

Efficiency of Digital Marketing & Medical Health Care Tourism: Double Ended Swords: Original Research

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Abstract

Background: To become a successful practitioner, dental professionals need to understand the theory and practice of marketing strategies. Social media has a lot of potential for marketing dental services in a cost-effective manner to influence the modern dental practice. The purpose of this paper is to study the influence of dental service marketing and the use of social media marketing within the field of dentistry. **Materials and method:** A probability sampling was done to select three different dental clinics among five major cities across the India where one clinic promoted digital marketing and other two had conventional marketing policy. After selecting the dental clinics a cross sectional study was conducted to assess the relationship between patients outcome in digital and non-digital marketing based clinic. Clinics were then evaluated and compared on the basis of outcome of the patients for six months. One way anova is done to compare patients inflow of three clinics with post hoc Turkish test to evaluate the result. **Result:** One way anova showed highest patient frequency of patients with the clinic having digital marketing. Clinically significant value came for clinic 1 proving that digital marketing does affect the outcome of the patient in clinics. It was concluded that digital marketing has shown to be of great importance in the dental services market in comparison with conventional advertisement strategies.

Keywords: Efficiency, practitioner, influence.

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing matters more than ever before. It has been pointed out that there is a drop in the percentage of patients visiting a dentist. This resulted in practices becoming in excess capacity. Therefore, marketing strategies can be utilized for bringing in new patients and it became common in almost all types of dental practices. Therefore, dental marketing is an essential and important for the opening or buying dental practices [1].

The economists recognized demand and supply sides as two important elements in the provision of oral health-care services. Demand side encompasses several elements such as patients and patient demographics, financing of care, the need for dental care, and the economic ability to purchase the care, etc. On the other hand, supply side includes dentists and dentist demographics, office and treatment hours, and practice

staffing. The marketing of dental services is somewhat different compared to the other health-care marketing [2]. It has been nearly a quarter century since commercial use of the Internet and the World Wide Web began. During this time the business landscape has changed at frenetic pace. Large multinational corporations such as Google, Facebook, Amazon, Alibaba, eBay and Uber, unheard of twenty years ago, have emerged as key players in our modern economy. Moreover digital technologies and devices such as smart phones, smart products, the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, and deep learning all promise significant transformations of consumers' lives in the near future. Objective of this study is to find whether digital marketing influences the patients outcome at dental clinic.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Two categories of dental clinics were selected where one is mostly based on digital marketing and other clinic based on conventional marketing.

Selection criteria for conventional marketing were strictly based on:

- Dental clinician shouldn't have any active profile of social networking sites.
- Dental clinic should not have any websites.
- There should not be any promotion or advertisement of dental clinician or dental clinic on web media.
- Dental clinician who doesn't avail email facilities for giving appointment to his patient.

Whereas on other side one clinic from five major cities of India were selected who were dependent of digital or multimedia marketing.

Whereas appointment through text messages, voicemail, phone calls were considered under conventional method only which can bring variability to our result. The patients can receive information about new items the clinic has to offer, prices, discounts, validate appointments or get information.

Study was conducted in Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Pune and Hyderabad over a period of six months. Three clinics were selected from all the above mentioned cities in which two were dependent conventional and one was on digital marketing.

After data collection one way anova with post-hoc Turkish test was conducted to compare three groups.

RESULT

After six months of data collection from all three clinics a total of 3804 patients reported to clinic 1(digitally marketed), 3118 and 3242 patients reported to clinic 2 and 3 respectively from Jaipur, Ahemdaban, Nagpur, Pune and Hyderabad.

Clinic 1 which was digitally marketed took lead in all five cities in no. of patients inflow. Post hoc one way anova showed significant result in favour of patients inflow for digital marketing. Number of patients was high in clinic 1 comparing to those with clinic 2 and 3. Clinical significant values for each of the clinic in five cities is charted below showing how clinic 2 and 3 lags behind attracting new cases due to its conventional methods of advertising.

Table-1: Statistical analysis of whole data for 5 cities

City	Season	Mean OPD freq		p-value	Post-hoc
		Mean	SD		
Jaipur	Clinic1	91.83	3.92	<0.001	C1>(c2=c3)
	Clinic 2	72.33	5.65		
	Clinic 3	71.00	2.90		
Ahmedabad	Clinic1	113.17	19.09	0.047	C11 > cl3
	Clinic 2	92.83	13.35		
	Clinic 3	92.67	11.45		
Nagpur	Clinic1	139.00	4.38	0.001	C1>(c2=c3)
	Clinic 2	116.33	13.13		
	Clinic 3	112.83	12.48		
Pune	Clinic1	136.17	7.83	0.002	C1>(c2=c3)
	Clinic 2	113.00	13.10		
	Clinic 3	114.17	9.75		
Hyderabad	Clinic1	153.33	10.11	0.002	C11 > cl2
	Clinic 2	126.50	14.28		
	Clinic 3	148.33	21.31		

One Way ANOVA with post hoc Tukeys test

Percentage wise distribution of patients for three clinics in all five cities is shown in Fig 1-5.

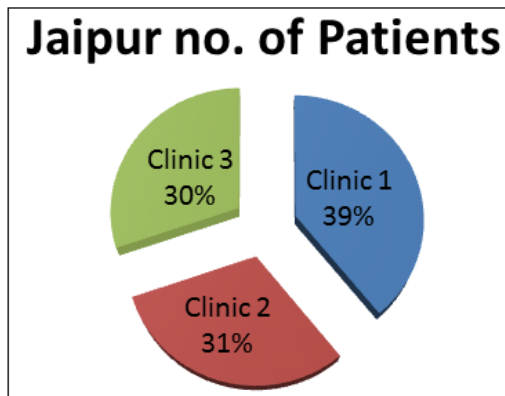


Fig-1:

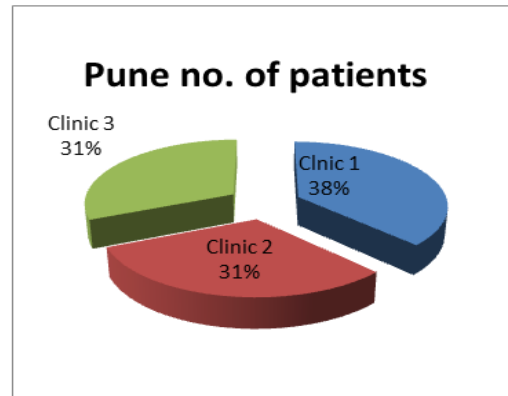


Fig-4:

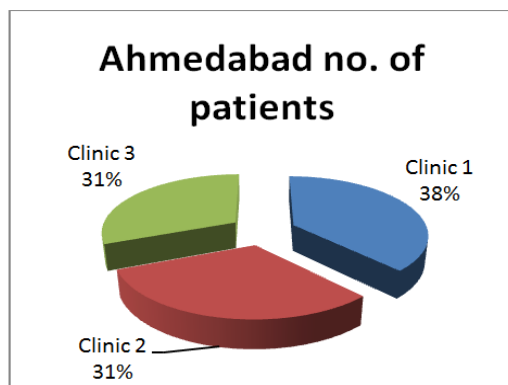


Fig-2:

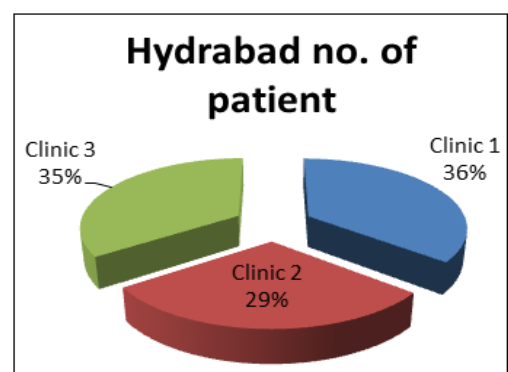


Fig-5:

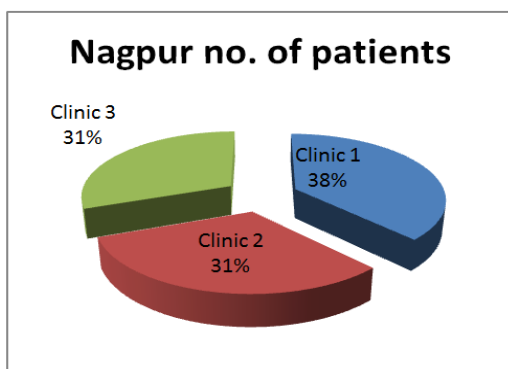


Fig-3:

DISCUSSION

Dental service takes the most important role in a clinic marketing strategy because this is the direct thing can meet the client's need and effect client's relationship. A poor-designed service cannot bring any meaningful value to the client. Poor service keeps damaging clinic's value [3]. The present scenario demands not only dental service but a good digital advertisement to introduce the clinic to a global level.

The authors Paim *et al.*, [4] and Paranhos *et al.*, [5] agreed that marketing is a set of studies, strategies and practices that launch a product or service to the public, according to the analysis of their needs,

seeking to maintain its success in the market, thus constituting the success of the company.

Our result shows that there is a galvanization of patients towards in clinic 1 which was digitally packetized. India is a fast growing economy where digital marketing coming into play recently. Most of the dental clinics adapting to this present scenario but still it's going to take bit of time to catch international market. That is the reason clinic 2 and 3 which was conventionally advertised is also not far behind but it lacked patients inflow. A downside regarding the use of digital marketing campaigns is that the absence of face-to-face contact limits the ability to persuade a potential patient to try-out the services offered by the dental clinics [6].

In trending digital marketing according to Rollsz *et al.*, [7], the network that dominates the largest number of users in the world is Facebook, followed by Whatsapp, however, Lima *et al.*, [8] stated that many market sectors, including dentists, are increasingly using Facebook and Instagram as useful marketing tools. The use of social media as a means to facilitate communication between dentists and their patients has been somewhat limited [9]. Social media, however, may offer critical opportunities for dentists to facilitate patient-dentist relationship outside the surgery [10].

Social media provides opportunities to tackle some issues such as after-clinic care and dental anxiety. Dental anxiety, an enduring challenge in dentistry, often causes sleeplessness, reluctance to form close interpersonal relationships and problems in workplaces [11-13]. It acts as a barrier for patients to actively seek necessary dental treatments [14].

Unfortunately, despite advances in technology, the prevalence of dental phobias has not been changed in the last twenty years [15]. Coping with it requires professional help, especially before clinic visits. Social media may allow dental professionals to deliver the help outside a dental practice environment. Notably, some features of social media such as gamification [16, 17] and engaging website design [18] may be particularly relevant to address and inform patients about critical health-related issues and educate them, which can also help increase their trust and appreciate the level of service received [19-21].

Nearly, three-fourth of the studies supported the utilization of social media in healthcare for communication [22]. Recent data have shown that social media has influenced the medical field too by connecting and communicating between practitioners and patients [23-28]. Social media is used in orthodontic practice to communicate with the patients, establish reputes, and attract new patients [29]. In addition, YouTube is playing an important role by displaying variety of content ranging from education to clinical case presentations and in opinion forming process [30].

Currently, dental services are advertised through the social media marketing which is comparatively cost-effective and more efficient. Sites like Twitter used to collect positive and negative perceptions regarding braces [31]. Since many people spend time on the Internet, social media is the main source for the promotion of services [32]. Facebook is considered as the top social marketing source followed by Twitter. Once the consumers become fan of a product or service, they are likely to purchase the product or service [33]. Hence, social media marketing becomes the most preferred way to market dental services.

Over the last few years, social marketing has taken over compared to the traditional marketing strategies. Markham et al. have shown the use of social media to share clinical and other information with practicing colleagues [23].

In addition, social media can also be utilized for evaluating one's reputation. One of the critical elements while selecting the orthodontist is the good reputation apart from the cost and recommendation [34]. Patient satisfaction surveys can be utilized to rate the service provider. However, such satisfaction tools will fail to obtain the minor details. On the contrary, social media platforms will provide patient's critical details and real patient experiences. Both positive and negative experiences can be shared through the social media tools [35]. Social media provides many opportunities for the health-care professionals ranging from the facilitation of communication between colleagues, chance to take part in professional development activities, advertise expertise, and services. It also helps to start collaborative research and development projects between colleagues. It also provides an opportunity for virtual hands-on teaching and training courses. If social media is used in proper way, it is a strong tool to improve the quality of health care [36].

CONCLUSION

The results of the study demonstrated the need for digital methods of promoting medical care services in order to expand a business. A strategic way of thinking in this case implies attracting new patients and offering them quality health care services, which ensures their satisfaction and the probability for them to recommend the health facility further. This study revealed an important role of social networking sites in promoting. This high response was probably responsible due to the targeted promoting services.

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