Volume : 3 | Issue : 11 | November 2014 • ISSN No 2277 - 8179

Research Paper

Contemporary Marketing Tools Used from Bulgarian Private Dentists

Dental Science

KEYWORDS : marketing, internet, media, management, dentistry, communication

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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.

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.

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] do not exist clear formula which connects the increased profit with advertisement expenses. Internet technology become very popular after its first launch. Social media, Internet and e-mail are defined as a low budget marketing tool.

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

According to Henry et al [4] 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 appointment. The authors stated 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.

Garven [3] 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 at 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 McLeod [10] good explanation of practice location and key words are the most important for successful website.

Nichols and Hassall [11] stated that the content of the websites should be regulated.

For presenting the dental practice might be used expensive advertisements in radio, TV and billboards. According to Levin [9] in most of the cases this advertizing is not effective financially.

Schiff [14] advises dentists to use digital technologies, digital images and patient education software.

Material and methods

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

Table 1. Questionnaire
The percentage of new patients for your practice.
The presence of website
The use of flayers
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)

Volume : 3 | Issue : 11 | November 2014 • ISSN No 2277 - 8179

Results

Four hundred and forty two dentists reseived a phone call with our questionairie. Two hundred and ninty 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 flayers	1.36%
Media advertisement	0.68
E-mails advertisement	0
Social media advertisement	21.57%
Other methods	0.68

Attracting new patients in dental practice is crucial for achieving better financial outcomes. The percentage of new patients according our questionaire 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 do 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 which have website. This marketing tool is effective but require 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.

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 is 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 form of rapid communication and advertisement on a moderate price.

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