

The 2026 Cosmetic Practice Marketing Benchmark Report

Cost per lead, conversion rates, Google Ads CPCs, and ROI benchmarks across 12 specialties and 40+ US markets.

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AI-Native Marketing for Cosmetic & Aesthetic Practices

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CHAPTER 01

Executive Summary

Key findings from the 2026 Cosmetic Practice Marketing Benchmark Report. These numbers represent aggregated data from 100+ managed campaigns across plastic surgery, med spa, dermatology, and adjacent aesthetic specialties.

\$67	\$138	4.2x	38%
Median CPL Med Spa	Median CPL Plastic Surgery	Median ROAS All Specialties	Practices Using AI Search (AEO)

Five Things Every Cosmetic Practice Marketer Needs to Know in 2026

1. Cost per lead has risen 22% since 2023 across all cosmetic specialties.

Rising Google Ads CPCs, increased competition from private equity-backed groups, and declining organic CTR from AI Overviews have all contributed to higher acquisition costs. Practices that have not updated their benchmarks since 2022 or 2023 are running on outdated numbers and making budget decisions against a reality that no longer exists.

2. The practices with the lowest cost per lead are not the ones spending the most.

The lowest cost per lead in our dataset comes from practices with the highest landing page conversion rates, not the largest budgets. A 3% landing page that converts to 8% produces a 62% reduction in cost per lead with zero change to ad spend. Conversion rate optimization is the most underinvested lever in cosmetic practice marketing.

3. AI search is intercepting patients before they reach Google for the first time at scale.

In Q1 2026, practices with structured AEO implementations reported that 11-18% of their inbound inquiries came from patients who mentioned finding them on ChatGPT, Perplexity, or Google AI Overviews. This channel did not exist at measurable scale 18 months ago. Practices not optimizing for AI search are already losing patients they never know they lost.

4. Local pack dominance has a compounding effect that most practices underestimate.

Practices appearing in the Google Maps top 3 for their primary procedure searches generate 3.4x more inbound calls than those ranking position 4-10 in organic results. The map pack is not a nice-to-have. For most cosmetic practices, it is the primary patient acquisition surface in local search.

5. The gap between top and bottom performers is widening, not narrowing.

The top quartile of cosmetic practices in our dataset generate a 7.8x return on marketing spend. The bottom quartile generates 1.4x. The difference is not budget size or market competition. It is infrastructure: proper conversion tracking, procedure-specific landing pages, systematic review generation, and coordinated paid and organic strategy.

CHAPTER 02

How to Read This Report

Data sources, methodology, and how to apply these benchmarks to your specific practice.

This report draws on two data sources. The first is aggregated campaign data from cosmetic and aesthetic practices managed directly or audited by Medical Marketing Firm, representing 100+ active campaigns across 28 states. The second is published research from Google, industry associations, and peer-reviewed marketing studies, cited where used.

All benchmark figures represent medians unless otherwise noted. Medians are more useful than averages for this data because outlier campaigns, both unusually high and unusually low performers, can skew averages in ways that make them difficult to apply to a typical practice.

How to use these benchmarks

Compare your actual metrics to the benchmark for your specialty and market size. A gap of more than 20% above benchmark in cost per lead, or more than 15% below benchmark in conversion rate, indicates a specific, fixable problem worth investigating. Use the benchmark tables as a diagnostic tool, not a target. Your optimal numbers depend on your procedure mix, average case value, and competitive environment.

Market Size Classifications

Throughout this report, markets are classified by metropolitan statistical area population:

- Small market: Under 250,000 population
- Mid-size market: 250,000 to 1 million population
- Large metro: 1 million to 3 million population
- Major metro: Over 3 million population (includes NYC, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, Houston)

Market size is the single strongest predictor of Google Ads CPC in cosmetic marketing, more predictive than specialty, campaign structure, or budget level. Understanding where your market falls in this classification is essential context for every benchmark in this report.

CHAPTER 03

Cost Per Lead Benchmarks by Specialty

What practices are paying per qualified patient inquiry across 12 cosmetic and aesthetic specialties. Figures represent the fully loaded cost per inbound inquiry including ad spend and management fees.

Cost per lead (CPL) is the total marketing spend divided by the number of inbound patient inquiries generated. This includes phone calls, form submissions, chat initiations, and appointment booking clicks. Practices that track only form submissions are typically undercounting leads by 60-70% and overstating their true CPL by 2-3x.

Specialty	Small Market	Mid-Size	Large Metro	Major Metro
Plastic Surgery	\$72-\$110	\$95-\$155	\$130-\$195	\$165-\$280
Med Spa (Injectables)	\$28-\$52	\$38-\$72	\$55-\$98	\$75-\$135
Med Spa (Devices)	\$42-\$68	\$58-\$90	\$78-\$118	\$105-\$165
Dermatology (Cosmetic)	\$45-\$78	\$62-\$105	\$88-\$140	\$115-\$190
Cosmetic Dentistry	\$48-\$82	\$68-\$115	\$92-\$155	\$125-\$210
Ophthalmology / LASIK	\$55-\$95	\$75-\$130	\$105-\$175	\$140-\$230
Orthodontics	\$38-\$65	\$52-\$88	\$72-\$118	\$95-\$158
OB/GYN (Aesthetic)	\$32-\$58	\$45-\$78	\$62-\$105	\$82-\$138
Hormone Therapy	\$28-\$50	\$40-\$68	\$55-\$92	\$72-\$120
Hair Restoration	\$85-\$140	\$115-\$185	\$155-\$240	\$200-\$310
Fertility / IVF	\$95-\$165	\$130-\$210	\$175-\$270	\$225-\$350
Weight Loss / GLP-1	\$22-\$42	\$32-\$58	\$45-\$78	\$60-\$105

The CPL Trap

High CPL does not equal bad marketing. A \$200 CPL for a LASIK practice where the average procedure generates \$9,600 per patient is exceptional economics. A \$50 CPL for a Botox practice where the average booking is \$400 may be marginal. Always evaluate CPL in the context of average case value and close rate, never in isolation.

What Drives CPL Above Benchmark

The most common causes of above-benchmark CPL are, in order of frequency: directing ad traffic to a homepage rather than a procedure-specific landing page (adds 40-80% to CPL); failure to use negative keywords that filter non-patient searches (adds 15-30%); broad geographic targeting that wastes spend on areas outside the actual patient draw radius (adds 10-25%); and running automated broad match keywords without adequate search term monitoring (adds 20-45%).

What Drives CPL Below Benchmark

Below-benchmark CPL consistently correlates with three factors: landing page conversion rates above 8%, which reduces the required click volume per lead; well-segmented remarketing campaigns that recapture visitors who did not convert on first visit; and high organic review count and map pack presence, which reduces ad dependency for the same keyword searches.

CHAPTER 04

Google Ads CPC Benchmarks by Market Size

Average cost per click for high-intent cosmetic procedure keywords across market sizes. Figures represent the median CPC for position 1-3 ad placement.

Cost per click (CPC) is the foundational input for all Google Ads budget planning. Understanding CPC benchmarks for your specific market and procedure category allows you to work backwards from a desired patient volume to a required monthly budget with reasonable accuracy. The figures below represent median CPCs for commercial intent keywords in position 1-3 placement.

Procedure / Keyword Category	Small	Mid-Size	Large	Major Metro
Rhinoplasty	\$4.20	\$7.80	\$13.50	\$22.00
Breast Augmentation	\$3.80	\$7.20	\$12.80	\$20.50
Facelift / SMAS	\$5.10	\$9.40	\$16.20	\$26.00
Liposuction / Body Contouring	\$3.20	\$6.10	\$10.80	\$17.50
Botox / Dysport	\$2.80	\$5.50	\$9.20	\$15.00
Dermal Filler	\$2.50	\$4.90	\$8.40	\$13.50
CoolSculpting	\$3.10	\$5.80	\$9.80	\$15.80
Laser Resurfacing	\$2.90	\$5.40	\$9.10	\$14.80
LASIK Eye Surgery	\$4.50	\$8.40	\$14.20	\$23.00
Dental Implants	\$5.80	\$10.80	\$18.50	\$29.50
Invisalign	\$3.40	\$6.30	\$10.80	\$17.20
Hair Transplant	\$6.20	\$11.50	\$19.80	\$31.00
IV Therapy / Drip	\$1.80	\$3.50	\$5.80	\$9.20
Hormone Therapy / HRT	\$2.20	\$4.20	\$7.10	\$11.50
Semaglutide / Weight Loss	\$1.90	\$3.60	\$6.10	\$9.80

Year-Over-Year CPC Trends

Average CPCs across cosmetic procedure categories increased 18-24% from 2023 to 2025, driven primarily by increased competition from private equity-backed group practices entering local markets and by Google's ongoing transition to AI-powered bidding that increases auction competitiveness. CPCs in major metros have increased at nearly double the rate of small markets over the same period.

The exception is weight loss and GLP-1 related keywords, where CPC has remained relatively stable or decreased slightly in some markets as supply has expanded to meet search demand. This category currently represents the highest-volume, lowest-CPC opportunity in cosmetic practice Google Ads.

CHAPTER 05

Conversion Rate Benchmarks

Landing page conversion rates, consultation-to-treatment close rates, and the compound effect of improving both.

Landing Page Conversion Rate Benchmarks

Landing page conversion rate is the percentage of paid ad clicks that result in an inbound patient inquiry. It is the single highest-leverage metric in Google Ads management because a 1% improvement in conversion rate reduces CPL by the same percentage as an equivalent reduction in CPC, but conversion rate optimization requires no additional ad spend.

Landing Page Type	Typical CVR Range	Impact on CPL vs 2% Baseline
Homepage (no customization)	1.2% - 2.8%	Baseline (highest CPL)
Generic service page	2.5% - 4.2%	-30% to -45% vs homepage
Basic procedure landing page	3.8% - 6.5%	-50% to -65% vs homepage
Optimized procedure page w/ social proof	5.5% - 9.2%	-63% to -75% vs homepage
Highly optimized w/ video + reviews	8.0% - 14.0%	-75% to -85% vs homepage

The Compounding Math

A practice spending \$3,000/month on Google Ads with a 2% landing page conversion rate and a \$6.50 average CPC generates approximately 462 clicks and 9 leads per month at a CPL of \$333. The same \$3,000 with an 8% conversion rate generates the same 462 clicks but 37 leads at a CPL of \$81. The conversion rate change alone reduces CPL by 76% with zero change to budget.

Consultation-to-Treatment Close Rate Benchmarks

Close rate measures the percentage of booked consultations that result in a completed procedure or treatment. This is distinct from lead-to-consultation rate, which measures how many inquiries become booked appointments.

Specialty	Avg Close Rate	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile
Plastic Surgery (surgical)	35% - 48%	55%+	Under 28%
Med Spa (injectables)	52% - 68%	75%+	Under 40%
Med Spa (devices)	38% - 55%	65%+	Under 30%

Cosmetic Dentistry	42% - 58%	68%+	Under 32%
Ophthalmology / LASIK	45% - 62%	72%+	Under 35%
Orthodontics	48% - 65%	74%+	Under 38%
Hormone Therapy	55% - 72%	80%+	Under 44%
Weight Loss / GLP-1	58% - 75%	84%+	Under 46%

Close rates below benchmark almost always trace to one of three causes: inadequate patient education before the consultation, meaning the patient arrives unprepared to make a decision; price presentation that lacks context or comparison; or post-consultation follow-up that is too infrequent or too generic to re-engage patients who expressed interest but did not book.

CHAPTER 06

Marketing Budget Benchmarks

What cosmetic practices are spending on marketing as a percentage of revenue, and how that allocation breaks down by channel.

Marketing spend as a percentage of revenue varies significantly by practice stage. New practices, those less than 3 years old, typically require 15-25% of revenue in marketing investment to build patient volume and reputation. Established practices in competitive markets typically spend 8-14%. Dominant practices with strong organic and referral pipelines typically operate at 5-8%.

Practice Stage	Avg Mktg % Revenue	Typical Monthly Budget	Primary Channels
New (< 3 years)	15% - 25%	\$2,500 - \$6,000	Google Ads, GBP, reviews
Growth (3-7 years)	10% - 16%	\$4,000 - \$10,000	Google Ads, SEO, Meta
Established (7+ years)	6% - 12%	\$6,000 - \$18,000	SEO, AEO, reputation
Multi-location group	8% - 14%	\$15,000 - \$45,000	All channels

Channel Allocation Benchmarks

Among practices with a diversified marketing budget, the following allocation breakdown represents the median across all specialties and market sizes:

Channel	Median Budget Allocation	Typical ROI Range	Time to Results
Google Ads (paid search)	38%	3.5x - 8x ROAS	1-4 weeks
SEO (organic)	22%	4x - 12x (12-mo)	6-12 months
Agency management fees	18%	Included in channel ROI	Immediate
Meta Ads (social)	12%	1.8x - 4.5x ROAS	2-6 weeks
AEO / AI Search	5%	Emerging / high upside	2-4 months
Other (print, events, etc.)	5%	0.8x - 2.5x	Variable

CHAPTER 07

AI Search & AEO Adoption Data

The fastest-changing area of cosmetic practice marketing in 2026. How practices are showing up in ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Google AI Overviews.

Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) is the practice of optimizing digital content to appear in AI-generated answers. For cosmetic practices, this means being cited when a potential patient asks ChatGPT "what should I look for in a rhinoplasty surgeon" or Perplexity "best med spas in [city].

AI Platform	Patient Adoption (2026)	Avg Citation Rate*	Time to First Citation
Google AI Overviews	62% of searchers see them	8% of practices	60-90 days post-AEO
ChatGPT (web search)	28% use for local discovery	5% of practices	30-90 days
Perplexity	14% use for health research	11% of practices	20-60 days
Meta AI	18% of Meta users	3% of practices	60-120 days
Bing Copilot	9% of searchers	7% of practices	30-60 days

*Citation rate represents the percentage of cosmetic practices in a given market that appear in AI-generated answers for procedure-related queries in their geography. This figure is expected to increase 3-5x by 2027 as more practices implement structured AEO programs.

The First-Mover Window

AI search citation positions are establishing now. The practices that implement structured FAQ schema, entity optimization, and llms.txt in 2026 are building citation authority that will compound over years. Practices that wait until 2027 will face a significantly more competitive landscape for the same positions.

CHAPTER 08

Local SEO & Map Pack Benchmarks

Google Maps local pack data and the specific metrics that determine which practices appear in the top 3 positions.

The Google Maps local pack, the 3 business listings that appear above organic results for local searches, generates disproportionate patient inquiry volume. Practices in positions 1-3 receive 72% of the clicks on the search results page for near-me queries, compared to 11% for organic position 1.

Metric	Top 3 Pack Average	Outside Pack Average	Impact on Calls
Google reviews (count)	87 reviews	34 reviews	3.4x more calls
Review recency (last 90 days)	12 new reviews	3 new reviews	Major ranking factor
GBP photo count	68 photos	22 photos	Moderate factor
GBP posts (last 30 days)	4 posts	0.8 posts	Minor factor
NAP citation consistency	94% consistent	71% consistent	Foundation factor
Response rate to reviews	88% response	42% response	Trust signal

Review recency is the most actionable local pack ranking factor because it is entirely within a practice's control. A systematic review generation program, asking every satisfied patient within 48-72 hours of their appointment, consistently produces 10-20 new reviews per month for practices that implement it. This recency signal alone is sufficient to move a practice from outside the local pack to inside it in moderately competitive markets within 60-90 days.

CHAPTER 09

The Benchmark Gap: Where Most Practices Fall Short

The specific gaps between current performance and benchmark that account for the majority of lost patient volume across cosmetic practices.

In auditing 100+ cosmetic practice marketing programs, we identified four gaps that account for the majority of below-benchmark performance. These are listed in order of frequency and impact.

Gap 1: Incomplete Conversion Tracking (74% of practices audited)

Practices tracking only form submissions are invisible to 60-70% of their actual lead volume. Phone calls, the primary conversion method for most cosmetic procedures, require call tracking integration to be measurable. Without complete conversion data, Google's Smart Bidding has no signal to optimize against, and budget allocation decisions are made on partial information. Estimated CPL impact: 2-3x overstatement of true CPL.

Gap 2: Homepage as Landing Page (61% of practices audited)

Sending paid ad traffic to the practice homepage instead of a procedure-specific landing page is the single most expensive mistake in cosmetic practice Google Ads. Homepage conversion rates average 1.8-2.5% for paid traffic. Procedure-specific landing pages with relevant before/after content, reviews, and a clear booking mechanism average 5.5-9.2%. The CPL difference is 55-75%. Estimated annual cost of this gap: \$18,000-\$45,000 in wasted ad spend for the average practice.

Gap 3: No Systematic Review Generation (68% of practices audited)

Most practices generate reviews reactively, when a patient volunteers to leave one. Practices with systematic review generation programs, those that ask every satisfied patient at the right moment via text or email, generate 5-10x more reviews per month than those without. Review volume and recency are the primary controllable factors in local pack rankings. Estimated impact: practices without systematic programs are generating 70% fewer local search inquiries than comparable practices that have them.

Gap 4: No AEO Implementation (62% of practices audited)

Most cosmetic practice websites have no structured data beyond basic LocalBusiness schema. FAQ schema, Physician schema, MedicalClinic schema, and the content structures that get practices cited in AI answers are absent from the majority of practice websites. As AI search tools intercept an increasing share of pre-Google research, this gap compounds over time. Estimated current impact: 11-18% of potential patient inquiries being

captured by AI-optimized competitors.

CHAPTER 10

Methodology & About This Report

How this data was collected, its limitations, and how to get market-specific benchmarks for your practice.

Data Sources

Campaign data in this report is drawn from cosmetic and aesthetic practice Google Ads accounts managed or audited by Medical Marketing Firm between January 2024 and April 2026. All figures are anonymized and aggregated. No individual practice data is identifiable in any benchmark figure.

Supplementary data sources include Google Ads industry benchmarks, Google Search Console aggregate data, and published research from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, the American Med Spa Association, and peer-reviewed marketing journals.

Limitations

Benchmark figures in this report represent medians and ranges across our dataset. Individual practice performance varies based on market competition, ad creative quality, practice reputation, seasonal demand patterns, and dozens of additional variables. These benchmarks are diagnostic tools, not targets. A practice performing above benchmark in one metric may be below benchmark in another, and both can be appropriate given the specific practice context.

Geographic coverage is strongest in the Northeast US, Florida, Texas, and California, which represent the largest portions of our managed campaign portfolio. Benchmarks for less-represented markets, including the Mountain West and rural markets, carry wider confidence intervals.

About Medical Marketing Firm

Medical Marketing Firm is an AI-native digital marketing agency exclusively serving cosmetic and aesthetic medical practices. We manage Google Ads, SEO, AEO, and full-funnel patient acquisition programs for plastic surgeons, med spas, dermatologists, cosmetic dentists, and adjacent aesthetic specialties nationwide.

Our AI-native approach means the research, auditing, and reporting work that takes traditional agencies weeks takes our team hours. That efficiency translates to more aggressive, more current strategy for every client.

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