

THE VIEWS OF POTENTIAL PLASTIC SURGERY PATIENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA USE: THE OUTCOME OF A QUESTIONNAIRE ON INSTASTORY

POTANSİYEL PLASTİK CERRAHİ HASTALARININ SOSYAL MEDYA KULLANIMINA İLİŞKİN GÖRÜŞLERİ: INSTAGRAM HİKAYE ANKETİNİN SONUCU

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ABSTRACT

Objective: In the age of technology, various social media channels, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have been used by the majority of surgeons to raise awareness, provide information about various medical procedures, and attract patients' attention. However, social media has also brought some new problems as well as provided some benefits for both the surgeons and patients.

Materials and methods: So, to understand the point of view of our followers, we prepared a short simple questionnaire, and we submitted it through Instagram asking them to answer the questions. Therefore, this article is based on views of our followers about the posts with aesthetic surgery on social media. It was seen that 56.0 percent of the participants mainly used Instagram, followed by Facebook (22.0 percent), and YouTube (9.6 percent).

Results: The most prominent result was that the participants thought not to be interested in the educative posts on Instagram, however, the doctor's website was found the most credible information source in comparison to the other social media platforms when seeking a surgeon for their aesthetic problems.

Conclusions: Therefore, Therefore, if we want to guide patients correctly, we should use social media channels according to the interests and tendencies of the followers.

Keywords: Social media, Questionnaire, Plastic surgery

ÖZET

Amaç: Teknoloji çağında Instagram, Facebook ve YouTube gibi çeşitli sosyal medya kanalları, cerrahların çoğunluğu tarafından farkındalık yaratmak, çeşitli tıbbi prosedürler hakkında bilgi vermek ve hastaların dikkatini çekmek amacıyla kullanılmaktadır. Ancak sosyal medya hem cerrahlara hem de hastalara bazı faydalar sağladığı gibi bazı yeni sorunları da beraberinde getirmiştir.

Materyal ve metod: Takipçilerimizin bakış açısını anlamak için kısa ve basit bir anket hazırladık ve bu anketi Instagram üzerinden göndererek onlardan soruları yanıtlamalarını istedik. Bu nedenle bu yazımız sosyal medyadaki estetik cerrahi içerikli paylaşımlar hakkında takipçilerimizin görüşlerine dayanmaktadır.

Bulgular: Katılımcıların yüzde 56,0'ının ağırlıklı olarak Instagram, ardından Facebook (yüzde 22,0), Youtube (yüzde 9,6) kullandığı görüldü. En belirgin sonuç, katılımcıların Instagram'daki eğitici paylaşımların ilgi çekici olmadığını düşünmeleri, bununla birlikte hastalar estetik sorunları için cerrah ararken diğer sosyal medya platformlarına kıyasla doktor web sitesini en güvenilir bilgi kaynağı olarak görmeleri oldu.

Sonuç: Bu makaledeki verilere dayanarak hastaları doğru yönlendirmek istiyorsak sosyal medya kanallarını takipçilerin ilgi ve eğilimlerine göre kullanmalıyız.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal medya, Anket, Plastik cerrahi

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Introduction

Today, there has been a great development in various surgical and non-surgical aesthetic procedures in the area of plastic surgery. These procedures could have a chance to spread in a short time through social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube as compared to previous times. The main benefit of social media use for surgeons can be said that it is a short and easy way to be well known or a famous surgeon. Thus, it will enable them to make a splash suddenly in their city, country, also all over the world. Because of this, especially new and less experienced surgeons mainly prefer using social media for this type of goal. Indeed, when a young surgeon uses it regularly and shares their own works or results, he will reach this goal and increase the number of followers. On the other hand, the patients also seeking a plastic surgeon for their needs also use the same method. So social media can be thought of as a meeting point in the virtual world for both surgeons and patients.

However, at this point, there has been a debate going on among surgeons for some time. The debate was focused on what the legality and ethical principles of social media use should be. It is an unarguable reality that social media has triggered the induced beauty sense of humans. In previous times, humans were living in more closed surroundings, and the majority of them were in a closer relationship with only their family members, colleagues or neighbors. And, there was much more face-to-face relation among humans. However, as time goes on, there have also been significant changes in the communication ways as well as the cities in which they live. The towns and cities have fast grown up with the result of migrations plus overpopulation and they have turned into a huge and very crowded metropolis. As the result of this, they were obliged to live and communicate with other people from different cultures and countries in these very crowded cities. Not only the number of people has increased but also there has been an increase in various communication methods. Parallel to the developing technology, social media was presented as an almost unique option to be social in modern times. This actually was not real communication but this virtual communication was the main way to be more

social for people living in crowded cities. In the developing world, social media platforms have been the easiest way for choosing and reaching a large number of potential clients. So, social media gives companies a chance to easily conduct their messages in a very short time.

Aesthetic surgery can be thought of as a unique subgroup in plastic surgery in which patients are more elective and they seek out their surgeons based on referrals (1). Plastic surgery patients are increasingly using social media to identify their surgeons. Before making a decision, the patients want to see the work, procedures, and results of a doctor, also about something from surgeon's private life. Social media has become a unique resource for the patients looking for a surgeon on their health problems. Educational materials, novel techniques, emerging trends, and new treatment options can be easily disseminated among the much larger audience by using social media and the surgeons can encourage the patients with informed decisions in this way of communication (2).

In this questionnaire study, we aimed to learn about the tendencies and point of the view of our followers and thoughts about the aesthetic surgery posts on social media. We also wanted to share some of our takeaways about management of patients' interest in social media to plastic surgeons around the world.

Materials and methods

The survey was carried out in a clinic in Turkey. Since the questions were prepared in Turkish, only Turkish people participated in the survey. In other words, we can only say that it reflected the point of view and ideas of Turkish people. We prepared a questionnaire and submitted it to our followers through the story section of Instagram. Since the questions were related to the aesthetic surgical procedures, no extra exclusion criteria were specified for the participants. The questionnaire was kept in story section of Instagram for 2 days in order to participate and respond to the survey. The questionnaire contained seven questions.

The followers were asked to indicate:

- Which social media channels they mostly used,
- Which social media channels they mostly used to seek a solution for their aesthetic problems,

- Which social media channels they found most reliable while seeking a surgeon for aesthetic problems,
- What kind of posts in the social media platforms attract your attention more,
- Whether they find correct before-and-after posts,
- Whether they find effective before-and-after posts use while making their decision about any plastic surgeon,
- Whether or not they find ethical before and after posts when making decisions about any plastic surgeon.

Results

Totally 863 followers saw these questionnaires on the history section of the Instagram. Averaged age of the participants was 42.6 (range, 15 to 67 years). 59% of the participants were male, and 41% were female. 250 participants replied to the first question (Figure 1). Instagram was found as the most commonly used social media platform

(140 followers). 173 participants replied to the second question (Figure 2). The doctor website was the most used social media channel while they are looking for a surgeon for their aesthetic problems (63 followers), and Facebook (43), Instagram (37) and YouTube followed it (28). 166 participants replied to the third question (Figure 3). Doctor website was found as the most reliable social media platform (81 followers). Except for this, the number of participants who find Instagram most reliable was 31, and it was 40 for Facebook, 13 for YouTube. And, 162 participants replied to the fourth question (Figure 4). Before-and-after posts were found the kind of most attractive sharing (79/162 participants). The number of the participants who find correct the before-after photograph sharing was 158 (91 percent) and found efficient in making a decision was 142 (83 percent). On the other hand, the number of participants who find ethics was 165 (94 percent). Table 1 shows all the data we achieved at the end of the questionnaire.

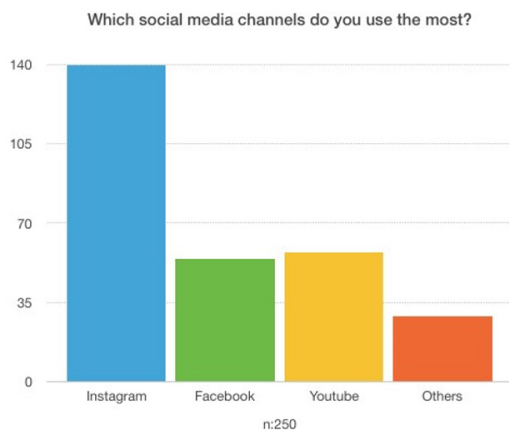


Figure 1: The participants were asked which social media channels they mostly used.

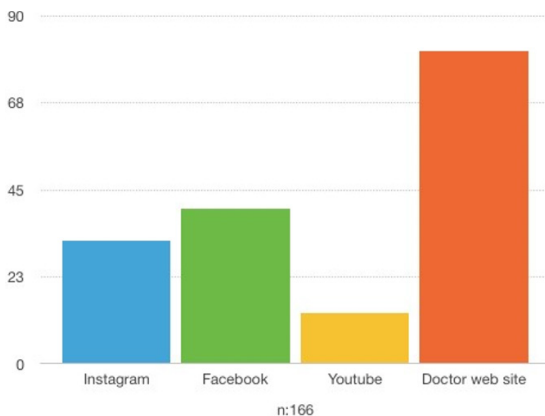


Figure 3: The participants were asked which social media channel they find most reliable while they are seeking a plastic surgeon.

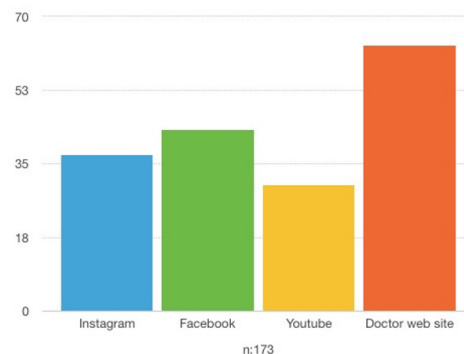


Figure 2: The participants were asked which social media channels they most used for their aesthetic problems.

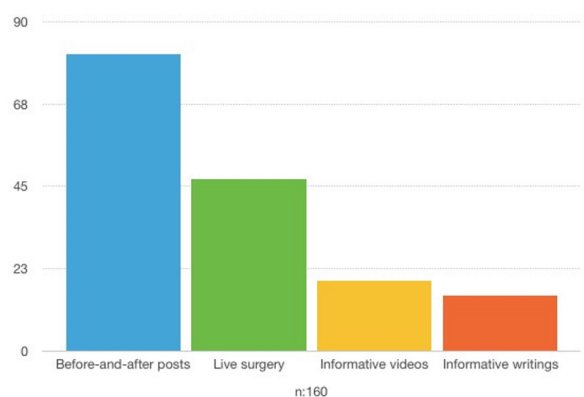


Figure 4: The participants were asked what kind of posts used in the social media platforms drew their attention more.

Table 1: Table shows all questions and answers given to the questionnaire

Which social media channels do you use the most?	n(participant):250
Instagram	140
Facebook	57
Youtube	24
Others	29
Which social media channels do you most use for your aesthetic problems?	n(participant):173
Instagram	37
Facebook	43
Youtube	30
Doctor web site	63
Which social media channel do you find most reliable while you are seeking a plastic surgeon?	n(participant):166
Instagram	32
Facebook	40
Youtube	13
Doctor web site	81
Which kind of post used on social media platforms draw your attention more?	n(participant):160
Before-and-after posts	81
Live surgery	47
Informative videos	19
Informative writings	15
Those who find correct before-and-after posts for making decision	158 (91%)-15 (9%)
Those who find efficient before-and-after posts for making decision	142 (83%)-30 (17%)
Those who find ethical before-and-after posts	165 (94%)-11 (6%)

Discussion

The study sought to look at how patients use social media to research their plastic surgeons. However, the study design was only made through Instagram stories in which the questions asked for a comparison with other social media channels. Because of this, someone can think that the data might be very different as the study repeated across all the major social media channels. Even if the questions were published in different media, we thought that the result would not change much and we preferred to use only Instagram. On the other hand, our goal was to reach as many followers as possible in a short

time. That's why we used Instagram, which is the most used social media channel in our country. Various social media channels and the internet have had an increasingly important role in the area of plastic surgery especially over the last years (3-5). In a recent study, most of the patients and the majority of plastic surgeons were found that they thought social media strongly influenced their decisions in choosing a specific doctor for various health problems. According to our current questionnaire results, we found that our followers mostly used Instagram among all social media channels and it was 140 of 250 participants (56 percent). However, as they were

asked which social media channel most preferred while they were seeking a surgeon for their health problems, the majority of the participants replied as the doctor website. A total of 173 participants replied to this question and the number of respondents as doctor website was 63, followed by Facebook (n=43), Instagram (n=37) and YouTube (n=30). Similarly, the doctor website was found as the most reliable social media channel, and followed by Facebook (n=43), Instagram (n=37) and YouTube (n=13). Herein, we can say there are two different points of view or goals. When the patients only wonder how and/or who the surgeon is, they mainly prefer using Instagram, Facebook or YouTube. However, if the patient wants to get more information about any pathology, illness or various treatment options, he or she prefers looking at the doctor's website. The social media channels can provide us to attract and reach to more patients or to announce our self them (6), however, we can use websites sites with aiming to inform the patients about the illness, treatment options, new treatment modalities, and sharing our experiences on various surgical techniques or procedures. So, we can say that websites should mainly be used as an information platform rather than make attractive posts that are generally made in other social media platforms.

A recent study concluded that all plastic surgeons should be aware of the positive and negative aspects of social media before integrating it into their professional lives (7). Both aspects are related to the misuse of social media. Some violations such as dancing in an operating room while scrubbed in with a patient under anesthesia or unprofessional job-related materials will disturb the patient and patient's family or public (8). Another example to cause similar effects for the patients is to sharing various cancer, burn or trauma cases photos and/or videos including blood, open wound or shocking views such as a groaning patient with pain during any medical application. According to our observations, these posts, maybe so, can draw much more attention than someone expects, however, they mainly negatively affect the patients and perhaps can lead them to make wrong decisions with mingled and weird feelings such as fear and wonder. Even while the patients already can not be expected to evaluate optimal any even simple medical

application, it will be a natural consequence that any ordinary person will judge the book only by its cover. Therefore, it is essential not to prefer this type of post to obtain any positive feedback from the patients that followed to the surgeon in social media. Another topic on the correct use of social media can be said always to give realistic messages (9). It must be certainly considered that unrealistic messages will lead to unrealistic patients. Especially the patients seeking a plastic surgeon should be thought to tend to fall in unrealistic expectations, and among them, the ones have body dysmorphic disorder is not rare.

In our results, the participants were found that they generally tend to prefer looking at the doctor's website especially while they are seeking a surgeon for their aesthetic problems even though the participants are mostly users of Instagram. Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube are the social media platforms in which are mainly shared before-and-after photos, patient testimonials and short knowledge for the patients. In a similar study, before-and-after posts were found the most interesting content and the outcome is similar to that of our study. In our study, 81 of a total of 160 participants found before-and-after posts more attractive than others. In addition, various studies have shown that aesthetic patients have engaged and spent long hours in nearly all of the social media sources in their decision-making (10-11). A large proportion of potential cosmetic patients often use social media to research surgeons in depth for their experience and competence. For this reason, plastic surgeons need to use these platforms correctly and regularly along with professional websites (12).

The main limitation of our study was that we were able to study a small size and all participants belonged to a single surgeon. The other limiting problem was that the followers stopped watching stories if stories repeated questions, which explains a reduction in responses with subsequent questions. Therefore, a new study can be designed to have each question on separate days to encourage more responses. Third, any demographic difference, participant's age, gender, occupation, and also their education levels can be considered to be able to affect the result of the study. On the other hand, in this kind of a study, we think that we can't eliminate the responders

from some subgroups such as prospective patients, friends of the practice that follow but are not patients, sales representatives, and other plastic surgeons. However, the main purpose of the study was to learn what the followers think about our activities on various social media platforms. It is the first study that it was done using, only one of the social media channels, Instagram. This platform enables us to make any survey owing to its ‘‘making survey’’ property in the story section of Instagram. Because Instagram followers are free to participate in the survey or not, so, this section is not suitable for any manipulation or take a siding. Therefore, we think that this study can provide for the readers an idea of how their follower’s interests can be managed by understanding potential patient trends.

Conclusions

Social media should mainly be considered an

educational platform to make correct guidance for the followers and potential aesthetic patients. Apparently, it has been the most sensible option any longer in terms of showing and announcing our professionalism to potential patients. For this reason, we should definitely avoid exaggerating and deceptive or over-encouraging posts in social media platforms to be able to achieve a more stable and problem-free patient-surgeon relationship.

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Conflict of interest

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