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Research Article

Factors affecting customer satisfaction for hair transplantation services in medical tourism

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Abstract

Purpose: The basic objective of this research is to examine online user comments about hair transplantation clinics in Türkiye and to reveal the evaluations that a potential health tourist may encounter in the decision-making process.

Design/methodology/approach: This study employs a qualitative approach based on a scenario involving an Arab tourist considering hair transplantation services in Türkiye.253 user review from 18 hair transplantation clinics in Türkiye were analyzed using the keyword "زراعة الشعر" on the Trustpilot platform in 2025.

Results: According to the findings, user experiences were shaped primarily by such factors as staff approach, communication, information provided, overall service experience, post-operative support, and physical comfort, and user experiences shared on digital platforms can shape medical tourists' perceptions of service quality that may influence their choice of healthcare facilities.

Discussion: It can be argued that clinics providing medical tourism services must manage a holistic service experience - ranging from pre-treatment information to post-operative follow-up—and that this process begins with user reviews shared on digital platforms, which play a guiding role in a potential patient's decision-making. Consequently, it is assessed that user experiences shared on digital platforms can shape medical tourists' perceptions of service quality and institutional trust and may influence their choice of healthcare provider. From a practical perspective, hair transplantation clinics targeting Arabic-speaking health tourists should prioritize culturally and linguistically responsive communication, transparent pre-treatment information, personalized patient support, and accessible post-operative follow-up services to enhance the overall service experience and strengthen patient trust.

Keywords: Medical Tourism, Hair Transplantation, Digital Perception, Customer Satisfaction

Introduction

Medical tourism has become a sector that is rapidly growing on a global scale and making significant contributions to national economies. Hair transplantation services play a significant role in this growth; Türkiye has emerged as a leading global destination in this field thanks to its affordable and comprehensive service packages, and the market is projected to reach 15.65 billion U.S. dollars by 2035 (Haider et al., 2025). Hair transplantation accounts for a large portion of Türkiye's medical tourism market; according to 2025 data, the share of hair transplantation in the country's medical tourism sector is 51.9% (Global Market Insights, 2026).

In a sector with such high international patient traffic, understanding the information sources and decision-making processes that potential patients consult before treatment is crucial from both an academic and practical perspective. The integration of digital technologies into healthcare services has also caused significant changes in the information-seeking and decision-making processes of medical tourists. Websites, social media platforms, and online review platforms not only provide information about healthcare suppliers but also enable users to assess the reliability, service quality, and online reputation of these institutions (Sevim, Gül, & Akbulut, 2024). In particular, online user reviews serve as a key source of information that potential patients are able to consult before directly experiencing the healthcare service. A systematic review of online healthcare web sites found that user reviews play a crucial role in evaluating factors such as online service popularity, reliability, and reputation (Shah et al., 2021).

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This transformation is becoming particularly evident in the international marketing of aesthetic and elective healthcare services. Hair transplantation is one of the healthcare services in high international demand, driven by individuals' aesthetic expectations, concerns about their appearance, and the pursuit of personal well-being (İlhan & Özdoğan, 2022). Türkiye stands out as one of the leading destinations for international patients seeking hair transplantation; factors such as affordability, specialized services, and the ability to combine healthcare with a travel experience support this demand. However, it is evident that the experiences of medical tourists coming to Türkiye for hair transplantation are not limited to the medical procedure alone but also encompass various stages such as transportation, accommodation, communication, clinical services, and post-treatment support (Cengiz & Koç, 2024).

Given the impact of online user reviews on decision-making, it is important to examine the content that a potential medical tourist might encounter in the digital environment (Zafer, 2024). In this regard, scenario-based approaches contribute to the concretization of the phenomenon under study by enabling the evaluation of situations similar to real-life conditions through a specific individual profile and decision-making context. At the core of the scenario-based approach is the evaluation of decision-making processes involving uncertainty within the framework of specific conditions and possible scenarios (Campi et al., 2021). In this regard, examining the user experiences a specific health tourist might encounter on digital platforms can help shed light on how online content might be evaluated from the perspective of a potential patient.

In this study, a symbolic Arab tourist visiting Türkiye and considering hair transplantation services was used as a case study, and the online user reviews this tourist might encounter during the decision-making process were examined. The aim of the study is to identify the positive and negative experience factors that a potential medical tourist might encounter during their decision-making process by analyzing user reviews on the Trustpilot platform regarding clinics offering hair transplantation services in Türkiye, using a scenario-based approach. In this regard, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of digital platforms in health (medical) tourism not merely as tools for promotion and information provision, but also, as a decision-support environment that potential patients encounter when evaluating and selecting their healthcare facilities.

Conceptual Framework

Hair Transplantation as a Specialized Type of Medical Tourism

Medical tourism refers to individuals traveling to international or national destinations to receive health services, such as diagnosis, treatment, or surgical procedures etc. Patients can take advantage of the tourist attractions of their destination in addition to treatment programs during this process (Connell, 2006). Individuals who cannot access the required treatment in their region or who believe that the treatment process is not sufficiently effective tend to choose different destinations to receive healthcare services (Cohen, 2008). Furthermore, medical tourism aims to provide a range of medical and supportive services that consider patients' treatment processes and accompanying family members' comfort and satisfaction (Ceyhan & Yiğit, 2016).

Hair transplantations, dental treatments, and cosmetic surgery have begun to rank among the most sought-after services in medical tourism with the increase in demand for aesthetic procedures in recent years (Bulut & Şengül, 2019). In particular, the extensive promotion of hair loss treatments through the media is a key indicator that this issue is being increasingly addressed as a medical problem. Furthermore, the widespread advertising of hair transplantation-related products and services has accelerated the sector's development and contributed to the rise in hair transplantation demand. These developments have significantly supported the growth of medical tourism in the field of hair transplantation by increasing international patient mobility (Sezgin, 2015).

Hair loss and baldness are now viewed as treatable conditions thanks to the surgical and pharmacological solutions offered by modern medicine, which contributes to the inclusion of hair transplantation procedures within the scope of medical tourism (Cengiz & Koç, 2024). Furthermore, the extensive promotion of hair loss treatment methods through the media is one of the key indicators that this issue is increasingly being addressed as a medical problem. In particular, hair transplantation is considered a permanent and effective method for treating androgenetic alopecia, which is common among men. In addition to improving physical appearance, hair transplantation also positively supports individuals' self-confidence and psychological well-being (Dhami, 2021).

The most commonly used methods in hair transplantation are the FUT and FUE techniques. In the FUT method, a strip of tissue taken from the back of the head is dissected into follicular units and transplanted.

Although this method allows for the harvesting of a large number of grafts in a single session, the fact that it can leave a scar in the donor area is considered a significant disadvantage (Patwardhan & Mysore, 2008; Avram & Rogers, 2009). Today, however, the FUE technique is more widely preferred because it is less invasive. Since follicles are extracted and transplanted individually in this method, the recovery process is more comfortable, and the risk of scarring is reduced. However, the procedure takes longer and requires a high level of technical expertise, which are among its disadvantages (Jimenez et al., 2021; Tanrıverdi et al., 2025). Despite the differences in FUE techniques such as DHI and robotic FUE, manual FUE remains the most preferred hair transplantation method today due to its effectiveness and widespread use. Additionally, supportive treatments such as PRP, can improve treatment success in suitable patients (Aydın & Aydın, 2015).

Psychological, aesthetic, economic, and tourism-related factors collectively affect the decision to visit a hair transplantation clinic. The negative effects of hair loss on self-confidence and self-perception, combined with the desire to have a younger and more natural appearance, are driving an increase in the demand for hair transplantation (Dhami, 2021). Modern hair transplantation techniques are considered as a reliable option by individuals since they offer natural-looking and permanent results (Avram & Rogers, 2009; Jimenez et al., 2021). Türkiye's capability to offer cost-effective services, shorter waiting times, and comprehensive packages that include accommodation, transportation services, and treatment is a significant factor in drawing the attention of international patients (Aydın & Aydın, 2015). Similarly, many patients prefer to combine their treatment process with a tourist travel experience, benefiting not only from healthcare services but also from the cultural and recreational opportunities offered by the destination (Connell, 2013).

Digital Perception

Digital transformation in healthcare refers to the process of integrating technological advancements into healthcare services and supporting healthcare needs through digital solutions (Sular & Atmaca, 2025). This transformation has reshaped not only the way healthcare services are delivered but also the ways in which individuals access information, communicate, and use healthcare services (Yorulmaz & Sağlam, 2025). The continued rapid advancement of digital technologies indicates that this transformation in the healthcare sector will become even more widespread in the future and that new applications will emerge to enhance the effectiveness of healthcare services (Işık, 2019).

Digital perception refers to the emotional and cognitive evaluations that individuals form about a product, service, organization, or destination through websites, social media platforms, online user reviews, digital advertisements, and other electronic communication channels (Kurtçu, 2024). From the perspective of medical tourism, the information, content, and user experiences that international patients encounter on digital platforms play a significant role in determining their choice of treatment destination and healthcare facility (Khizzou et al., 2025). Particularly in elective healthcare services such as hair transplantation, patients review clinics' websites, follow their social media accounts, and rely on online reviews containing the experiences of previous patients before deciding (Özyürek, Seferoğlu, & Hız., 2022). Thus, the content presented on digital platforms plays a noteworthy role in shaping trust in healthcare organizations, perceptions of quality, and the intention to choose them (Turan, 2024). For this reason, the visibility of healthcare organizations in the digital environment and the corporate image they project have become strategic elements that provide a competitive advantage (Demirel, 2026).

The literature emphasizes that online user reviews are one of the most influential sources of information in shaping digital perception (Lunt and Carrera, 2011; De La Hoz-Correa and Munoz-Leiva, 2019; Şafak, Yılmaz, & Karamustafa, 2022; Türkay, 2024; Mutlu, 2024; Işık, Çallak, & İçöz, 2026; Aktaş Alan & Şahin, 2026). The experiences shared by users not only provide information about service quality but also contribute to building trust by reducing potential customers' perception of issue (Uzun & Ağca, 2025). In particular, high-rated and detailed user reviews may contribute to positive emotional and cognitive evaluations, whereas negative reviews may influence perceptions of service quality and purchase intentions. (Guo & Pesonen, 2022). Similarly, it is stated that online content related to a destination or business plays a significant role in shaping the perceived image, and that users' online reviews directly influence the decision-making process (Mak, 2017; Chang & Ko, 2024).

Not only user reviews but also the digital communication activities of healthcare centers have a noteworthy function in shaping digital perception. The design of institutional websites, the quality of social media posts, pre- and post-treatment images, information about specialist physicians, and transparent and reliable content provided in the digital environment all strengthen individuals' perceptions of service quality (Turan, 2024). In this context, digital reputation management is considered a crucial management tool for healthcare

organizations to compete in the international market (Demirel, 2026). Digital reputation models developed recently also demonstrate that social media and user-generated content directly influence businesses' online perception and desirability (Puche-Regaliza et al., 2026).

Information and content available in the digital environment are among the key factors influencing individuals' decision-making processes in health tourism (Bektaş et al., 2017). Before deciding on a treatment destination and healthcare facility, international patients evaluate the service quality, reliability, and corporate reputation of service providers by utilizing digital information sources such as websites, social media platforms, and online user reviews (Tekingündüz et al., 2021). Accordingly, for businesses operating in the field of medical tourism, establishing an effective digital presence, providing accurate and reliable content, and effectively managing online reputation are considered key factors in enhancing competitiveness in the international market (Şimşek, 2023).

Literature and Background

Studies examining the role of hair transplantation within medical tourism indicate that Türkiye is emerging as a leading destination in this field. Şahbaz, Akdu, and Akdu (2012), in their study examining the medical tourism practices of private hospitals in Ankara and Istanbul, noted that hair transplantation plays a significant role among the motivations men seek treatment at aesthetic centers. Soysal (2017), on the other hand, demonstrated that Türkiye is a preferred medical tourism destination not only for necessary medical interventions but also for hair transplantations and aesthetic procedures, and that the price advantage, in particular, constitutes a significant draw for patients coming from Europe and the United States. Karadayı Usta and Serdarasan (2020) determined that, in addition to preferences regarding service elements such as the start time of treatment, healthcare provider, accommodation, and transportation, the demands of individuals planning medical tourism for hair transplantation regarding tourist activities are also significant.

In their study comparing Türkiye and Poland in terms of hair transplantation services, İlhan and Özdoğan (2022) evaluated competitive factors such as cost, quality assurance, accreditation, and accessibility and, demonstrated that Türkiye holds a particularly advantageous position in terms of cost. Bahar and Akyürek (2022) revealed that high treatment costs in their home countries play a significant role in European patients' preference for Türkiye for hair transplantation, illustrating this motivation through the experience of a French patient. Ölmez (2023), using the example of Kuşadası, noted that hair transplantation services in the country are attractive to international patients due to their high success rates, experienced healthcare personnel, technological infrastructure, and affordable prices. In their study examining perceptions regarding hair transplantation in Türkiye, Cengiz and Koç (2024) found that participants generally did not view the procedure as risky and that concerns about various negative outcomes did not significantly influence their decisions.

Heper and Kayuk (2024), evaluating Istanbul's position in medical tourism, determined that hair transplantations and cosmetic surgery procedures, in particular, are among the treatments most frequently chosen by foreign patients. Likewise, Ayyıldız (2025), in a study based on the views of industry stakeholders, demonstrated that cosmetic surgeries are one of the primary service areas associated with medical tourism; hair transplantations and dental treatments also rank among the prominent procedures mentioned in the context of medical tourism.

Overall, the literature indicates that the reasons for choosing Türkiye in the field of hair transplantation are primarily discussed in the context of affordability, experienced healthcare personnel, quality of service, technological and medical infrastructure, and the growing demand for aesthetic procedures.

In the international literature, the decision-making processes of medical tourists and the role of online user experiences in these processes have also been extensively examined. Hwang, Lee, & Kang (2018), in their study of medical tourists in South Korea, found that patients' information-seeking behavior prior to treatment significantly influenced their experiences during the treatment process, and that these experiences, in turn, notably affected their post-treatment behaviours regarding relationship-building, recommendations, and feedback. This finding is significant in that it demonstrates that the patient experience extends across the entire pre-, during, and post-treatment process, rather than being limited to a single phase. Similarly, in their study on the patient experience in medical tourism, Xu Wangi & Du (2020) noted that low cost, short waiting times, and service quality are decisive factors in treatment preferences; they also stated that the internet, testimonials from previous patients, and recommendations from physicians or intermediary agencies are among the most frequently consulted sources of information. Al-Saad, Alzghoul, and Harb (2024), in their research on tourists' perceptions of e-WOM, revealed that information quality and social interaction shape tourists' decision-making processes through the "trust" factor. Zhang et al. (2023), on the other hand, found that reviews shared

in online health communities serve as an important reference source in patient-physician selection and that this effect varies depending on the physician's area of expertise. These findings support the notion that online user experiences in healthcare serve not only as a source of information but also as a "trust-building" decision-support mechanism.

Recent studies specific to hair transplantation tourism, however, highlight both the appeal and the risks of the industry. In their study of the hair transplantation tourism industry, specifically in Türkiye, Haider et al. (2025) noted that low costs and comprehensive package services have increased international patient demand, but emphasized that practices such as intensive digital marketing and the use of unregulated technicians could create risks to patient safety.

When the literature is evaluated as a whole, studies in the fields of medical tourism and hair transplantation have primarily focused on the reasons for destination choice (Şahbaz et al., 2012; Soysal, 2017; İlhan & Özdoğan, 2022), structural models of the patient experience (Hwang et al., 2018), or the analysis of website and social media content (Şafak et al., 2022; Türkay, 2024). In contrast, only a limited number of studies have examined online user reviews - which a potential medical tourist might encounter prior to treatment—using a scenario-based approach that considers the context of a specific patient profile and searches conducted in their native language. In this regard, this study aims to contribute to the conceptualization of digital platforms in the medical tourism literature not merely as promotional tools but as decision-support environments.

Based on above mentioned information, the research question has been identified as: "What user reviews might a potential medical tourist (in the scenario of an Arab tourist) who decides to undergo a hair transplant in Türkiye encounter during the decision-making process?" The sub-questions are as follows: "What themes stand out in patient reviews?" and "Do these themes differ based on the countries of the users who post the most reviews (the United States, the United Kingdom, and France)?"

Method

This study employs a scenario-based approach. The scenario-based approach allows for the systematic examination of processes involving uncertainty within a framework resembling real-life conditions, based on a specific individual profile and decision-making context (Campi et al., 2021; Hazarhun & Yılmaz, 2021; Önsel Şahin, Ülengin, & Ülengin, 2011). In addition, the study utilizes "content analysis" as a qualitative research method to analyze "online user comments" compiled by the authors within the scenarios; subsequently, coding, code frequency, a code relationship map, and a single-case model were developed (Creswell, 2016).

Medical tourists often decide their treatment plans before traveling and use digital information sources to identify the healthcare facilities where they will receive care. However, some tourists may purchase healthcare services at their destination based on their needs that arise during their trip. In this context, the study adopts a scenario-based approach to examine how a hypothetical Arab tourist considering hair transplant services in Türkiye evaluates the pre-treatment decision-making process within a framework close to real-life conditions and how they might be influenced by user reviews encountered on digital platforms. The selection of the Arab tourist in this scenario was influenced by geographical proximity, cultural and social interactions, and the fact that Türkiye is one of the leading and popular medical tourism destinations for hair transplantation services among health tourists from Arab countries.

Furthermore, the fact that hair transplantation is one of the healthcare services most frequently chosen by international patients in Türkiye makes it meaningful to examine the decision-making process of a potential Arab medical tourist evaluating this service based on user reviews on digital platforms. Thus, the objective of this study is to examine the potential effects of user reviews encountered on digital platforms prior to treatment on the choice of a healthcare facility, focusing on factors such as trust, service quality, satisfaction, and institutional reputation.

The universe of this research consists of all user reviews posted on the "Trustpilot" web platform regarding hair transplantation clinics operating in Türkiye. During the sample selection process, the Arabic equivalent of the term "hair transplantation" was first verified using three different online dictionaries; then, a search was conducted on Trustpilot using the keyword "زراعةشعر," with the location filter set to Türkiye. A total of 253 user reviews posted in 2025 and originating from the three countries with the highest number of reviews (United States: 118, France: 70, United Kingdom: 65) for the 18 hair transplant clinics identified through this search were included in the sample. The selection of the three countries with the highest volume of reviews

was intended not to ensure the statistical representativeness of the findings but, rather to provide a sufficient volume of data to achieve thematic saturation.

The research data consists of publicly available user reviews published on the Trustpilot platform. The reviews were collected exactly as users posted them on the platform, without any intervention or guidance; therefore, the data was generated in a natural setting and is independent of researcher influence. To strengthen the validity of the data, only reviews from verified user profiles were considered; duplicate or empty reviews were excluded from the sample, and the analysis was limited to the year 2025 to ensure the data's recency.

The 253 users' comments collected were coded in the MAXQDA program using qualitative content analysis techniques. During the analysis process, the texts were first analyzed separately by country (United States, United Kingdom, France), followed by a word frequency analysis to generate word clouds (Figures 1 - 3), single-case code models (Figures 4 - 6), a combined code map and pie chart (Figures 7 - 8), and a cross-country coding trend (Figure 9). The coding process was conducted by the researcher in two stages: in the first stage, comments were subjected to open coding to identify frequently recurring words and phrases; in the second stage, semantically related codes (e.g., staff-focused codes such as "staff," "team," and "care") were grouped under thematic categories. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the coding process was reviewed twice at different time points.

Table 1. User Comments By Countries

USA	118
France	70
United Kingdom	65
Türkiye	38
Germany	23
Canada	22
Italy	21

Findings

The findings obtained as part of the research are presented below. First, the distribution of user comments by language is presented, followed by an analysis of the findings derived from the comments.

Figure 1. Word Cloud For The USA

The word cloud in Figure 1 visualizes the concepts that stand out in user reviews of hair transplant clinics, highlighting the key factors in patient experiences. The most frequently recurring terms in the visual—"transplantation," "procedure," "experience," and "process"—indicate that user reviews primarily revolve around the execution of the hair transplant procedure and the overall treatment experience. In addition, terms such as "professional," "staff," "team," "care," and "service" encompass the professionalism of the healthcare staff, team coordination, and the quality of services provided. Furthermore, there is a heavy use of positive terms such as "recommend," "great," "comfortable," "excellent," and "highly." On the other hand, terms such as "consultation," "after," "entire," and "step" reveal that the patient experience is not limited to the moment of the procedure alone; rather, the consultation process, post-operative care, and the entire treatment process play a significant role in these evaluations.

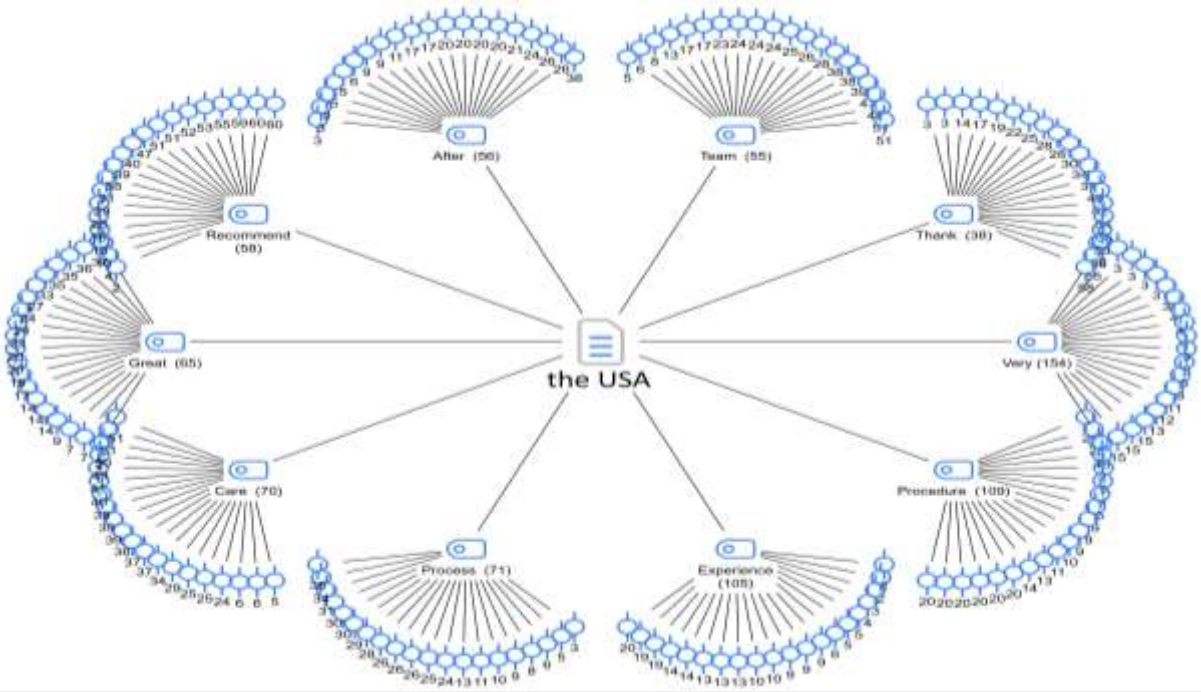
Figure 2. Word Cloud For United Kingdom

The word cloud for the United Kingdom presented in Figure 2 illustrates patient perceptions of the hair implant experience by visualizing the concepts most frequently repeated in user reviews. The term "transplantation/implant," which stands out in the visual, indicates that the reviews largely revolve around the treatment process and the implant procedure. Furthermore, the heavy presence of positive terms such as "great," "recommend," "experience," "team," "care," "procedure," and "staff" suggests that patients particularly appreciate the professionalism of the healthcare staff, team cohesion, and the quality of care provided. Furthermore, words like "friendly," "helpful," "professional," and "excellent" support a positive perception of service quality; while terms such as "pain," "before," "after," and "surgery" indicate that the operational aspects of the treatment process play a significant role in patient experiences. On the other hand, the words "hotel" and "Türkiye" appear repeatedly.

Figure 3. Word Cloud For France

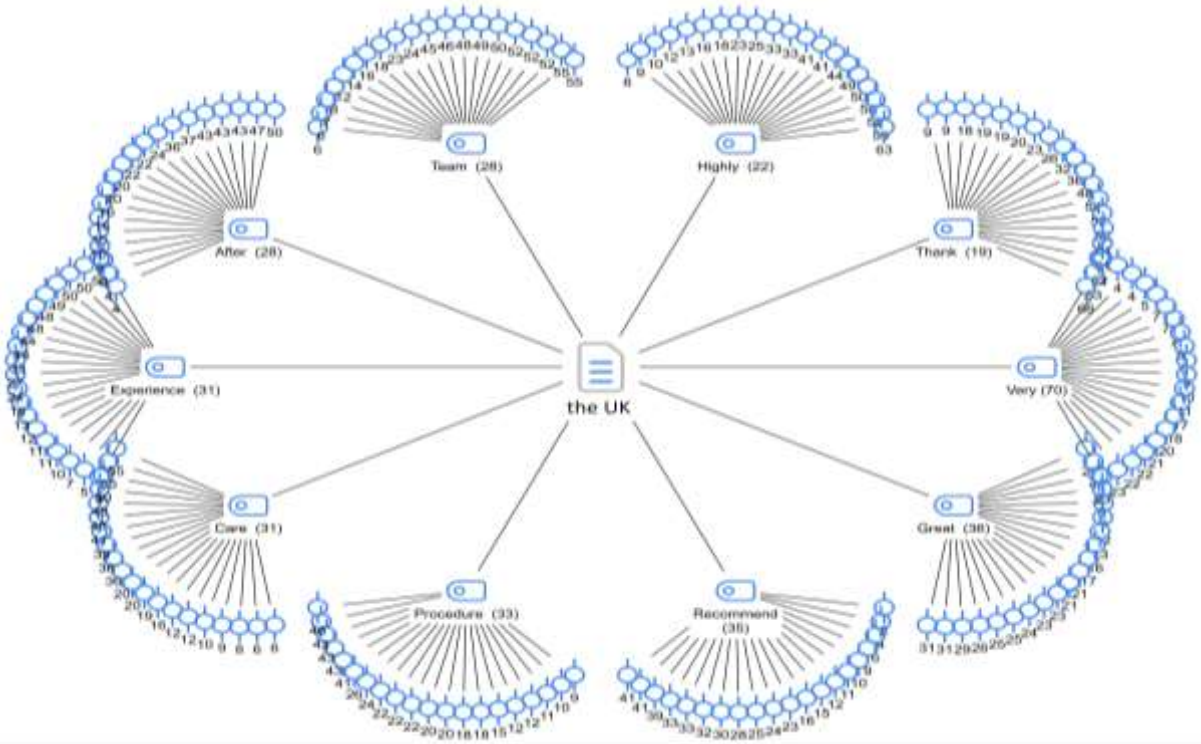
In the word cloud for France shown in Figure 3, words such as "transplantation," "very," "thank," "recommend," "excellent," and "professional" stand out in particular. User reviews frequently highlight the healthcare team's professionalism, as well as the attention and care provided during the surgical process; terms such as "team," "care," "attentive," "support," and "follow-up" are frequently mentioned in relation to patient communication and post-operative support. In addition, words such as "hotel," "airport," and "stay" stand out and are further supported by positive expressions like "satisfied," "happy," "perfectly," and "exceptional."

Figure 4. The USA Single-Case Model



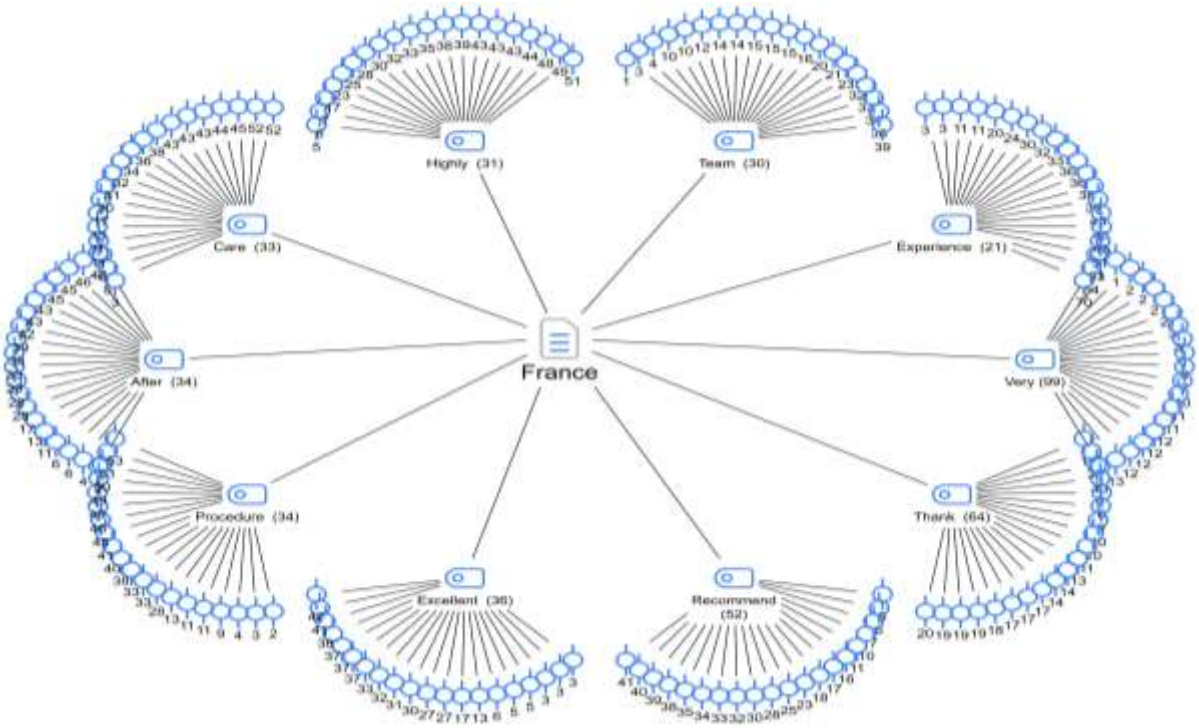
In "the USA" single-case model presented in Figure 4, it is evident that user comments cluster around specific core themes. The "the USA" node at the center of the model represents the common analytical domain for all user experiences, while the codes positioned around it highlight the dimensions of experience that emerge in user comments. The codes with the highest frequencies were identified as "Very" (154), "Procedure" (109), and "Experience" (105). These are followed by the codes "Process" (71), "Care" (70), "Great" (65), "Recommend" (58), "After" (56), "Team" (55), and "Thank" (38). In the model, the "Procedure," "Experience" and, "Process" codes appear in statements related to the surgical and experience processes; the "Care" and "Team" codes appear in statements related to care and team elements; the "After" code appears in statements related to the post-operative period; the "Recommend" code appears in statements of recommendation; and the "Thank" code appears in expressions of gratitude.

Figure 5. The UK Single-Case Model



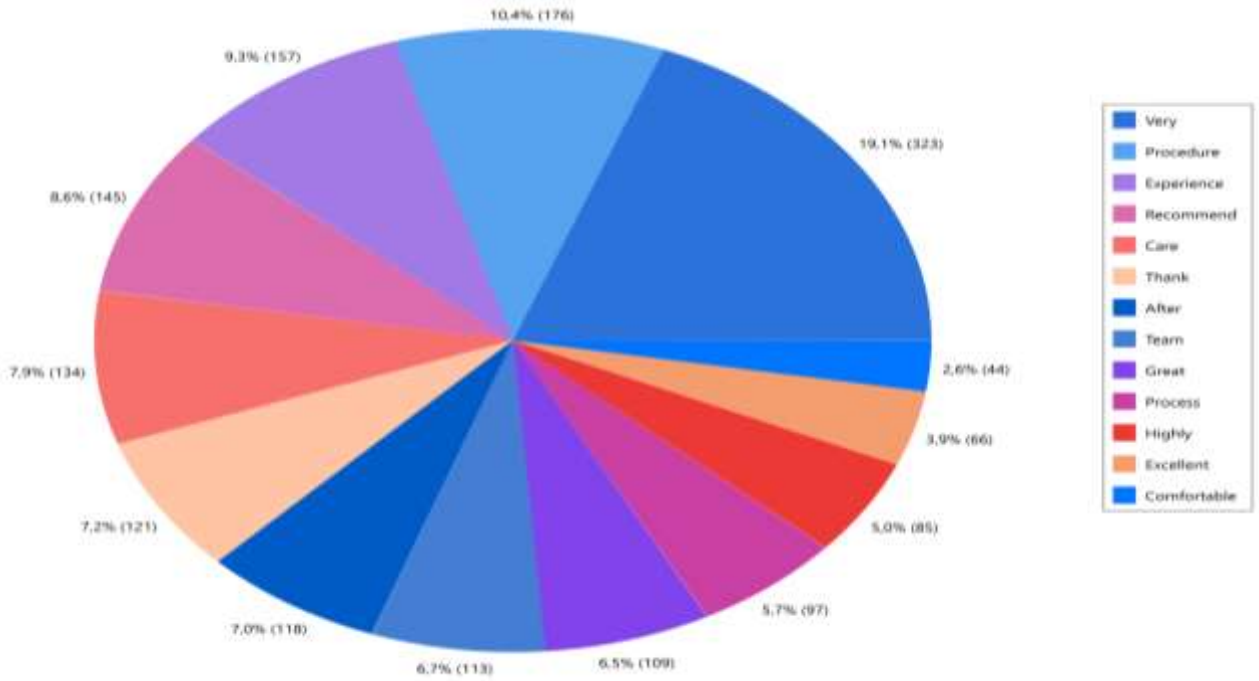
In the United Kingdom single-case model presented in Figure 5, it is evident that user comments center on satisfaction, service quality, and patient experience. The "England" node at the center of the model represents the common analytical domain for all user evaluations, while the codes surrounding it highlight the key themes emerging from user experiences. The codes with the highest frequencies were identified as "Very" (70), "Great" (36), "Recommend" (35), and "Procedure" (33). These are followed by the codes "Experience" (31), "Care" (31), "After" (28), "Team" (28), "Highly" (22), and "Thank" (19). The codes are associated with expressions of satisfaction, the surgical process, experience, care, the post-operative period, the team, recommendations, and gratitude. In the model's connection structure, the codes are positioned around the "England" node, and various connections exist between the codes. While the codes "Very," "Great," and "Recommend" stand out as high-frequency codes in the model, the codes "Experience," "Care," "After," and "Team" are also present in the connection structure.

Figure 6. France Single-Case Model



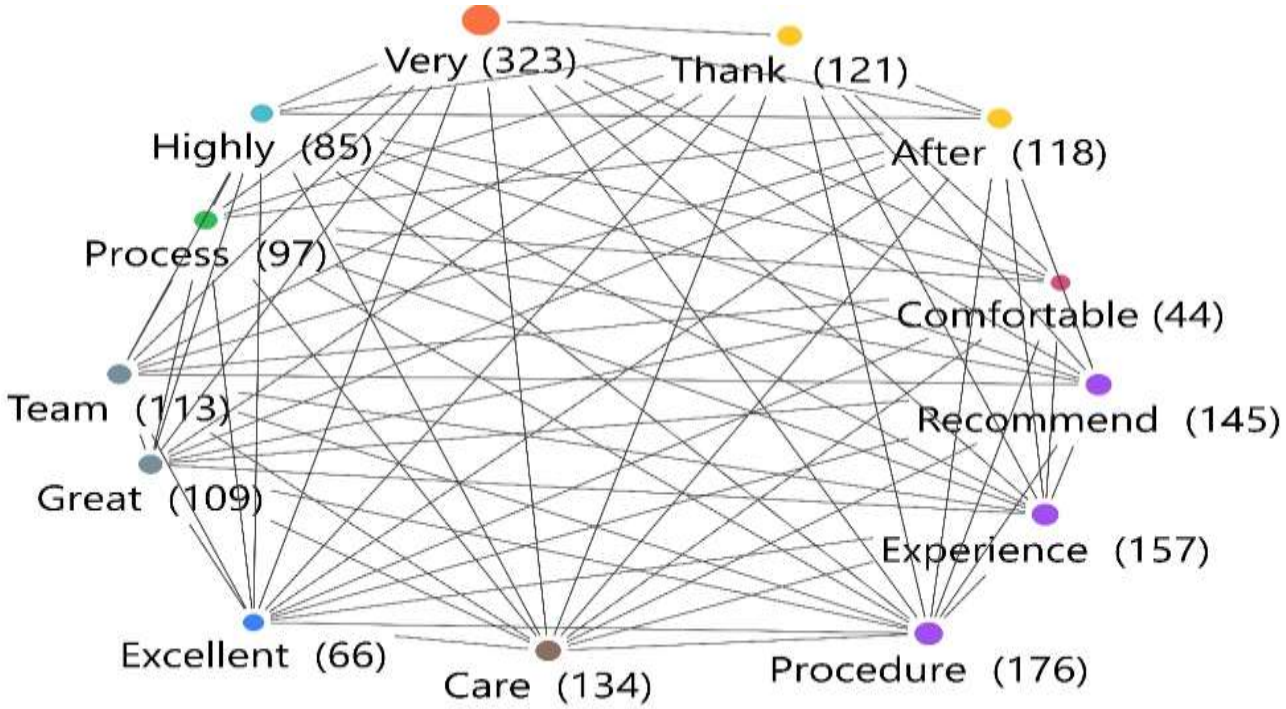
In the France single-case model presented in Figure 6, it can be seen that user comments center on overall satisfaction, expressions of gratitude, and service recommendations. The "France" node at the center of the model represents the common analytical domain for all user experiences, while the codes surrounding it highlight the key themes that emerge in user evaluations. The codes with the highest frequencies were identified as "Very" (99), "Thank" (64), and "Recommend" (52). These are followed by the codes "Excellent" (36), "Procedure" (34), "After" (34), "Care" (33), "Highly" (31), "Team" (30), and "Experience" (21). The codes are associated with expressions of satisfaction, gratitude, recommendation, surgical procedure, post-operative period, care, team, and experience. In the model's connection structure, the codes are positioned around the "France" node, and various connections exist between the codes. While the codes "Very," "Thanks," and "Recommend" stand out due to their high frequencies, the codes "After," "Care," "Team," and "Experience" are also present in the model.

Figure 7. Pie Chart For All Codes



In the pie chart, the code with the highest frequency is "Very" at 19.1% (n = 323). "Procedure" accounts for 10.4% (176), 'Experience' for 9.3% (157), and "Recommend" for 8.6% (145). The codes "Care" (7.9%), "Thank" (7.2%), 'After' (7.0%), and "Team" (6.7%) are also present. The codes "Great" (6.5%), "Process" (5.7%), "Highly" (5.0%), "Excellent" (3.9%), and "Comfortable" (2.6%) are also present.

Figure 8. Code Map



The colors used in the code map presented in Figure 8 have been grouped to represent similar themes and conceptually related categories in the user experience. The codes "Very," "Team," "Great," and "Excellent," shown in shades of blue, represent general satisfaction, service quality, and positive evaluation statements. The intensity of this color group indicates that users have developed positive perceptions regarding operational outcomes, team performance, and the service provided.

The codes “Procedure,” “Experience,” “Recommend,” and “Comfortable”—which appear in shades of purple and pink—are associated with patient experience, the surgical process, the level of comfort, and the tendency to recommend the service to others. This category demonstrates that the medical tourism experience is evaluated not only based on the outcome of the procedure but also on the experience throughout the process and the quality of service. In particular, the inclusion of the “Recommend” and “Comfortable” codes in this group suggests that users tend to share their satisfaction with those around them and view comfort factors as an important evaluation criterion.

The codes “Thank,” “After,” and “Highly”—displayed in shades of orange and yellow—represent post-operative satisfaction, expressions of gratitude toward healthcare staff, and a high level of positive feedback. This indicates that post-operative follow-up services, patient communication, and support processes play a significant role in user reviews. It is evident that users include not only the moment of the procedure itself but also the post-operative care and attention in their evaluation process.

The “Process” code, shown in shades of green, represents the organizational and operational aspects of the procedure; it reflects users’ evaluations of process management, planning, and service flow. Additionally, the “Care” code, shown in shades of brown, symbolizes care, attention, and a patient-centered service philosophy; it demonstrates that a humanistic approach plays a significant role in user satisfaction.

Figure 9. Country-Specific Code Trends

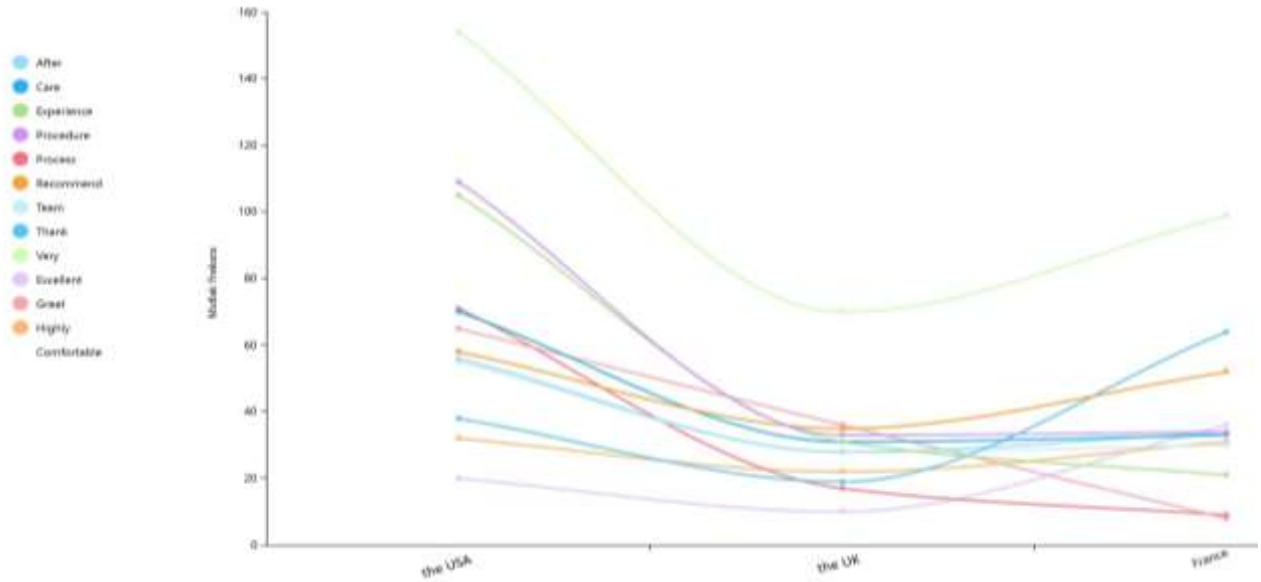


Figure 9 compares the frequency distributions of the codes for the samples from the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. In the U.S. sample, the codes “Experience,” “Procedure,” and “Very” stand out. The codes “Care,” “Thank,” “Recommend,” and “Great” also have notable frequency values. In the UK sample, the codes “Experience,” “Procedure,” and “Recommend” stand out, while the codes “Process,” “Care,” and “After” are also present in the model. It can be seen that the frequencies of the codes are lower and more evenly distributed compared to the US sample. In the French sample, the codes “Care,” “Recommend,” and “Very” stand out. In addition, the codes “Comfortable” and “Excellent” are also present in the French sample. The codes “Process” and “Experience” have lower frequencies than some other codes. In the comparative distribution across the three countries, the codes “Very,” “Procedure,” “Experience,” “Care,” and “Recommend” recur at varying frequency levels; meanwhile, the codes “Comfortable” and “Excellent” stand out particularly in the French sample.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, using a scenario involving an Arab tourist considering hair transplant services in Turkey, 253 user reviews shared on the Trustpilot platform were analyzed using a scenario-based approach. The study sought to answer the questions of which themes the user reviews - which a potential medical tourist might encounter during the decision-making process - are centered around, and whether these themes differ across the countries with the highest number of reviews (the United States, the United Kingdom, and France).

Findings regarding the study's main research question revealed that health tourists' evaluations of hair transplant services were not limited to the technical outcome of the procedure; rather, they were shaped by multidimensional factors such as staff approach, communication, information provided, overall service experience, post-operative support, and physical comfort. A combined analysis of word clouds, single-case coding models, pie charts, and a coding map revealed that the codes "transplantation/procedure," "experience," "care," "team," and "recommend" appeared with high frequency across all three country samples; indicating that the patient experience is shaped by the moment of the procedure and by a holistic process extending from pre-treatment information to post-operative follow-up.

The cross-national comparison conducted as part of the study's sub-question revealed that, within this common framework, there are also country-specific differences: While user comments in the U.S. sample primarily centered on the operational process and general experience ("Very," "Procedure," "Experience"), the code frequencies in the U.K. sample exhibited a more balanced and procedure-based distribution, whereas in the French sample, expressions of gratitude and care/satisfaction ("Thank," "Care," "Recommend") stood out more prominently compared to the other countries. This finding directly addresses the sub-question of demonstrating that the evaluation priorities of medical tourists may vary depending on their country of origin.

In the word cloud for the U.S.A. sample (Figure 1), the codes "transplantation/procedure," "experience," "care," "team," and "recommend" appear with high frequency; in addition, process-oriented terms such as "consultation" and "step" stand out more prominently compared to other countries. In the word cloud for the UK sample (Figure 2), the same common codes are present, but destination-focused terms such as "hotel" and "Turkey" also stand out. In the word cloud for the French sample (Figure 3), accommodation - and transportation - focused terms such as "hotel," "airport," and "stay" are more prominent compared to the other two countries. Thus, the word clouds (Figures 1–3) demonstrate the existence of a common codebase across all three countries while also revealing that country-specific emphases differ.

In the single-case coding model of the U.S. sample (Figure 4), the codes "Very" (154), "Procedure" (109), and "Experience" (105) have the highest frequencies; this indicates that user comments are primarily centered on the operational process and general experience. In the single-case coding model for the UK sample (Figure 5), however, code frequencies are more balanced and exhibit a procedure-based distribution ("Very" = 70, "Great" = 36, and "Recommend" = 35). In the single-case coding model for the French sample (Figure 6), the codes "Very" (99) and, in particular, "Thank" (64) stand out; the "Thank" code does not appear at the same level in the U.S. and UK samples. The single-case coding models (Figures 4–6) confirm that the codes "transplantation/procedure," "experience," "care," "team," and "recommend" appear at high frequencies across all three countries. This is also confirmed by the pie chart showing the entire sample (Figure 7), where the codes "Very" (19.1%), "Procedure" (10.4%), and "Experience" (9.3%) account for the largest shares of the total sample. The prominence of positive expressions such as "Very," "Recommend," and "Great" appears consistent with previous studies highlighting the appeal of hair transplant tourism (Ölmez, 2023; Heper & Kayuk, 2024). However, there appears to be a partial inconsistency among Haider at al's (2025) findings; it can be argued that the relationship between high digital reputation and the clinical safety of the service should also be evaluated independently.

The code map (Figure 8) supports the internal consistency of the findings by grouping these codes into three main categories: satisfaction/service quality (blue cluster), process/comfort (purple-pink cluster), and post-operative support (orange-yellow cluster). This finding - that the patient experience has a multidimensional and holistic structure - aligns with the findings of Hwang et al. (2018), who demonstrated that the patient experience is a holistic process encompassing the pre-, during, and post-treatment phases; and it also substantively supports the study by Xu et al. (2020), which shows that the experience in medical tourism is shaped not only by clinical success but also by the relationships established throughout the process. The finding regarding staff approach and communication codes—which appear with high frequency in both the code map (Figure 8) and the single-case models of the three countries (Figures 4 - 6) - is consistent with studies in the medical tourism literature that frequently emphasize the process of trust-building (Uzun & Ağca, 2025; Al-Saad et al., 2024). In particular, the prominence of phrases such as "carefully explaining every step" and "answering every question" is also consistent with the findings of Zhang et al. (2023), who argued that information-based communication strengthens the perception of trust by reducing uncertainty.

The cross-national coding trend (Figure 9) brings together the differences seen separately in Figures 1 - 6 into a single comparative view: In the U.S. sample, process- and experience-related expressions stand out in frequency compared to other countries; in the U.K. sample, more balanced and procedure-based expressions are prominent; and in the French sample, expressions of gratitude and care/satisfaction are more frequent than

in other countries. This finding suggests that evaluation criteria may vary depending on the cultural context; it contributes to the literature by demonstrating that online reviews do not exhibit a universal structure independent of cultural and contextual factors, but rather that the order of priorities may vary depending on the country of origin of the medical tourist.

In conclusion, it can be said that the user reviews a potential medical tourist may encounter on digital platforms when deciding to undergo a hair transplant in Turkey serve as a multidimensional source of information that shapes trust-building, perceptions of service quality, and the decision-making process. This finding demonstrates that digital platforms should be viewed not merely as promotional tools in medical tourism but, as a decision-support environment that potential patients rely on when evaluating and selecting healthcare facilities. A comparative analysis of the nine figures reveals two findings: evaluations of hair transplant services, regardless of country, center on the surgical process, the staff/team approach, aftercare, and the tendency to recommend the service. Within this common framework, it is observed that in the U.S. sample, statements regarding the process and experience stand out in frequency compared to other countries; in the U.K. sample, more balanced and procedure-based statements are prominent; and in the French sample, expressions of gratitude and care/satisfaction are more frequent than in other countries. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that hair transplantation clinics targeting international patients should adopt a comprehensive service approach that integrates clear pre-treatment information, responsive communication, attentive staff support, and accessible post-operative follow-up. For clinics seeking to attract Arabic-speaking health tourists, culturally and linguistically appropriate communication may constitute an important consideration in service delivery. Rather than focusing solely on the technical outcome of hair transplantation, service providers should also consider the broader patient experience, including care, comfort, and support throughout the treatment process. These findings provide insights into how clinics can address the service expectations reflected in online user reviews and strengthen the overall patient experience.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature on health tourism from a theoretical perspective by examining online user reviews through a scenario-based approach. The study goes beyond merely classifying user experiences on digital platforms in a descriptive manner, demonstrating that situating a specific patient profile within a decision-making context can offer a new methodological perspective to health tourism research. Furthermore, the comparative analysis of user reviews from multiple countries contributes to the literature on the impact of cultural context on evaluation criteria in health tourism.

Practical Implications

When evaluated from a practical standpoint, the findings provide various insights for medical tourism organizations. First, clinics offering hair transplant services should evaluate patient satisfaction not only based on the technical success of the procedure but also within the framework of a holistic service experience that encompasses consultation, communication, information sharing, and post-operative support. Second, clinics should invest in digital reputation management; providing transparent, up-to-date, and verifiable information on online platforms will reinforce international patients' sense of trust. Third, institutions shaping medical tourism policies can encourage the evaluation of online user reviews not only for marketing purposes but also as a feedback mechanism for monitoring service quality. Finally, the differing evaluation priorities of patients from various countries highlight the need for clinics to develop tailored communication and service strategies that align with their target market.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has some limitations. First, the study is confined to user reviews posted on the Trustpilot platform during a specific period (2025) and filtered exclusively for Arabic-language comments; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all online platforms or time periods. Second, the study focuses only on the three countries with the highest review volumes (the United States, the United Kingdom, and France), thereby excluding the experiences of medical tourists from other countries and regions. For future research, a comparative analysis of different online platforms (Google Reviews, social media, forum sites, etc.), supplemented by clinic reviews listed through searches using English or French terms in addition to Arabic, could enhance the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, studies based on interviews or surveys with actual patients could help validate the findings obtained through the scenario-based approach.

Ethics Statement: The data used for the document analysis in this study were obtained from open sources; since no data were collected from humans or animals, an ethics committee report was not required.

Author Contribution Statement: The contribution rate of the 1st. author is 34%, 2nd author is 33% and 3rd author is 33%.

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