international markets

SHOFU: “We see the fastest growth coming from China”

SHOFU Dental Asia-Pacific attended the UAE International Dental Conference and Arab Dental Exhibition (AEEDC) in Dubai this year to introduce its new abrasive and restorative materials to professionals in the Middle East. The global dental materials and equipment manufacturer has been eyeing the region for a long time, but ongoing market restrictions remain a challenge. However, SHOFU is also targeting countries in Asia Pacific that promise stronger growth.

While trade show attendees from the Middle East expressed great interest in SHOFU’s materials and digital dental cameras, the company feels that the market conditions do not facilitate foreign investment. “Our meetings were good—although the fair could have been stronger. We met dentists and dental students from the UAE, Kuwait, Iran and Iraq. This is a big market, especially for Asian companies, but the market needs to open more to ease import and export,” stated Patrick Loke, Managing Director of SHOFU Dental Asia-Pacific during AEEDC. Given the company’s history, SHOFU is continuing its careful assessment of business opportunities before possibly opening a production facility or sales office in the Middle East.

In 1922, SHOFU was founded in Kyoto at the time when growing national debt and political uproar endangered Japan’s strong economy. The company initially produced high-quality porcelain teeth for the local market, but soon added abrasives, silicone polishers, composites and amalgam fillings to its portfolio. The 1970s saw the opening of new manufacturing facilities in Japan and sales offices in the US and Germany, while Asia Pacific remained relatively untouched despite SHOFU’s geographical proximity.

SHOFU finally established a new subsidiary in Singapore in 1980. Since then, SHOFU Dental Asia-Pacific has reached a number of milestones in the region. In 1985, SHOFU began operating in China with the establishment of a worldwide sales network and opened a production facility and sales office 20 years later. Back then, the country had only 50,000 dentists and fewer than 200 dental clinics to serve its 1.3 billion people—about 440,000 dental professionals would have been needed to provide adequate oral health care according to Western standards.

In the last decade, the Chinese government has invested substantially in dental training facilities and schools. The result was an increase in dental clinics that led to double-digit growth in relatively new market segments, such as dental implants.

Loke is very pleased with SHOFU’s sales in China. “We see the fastest growth coming from China. For the most part, China is now a fully developed country with huge opportunities to conduct business. We have experienced a double-digit increase in Chinese sales and the nation remains our most important market in the region,” he said during AEEDC. “Other countries in the South-East Asian region are also developed but growth is slower. However, India is coming up. Shofu will start operating in India soon. There is growing awareness regarding dental health there.”

orthodontics

Invisible braces market to grow rapidly over next five years

According to a recently published report, the global invisible braces market is expected to grow at a 12.16 per cent compound annual growth rate from 2016 to 2021. The report analyses the development of the ceramic, lingual and clear aligners segment in ten major countries and further shows that the process will be mainly driven by technological innovations and increasing demand for invisible braces among the adult population with aesthetic concerns about fixed orthodontic appliances.

Over the past decade, improved technological advancements, particularly digital technologies, and increasing awareness of aesthetic alternatives to conventional braces have led to growing demand for orthodontic treatment with aligners.

In addition, rising disposable income has resulted in increasing per capita health care expenditure, which has further led to a growing focus on health care, thereby increasing the demand for invisible braces specifically among the adult population.

While the market has witnessed a strong foothold in North America and Europe, rapid growth in the demand for invisible braces is expected to be fueled by the emerging markets in Asia Pacific and Latin America through India and Brazil, whereas rising dental tourism in Mexico and Thailand will continue to contribute towards the invisible braces market.

Among the leading companies operating in the market are Align Technology, Ormco, DENTSPLY International, 3M and ClearCorrect.

The 152-page report titled Global invisible braces market: Trends, opportunities and forecasts (2016–2021) was published on 1 February. It can be purchased at www.rnrmarketresearch.com.
cosmetic procedures

AADC survey indicates digital push in cosmetic dentistry

The field of cosmetic dentistry is showing persistent growth potential, a survey conducted by the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (AADC) has found. The majority of respondents believed that cosmetic procedures will generate the same amount of revenue or more in the coming year, with the greatest expectation being that dental implants will continue to see the most positive growth.

“Some of the most notable findings from the survey are those that relate to larger trends in the dental industry,” remarked AADC President Dr Joyce Bassett. This particularly applies to the ongoing trend towards digitalization in dentistry. Bassett said, “The digital push is definitely something being felt in the area of cosmetics – more than 50 per cent of respondents said they either currently use chairside CAD/CAM or are considering purchasing a chairside CAD/CAM system.”

The survey, 93 per cent of dental professionals believed that the continued demand for cosmetic dentistry is primarily driven by referrals from friends and family who have had a positive experience. Other factors included increasing information about cosmetic dentistry online (75 per cent), better marketing of dental practices (63 per cent), and media coverage of cosmetic dentistry (56 per cent).

Concerning the most frequently performed cosmetic procedures, crowns and bridgework, bonding, veneers, and whitening made up the bulk of interventions. At 32 per cent, the most popular treatment in practices was tooth whitening.

According to the practitioners surveyed, patients requested cosmetic treatment mainly to improve physical attractiveness and self-esteem (86 per cent); to fix a previously failed cosmetic treatment (51 per cent); for upcoming events, such as a wedding (48 per cent); for restorative or health reasons, such as an accident or injury (46 per cent); and to look and feel younger (45 per cent).

The survey was conducted between September and November 2015. It included 360 dental professionals, of whom 89 per cent described themselves as either general dentists (60 per cent) or cosmetic dentists (29 per cent). Among the respondents, 74 per cent were AADC members.


colour assessment

Study evaluates accuracy of digital v. conventional shade measurement

Matching the shade of the natural dentition is of great importance for achieving a good aesthetic result in prosthetic reconstructions, especially in the anterior region. Although various computer-based shade determination systems have been developed in recent years, the use of this new technology has not been widely evaluated in clinical settings. A study has now compared the reliability of two digital shade measurement solutions with the conventional method for colour assessment, the human eye.

In the study, researchers from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark and the Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje compared 3Shape’s TRIOS shade measurement tool, MHT’s SpectroShade spectrophotometric computer-based system and VITA Zahnfabrik’s VITA Toothguide 3D-MASTER, a conventional colour tab system.

According to the researchers, reliable visual shade selection by the human eye can be inconsistent owing to the complexity of tooth colour and external factors, such as room lighting, patient clothing and even make-up. In order to compensate for these variables, the shade determination was performed in natural daylight, but away from windows and with no direct light. Lipstick or other factors that may affect colour assessment were removed, and patients with brightly coloured clothing were covered with a neutral cloth.

Shade determination was tested on 87 teeth in 29 patients between the ages of 22 and 62. In order to validate the various methods, two dentists selected the colour tab they considered to be the best match for each tooth and with each method. The colour tabs chosen were then evaluated pairwise.

The study found that the reliability of the computer-based systems was higher than that of the conventional visual system. The TRIOS measurement system achieved the greatest agreement for colour chroma and hue, whereas SpectroShade demonstrated the highest agreement for colour value. However, no significant differences were found between the TRIOS tool and the colour tab system and between SpectroShade and the colour tab system.

According to the researchers, the results support the use of computer-based scanning and shade measurement systems for dentistry. They concluded that further development of such systems for clinical use could be valuable for material selection and restoration design, particularly in aesthetic and restorative dentistry.

The study titled Effectiveness of shade measurements using a scanning and computer software system: A pilot study was published on 25 April 2015 in the International Journal of Oral and Dental Health.
teeth whitening

Enlighten: “The most important feature of a whitening system is predictability”

Enlighten is widely acknowledged as the most effective teeth whitening system in the world. With over 200,000 VITA shade B1 Guaranteed procedures, Enlighten has a 98 per cent success rate, irrespective of starting shade. Enlighten is a combination of home whitening followed by in office. There are no lights or lasers, the system comes with impression materials, bleaching labwork, desensitisers and toothpastes.

“Our users understand that the most important feature of a whitening system is predictability and wow results”, said Dr Payman Langroudi, Clinical Director “There is nothing worse or more damaging to a practice than underwhelming whitening results, we really think we have a breakthrough” continued Langroudi “We are looking for the top 5 to 10 per cent of dentists in each country, to become Enlighten Centres of Excellence.”

Enlighten partners with dentists and provides both clinical and marketing training to all the team. Enlighten trained dentists do four times as much whitening as a result. There is no need to change diet or habits like smoking, and results last indefinitely with very simple maintenance. “When a patient asks how white their teeth will go, the dentist can confidently predict a minimum B1 shade. When they ask how long it will last, the dentist can confidently say forever”, says Langroudi.

The company is pursuing an aggressive international expansion from its London base with a combination of joint venture and distributor partnership models.

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expansion of production

VOCO to give its headquarters in Cuxhaven a boost

Left: With the cutting of the first sod, Manfred Thomas Plaumann, Ines Plaumann-Sauerbier and Olaf Sauerbier (VOCO management, from left) marked the start of the construction project to expand production at the dental company based in Cuxhaven (Photo © www.voco.com).

Plans to expand production have been in discussion for around a year with the Bremerhaven planning company Lüdke Hoch- und Tiefbau in conjunction with Schröder from Bremervörde have been commissioned to perform this work. The investment volume is in excess of 10 million euros.

Creation of long-term capacities

This project is the fifth construction phase. In 1997 and 2005 the production hall area, which was developed back in 1992, was almost doubled both times. Construction of the striking main building together with the laboratory building was completed in 2013. The current complex is to be expanded to include a two-storey new building boasting an effective floor area in excess of 9,000 m². The total effective floor area, including the administration and research areas, will amount to around 39,000 m² upon completion of this stage. And, of course, we have already taken future growth into account:

“'We deliberately opted for a two-storey design for this extension project in order to make optimal use of the company site', explained the VOCO management.

Global family company

Today this family company is one of the leading brands in the dental industry and operates around the world with great success. Some 340 people work at the headquarters in Cuxhaven and, in addition, there are more than 50 dental consultants in Germany as well as 370 country-specific sales representatives around the world.

Following the inauguration of the impressive new main building with its exclusive training centre and the state-of-the-art research and development building in autumn 2013, the expansion of our production facilities is the next step to paving the way for further growth. Completion of the new production area is planned for spring 2017.

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