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**RESEARCH PAPER**

# Role of Social Media for the Adoption of Cosmetic Procedures among Young Pakistani Women

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| PAPER INFO | ABSTRACT |
|---|---|
| | Non-surgical facial Cosmetic procedures (CP) are becoming very common and the way it is promoted on social media is effecting Pakistani women who are frequently exposed to advertising of dermatologists, beauty practitioners and aestheticians. The present study examines the role of social media associated with the likelihood of having CP among women of Lahore. A quantitative methodology using convenient sampling and a questionnaire having 31 items (6 subscales) was developed i.e. women's Interest in CP, Influence of SM, Celebrity endorsements, Practitioners trust, Attractive offers and Adoption of CP. An online survey was conducted among females (n=340). Results showed that there is a positive relationship b/w watching posts on SM for cosmetic treatments and adoption of the treatment i.e. practitioners trust, Attractive offers and influence of SM are the significant Predictors while celebrity endorsement was negatively predicting their decision. Implications for the awareness of mothers and practitioners have been discussed. |

**Introduction**

Social Media platforms are constantly showcasing the newest advancements in cosmetic surgical and non-surgical procedures. Davis (1995) argues that beautification industry across western media is expanding globally. Cosmetic surgery, which has become a popular method of beautifying oneself, is one of the most dramatic procedures for body transformation (Bordo, 2003; Covino, 2004; Doyle, 2008; Gimlin, 2007; Heyes, 2007; Jones, 2008a; Muzaffar,et. al 2019). Social media are commonly characterized as using Internet-related activities to develop, interact and exchange ideas with each other (Bechmann & Lomborg, 2012). Ads on the internet particularly social media, television, radio, public transportation, gyms, salons and skin clinics show the image of idealized women, giving a message that beauty enhancement procedure is a viable and desirable way to achieve beauty. Beauty is now readily accessible in an electronic and fleeting community of evolving beauty and modern women's pictures (Blum, 2003). In the early years of the industry, the cosmetics industry started off with promising transformations and promotions of cosmetics alongside terms such as before and after pictures. The readers believed that if you changed looks, you might change your own life (Haiken, 1997). There are many youngsters who have cosmetic operations, use social media, and the trend is growing currently rising from 17.2 % in the year of 2014 to 18.2 % in 2017 (American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2017). Likewise, one study found that social media is of great benefit and interest among cosmetic surgery patients with information about treatments, testing, before and after photos and competitions (Sorice et al. 2017). Nowadays the importance of body image is undoubtedly more compelling than ever, particularly among

women via media (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016). Instagram is a site that allows users to upload and post images and videos using a smartphone app free of cost. People's presentation on the SNS will affect the perception of their image and cause people to make it better (De Vries et al. 2014; Muzaffar, et. al 2020). Greater psychological engagement in body attractiveness and greater internalization of social media messages of attractiveness have been shown to reflect more favorable attitudes towards cosmetic procedures (Sarwer et al. 2005). Ninety five percent of patients seeking a cosmetic operation were guided by social media (American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Inc. site 2018). If the popularity of the social media sites continues to grow, the majority exposed to cosmetic procedures will begin to increase, effect the demand of cosmetic patients (Montemurro P, Porcnik A, Hedén P, Otte M, 2015). Instagram continues to have younger female users and may cause female patients to undertake such treatments at a younger age in cosmetic clinics (Falzone AE, Brindis CD, Chren M-M et al, 2017).Nonetheless, the aim of present study is to check how social media has helped drive up the number of cosmetic procedures among women in Pakistan.

**Literature Review**

Celebrities and cosmetic procedures go hand in hand, particularly in Pakistan. Social norms have been established by models and celebrities by the mass media, and have formed the social image of the "ideal body": mass media forms the criteria for women to work for "real" attractiveness by young women (DeBraganza & Hausenblas, 2010). The popularity in plastic surgery was based on the popularization in the image of beauty in mass society by the obsession of actors and celebrities, shown on social media and television (see Blum, 2005, 2007; Featherstone, 1982; Hepworth and Featherstone, 1982). In their research Swami et al. (2009) clarified the links between cosmetic surgery recognition and celebrity worship. The study shows that if any popular media personality is exposed to cosmetic surgery their fan(s) will imitate that model. Maltby and Day (2011) have observed similar results. According to their report, research subjects with extreme interpersonal celebrity worship have a strong propensity to undergo cosmetic surgery within eight months. Much work has centered on advertising impacts on improving viewers ' body image and body confidence due to increasing television ads and advertisements of cosmetic surgeries (Delinsky, 2005; Mahmud, 2003; Nabi, 2009; Slevec & Tiggemann, 2010; Swami, 2009; Thompson et al., 1999). Moreover, general attention will also be influenced by promotions from celebrity pages. One report found that after United States (US) star Kylie Jenner revealed that she had undergone lip implants, online search demand for dermal fillers grew significantly (Ward B, Ward M, Paskhover B, 2018). However, the influence of the media and wider 'celebrity culture' depend on how they communicate with the beliefs, interests, financial status, and social interactions of a person, the manner in which they will behave on individuals will differ considerably (Dittmar & Howard, 2004). It is unlikely that beauty interventions would have beneficial effects if their motives are focused on appearing like someone they have posted on social media (Lee et al. 2009).

Practitioner's use of social media is very common these days especially in Pakistan. The role of Aesthetic surgeons and even salon owners are important as they are treating more and more young adults and teenagers for these procedures. Research shows that 50 % of cosmetic surgeons and dermatologists have started using internet platforms to provide updates to clients (Vardanian et al., 2013). Because insurance is not provided by cosmetic operations, surgeons rely on social media in order to attract new patients they need to survive. Research (BAPRAS, 2015) found that more than 50 % of respondents believed that advertisements from treatments caused them accept cosmetic care. The exposure to representations of beauty portrayed in various media sites is related with adherence of women to the expectations of social appearance (Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008; Levin, 2008). More specifically, perceived media pressure to change oneself physically is

related with the attitude change that cosmetic surgery will change one's appearance (Markey & Markey, 2010; Menzel, Sperry, Small, Thompson, Sarwer & Cash, 2011; Nerini, Matera & Stefanile, 2014; Swami, 2009). A study found that 92 % of women (18-69 years) reported being subjected to ads for cosmetic surgery (Sharp et al, 2014). Such commercials usually use photos of perfect women and advertisements indicating that cosmetic procedures are safe to meet existing beauty standards (Grogan, 2007; Lett, 2008; Spilson, Chung, Greenfield & Walters, 2002; Menzel et al, 2011).

Attractive offers given by social media through advertising is fairly common in UK media, with advertisements appearing in magazines, billboards, television, and radio. It usually features photos of attractive women who have been seeking cosmetic treatments, ensuring the positive effects of the procedure on self-esteem and confidence. The attractive offers or financial plans for cosmetic surgery on media, is a common feature of this trend. Financial incentives and promotions are widely available in the UK, and they come in the form of different packages such as money discounts and loyalty cards that promote purchases. (BAAPS, 2012).

Paul Schilder introduced the term body image in 1935, is a "mental image of the body as it appears to others". (Featherstone, 2010, p.194). He further said that modifications in body are now the means of creating a beautiful self. These alterations, including tattooing, stitching, and cosmetic surgery allows individuals to appreciate body language, beauty, and appearance that can eventually be desired by others. Cosmetic surgery alter the nature, color, texture, form, or location of body characteristics that were considered ' natural ' for that individual '' (Health Department, 2013 p.6). It not only removes cosmetic defects but also the emotional pain resulting from non-acceptance by others (Blum, 2003). Cosmetic surgery deals only with aesthetic-related surgery, relating to surgery performed on a healthy body purely to improve the appearance.

Most recently, media coverage of cosmetic surgery was directly responsible for the spike of cosmetic procedures (Crerand et al., 2012). According to Eskenazi, cosmetic procedures are less unpleasant and requires less healing time (Eskenazi, 2006). Cosmetic surgery is an invasive medical procedure that provides an opportunity for people to improve their bodies (Lirola & Chovanec, 2012). Boseley (2012) reports 63 % youngsters were willing to undergo cosmetic surgery to make sure their appearance felt better. Non-surgical procedures consist of laser light penetration to prevent or interfere the areas of the body; Dermal fillers for lip and face,hair removal, Chemical peels, Microdermabrasion, Skin lightening, Tattoo removal. It also includes thickening of lips, contouring, removal of facial creases and wrinkles. However, surgical and non-surgical treatments may be risky, such as scarring, failure and multiple health problems. (Public Citizen, 2008; Tutton, 2010). Facial cosmetic procedure includes Brow and Forehead Lift, Cheek and chin Implants, t, Dermal Fillers, Neck lift, Jaw Implant, Skin Rejuvenation and Resurfacing etc. A lot of researches explored the attitudes, trends, benefits and risks of cosmetic surgery among women. Training in media literacy has been shown to lessening the positive views of women towards elective cosmetic treatment and increase self-esteem (Khazir et al.2016). Therefore, introducing media awareness instruction in institutions and workplaces may be a means of reducing the detrimental impact of viewing photos of cosmetically enhanced women on social media on the body image of young women.

In a 2019 Saudi Arabia survey (N=1449), 81% of the participants were between 25 and 34 years of age. The majority (79 %) was conscious of the difficulties that cosmetic procedures which follow. The price was 77 % influenced by the decision to undergo those procedures. Overall, 97 % thought that social media cosmetic expert accounts are useful, but 78% thought that those accounts do not have adequate detail. The effect of social media on participants was 68% while 32 % had no effect. Following Snapchat and then Twitter,

Instagram was the most popular application; 50 percent of respondents regularly use Snapchat filter and 42 % chose to experience facial changes after applying Snapchat filter (Alghonaim Y, Arafat A, Aldeghaither S, et al. 2019).

**Hypotheses**

**H1:** There is likely to be a positive relationship between watching posts on social media for cosmetic procedures and adoption of the cosmetic treatments.

**H2:** Trust on practitioner about risk free treatment is likely to predict women decision to undergo Cosmetic treatments.

**H3:** Attractive cosmetic treatment offers are likely to predict the women's decision for undergoing cosmetic procedure.

**H4:** The celebrities' endorsement is likely to predict the adoption of cosmetic procedures.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)**

Uses and Gratification Theory by Greenberg and Dominic (1972) has been used in this study as theoretical framework. This theory takes into account the active user perspective and asks that what active audience of media do with media and with what effect? (Lasswell, 1948). This theory assumes that people select specific media and its related content to fulfill and gratify their certain needs (Dominic, 2011). Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1973) stated that this theory focuses on the psychological and social desires of any individual who wants to satisfy their specific needs. UGT usually recognizes two types for media gratification in this regard: process and content. Method gratifications derive from the internet browsing process itself, while material gratifications derive from data collection (Kayahara & Wellman, 2007). Internet pleasure (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Album, Larose, Eastin, & Lin, 2004) is a third pleasure, specific to social media. The public position is to be taken into account in media choice. This impression considers that users' recipients of media are active rather than passive. Women actively seek information related to cosmetic and beauty enhancement aesthetic treatments for their satisfaction. The number of users exposed to information about these procedures will begin to grow as social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube expand, impacting both absolute demand as well as the cosmetic patient demographic mix. Sociocultural theory suggests that people acquire beauty norms in the social and cultural sense (Thompson et al., 1999). People judge their attractiveness on the basis of the beauty ideals established by the culture in which they reside. The media is a primary medium in which signals about the standards of attractiveness are presented (Cafri et al. 2005). Based on the above theories researchers of the present study wanted to identify the role of social media in adopting cosmetic procedures.

**Material and Methods**

For this study quantitative approach was used. Population was the females of Lahore city. Simple convenient sampling strategy was used to gather the data. A sample (N=340) consisted of female social media users was taken from Lahore. The age of women was divided into four categories a) below19 years, b) 20-29 years, c) 30-39 and d) above 40 years. A questionnaire was developed by the researcher on google form, consisting of 31 items on Likert scale, having six sub components. The first component was about the knowledge and interest of women in non-surgical facial cosmetic procedures (items=6), second about the influence of social media (items=7), third (items=5) was about the role of celebrity endorsement, forth of practitioners' trust (items=4), fifth was about attractive

offers (items=4) and the sixth component was about women's decision to undergo cosmetic procedures (items=5). Google form was shared to the females of Lahore, clients of skin clinics and social media groups by email, messenger and WhatsApp.

The demographic results showed that out of 340 females, 14 % (48) use social media for 1 hour, 36. % (122) use it for 2-4 hours, 29 % (98) for 3-4 hours while 21 % (72) of females use social media more than five hours per day. The distribution shows that 16% (56) female respondents use social media for entertainment, 10% (34) use it for information, 3% (12) for infotainment, 4% (12) for social interactions and 67 % (226) use it for all of these i.e. entertainment, social, information and infotainment.

**Results and Discussion**

**Table 1**
**Reliability Statistics of the Questionnaire**

| Variables | No. of Items | Cronbach'sAlpha |
|---|---|---|
| Total scale | 31 | .944 |

The value of Cronbach's Alpha is .944 which is close to the required value. Further, reliabilities of each sub scales were carried out and all of them were satisfactory.

**Table 2**
**Correlation between Study Variables**

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interest in Cosmetic procedure | - | | | | | |
| Social Media influence | .502** | - | | | | |
| Celebrity Endorsement | .475** | .678** | - | | | |
| Practitioners Trust | .555** | .576** | .634** | - | | |
| Attractive Offers | .389** | .521** | .569** | .600** | - | |
| Adoption of Cosmetic Procedures | .483** | .517** | .499** | .711** | .570** | - |

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

Table no.2 shows that all the subscales are significantly correlated with each other. The highest correlation is between practitioners' trust and adoption of cosmetic procedures (r=.711, p<0.01). The celebrity endorsement has lowest correlation with adoption of cosmetic procedures (r=.475, p<0.01).

**Table 3**
**Multiple Linear Regression: Social Media Influence, Celebrity Endorsements, Practitioners' Trust and Attractive offers in predicting Adoption of Cosmetic Procedures**

| | Unstandardized Beta | SE | Standardized Beta | t | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 3.48 | .70 | | 5.005 | .000 |
| Social media influence | 0.09 | 0.04 | .13 | 2.51 | .013 |
| Celebrity endorsement | -.050 | .053 | -.052 | -.927 | .355 |
| Practitioner trust | .593 | .057 | .547 | 10.46 | .000 |

| | Unstandardized Beta | SE | Standardized Beta | t | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attractive offers | .25 | .06 | .203 | 4.15 | .000 |

Dependent Variable: Adoption of cosmetic procedure

R = .739, R Square = .546, F =100.86, p<.05

Multiple Regression table no.3 shows that all the predictors like Practitioner's trust, attractive offers given on social media and social media influence, significantly predicted the adoption of cosmetics procedures. The highest standardized beta is for practitioners' trust ($\beta$ =.547, p<.01) which tells that one standard deviation change in practitioners trust will increase more than half of the standard deviation increase in the adoption of the cosmetic procedures. The second highest standardized beta is for attractive offers ($\beta$ =.203, p<.01), and the third beta value is that of social media influence on the participants. ($\beta$ =.131, p<.01) although moderate but have significant effect on the outcome that is adoption of cosmetic procedures. The results show that the effect of celebrity endorsements is negatively effecting the adoption of cosmetic procedures. It means that as the women watch celebrity endorsing cosmetic procedures they do not get attracted by them for the adoption of cosmetic treatment. However, the beta value is not significant ($\beta$ = -.052). Overall, the model has 30% variance which means that above variables contribute 30% change in the behavior of women regarding the adoption of the cosmetic surgery.

**Discussion**

This research was performed to explore the role of social media on the opinion of women to undertake cosmetic procedures.  Result showed that more clients coming to aesthetic clinics and salons get guidance from social media. The first hypothesis of the study was 'There is likely to be a positive relationship between watching posts on social media for cosmetic procedures and adoption of the cosmetic treatment (r=.517, p<0.01). The results showed that all the subscales of the questionnaire were significantly correlated with each other. When the respondents (n=340) were asked about the role of social media 234 (69%) women agreed that due to social media they have more knowledge about cosmetic procedures. When the participants were explored whether 'they have interest in nonsurgical facial cosmetic procedures' one third of women were interested and one third said they have no interest, rest were neutral. 84 (25 %) women said they have visited a skin clinic for consultation. 64 (19 %) women said they have gone through a nonsurgical facial cosmetic procedure. Researches show that social media is of great benefit among cosmetic surgery patients with information about treatments, such as information for testing, before and after photos and competitions (Sorice et al. 2017).

The second hypothesis 'Trust on practitioners about risk free treatment is likely to predict women decision to undergo Cosmetic treatments' was tested and it was found out that the best predictor of undergoing cosmetic procedure was the participant's trust on Practitioners (b=0.547, p<.01).  Out of 340 Women (57%) were of the opinion that Social media is most reliable source for obtaining information about the practitioner. Participants (36%) agreed that the information given by beauty practitioner on social media is trustworthy.

The third hypothesis 'Attractive cosmetic treatment offers are likely to predict the women's decision for undergoing cosmetic procedure'. The result of present study showed that the offers presented on social media were the significant predictor of adopting cosmetic surgery (b=0.203, p<.01). While analyzing the effect of attractive offers given on social media about the procedures, out of 340 females, 144 women (42%) agreed that attractive offers have an impact on their decision while 92 (27 %) disagreed. Similar results

have been reported by other studies, that media coverage of cosmetic surgery marketing and advertising has been charged with increasing cosmetic procedures (Crerand et al., 2012). A survey (BAPRAS, 2015) found that more than 50 % of respondents believed that advertisements from treatments caused them accept cosmetic care. In the present study, it was found that discount offers and packages attracts females to adopt such treatments.

The fourth hypothesis 'the celebrity's endorsement is likely to predict the adoption of cosmetic procedures. The results of regression analysis shows that the celebrity endorsements is negative predictor of the adoption of cosmetic procedures ($\beta$ = -.052, p>.05). It means that when the women watch celebrity endorsing cosmetic procedures they do not get attracted by them for the adoption of cosmetic treatment. However, the beta value is not significant. In this research 38% of women said celebrity endorsement of cosmetic procedure do not attract them while the rest were agreed or neutral. Our results are contradictory to the published reports which found out the role of celebrity control as a driving force for contemplating or performing cosmetic procedures (Swami et al. 2009; Maltby & Day, 2011). This may be due to the reason that in Pakistan some celebrities' faces have been distorted after cosmetic procedures. Brown and Tiggemann (2016) also showed that seeing images of glamorous celebrities and friends on Instagram has a negative impact on women's mood and body appearance.

Regarding the age factor in the adoption trend of cosmetic procedure (n=340) nearly half of the elderly women (48%) were more willing to try skin treatment than younger women.

## Conclusion

Cosmetic procedures are visibly linked to social media for their adoption as shown by the survey results. People are impressed by watching posts by the practitioners about risk free treatments and free/discount offers, which develops trust among them to undergo these treatments. Other than physical benefits of beautification, cosmetic procedures could involve a degree of physical harm, as with any other bodily intervention. Physical damage can occur as a result of the materials used in the procedure, as a result of bad practice, or as a result of the risks associated with the procedure, such as contamination or bleeding, or as a result of adverse reactions. There are mild and transient complications, while some are more severe and longer term. At least initially, all individuals are pleased with the result obtained by the treatment they have had.

## Recommendations

It is reasonably uncontested to argue that industry-wide guidelines are developed and applied to ensure that patients are handled in a healthy atmosphere, with services or procedures that satisfy at least the minimum safety criteria, and by practitioners with the requisite expertise and experience. Women must have complete knowledge about the possible side effects of the procedures. A major cause for concern is the control of the premises on which cosmetic services are offered, leaving consumers of non-surgical treatments, in particular, with unacceptably low standards of protection. In particular, controls on the quality of some of the materials used in operations are entirely inadequate, the standards for practitioners to have the training and expertise required for safe practice remain voluntary, and it is much too difficult for members of the public to identify properly trained practitioners. It is proposed that major providers of cosmetic procedures work together with the related professional bodies and users of cosmetic procedures to strengthen independent development, continuous updating and widespread dissemination of comprehensive knowledge to users on non-surgical procedures.

The awareness about the cosmetic procedures to reduce facial and body deficiencies and enhance beauty of the women should be increased on diverse forum so that the people having financial resources could go to the right clinic. However, Women should be careful and do research before going for a cosmetic procedure from a certified professional practitioner. Practitioners must avoid un-ethical content related to their services like live procedure videos (using injectable materials) which sometime shows blood on face like vampire facials.

It is not ethically appropriate for mothers to force their daughters to take these procedures. The researchers believe that there should be a clear presumption that girls and young women under the age of 18 should have access to cosmetic procedures. Furthermore it's important that future research focus on men's body image and intention to undergo cosmetic treatment.

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