

DENTAL MARKETING: BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS

Assist. Oprea-Valentin Busu Ph. D
University of Craiova
Teaching Staff Training Department, Craiova,
Romania
Ph. D. Student Cristina-Elena Andrei
University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Craiova
Faculty of Dental Medicine
Craiova, Romania
Student Mihai-Narcis Popescu
University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Craiova
Faculty of Dental Medicine
Craiova, Romania

Abstract: Compared to other medical sectors, dentistry occupies a leading place in promoting the services it offers. Thus, over time there have appeared numerous marketing companies specialized in this area, which propose various strategies aimed at attracting both individuals with good oral health for periodic checks and long-term health maintenance, as well as individuals in urgent need. oral rehabilitation. However, it should not be overlooked that dentistry tends to become a type of commercial medicine that often promotes aesthetic and not functional treatments. This aspect is due to the high demand for dental-facial cosmetic services, including: teeth whitening, lip augmentation, cheekbones lifting, dental facet application. The causes that have led to the increase of the requests for this type of interventions are represented by the aggressive promotion by the media sometimes of public personalities who have resorted to these interventions. Therefore, dental marketing should be applied correctly in order to increase the quality of life of the individual by ensuring good oral cavity health, with certain limitations that prevent the danger of dental functionality in the aesthetic effect. Our study aims to highlight the correct techniques for promoting a dental clinic, but also to bring to the fore the news in the field of dental medicine that contributes to the increase of the profit.

JEL classification: I0, I2, M19

Key words: dental marketing; dental management; dental volunteering; medical technology development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Every business needs a good marketing strategy in order to make the desired profit. Owning a dental clinic requires a complex approach, because it has a separate component in terms of human and material and financial resources, namely: the patient. All the services that they distribute on the medical market are focused on the patient in order to obtain the best results in order to restore or improve the oral health (Popescu, 2013, p. 7).

In the past, most dental practitioners could not admit that the dental medical sector is a business, but they strictly limited the entire activity to applying the necessary treatment without embracing the idea of promoting services. Currently dentistry presents another vision, namely the adoption of marketing strategies aimed at increasing the profit of the clinic and improving the working techniques and protocols for the distribution of efficient and minimally invasive treatments. Once the doctor understands that the dental unit represents a profitable business, he will begin to make a series of investments both in the human competence represented by the health and auxiliary personnel, as well as in the latest equipment and materials. This will result in changes that will add value to the dental practice for both patients and the physician:

- Use of technologies that shorten the treatment time and increase its efficiency;
- Efficient communication with the patient and staff;
- Investing in marketing strategies for a professional promotion of the clinic;
- Increasing the credibility of the dental unit;
- Establishing clear long-term goals;
- Increasing the number of medical services offered;
- Promoting services online;
- Implementation of training rules for the staff employed on attracting patients;
- Establishing the target groups that require the treatments available to the clinic;
- Establishing a quality / price ratio (Puiu, 2008, p. 71; 282).

2. OBJECTIVES

Our objective is to highlight the need to implement effective marketing strategies in the medical field. At present, any dental clinic is considered a business, which requires optimum promotion of the services available on the consumer market. The promotion must be done in a professional manner, without compromising the quality of the medical act.

3. METHODOLOGY

The article is based on the meta-analytical method that highlights the complexity of the marketing activity within a clinic with a specific dentistry. The field of dental medicine requires an approach from the point of view of interdisciplinarity, and the marketing process is included in this sphere, being a fundamental instrument in order to obtain an optimum profit and to provide medical services corresponding to quality standards.

4. THE DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP AND THE LEADER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP

4.1 FUNDAMENTAL PRICIPLES

Like any other bussnies, the administration of a dental clinic is guided by several principles well established and understood by all the staff employed in order to keep patients loyal:

1. Communication - plays a key role, being among the most important aspects of ensuring quality management. Dialogue is indispensable in strengthening an effective doctor-patient relationship, as well as the leader-employee relationship. Therefore, the communication process must be an assertive one by clearly and objectively transmitting information without giving rise to misinterpretations that can lead to loss of patient confidence, but also to the establishment of an inadequate diagnosis or treatment plan. Through communication, the patient's expectations regarding the treatment to be applied, but also his dissatisfaction with the previous dental treatments (Paul du Toit, 2012, p. 145) can be established. Another important issue is organizational ethics. Within a dental medicine practice, it is compulsory to respect ethical principles such as:

- ensuring the patient's freedom regarding the treatment method he wishes and obtaining the informed consent after performing a thorough history that reveals the current state of health, but also the personal or hereditary-collateral medical history that may compromise the dental medical act;

- providing dental services without discriminating (racial, regular, etc.);

- the medical treatment only after all the information regarding the benefits and the risks have been provided; the accuracy of the information provided (Mureşan, 2010, p. 33);

- the doctor should not pressure the patient consent to a certain type of treatment; absence of coercion (Meghisan, 2007, p. 167);

- allowing the patient to obtain a second opinion if he is not fully convinced (Nanu,);

- the non-disclosure of the patient's confidential data (Preda, 2006, p. 48-49);

2. Empathy - in the medical sector, empathy is vital.

Empathy is an individual's ability to transpose into another person's skin and to understand what he or she feels. Thus, if a doctor shows empathy, he or she will be able to understand certain patient biases correctly and not force certain decisions that may not be to their liking. However, it should be emphasized that empathy does not mean giving up one's opinion, but it does mean the ability of the physician to understand the patient's expectations and to try to implement them (Corcos, 2008, pp. 66-67).

3. Ensuring an adequate climate of the dental clinic

Ensuring an adequate working environment is not achieved spontaneously, but requires time and attention. An appropriate environment results in increasing the confidence in the employees' own strengths, but also in gaining the confidence of the patients in relation to the medical services provided. The desire of the medical staff to promote their services is perceived favorably by the client. However, the promotion must be done in a professional way, without leaving the impression that the range of medical services tends to become a pure commercial element.

4. Presentation of the benefits and risks of the provided dental services As in any other commercial activity it is advisable to start with the benefits. The patient has the right to be informed about the treatment procedures exposed by the doctor. Often, a dental practice has a significant number of products as it is absolutely necessary to present their composition, as well as indications and contraindications, because certain patients may have allergies or intolerance to certain elements of their composition (Corcos, 2008) .

Very important in the doctor-patient relationship are the following:

- understanding that each patient is a complex and different individual who can adopt a certain attitude towards the dental activity depending on the external influences or their own experiences in the past;
- making a thorough history in order to find out as much information about the patient;
- carefully analyzing the patient's personality to know how we set out the treatment plan and approach the therapeutic medical act to achieve success;
- we ask at regular intervals the patient's opinion regarding the applied medical procedures, but also about the evolution of the symptomatology (Dugdale, 2014, p. 111).

The Internet - a way to promote dental services

In today's society you can see the transmission of information extremely fast, sometimes registering a data explosion that tends to confuse the users. The transmission of information in a short time and to a large number of people in a community could be possible through the Internet.

The web address of a dental clinic must fulfill a number of items in order to be perceived as useful and attractive:

- Simplistic design - this concept is ideal for medical websites, because it is important to facilitate the easy finding of the desired information in a short time, without being loaded with ads that have no correlation with the respective domain. Another mandatory requirement nowadays is that the clinic site is adapted for mobile phones.

- The section about us- includes the presentation of the medical team and of the auxiliary staff, which can make possible a familiarization of the patient with the medical staff with whom he will come in contact. This field is particularly important for new patients. It is compulsory for the displayed data and pictures to be real and to convey a positive, reliable attitude.

- The medical cases section - in this section, we must carefully choose the cases we want to expose in order not to have a negative or traumatic psychological impact on the patient. Also, in order to publish the pictures taken before and after the treatment, it is mandatory to obtain the informed consent of the patient.

- The Blog section - is a section in which articles are posted on different topics related to the dental sphere and can be helpful to patients for a better understanding of the causes of the disease or treatments. Also in this section, articles promoting medical news can be uploaded (Sutherland, 2008, pp. 290-292).

4.2 Types of dental marketing strategies

Social media - the Facebook or Instagram page of the clinic should not be seen solely from the perspective of promoting offers of different dental interventions. These should be a means of facilitating distance communication with the patient, educating the patient through articles and tips posted, while also managing to play a role in attracting other patients.

Online reviews - this topic has a great impact on future patients. A potential future patient of the clinic will certainly access the "review" section to be able to outline an image of the activity of the cabinet and its staff. This "virtual" reputation can be an important dental marketing tool that can result in an increase in the number of patients.

Campaigns - they must be diversified: from traditional holiday messages to newsletters. The messages sent during the holidays have a favorable impact, as patients

appreciate the interest they are given, and it is also a way to remind patients of the importance of visits to the office. Also, messages sent every 6 months can be used to remind you about the importance of presenting at regular check-ups.

Newsletter: Provides constant patient information, generally monthly, about the new dental treatments that have appeared or various dental care products.

Blog - Frequently the existence of a blog that includes articles aimed at health tends to increase the confidence of patients. Through a blog, the dental clinic offers the patient the opportunity to be informed and to keep up with the new technologies and treatments that appear on the market. In the case of a potential patient, the blog can have a major influence in presenting it in the dental office. Offers - these are designed to get new patients. The offers have a diverse range, the most commonly used discount vouchers for holidays or at certain times of the year (for example: in the summer season vouchers are granted for dental whitening treatments or lip / wrinkle augmentation knowing that this season it is intended for vacations, and most individuals tend to attach greater importance to physical appearance). Family discount packages can also be used.

4.3 Technology in the dental health sphere

The impact of technology in the dental health sphere:

-convinces patients that medical technology can lead to improved health, being an instrument that streamlines the treatment modality and shortens the recovery period (Schneider, 2005, p. 45);

-technology has the ability to constantly supply the latest equipment on the market, but also dental materials meant to improve the aesthetics and functionality of the tooth;

- the use of telemedicine brings a great contribution to patients in an inaccessible area that cannot reach a medical unit, representing a constructive element of emergency management;

The disadvantages of technology in the doctor-patient relationship

- A "dehumanization" can be take place, as more emphasis is placed on the technological component, the direct contact being minimized;

- It may lead to the establishment of a sedentary state that is harmful to the whole body;

- Degradation of inter-human relations due to insufficient and inefficient dialogue;

- Establishing an incorrect diagnosis or treatment plan;

- Real medicine can never be replaced by virtual medicine;

- Inability to filter the medical information found on various websites correctly;

- Often the Internet and the media encourage self-medication, which is why Romania was in the first place in Europe when consuming medicines, especially antibiotics and anti-inflammatories;

- The tendency of many individuals to diagnose and administer treatment according to information found on the Internet, without consulting a specialist doctor in the field can have a harmful effect on the body.

4.4 The reasons for the lack of success in promoting dental interventions

We can see that recently the dental implant is being excessively promoted. However, this medical procedure did not get a demand as great as the dental practitioners expected. The demand for dental treatments varies depending on the patient's motivation, stage (emergency or not), but also financial resources. Among the top treatments required were those for periodontal disease and those for children, as well as facets or dental crowns. The reason is this: in the case of periodontal disease there is an intense motivation, because the patient is aware that the mobility of the teeth leads rapidly to their loss. In the case of facets and dental crowns, the motivation is often aesthetically and to a lesser extent functional. Pedodontia is a branch of dentistry that deals with treatments for children. These require a multidisciplinary approach and a good knowledge of the child's psychology.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Dental marketing is an efficient tool in promoting medical services and increasing the number of patients, but its use must be within certain limits. The purpose of these limits is to prevent the transformation of the medical activity into a purely commercial activity. Therefore, in the current dental field, the marketing process is indispensable, as it is responsible for ensuring optimum profit. Another reference element in dental marketing is the fact that the entire activity carried out must be focused on the patient in order to obtain a successful treatment.

REFERENCES

1. Corcos, M. Tehnici de vânzare eficiente: Planul de vânzare; Principii și condiții esențiale, Iași: Polirom Publishing, 2008.
2. Dugdale, K. Cum să vinzi inteligent: strategii de viitor pentru clienți mereu mulțumiți, București: Curtea Veche Publishing, 2014.
3. Meghisan, F. Strategii concurențiale de marketing, Craiova: Universitaria Publishing, 2007.
4. Mureșan, L. Etică și responsabilitate socială în marketing: aspecte economice și juridice, București: C.H. Beck Publishing, 2010.
5. Popescu, M. Reabilitare orală, Craiova: SITECH Publishing, 2013.
6. Preda, M. Comportament organizațional, Iași: Polirom Publishing, 2006.
7. Puiu, C. Elemente de marketing, Craiova: Aius Publishing, 2008.
8. Schneider, D.J.G. Marketingul tehnologiilor, București: Economica Publishing, 2005.
9. Sutherland, M., Sylvester, A.K. De la publicitate la consumator: ce “merge”, ce nu “merge” și mai ales de ce, Iași: Polirom Publishing, 2008.
10. Toit, Paul du Secretul prezentărilor de succes, București: Curtea Veche Publishing, 2012.
11. <https://www.marketdent.ro/articole/marketing-clinica-stomatologica/promovarea-implantului-dentar-nu-a-dat-rezultate-uite-de-ce> (accessed on 06.01.2020)