2026

Healthcare Marketing Outlook in the Carolinas

DATA, TRENDS, & EXPERT INSIGHTS

SHAPING PATIENT ACQUISITION & RETENTION

CRIMSON PARK
DIGITAL

Executive Summary

The healthcare and wellness market in North and South Carolina is evolving rapidly: population growth, decentralized care models, and digitally centered patients are reshaping how providers attract, inform, and retain patients. This report captures the key trends driving patient acquisition and engagement in 2026 and how providers can stay ahead of the curve from a marketing perspective.

What's Shaping Healthcare Marketing and Patient Experience Across the Carolinas →→

Patients are increasingly choosing local, specialized providers over large systems, and digital experience and content authority now play a central role in their decision-making. Visibility, short-form video, and local discovery platforms are core components of today's acquisition strategies, while regulatory shifts and rising health insurance costs are pushing consumers toward preventive and out-of-pocket wellness services.

This report is designed for healthcare marketers, practice leaders, and wellness brand decision makers who want to understand the forces shaping practice growth in the Carolinas this year, and how their marketing programs should adapt accordingly.

Top Trend Predictions FOR 2026

1 **Neighborhood clinics** will outpace centralized systems in new patient growth.

2 Patients will expect **seamless digital journeys**

3 **Preventive and lifestyle medicine** will become a major driver of brand loyalty.

4 **AI** will transform how patients discover and interact with providers.

5 **Content authority and reputation** will be strategic differentiators during research and decision-making.

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Market Overview

Outpatient care, wellness centers, and med spas are rapidly expanding across the Carolinas. The Southeast has also emerged as one of the fastest-growing regions for ambulatory surgery center development, with North Carolina tied for the most ASC openings in the nation in 2025.[1]

> **NEARLY**
> # 80%
> **OF SURGERIES**
> are now performed in outpatient settings,[2] further pointing to the growth of same-day procedures with specialty providers.

Beyond facility growth, the patient experience is evolving. Hybrid care that blends telehealth and in-clinic services is no longer a novelty; it's expected to be an option or the standard operating procedure. **Personalization, video content, and local search** are also dominant tactics for patient acquisition, while privacy regulations are forcing providers to rethink digital user tracking and campaign targeting strategies.

⟫⟫ What Matters Most Today?

Search remains the most effective channel for patient acquisition, emphasizing the need for strong visibility.

Paid social is essential for discovery and awareness, especially for services like aesthetics and wellness.

Video platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram are central to education and storytelling.

Google Business Profiles and local visibility directly influence rankings in major markets, including Charlotte, Charleston, Greenville, and Raleigh-Durham.

Stats at a Glance »»»

In 2025, over
72%
of **healthcare advertising budgets** were spent on **digital channels**.[3]

Organic search drives
53%
of **website traffic** with nearly **70% converting to appointments** within 24 hours.[4]

68%
of patients **influenced by provider social media presence** when making choices within 24 hours.[5]

User-generated content **boosts patient trust**[6] by
28%

TikTok healthcare content views up
150%
year over year.[7]

Instagram drives
31%
of healthcare **social referrals** with visuals **doubling engagement**.[8]

Pinterest health pins saved
2.3x
more than other pins.[9]

Data-Driven Insights

The Shift in Organic Search & Visibility

Long-tail organic searches that combine symptoms with treatments are increasing across specialties, such as orthopedics, aesthetics, physical therapy, and urgent care. Providers who publish clear, expert-led content and directly answer patient questions are gaining the most visibility and are standing out in search results.

BUILDING A CONTENT ECOSYSTEM

> **Search authority compounds over time**; it's not a quickly produced result. Each piece of high-quality content helps new pages rank faster and boosts the ranking positions of older content simultaneously.

> **Providers who consistently share expert insights, FAQs,** and educational resources build trust with both patients and search engines more than those who do not.

> **Linking content, showcasing services clearly, and maintaining structured site architecture amplifies reach**.

> **Organic visibility** isn't just about appearing in search results; it's about creating a trusted, discoverable content ecosystem that guides patients from awareness to booking.

GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILES

> **Many patients discover providers through these listings** before (or instead of) visiting a website; consider it a hyperlocal gateway for your brand that provides a first impression.

> **Optimized profiles (updated** services, hours, photos, and reviews) are essential for credibility and attracting new patients.

Paid Media Performance

Paid Search (PPC) ads remain one of the most efficient ways for providers to capture patient interest and convert demand into booked appointments. Campaigns focused on long-tail, specific queries consistently outperform generic service ads, providing hyper-relevance and exact options to patients' needs.

Social Media Trends

Short-form video formats (Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and TikToks) continue to drive the highest patient engagement online. Video content boosts patient engagement by 49%, with 88% preferring it over text.[10]

Audiences also respond best to content that is clear, relatable, and educational, helping them understand conditions or treatments without feeling overwhelmed. Engagement patterns also vary by age: younger audiences tend to favor TikTok and Instagram Reels for lifestyle and wellness tips, while older patients are more likely to engage with educational videos on YouTube or Facebook.

What Works

> Social proof and testimonials build trust quickly.
> Bite-sized educational snippets break complex topics into easy-to-understand pieces.
> Quick, approachable videos help providers connect with patients in a memorable way.

How Social Media Drives Patient Bookings

IMPRESSIONS
(social media reach)

CLICKS
(website visitors)

CONVERSIONS
(inquiries)

BOOKINGS
(scheduled patients)

TRENDS

SHAPING HEALTHCARE & WELLNESS ACROSS THE CAROLINAS

Trend #1

The Decentralization of Healthcare

The Decentralization of Healthcare

The Repricing of Care: From Hospital Systems to Neighborhood Clinics

Patients are moving away from large hospital systems and toward specialized, trusted local clinics that offer convenience and personalization. A 2023 survey found that 51% of patients feel like they get better quality of care from independent practice providers.[11] Practices that build brand authority through educational content and cohesive digital experiences are gaining visibility and patient confidence as they naturally become a more trusted source.

Did you know?

Consumers are increasingly choosing care based on **convenience and value**, with many opting away from traditional providers when cost or access barriers exist (McKinsey, 2024).

Real World Applications Across the Carolinas:

TRYON MEDICAL PARTNERS | Charlotte, NC

After separating from a major health system, Tryon Medical Partners has expanded by emphasizing physician-led care, easier access, and a more personal patient experience. Its growth reflects a broader shift toward independent practices that compete on convenience, continuity, and community trust rather than the scale of large hospital networks.

TOTALITY MEDISPA | Charleston, SC

Totality MediSpa has grown through a membership-based wellness model designed to build long-term relationships instead of one-time visits. By focusing on education, consistency, and preventative engagement, their direction illustrates how recurring-care models are reshaping outpatient and aesthetic services into ongoing wellness partnerships.

Key Marketing Takeaway: Local search visibility, differentiated positioning, and trusted reputation are essential.

Expert insights from Carolina-based healthcare leaders and Crimson Park Digital's marketing partners:

Blair Primis, Chief Growth Officer at OrthoCarolina, emphasizes that "understanding the primary role that access does—and will—play for patients is critical. Not all, but the vast majority of marketing strategy development and prioritization derive from this focal point." Clinics that remove friction between intent and appointment are gaining a measurable advantage, demonstrating that convenience and accessibility itself has become a key differentiator in the patient's decision-making process.

Trend #2

Experience-Led Care: The Patient as Guest

Experience-Led Care

The Patient as Guest

Now more than ever, modern healthcare experiences are borrowing from other sectors such as hospitality and retail. Patients expect seamless digital journeys, clear communication, and personalized care at every touchpoint. Short-form video, social proof, and intuitive scheduling are central to building trust and engagement.
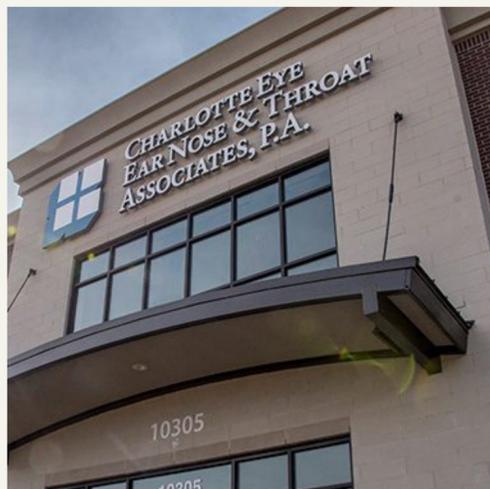
Did you know?

77%

*of patients report that a **strong digital experience** impacts provider choice (Accenture, 2025).*

Real World Applications Across the Carolinas:

ORTHOCAROLINA | Carolinas

Invested in improving patient experience across key digital touchpoints, from website usability to appointment scheduling and patient education. By reducing friction and making information easier to access, the brand reinforces trust and delivers a more seamless experience before, during, and after care.

CHARLOTTE EYE EAR NOSE & THROAT ASSOCIATES, P.A. | Carolinas

The Charlotte Eye Ear Nose & Throat Associates, P.A. website demonstrates how exceptional care extends into the digital space. From the moment patients land on the site, intuitive navigation makes it easy to find key information. Patient resources are front and center, reducing friction and empowering users to take control of their care. The site's clear structure, mobile responsiveness, and easy access to scheduling reflect a UX-driven approach that positions patients as valued guests, setting expectations for convenience, transparency, and personalized engagement before they even step into a clinic.

Key Marketing Takeaway: Brands that invest in UX, access, and conversion-focused design create patient journeys that outperform short-term acquisition tactics.

Expert insights from Carolina-based healthcare leaders and Crimson Park Digital's marketing partners:

Leaders Crimson Park Digital interviewed across large healthcare systems and specialty practices aligned on one priority for 2026: **experience-led marketing**. UX, access, and journey optimization were consistently cited as the investments most likely to drive sustainable growth, outperforming traditional channel expansion or short-term acquisition tactics.

" If healthcare marketing leaders could focus on one improvement in 2026, it should be optimizing for the real patient experience across the entire digital journey. When patient experience is done exceptionally well, AI systems will naturally identify, validate, and amplify those signals. "

— TR WILLIAMS
Chief Product & Delivery Officer, E-dreamz Healthcare Solutions

Trend #3
Preventive Health & Lifestyle Medicine

Preventive Health & Lifestyle Medicine

From Treatment to Optimization

Consumers are increasingly investing in services that help them feel better, function better, and stay ahead of health issues. Interest is growing in hormone therapy, metabolic health, longevity-focused services, and functional medicine as patients look beyond reactive care and toward long-term optimization.

Expert insights from our very own Founder and CEO of Crimson Park Digital

"Preventive and lifestyle-driven care isn't a niche anymore, it's becoming the expectation. Across North and South Carolina, especially among 40+ patients with both the means and motivation to invest in their long-term health, we're seeing a surge in demand for services like hormone therapy and functional medicine. What's changed isn't just the services, it's the mindset. Patients are doing their research, asking better questions, and choosing providers who help them stay ahead, not just react. From a marketing standpoint, that means education is no longer optional, it's the growth engine."

— ALEXA PARKER
Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Crimson Park Digital

Real World Applications Across the Carolinas:

REVIVE WELLNESS | Bluffton, SC

Uses educational content to help patients better understand hormone therapy and preventive care options. By answering common questions and clearly explaining services, the brand creates confidence and drives appointment interest through informed decision-making.

VYVE WELLNESS | Charlotte, NC

Increased visibility by investing in SEO-centric content that aligns with how patients search for functional and lifestyle medicine services. Clear service pages and educational resources support discovery while reinforcing the brand's expertise.

Key Marketing Takeaway: Thought leadership, consistent education, and micro-content strategies are driving patient trust and expanding brand authority in preventive and lifestyle care.

Did you know?

U.S. preventive health market projected to hit **$650B by 2033.**[12]

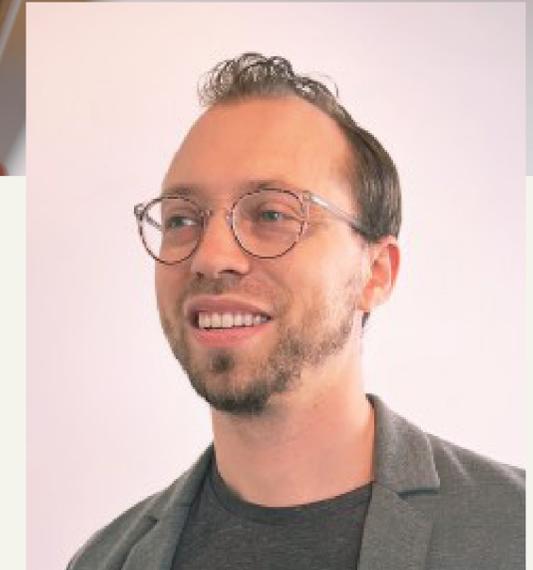*Carolinas' median age (39–42) & affluent relocator population* **fueling demand.**[13]

Trend #4
The Digital
Care Economy

The Digital Care Economy

Telehealth, AI, and the Data-Driven Patient Journey

AI is no longer a new buzzword that causes concern or worry. Patients now expect AI to be a part of their care experience to some degree, used to help coordinate digital ecosystems that include telehealth, scheduling, reminders, and follow-up engagement. The majority of patients search online before booking care, and health-related AI queries are rising quickly within Google's AI Overviews or AI Mode, and platforms such as ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude, and more.

Expert insights from Carolina-based healthcare leaders and Crimson Park Digital's marketing partners:

"AI as a tool is great. But the belief that AI will solve your growth problems, when the real problems are measurement gaps and budget pressure, is misguided. CMOs are under pressure to do more with less, and AI has become the executive-friendly answer to that pressure. The healthcare marketers who are actually making progress are focusing on multi-channel strategies built on a clean data foundation with the capability to track events, resolve identity across touchpoints, and close the loop between ad spend and attended appointments."

— JAMES CORR
Head of Partnerships, Freshpaint

Real World Applications Across the Carolinas:

ATRIUM HEALTH VIRTUAL CARE | Charlotte, NC
Scaled its virtual care offerings, integrating telehealth seamlessly with in-person services. By providing patients with convenient, digital-first access to care, Atrium Health strengthens engagement, improves accessibility, and meets the growing expectation for on-demand healthcare solutions.

BLISS BEAUTY AESTHETICS & WELLNESS | Greenville, SC
Bliss Beauty Aesthetics & Wellness is leveraging AI-driven scheduling and remarketing tools to enhance patient experiences and boost conversions. By automating appointment coordination and strategically following up with prospective patients, the spa is able to deliver personalized service at scale while maintaining strong brand visibility.

Key Marketing Takeaway: Connecting organic visibility to conversion and retention with data, analytics, and technology integration is table stakes.

Did you know?

82% of patients **use search** before booking (Google, 2024).

89% of healthcare keywords now **generate an AI overview,**[14] per December 2025 data.

Trend #5

Brand Trust, Reputation & Content Authority

Brand Trust, Reputation & Content Authority

Digital Credibility in an Era of Algorithmic Search

With Google's growing focus on authority, expertise, and patient experience, providers that produce expert-led, medically accurate content are being rewarded with higher visibility in search. It's no longer enough to simply have a website; patients are looking for credible, trustworthy brands they can rely on, and search engines are mirroring those expectations.

Providers that consistently publish high-quality, educational content, maintain structured service information, and share authentic stories across channels see compounded growth over time. Each blog post, FAQ, or video not only answers patient questions but also strengthens the brand's overall authority, making future content easier to rank and amplifying the reach of existing resources.

Expert insights from Carolina-based healthcare leaders and Crimson Park Digital's marketing partners:

" We should be focusing on the gap between building trust and providing access. We spend so much energy and budget building a reputation through content and stories, but that trust is fragile. If a family finally feels confident enough to reach out and then hits a wall of administrative friction, we have failed them. Solving for this is not just about a business metric. It is about respecting the effort it takes for a person to seek care in the first place. If the transition from the website to the clinic is not seamless and empathetic, all that brand work we did on the front end won't matter. "

— **RACHEL JOHNSON**
Director of Marketing, Acorn Health

Real World Applications Across the Carolinas:

CAROLINA TOTAL WELLNESS | Raleigh, NC

Uses a combination of expert blogs and email nurture campaigns to educate patients and naturally establish digital authority. By consistently providing helpful, evidence-based content, the practice positions itself as a trusted resource and guides patients through the care journey, building long-term engagement and credibility.
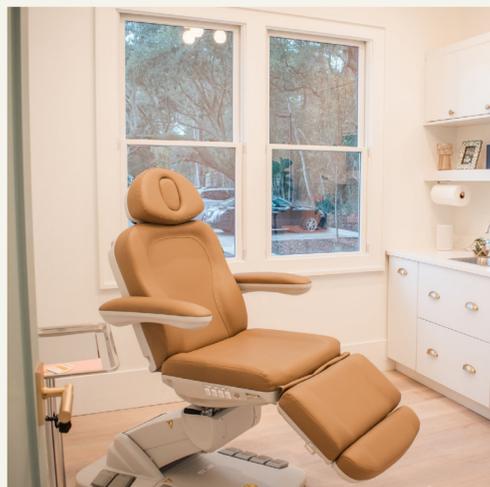
OPAL AESTHETICS | Charleston, SC

Opal Aesthetics' social presence features real before-and-after results, transparent procedure explanations, and practitioner insights that educate and reassure potential patients. By sharing in-depth content across social media, website pages, and patient resources, Opal positions itself as a credible, approachable brand, reinforcing trust while showcasing expertise. This cohesive digital strategy strengthens reputation, encourages engagement, and ensures patients feel informed and confident in choosing their care.

Key Marketing Takeaway: Brands that focus on content ecosystems are building trust at every step of the patient journey. Visibility, engagement, and reputation all reinforce one another, creating a cycle that turns awareness into loyalty.

Did you know?

*A Cornell analysis found health and wellness sites among the **most cited sources** in Google's AI Overviews.*[15]

***Long-form content ranks 2.5x higher** in healthcare SERPs.*[16]

> "Vanity metrics lead to poor decision-making, bad ad optimization, and an inability to communicate marketing's value to other stakeholders. Shifting to ROI or booked appointments is a massive improvement."
>
> — **BRADLEY BLASER**
> CEO of Liine

> "High-performing healthcare marketers are the ones who can connect fragmented patient and provider data into a single, privacy-safe view of the journey, so they know exactly who to reach, where, and when across channels instead of working in silos."
>
> — **LAUREN WHITE**
> Sr. Sales Executive at MiQ

Challenges & Opportunities

STAFFING SHORTAGES
Limited resources across North and South Carolina make it challenging for providers to scale marketing initiatives effectively.

REGULATORY LIMITS
Privacy rules and marketing restrictions can slow outreach and reduce access to patient data for personalization.

FRAGMENTED SYSTEMS
Disconnected platforms and data silos make it harder to track the patient journey and measure campaign performance.

AUTOMATION & AI INSIGHTS
Leveraging AI-driven tools and automation can streamline processes, improve targeting, and enhance patient engagement.

INTEGRATED DATA FLOWS
Connecting systems and platforms creates a single view of the patient journey, unlocking actionable insights.

MULTI-CHANNEL CAMPAIGNS
Coordinating messaging across search, social, email, and content helps meet patients where they are and address their specific needs.

Strategic Next Steps for Healthcare Brands

PARTNER FOR GROWTH
Work with an <u>expert digital marketing agency</u> for strategy, execution, and measurable results.

BOOST SEARCH VISIBILITY
Strengthen SEO and optimize Google Business Profiles to get found by the right patients.

TELL YOUR UNIQUE STORY
Invest in social storytelling and short-form video to educate, engage, and inspire.

BUILD AUTHORITY
Create expert content that answers real patient questions and establishes trust.

SMARTER PATIENT JOURNEYS
Use AI tools to personalize scheduling, follow-ups, and patient engagement.

About Crimson Park Digital

Crimson Park Digital is a boutique digital marketing agency based in Charlotte and Charleston, serving healthcare and service providers from the Blue Ridge to the Lowcountry and beyond. We help our client partners grow their visibility, engage patients, and build lasting brand authority by combining strategy, creative content, and data-driven media to connect providers with the right audiences at every stage of the patient journey.

👑 **CHARLOTTE, NC**

〰️ **CHARLESTON, SC**

We help our client partners grow their visibility, engage patients, and build lasting brand authority.

Thank you!

This report was compiled using internal CPD data, proprietary campaign benchmarks, and regional search behavior trends. External sources include industry reports, tool data, and partner insights.

REGIONAL PARTNERS

A special thank you to our partners and contributors across the Carolinas, **E-dreamz, MiQ, Freshpaint, Liine, OrthoCarolina, and Acorn Health**, for sharing the insights and data that helped shape this report. Your collaboration ensures this resource reflects real-world trends and delivers practical, actionable strategies for healthcare organizations navigating today's evolving landscape.

Sources

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