



GOING SOCIAL:

HOW SOCIAL
MEDIA IS ALTERING
THE MARKETING
LANDSCAPE FOR
MEDICAL
AESTHETICS

Social media has become a vital way for people to connect and communicate in the 21st century. But what's perhaps more important to note is that as consumers spend more time on social networks, they are beginning to have much more profound effects on our behaviors and attitudes. In fact, social media now plays a pivotal role in presenting medical aesthetics as a feasible option for consumers active on the platforms. As a provider, it is imperative that you understand how social sites play into clients' daily decision-making and how to harness the power of these platforms for your business.

In this report, we review what makes social media so influential in the aesthetics space, the implications for aesthetic practitioners, and the action points you can put into place in your marketing strategy today for improved patient acquisitions tomorrow.



BROADENING YOUR MARKETING AUDIENCE VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

The first ever social media website was created in 1997¹. Called SixDegrees.com, the site was based on the six degrees of separation theory—the idea that all people are linked to each other, even strangers, by six connections of friends to friends or fewer—and allowed users to create their own friend matrix, send messages to other users, post bulletin board items to friends within their first three degrees of connections, and see how they were connected to anyone else on the site. It wasn't until 2004 that Facebook, the historically most popular social network to date, was launched.

Since then, multiple other social media platforms have entered the market, including Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, and many more that have either come and gone or are still holding on strong. Altogether, the rate of United States-based adults using social media has shot up from five percent in 2005 to 69 percent today, with that figure rising among younger demographics up to 88 percent for 18–29-year-olds.² While Facebook remains the most heavily used platform with 68 percent of U.S. adults regularly logging on, photo-sharing app Instagram has seen strong growth, rising from a usage rate of 28 percent among U.S. adults in 2016 to 35 percent in 2018. Regardless of the social network of preference, a study on Americans' digital habits found that in 2017, 35 percent of users posted on social networking sites daily, spending an average 23.6 hours online each week.³

Social Media Platforms by the Numbers



69%

Of adults in the United States are using social media which is a significant increase from 5% in 2005.



Facebook
68%



LinkedIn
25%



Instagram
35%



Twitter
24%

People average **23.6 hrs** online each week

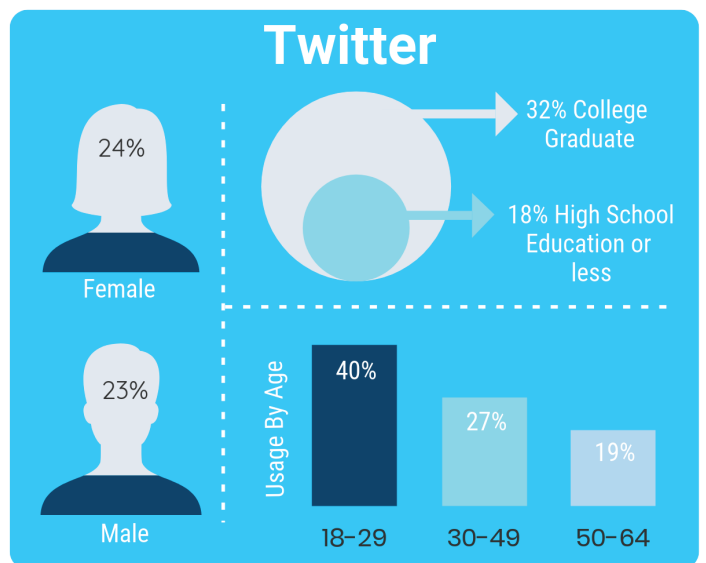
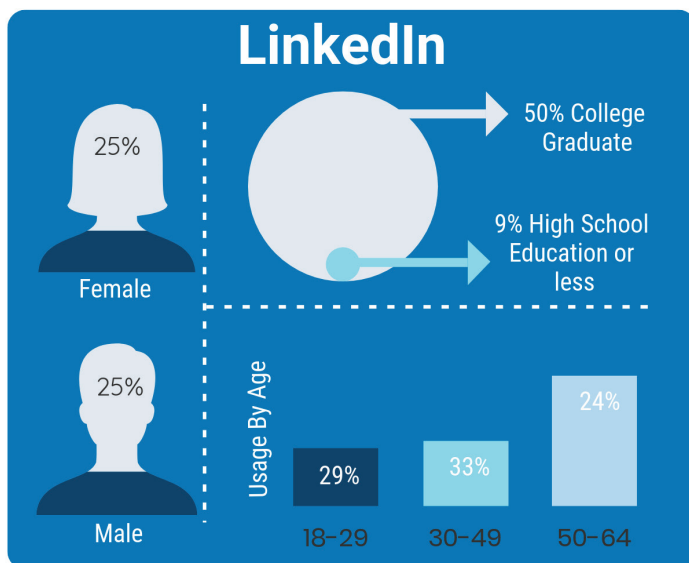
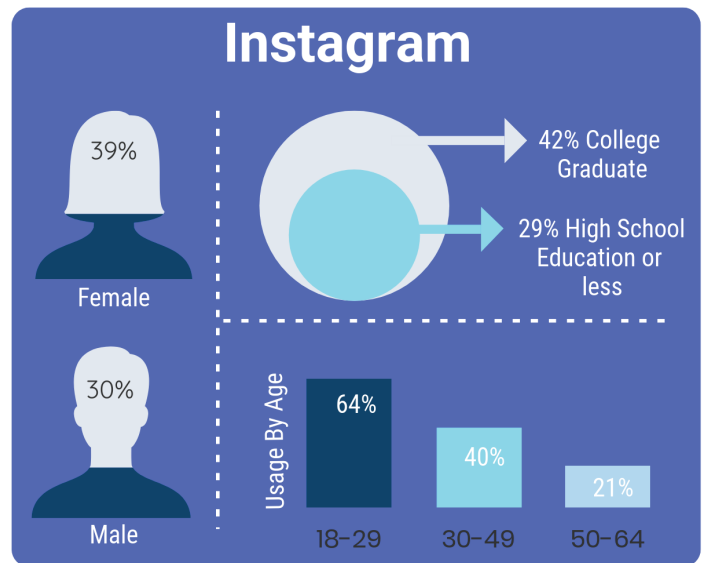
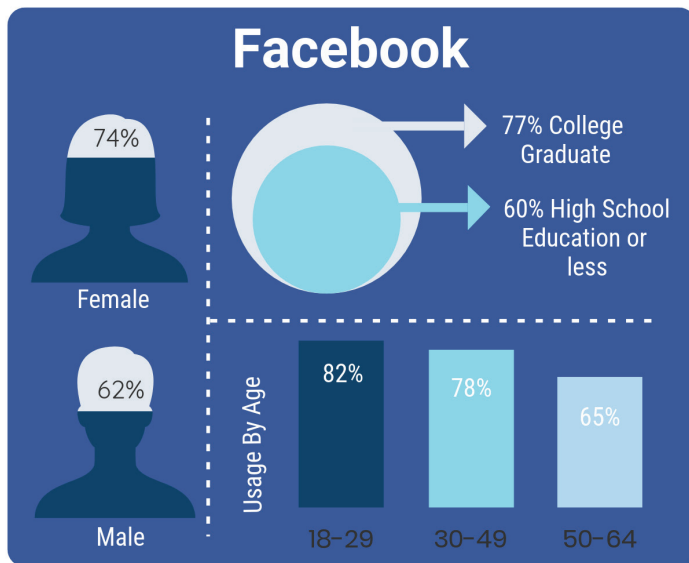
¹ Hale, B. (2016). The History of Social Media: Social Networking Evolution. History Cooperative. Retrieved from <http://historycooperative.org/the-history-of-social-media/>

² Pew Research Center. (2018, February 5). Demographics of Social Media Users and Adoption in the United States: Social Media Fact Sheet. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/>

³ Lebo, H. (2017). The 15th Annual Study on the Impact of Digital Technology on Americans. Center for the Digital Future. Retrieved from <http://www.digitalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/2017-Digital-Future-Report.pdf>

BROADENING YOUR MARKETING AUDIENCE VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

However, it is also important to note that user demographics vary by social media platform in terms of education, age, gender, geographic area, and more. While more females use Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter than males, the number of males using LinkedIn matches females. As for age groups, younger demographics are much more likely to use Instagram and Twitter than those aged 30 or older. Finally, those with a college education are five-times more likely to use LinkedIn than those with a high school diploma. (For a more detailed breakdown, see the charts below.)⁴



It's hard to believe that in just the last 14 years since Facebook's launch, social media is now so widespread. In fact, it's so integral to our lives that "selfie," a term formed to describe taking a picture of oneself for social media, is now found in most academic dictionaries and there are even devices to help us take better selfies. In other words, these platforms have transformed the way people communicate, interact, and even view themselves.

⁴ Pew Research Center. (2018, February 5)

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE POPULARITY OF MEDICAL AESTHETICS

So what does the proliferation of social media have to do with your aesthetics practice? Well, while patients' individual aesthetic choices are certainly influenced by many factors, such as age, relationship status, income, personality type, and more, social media is becoming uniquely powerful in shaping personal perceptions of beauty and motivating aesthetic purchasing decisions.

As mentioned, the proliferation of the selfie is commonplace on social media, but it's also a driving force for the adoption of aesthetic treatments. The desire to look good in one's own social media images is a well-reported key factor fueling demand for aesthetic services today. With professionals reporting that younger patients up to those in middle age increasingly form impressions of their own appearance through their social media accounts⁵, it's clear that social media is an area in which consumers are more accepting of your insight. In fact, 55 percent of facial plastic surgeons

said patients in their practice reported that they were motivated by a desire to look better in selfies in 2017, up from 13 percent in 2016⁶. Another survey by review site RealSelf found that almost half of all patients reported social media as an influential factor when considering or opting for a cosmetic procedure.⁷

Researchers have theorized that social sites have a greater impact than mass media and advertising on consumers because they incorporate a sense of authenticity, personalization, and day-to-day life that makes the content and images feel more immediate and relevant.⁸ Likewise, with celebrities and beauty influencers alike being more open about their aesthetic treatments via social media, many users are beginning to adopt a more positive view of these procedures. These factors, combined with the desire to look good online makes this marketing space ripe for your business.



⁵ Mackenzie, M. (2018, January 30). Plastic Surgery Trends for 2018 Are Being Shaped by Social Media. Allure Magazine. Retrieved from <https://www.allure.com/story/plastic-surgery-trends-2018-social-media>

⁶ American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. (2018, January 29). AAFPRS Annual Survey Reveals Trends in Facial Plastic Surgery. Cision PR Newswire. Retrieved from <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/aafprs-annual-survey-reveals-trends-in-facial-plastic-surgery-300588707.html>

⁷ Dermatology Times. (2015, January 6). Cosmetic Surgery and Social Media Influence in 2015. Dermatology Times. Retrieved from <http://dermatologytimes.com/cosmetic-surgery/cosmetic-surgery-and-social-media-influence-2015>

⁸ Klein, K.M. (2013). Why Don't I Look Like Her? The Impact of Social Media on Female Body Image. Scholarship@Claremont. Retrieved from http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/720

HOW TO WIN AT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

So, with consumers on social media becoming ever more receptive to aesthetic treatments, it would be a major miss for aesthetic practitioners focusing on patient acquisition not to tap into these markets. If you're looking to improve your social media marketing strategy, use these tips to help you strategize and define a clear marketing plan for a better business outcome.

Tip #1

BE IN IT TO WIN IT

If you had any doubts about social media, the data at the beginning of this report should help you better focus on the platforms where the eyes of your ideal patients are, so you can see a better return on your efforts. As well, consider that one recent study, which compared the financial return on investment in social media to Google search ranking, advertising, television, and other media, found that social media produced a stronger ROI than other digital marketing initiatives.⁹ In one respect, with such a large majority of consumers using social media and a higher ROI possible, if you're not active on social media, you are as good as ensuring your competitor's success. Invest time in the platform(s) your ideal patients are using most on a daily basis and make it a priority. If you're not putting in the effort, you won't see a return. Like any marketing campaign, social media requires commitment, a strategy, and a call to action. Commit to social media and you're much more likely to see new patients commit to you.

Tip #2

DON'T TRY TO USE EVERY SOCIAL MEDIA SITE

It's beyond the resources of most clinics to actively engage on every social media platform—and it's not productive. Instead, focus on generating rich interactions with your ideal audience. Pick one to three networks that most closely align with your target audience (see the demographics chart included earlier in this report as a guideline) and create a complete strategy for each network. When choosing your networks, Facebook will most likely be a top pick simply based on its broad audience. However, if you were looking to cultivate an audience among professionals and men, LinkedIn may be your second pick. Also consider the level of engagement (how often the average user logs on to the site) for each platform. A survey by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) of 100 patients, almost all of which were women with an average age of 44, found that Instagram was second in engagement, while Twitter was least popular among aesthetic patients.¹⁰ You'll also want to consider additional platforms besides those listed above, such as RealSelf and Yelp, both of which are influential in the medical aesthetics space.

Tip #3

CONSIDER SOCIAL MEDIA THE OPENING OF A FUNNEL

Without a doubt, consumers want to get to know your staff and clinic on social media, but it's best to consider these platforms as the opening of a funnel. Your goal on all your social media profiles should be to draw in followers and funnel them back to your website, where they can access key information regarding your services or book a consultation. According to an ASPS survey, a clinic's website is the main source consumers refer to online to access more information, with the majority of patients reporting that a clinic's website is a key factor when selecting a practice.¹¹ Make finding your website easy for social media followers by including a link in all your social media bios, profiles, or about pages.

⁹ Gould, D.J. and Nazarian, S. Social Media Return on Investment: How Much is it Worth to My Practice? *Aesthetic Surgery Journal*. 2018, Apr 6; 38(5); 565–574.

¹⁰ American Society of Plastic Surgeons. (2017, October 27). Cosmetic Surgery on Social Media – Patients Rate Preferred Social Media Sites and Content. ASPS. Retrieved from <https://www.plasticsurgery.org/news/press-releases/cosmetic-surgery-on-social-media-patients-rate-preferred-social-media-sites-and-content>

¹¹ Ibid

HOW TO WIN AT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Tip #4

CHOOSE THE RIGHT CONTENT

Before-and-After photos are the most popular content on social media, with other highly rated content being practice information and contests, as reported by the previously mentioned ASPS survey.¹² More than one-fourth of followers wanted to see information about procedures, while few selected instructional or educational information. Videos of procedures being performed were rated popular among consumers, but some practitioners find them ethically questionable and not always aesthetically pleasing. Experiment with various formats and content to see what generates the best level of engagement from your ideal audience while being practical for your clinic. For example, contests may generate a high engagement rate, but your practice is unlikely to be able to support daily contests to maintain this level of engagement. Choosing the right content for you should be a balance between practicality and performance.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Reissis, D., et al. Advertising on Social Media: The Plastic Surgeon's Prerogative. *Aesthetic Surgery Journal*. 2017, Jan 1; 37(1): NP1-NP2.

Tip #5

ALWAYS BE HONEST

Social media, as we have seen, is influential. In aesthetics, it can be a force for good. Social media has been a platform for beauty campaigns to promote greater inclusivity for all genders, races, ethnicities, and body types. On the other hand, some providers feel social media can glamorize procedures, minimize risks, promote unrealistic expectations, and increase psychological pressure to achieve perfection.¹³ Before posting anything on your social media channels, consider an honesty test and be sure you're not posting something you can't promise.

Tip #6

GET CREATIVE WITH NEW MARKETING STRATEGIES

Unless you're purchasing sponsored posts (which can be an effective strategy as well), social media marketing doesn't cost your business much, if anything at all! Take this low-cost opportunity, then, to get creative and serve your community. Stress innovation, conversation, authenticity, value, and creativity in your social media strategies to test new marketing angles, promotions, or more. With little money on the line, this could become your greatest tool for discovering more about those interested in your services while utilizing this information to better target your more costly marketing initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Social media is an area that's ripe for aesthetic marketing success. The intrinsic focus on aesthetics makes social media an essential component to any effective aesthetics marketing strategy. With a little research, a bit of creativity, an innovative marketing strategy, and a little guidance from our tips above, you can harness the power of social media for your clinic.

Plus, we're willing to help you out along the way. Venus Concept is more than an innovator in aesthetic technology. We serve our clinic partners with programs that empower success, such as clinical insights, practice enhancement, award-winning product support, and unique financing solutions.

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