

Are your men dentally fit?

How do you market dentistry to your male patients? **Shaz Memon** considers your moves

British cultural perceptions of masculinity are slowly edging away from the idealised archetypes, with their archaic associations with power and strength, and heading for more enlightened paths.

Notwithstanding the results of a 2018 YouGov poll – which revealed that damaging male stereotypes persisted to impact on our general perception of gender – boundaries, in the context of marketing at least, are broadening.

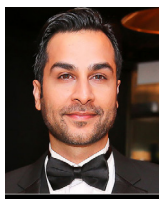
Social media has a huge influence in shaping 21st-century culture. Heavily focused on aesthetics and the concept that we should all aim to ‘become the best version of ourselves’, the digital sharing of many different masculine ideal fuels the general desire to seek ways to enhance appearances.

What this means is a more discerning male consumer who is influenced by what he sees and experiences online.

Modern masculinity, therefore, appears to be as much to do with male grooming, style trends and fashion, as it is gym bodies, healthy eating and fitness fads.

Today’s cosmetically focused, body-conscious male has a part to play in developing business marketing strategies – and this includes those of a dental practice.

Currently, the state of play within dentistry varies. For some dentists, a broad-brush approach to promoting practice treatments and services is the default. With others, their websites feature stunning smile makeovers and supportive testimonials of satisfied female patient but may lack a male presence. Whilst women are perhaps more likely to share their patient journey and give feedback, even the blogs and stock images favour the female and the imbalance should be addressed.



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It is well documented that men have a notoriously poor record of self-care when it comes to their teeth and gums – seemingly there is a huge disconnect between lifestyle habits and practices and the influence these have on their wellbeing.

Yet there remains little effort by dental practices to engage directly with this demographic on this level, too; feeding specific information to help enlighten an untapped audience with targeted and tailored posts not only helps them achieve dental fitness, but also promotes a practice to current non-attenders.

Whilst figures show men are now spending more now on grooming products – 66% of *GQ* magazine readers spend more than £15 on grooming products each month – we also know they are not so great at oral hygiene, fail to visit the dentist as often as women, and are less particular about the frequency of changing their toothbrush or toothbrush head. So, whilst social media drives their hunger for improvement, seemingly they’re a little lazy about effecting change.

Five ways to engage

Plug in to those who are technology driven. Talk about the cutting-edge equipment you use in your surgery and link it directly with what it can do to improve their oral health as well appearance. Men are on Instagram, too, so post images and videos demonstrating the use of technology in your clinic. Make sure the patient you are using it on is a man to

make it instantly relatable.

Enlighten your male audience by posting advice on energy drinks and how they are likely to be impacting negatively on their teeth and gum health. With recent studies by the likes of Professor Ian Needleman demonstrating that elite athletes felt that their oral health was negatively affecting their performance thanks to sports drinks, an emphasis on rehydration and remineralisation via other, more health-friendly drinks is important. Consider offering water in the reception area – perhaps go as far as to branded recyclable bottles for use in the gym?

Are they still a smoker? Do they love a beer? Let your followers know about the statistics relating mouth cancer cases to smoking tobacco and drinking alcohol to excess. Men are more likely to be victims. Signpost to smoking cessation support and open up a discussion online about healthy dietary and lifestyle habits.

Some of your male followers are likely to participate in contact sports. Talk about how they run the risk of trauma to mouth and teeth if they are not wearing a mouthguard. If possible, post evidence on your social media platforms of injuries to illustrate.

And, if all this evidence fails to convince them, hit them with your trump card. Let them know how scientists have discovered that men with poor oral health are more likely to suffer with erectile dysfunction. Bacteria caused by poor dental hygiene enters the blood stream and can eventually impair the blood flow to the vital organ.