

MASS MEDIA INFLUENCE ON WOMEN UNDERGOING PLASTIC SURGERIES IN RA,  
USA AND SOUTH KOREA; BENEFITS OF DEVELOPING PLASTIC SURGERY IN RA

By

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## Dedication

I dedicate this research study to my family and friends.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the American University of Armenia for providing me with the opportunity to study in a supportive, challenging and aspiring learning environment.

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## ABSTRACT

This research observes the relation of body image acceptance and mass media influence on the women in Armenian, American and South Korean cultures. Going further, it finds out the possible mental issues generated by plastic surgeries, and the motives of women in those countries to register for a plastic surgery in order to enhance the beauty. This work only observes the surgeries done for beauty enhancements and not for the ones with reconstructive medical purposes. The reason to explore more profoundly this market field in Armenia is the worldwide phenomenon of plastic surgeries that overtook the Armenian market as well. However, there is not much research done on the motivation of Armenian women undergoing the surgeries. Assuming that the patriarchic society and mass media has a huge influence on developing this field, the study was conducted to investigate that connection more explicitly. Finding out the key analysis, this research goes on discovering the possible benefits the rapidly progressing industry could bring to the PR and economy of RA.

## Introduction

For the first time in 1942, surgeons Gillies and McIndoe performed a plastic surgery operation on a fireman, with the attendance of journalists as media representatives. Since then the possible miracles done by surgeries were pushed into the public's eyes and people started looking at the operations not only through the medical reconstructive lens, but also through possible beauty enhancement lenses. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the combination of internet and rapidly developing plastic surgery industry of the world, gave immense opportunities to women and men to draw new boundaries in the concept of what type of body image and facial characteristics are considered beautiful.

Taking into consideration the amount of controversial discourses that have been happening during the last two decades about undergoing a plastic surgery or not, it can easily be stated that the plastic surgery industry has become a limelight. This research is finding out the reasons why is it important for women to feel beautiful, motivations because of what women specifically undergo the plastic surgery procedures then implements the findings from the USA and South Korea into Armenian female society to compare contrast women desires regarding plastic surgeries.

When talking about this field of medicine, it's hard to let go off the financial benefits it brings to any country that has a developed or rapidly developing plastic surgery industry. That's why this research also considers observing the possible positive outcomes this new field could bring to Armenian economy.

This is a two-part research, uniting both qualitative and quantitative methods. The first part of the work explores the concept of beauty, acceptance of body image, sociocultural and media influence and the related mental disorders that often women face associated with undertaking a plastic surgery procedure or not throughout the USA, Armenia and South

Korea. The second part of the study inputs the findings from the first part into Armenian society adapted surveys and interviews. The study takes into consideration women between ages of 18-50, their educational level, religion, socio-economic status in the society and marital status. The first aim of this research, as mentioned, is to find out the motive(s) of the women who undergo a plastic surgery procedure, understand how much influenced are they by the mass media and the society standards they live in, find out the existing or non-existing variables between the procedures chosen by the American and Armenian women.

The second main goal is to not only find out the connections between the influence of media and sociocultural circumstances on American, Armenian and South Korean women, but also provide possible ways the plastic surgery industry could be in use of Armenia. Considering the amount of rhinoplasty and breast augmentation that is done in the country, the low costs for the services and the existence of highly qualified plastic surgeons, PR strategies have been discussed in order to make Armenia a favorable destination on the medical map of the world.

## Central Research Questions

1. To what extent is the focus group, i.e. plastic surgery outpatients from the USA, Armenia and South Korea, influenced by different sociocultural and mass media motives in an attempt to be beautiful?
2. What benefits could the possible development of Armenian plastic surgery industry bring to the PR and economy of RA?

## Literature Review

### Concept of Beauty

From century to century, the criteria and standards of beauty have been differing, however, the main purpose of achieving the beautiful has remained the same. According to Psychology Dictionary, beauty is positively pleasure and satisfaction evoking quality that can be either inherent or acquired. In general terms the concept of beauty outlined as a harmonic blend of elements like make up, body, nice clothes and attractiveness (Synnot,1991).

With the development of technology and medicine beauty is no more accepted in concept of something natural; now it can be categorized as an “obtained product” as well (Driskel, 1993). The more one digs into the idea of beautiful the wider the fields it influences get; Kaczorowski (1990) writes that there is a huge link between the socio-economic status of individual and his or her beauty, i.e. good looks demonstrate richness; hence there is a subconscious will of trying to be beautiful.

It’s hard to record the first time a mankind decided that discussing beauty and trying to be beautiful is essential, however through art, history, architecture and even science, beauty standards of different eras can be analyzed and compared to one another. In ancient Greece

Aristotle writes about male bodies to be considered beautiful, a reproduction ready woman's body with round belly and curves was another phenomenal beauty standard for Middle Ages Europe (Heinberg, 1999). In contrast, today, the skinny, slim body with full breasts is constantly advertised as beautiful. As mentioned above, beauty is now an obtained "product", therefore buying it is more than possible. The question is, why to achieve beauty?

Alvaro Jarrin in a study conducted in 2017 in Brazil states that most of the women to the question of what is ugly for them had one answer only "Não tem feio, só tem pobre", which means "There are no ugly people there are just poor ones". Moreover, the reason they wanted to get it done was mostly better relationship with the opposite sex. In another research Blum confirms Jarrin findings which obviously stated that women simply strive for the beauty itself. the possible grow in the numbers of partners surely does matter, however that's a way to prove their state of being beautiful. Gifts and other privileges coming with the feeling of beautiful are only for the checklist on the beauty achievements (Bloom,2003).

Beautiful women get better marriages, beautiful girls are more noticed at school, they get better grades and better connections later on for life, being physically attractive means getting job easily, first impression is the most important one, men are exposed first to your appearance and then only to your brain; these are statements and standards that young girls from the very early ages of their life hear and are expected to meet certain beauty criteria to be successful in every aspect of life. Having this information imprinted in their brains its no longer hard to understand why they want to improve their appearance and be as close to the beauty standard as possible.

Unlike body size standards that are even measurable today, the beauty of facial characteristics' standards can differ from country to country. Ironically, if it took almost five centuries to go from curvy body considering beautiful to slim body to be considered beautiful, facial beauty trends change almost every year and it's unrealistic to imagine the

amount of cosmetic surgeries one has to undergo to catch up with the latest tendencies. The problem is, outpatients seeking for a cosmetic surgery to improve their life at any aspect, are not quite properly informed about what makes an individual look beautiful and appealing to others. Due to many reasons and not only mentioned above, physical appearance importance is overestimated in almost all cultures of today (Eastern, Western, Asian, African, European etc.). Furthermore, in a Berscheid study done back in 1972, it is obvious that whatever is beautiful is stated as good by the people taking part in the survey.

### Plastic Surgery & Cosmetic Surgery

Cosmetic and plastic surgeries refer to a subordinate field of medical surgeries that is predominately concerned with preservation, reconstruction or enhancement of physical appearance of an individual through medical and surgical intervention (Davis, Rohrich, 2003). Nowadays these surgeries are not under the question of having or not having but rather when to have and how much does it cost. It is fair to mention that according to ISAPS (International Study on Aesthetic/ Cosmetic Procedures) only in 2017 there were 23.390.542 procedures legally performed. Medicine, science, technology and human fantasy together give no space to having a type of procedure that is impossible to have come true. It's already all about desire, trends and wishes. To some critics this is a result of patriarchal world where women fulfill the men wishes (Bordo, 1993). However, just like every social phenomenon, cosmetic surgeries also have been given pros and cons for undergoing the procedure.

In a conducted study, cosmetic surgeons presented high rates of satisfaction among outpatients from the procedures perspective (Heyes, 2009). It was also presumed that positively changed appearance would allow them to have better psychosocial attitude.

However, the study showed that the relationship between improved psychosocial behavior and plastic surgery's positive results are rather different although related statements.

Nevertheless, outpatients who aimed at having better self-esteem and self-confidence but didn't feel having any changes or got in a temporary or a long-term depression, were examined by Iranian doctor-professors such as Ahlegkhi and Motammadi. In their research the professors were concentrated on the question whether plastic surgery potentially increases individual's self-satisfaction and self-confidence, also whether the patients face negative outcomes from the procedure. The results showed that people seeking for cosmetic surgical help were mostly psychologically healthy, yet about 37,3 % of the patients stepped into the psychiatric phenomena - BDD and suicide (Sansone, 2007).

Dermatological and plastic surgical profound difficulties are officially linked with BDD according to German Dermatologists Association 2016 research. Body Dysmorphic Disorder is characterized with immoderate concentration on perceived physical defects which are slightly seen or unseen by others (JDDG 2016). As anxiety, depression and nervousness were detected among outpatients (31%) and inpatients (61,7%) of dermatological procedures, the research raised the question of vital need of psychotherapeutic support. The latter aid is also offered because both inpatients and outpatients' 6%-15% look for immediate plastic surgical help (Pavan, Simonato 2008).

The post-facto outcome suggests that patients not only don't stop at getting surgery but also develop obsessive compulsive spectrum disorders, as with the change of the meaning of beautiful body standards, individual's internal need to mirror back those standards increases. However, how hard is it to detect the fine line between looks improvement and neurosis? Research done by Philips in 2005-2006 among 200 people found out at least one common and repetitive characteristics directed to reduce the anxiety, nervousness and depression obtained with the physical appearance defect. Moreover, now GDA offers Dysmorphic

Concerns Questionnaire, Rhode Island adapted Change Assessment Scale and the Social Adaptation Self-Evaluation Scale which was examined and tested successfully back in 2015. Most common behavioral traits included camouflaging, hiding defects with the help of makeup, “regular mirror checking, glancing in reflective surfaces, comparing the imagined abnormal part with that of others, excessive grooming, frequent changes in dress, skin picking, dieting and excessive physical exercise” (Pavan, Simonato 2008).

There is another question raised by the doctors and psychiatrists as well; whether the patient is a good candidate for having a surgical intervention or not. The literature researched proves the unrealistic expectation patients usually have from cosmetic surgeries, moreover patients with “minimal deformity” who can conclude in solving their problem with psychiatric help usually avoid it prioritizing to have the quick solution - plastic surgery. As the patients can't be categorized properly whether they can be a good candidate or not, psychosocial and psychiatric problems will not be able to be avoided. Yet, after a range of researches and surveys, Dr. Sansone concluded that patients with higher level of BDD scales record higher levels of anger and perfectionism, and lower levels of self-esteem. This is followed with attempts of suicide.

Teenagers and young adults choosing the path of plastic surgeries have increased drastically in the latest decades (Eslami, & Khanjani, 2012). Only in 2013 ASAPS reported to have around 13 million surgeries performed. As the numbers grow annually, the current situation shouldn't be surprising. The surgical and non-surgical cosmetic help seeking outpatients' number only in the US has increased by 21,6% (ASAPS, 2017).

## MEDIA AND PLASTIC SURGERIES

A range of psychological and psychiatric factors can be the reason of wanting to “get under the knife”, however, body dissatisfaction and low self-confidence are considered to be the essential factors (Henderson-King & Henderson-King, 2005, Pertschuk, 1998). Self-confidence is “the person’s emotional evaluation of his/her own worth” (Hewitt, 2009) and the body dissatisfaction is described as person’s emotional low level caused by negative feelings got from a certain type of body shape, weight etc.

Where are these psychological factors affected from? According to Tucci and Peters, 2008 report, beauty standards represented by the mass media develop not only the light stages of the above- mentioned psychological problems but are direct causes of the plastic surgery choice the patients make. The misleading advertisements of beauty norms by the media and the encouraging ads that lessen the cons, dangers and side effects of plastic surgeries, bring to having a bigger army of people expecting unrealistic outcomes from the procedures, therefore a beneficial environment for having higher percentage of patients ready to get under the knife (Grazer, & de Jong, 2000; Fernandes, 2008).

The accepted standards of beauty according to age and gender vary from country to country. If the Western society is thought to be rather tolerant towards cosmetic procedures and is even widely advertising it, the Eastern civilization has always been known as the natural beauty appreciating culture, that is why the Korean young adult women’s growing number that is undergoing surgical procedures, is a relatively new phenomenon. With the increasing rates of globalization, easy access to the internet and the constantly endorsing advertisements appreciating cosmetic procedures, the percentage of Korean women, for whom appearance is undoubtedly important for having successful life, went from 14% to 61% in 1994 -2014 (Young A Kim, 2018). With the highest global rates for aesthetic

procedures, Korean scientists and psychologists have done a survey for trying to understand the causes for the highly increased social acceptance level of the plastic surgery procedures among Korean women. There is no need to try to find those causes far away in different countries or continents.

Every South Korean citizen can simply turn the Tv on and watch the most popular Tv series in the country “My ID is Gangnam Beauty”. Rating number one in SBS awards, the Tv series tell a story about a newly high school graduated girl who underwent many plastic operations to get the Gangnam fitting beauty; heart shaped face due to multiple jaw and face contouring operations, cheek implants for kawaii (meaning cute in Korean) looks and of course the double eye lid operation for wider, bigger and almond shaped eyes. Since the very beginning of the scenes the girl points out females who have already undergone specific operations and rates them from zero to hundred. It’s important to notice that this girl gives nobody the 100, because she keeps on seeking for better looks and more opportunities for operations. According to KBS Entertainment Awards, the Tv series had a viewership of a total 62% only in Seoul’s metropolitan area.



## Propaganda of Plastic Surgery Through Media in Armenia

Since 2003 Armenia holds a contest “The Most Armenian Nose” that is broadcast by Armenian Public Tv. The channel has 37,4% of the Tv watchers according to 2016 survey. The organizers admit they have had over 400 applications only in 2012. This contest easily allows plastic surgeons and medical centers to advertise their services to a huge number of possible future outpatients among the audience, the contestants and among Tv watchers. The winner of the contest gets a free rhinoplasty procedure (nose job), the second-place taker gets a 50% discount while the person in the third place gets a 25% discount for rhinoplasty. The tendency towards fitting in is already out of social media; if the contest started as a PR move and the contestants were simply ways to widespread the awareness about this type of surgeries, now the doctors no longer need any advertisement. Patients find their doctors themselves and they are willing to pay as much as needed for getting more Western looks.

As a proof that rhinoplasty is already a part of Armenian society, one can have a look at the most popular advertisement, the best billboard and the most successful PR move awards of 2018. Doctor Gevorg Yeghiazaryan had a successful new slogan, which was a part of his PR campaign, for increasing the number of Armenian patients specifically in rhinoplasty. The poster successfully uses the Armenian saying widely spread among parents describing their kids, “They eyes are mom’s and the nose is dad’s”. The poster changes the dad into the doctor’s name, and successfully wins awards and more patients for the future.



Not only Armenian Tv producers successfully hold contests in order to openly propagate rhinoplasty, they also film Tv programs similar to American Tv-shows and get best rankings among broadcasting shows. Tv shows like “Restart” (Armenian Public Tv, 2018-2019) and “The Queen of the Tv Shows” (ATv, 2018-2019) takes women between 21-55 years old and does surgical (eyelift, facial lifting, facial contouring, rhinoplasty, liposuction), rejuvenating and beauty procedures to make them look younger and make them feel more confident by boosting their self-esteem through surgeries. This coin definitely has two sides in it; at one side the woman gets to experience the rejuvenating and face changing procedures, on the other side the Tv programs show only the final result and throughout the episodes don’t talk about the possible cons and health issues patients may face.

In a survey conducted with 20 Armenian women in Yerevan, who undertook breast augmentation, 55% of them confessed that Tv programs and social media were the biggest influencers for them to consider undergoing a breast augmentation surgery (Appendix 3). 9 girls out of 20 also confessed that the surgery was done to get better chances for a privileged life, i.e. rich husband. This type of lifechanging scenes are widely represented in Armenian popular soap operas. Also, Kim Kardashian turned out to be the most popular body image idol among those 20 women.

Through a research, it was also obvious that small waist, curvy body figure and strong facial features are widely appreciated by Armenian men. Most popular answers for perfect

body figure were Kim Kardashian and Lili Morto (Armenian popular social media influencer and comedian). Therefore, it's an ongoing cycle between men being obsessed with body curviness in this society and women doing surgeries for men in order to get the needed curviness.

### Society and Plastic surgery

The quick rise in aesthetic medicine use has been explained as a whole one unity influenced by the sociocultural factors; very often these factors refer to objectification faced by women in the patriarchal society and acceptance of plastic surgery by females as a means of correcting body image (Bordoe 2007). Additionally, scholars (Sarwal 2007, Crerand 2003) have mentioned the huge amount of media data specifically devoted to plastic surgeries and their positive only side effects. This is another reason why plastic surgery is now seen as a fashion accessory rather than acknowledged as a medical very difficult surgery.

The national, ethnical and sociocultural attitude towards a procedure or another differs from continent to continent Asians and Hispanics usually undergo a double eye lid operation to have more almond shaped big eyes which will make them look western (Bordo, 2007). Bordo tells in her writing that she was taken to a plastic surgeon by her mom when she was only eighteen, however she never intended to get a plastic operation. The plastic surgeon, nevertheless, did his best to convince her to get her nose job done. A model's before and after pictures were shown and as she writes later in her book, after rhinoplasty she then wanted to get other operations as well to be as much looking like the model in the picture as possible. She discusses that the parents' role in shaping the sociocultural values young adults are driven by are very important and that the latter always need to be positively body image supported by the parents.

In a society like South Korea where western world has a big influence but it's also crucial to keep the national identity(i.e. traditions, family values, facial characteristics etc.), parents very often give their teenage daughters a present for eighteenth birthday a plastic surgery certificate; very often it's a facial contour and double eyelid surgery (Prezinskiy 2003). Prezinskiy also mentions that in Iran girls very often hear that they are beautiful however they would need a little bit of a correction, which is usually rhinoplasty, to look perfect. In societies where families are considered conservative or extremely conservative, mothers are very often the epitomes for daughters. Hence, their choice of being for or against plastic surgeries has a huge impact on children accepting aesthetic medicine procedures as a harm or benefit (Cash, 2003).

As long as people are willingly dependent from looks in order to build a successful social relationship, plastic surgery will be considered fashionable (Sandgrove 1997). Some patients openly admit that they underwent a procedure to keep a partner secure and that the negative comments on the looks by the society does trigger an interest towards aesthetic surgeries. Blesser (2011) writes that plastic surgeries can be a way to fulfill society's expectations from an individual, hence it is an easy way to get attention, admiration. However, studying a specific group of people at a specific surrounding and culture and doing analyses and conclusions afterwards is often an uncertain source for picturing the whole image towards sociocultural acceptance of plastic surgeries in every culture in the world (Delinsky 2006). Very often the studies and researches are conducted among US citizens and the findings can definitely not be generalized for example on Iran.

Culture, traditions, values, conservatism level, surroundings, political religious structure and situation of the country, the peers they are getting along with and many more socio-cultural norms can influence on the upbringing and mindset horizon of an individual. All of

this, at its turn, influence on our own body observation and gives us an overall understanding of the concept of desired beauty.

Armenia is a patriarchic country, where there is also a strong representation of collectivism. That's why the ideas about beautiful is also very often dictated by the ideas of the Collective, i.e. groups of people. Male representatives of Armenian society have strong opinions connected with plastic surgeries and generally do not accept it. In a survey conducted in March 2019 and shared with 150 men, 93,75% never consider any serious relationships with women who have had breast augmentation; however, they depict a slightly calm approach towards women who have undergone a rhinoplasty. (Appendix 2).

## KEY FINDINGS

Through surveys, interviews and observed literature, I've found out the most popular plastic surgery procedures in Armenia, which are liposuction, breast augmentation and rhinoplasty, and the reason why they rank among the most popular ones by Armenian females. It has turned out that the standards of beautiful are strongly dictated by the media, and the sociocultural environment Armenian women live in It does have a huge influence on making up their mind to undertake a plastic surgery.

### Liposuction

The country, being a rapidly developing medical tourism center, offers qualified liposuction services. According to Dr. Torosian's interview for News.am in December 3, 2013, liposuction in Armenia is widely popular among both women and men. Most popular are for using this method is abdominal wall fat, however the most common misunderstanding about this procedure is that patients think liposuction is an everlasting means against obesity.

The fact is, it's not, "liposuction does not solve the problem of obesity radically; in this case it is necessary to change the lifestyle, keep certain diet, and be active" he mentions.

Liposuction is also one of the lowest costing surgeries. The cost can vary from 50,000AMD to only a couple of hundred dollars, depending on the needed type of procedure (laser, ultrasound, vibration).

## BREAST AUGMENTATION

Very few know that breast augmentation is one of the first reconstructive plastic surgery fields that dates back to post war period of trials with paraffin and liquid silicon (Hayes, 2010). According to ASPS only in 2017 more than 333,000 outpatients were admitted for breast augmentation operation in the USA, putting this type of plastic surgery on to the top of all plastic procedures. According to McGrath 2007 research, breast augmentation is specifically widely endorsed by show business and media stars. Perfect curves image has taken all over magazines, internet, Tv, and the growing up generation has to constantly face and try to match the requirements to fit in. In 2005 only in the USA 247000 women underwent this surgery, while in 2017 the number went up to 330000 which is 25,2% growth.

Considering the weight of influence the media outlets have on women still back in 2000 Siggurdson found out that the women outpatients undergoing this operation are 18-58 and the average age is 30 years old. At the same time only 25% of these women are single; 75% of these outpatients are either divorced or separated. The demographic and psychological aspect of breast augmentation was also researched by Cook in 2005. For most females, beautiful breast is an essential part for being desirable and is a sign of femininity. Joiner (2007) states that women with breast augmentation demonstrate higher psychological risk of suicide than the ones who didn't have the operation. He sums up that the reason is the body image dissatisfaction.

Unfortunately, there has been no surveys conducted in Armenia regarding the psychological motives of Armenian outpatients as of April 2019 but according to Dr. Armen Hovhannisyan, women usually expect life quality change for 180 degrees after breast augmentation; i.e. quick career growth, self-confidence, better social skills, better sexual partners and rich husbands. The number of outpatients of breast augmentation in Armenia was 1 in 2005 and 100 in 2009. There is no data recorded for present times. However, the amount of breast augmentation operation in Armenia in 2018, can roughly be counted by the two numbers provided by Dr. Armen Hovhannisyan and it can easily exceed 350 annually if considered that the number has grown by the statistics provided above.

## Rhinoplasty

Armenia tries to keep up with the world's westernized fashion standards of beauty and aesthetic medicine. That's why the most popular plastic surgery in the country is rhinoplasty. Widely known as nose job, the surgical procedure allows the outpatients to get the type of the nose they imagine will suite the best to their facial characteristics. As a Caucasian nation, Armenians very often have a hook on their nose which is not making the nose to look petite. According to the interview conducted with Dr. Iren Rafayelovna in April, 2019, "Armenia is considered to be one of the most popular and qualified places where outpatients can easily trust the doctor when it comes to rhinoplasty as we (the doctors) do so many nose jobs per month that I don't think any, for example, Scandinavian country doctor is able to have that much practice in a year". At the same time Dr. Armen Hovhannisyan confirmed the conducted research analysis and said that the reason behind wanting to get rid of the Armenian nose is simple, "globalization and the forced standards that most of the time young adults need to accept are very harsh and often not suitable for their medical conditions, yet that's what they see as beautiful."

# METHODOLOGY

## Research Approach

One of the vital parts of the scientific research is its scheduling and the use of research tools (Hulden, 2003). For conducting a research qualitative and quantitative approaches are the most widely recognized ones. The qualitative research helps one to deeply and profoundly use and analyze the data, opinions of professionals and individuals. Taking into consideration the main desired outcome of the research, the data is analyzed respectively to understand the circumstance and the reason of the issue. Qualitative research is crucial for any conducted campaign, for producing a new product or for a profound research of a topic.

Quantitative method is illustrated as a perspective or approach to run a natural science applied research (Bryman,1984). Social surveys are objectively acknowledged as the most preferred tools of a traditional quantitative research. With the help of questionnaires gathered concepts can be functionalized. The objectivity of this type of research can be carried out through distance maintenance between the observer and the observed. Quantitative research is recognized as a positivist approach.

## Data Collection Method

In order to conduct a data collecting action, primary, secondary and tertiary data is used. Primary data is an outcome of a rather new study and the closest relevant source to the research. Secondary data is the published work information (Vickery,2009). Very often it is organization documents published for a different reason, academic articles, books or studies.

As a primary data, quantitative research and interviews were planned to be conducted for the current study observations. I will interview plastic surgeons for a better understanding of the field customers and for exploring the possible benefits the newly developing industry could bring to RA.

## Data Analysis

### Quantitative

As a new work about a relatively new industry in the Armenian market, my observations lacked in statistical studies. The collected data can be used in evaluating the sociocultural influence on the segment of outpatients of the plastic surgery market in RA, as well as the reasons the industry could be beneficial for the PR and economy of RA:

1. Data about Armenian outpatients' segment
2. Data about reasons women choose to undergo a plastic surgery
3. Data about tourist numbers in Armenia in 2018
4. Data about the popular plastic surgery prices in Armenia and five other countries

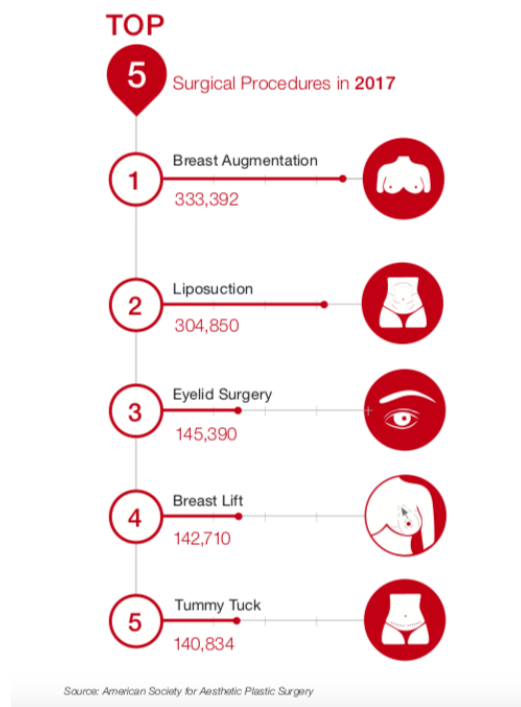
### Qualitative

Through classification, editing and interpretation, conducted interviews will be depicted and explained in this research study. This method helps in analyzing the needs of the outpatients, the sociocultural impact level according to doctors and the significance of developing plastic surgery industry.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Figure 1: ASAPS research on the most popular surgeries among Americans

Source: ASAPS



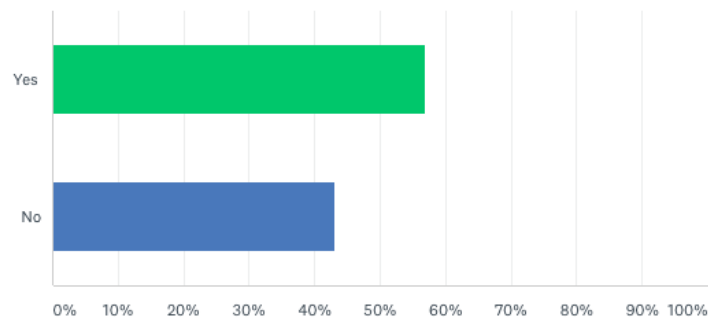
The wave of plastic surgery that gives annually drastically rising statistics made the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS) representatives and researchers start to collect data and do analysis of the most common procedures since 1997 for the USA. The latest recorded and officially distributed data is from 2017 where 30.000 board-certified physicians took part in an online and paper-based questionnaire. The full statistics charts and graphs can be found in Appendix. According to the survey the most popular procedures in the USA are breast augmentation, rhinoplasty and liposuction.

*FIGURE 2: Survey on finding out the most popular plastic surgery procedure among Armenians*

*Source: SurveyMonkey conducted research among 100 men and females*

Have you ever considered getting plastic surgery?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 3

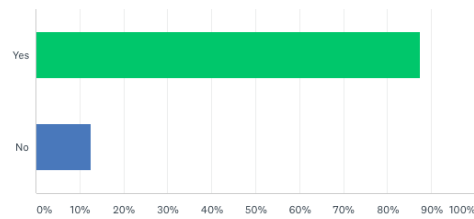


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	57.00% 57
No	43.00% 43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

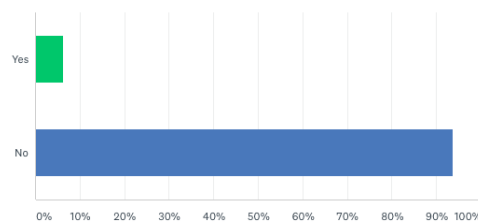
[Comments \(15\)](#)

Due to the lack of officially recorded data to analyze surveys for Armenian reality of plastic surgery procedures' rate and popularity, the conducted interviews in 2018 and 2019 allowed to conclude that the most popular surgeries among Armenians are breast augmentation and rhinoplasty (so called nose job). Moreover, the small survey conducted by me through SurveyMonkey and shared with 100 individuals, it turned out that the overwhelming majority of the participants (57%) had either thought of having a rhinoplasty operation or had already had it done. Over 60 % of the participants were among ages of 18 to 24 and females who are willing to get under the knife to get aesthetically more pleasant and fashionable looks. Surprisingly, none of the participants answered that they consider a plastic surgery because of some health issues.

*FIGURE 3: A survey conducted in order to find out Armenian men's attitude towards women undergone plastic surgeries.*



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	87.50%
No	12.50%



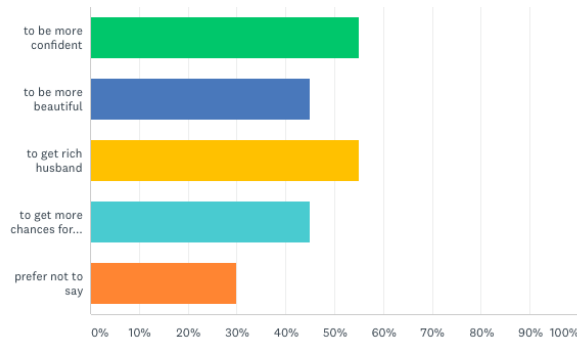
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	6.25%
No	93.75%

The conducted survey illustrates one of the key findings of this research. 93,75% of the 18-45 aged Armenian men participating in the survey, who have relatively high income, never consider having serious relationships with women undergone plastic surgeries. However, ironically 87,50% of these men also consider having exceptionally sexual relationships, with no possible responsibilities, with plastic surgery undergone women. This shows the desire of trying to get the conservative understanding of the Armenian woman and the hidden rush towards the body actively hyped and promoted by the mass media.

*FIGURE 5: Breast augmentation undergone women telling about the influence on their choice and desired final outcomes.*

Why have you undergone a plastic surgery?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



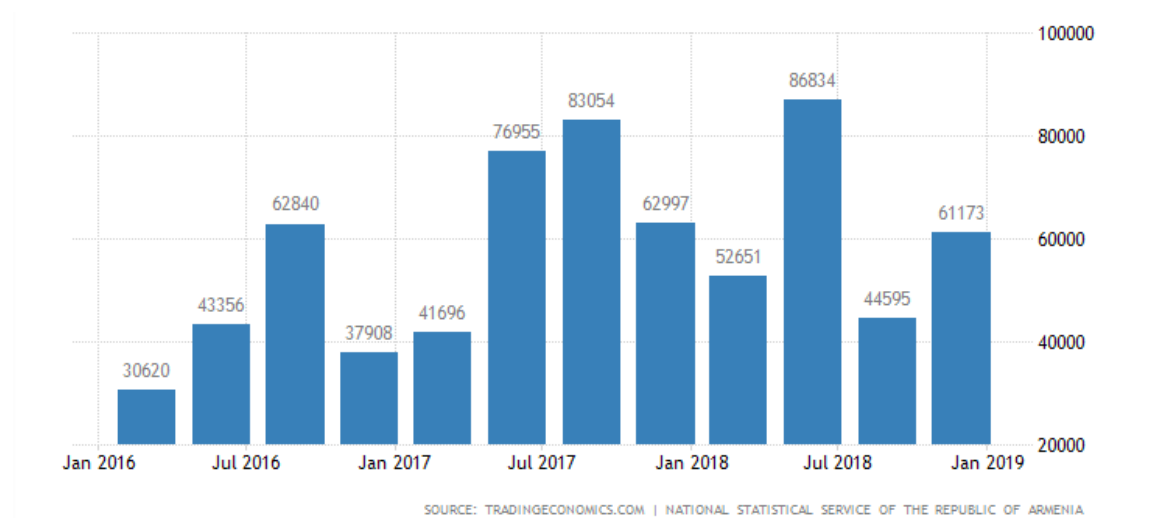
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ to be more confident	55.00%
▼ to be more beautiful	45.00%
▼ to get rich husband	55.00%
▼ to get more chances for privileged life, if not rich husband	45.00%
▼ prefer not to say	30.00%

Part of this research was conducted with 20 women who have undergone breast augmentation. When asked, what were the reasons these women had chosen to do breast augmentation, the most common answers were connected with finding financially more stable husbands or at least financially more stable men who would offer them a privileged life. Men preferences were also the main influencers on wanting to get a surgery (80%). The survey also showed that 55% of the women were single and 20% were divorced. Only 5% were married and the others preferred to not state their status. This survey proves that women undergoing plastic surgeries, very often consider doing it for better future life chances. As much sexist as it may sound, women in Armenia still consider men as individuals who should be the providers of their financially stable life, according to this segment of Armenian females. Therefore, mass media and men together will dictate the rules of beautiful body image in Armenia, again according to this survey results.

This part of the research is aimed to answer one of the main research questions.

*FIGURE 6: The number of tourists in Armenia in 2018*

*Source: tradingeconomics.com*



To find out what are the benefits that medical tourists can bring into Armenian economy, first and foremost one needs to find out the quantity of the medical tourists arriving in Armenia. The depicted figure demonstrates that in July 2018 Armenia had 86,834 people visiting the country. Tradingeconomy.com also states that 17 percent or 14,761 of the visitors were medical tourists. As plastic surgery in Armenia is a very rapidly growing industry, according to numerous surveys, interviews and literature, it could be used as a way to increase the interest of foreigners in Armenia.

*FIGURE 7: Medical tourism impact on the RA economy*

*Source: RA National Statistics Service*

	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Total Services Industry</b>	<b>788,805</b>	<b>872,371</b>	<b>972,593</b>	<b>1,022,754</b>
Organization of accommodation and catering	39,098	44,335	61,062	73,265
culture, leisure and recreation	26,998	32,003	52,161	61,631
education	40,782	48,644	40,463	43,071
health and social services	22,098	33,662	34,248	42,737
activities related to real estate	25,491	28,136	31,602	35,640
information and communication	191,474	199,486	207,196	222,882
transport	170,073	179,676	192,137	167,827
administrative and supporting activities	41,414	47,911	57,425	51,689
Professional, scientific and technical activities	52,732	48,665	49,901	54,452
Financial and insurance activities	164,242	194,536	228,568	250,504
other services	14,405	15,316	17,830	19,056

The table proves that medical tourism development can be a very beneficial step for the RA economy. Only in 2013, this field brought 42,737 million AMD into Armenian economy. As the Figure 3 table shows, many countries consider Armenia as a trustworthy medical industry having country. Hence, the growing trust towards Armenian medicine, specifically plastic surgery industry, should be used. More PR campaigns that would represent Armenia in the global market should be conducted.

*FIGURE 8: Cost of plastic surgery procedures in Armenia vs five other countries*

Service/Country	Germany	Thailand	Israel	Belgium	Hungary	Armenia
Face Lift	2000	1200	1500	1800	2500	1200
Breast Implant	3000	2000	2500	3000	3000	2000
Rhinoplasty	5000	2000	3000	6500	4000	1500
Breast reduction	5500	2500	3500	6000	4500	2200

In 2017, 65 professionals of the field were interviewed in Armenia (both foreign and local plastic surgeons), for getting a holistic view of what are the best destinations for plastic surgery patients. 68% of the surgeons admitted that Armenia is one of the safest countries, as

it offers the best combination of quality and price. The chart illustrates that services for rhinoplasty in Armenia cost only 1500 USD, which is a relatively reasonable and even low cost in comparison with countries like Germany (5000 USD) and Belgium (6500 USD). At the same time the quality doesn't yield to developed countries' aesthetic medicine services.

## Recommendations

The main PR tools that could be used in order to raise awareness about plastic surgery field in Armenia among tourists and in the global market of medicine are;

### Brand Awareness

1. Development of the private and public medical centers as a brand that would represent Armenia in global forums
2. Constant monitoring (annually, every six months, depending on the professional research group's decisions) of the centers' quality, price, new services and technologies

### Collect Academic Literature

1. To conduct surveys throughout all the medical centers for plastic surgery statistics
2. Annual mandatory academic articles' printing

### Online Guidance and Trainings

1. Cross cultural trainings and workshops
2. Online guidance for destination

Internet has a huge impact on the medical field and is one of the most powerful tools for developing any industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Considering the fact that medical tourists visiting

Armenia leave their emails in hotels, hostels, other preferred stay in locations, the researcher's group engaged in online network could spread the future plastic surgery news, possible doctor and institution guidance and procedure opportunities through mailing. The online sphere could also include Armenian plastic surgeons' professional achievements and outpatients' reviews.

Overall, gathering a research team that will be provided with the opportunity to present Armenian plastic surgery industry in the global market, through conferences and press releases, will give a chance to be one step ahead in adding Armenia to the best plastic surgery destinations of the world. The qualified public relations, academic literature and the number of medical tourists the mixture of low cost, high quality service could bring to Armenia is significant.

## Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

The study should evaluate more profoundly Armenia's sociocultural position, its influence on women desiring to get plastic surgeries, more rapidly develop PR strategies towards the progression of this field and acknowledge the industry as an essential profitable for the RA economy "machine".

Due to the moral concerns and sensitive nature of the data, recruiting information has been done through bodies who very often didn't show any interest in cooperating. The second limitation concerns the statistics, that rarely exist about plastic surgery outpatients' number in Armenia, therefore the information was collected through interviews and surveys. As mentioned, Armenia lacks on academic papers, that could be in use for researching the sociocultural impact on women. Hence, small focus group questionnaires and interviews were conducted but they don't give the holistic picture of the present situation regarding this field.

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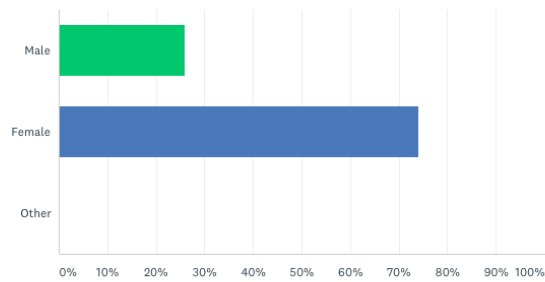
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## APPENDIX

### 1. Survey conducted for finding out the popular plastic surgery procedures in Armenia and the segment of outpatients: Questions and Results

What's your gender?

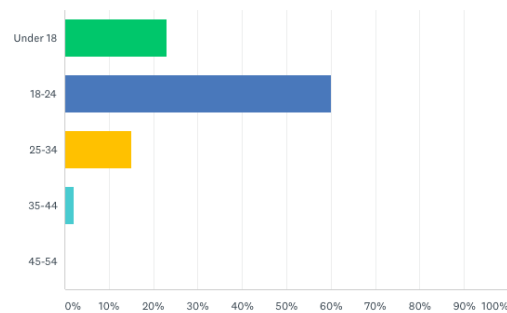
Answered: 100 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Male	26.00% 26
▼ Female	74.00% 74
▼ Other	0.00% 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

What's your age?

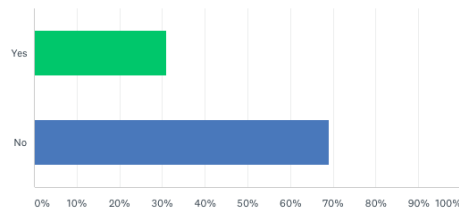
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Under 18	23.00% 23
▼ 18-24	60.00% 60
▼ 25-34	15.00% 15
▼ 35-44	2.00% 2
▼ 45-54	0.00% 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

## Have you ever had cosmetic surgery?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 3

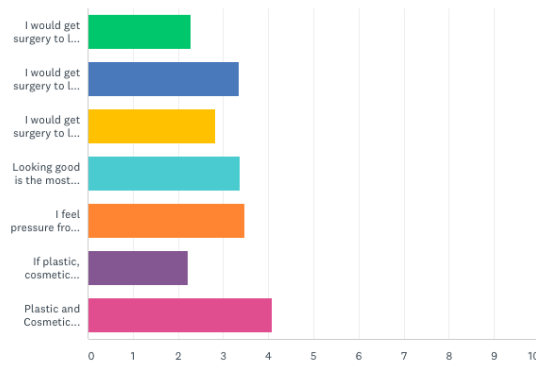


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	31.00%	31
No	69.00%	69
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>

[Comments \(9\)](#)

## Please give your opinion on the following statements.

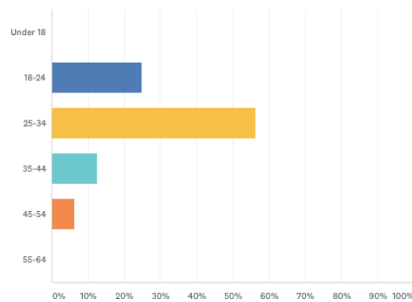
Answered: 100 Skipped: 3



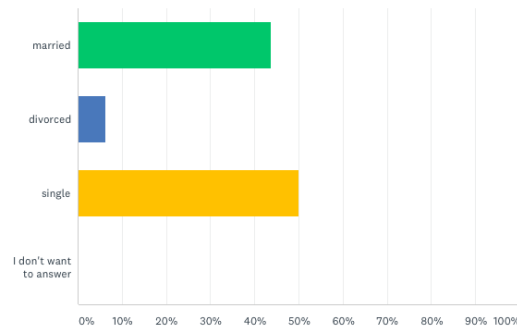
	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
I would get surgery to look stylish	8.00% 8	2.00% 2	26.00% 26	39.00% 39	25.00% 25	100	2.29
I would get surgery to look more attractive	19.00% 19	33.00% 33	19.00% 19	22.00% 22	7.00% 7	100	3.35
I would get surgery to look younger	7.00% 7	16.00% 16	38.00% 38	31.00% 31	8.00% 8	100	2.83
Looking good is the most important thing	23.00% 23	29.00% 29	18.00% 18	21.00% 21	9.00% 9	100	3.36
I feel pressure from media to look in a certain way	24.00% 24	29.00% 29	24.00% 24	16.00% 16	7.00% 7	100	3.47
If plastic, cosmetic surgeries were free I would keep on doing them	3.00% 3	5.00% 5	31.00% 31	33.00% 33	28.00% 28	100	2.22
Plastic and Cosmetic surgeries give confidence	34.00% 34	50.00% 50	8.00% 8	6.00% 6	2.00% 2	100	4.08

2. A survey conducted in order to find out Armenian men's attitude towards women undergone plastic surgeries

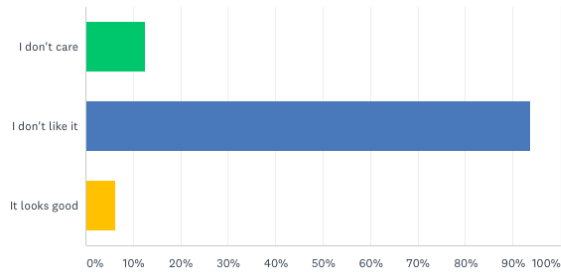
Survey includes age, marital status, income, wish for having sexual relationships with women undergone plastic surgery, desire to have serious relationships with women undergone plastic surgery.



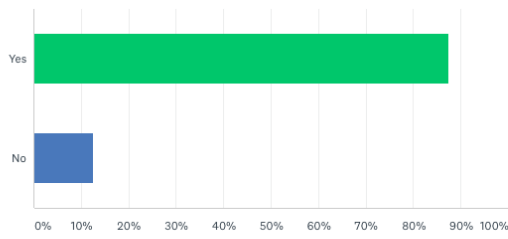
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under 18	0.00%
18-24	25.00%
25-34	56.25%
35-44	12.50%
45-54	6.25%
55-64	0.00%
TOTAL	



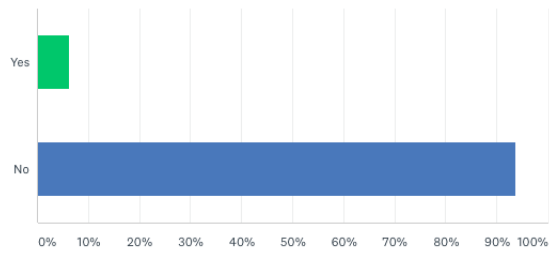
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
married	43.75%
divorced	6.25%
single	50.00%
I don't want to answer	0.00%



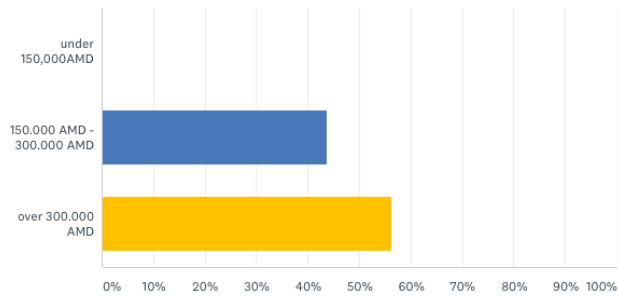
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ I don't care	12.50%
▼ I don't like it	93.75%
▼ It looks good	6.25%



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Yes	87.50%
▼ No	12.50%



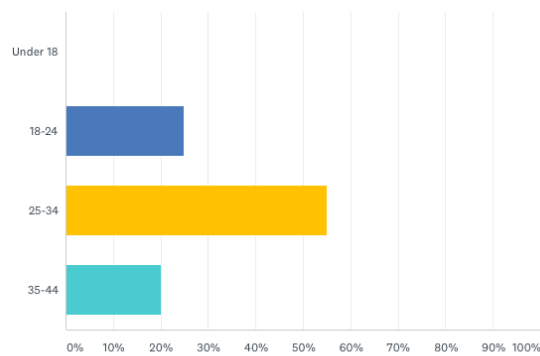
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Yes	6.25%
▼ No	93.75%



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
under 150,000AMD	0.00%
150.000 AMD - 300.000 AMD	43.75%
over 300.000 AMD	56.25%

*Survey 3: Breast augmentation undergone women telling about the influence on their choice and desired final outcomes.*

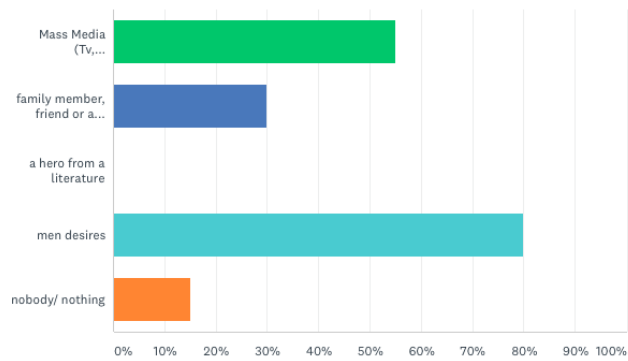
The survey includes age, marital status, income, open ended questions about the preferred media icon, influence on their choice and future plastic operations.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under 18	0.00% 0
18-24	25.00% 5
25-34	55.00% 11
35-44	20.00% 4

## What or who is your main influence for doing a breast augmentation surgery?

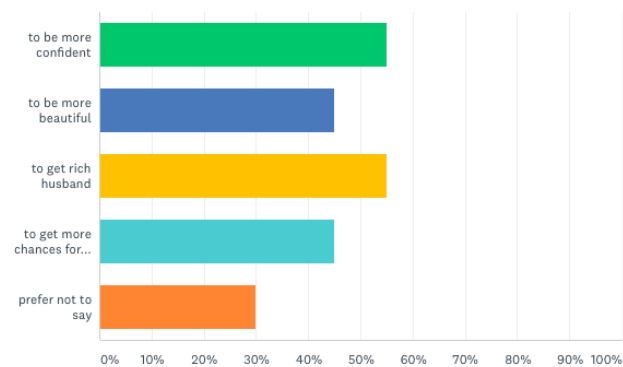
Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Mass Media (Tv, newspapers, magazines, social media, internet, advertisements)	55.00%
▼ family member, friend or a relative	30.00%
▼ a hero from a literature	0.00%
▼ men desires	80.00%
▼ nobody/ nothing	15.00%

## Why have you undergone a plastic surgery?

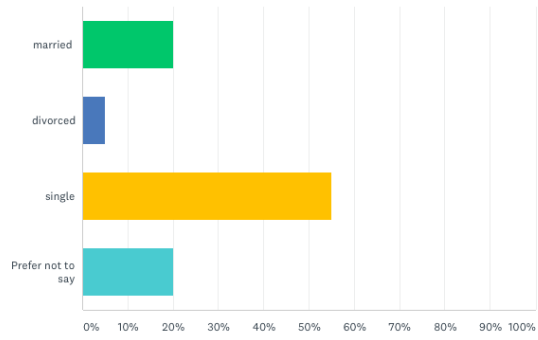
Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ to be more confident	55.00%
▼ to be more beautiful	45.00%
▼ to get rich husband	55.00%
▼ to get more chances for privileged life, if not rich husband	45.00%
▼ prefer not to say	30.00%

### Whats' your marital status?

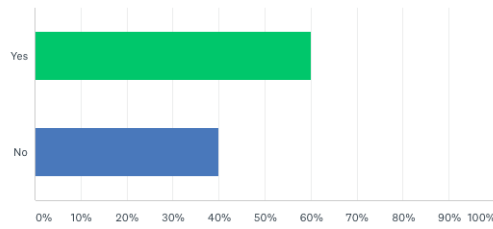
Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ married	20.00% 4
▼ divorced	5.00% 1
▼ single	55.00% 11
▼ Prefer not to say	20.00% 4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

### Do you plan to have more plastic surgeries?

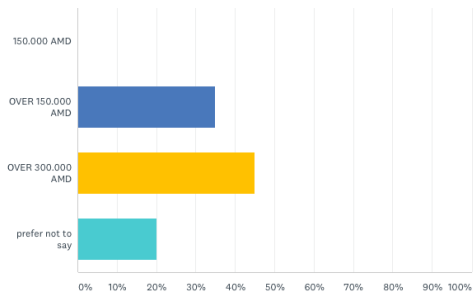
Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Yes	60.00%
▼ No	40.00%

### what number describes best your monthly income?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ 150.000 AMD	0.00%
▼ OVER 150.000 AMD	35.00%
▼ OVER 300.000 AMD	45.00%
▼ prefer not to say	20.00%

*Interview Transcript*

*Name: Dr. Iren Rafayelovna*

*Organization: Beglaryan Medical Center*

*Time: 11 minutes*

*1Q: Why did you choose to become a plastic surgeon?*

The problem is, in Armenian society, it's a rare thing to meet a woman who has a difficult surgical profession. I have been into medicine all my life and the fact that I believe, woman understands women better made me choose this profession. I also believe that the ability to enhance beauty of others and understand the limits of natural and beautiful should be innate.

*2Q: Have the beauty standards changed during the last 15 years in Armenia?*

I can say they have changed much. I remember men used to think that women with lip fillers and showing cleavages are vulgar. Now I have many parents taking their children to me after their graduation or men financially supporting their wives' wishes to enhance their beauty through plastic surgeries. There are also women who come individually but most of them simply connect especially breast augmentation with drastic positive changes in their lives. I remember that my grandmother always wanted to feed me saying you should be in curves to be considered beautiful. Now I see either girls that are extra skinny or girls that are really curvy. I'm talking about the customer segment of plastic surgery.

*3Q: What can you tell about tendencies in Armenian rhinoplasty?*

That's a whole another interview question, I think. Armenia is considered to be one of the most popular and qualified places where outpatients can easily trust the doctor when it comes to rhinoplasty as we (the doctors) do so many nose jobs per month that I don't think any, for

example, Scandinavian country doctor is able to have that much practice in a year. We don't have officially recorded data about the number of rhinoplasty patients overall, but I personally conduct 30-40 and at the beginning of autumn usually 40-50 surgeries a month only on rhinoplasty. I do my best to not make them lose their identity, to make the nose look natural, but many clients simply come with a picture. We put it in a 3d modelling system on a computer and I tell her that the nose she wants will cause many health issues. Still, they don't agree with the nose type I suggest them.

*4Q What do you do with that type of a patient? Do you reject conducting an operation?*

Of course, I do. I have to know that my patient is safe first and foremost health wise. I try to explain these patients that plastic surgery is a medical health concerning extra difficult operation. If we talk about rhinoplasty, I'm getting acquainted with eye zone, breathing zones, mouth zone. Can you imagine how hard it is to work with bones, nerve systems etc. in a way the patient doesn't have any concerns later? And if we talk about breast augmentation, the doctor has to deal with breathing system, chest and heart. If you put the silicone not on its place and God forbid the muscle hardens there it can have unforgettable outcomes. I don't want to talk about bad things, but people underestimate the risks operations can bring. Its not about taking two silicon balls and putting it into your chest or taking one nose off and putting the other on. These surgeries are very difficult.

*5Q What can you say about media? How much influence does it have on patients' decisions?*

It has a gigantic influence. My 5 years old daughter wants to be a blogger or a model. I sure try to give her much love, care, I tell her that she is the most beautiful girl but I know that at some point, the choice will be up to her on what to read, what to watch, what pictures to take and many many more. Media already is a sphere that is not controlled by the nations. This

may seem absurd to you but media dictates what to wear what to eat what to drink where to go, who to love, who to try to make your icon, what is the most popular. At the end of the day, today teenagers simply want to be popular. They consider how much followers you have on Instagram, how many friends and likes on Facebook, how many followers on Twitter. It's important to be popular on social media. Then they look at the most liked pictures or the most followed accounts. They find Kim Kardashian, Kylie Jenner, some other very skinny models who always have perfect make up, perfect either curvy body or extra skinny body, they see how they are dressed. They look at their faces and see big eyes, big lips, small cute noses and perfect white teeth smile. Of course, people seeing how much successful they are, will try to copy them to feel a little bit close to the beauty standard.

*6Q What can you tell about men preferences, have they also changed?*

As I said, I have many outpatients who come with their husbands. I think the media had a big influence on men, as well. They think whatever is shown on Tv is beautiful, and if their wives consider it beautiful as well, then it's definitely worthy to try. Especially after having kids, women tend to lose their forms on breast and waist area. In order to be the same desirable wives, many come with their husbands to register for surgeries. But this type of surgeries I understand. I don't understand when young adults up to 25-26 come to me and ask for bigger breast to get better men. I think, media here did its biggest job. Even Armenian Tv channels; Simply turn on the Tv and the most popular show, it's called Women's club, if I'm not mistaken, shows women with different sizes and shapes, but the most positively introduced ones are toned with curves and definitely have undergone plastic surgeries.

