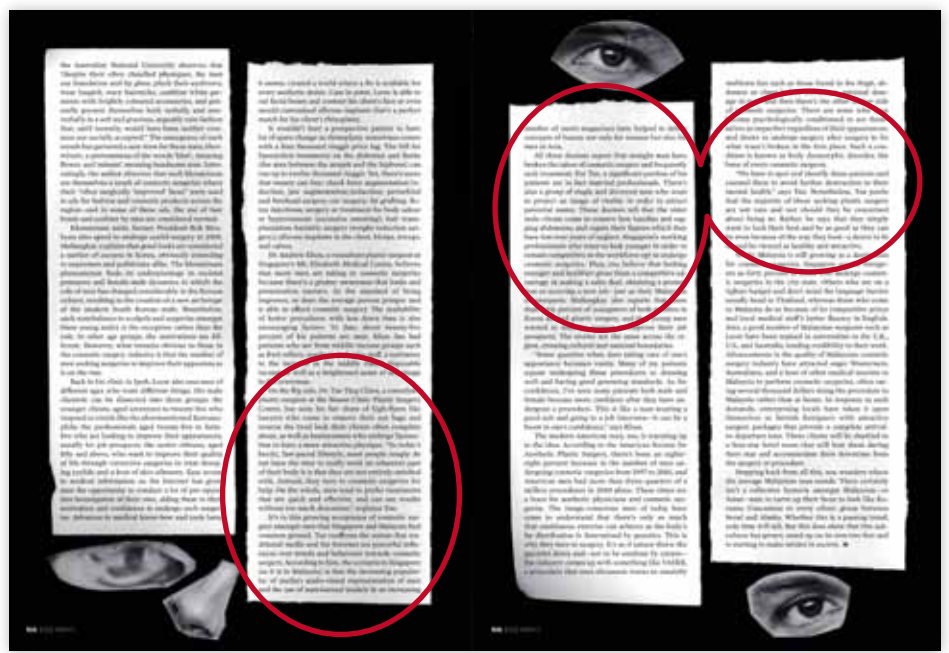




On the flip side, Dr. Tan Ying Chien, a consultant plastic surgeon at the Sloane Clinic Plastic Surgery Centre, has seen his fair share of high-flyers like lawyers who come to remove their eye bags and reverse the tired look their clients often complain about, as well as businessmen who undergo liposuction to have a more attractive physique. "In today's hectic, fast-paced lifestyle, most people simply do not have the time to really work on whatever part of their body it is that they are not entirely satisfied with. Instead, they turn to cosmetic surgeries for help. On the whole, men tend to prefer treatments that are quick and effective, and can see results without too much downtime," explains Tan.

It's in this growing acceptance of cosmetic surgery amongst men that Singapore and Malaysia find common ground. Tan reaffirms the notion that traditional media and the Internet are powerful influences over trends and behaviour towards cosmetic surgery. According to him, the scenario in Singapore (as it is in Malaysia) is that the increasing popularity of media's audio-visual representation of men and the use of metrosexual models in an increasing number of men's magazines have helped to define concepts of beauty not only for women but also for men in Asia.

All three doctors report that straight men have broken the taboo of cosmetic surgery and frequently seek treatment. For Tan, a significant portion of his patients are in fact married professionals. There's also a group of single and divorced men who want to project an image of vitality in order to attract potential mates. These doctors tell that the older male clients come to remove love handles and sagging abdomens, and regain their figures which they have lost over years of neglect. Singapore's working professionals who want to look younger in order to remain competitive in the workforce opt to undergo cosmetic surgeries. They, too, believe that looking younger and healthier gives them a competitive advantage in making a sales deal, obtaining a promotion or securing a new job—just as their Malaysian counterparts.



There are some who have become psychologically conditioned to see themselves as imperfect regardless of their appearances, and desire to undergo surgery after surgery to fix what wasn't broken in the first place. Such a condition is known as body dysmorphic disorder, the bane of every cosmetic surgeon.

"We have to spot and identify these patients and counsel them to avoid further destruction to their mental health," says Tan. Nonetheless, Tan posits that the majority of those seeking plastic surgery are not vain and nor should they be concerned about being so. Rather, he says that they simply want to look their best and be as good as they can be even because of the way they look—a desire to fit in, and be viewed as healthy and attractive.