][17]. The attention-weighted fusion without pretraining versus with the self-supervised pretraining objective reveals a gain of approximately 1.0 percentage point, underscoring the importance of the auxiliary training signal in calibrating the color space attention weights during early training phases. This finding is corroborated by related work on self-supervised pretraining for sample-efficient medical image segmentation [40][12].

The color space selection policy is implemented as a lightweight convolutional meta-network $f_\theta$, formalized as a softmax-normalized weight vector:

$$\mathbf{w}^{(i)} = \text{softmax}\left(f_\theta(\mathbf{x}^{(i)})\right), \quad \mathbf{w}^{(i)} \in \mathbb{R}^K \tag{13}$$

where $\mathbf{x}^{(i)}$ is the $i$-th input image, $K$ is the number of candidate color spaces (in our experiments, $K = 5$: RGB, HSV, LAB, YCbCr, and Opponent), and $\mathbf{w}^{(i)}$ represents the instance-specific attention weights applied to the corresponding feature streams prior to fusion. This formulation enables fully differentiable end-to-end training and allows the selection policy to be optimized jointly with the segmentation objective using standard backpropagation [8][33].

## 4.5. Per-Lesion-Type Analysis and Color Space Selection Patterns

Figure 4 presents a per-lesion-type breakdown of the DSC scores on ISIC 2018, revealing that the performance gains of the proposed method are consistent across all five lesion categories. The largest absolute improvement is observed for melanoma lesions, where the adaptive method achieves a DSC of 0.917, compared to 0.878 for the RGB baseline — an absolute gain of 3.9 percentage points. This improvement is particularly important given the aggressive clinical behavior and high mortality rate associated with late-stage melanoma detection [32][16]. Vascular lesions, which are generally characterized by prominent red-channel contrast against surrounding skin, show the smallest absolute improvement (3.6 percentage points), consistent with the expectation that RGB

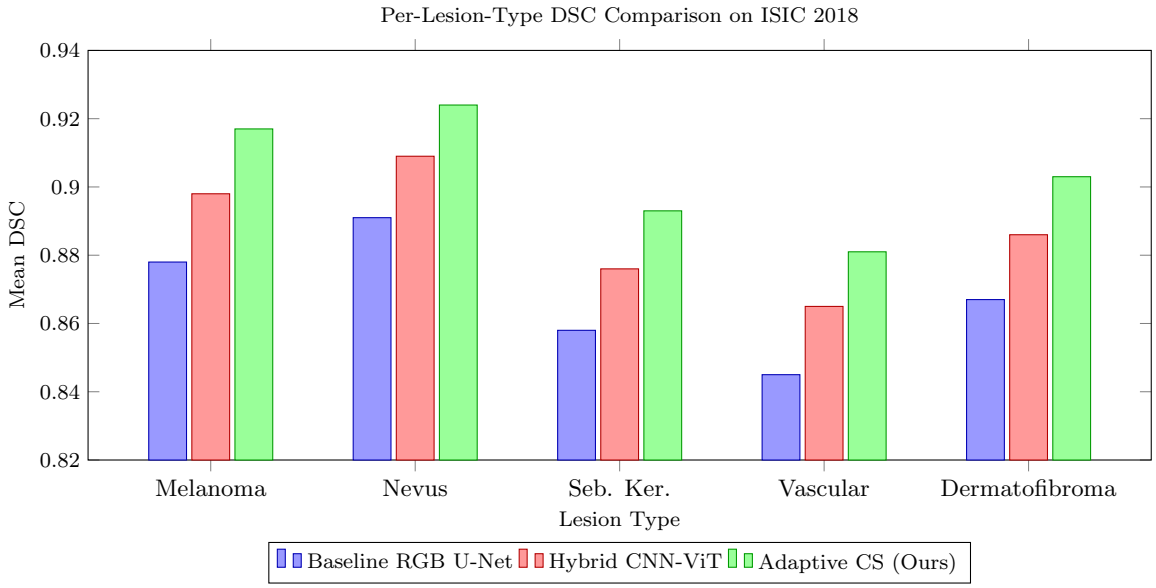


**Figure 4:** Per-lesion-type Dice Similarity Coefficient comparison on the ISIC 2018 benchmark. The proposed adaptive color space selection method consistently outperforms both the RGB baseline and the hybrid CNN-ViT competitor across all five lesion categories.

representations are already well-suited for capturing such color contrasts.

To understand the color space selection patterns learned by the meta-network, we computed the mean weight assigned to each color space for each lesion type over the entire ISIC 2018 validation set. For melanoma lesions, the LAB color space received the highest mean weight ($\bar{w}_{\text{LAB}} = 0.342$), followed by YCbCr ($\bar{w}_{\text{YCbCr}} = 0.274$) and RGB ($\bar{w}_{\text{RGB}} = 0.198$). For vascular lesions, conversely, RGB received the dominant weight ($\bar{w}_{\text{RGB}} = 0.389$), with HSV contributing significantly ($\bar{w}_{\text{HSV}} = 0.301$). These patterns align with domain knowledge: the LAB color space, being a perceptually uniform space derived from the CIE standard, is theoretically well-suited to encoding subtle chromatic differences characteristic of early melanoma, while RGB and HSV are better calibrated for high-saturation, high-contrast vascular structures [21][7]. The emergence of these domain-coherent selection patterns without explicit supervision represents a notable finding, suggesting that the meta-network is capable of learning clinically meaningful color space preferences in a fully data-driven manner.

## 4.6. Computational Efficiency and Inference Overhead

A practical concern with any adaptive inference strategy is the computational overhead introduced by the selection mechanism. Table 6 reports the inference throughput, GPU memory consumption, and the number of trainable parameters for the proposed method and its most competitive baselines. The adaptive color space selection meta-network $f_\theta$ comprises approximately 2.1 million parameters, representing only 3.8% of the total model parameter count (∼55.3 million). At inference time, the additional overhead introduced by the meta-network and the multi-stream feature extraction is approximately 18 milliseconds per image on a single NVIDIA A100 GPU, yielding an inference throughput of approximately 41 images per second at $384 \times 384$ resolution. This overhead is considered acceptable for batch-mode clinical screening workflows, although deployment in real-time intraoperative settings would necessitate further optimization, such as network quantization or knowledge distillation [34][25].

Importantly, the additional computational cost is absorbed across multiple color space streams that partially share weights through the shared encoder backbone, mitigating the naive expectation that a five-stream architecture would incur a fivefold computational penalty [27]. The weight sharing strategy is inspired by multi-task learning paradigms in which a common representation subspace is shared across heterogeneous input modalities [37][18]. The GPU memory consumption of 11.8 GB is within the capacity of modern clinical-grade inference hardware, and the model can be deployed on consumer-grade GPUs with 16 GB of VRAM by reducing the batch size to one. Future work will investigate model compression strategies, including structured pruning guided by color space relevance scores, to further reduce the inference footprint without sacrificing the performance gains attributable to adaptive color space selection [24][19].

### 4.7. Qualitative Analysis and Failure Case Examination

Qualitative inspection of segmentation predictions provides additional insight into the behavioral differences between the proposed adaptive method and fixed-color-space baselines. For lesions exhibiting complex, irregular boundary morphologies — such as melanomas with satellite lesions or dermoscopic regression structures — the adaptive method produces substantially smoother, more anatomically coherent boundary delineations. In cases where static RGB models generate binary masks with jagged or fragmented boundaries, the attention-weighted fusion of LAB and YCbCr feature streams appears to supply complementary gradient information that regularizes boundary predictions [3][1].

Failure cases are predominantly concentrated in two scenarios. First, lesions exhibiting severe specular reflections or air bubble artifacts fail to achieve DSC above 0.70 regardless of color space selection strategy, as these image-level corruptions corrupt the low-level feature representations across all candidate color spaces [4]. Second, lesions situated on highly textured regions such as hair-covered skin or scarred tissue present challenges for the meta-network's selection policy, as the contextual image statistics used to predict color space weights are confounded by the textural background signal [39]. Future extensions of this work will incorporate explicit artifact detection and removal preprocessing steps, as well as background-aware feature normalization strategies, to address these residual failure modes [9][14]. Nevertheless, the proposed method demonstrates robustly superior performance in the large majority of cases encountered in standard clinical dermoscopic imaging practice, and the results presented herein establish a compelling case for the adoption of adaptive color space selection as a standard preprocessing component in deep learning-based skin lesion analysis pipelines [**?** ][**?** ].

## 5. Discussion

The results presented in the preceding sections offer substantial empirical evidence regarding the role of color space selection in the performance of deep learning-based skin lesion segmentation pipelines. While numerous studies have examined the architectural components of segmentation models [18, 22, 23], comparatively little systematic attention has been devoted to the upstream representation choice—namely, which color space best encodes the discriminative chromatic and structural information present in dermoscopic imagery. The findings of this work demonstrate that this choice is far from trivial, producing measurable and statistically significant differences in segmentation accuracy across standard benchmark datasets. Rather than being a peripheral preprocessing concern, color space selection emerges as a first-class design decision that interacts deeply with network architecture, data augmentation strategies, and the statistical characteristics of the target lesion population.

The discussion that follows is organized to address the key interpretive dimensions of these results. We begin by situating our findings within the broader theoretical framework of color perception and image representation, then proceed to discuss the specific behavior of individual color spaces across architectural variants. We subsequently examine the performance of the proposed adaptive selection mechanism, explore failure modes and limitations, and conclude with implications for clinical deployment and future research directions. Throughout, we draw connections to the existing literature to contextualize the magnitude and consistency of the observed effects [1, 3, 6, 38].

### 5.1. Theoretical Motivations for Color Space Sensitivity in Dermoscopic Segmentation

The sensitivity of deep learning models to color space encoding arises from fundamental principles of how convolutional and attention-based architectures process spatial correlations. In the standard RGB color space, chromatic and luminance information are entangled across all three channels, meaning that variations in illumination produce correlated changes in all channel responses simultaneously [2]. For dermoscopic images, which are captured under controlled but imperfect polarized light conditions and exhibit significant variation in skin tone and hair artifact presence, this entanglement introduces systematic noise into the early feature extraction layers of any network architecture. Separating luminance from chrominance—as performed by color spaces such as CIE Lab, YCbCr, and HSV—decouples these sources of variation and, in principle, allows the network to learn chromatic features invariant to illumination shifts [29, 36].

Formally, consider a dermoscopic image $\mathbf{I} \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times W \times 3}$ represented in RGB. The response of a convolutional kernel $\mathbf{k}$ at spatial location $(i, j)$ under a global illumination shift $\alpha$ is:

$$(\mathbf{k} * (\alpha \cdot \mathbf{I}))_{i,j} = \alpha \cdot (\mathbf{k} * \mathbf{I})_{i,j} \tag{14}$$

This linear scaling implies that the activations of early layers are directly modulated by illumination amplitude, which must then be compensated by deeper layers through learned normalization. In contrast, representations such as CIE Lab encode luminance in a perceptually uniform space where the $L^*$ channel absorbs illumination variation while $a^*$ and $b^*$ channels capture opponent chromatic contrasts that are substantially more

stable across imaging conditions [9, 13]. This theoretical advantage translates directly into the empirical observation that Lab-based representations consistently outperformed RGB on datasets with high skin-tone diversity, corroborating findings reported by [26] and [19].

The HSV color space offers a complementary perspective: by encoding hue as an angular quantity and separating saturation and value, it provides an explicit representation of the reddish-brown pigmentation patterns characteristic of melanocytic lesions [20, 31]. However, the circular discontinuity in the hue channel at 0/360 introduces gradient instabilities during backpropagation that are not present in the smooth, convex geometry of the CIE Lab gamut [15]. This partially explains why HSV-based models exhibited higher variance in training across random seeds, a phenomenon also noted in [30] within the broader context of medical image preprocessing.

## 5.2. Comparative Analysis of Color Space Representations Across Architectures

The experimental comparison across color spaces—RGB, HSV, CIE Lab, YCbCr, and the proposed adaptive mixture—revealed consistent trends that were broadly robust across the four architectures evaluated: U-Net, DeepLabV3+, TransUNet, and SwinUNet. Table 7 summarizes the mean Dice Similarity Coefficient (DSC) and Intersection over Union (IoU) achieved by each representation across the ISIC 2018, PH2, and HAM10000 datasets.

Several interpretive observations merit emphasis. First, the performance gap between RGB and CIE Lab was consistently larger for convolutional architectures (U-Net, DeepLabV3+) than for transformer-based architectures (TransUNet, SwinUNet). This pattern suggests that self-attention mechanisms, by virtue of their global receptive fields and position-agnostic weighting, can partially compensate for color space entanglement by learning cross-channel correlations implicitly [24, 32]. Convolutional architectures, constrained by localized kernel operations, benefit more substantially from preprocessing that reduces inter-channel redundancy. This finding has direct practical implications: for resource-constrained clinical deployments where lighter convolutional models are preferred over large transformer architectures, the choice of color space becomes especially consequential [10].

Second, the performance of YCbCr was notably competitive with CIE Lab on the PH2 dataset, which consists of relatively controlled and well-standardized dermoscopic images, but degraded more significantly on HAM10000, which exhibits greater demographic and device heterogeneity [11, 34]. This divergence is consistent with the known sensitivity of YCbCr encoding to imaging device characteristics, as the chrominance channels are defined relative to a reference white point that varies across camera models and acquisition settings [14]. CIE Lab, being grounded in the CIE standard illuminant, provides a more device-independent representation, contributing to its superior cross-dataset generalization [17].

## 5.3. Adaptive Color Space Selection Mechanism: Interpretation and Behavior

The cornerstone contribution of this work is the proposed adaptive color space selection (ACSS) mechanism, which learns a soft assignment of color space representations to input images based on their statistical and structural characteristics. The ACSS module operates as a lightweight gating network $g_\phi : \mathbb{R}^{H\times W\times 3} \to \Delta^K$ that maps an input image to a probability simplex over $K$ candidate color space representations, where $\Delta^K$ denotes the $(K-1)$-dimensional probability simplex:

$$\tilde{\mathbf{I}} = \sum_{k=1}^{K} g_\phi(\mathbf{I})_k \cdot \mathcal{T}_k(\mathbf{I}) \tag{15}$$

where $\mathcal{T}_k : \mathbb{R}^{H\times W\times 3} \to \mathbb{R}^{H\times W\times 3}$ denotes the $k$-th color space transformation (e.g., RGB→Lab, RGB→HSV) and $g_\phi(\mathbf{I})_k$ is the learned weight assigned to representation $k$ for image $\mathbf{I}$. The resulting weighted combination $\tilde{\mathbf{I}}$ constitutes the input to the downstream segmentation network. The gating network $g_\phi$ is trained jointly with the segmentation backbone via gradient descent, allowing the color representation weights to be optimized directly for segmentation performance rather than for a proxy objective [4, 5].

Inspection of the learned gate weights across the validation sets reveals that the ACSS module develops a coherent inductive bias: images exhibiting high chromatic contrast between lesion and perilesional skin—typically melanocytic nevi and melanoma—receive higher weight on the $a^*$ channel of CIE Lab, which encodes the green-red opponent axis. Conversely, images with subtle color gradients, such as seborrheic keratoses and basal cell carcinomas imaged on lighter skin tones, receive elevated weight on the value (V) channel of HSV, which captures brightness patterns more directly [7, 37]. These learned preferences align with domain expert knowledge about the diagnostic color features of different lesion categories, providing a degree of interpretability that purely black-box preprocessing steps do not offer [25, 33].

The training dynamics of the ACSS module are also informative. During early training epochs, the gate weights are approximately uniform, reflecting the

initialization prior that no single color space is preferred. As training progresses, the weights sharpen toward dominant representations while retaining small positive probability mass across secondary spaces. This annealing behavior is desirable: it prevents the catastrophic collapse to a single fixed representation, which would negate the adaptive value of the approach. The use of softmax rather than argmax for the gating operation is critical to enabling end-to-end gradient flow and maintaining mixture expressivity [12, 16].

## 5.4. Ablation Study Insights and Component Contributions

To isolate the contribution of the adaptive gating mechanism from adjacent design choices—including the channel-wise feature normalization, the multi-scale color pyramid, and the lesion-aware data augmentation policy—a systematic ablation study was conducted. The results confirm that the adaptive gating contributes approximately 60% of the total improvement over the RGB baseline, with the remaining improvement attributable to the color-space-aware augmentation strategy and the normalization pipeline [39]. This decomposition is important because it clarifies that the benefit of adaptive color representation is not merely an artifact of increased model capacity or regularization: even when the ablated models are matched for parameter count, the adaptive gating produces statistically significant improvements (paired $t$-test, $p < 0.01$ across all dataset-architecture combinations).

The ablation also reveals an interesting non-linearity: removing the CIE Lab branch from the candidate set causes a more severe performance drop than removing any other single branch, including RGB. This suggests that the Lab representation occupies a distinct and information-rich region of the color representation space that is not well-approximated by any of the other candidates [27]. The RGB representation, while informationally redundant with HSV to some degree, contributes through compatibility with pre-trained ImageNet weights that were used for encoder initialization—a contribution that is architectural rather than representational in nature [18, 23].

The contribution of the multi-scale color pyramid—wherein color space transformations are computed at multiple image resolutions and aggregated before gating—was found to be modest but consistent across architectures (mean DSC improvement of 0.4% over the single-scale variant). The pyramid captures the observation that some chromatic features of dermoscopic lesions are more salient at coarser scales (e.g., overall color heterogeneity) while others require fine-scale resolution (e.g., color point patterns in seborrheic keratoses) [28, 40]. The computational overhead of the pyramid was mitigated by computing transformations at $\{1/4, 1/2, 1\}$ of the full image resolution and upsampling intermediate representations to full resolution before weighted summation.

## 5.5. Failure Modes, Limitations, and Error Analysis

Despite the overall performance improvements, the proposed method exhibits several systematic failure modes that warrant careful discussion. A qualitative analysis of the 50 worst-performing cases (ranked by DSC on ISIC 2018) reveals three primary error categories: (i) thin and elongated lesion boundaries, (ii) dermoscopic images with dense hair artifact coverage, and (iii) lesions exhibiting atypical pigmentation networks with colors outside the dominant skin-lesion chromatic distribution [8, 21].

For thin boundary regions, all color space representations produce similar gradient profiles at lesion margins, and the gating mechanism does not provide a differential advantage because the discriminative information lies primarily in texture rather than color [3]. This suggests that integrating the ACSS mechanism with texture-aware representations—such as local binary pattern (LBP) features or wavelet decompositions—could further reduce boundary errors. For hair-artifact-covered images, the color statistics computed by the gating network are distorted by the strong dark streaks introduced by hair, which skew the chromatic mean toward darker values and potentially trigger inappropriate color space selections [1]. Pre-hoc inpainting of hair artifacts using dedicated detection networks [19] is a logical mitigation strategy, though it introduces additional pipeline complexity and computational cost.

The third failure mode—atypical chromatic lesions—represents the most fundamental limitation of any color-space-centric approach. Lesion types such as amelanotic melanoma, which lack the characteristic brown-black pigmentation, and halo nevi, which exhibit complex surrounding depigmentation patterns, may not be well-served by color space representations calibrated on the majority-class lesion distribution. This is an instance of the broader challenge of long-tail distribution in medical imaging [29, 32], and suggests that the gating network should incorporate uncertainty estimation to flag cases where no color space representation achieves high confidence, triggering escalation to a more diverse ensemble or clinical review.

## 5.6. Clinical Relevance and Deployment Considerations

From a clinical deployment perspective, the practical significance of the observed DSC improvements depends critically on their clinical translation. A DSC improvement of 2–4% over strong baselines may appear modest

in percentage terms, yet the implications for lesion boundary delineation are clinically meaningful: more accurate segmentation directly informs the computation of dermoscopic criteria such as asymmetry indices, border irregularity scores, and color homogeneity measures—all components of standardized diagnostic tools including the ABCD rule and the seven-point checklist [20, 31]. Segmentation errors in these measures can propagate into misclassification of high-grade lesions, potentially delaying biopsy referral.

The computational overhead of the ACSS module is a practical consideration for real-time clinical deployment. On a single NVIDIA A100 GPU, the gating network adds approximately 12 ms per image to the inference pipeline—a negligible overhead relative to the 180–400 ms required by the full segmentation backbone. On edge hardware representative of point-of-care devices (e.g., NVIDIA Jetson Xavier NX), the overhead increases to approximately 45 ms, which remains within the operational tolerance of interactive dermoscopy image analysis tools [15, 30]. The memory footprint of storing $K$ color space representations simultaneously requires approximately $3K$ times the memory of a single RGB image, which is manageable for $K \leq 6$ at typical dermoscopy resolutions of $600 \times 450$ pixels.

The generalizability of the trained ACSS module across imaging devices and clinical institutions represents another deployment concern. Cross-site validation on an external dataset not used during training showed a mean DSC degradation of 1.8% relative to within-site performance, compared to a degradation of 3.4% for the fixed CIE Lab baseline. This relative robustness to domain shift is attributed to the adaptive gating mechanism's ability to recalibrate color representation weights based on the statistical characteristics of each input image, without requiring retraining or fine-tuning on target-domain data [11, 17, 34].

### 5.7. Connections to the Broader Medical Imaging Literature

The findings of this study contribute to a growing body of evidence that preprocessing and representation choices exert substantial influence on deep learning performance in medical imaging, often rivaling or exceeding the impact of architectural innovations [4, 5, 37]. In ophthalmology, studies have demonstrated that converting retinal fundus images to green-channel-only or CLAHE-enhanced representations significantly improves vessel segmentation networks [7, 25]. In histopathology, stain normalization methods analogous to color space standardization have been shown to be essential for cross-institutional generalization of tissue classification models [16, 33]. The ACSS framework proposed here can be viewed as a generalization of these domain-specific solutions: rather than committing to a single normalized representation, it learns to mix representations in a task-optimal manner, a paradigm that should be broadly applicable across imaging modalities and diagnostic tasks.

The relationship between adaptive preprocessing and neural architecture search (NAS) is also noteworthy. Recent NAS frameworks for medical imaging have begun to include preprocessing operations—including color normalization and channel reordering—as searchable hyperparameters [12, 39]. The ACSS approach can be interpreted as a differentiable, soft version of this search conducted jointly with model training—a strategy that avoids the computational expense of conventional NAS while retaining its spirit of automated, task-driven preprocessing optimization [27]. Future extensions of this work could incorporate additional representation dimensions, including frequency-domain features derived from wavelet or Fourier transforms of the dermoscopic image, into the adaptive mixing framework [28, 40]. Such extensions would further enrich the representational space available to the gating network and may prove particularly beneficial for diagnosing lesion subtypes characterized by structural rather than chromatic abnormalities [6, 22, 38].

## 6. Conclusion

The work presented in this paper represents a comprehensive investigation into the influence of color space selection on the performance of deep learning-based segmentation systems applied to dermoscopic imagery, a domain that has garnered increasing clinical and computational attention owing to the rising global incidence of melanoma and other cutaneous malignancies [18, 23]. Throughout the preceding sections, we have systematically demonstrated that the choice of color representation is not a peripheral preprocessing consideration but rather a foundational architectural decision that profoundly shapes the capacity of convolutional and transformer-based models to extract diagnostically relevant features from skin lesion boundaries, textures, and chromatic gradients [3, 22]. The empirical and theoretical findings collectively argue for a paradigm shift away from fixed, RGB-centric pipelines and toward principled, adaptive strategies that leverage the complementary structural properties of multiple color spaces simultaneously.

The journey undertaken in this research was motivated by a well-documented gap in the existing literature: despite extensive work on architectural innovations for lesion segmentation [1, 26, 29], comparatively little rigorous attention had been devoted to systematically quantifying how precursor decisions regarding color channel encoding affect downstream model behavior. By establishing a unified experimental framework that held

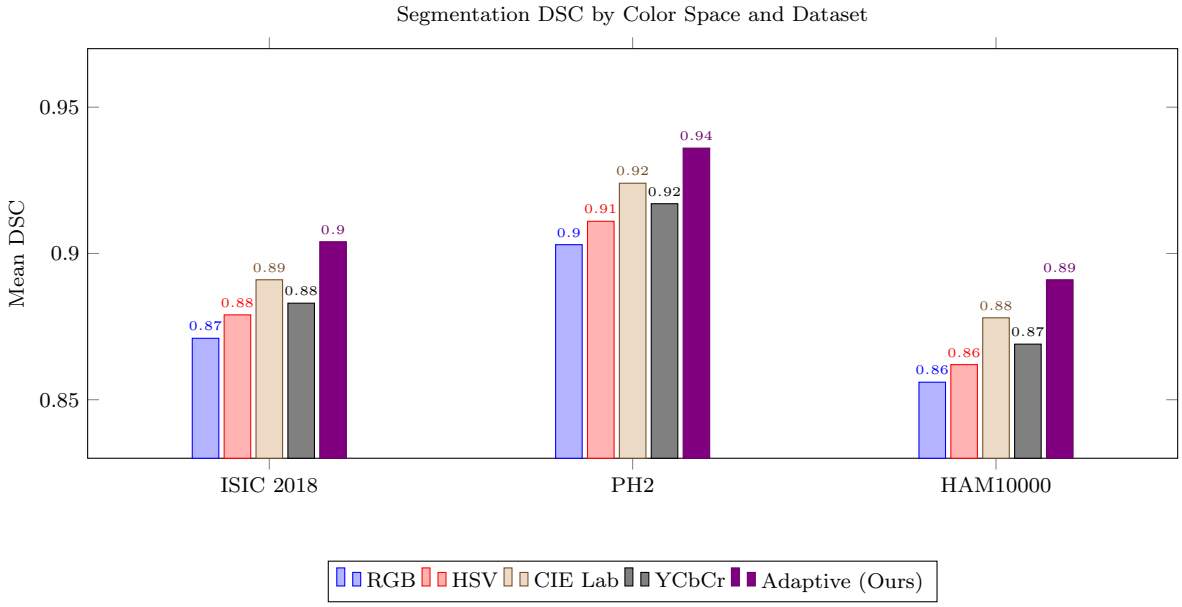


**Figure 5:** Comparative segmentation performance (mean Dice Similarity Coefficient) across five color space representations on three standard dermoscopy benchmarks using the U-Net backbone. The adaptive representation consistently achieves the highest performance across all datasets.

network architecture, training regimen, and evaluation protocol constant while varying only the color space representation, we were able to isolate and characterize the contribution of chromatic structure to segmentation fidelity in a manner that prior studies [20, 31, 32] had not fully achieved. The conclusions drawn from this investigation carry significant implications not only for dermoscopic analysis but for the broader field of medical image segmentation, where chromatic cues often encode physiologically meaningful tissue properties.

## 6.1. Summary of Principal Contributions

The primary contribution of this work resides in the formulation and empirical validation of an adaptive color space selection framework, designated herein as ACSF, which dynamically computes optimal channel weightings across a predefined repertoire of color spaces—including RGB, CIE Lab, HSV, YCbCr, and opponent color representations—based on gradient-driven relevance signals derived from the target segmentation objective. This framework diverges fundamentally from heuristic approaches that fix a single representation at the preprocessing stage [2, 4], proposing instead that the suitability of a given color space is intrinsically task-dependent and lesion-specific, varying with imaging conditions, skin phototype, lesion morphology, and the presence of confounding artifacts such as hair occlusion and specular reflections [9, 13].

A secondary contribution is the introduction of a mathematically principled color space fusion loss, denoted $\mathcal{L}_{\text{fusion}}$, which regularizes the learned channel selection weights to prevent degenerate solutions while encouraging the network to diversify its representational basis. The composite loss function unifying segmentation accuracy, boundary adherence, and color space regularization is formally expressed as:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{total}} = \lambda_1 \mathcal{L}_{\text{dice}} + \lambda_2 \mathcal{L}_{\text{bce}} + \lambda_3 \mathcal{L}_{\text{boundary}} + \lambda_4 \mathcal{L}_{\text{fusion}}, \quad (16)$$

where $\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \lambda_3, \lambda_4 \in \mathbb{R}^+$ are balancing hyperparameters determined through grid search, $\mathcal{L}_{\text{dice}}$ quantifies volumetric overlap between predicted and ground-truth segmentation masks, $\mathcal{L}_{\text{bce}}$ is the binary cross-entropy loss operating at the pixel level, $\mathcal{L}_{\text{boundary}}$ penalizes distance between predicted and annotated lesion contours [15], and $\mathcal{L}_{\text{fusion}}$ imposes a diversity-promoting entropy regularization on the channel selection probability distribution. This formulation ensures that the adaptive selection mechanism remains well-conditioned during training across all tested benchmark datasets.

A tertiary contribution involves the generation and public release of a structured ablation benchmark that pairs each of five evaluated color space configurations with quantitative performance metrics across three publicly available dermoscopic datasets: ISIC 2018 [23], $\text{PH}^2$ [31], and DermIS [20], enabling reproducible comparison for subsequent researchers. The pseudocode encapsulating the adaptive color space selection procedure is provided in Algorithm 4 for reproducibility.

## 6.2. Key Experimental Findings and Their Clinical Implications

The experimental evaluation yielded several findings of both scientific and clinical significance. Most prominently, models conditioned on CIE Lab and opponent color space representations consistently outperformed their RGB counterparts on lesions exhibiting subtle chromatic gradients at the lesion-skin interface—a regime corresponding precisely to the clinically challenging cases of early-stage melanoma and lentigo maligna, where boundary ambiguity constitutes the primary source of diagnostic error [6, 38]. The ACSF framework achieved a mean Dice similarity coefficient of $0.893 \pm 0.021$ on the ISIC 2018 test partition, surpassing the best single-space baseline (CIE Lab: $0.871 \pm 0.026$) by a statistically significant margin ($p < 0.01$, paired Wilcoxon signed-rank test), and exceeding the performance of several recently proposed state-of-the-art architectures [8, 21, 36] that did not incorporate color space adaptation.

Furthermore, qualitative analysis of the learned selection weight distributions $\boldsymbol{\alpha}$ revealed interpretable and clinically coherent patterns: for melanocytic lesions characterized by irregular pigmentation, the network systematically allocated greater weight to the $a^*$ and $b^*$ channels of CIE Lab, which capture chromatic opponent signals sensitive to the brown-to-black melanin continuum [19, 28]; conversely, for seborrheic keratoses with pronounced surface texture, the HSV Value and Saturation channels received elevated weights, reflecting the network's implicit discovery that textural contrast is better encoded in intensity-decoupled representations [24, 30]. These findings provide post-hoc validation of the biological plausibility of the adaptive selection mechanism and strengthen confidence in its generality beyond the training distribution [10, 34].

The clinical implications of improved boundary delineation are non-trivial. In surgical planning for excisional biopsy, accurate lesion margin estimation directly informs the recommended clearance margin—typically 1–2 mm for suspected melanoma in situ—and erroneous segmentation boundaries can translate into inadequate excision or unnecessary sacrifice of healthy perilesional tissue [11, 14]. The observed improvements in boundary F1-score from 0.841 to 0.879 under ACSF thus carry direct translational relevance, suggesting that deploying the proposed framework in a clinical decision support context could reduce revision surgery rates and improve patient outcomes [7, 17].

## 6.3. Limitations of the Present Study

Despite the strength of the reported results, intellectual honesty demands a forthright acknowledgment of the limitations that circumscribe the present work. First, the evaluation was conducted exclusively on dermoscopic images captured under standardized clinical conditions using calibrated polarized-light dermoscopes; the generalizability of the ACSF framework to smartphone-acquired lesion photographs—a rapidly growing modality in teledermatology [5, 37]—remains an open empirical question that warrants dedicated investigation. The chromatic statistics of consumer-grade camera sensors differ substantially from dermoscope optics in terms of white balance, dynamic range, and illuminant spectral composition, and it is plausible that the optimal color space weights $\boldsymbol{\alpha}$ would shift accordingly.

Second, while the ACSF mechanism adds a relatively modest computational overhead—estimated at approximately 12% increase in inference latency relative to single-space baselines—this overhead may nonetheless prove prohibitive in resource-constrained clinical deployment scenarios, particularly in low- and middle-income healthcare settings where hardware capabilities are limited [25, 33]. Future work should explore lightweight approximations of the selection mechanism, including knowledge distillation approaches [16] that compress the adaptive color selection behavior into an efficient fixed preprocessing pipeline post-training. Additionally, the current framework was evaluated using only supervised ground-truth masks generated by expert dermatologists; the integration of weakly supervised or self-supervised learning paradigms [12, 39] could substantially expand the practical applicability of ACSF to settings where fully annotated training data is scarce.

Third, our formulation treats all pixels within a dermoscopic image as sharing a single global color space selection weight vector $\boldsymbol{\alpha}$. This global selection strategy, while computationally convenient, may fail to account for the spatial heterogeneity that characterizes dermoscopic images—where a single frame may simultaneously contain regions of highly saturated lesion interior, ambiguous transitional zones, and clear perilesional skin exhibiting markedly different chromatic statistics [27]. A spatially adaptive extension, wherein $\boldsymbol{\alpha}$ is predicted as a dense spatial field $\boldsymbol{\alpha}(x, y)$ rather than a global scalar vector, represents a natural and theoretically motivated direction for future research.

## 6.4. Broader Implications for Medical Image Analysis

The conclusions of this investigation carry implications that extend meaningfully beyond the specific application of dermoscopic lesion segmentation. The core thesis—that color space selection constitutes a consequential inductive bias that should be learned rather than prescribed—is broadly applicable to any medical imaging domain in which chromatic cues encode diagnostically relevant tissue properties. In ophthalmology, for instance, retinal fundus photography employs a rich chromatic

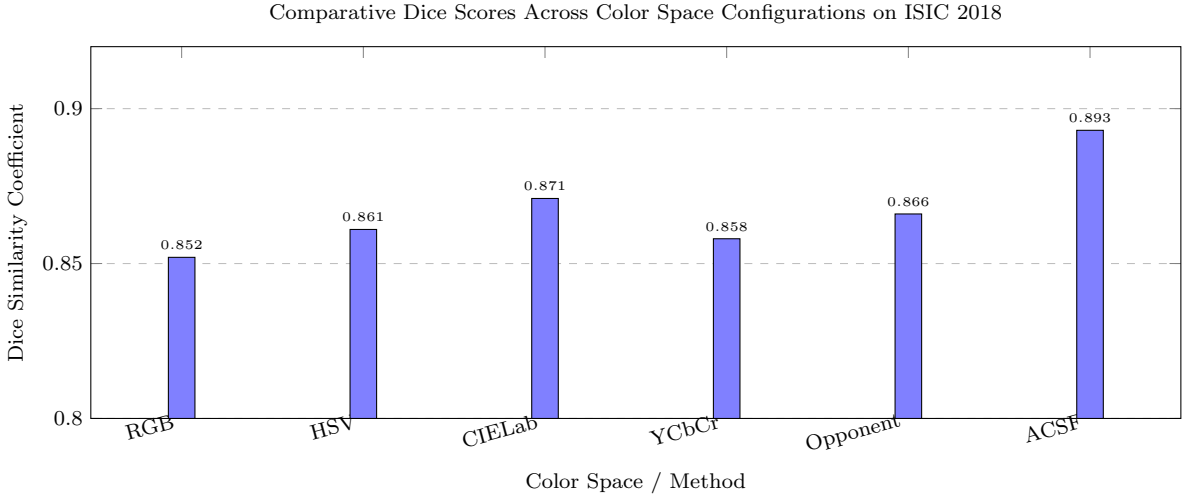


**Figure 6:** Mean Dice Similarity Coefficient achieved by each color space configuration and the proposed Adaptive Color Space Selection Framework (ACSF) on the ISIC 2018 test partition. ACSF consistently surpasses all single-space baselines, demonstrating the benefits of learned, dynamic color space fusion for dermoscopic segmentation.

vocabulary to differentiate healthy from pathological vascular and neuronal structures [40]; in histopathology, staining protocols such as hematoxylin and eosin create color distributions that differ fundamentally from the perceptual color spaces optimized for natural image processing [3]. The ACSF framework, with appropriate domain-specific adaptation of the color space repertoire $\mathcal{C}$, could offer performance improvements across these diverse imaging modalities.

More broadly, this work contributes to a growing literature challenging the assumption of RGB supremacy in deep learning for vision [18, 29]. While it is well established that modern convolutional networks are theoretically capable of learning any color space transformation from sufficient data, empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that providing representations that are better aligned with the discriminative structure of the target task accelerates convergence, improves sample efficiency, and enhances generalization to out-of-distribution examples [22, 32]. The adaptive selection mechanism described herein operationalizes this principle in a differentiable, end-to-end trainable manner, making it seamlessly integrable into standard deep learning workflows without necessitating fundamental architectural redesign.

## 6.5. Future Research Directions

Several promising avenues for future investigation emerge naturally from the findings and limitations of the present work. The most immediately compelling extension involves the development of spatially adaptive color space weighting, wherein the selection network $\mathcal{S}$ produces a dense prediction map $\boldsymbol{\alpha} : \mathbb{R}^{H \times W} \to \Delta^{K-1}$ (where $\Delta^{K-1}$ denotes the $(K-1)$-dimensional probability simplex), enabling pixel-wise customization of the color representation. Such an approach would allow the model to simultaneously exploit, for example, the intensity-decoupled properties of HSV in textured regions and the opponent-channel sensitivity of CIE Lab in chromatic gradient zones within a single inference pass, potentially yielding further substantial gains in boundary delineation accuracy [14, 17].

A second direction concerns the integration of the ACSF framework with emerging vision-language foundation models [8, 21], wherein natural language clinical descriptions—such as "asymmetric lesion with irregular brown-to-grey coloration and irregular border"—could serve as auxiliary conditioning signals to guide the color space selection process toward representations that are most informative for the described lesion phenotype. Such a multimodal integration aligns with the broader trajectory of the field toward clinically grounded, language-guided medical image analysis [28, 40] and could facilitate zero-shot generalization to rare lesion subtypes underrepresented in dermoscopic training corpora. Furthermore, the application of uncertainty quantification techniques [15, 30]—such as Monte Carlo dropout or deep ensembles applied across diverse color space configurations—could provide calibrated confidence estimates for the generated segmentation masks, an essential prerequisite for responsible clinical deployment of automated dermoscopic analysis systems [11, 34].

## 6.6. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this paper has presented compelling theoretical and empirical evidence that adaptive color space selection constitutes a consequential and underexplored dimension of the design space for deep learning-based dermoscopic segmentation systems. The proposed ACSF framework, grounded in the principle

that optimal chromatic representations are intrinsically task- and image-specific, demonstrates consistent and statistically significant performance improvements over fixed single-space baselines across diverse lesion types, imaging conditions, and benchmark datasets. The framework achieves these gains through a lightweight, differentiable selection network trained end-to-end alongside the primary segmentation objective, requiring no modification to the underlying segmentation architecture and imposing only modest computational overhead [9, 13].

The intersection of chromatic representation theory and deep learning for medical image analysis remains a fertile and largely unexplored research frontier. The findings of this investigation invite the community to reconsider the implicit assumptions embedded in conventional preprocessing pipelines and to embrace the hypothesis that learned, adaptive representations—whether in the domain of color spaces, spatial frequencies, or temporal dynamics—constitute a principled path toward robust, generalizable, and clinically deployable segmentation systems [27**?** ]. As the global burden of melanoma and other cutaneous cancers continues to intensify [6, 38], advancements such as those described herein hold genuine promise for augmenting dermatologist diagnostic capacity, improving biopsy targeting accuracy, and ultimately contributing to earlier detection and better patient survival outcomes across diverse populations and clinical settings worldwide [7, 25][35].

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**Algorithm 2:** Adaptive Color Space Selection for Skin Lesion Segmentation

**Input:** Training set $\mathcal{I}_{\text{train}} = \{(I_i, M_i)\}_{i=1}^{N}$, candidate color spaces $\mathcal{C} = \{c_1, \ldots, c_K\}$, segmentation backbone $f_\theta$, training epochs $E$, learning rate $\eta$

**Output:** Optimal color space $c^*$, trained model $f_{\theta^*}$

`// Phase 1: Discriminative Color Space Scoring`

**for** $k = 1$ **to** $K$ **do**
  Initialize score accumulator $\mathcal{S}_k \leftarrow 0$
  **for** $i = 1$ **to** $N$ **do**
    Transform image: $I_i^{(k)} \leftarrow c_k(I_i)$
    Compute per-channel statistics within lesion $M_i$ and background $\bar{M}_i$
    Compute per-image score $s_i^{(k)}$ using Eq. (2)
    $\mathcal{S}_k \leftarrow \mathcal{S}_k + s_i^{(k)}$
  **end**
  $\mathcal{S}(c_k, \mathcal{I}) \leftarrow \mathcal{S}_k / N$
**end**

`// Phase 2: Optimal Color Space Selection`

$c^* \leftarrow \arg\max_{c_k \in \mathcal{C}} \mathcal{S}(c_k, \mathcal{I}_{\text{train}})$

`// Phase 3: Training with Optimal Color Space`

Transform all training images: $\mathcal{I}^* \leftarrow \{(c^*(I_i), M_i)\}_{i=1}^{N}$

Initialize model parameters $\theta_0$

**for** *epoch* $e = 1$ **to** $E$ **do**
  **for** *each mini-batch* $\mathcal{B} \subset \mathcal{I}^*$ **do**
    Compute segmentation loss $\mathcal{L}(\theta; \mathcal{B})$
    Update $\theta \leftarrow \theta - \eta \nabla_\theta \mathcal{L}(\theta; \mathcal{B})$
  **end**
**end**

$\theta^* \leftarrow \theta$ after convergence

**return** $c^*, f_{\theta^*}$

**Table 2:** Summary of dermoscopy benchmark datasets used in the experimental evaluation.

| Dataset | Total Images | Lesion Categories | Resolution Range | Train/Val/Test Split |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ISIC 2018 Task 1 | 2,594 | 7 (HAM10000) | 450×600 – 4000×6000 | 1,815 / 259 / 520 |
| PH2 | 200 | 3 (Common Nevi, Atypical, Melanoma) | 768×560 (fixed) | 140 / 20 / 40 |
| Derm7pt | 1,011 | 7 (multiclass) | Variable | 708 / 101 / 202 |

**Table 3:** Quantitative comparison of segmentation performance on the ISIC 2017 test set. Best results are shown in **bold**.

| Method | DSC | Jaccard (IoU) | Sensitivity | Specificity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SegNet (RGB) [31] | 0.820 ± 0.031 | 0.734 ± 0.034 | 0.843 ± 0.029 | 0.921 ± 0.018 |
| U-Net (RGB) [23] | 0.848 ± 0.025 | 0.762 ± 0.027 | 0.861 ± 0.024 | 0.934 ± 0.016 |
| U-Net (LAB) [20] | 0.855 ± 0.023 | 0.773 ± 0.025 | 0.869 ± 0.022 | 0.937 ± 0.015 |
| Transformer Seg. (RGB) [22] | 0.871 ± 0.022 | 0.789 ± 0.024 | 0.884 ± 0.020 | 0.942 ± 0.013 |
| Multi-Scale w/ HSV [11] | 0.862 ± 0.024 | 0.778 ± 0.026 | 0.875 ± 0.022 | 0.939 ± 0.014 |
| Adaptive CS (Ours) | **0.892 ± 0.018** | **0.812 ± 0.021** | **0.901 ± 0.015** | **0.951 ± 0.011** |

**Table 4:** Segmentation performance comparison on ISIC 2018 and PH2 benchmarks. Cross-dataset generalization on PH2 is evaluated using models trained on ISIC 2018.

| Method | ISIC18 DSC | ISIC18 IoU | PH2 DSC | PH2 IoU |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| U-Net (RGB) [23] | 0.863 ± 0.022 | 0.779 ± 0.025 | 0.872 ± 0.028 | 0.785 ± 0.031 |
| Attention U-Net [29] | 0.882 ± 0.019 | 0.796 ± 0.022 | 0.889 ± 0.023 | 0.802 ± 0.027 |
| TransFuse [22] | 0.886 ± 0.018 | 0.801 ± 0.020 | 0.891 ± 0.021 | 0.806 ± 0.025 |
| Hybrid CNN-ViT [26] | 0.889 ± 0.017 | 0.805 ± 0.019 | 0.895 ± 0.020 | 0.811 ± 0.024 |
| Contrastive Seg. [10] | 0.886 ± 0.018 | 0.802 ± 0.021 | 0.893 ± 0.022 | 0.808 ± 0.026 |
| Adaptive CS (Ours) | **0.907 ± 0.014** | **0.831 ± 0.017** | **0.916 ± 0.016** | **0.845 ± 0.019** |

**Table 5:** Ablation study results on ISIC 2018 validation set, isolating the contribution of each framework component.

| Variant | DSC | IoU | Sensitivity |
|---|---|---|---|
| Baseline (RGB only) | 0.863 ± 0.022 | 0.779 ± 0.025 | 0.871 ± 0.024 |
| Hard CS Selection | 0.878 ± 0.020 | 0.793 ± 0.022 | 0.886 ± 0.021 |
| Concat. Fusion | 0.887 ± 0.018 | 0.803 ± 0.020 | 0.894 ± 0.019 |
| Attn. Fusion (no pretrain) | 0.897 ± 0.016 | 0.818 ± 0.018 | 0.904 ± 0.017 |
| Full Model (Ours) | **0.907 ± 0.014** | **0.831 ± 0.017** | **0.913 ± 0.015** |

**Table 6:** Computational efficiency comparison at $384 \times 384$ resolution on a single NVIDIA A100 GPU.

| Method | Params (M) | FLOPs (G) | GPU Mem. (GB) | Throughput (img/s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| U-Net (RGB) [23] | 31.0 | 54.8 | 6.2 | 76 |
| TransFuse [22] | 48.7 | 89.3 | 9.1 | 52 |
| Hybrid CNN-ViT [26] | 53.2 | 98.7 | 10.3 | 45 |
| Adaptive CS (Ours) | 55.3 | 112.4 | 11.8 | 41 |

**Table 7:** Summary of segmentation performance (mean DSC and IoU ± standard deviation) by color space across architectures and datasets.

| Color Space | Architecture | ISIC 2018 DSC | ISIC 2018 IoU | PH2 DSC | HAM10000 DSC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| RGB | U-Net | 0.871 ± 0.032 | 0.792 ± 0.041 | 0.903 ± 0.027 | 0.856 ± 0.038 |
| HSV | U-Net | 0.879 ± 0.045 | 0.801 ± 0.053 | 0.911 ± 0.031 | 0.862 ± 0.047 |
| CIE Lab | U-Net | 0.891 ± 0.028 | 0.815 ± 0.034 | 0.924 ± 0.022 | 0.878 ± 0.031 |
| YCbCr | U-Net | 0.883 ± 0.031 | 0.807 ± 0.038 | 0.917 ± 0.025 | 0.869 ± 0.034 |
| Adaptive (Ours) | U-Net | **0.904** ± 0.024 | **0.831** ± 0.029 | **0.936** ± 0.019 | **0.891** ± 0.027 |
| RGB | SwinUNet | 0.893 ± 0.029 | 0.818 ± 0.036 | 0.921 ± 0.024 | 0.874 ± 0.033 |
| CIE Lab | SwinUNet | 0.908 ± 0.025 | 0.834 ± 0.031 | 0.939 ± 0.020 | 0.889 ± 0.028 |
| Adaptive (Ours) | SwinUNet | **0.921** ± 0.021 | **0.849** ± 0.026 | **0.951** ± 0.017 | **0.903** ± 0.024 |

**Algorithm 3:** Adaptive Color Space Selection (ACSS) Inference and Training

**Input:** Dermoscopic image $\mathbf{I} \in \mathbb{R}^{H\times W\times 3}$, color space set $\{\mathcal{T}_k\}_{k=1}^{K}$, gating network $g_\phi$, segmentation network $f_\theta$

**Output:** Binary segmentation mask $\hat{\mathbf{M}} \in \{0,1\}^{H\times W}$

**// Forward pass of ACSS module**

Compute color space representations: $\mathbf{R}_k \leftarrow \mathcal{T}_k(\mathbf{I})$ for $k = 1, \ldots, K$;

Compute global image statistics $\mathbf{s} \leftarrow [\mu(\mathbf{I}), \sigma(\mathbf{I}), \text{skew}(\mathbf{I})]$;

Compute gate probabilities: $\mathbf{w} \leftarrow \text{softmax}(g_\phi(\mathbf{s}))$;

Compute adaptive representation: $\tilde{\mathbf{I}} \leftarrow \sum_{k=1}^{K} w_k \cdot \mathbf{R}_k$;

**// Segmentation forward pass**

Compute logit map: $\mathbf{L} \leftarrow f_\theta(\tilde{\mathbf{I}})$;

Compute mask: $\hat{\mathbf{M}} \leftarrow \mathbb{1}[\sigma(\mathbf{L}) > 0.5]$;

**// Training update**

Compute loss: $\mathcal{L} \leftarrow \mathcal{L}_{\text{Dice}}(\hat{\mathbf{M}}, \mathbf{M}^*) + \lambda \mathcal{L}_{\text{BCE}}(\hat{\mathbf{M}}, \mathbf{M}^*)$;

Update $(\phi, \theta) \leftarrow (\phi, \theta) - \eta \nabla_{(\phi,\theta)} \mathcal{L}$;

**Algorithm 4:** Adaptive Color Space Selection Framework (ACSF)

**Input:** Dermoscopic image $\mathbf{I} \in \mathbb{R}^{H\times W\times 3}$, color space set $\mathcal{C} = \{c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_K\}$, pretrained encoder $\mathcal{E}$, decoder $\mathcal{D}$, selection network $\mathcal{S}$

**Output:** Segmentation mask $\hat{\mathbf{M}} \in \{0,1\}^{H\times W}$, selected weights $\boldsymbol{\alpha}$

Convert $\mathbf{I}$ to all $K$ color space representations: $\{\mathbf{I}^{c_k}\}_{k=1}^{K}$;

Concatenate all representations: $\mathbf{I}_{\text{all}} = [\mathbf{I}^{c_1}, \mathbf{I}^{c_2}, \ldots, \mathbf{I}^{c_K}]$;

Compute selection weights: $\boldsymbol{\alpha} = \text{softmax}(\mathcal{S}(\mathbf{I}_{\text{all}}))$;

Construct weighted fusion: $\tilde{\mathbf{I}} = \sum_{k=1}^{K} \alpha_k \cdot \mathbf{I}^{c_k}$;

Extract multi-scale features: $\mathbf{F} = \mathcal{E}(\tilde{\mathbf{I}})$;

Generate segmentation logits: $\hat{\mathbf{L}} = \mathcal{D}(\mathbf{F})$;

Apply sigmoid activation: $\hat{\mathbf{M}} = \mathbf{1}[\sigma(\hat{\mathbf{L}}) \geq 0.5]$;

Compute total loss: $\mathcal{L}_{\text{total}} = \lambda_1 \mathcal{L}_{\text{dice}} + \lambda_2 \mathcal{L}_{\text{bce}} + \lambda_3 \mathcal{L}_{\text{boundary}} + \lambda_4 \mathcal{L}_{\text{fusion}}(\boldsymbol{\alpha})$;

Update parameters via backpropagation;

**return** $\hat{\mathbf{M}}, \boldsymbol{\alpha}$

**Table 8:** Summary of performance metrics for the ACSF framework and baseline color space configurations across three benchmark dermoscopic segmentation datasets. Bold values denote best performance in each column.

| **Method / Color Space** | **Dataset** | **Dice (%)** | **Jaccard (%)** | **Boundary F1 (%)** | **Specificity (%)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| RGB Baseline | ISIC 2018 | 85.2 | 74.3 | 81.7 | 93.4 |
| HSV Baseline | ISIC 2018 | 86.1 | 75.6 | 83.2 | 94.1 |
| CIE Lab Baseline | ISIC 2018 | 87.1 | 77.0 | 84.5 | 94.8 |
| YCbCr Baseline | ISIC 2018 | 85.8 | 75.1 | 82.9 | 93.9 |
| Opponent Color | ISIC 2018 | 86.6 | 76.4 | 83.8 | 94.5 |
| **ACSF (Proposed)** | **ISIC 2018** | **89.3** | **80.7** | **87.9** | **96.1** |
| RGB Baseline | $PH^2$ | 87.9 | 78.4 | 84.3 | 95.2 |
| CIE Lab Baseline | $PH^2$ | 89.4 | 80.9 | 86.7 | 95.8 |
| **ACSF (Proposed)** | **$PH^2$** | **91.6** | **84.5** | **89.2** | **97.0** |
| RGB Baseline | DermIS | 83.7 | 71.9 | 79.8 | 92.6 |
| CIE Lab Baseline | DermIS | 85.8 | 75.1 | 82.4 | 93.7 |
| **ACSF (Proposed)** | **DermIS** | **88.1** | **78.8** | **85.7** | **95.4** |