



Correspondence

Digital transformation and talent needs in the Greater China region: The perspective of a regional sales manager with international expertise in the dental materials manufacturing



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Dental technician;
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In a successful dental treatment process, in addition to relying on the skills of the dentists and the dental technicians, the high-quality dental materials or instruments are another crucial factor.¹ Selecting the optimal materials or instruments based on different circumstances is particularly challenging. This requires establishing effective communication channels between the users and the dental material manufacturers. Currently, beyond the common reliance on the sales representatives, the demand for the technical consultants or the dental technicians with professional dental backgrounds has increased significantly. Moreover, the dental digital transformation impacts the clinical practices and reshapes the structure of the dental market.² Therefore, this study interviewed a regional sales manager with the extensive expertise in the dental materials manufacturing to explore perspectives on the ongoing digital transformation and talent demands in the Greater China region.

The regional sales manager graduated from the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Hong Kong, completing a three-year program in the dental technology and earning a

dental technician qualification. Subsequently, she pursued further studies in the business marketing. Currently, she serves as a regional sales manager for a globally renowned dental materials company, with over 22 years of experience in the dental market. This study discussed the perspectives of this regional sales manager across four aspects: the situation, change, talent, and future, as shown in Fig. 1.

Regarding the situation, the market largely depends on differences in the healthcare policies, income levels, and national conditions across different countries (Fig. 1A). As for demographic structures, there are no significant differences among the countries in the Greater China region, but all face challenges related to the aging populations and the declining birth rates.³ For change, the digitalization of dentistry primarily lowers the entry barriers for the technical personnel (Fig. 1B). The digital equipment and dental software integrated with the artificial intelligence (AI) significantly reduce the time required for the traditional processes.^{4,5} However, this raises concerns about whether individuals without professional dental backgrounds can operate these tools and software to perform the dental

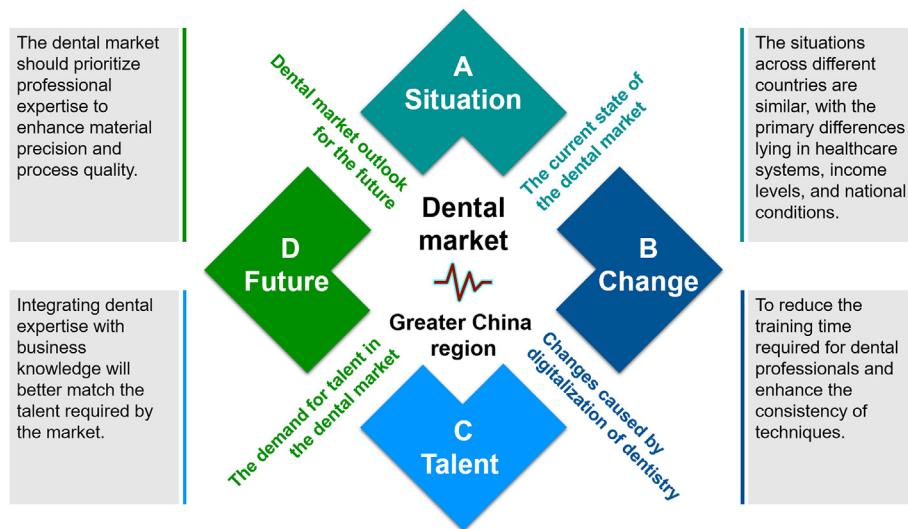


Figure 1 Exploration of the dental market in the Greater China region under the digital transformation. (A) The current state of the dental market, noting similarities across different countries but influenced by variations in the healthcare systems, income levels, and national conditions. (B) The changes driven by the digitalization of dentistry, emphasizing the need for the reduced training time and the enhanced technical consistency for the dental professionals. (C) The growing demand for the talent that integrates the dental expertise with the business knowledge to align with the market needs; and (D) The future prospects of the dental market, underscoring the importance of the professional expertise in improving the material precision and quality management.

procedures. Consequently, the digital transformation not only influences processes and materials but also necessitates the comprehensive policy frameworks to address the personnel-related challenges. In terms of talent, the most notable impact of digitalization on the workforce demand lies in the professional expertise (Fig. 1C). In the past, a single-specialization model was sufficient—for example, the technical consultants needed only a dental background. However, with the advent of digitalization, the choices available in the dental care have expanded. The dental material manufacturers must now consider the material properties, digital equipment operations, and business models. The digitalization has also shortened the international distances, making globalization essential for the market strategies. Consequently, individuals with the international perspectives and multidisciplinary expertise are highly valued by the manufacturers. For the future, expectations must return to professionalism (Fig. 1D). The integration of too many non-dental professionals into the field has impacts on the precision and quality control of the processes in dental clinics and manufacturing. While the digitalization and AI can assist the clinical care, the definition of professionalism must be carefully reconsidered to ensure improvements in quality.

In conclusion, an analysis of the dental market reveals that while the digital transformation brings the advancements and convenience, it also necessitates more policies and professional perspectives to adapt to these changes.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest relevant to this article.

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