

Comparison of digital marketing efficiency of different online platforms for promoting orthodontic practice.

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Abstract

Marketing plays a crucial role in flourishing of an orthodontic practice. In an era of digital marketing, the orthodontist must upgrade his/her marketing skills to increase in flow of the patients, spread awareness about orthodontic treatment and make his /her practice renowned not just locally but globally. The digital world is dominated by Google, video sharing website like YouTube and two most popular social media among all age groups, Instagram and Facebook. Our study aimed at

comparing the digital marketing efficiency of different online platforms for promoting orthodontic practice. An online survey containing questions about the advertisement efficiency of these digital platforms pertaining braces and orthodontic treatment was evaluated. Our results suggested that, Google and YouTube are two most efficient web platforms for promoting orthodontic practice. YouTube and Instagram were chosen as the best platforms for showing attractive

advertisements about braces. Facebook was the least chosen option.

Keywords: Digital marketing, Google, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook

Introduction

Internet use is increasing worldwide every day, in fact over 840 million people in India are active users of internet. Marketing is and always has been about reaching customers, where they are. Reaching an ideal audience is easier with internet marketing than traditional “word of mouth” advertising.

Compared with traditional advertising, social media marketing is an interactive, cost-effective, and more efficient solution for promoting services and products, especially because more customers are spending time online.¹

Digital marketing is not limited to the world of business, as there are increasing number of dentists who use internet and social media to promote and to communicate with their patients. The field of orthodontics is no exception. Now a days information about orthodontic services and procedures is just a click away.

Google which is a search engine, allows orthodontists to create their individual website in which they can extensively market their practice. A well designed, engaging, and easy to navigate search engine optimized website is the number one priority. If a potential patient searches for someone with a particular skill set and range of services on Google, a well- optimized website will stand out amongst competitors².

According to a healthcare survey, every orthodontic patient seeks help on the internet these days before scheduling an appointment mainly for two reasons: Firstly, to find orthodontists in their local area and secondly, to determine which would be the right clinic to

meet their needs. These consumer habits benefit orthodontists with a good online presence and who deliver their internet marketing message in an impressive style on the web².

Social media marketing is the newest form of marketing. It has various definitions, the simplest one being— “content of the people, for the people, put up by the people”.

A more authentic explanation would be to say— social media refers to interaction among people in which they create, share and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks³.

The most extensively used social media are YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. These social media websites allow an orthodontist to create a page and upload promotional and informative videos and content which can garner the attention of potential patients.

The present study was conducted to compare the efficiency of online marketing platforms like Google, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram for promoting orthodontic practice.

Materials and methods

A survey was developed on Google forms to explore the use of Digital platforms in orthodontic practices, and was randomly distributed to layman participants online. The survey contained questions evaluating usage of different online plat forms like Google, You Tube, Facebook and Instagram, advertisement type, frequency of advertisements, simplicity of search, content sharing efficiency and information availability.

The validity and reliability of the survey was assessed by the experts (n=10) in the field. Overall internal reliability and test rest was assessed (Cronbach’s alpha= 0.09).

Exclusion criteria: Individuals with previous fixed or removable orthodontic treatment or active fixed or removable orthodontic treatment.

Results

Total 505 individuals completed the survey. Chi square test was performed to compare the responses for questions. Maximum combined response of all the questions was (38.4%) for Google, closely followed by YouTube 36.1%, responses declined rapidly for Instagram with almost 17.7% votes, which were almost half of those for YouTube. Facebook was the least chosen option with response rate of only 7.6%. Statistical Package for Social Sciences [SPSS] for Windows, Version 22.0, released 2013, IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, was used to perform statistical analyses. Chi-square (χ^2) goodness of fit test was used to compare the difference in the distribution of responses for the study questionnaire. The level of significance (p-value) was set at $p < 0.001$. Results for individual questions are discussed below (chart 1-8).

1. Which online platform do you frequently use?

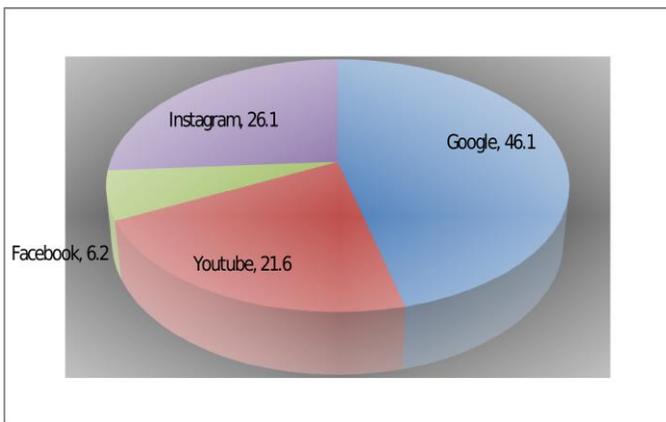


Chart 1

The most commonly used online platform by the users was Google.

YouTube and Instagram followed with almost half the responses. Least used online platform was Facebook with only 6.2 % users.

2. On which platform do you frequently come across videos or advertisements regarding Braces/Teeth straightening procedure?

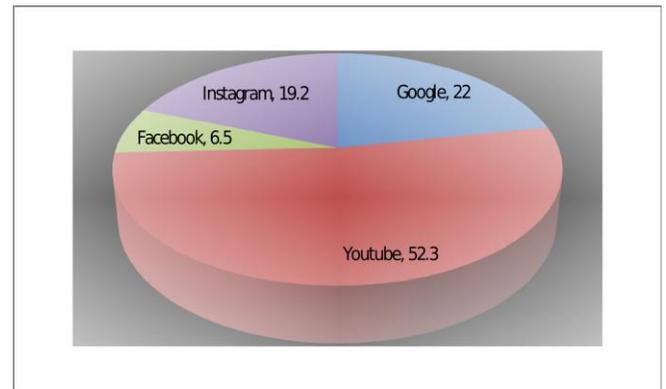


Chart 2

Participants came across advertisements regarding braces or orthodontic treatment most frequently on YouTube with 52.3%. Google received 22% votes closely followed by Instagram. Facebook was the least chosen option.

3. On which platform do you search for dental clinics and dentists providing Braces/ Teeth straightening treatment?

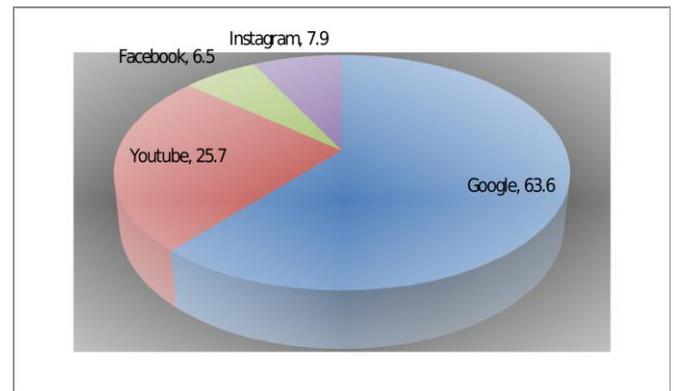


Chart 3

Dental clinics and dentists providing orthodontic treatment were most commonly searched on Google with majority of the responses. YouTube received 25.7% response. Instagram and Facebook received very less responses.

4. Which platform do you prefer seeking information about Braces/ Teeth straightening treatment?

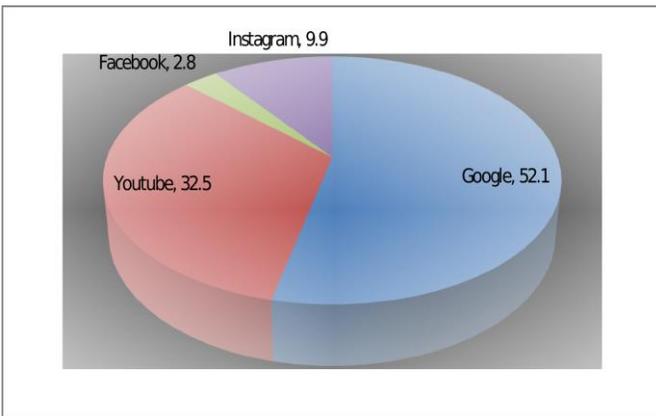


Chart 4

Majority of participants (52.1%) preferred seeking information about braces on Google. YouTube was the next option with 32.5% response rate. Instagram received 9.9% and Facebook received 2.8%.

5. Which platform provides a simplified search for braces/ Teeth straightening treatment?

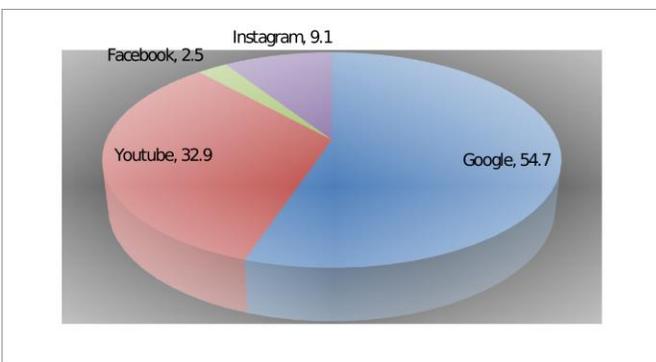


Chart 5

A Simplified search for orthodontic treatment was provided by Google followed by YouTube and then Instagram, with again the least chosen option, Facebook with only 2.7% response rate.

6. Which platform shows you more recommendation and suggestion posts of Braces/Teeth straightening treatment?

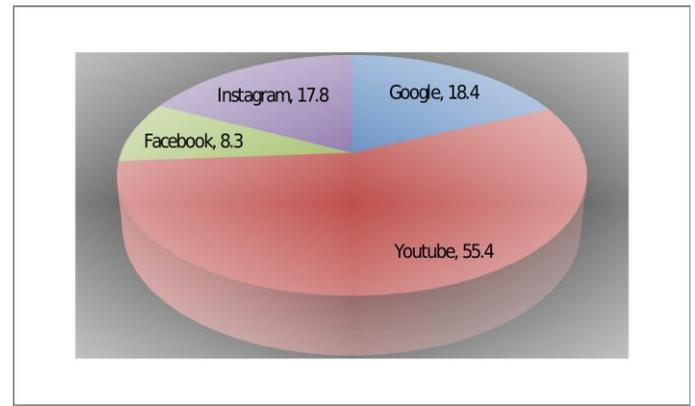


Chart 6

YouTube gained highest responses (55.4%) for showing recommendations and suggested posts about braces and orthodontic treatment. Google lagged behind with 18.4% response rate and Instagram with almost similar response rate (17.8%). Facebook received only 8.3% responses.

7. Which platform allows you to easily share any advertisements or posts related to Braces/ Teeth straightening treatment?

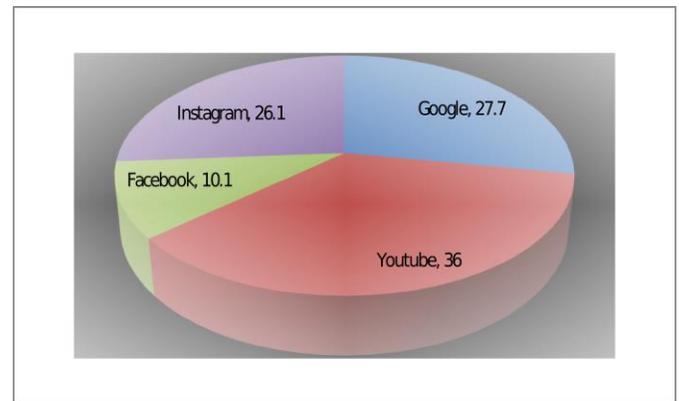


Chart 7

Online platform with allowed easy sharing of advertisements and posts related to braces was YouTube. Google and Instagram had a similar response rate of almost 27%.

8. Which platform has attractive advertisements of Braces/ Teeth straightening treatment?

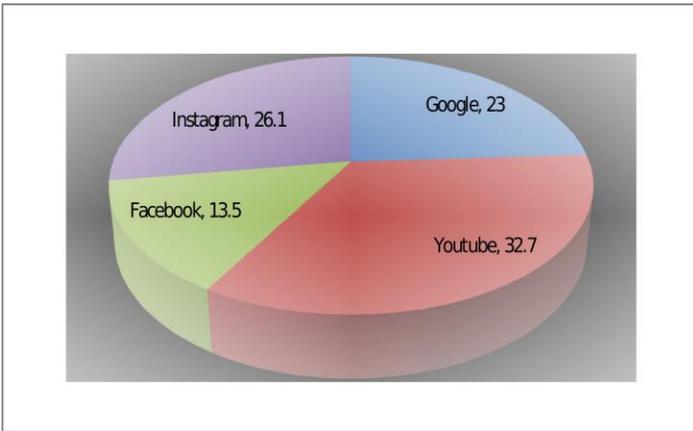


Chart 8

YouTube received highest 32.7% , closely followed by Instagram with 26%. Google received 23% and Facebook had the least amount of votes.

Qn.	Question	YouTube	Google	Instagram	Facebook	X ²	P value
	Which online platform do you frequently use?	109	233	132	31	26.71	<0.001
1.	On which platform do you frequently come across videos or advertisement regarding Braces/Teeth straightening procedure?	264	111	97	33	14.19	<0.001
2.	On which platform do you search for dental clinics and dentists providing Braces/Teeth straightening treatment?	130	321	14	40	29.03	<0.001
3.	Which platform do you prefer seeking information about Braces/ Teeth straightening treatment?	164	263	50	28	22.90	<0.001
4.	Which platform provides a simplified search for braces/ Teeth straightening treatment?	166	276	46	17	45.21	<0.001
5.	Which platform shows you more related posts and advertisements of Braces/Teeth straightening treatment?	280	93	90	42	21.32	<0.001
6.	Which platform allows you to easily share any advertisements or posts related to Braces/ Teeth straightening treatment?	182	140	132	51	31.12	<0.001
7.	Which platform has attractive advertisements of Braces/ Teeth straightening treatment?	165	116	156	68	19.08	<0.001

Discussion

Google is a search engine which is majorly used by individuals of all age group. Social media websites like YouTube, Facebook and Instagram are also popular

among the users. Patients are interested if the orthodontic practice is fun and hi tech. Reviews on Google, likes and comments on social media make it easier to reach to variety of new patients⁴. Experiences

of current patients regarding the orthodontist and the treatment provided are valuable for the prospective patients. Positive experiences of the current patients if shared through proper online platform will increase new patient in flow. Orthodontists who used social media and a practice website had newer patient starts per year than those who did not¹.

Nelson¹ conducted a study on social media marketing and found that Facebook was the most commonly used social media platform among orthodontists and patients/parents, also, 63% of patients and parents reported that a good reputation of an orthodontist on social media website would influence their decision to go to or bring their child to that orthodontist.

In the present study most commonly used online platform was Google followed by Instagram and YouTube. Facebook was less commonly used (6.2%).

Numerous studies and surveys have reported the importance of good web presence on Google in form of a well-developed and efficient website. If orthodontic clinics are searched on Google by potential patients, then a good review given by current patients would be beneficial to increase inflow of new patients. A study by Trent Cox (2014)⁵ reported that patients preferred to visit the orthodontist's Facebook page before taking the decision to select the clinic. Similar results were obtained by few other studies^{1,4,6,7}. Even though the social media marketing has expanded tremendously over few years, the practice Web site still is the most significant component of an online marketing strategy⁸. In our study it was found that majority of users (63.6%) searched orthodontist and dental clinic providing orthodontic treatment on Google.

YouTube is the largest online source of videos. An advertisement video or informative video about a clinician's orthodontic practice can have a tremendous

positive impact on decision making of the patient. Impact of a video advertisement is greater as opposed to text advertisement⁹. In a study conducted by Al-Silwadi et al¹⁰, it was reported that patients' knowledge about their fixed appliances was significantly improved by the presentation of audio-visual information through the video-sharing social website, YouTube. In our study YouTube received highest scores for frequency appearance of braces related videos or advertisements, recommendations and similar posts were shown by YouTube, ease of sharing and attractiveness of advertisements.

Instagram is the most recent form of social media. The popularity of Instagram is increasing in recent times. Vast majority of adolescents and young adults use Instagram and it has become an online commercial marketing hub, its use in orthodontic marketing is also increasing rapidly¹¹. The Image Ad, the Video Ad, and the Carousel Ad are the three different ad formats available to businesses and agencies on Instagram. The image ad focuses on a single image supported by the brand, the video ad is a short film (about 30 seconds) marketing the service or product, and the carousel ad is a series of pictures that the viewer can swipe through, with up to four images. All three ads contain a "Learn More" call to action button that brings visitors to a website where they may learn more¹².

In the current study Instagram ranked third in majority of categories. YouTube and Instagram garnered majority of responses for having attractive advertisements, (32.7%) and (30.9%) respectively. Instagram also received good number of votes for its efficiency in sharing the advertisements. A study by Suleyman Kutalmış¹¹ (2020) stated similar results concluding that Instagram use in orthodontic advertisement is increasing because of its attractive videos and photos.

A study carried out by Isabelle Graf et al¹³ stated that patients preferred seeking information related to orthodontic treatment through media sharing website, YouTube and social media Instagram. In our study participants preferred seeking information majorly on Google and then YouTube. Instagram received relatively less responses (9%) in this aspect.

Conclusion

The current trend suggests that, in recent years more and more patients are drawn towards orthodontic practices which have more online presence or a digital footprint. As there is general rise in digital literacy, the new 'word of mouth' is digital marketing.

The present study concludes that

1. Most commonly used online platforms were Google and YouTube, and patients search for orthodontist and orthodontic clinic on the same. Therefore, a well-developed website of orthodontic practice should be established on Google. It should have detailed information of the orthodontist, photo gallery of the clinic and before and after photographs of patients and reviews by the previous and current patients. The website should be search engine optimized as patients prefer Google for simplified search options.
2. Videos related to orthodontic treatment and information regarding braces should be uploaded by orthodontist on YouTube with marketing of his/her orthodontic practice as people used YouTube for video related information.
3. Attractive sponsored advertisements should be shared on YouTube and Instagram which will increase the inflow of prospective patients.

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