# Exploring the Role of Social Media in Shaping Breast Cancer Treatment Decisions Among Woman

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## Objectives:

To evaluate the role of social media in shaping woman´s knowledge, trust, and engagement with breast cancer treatment information, and to assess its influence on discussions and decisions with healthcare providers

## Background:

- Breast cancer treatment is increasingly individualized increasingly individualized.
- Social media has become a major source of health information and peer support.
- However, misinfromation is prevalent and trust varies widely.

## Methods:

A cross-sectional survey was conducted in July 2025 through a breast health-focused Instagram account using the platform´s native survey tools.
The questionnaire assessed demographics, engagement with breast cancer treatment related content, perceived trust in social-media health information, and wether online information influenced discussions of decisons made with healthcare providers.
Data were analyzed descriptively, and associations between trust levels, engagement, and reported influence on medical decision-making were explored.

**How Social Media Influences Breast Cancer Treatment Discussions**

**Exposure: 94% searched online (82% Instagram)**

**Trust: 79% said trust depends on source credibility**

**Higher trust → more engagement**

**17% of high-trust group discussed info with doctor**

**Influence: 10% reported content influenced discussions**

*Social media shapes how women approach treatment discussions — open dialogue helps build trust and support shared decision-making.*

| | Implications / Recommendations |
|---|---|
| **Healthcare Providers** | Ask patients what they have seen online; use it as an entry point for shared discussions. |
| **Breast Centers / Clinics** | Develop credible, curated social media content to reach patients where they are. |
| **Public Health / Policy** | Collaborate with digital platforms to flag misinformation and promote transparency. |

*Figure 1: From exposure to influence — most women (94%) searched breast cancer information online; higher trust led to greater engagement, with 17% discussing and 10% influenced by social media content.*

## Results:

- **Participants:**

N = 1,026 (100% women)
Main age group: 41–50 years (43%)

- **Online Information-Seeking Behavior:**

94% searched online for breast cancer content
Instagram was main platform (82%)
Others: websites, YouTube, Facebook

- **Trust in Information:**

79% said trust depends on source credibility
Younger women (20–30 years) more likely to trust online info (25%)
Higher trust → higher engagement and discussion with physician (17%)

- **Influence on Decisions:**

73%: social media did not change treatment plan
10%: discussed information found online with doctor despite partial trust

**Information Flow in the Digital Era:**




## Discussion:

- Social media has become a central channel for obtaining breast cancer treatment information. Trust in the source is the main factor driving engagement and perceived credibility. Younger women tend to be more digitally confident; however, they are also more frequently exposed to misinformation. Importantly, social media interactions can stimulate dialogue with healthcare providers, fostering shared decision-making (SDM) in treatment planning.
- These findings are consistent with global data showing that patients increasingly use digital spaces to prepare for medical consultations. The results also align with Gandamihardja et al. (2023), who described the dual role of social media as both a source of empowerment and a conduit for misinformation. This study adds novel evidence from Latin American Instagram users, a population underrepresented in previous research, highlighting regional nuances in digital health behavior.

## Limitations & Future Directions:

**Limitations:**

- Cross-sectional design (cannot infer causality)
- Instagram-only sample (digitally active bias)
- Self-reported influence and trust levels

**Future Research:**

- Qualitative interviews to explore motivations and perceptions
- Longitudinal follow-up to assess real behavioral impact
- Interventions using verified social media content

## Conclusion:

- Social media—especially Instagram—is a dominant source of breast cancer information.
- Trust in the source/platform moderates engagement and influence.
- Most women do not change treatment plans based on social media alone,
- but many initiate informed discussions with their physicians.
- Physicians should recognize social media as a complementary tool for patient education and empowerment.

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