



ARE MILLENNIALS THE NEXT FRONTIER OF MEDICAL AESTHETICS?



The downsides of alienating Boomers to cater to Millennials.

BY WENDY LEWIS

Lately more practices seem to be pivoting to modernize their practices to appeal to Millennials and Gen-Y as the heirs apparent of aesthetic demand. While that may work well for some newer practices, there are potential downsides for more established practices who have built up a steady stream of Boomers that keeps their cash flow going.

For starters, Boomers/Gen Xers are the de facto parents of Millennials and Gen-Y. Your mature patients may not be eager to go the same place their kids go for injectables, lasers, and fat melting.

We often hear about how important it is to reach out to younger consumers. According to Pew Research, Gen Xers are projected to outnumber Boomers in 2028 as the largest generation.¹ Yet, many Millennials graduate from col-

lege with massive debt, so they need to be frugal when it comes to their spending habits. As they pay off loans and work their way up the food chain to better paying jobs, their spending habits are likely to change.

Marketing tactics skewed too heavily towards younger generations may also turn away Boomer/Gen X patients, who are still considered the wealthiest generation to date. These distinct demographics also have different mindsets in terms of services, convenience, style, location, price tolerance, pain points, and who their providers should be.

Clearly, no aesthetic practice can ignore a vital market segment. However, by putting all your focus on younger patients, you may risk alienating millions of potential patients “around” age 50. With longevity increasing, they (or I should say “we”) will very likely control a

disproportionate share of wealth in the US at least for the near future.

TREAT PATIENTS AS INDIVIDUALS

It’s important to keep in mind that no generation is homogeneous. Many Boomers can actually be big users of digital technology, so there is less of a generational gap with Millennials around this behavior than previously thought. In fact, many are perfectly comfortable with dating apps, mobile banking, and navigating the QR Code menu at their favorite restaurant, while others may need personalized assistance. In 2021, more mature consumers are capable of mastering digital tools. They are most likely buying the same devices with all the bells and whistles that their kids are using, mostly because they can pay for them with ease. These two generations are more similar than they are different in many ways.



According to New York dermatologist Judith Hellman, MD, “Our New York City practice caters to all age groups, but Boomers bring in a majority of the revenue for us. They tend to be less frugal and are more willing to have several different treatments done in one session. On the other hand, younger patients may have a lip filler and baby Botox, or laser hair removal and Morpheus8 for acne scars, but not all at the same time. They are more likely to shop around and try one treatment first to see if they like the results, and then they will come back for other things.”

She continues, “Boomers, especially men, want it all done at once and are less likely to worry about the fees.”

Providing mature patients with a personalized menu of services is helpful to address all of their needs at different stages. This well-heeled population may be seeking a very different and more varied experience than their Gen-Y children.

Michael Somenek, MD, a Facial Plastic Surgeon in Washington DC, and Chair of the Young Physicians Committee for AAFPRS, recommends having a comprehensive menu of services that can attract all age groups and demographics. “It’s important to understand the different needs of both populations. Millennials are typically looking for lighter, refreshing treatments, such as fewer units of toxins, microneedling, and lower priced skin-

care. Boomers are looking for more volume replacement, laser treatments to address wrinkles and fine lines, and surgery for skin laxity,” he says.

“The manner in which you attract these patients needs to be different,” he adds. “Millennials love texting and want to make and confirm appointments without speaking to an actual person; Boomers are more likely to call to schedule something. Offer both types of platforms to cover all your bases.”

WHAT THEY REALLY WANT

Boomers and Millennials can co-exist very well in a practice, says Corey S. Maas, MD, San Francisco facial plastic surgeon and President of the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPRS).

“The most important consideration is that both groups have different needs, but we can cater to both generations. Boomers have more concerns about the aging face that injectable products like Botox, Dysport, Xeomin and Jeuveau, and fillers, such as Juvederm, Restylane, Teoxane RHA Fillers, and Belotero, can address. All of these options have a role for addressing the aging face, as well as minimally invasive treatment options. In many cases, Boomers will do better with surgical options to look and feel their best,” he says.

Younger patients are in tune to looking and feeling their best, too. “They tend to lean on mostly minimally invasive approaches, like neuro-modulators and fillers, minimally invasive lasers, microneedling techniques, radiofrequency treatments for skin texture, and some limited skin tightening or smoothing,” says Dr. Maas.

“We offer both minimally invasive and surgical options to Boomers and Millennials. Generally, Boomers are better candidates for surgical options to ‘look like you feel,’ whereas both groups can benefit from surgical options to balance features, such as rhinoplasty, hair restoration, facial implants, and otoplasty.”

DRIVING MILLENNIALS AND GEN-Y

Give some thought to the preferences of each of these distinct patient groups to keep them coming back.

Although Boomers are living longer and getting richer, they tend to be overlooked by many brands on social channels. In 2021, Instagram has risen to be a universal channel for all age groups, and TikTok just hit one billion users. But don’t give up on Facebook to target more mature clients. They like videos just as much as other groups online, and are seeking out influencers who represent their values and mindset.

Communicate to patients in the way they prefer. Although Boomers have adapted to digital in varying degrees, many appreciate dealing with a human rather than a chatbot whenever possible. Reserving the option to engage directly with a real person when they need to can serve to meet their need for personal attention.

Practice staff should be prepared to spend more time with some mature patients when needed, present information in a thorough way, and answer any questions. These patients want concerns to be addressed in a timely manner and won’t appreciate getting brushed off.

Lastly, never make assumptions about how much money a patient has or how much they are willing to spend. You can’t tell just by someone’s age or their handbag what their goals are or their ability or willingness to pay for them. When I ran a Park Avenue plastic surgery practice, some of the most affluent patients came dressed in cashmere sweaters with holes while their drivers were parked outside. ■

1. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/28/Millennialsovertake-baby-Boomers-as-americas-largest-generation/>

BOTTOM LINE

Boomers and Millennials can co-exist in a practice. Focus on offering a range of procedures from minimally invasive to advanced. Market and communicate through a variety of outlets, and be sure to balance technology solutions with the human touch. Avoid making assumptions based on age.

WENDY LEWIS

- Founder/President of Wendy Lewis & Co. Ltd., a marketing communication and social media boutique in New York City
- Founder/Editor-in-Chief of beautyinthebag.com
- WL@wendylewisco.com