



Contemporary Marketing Tools Used from Bulgarian Private Dentists

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of different marketing tools among dentists for the development of private dental practices.

Material and methods A phone call survey was conducted. The survey consisted of questions related to the use of different marketing tools used by dentists for the development of their practices.

Results The most used contemporary marketing tools from Bulgarian dentist are the presence of web site (24.3%) and social media advertisement (21.57%). The less used tools are media advertisement (0.68%) and the use of flyers (1.36%).

Conclusion Dentists are not well acquainted with the contemporary marketing tools. The internal marketing is most secure tool for attracting new patients. Internet technology gives opportunity for additional form of rapid communication and advertisement on a moderate price.

Keywords: Marketing, Internet, media, management, dentistry, communication

INTRODUCTION

The marketing is common use in services and manufacture. It is interesting to what extend marketing is used by the dentists. Years ago most of the dentists rely on the note in front of their office. The development of new technologies changed the situation. Most of the authors recommend the internal marketing strategy is the most effective tool to attract new patients. "Mouth to mouth" is costless and effective marketing tool. Despite the clinical dental medicine marketing is not clearly defined procedure.

The use of new technologies gives the opportunity of effective and extremely fast communication between the dentists and the patients. In the current study our aim is to determine the use of new marketing tools for the development of private dental practices in Bulgaria.

According to Levin^{7, 8} A clear formula which connects the increased profit with advertisement expenses does not exist. Internet technology has become very popular since its first launch. Social media, Internet and e-mail are defined as a low budget marketing tools.

Henry et al.⁴ conducted a survey among dental practices in USA to determine to what extent they use social media for advertisement. Forty five percent of all participants used social media, mainly Facebook for communication and advertisement. Dentists younger than forty five years old were more active.

According to Henry et al⁴. the use of social media will be necessary to practices for the future. Social media use will grow and how it used will continue to diversify to communication with current patients and scheduling appointments. The authors stated

GJMEDPH 2014; Vol. 3, issue 5

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Conflict of Interest—none

Funding—none



that future studies should examine how success with social media can be determined so that its use may be modified to allow it to be an effective tool in the dental field.

Garven³ stresses on the power of social media as a new communication form. He underlines the opportunity for immediate communication with the patients. According to him the dentist needs a very little effort.

Kim et al.⁶ found that main communication channels for advertisement of university dental practices are internal marketing through relatives and friends and website development.

According to McLeod¹⁰ good explanation of practice location and key words are the most important for successful website.

Nichols and Hassall¹¹ stated that the content of the websites should be regulated.

For marketing the dental practice might have used expensive advertisements in radio, TV and billboards. According to Levin⁹ in most of the cases this advertising is not effective financially.

Schiff¹⁴ advises dentists to use digital technologies, digital images and patient education software.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Contemporary technologies allow different tools for the development of dental practices. The goal was to determine to what extent dentists involve marketing tools for creating large patient base. A questionnaire was developed including the following aspects: percentage of new patients per month and different marketing tools. One open-ended question was included (Table 1). A survey was completed by phone calls. Geographic distribution included responses from different regions in Bulgaria.

Table 1 Questionnaire

Type of marketing tools
The percentage of new patients for your practice
The presence of website
The use of flyers
Media advertisement
E-mails advertisement
Social media advertisement
Other methods

Geographic distribution included responses from different regions in Bulgaria. We also include the question related to the age group of the dentists (Table 2):

Table 2 Age and number distribution

Under 35 years old	n= 86 (29.45%)
Between 36 – 55 years old	n= 107 (36.64%)
Over 56 years old.	n=99 (33.91%)

Four hundred and forty two dentists received a phone call with our questionnaire. Two hundred and ninety two respondents (n=292) answered the following answers (Table 3).

Table 3 Results of the survey

Type of marketing tools	Percentage
The percentage of new patients for your practice.	14%
The presence of website	24.3%
The use of flyers	1.36%
Media advertisement	0.68%
E-mails advertisement	0%
Social media advertisement	21.57%
Other methods	0.68%

RESULTS



Attracting new patients in dental practice is crucial for achieving better financial outcomes. The percentage of new patients according our questionnaire is relatively low compared to other European countries.

Comparatively low is the percentage of dentists who use social media for advertisement and communication with patients. Younger dentists tend to use more often social media than the groups with older dentists. This marketing tool does not require high price and it is not time consuming but provides very fast communication with patients. Comparatively low is the percentage of the dental practices with websites. This marketing tool is effective but requires higher investment and better preparation.

Conventional media and flyers almost do not present as a tools to advertize dental practices. One of the reasons is the high price and on the other hand their uncertain effectiveness.

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CONCLUSION

Technology is spreading widely in dental field. Most of the dental practices used Internet. Not surprisingly most practices using the internet have websites, but almost half of responding practices are using social media.

Younger dentists were more apt to use social media than their older colleagues and therefore it may be inferred that social media use will continue to increase as older dentists retire and their younger colleagues purchase practices. As more practices are using social media to attract the new generation of dental patients it will force more practices to use the modality to stay competitive.

Dentists are not well acquainted with the contemporary marketing tools. The internal marketing is most secure tool for attracting new patients. Internet technology gives opportunity for additional forms of rapid communication and advertisement on a moderate budget.



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