



# Further Aspects of Hair Transplantation

# 6

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## 6.1 Hair Transplantation Between Business and Ethics

The modern methods of hair transplantation have made it possible to improve the situation of most people suffering from alopecia. So in the last decade, the number of patients has risen greatly. But the increase in patients, doctors, and technologies has also created a very different competitive situation for all parties involved, and this is going far beyond the pure medical factor.

Being part of cosmetic surgery, it is a procedure which is triggered by the wishes and expectations of the patients. We have arrived at a situation where the interests of patients and physicians have to find a common denominator so that an operation can be successfully carried out to the full satisfaction of all parties involved. And this is a situation where patients are willing to travel great distances to bargain on the price of their surgery or to get a special treatment not available within their home area. There is a large flow of patients between countries and continents, which raises many additional practical questions concerning patient communication, travel organization, language, and patient management before and after surgery. Different cultures, desires, and prices collide with legal frameworks for the doctor which are different in each country. This is an area which many doctors are relatively unprepared for, as this is beyond the scope of their medical education as well as the usual work in the hospital or even as an employee in a practice.

For the doctor, it is very important to see how he is able to obtain patients based on a valid strategy covering both medical and financial conditions and to balance out the ethical problems in a competitive market situation.

These questions of the determination of one's own position, the medical and business strategy, but also very concrete questions, how and where patients are recruited for their own practice or clinic, and in what form the communication is handled. These are new topics for many doctors but are very decisive for success.

In fact we have to look at the whole process starting from the strategy with medical, financial, and practical options to see the consequences in managing a hair clinic.

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## 6.1.1 Marketing Strategy

### 6.1.1.1 Market and Target Groups

Questions which are almost unknown to doctors from hospitals, currently seeing only patients acquired by other people, are as follows: Who is my potential client? What is my target group? These are questions that did not matter at a time when there were perhaps 10 or 20 doctors worldwide for techniques of modern hair transplantation. But now that there are more than 500 clinics in cities like Istanbul, it is clear that this is a crucial question from the beginning. Every doctor and clinic must consider exactly which customers should be addressed. And here the experiences of the marketing people help, which classify the customers according to a very different number of segmentation criteria beyond the pure medical pattern, and thus enable a selection but also targeted communication (Table 6.1).

Within these criteria it seems very easy to focus on the clearly identifiable and certainly important demographic factors such as the regional target group. Naturally, the location of the clinic, the connection to transport, etc. play a very central role, which target groups maybe of potential interest.

Besides the easy demographics, it is very important to consider that the decision of a patient for a physician is mostly influenced by emotional factors, at least at the point where offers of clinics are technically and price-wise similar. “Trust” becomes an important factor, which is the result of much more complex ideas and decision-making processes than one might suspect. There are many points which flow into the image of the physician and his clinic.

But it is also vice versa: the clinic will always represent an image of the respective physician and owner, who must also identify with his work and his appearance. There is no “good or bad,” but the need for a sensible adaptation, which the clinic must give to the outside in accordance with the desired target group.

### 6.1.1.2 Detailed Competition Analysis

But before you realize your own ideas in—perhaps even in purchasing office space and equipment—it is very helpful to look at other providers and their offers to the patients. This is the best way to recognize where there are still

**Table 6.1** Nonmedical segmentation criteria for customers

<i>Demographic</i>	<i>Psychographic</i>
Age	Open/closed personality ( <i>how openly personal situation and hair transplant is discussed</i> ) Spontaneity ( <i>decision-making process</i> ) Price sensitivity Lifestyle ( <i>including desired haircut</i> ) Information sources
Income level	
Education	
Nationality/national roots ( <i>e.g., Hispanic, Turkish, etc.</i> )	
Gender ( <i>male certainly, female??</i> )	
Geographic location	
<i>Behavioral</i>	<i>Environmental</i>
Medical history	Location ( <i>travel options</i> )
Service preferences	Family ( <i>travel options</i> )
Media (especially Internet) usage	Political situation ( <i>travel easiness</i> )
Time investment	Finance and currency ( <i>financial frame</i> )
Traveling and language flexibility	Languages routinely spoken

gaps on your own profile and in which questions your own abilities could be improved.

So spend your time not only checking the Internet websites but also doing a careful examination how the other clinics around you work and how the patients (customers) see these clinics.

Also it is important to know how much marketing and financial power competitors are able to exercise. Sometimes it will be hard to find out. For example, if a Hispanic doctor is using media in his own language for advertising, you most likely will not see and find this.

**6.1.1.3 SWOT Analysis**

When starting a new clinic or thinking about the future of an existing franchise, it is important to take a step back from the pure operational aspect and tasks. When deciding about the key strategy, the most realistic possible assessment of the initial situation is decisive for the success of all strategies, and too much optimism and pessimism can be very dangerous.

In the case of any business including a hair clinic, a false assessment of the initial situation may have serious consequences.

The SWOT analysis is one of the world’s most widely used methods for assessing the initial situation in practice. It is collection of general (external) opportunities and threats/risks in relation to own (internal) strengths and weaknesses.

It is important to try to include all important items. To make it a bit more practical, an example of “a newcomer clinic in a medium-sized city of the Western world” is used with some fictitious framework of this doctor or clinic (Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2** SWOT analysis of a hair clinic (example)

<p>Strengths—internal factors                  Long-term working experience in an established hair transplant clinics before starting own clinic                  Good results, published in many patient forums                  Newly purchased equipment in good conditions                  The only doctor around doing manual FUE                  Two experienced nurses as staff</p>	<p>Weaknesses—internal factors                  Starting with “zero” income                  Money already invested in clinic                  Patient requests create work but do not result in real surgeries                  No marketing experience                  Monthly costs to cover</p>
<p>Opportunities—external factors                  A growing market                  Wide publicity about hair transplant lowers also psychological barriers                  FUE now de facto standard                  Increasing amount of “repair work”                  New medical options in FUE give more choices to treat patients</p>	<p>Threats—external factors                  Established competitor clinics in the same city                  Aggressive pan-national advertising campaigns of large hair centers                  Low-cost offers from foreign clinics putting pressure on prices                  Not all new medical options are considered effective but required by patients                  In a world of many disputes of political and even terrorist character, the frame for beauty surgery may change immediately</p>

A SWOT analysis primarily helps one become aware of the basic conditions and prerequisites. It also helps to identify tasks and risks at an early stage, as well as to define further action with them. However, it must also be made clear that a sober and honest analysis is necessary, but in the end always an entrepreneurial decision has to be made.

#### 6.1.1.4 Develop Your Own Profile

Seeing the others should not lead you away from the target to develop your own strong profile. There are many niches, and there is enough space for every doctor willing to create a clear message. Don't copy others—it does not pay off.

With analytical data in hand, you should have a better idea of who you are, who you are not, and who your best audience is. It's time to make a statement about those facts, and this in a clear comparison to the clinics which you consider to be "competition."

Draw a simple table starting with the main points (Table 6.3).

#### 6.1.1.5 Define Your USP

This table already gives you a solid basis for your concept. But think also about your patient and what you can really promise and keep. The questions about credibility and authenticity of your service are a major key for long-term success. So ask yourself some questions:

- What makes our clinic unique?
- What are our particular strengths?
- How can we differentiate from our competitors?
- Where are we better than our competitors?
- Which of the strengths could have the greatest appeal to our customers?
- Which existing and future options (innovations, additional service offers, etc.) can be added?
- What additional benefits can we offer?

Although success depends on many influencing factors, it is essential to look for a factor for one's own success. This search for a competitive advantage is aimed at achieving a certain uniqueness and thus a unique feature—a so-called unique selling proposition (USP).

**Table 6.3** Simple competitive analysis sheet for hair transplant clinics

	Clinic A	Clinic B	Clinic C	Clinic D	YOU
Technology (FUT/FUE, manual, robot, etc.)					
Price per graft					
Additional treatments					
"Service"					
Package pricing					
Media strategy					
Other					

The USP is the outstanding and unique feature of your clinic, which makes it easy for your customers to decide for your clinic. Just some examples how this could like:

- The only manual FUE clinic in xyz city
- The most exclusive place to go in xyz city
- Unique treatment package besides surgery included
- All work done by medical doctor
- The unique “weekend option” for busy people

### **6.1.1.6 Write Down and Visualize Your Profile**

The last step to define the desired profile is the textual and graphical implementation in the form of websites, brochures, and other advertising materials.

Many doctors offer lots of information on their websites or vice versa—some nice pictures and that’s it. It is very difficult in practice to inform the potential customers on one hand as much as possible but also, on the other hand, to motivate them to make contact with the clinic. At this point it is very advisable not only to involve a graphic artist but also an experienced copywriter and web designer. Also, it must be pointed out that the responsibility for the content is always with the doctor and he should therefore very carefully examine what statements are made on his advertising materials. There is also a legal side to this matter, and only the one who keeps his promises has a secure position in case of a legal conflict.

There is a practical marketing model which we would like to introduce briefly.

### **6.1.1.7 AIDA Concept**

Anyone who has some experience in the advertising and marketing world knows it: the AIDA formula. It is the best-known model for the advertising process and consists of four phases that a possible customer can go through and finally make him a buyer.

All phases are equally significant, but can overlap. Even if it belongs to the self-evident repertoire of every marketer, it makes sense to know and follow it, as many marketing professionals get really lost on their way to create materials fulfilling this need.

AIDA stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action.

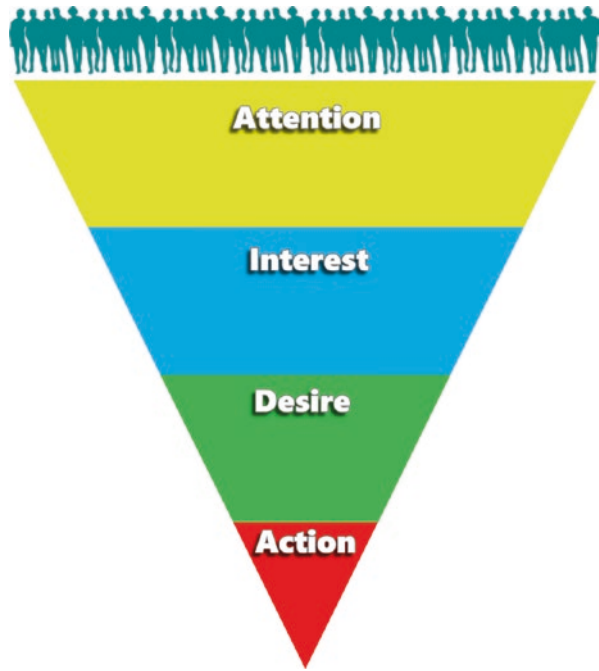
#### **Attention**

The attention of the potential customer has to be gained; he has to start looking and reading. This may be an attractive graphic element or an interesting slogan, just to keep the patient with you. Caution: Getting attention at any cost may become dangerous, especially if this is distracted or even contradicted by the service of the clinic. For example: A red Ferrari as a motif may be very striking and could be related to success and attractiveness, but it can also easily enter into a negative interpretation of “asocial” and “very expensive.”

#### **Interest**

Now the special interest of the customer has to be addressed. It’s very important to tell very early that something special is available. Typically it’s the headline of a brochure or advertisement which should lead the reader to further looking inside the offer.

**Fig. 6.1** The AIDA concepts leads the viewer to a concrete action



### Desire

More and more details should be explained. The desire for the product or service has to grow; there should be clear reasons why this offer is good and interesting. Clear and pragmatic and not too long and too many!

### Action

The customer should be led to act himself. Famous and simple slogans like “Call us now” are there to make this step easier (Fig. 6.1).

As stated above, it is often very important to check the materials created by agencies to see if they follow these but very effective sequence:

1. Is my advertising attractive and unusual, so the customers look at it?
2. Does it clearly state what is offered?
3. Are there clearly recognizable advantages that lead to a contact?
4. Is there a simple and easy-to-recognize option for the patient to contact the clinic?

## 6.1.2 Communication Framework in the Clinic

### 6.1.2.1 The Nonmedical Workflow

Operations, techniques, and patient examinations form the everyday life of a doctor. However, when you are responsible for the organization of a clinic, there are a number of important organizational issues that need to be clarified and transparent.

Patients and their inquiries need to be answered quickly and correctly, just as patients and customers have to find their way to the clinic and their contacts easily.

Everything is simple in a small office, but the more the number of patients and employees grows, the more it is important to ensure a smooth flow of the patient and clear responsibilities within the staff.

### **6.1.2.2 Clinic (Location, Size)**

It is not the place here to discuss the medical needs or the details of a hair clinic. However, some points are very important, which are self-evident among experienced physicians, but are often neglected as part of a new foundation:

Good accessibility by public transport, especially if the clinic is located in a major city and/or there are no suitable parking facilities nearby.

The clinic must reflect the desired profile; e.g., those who offer a high-price treatment should also provide a sufficient budget for the clinic facilities.

Restrooms and toilets for patients and staff contribute to the image of the clinic as well as the doctors and the operations rooms.

Proper labeling from outside helps to avoid confused visitors and also helps to strengthen your brand.

### **6.1.2.3 Consultations: Doctor or Hair Consultant?**

One of the most important points that must be carefully considered is the question of who is communicating with the patient and how.

While in smaller clinics it is often the task of the doctor, this quickly causes problems: the doctor must consider whether he is devoting his time to the actual hair transplant, the control and training of his staff, his own training, or his daily communication with the patients.

The physician very quickly reaches his personal limits, so in the vast majority of the clinics essential parts of the communication are provided by permanent employees or freelancers of the clinic. A full new profession has developed here—unfortunately still very ill-defined—the “hair consultant.”

It is a very wide field with many problems and questions to be considered. The basic question is the exact definition of the job profile. One can try to define the tasks more precisely here.

Assume only the purely technical processing according to the respective specific details of the physician (comparable to a secretary).

Assume the processing of routine requests; in case of special questions, then consult the doctor.

Extensive independent acquisition of customers; the doctor usually receives the patient only on the day of the operation. This model is usually found in foreign representatives who operate here as economically independent companies.

It must be noted very critically that in particular the last model can entail massive economic and ethical problems. The responsibility for the operation lies, after all, with the treating physician. If the consultant has failed to recognize a problem which necessitates major deviations from the planned and promised procedure, then one may expect conflicts with the patient.

From a medical standpoint, one can only make the clear recommendation that the surgeon must obtain a thorough patient history before agreeing to perform an operation and promising certain options.

#### **6.1.2.4 Online Recruiting and Data Management**

The technical processing of patient inquiries appears very simple at first glance: Forms on the websites are easily created, and the Internet transports the messages quickly to all parts of the world. Nevertheless, every doctor should be very specific about the processing of such inquiries:

- The number of inquiries is much higher than the actual number of patients, because the ease of electronic communication encourages the patient to make the same request to a larger number of clinics.
- The data volume with images is considerable, even if technically today the hard disks on computers are more than sufficient; retrievability and traceability of the communication must be guaranteed. Changing e-mail addresses, different computers or devices for responding to inquiries, and different languages – there are many reasons why you can have difficulties in documenting all discussions with a single patient later.
- Security of data transmission: a secure and encrypted transmission of the data is still technically problematic today, especially if emails are to be processed with different terminals.
- Data backup: here again the problem arises that with changing processing devices (as, e.g., the mobile phone), a complete data backup of the communication with the patient is not so easy to realize.

In addition to the technical question, there is also an organizational problem: inquiries must be answered quickly and at the same time correctly from a professional standpoint, so that there are no discussions with patients about medical or financial questions afterward.

Especially for the doctor who spends a large part of the day in the operating room, this can be a considerable problem if he handles these requests personally in his remaining time. Conversely, an answer by employees with insufficient knowledge is also a possible problem factor in patient relationships.

#### **6.1.2.5 Website, Promotion, and Patient Information Material**

In today's world, the website has become the central information place of a clinic and its doctor. A variety of agencies allow professional websites at manageable cost. Again, it must be pointed out here that the medical and legal responsibility for the content always lies with the doctor who should be very well aware of the relevant legal regulations regarding such advertising.

A review by an experienced lawyer for medical Internet advertising is hardly a waste of money but nowadays a sensible investment in legal security. In many countries there are very restrictive regulations, in terms of both medicine and competition law.



For the design of the site, please refer to the comments already made on the marketing strategy, because the website must fit the doctor and his direction.

But one point should be considered in addition: As many webpages look brilliant on the large screen of an advertising agency, it must be taken into consideration that today a significant and increasing number of patients just use the small smartphone to surf on the Internet. It is therefore important to ensure that a so-called responsive design also gives these users the possibility to navigate quickly and safely on the page and, above all, to make appropriate inquiries.

### **6.1.2.6 Patient Manager**

The more a clinic relies on patients from a greater distance, the more important is the care of these patients and customers on site. This has of course also to be seen in the context of the accessibility. A clinic located in the immediate vicinity of a center and/or a central railway station is certainly in a different situation than in a secluded location far away from public transportation.

If patients come from abroad and do not speak the local language, it becomes increasingly important to ensure safe, comfortable, and reliable transportation. This is also in the interest of the clinic, because relaxed patients arriving punctually at the clinic and in the operation create far fewer problems than if there are delays and problems.

Particularly in countries with low wage levels, most of the hair clinics have special staff responsible for the care of the patients on site. In addition to the arrival, this may also include accommodation, food, entertainment, and the simple organization of punctually keeping a medical appointment in the clinic.

These patients should have good language skills in the visitors' languages and have a friendly and balanced personality.

In countries with high personnel costs, it will often not be possible to hire in-house employees for this task. It is very important, however, that the website contains accurate and easily understood information on travel, accommodation, and contact possibilities so that fast and secure communication is possible in case of a problem.

### **6.1.2.7 Aftercare**

Few patients will leave the clinic without advice. And in fact it is crucial that the patient is acutely aware of the behavioral rules for dealing with his sensitive new hair. Another important point is subsequent hair care. Here the advice of the individual clinics differs. Many hospitals also provide the patient with a care kit, so that he does not have to procure corresponding products at home.

Most doctors also know that they should not rely on the spoken word but also provide written instructions. And yet, if the patient is at home, there are still many questions that occupy him. Partially afraid of losing his new hair, but also stressed by returning to the daily workplace, he is faced with questions which require prompt answers from the doctor or an experienced consultant.

There are clinics that have special staff after the operation day in order to explain skin care and behavior in detail. This is certainly an ideal situation, which cannot

always be achieved for personal but also time reasons. That is why it is important that there are contact persons who are also available to the patient in the short term.

### 6.1.3 Promotion in Forums and Media

The patients have a choice nowadays, so to be successful a clinic requires active promotion and information for the public. In order to choose the best way, the careful analysis of your own strengths and the positioning or marketing strategy is an indispensable foundation. Particularly with regard to the selection of specific media, some guidelines are given here. Whoever is targeting a specific language group will have to deal with the media of the language in question.

Many doctors now find their patients on the Internet. Millions of websites also mean millions of ways to find and contact patients or customers. The range of possibilities is very wide, it is only important to point out very important communication and distribution channels:

- Video (e.g., YouTube)
- Forums
- Online ads (e.g., Google AdSense)
- SEO (search engine optimization)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)

As diverse as these media are, just as varied are the advertising possibilities in detail. The doctor or the clinic will hardly manage most of these channels without the advice and the activity of a special agency, which is familiar with these media and presents the clinic accordingly.

It must also be clearly stated that it is hardly helpful to utilize all of these at the same time. It is far more sensible to test individual opportunities and gain experience in a step-by-step manner, especially since the marketing investments in these advertising channels can be very high in some cases and in many cases do not lead to convincing results.

However, we will deal with a very specific path, the forums on the topic of hair transplantation, in a very detailed way, since this is absolutely essential for the largest number of clinics.

#### 6.1.3.1 Classic Media

In view of a typical age group of 20–45 years for hair transplant patients, the classic media like newspapers, radio, and TV have to be judged with care, as many of the probable patients do not use these types of media anymore. But this also depends greatly on social status and educational background.

As these types of media are usually pretty expensive to use (including cost for design), a very careful analysis of possible target groups has to be done. It may be more interesting in the case of a local reference (regional marketing) or very specific target groups (e.g., special languages).

Radio is an unusual communication channel, but there is the well-known radio project in the USA with a new sidekick in the UK “The Bald Truth” by Spencer David Kobren (<http://www.thebaldtruth.com/>).

On the other hand, reports of beauty operations are much more often found in television broadcasts, and of these, hair transplants are not excluded.

However, all of these media will require a specialized agency with the appropriate experience and background.

In recent years the new media and the many possibilities of the Internet have opened new means of communication.

### 6.1.3.2 Forums and Their Special Role in Dialog

#### Forums: Innovation of the Internet

With the expansion of the Internet, the hair loss victims encountered a previously unknown form of communication. With the development of suitable software for the exchange of discussions in connection with the possibility of anonymous participation, it became possible to use the Internet as a platform for the exchange of opinions regarding their own questions, fears, and worries about hair loss.

As a result, the Internet launched an absolutely novel and revolutionary communication on the topic of hair loss, since it was never before possible for those concerned to exchange information on one another in anonymous form and even on an international level.

Through the linking of pictures, reports of personal experience, and discussion contributions, the forums became the central contact point for all questions concerning the topic of hair loss. Many thousands of visitors per day are usual for the big forums, with the most rapidly growing segment currently being the topic of hair transplantation.

The focus of the forums might cover hair loss in general, and the share of hair transplant surgery may vary to a large extent.

### 6.1.3.3 The Forum Users

The forum users take part in the possibilities of the forum for various reasons and motivations. In terms of content, the discussed questions are divided into:

*Personal reports:* here the user reports on their own situation and possibly their own experiences after treatment—the individual experience and the individual person are in the foreground. Through pictures it is possible for other participants to see, understand, and take part in the concrete situation of the person concerned.

*Technical questions:* here are concrete questions, e.g.: “Where can I get the product x?”, “How can I treat my hair after surgery?,” etc.

*Exchange of experience:* everyone can participate in discussions about products and suppliers and express their opinions. This can be done with or without personal concern, as a suggestion or as a criticism.

The following motivations lead people to participate actively in the forum.

The patients with personal interests are the following:

- Patients who could not yet find the courage to contact a doctor. This demands a great deal of fortitude of sufferers and is often associated with personal shame and anxiety.
- Affected persons who are new to the topic of hair loss and are looking for information and solutions for their personal problem.
- Formerly affected persons, who are present with tips or moral support for other affected persons.
- Patients who are not adequately perceived, understood, or advised by their doctor and therefore have the need for communication and communication on hair loss.
- Patients who have already been treated and are looking for additional advice for the postoperative phase or a second opinion on hedging. In some cases, they have only experienced inadequate advice from their treating physician, or they are looking for an exchange and comparison with other affected persons and ask questions such as “Is it normal for me to lose all hair a few weeks after the hair transplant?”
- Patients who are not satisfied with their results after a hair transplant. They use the forum as a valve to communicate their disappointment, dismantle frustration, and possibly also announce their displeasure over the doctor.
- Patients who would like to share their joy about a successful hair transplant and encourage others to do so. They share their satisfaction with a treatment, physician, or medication, thus encouraging other users to go similar or same steps. Sometimes the treating physicians have also requested the patient to make such communication or treatment documentation to act as a positive example.
- Patients who have already had multiple hair transplants and are described as “exfoliated” and rejected by many doctors. These patients have often not been adequately advised by their doctors about alternative treatment methods and are desperately looking for further solutions.

In the forum, they collect information and learn about therapeutic approaches which are not quite as common, for example, body hair transplant.

#### **6.1.3.4 Commercial Users and Usage**

Doctors or clinics who provide information about their treatments in the form of contributions. Either directly from their point of view as treating physicians or through consultation with a patient who describes his successful treatment from his perspective and reports practically on the treatment of the physician. The forum acts like a multiplier, which can ensure a fast-growing awareness level.

Doctors or clinics who advertise their services using banners and advertisements.

Hair consultants who draw attention to themselves through editorial contributions and advertising in order to advise potential patients about their choice of doctors and clinics and to mediate accordingly.

In addition, experts from the field who provide comprehensive information on studies, scientific background, and current and also international developments.

#### **6.1.3.5 Managing a Forum**

The forum moderators monitor the discussions, exercise a control function, and are also a kind of conciliation body and are usually recruited from the circle of users. Whereas a forum was originally a rather free area, there are now clear legal considerations that must be respected. The moderators check the contributions in terms of content and objectivity, issue warnings in the event of a breach of rules, and possibly resolve conflicts between the participants in the forum. They are able to delete posts and to ban users from the forum in case of repeated and/or severe problems.

Meanwhile, many physicians are also aware that online contributions to the forum can have a significant impact on their personal reputation as doctors and their sales. In case of negative feedback, there is usually an immediate response from a lawyer on behalf of the clinic, which has to be handled carefully according to local regulations.

The multiplicity of the participants in the forum and their varied and often contrary opinions are both an opportunity and a risk because only if these different wishes and needs are fulfilled can a lively but constructive discussion emerge, allowing all parties to benefit from using the forum.

#### **6.1.3.6 Small Number of Forums**

Both nationally and internationally, particularly forums with a broadly established user base are the most attractive, which offer users a timely exchange of information and opinions. As a result, smaller forums have problems to defend themselves against already successful forums. Similar constellations can be observed in many countries but clearly divided by language. In most countries and languages, there are only one or two forums in which the people concerned exchange on the topic of hair loss and/or hair transplant online. In the European countries, these are mostly general hair loss forums, which also have a corresponding subgroup on hair transplantation. Only in the USA, "[hairrestorationnetwork.com](http://hairrestorationnetwork.com)" is a provider that specializes almost exclusively in the field of hair transplantation.

Finding objective criteria about the importance of forums is not easy. As the different forums are privately operated, it is unfortunately not possible to report the exact number of visitors to the forums. However, the number of forum contributions is a fairly strong indicator of popularity of a forum. The following chart provides information on the estimated numbers of forum contributions on the subject of hair transplantation in some selected important countries of the Western world (Table 6.4).

#### **6.1.3.7 Video Platforms**

YouTube became the new "TV programs" for younger people, and in fact there is extensive coverage of all aspects of hair transplantation found there. Although there are many more similar platforms, there is a clear dominance of YouTube.

**Table 6.4** Selected hair forums of western world and their coverage of hair transplant surgery

Forum/country	Estim. posts hair transplant (June 2017)	Other hair loss topics	Remarks
<i>English language</i>			
USA			
<a href="http://www.hairrestorationnetwork.com/">http://www.hairrestorationnetwork.com/</a>	400,000	35,000	
<a href="http://www.baldtruthtalk.com/">http://www.baldtruthtalk.com/</a>	30,000	200,000	
<a href="http://www.hairlosstalk.com/">http://www.hairlosstalk.com/</a>	28,000	810,000	
<a href="http://www.hairlosshelp.com/forums/">http://www.hairlosshelp.com/forums/</a>	20,000	90,000	
<a href="http://www.hairsite.com/">http://www.hairsite.com/</a>	40,000	80,000	Forum software switch in 2016
<a href="http://www.heralopecia.com/">http://www.heralopecia.com/</a>	800	242,000	Hair transplant in women is an absolute niche!
UK			
<a href="http://www.hairlossexperiences.com/">http://www.hairlossexperiences.com/</a>	35,000	10,000	
<i>Other languages</i>			
France			
<a href="http://www.international-hairlossforum.com/">http://www.international-hairlossforum.com/</a>	67,000	36,000	
Germany (Austria, Suisse)			
<a href="https://www.alopezie.de">https://www.alopezie.de</a>	125,000	450,000	
Greece			
<a href="http://www.hairlossgr.com/">http://www.hairlossgr.com/</a>	47,000	130,000	
Italy			
<a href="http://bellicapelli.forumfree.it/">http://bellicapelli.forumfree.it/</a>	235,000	130,000	
<a href="http://forum.salusmaster.com/">http://forum.salusmaster.com/</a>	35,000	475,000	
Netherlands			
<a href="http://www.haarweb.nl/">http://www.haarweb.nl/</a>	56,000	340,000	
Spain			
<a href="http://foro.recuperarelpelo.com/">http://foro.recuperarelpelo.com/</a>	144,000	370,000	

It is especially the place for many younger people to find out about hair transplantation. However, it must also be made clear that the contributions often have a questionable character. This is based on some dangerous practices:

YouTube does not conduct any content control of the published videos.

YouTube allows anonymous videos and does not require any proof of whether commercial interests are represented here.

As a consequence, there are a large number of publications sponsored by hospitals. However, it must also be stated very critically that the quality of these contributions often has a deterrent effect.

Having one's own YouTube channel is certainly an interesting marketing tool but also requires corresponding consistent preparation and ongoing updating of the contributions.

It is also very difficult to reach a successful position in the hair transplant section and to achieve a sufficient number of visitors. Here, as on the rest of the Internet, certain marketing measures are necessary to optimize the position, requiring a dedicated specialist.

#### **6.1.3.8 Social Media**

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc. have had a big impact on Internet communication. Despite this it should be noted that social networks are less important in terms of hair loss. The desired anonymity is not present here, and it is easy to understand that the personal hair problem is omitted from most self-presentations on social networks, usually trying to show the nice side of the people involved.

It may still be helpful to build some kind of presence here comparable to a website, as the number of people who do use these channels is growing.

Especially with regard to Facebook, it may be worthwhile to keep in touch with existing patients and to build new contacts via the existing connections.

#### **6.1.3.9 Online Advertising**

Who does not know it—the ads on Google. The company runs a very professional advertising business, and in every country, there are a large number of clinics that are present here with advertising.

Conceptually, the idea is awesome: someone who is looking for the term “hair transplant” on the Internet is most likely a candidate for it and will be interested in offers. And, indeed, a large number of contacts can be generated via corresponding online advertisements.

Customers of Google have the possibility of running several keyword concepts as well as different advertisements, in order to be able to control the display circuit very precisely.

However, the problem lies in the rather high price: Google is paid by every contact (click) by a price which is determined in a kind of auction.

In the field of hair transplantation, there are a large number of clinics, and accordingly, prices are also comparatively high. And there are already some points that make at least a careful review of efficiency important:

- It is known that manipulations (click fraud) occur repeatedly on Google. The temptation to build up a simple page and generate corresponding clicks and visitors and income through a network of friends or through automated systems is high. Even if Google intensively combats this fraud method, it cannot be completely ruled out.
- The interested customer will, of course, look at a wide range of pages. To what extent he really makes at least one specific inquiry is a very different matter. There are systems that provide very accurate information about this and should be implemented when working with Google.
- Interesting headings bring more visitors but not necessarily more customers. It is therefore important to ensure that there is a link between the ad and a real request by checking the relevant queries.

Of course the Internet does not just consist of the search engine Google, and there are numerous ways to build advertising campaigns. Nevertheless, one should be aware that only a relatively small part of the population is interested in a hair transplant. This makes it very difficult to use general Internet offers since at least 95% of the users are not interested in this topic at all.

In addition to Google, there are also other interesting advertising networks that offer certain optimization options. Appropriate professional advice is, however, essential, as otherwise valuable investments in advertisements quickly become wasted.

### **6.1.3.10 Search Engine Optimization**

The high cost of advertising with Google has led many people to improve their position in the search results instead. The so-called search engine optimization (SEO) usually focuses on the respective leading search engine (Google worldwide, but in some countries BING and other providers also have relevant market share).

Whoever uses the term “hair transplant” in a search box on Google will see a very specific result: it depends on the location of the searcher, his language, and his previous searches. Google has set itself the goal of providing each user with an individual optimization.

For example, a patient from New York will see the offer of clinics from this area with a certain priority. But there are more than 200 factors that ultimately determine the search result.

In addition to the geographic location, the page layout also plays a role as well as the content, which is carefully analyzed by Google.

An optimization for search engines therefore usually involves different work steps:

- An optimization of the page, in particular outline, text parts, pictures, and videos. This work is not only helpful for the position in the search engine but often also for the customer, if the information is clearly presented to him with suitable titles.
- Creation of interesting content which leads to other pages linking this content.
- Trying to get some valuable “backlinks” to the own website, being still one of the most important factors.

While website improvements are well accepted by Google as being legitimate, most methods of backlink building are now seen as fraud. However, a whole industry has developed here which tries to improve the position in the search engines by means of illegal methods. This creates the long-term danger that this can lead to complete deletion from search results.

Overall, the topic of search engine optimization is now a very complex matter and is not feasible without a specialized agency. The costs are now considerable; they are often in the four-digit range (euros or dollars) monthly. Control of the



activity is rarely possible, and if after many months of monthly payments still no success is seen, it leads to a great frustration.

There is also another significant risk that must be pointed out: if an agency has successfully achieved a placement, the customer ultimately depends on the agency. If he terminates the contract, he risks the agency reversing the measures taken and that success may be lost.

#### **6.1.4 Conclusion and Outlook**

More patients, better techniques, increasing number of doctors, and cheaper prices have built the basis for a very positive development in the number of hair transplants. While a decade ago the number of renowned hair restoration surgeons was very small, an industry with a four-digit number of clinics in the world has since developed here.

So the individual doctor can and must also deal with how he can structure and build up his medical and business concept. There is unmistakably a trend toward specialization in certain customer groups, whether these are geographic, price-related, or related to the type of applied technologies. In order to successfully offer its services on the market, every clinic should have a clear idea of the offer and the advantages of acquiring new customers. It is very important in this context that, in cooperation with service providers (agencies and consultants), medical supervision is not lost, and thus no unrealistic hopes are created which later cannot be fulfilled by the doctor.

The Internet as a communication platform and especially the forums offer users a variety of services and benefits for the topic of hair loss, and the possibilities of these channels represent a revolution in medical communication. The widespread use of the Internet and the great interest in the subject can be interpreted as a continuing increasing importance.

Looking to the future, however, Internet operators will have to increasingly focus on quality assurance.

This includes on the one hand the assurance of the content quality of individual contributions. Unfortunately, some contributions to the discussion do not have any medical basis and lead to the dissemination of false and scientifically rejectable statements, which leads to false conclusions and possible follow-up therapy recommendations.

Currently it is a very problematic development that in many areas of the Internet, there is essentially no control over content, especially on YouTube. In the long run the question of liability must be clarified. Independently, every doctor must consider whether this is an appropriate environment for his presentation.

On the other hand, providing better information on techniques, treatments, and results offered may be an argument in favor of these channels. Quality assurance is in the fundamental interest of all patients.

## 6.2 Founding and Development of FUE Europe

As was described in Chap. 1, the new millennium brought with it a decisive technical breakthrough in hair transplantation. Techniques were becoming ever more refined and more efficient, and the time had come for FUE hair transplantation. New at the time, the FUE method was the first to allow direct extraction of individual follicular units. This wonderful possibility aroused my initial interest, an interest which later developed into an absolute passion for hair restoration surgery. I found this type of hair transplant so much more atraumatic, efficient, and sensible than the methods that had previously been used.

I wanted to share my fascination with the FUE method with other like-minded hair restoration surgeons. Eventually this led to Dr. Mentrup, Dr. Heitmann and myself founding FUE Europe. With the founding of FUE Europe, our vision was to bring together experienced specialists in order to create the best possible conditions for defining the highest international standards of quality and thus to ensure internationally the highest quality results for patients undergoing minimally invasive hair transplantation.

Together we have realized this vision. FUE Europe has since become the world's leading association of FUE specialists.

The European Organization of Hair Restoration Professionals (FUE Europe) is today an international, nongovernmental, nonprofit, nonpolitical organization pursuing the goal of defining and ensuring high international standards of quality for the minimally invasive FUE technique and providing competent professional consulting for persons affected by hair loss. Founded in 2010, the organization now has its headquarters in Zürich, Switzerland. FUE Europe's members are primarily physicians who perform hair transplants themselves using the FUE method and who are also interested in maintaining the highest, internationally recognized standards of quality.

Tissue preservation and the natural appearance of the result have top priority in their work. This necessitates a high level of ability and many years of experience on the part of the attending physician.

At the European Organization of Hair Restoration Professionals (FUE Europe), the members made it their goal to contribute to the education and improvement of each and every medical professional that desires to be active in the field of hair transplantation as well as noninvasive techniques. Besides this, their dedicated staff is working toward educating the public and raising awareness among prospects that desire to invest in high-quality, long-lasting results.

### 6.2.1 Tasks and Goals of FUE Europe

Hair transplantation has become a very effective option for covering the consequences of hair loss. In particular, new techniques such as follicular unit extraction provide the patient with the benefit of the elimination of the linear scar in the donor area. FUE is becoming a widely used standard procedure in hair transplantation.

The goal of FUE Europe is to bring science and practice to one table in order to eventually develop practical solutions based on scientific data and facts. The organization aims to achieve these purposes by organizing annual meetings, additional meetings and seminars, and education programs and events and by publishing printed materials.

New emerging techniques related to FUE raise interesting new questions. Therefore FUE Europe as professional organization aims to:

- Collect, exchange, and supply information about innovative treatments of hair loss and the method of hair transplantation especially
- Exchange and diffuse expertise of methods, possibilities, and opportunities of treatments of hair loss in general with a special focus on FUE hair transplant technology between professionals and for patients
- Advance the knowledge in the scientific disciplines relating to the methods and physiology of hair growth and hair transplantation by conducting its own research, supporting third parties' activities and exchanging findings with other scientists
- Supply services, products, and support to professionals and patients
- Act as a cooperation platform for registered members
- Act as a policy maker for the benefit and in the interest of professionals and patients

### 6.2.2 Membership

Specialists in research, university, hospitals, and practice are welcome to participate with their academic experience in the hair follicle research and their clinical experience in this working group.

The specialization in Europe as a region should make it possible to establish a regular and close communication among members. Short distances and a pragmatic approach are important to us.

Both licensed MDs and surgical staff such as technicians and assistants may register and become FUE Europe professional members.

On behalf of the Board of the European Organization of Hair Restoration Professionals (FUE Europe), we would like to welcome you in joining and supporting their mission.

For registrations and further details, please visit [www.fue-europe.org](http://www.fue-europe.org) or contact us by email: [office@fue-europe.org](mailto:office@fue-europe.org)



## FUE EUROPE - IT'S YOUR ORGANISATION



At the European Organization of Hair Restoration Professionals - FUE Europe, we made our goal to contribute to the education and improvement of each and every medical professional that desires to be active in field of hair transplant, as well as non-invasive techniques.

Besides this, our dedicated staff is working towards educating the public and raising awareness amongst prospects that desire to invest in high quality, long-lasting results.

On behalf of the Board of the European Organization of Hair Restoration Professionals - FUE Europe, we greet you all and we welcome you in joining and supporting our mission.

*“Become member of a quickly growing family of professionals dedicated to deliver the highest quality in FUE ”*

[www.fue-europe.org](http://www.fue-europe.org)

