

A Comparison of Demographics And Social Media Preferences In An Obgyn Office

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ABSTRACT

The growth and increasing significance of the service sector in developed markets like the US has spawned a sizeable body of related research addressing a variety of issues such as service quality and its dimensions. Providing superior quality in service experiences is an effective approach to acquire such an advantage. In the face of increasing competition, it is in an organization's best interest to provide customers with the best service possible. This principle is prevalent in all industries, including various types of nonprofits and profit seeking organizations. In medical services, studies have shown that a variety of variables impact the perception of service quality. An extensive literature review reveals there is evidence that a number of demographic characteristics have been linked to service quality perceptions.

Social media has become a vital communication technology across a broad spectrum of industries and populations. Particularly, the growth and popularity of social media interaction is extremely impactful in the healthcare profession. As 80% of Americans with Internet access search for health information, it is important for healthcare professionals (HCP) to adapt to the needs of their clients (Craig, et. al. 2013). Increasingly, social media is becoming a more important element in the healthcare world. In healthcare communication, social media presents a broad variety of tools and applications. They range from passive tools to engaging, interactive communication techniques. Such innovation has also influenced the ways that consumers behave across all types of market settings. Indeed, social media has taken communication in the healthcare field from passive to active as more patients make use of these sites to seek health information, research providers, and connect with other patients and HCP (Kassirer 2000; Macario et. al. 2011). When used effectively, social media benefits hospitals through increased revenue, employee recruitment, and increased customer satisfaction (Richter, et. al. 2014). This paper extends Richter, et. al.'s research by relating antecedents, such as, demographic characteristics, to social media use.

This paper compares samples of patients and their demographic characteristics and how they influence the outcomes of a customer or patient's perception of the quality of a service experience. Particularly, this study proposes that age, income, occupation, and gender can help provide some insight into the types of customers or patients patronize medical services. Furthermore, the study contrasts demographic characteristics with preferential traits.

This research contributes to existing research by demonstrating how healthcare practitioners can utilize patients' demographic characteristics to make business decisions on the most effective social media options to use for communicating with existing and potential clientele.

This study poses 3 research questions:

RQ1 What are the demographic characteristics that can be used to determine the social media preferences for patients in an Obstetrics/ Gynecology (Ob/Gyn) practice?

RQ2 What are the demographic characteristics that can be used to determine social media usage patterns of an Ob/Gyn patient?

RQ3 What are the demographic characteristics that can be used to determine patients' expectations for social media communications by an Ob/Gyn practice?

It has been theorized that demographics can serve as an important influence on the consumer decision making process. This study reviews patient demographic data and emphasizes the practicality and significance of social media as a communication tool for medical practices, based on demographic variables. Preliminary data indicates that the patients from this medical practice spend 60 minutes per day on social media. In general, average users spend 35 minutes per day on Facebook, 25 minutes per day on Snapchat, and 15 minutes per day on Instagram (Asano 2017). This is a total of 75 minutes per day. 80% of the patients from this study have some degree of content engagement with their social media usage. When asked, should the medical office they were visiting use social media, 41% responded "unsure". So, obviously, there some ambiguity in the minds of patients regarding the use of social media by medical offices. 34% of the patients responded that the practice should social media, while 21% responded "no".

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