

TRENDS OF THE YOUTH AUDIENCE'S BEHAVIOR IN AESTHETIC MEDICINE

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Abstract

The beginning of the 21st century has seen a noticeable change in traditional consumer values, primarily among the younger audience. Technological developments in aesthetic medicine, including ones to improve the looks and body image, are making this sphere more and more attractive for the younger generation. As millennials and Generation Z representatives foresee negative effects of aging, they are prepared to undergo aesthetic medical treatment for preventive purposes. Frequently dissatisfied with their appearance, they eagerly choose facial and body improvement medical procedures, viewing them as a sort of “beauty tuning”. An attractive appearance gives them a feeling of success and guarantees professional and personal development. The article is devoted to the study of the specifics of the Russian youth consumer behavior in relation to aesthetic medicine. 410 respondents aged 18-35 took part in the study. The study revealed that young consumers are prepared to pay for aesthetic medical treatment both to slow down the aging process and to enhance their looks. The study found that their motivation is mostly related to the desire of social endorsement and career growth.

Key words: consumer values, youth audience, aesthetics medicine.

JEL Code: A13, A14

Introduction

Modern society is very sensitive to a person's external beauty which mass media promotes as an attribute of success in all spheres of life. The recent study (Dayan et al., 2019) proved that positive results of aesthetic medical treatments have a favourable impact on a person's social perception, as attractive post-treatment images appear more socially adapted and successful. Attractiveness and youth are global cult trends and dictate changes in customer values and preferences. Buying organic foods, living healthy lifestyles and staying young provide a growing interest in aesthetic medicine. The global market value for aesthetic medicine was estimated at \$ 52.5 billion in 2018, with an ever-growing average trend of 8.9% till 2026 (PwC, 2019). The introduction of highly effective and minimally invasive techniques has led

to an increase in the amount of aesthetic medicine consumers. Traditionally, key clients of the industry were people aged 30-65, who were actively fighting against the signs of aging, e.g. fine lines, skin deterioration and age spots. Nowadays, however, the younger generation has started using aesthetic medical treatment proactively. The transformation in consumer behavior is stimulated by the fact that the young tend to compare themselves with celebrities. The study of Awasthi, A. K. & Choraria, S. (2015) showed that although customers might demonstrate imitation behaviour, they find it crucial to select celebrities according to characteristics that match their own personalities. Their desire to obtain an attractive celebrity-like appearance could encourage the youth to resort to similar aesthetical medical treatments. Advertisements, especially in social media, emphasize the advantages of external attractiveness, particularly in boosting self-confidence.

Top Global Consumer Trends 2019 (Angus & Westbrook, 2019) traditionally reflect the most important aspects that determine behaviors in modern society. The ones below are highlighted:

1. rejection of age;
2. interest in natural cosmetics;
3. conscious consumption and vegetarianism;
4. digital communications;
5. imaginary expertise (Such ideas as “all of us are experts and it is impossible to hide information from the consumer” often reveal how much people rely on their own opinion and knowledge when choosing goods and services);
6. growing importance of personal time;
7. increasing interest in self-care with costly healthcare playing the leading part and aesthetic medicine being responsible for a significant share of those costs;
8. increasing number of people living alone.

These trends highlight an increased value of anti-aging procedures, including purely medical and aesthetic medical treatments and the use of natural cosmetics. Consumers are becoming increasingly focused on themselves; they pay attention to their well-being and are willing to invest substantial resources into youth, beauty, and health maintenance. In all respects, the above-mentioned trends are characteristic of millennials and Generation Z consumers.

In the US, millennials are considered to be the largest consumer group, with the purchasing power of about \$200 billion a year in direct income and another \$500 billion in indirect costs, which usually come from parents and guardians (Moretti, 2018).

1 Motivation and attitude to aesthetic medicine

According to the results of the Seery study (2016), 91% of women aged 18-24 and 90% of women aged 25-35 noted that they were dissatisfied with something in their appearance. 63% of the former and 67% of the latter demonstrated willingness to visit a spa clinic, or undergo an aesthetic medical treatment or plastic surgery. This percentage was higher than in any other age group of respondents. These results imply that young consumers (mostly female) have quite a few reasons to turn to aesthetic medicine. Currently, one of the main research tasks in the field of aesthetic medicine is to identify potential goals and motives of consumers, as well as their desired outcomes.

In 2017, a consumer study conducted at the Aesthetic Medicine Clinic in Florence showed changes in purchasing habits and assessment of treatment offered (Angelini & Carmignani, 2017). The authors concluded that there were a number of reasons for consumers to turn to aesthetic medicine. In the study, the authors identified the main goals and motives of customers (Table 1).

Tab. 1: Goals and motives of aesthetic medicine customers

Customer goals	Respondents, %	Customer motives	Respondents, %
Correction of physical defects	66,67	Getting rid of inner discomfort	93,62
Fighting aging signs	23,24	Social endorsement	4,26
Radical change in appearance	9,09	Other	2,13
Total	100		100

Source: Angelini & Carmignani, 2017

In 2019, the results of a global research project on the growing diversity of aesthetic medicine patients were presented (Liew, Silberberg, & Chantrey, 2019). The authors examined 54,000 participants in 17 countries and identified four patient archetypes: Beautification, Positive Aging, Transformation and Correction. Each archetype is characterized by special motives, goals, ways to achieve them, desirable outcomes and limitations. However, the share of each archetype is generally undefined as cultural differences have a great impact on the structure in each country.

The research focused on identifying client motives for aesthetic medicine is currently being pursued (Dayan, 2017; Paoli & Procacci, 2019; Rieder & Dayan, 2020).

Marketing communications aimed at informing and educating clients about aesthetic clinics play an essential role in the development of the aesthetic medicine market. In particular, a special role is played by websites that clinics have, doctors that they employ and promotion in social networks that they provide. These issues are also addressed by researchers like Montemurro, P., Cheema, M., Tamburino, S., & Heden, P. (2019). The study involved Swedish aesthetic plastic surgeons and their Internet and social media activities.

2 Research methodology

The authors conducted a study of the youth consumer behavior on the basis of Plekhanov Russian University of Economics (PRUE). One of the main research fields of the PRUE Marketing Department is the study of value orientations and purchasing preferences of young consumers. The analysis of youth values in the healthcare markets, consumer products, cosmetics and perfumes provides an understanding of how consumer preferences are formed, how young people react to the use of different media channels, mobile applications, and social media marketing tools when it concerns the subject matter.

In December 2019, an online survey based on a structured questionnaire was conducted. Its purpose was to identify goals and motives which lead to the decision to undergo aesthetic medical treatment, to find information sources used by customers to make the final choice, and to define factors that influence the choice of a clinic. It was an online study involving consumers who have Internet access at home, at work or on their mobile devices. The questionnaire was uploaded in Google Forms, respondents received the link to it via Facebook and V Kontakte and the age selection criteria also allowed their acquaintances to participate in the study. A sample method was used in the study. First group of the respondents consisted of PRUE students (from different programmes), then "snowball" method was used. But only respondents between 18-35 years old, either university graduates or undergraduates, were selected for the study, as these consumers are more interested in aesthetic medicine. According to authors' expertise the share of male group in the Russian target audience of aesthetical medicine is 10-20%, so this gender distribution was taken into consideration when forming the sample. The study was based on the sample of 410 respondents. Out of them, the participants who took part in the survey consisted 350 (85%) females and 60 (15%) males and mainly represented the 18-23 age group (85%). Within a month before the survey date, 56% of the respondents received at least one medical treatment and 29% purchased various aesthetic medical treatments.

Study limitations are non-representable of the sample, geographically a vast majority of respondents were the inhabitants of the Moscow region.

3 Research results

The main research question concerns customer goals and motives in relation to aesthetic medicine. The results are presented in Table 2. It can be concluded that answers given by Russian respondents differ from the results obtained from the earlier-mentioned research of Angelini & Carmignani (2017).

Tab. 2: Goals and motives of aesthetic medicine customers

Customer goals	Respondents, %	Customer motives	Respondents, %
Correction of skin defects	53,4	Social endorsement	41,4
Fighting aging signs	15,1	Fear of aging	24,1
Appearance perfection	31,5	Feeling more confident and attractive	11,7
		Career development	22,8
Total	100		100

Source: composed by the authors

The primary goal of over half of the respondents is to correct certain skin defects. This result is comparable with the previous research. However, Russian respondents expressed different motives, highlighting among others social endorsement and career development. Thus, national differences in goals and motives of aesthetic medical treatment consumers have been identified.

The authors also considered the aesthetic medical treatment types that young consumers intend to apply in the near future. Table 3 shows correlation between their goals and projected treatment types.

Tab. 3: Goals of aesthetic medicine customers and types of treatment planned

Treatment type	Customers' goals			Total
	Correction of skin defects, respondents	Fighting aging signs, respondents	Appearance perfection, respondents	
Contour plastic	8	17	4	29
Botox injections	14	10	10	34
Mesotherapy	18	10	21	49
Peeling	36	1	27	64

Apparatus cosmetology	64	2	4	70
Biorevitalization	52	10	13	75
Plastic surgery	27	12	50	89
Total	219	62	129	410

Source: composed by the authors

The chi-squared method was used to test the hypothesis: “*Aesthetic medicine consumer goals determine the type of treatment consumers plan to receive*”. The test was performed with a significance level of 5%. The results are presented in Table 4.

Tab. 4: Chi-Square tests

	Value	Degrees of freedom	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	139.513 ^a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	136.354	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.090	1	.764
Number of Valid Cases	410		

a. 1 cells (4.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.39.

Source: composed by the authors

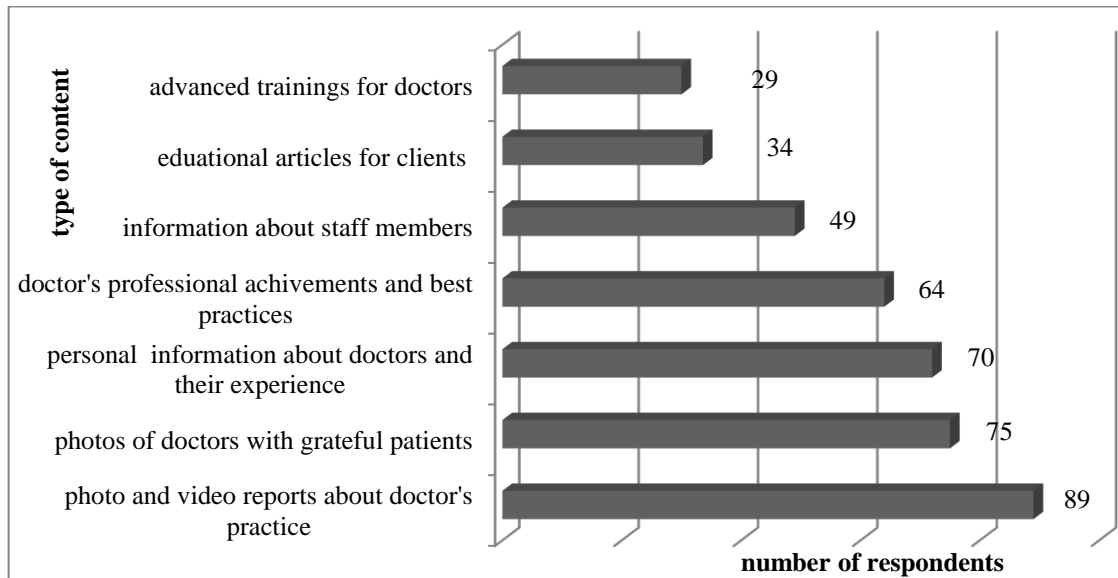
Thus, the hypothesis was proven, and the research results might be used to offer customers a particular treatment type based on their goals.

Though young customers are willing to receive aesthetic medical treatment, they express a number of concerns regarding the clinic itself, as well as the prices of procedures and doctors’ professional competence. Price sensitivity among young customers is relatively high. Among most important concerns are the likelihood to choose a wrong treatment approach (61%) and poor communication with the doctor (52%). 48% of respondents mentioned the risk of obtaining insufficient information about doctors. Only 32% of respondents were afraid of negative outcomes from the facial treatment they were about to undergo. The probable explanation for such a low perceived risk is confidence that all negative outcomes could be repaired. Such an attitude is typical of young people, along with their willingness to take risks, as they are less burdened with negative experiences.

Most patients are influenced by social media content, and this flow emphasises the necessity of aesthetic medical treatment (Crockett, Pruzinsky & Persing, 2007; Ward, Ward & Paskhover, 2018). The research results revealed that most young patients of aesthetic medicine clinics, both potential and current, used official websites (293 respondents), social

media (287 respondents) pages and friends' recommendations (220 respondents) when choosing a clinic.

Fig. 1: Desirable information about clinics in social media (n=410)



Source: composed by the authors

To manage a perceived risk and maintain patients' trust, it is crucial for an aesthetic medicine clinic to run intense social media activities. In the respondents' view, it is important to provide clients with integral personal and professional information about doctors, their achievements, best practices, trainings, as well as offer photo and video evidence of post-treatment results of their patients (Figure 1). The traditional before-and-after format to demonstrate treatment outcomes has a strong influence on younger consumers.

The authors also tested the hypothesis about the correlation between customer goals and the official information they need to make the final decision. The results are presented in Table 3.

Tab. 3: Goals of aesthetic medicine customers and information needed

Information about clinic	Customers' goals			Total
	Correction of skin defects, respondents %	Fighting aging signs, respondents %	Appearance perfection, respondents %	
Advanced trainings for doctors	3.7	27.4	3.1	100
Educational articles for clients	6.4	16.1	7.8	100

Information about staff members	8.2	16.1	16.3	100
Doctor's professional achievements and best practices	16.4	1.6	20.9	100
Personal information about doctors and their experience	29.2	3.3	3.1	100
Photos of doctors with grateful patients	23.7	16.1	10	100
Photo and video reports about doctor's practice	12.4	19.4	38.8	100
Total, %	100	100	100	

Source: composed by the authors

Thus, a link between consumer goals and the information consumers seek on clinics' websites and in social networks was identified. These outcomes could be applied when planning promotional and advertising campaigns.

Conclusion

Aesthetic medicine has become a vital part of the youth lifestyle. Due to the latest mass media trends that have turned the appearance of the youth-of-today into a cult of success, the consumption of aesthetic medicine services has been forever growing, which is reflected by global indicators. The peak popularity of selfies and social media activities increases the chances of young consumers to receive higher ratings regarding their attractiveness. Thus, the role of beauty as a social category has increased dramatically.

The conducted research allows to uncover certain peculiarities of aesthetic treatment perceptions, indicates the difference in goals and motives of young respondents as compared to the results of previous studies and confirms the idea of significant national and cultural differences in the perception of aesthetic medicine. It has been concluded that the predominant motives of young consumers lie in the area of social endorsement and career development. This means that young people believe that a more attractive appearance is likely to help them make friends, find partners, get better jobs and be successful in life. Young respondents believe that possible negative effects are unlikely to occur and even if they do, they could be easily cured.

Despite the overall positive attitude, young consumers express concerns when it comes to applying a wrong treatment type, failing to build effective communication with the doctor

and paying an excessive price for the procedure. To reduce customers' perceived risks and successfully meet their expectations, clinics should pay special attention to their official websites and carefully plan their social media activities, as these are the priority channels young patients opt for to obtain information. The results of the study have helped to identify information rubrics that are in high demand among clients of aesthetic medicine clinics.

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