

# Entrepreneurial Strategies for Dental Startups and Private Practices

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the entrepreneurial strategies employed by dental startups and private practices. This qualitative study utilized semi-structured interviews with 29 dental entrepreneurs from diverse countries, recruited through online announcements. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. The interviews were conducted via video calls and analyzed using thematic analysis with NVivo software. The analysis followed an inductive approach, identifying key themes related to business model strategies, financial sustainability, patient engagement, and technological advancements. Thematic analysis revealed four main themes. In business model development, practitioners adopted various ownership models, service differentiation strategies, and scalability plans to enhance market positioning. Financial management strategies included securing diverse funding sources, optimizing operational costs, and diversifying revenue streams to mitigate risks. Patient acquisition and retention strategies emphasized digital marketing, referral programs, customer relationship management, and community outreach. Technological integration played a significant role, with practitioners adopting AI-driven diagnostics, telemedicine, and secure patient data management systems to improve efficiency and service delivery. The findings align with previous studies, highlighting the necessity of adaptive business strategies in modern dental practice. Entrepreneurial success in dental startups and private practices depends on a combination of strategic business planning, financial resilience, patient engagement, and technological innovation. Dentists must adopt diverse revenue models, leverage digital tools, and maintain a strong online presence to remain competitive. Future research should explore the financial sustainability of different business models and assess the long-term impact of technological advancements on dental entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** Dental startups, private practice management, financial sustainability, patient acquisition, digital transformation, artificial intelligence in dentistry, entrepreneurship in healthcare.

How to cite this article:

Saberi, S. (2024). Entrepreneurial Strategies for Dental Startups and Private Practices. *Journal of Oral and Dental Health Nexus*, 1(1), 61-69. <https://doi.org/10.61838/jodhn.1.1.6>

## Introduction

Entrepreneurship in dentistry has gained significant momentum in recent years, with an increasing number of professionals establishing private practices and startups. The dynamic nature of the dental industry, coupled with evolving patient expectations, technological advancements, and financial challenges, necessitates the adoption of innovative business strategies for sustainable growth and operational efficiency (1). The ability to successfully navigate these challenges is particularly critical for dental

entrepreneurs who must balance clinical excellence with sound financial and managerial decision-making (2).

The decision to transition from an employee or associate to an independent practice owner is influenced by multiple factors, including career aspirations, financial incentives, and professional autonomy (3). Many dental professionals aspire to build their own practices, perceiving ownership as a means of achieving long-term stability and financial independence. However, the reality of managing a dental business extends beyond clinical expertise, requiring significant investment in practice management, marketing, and operational planning (4). A recent survey on the career

outlook of dental students revealed that while many express interest in owning a practice, they often lack formal training in entrepreneurship, which underscores the need for strategic planning and financial literacy (3).

Furthermore, changes in the global economic landscape have influenced dental practice sustainability, particularly in the wake of financial disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (5). Many dental professionals faced financial instability, with some struggling to maintain cash flow and operational viability (6). In regions such as Pakistan and Malaysia, studies indicated that private dental practices experienced a substantial decline in revenue, leading to increased concerns about long-term sustainability (7, 8). The pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of traditional dental business models and underscored the necessity for adaptive strategies that enhance financial resilience and patient retention (9).

Establishing a viable business model is central to the success of dental startups and private practices. The choice between a solo practice, group practice, franchise model, or corporate partnership has significant implications for financial stability and operational efficiency (1). Some practitioners prefer solo ownership due to greater autonomy and control over treatment decisions, while others opt for group practices or franchises to share financial risks and administrative responsibilities (10). Regardless of the model chosen, differentiation in services plays a crucial role in patient attraction and retention (11). Specializing in high-demand treatments, such as cosmetic dentistry, orthodontics, and implantology, allows startups to establish a niche and enhance competitive advantage (12).

Moreover, the integration of digital tools has transformed service delivery, with many practices leveraging online booking systems, virtual consultations, and AI-assisted diagnostics to streamline operations (13). Technological innovations not only enhance patient convenience but also contribute to improved workflow efficiency, reducing overhead costs and increasing revenue potential (14).

Effective financial management is a critical component of entrepreneurial success in dentistry. Studies have highlighted that one of the most significant challenges facing new dental entrepreneurs is securing initial funding and managing operational costs (15).

While some practitioners rely on traditional financing options such as bank loans and personal savings, others explore alternative funding sources, including angel investors and crowdfunding (2).

Beyond startup capital, maintaining financial sustainability requires strategic cost management, revenue diversification, and risk mitigation. Many practices have adopted subscription-based models, membership plans, and insurance partnerships to stabilize cash flow and enhance patient retention (16). Financial forecasting and expense tracking are essential for identifying inefficiencies and ensuring long-term viability (17). Additionally, studies have emphasized the importance of preparing for economic downturns by maintaining financial reserves and securing adequate insurance coverage (18).

One of the most significant financial disruptions in recent history was the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to reduced patient visits, increased operational costs due to infection control measures, and temporary closures of many private practices (19). Research indicates that practices that had diversified revenue streams, such as offering telehealth consultations and expanding services beyond general dentistry, were more resilient to economic shocks (20).

Attracting and retaining patients is a fundamental aspect of sustaining a successful dental business. Digital marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for engaging potential patients, with many practices utilizing search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and online advertising to enhance visibility (21). Studies show that patients are more likely to choose a dentist with a strong online presence, including positive reviews and active engagement on digital platforms (22, 23).

In addition to marketing efforts, relationship-building strategies such as referral programs, loyalty incentives, and community engagement play a crucial role in patient retention (23). Research has demonstrated that patients who feel valued and engaged are more likely to return for follow-up treatments and recommend the practice to others (15).

Moreover, implementing automated patient communication systems, such as appointment reminders, post-treatment follow-ups, and educational newsletters, enhances patient satisfaction and strengthens long-term relationships (Zafar et al., 2024). As competition in the dental industry intensifies,

practices that prioritize personalized patient experiences are more likely to succeed in retaining their clientele (9).

The rapid advancement of dental technology has revolutionized practice management and treatment methodologies. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI), cloud-based patient data management, and digital imaging has significantly improved diagnostic accuracy and treatment planning (13). Research suggests that AI-powered tools enable more precise treatment recommendations, reducing the likelihood of diagnostic errors and improving patient outcomes (24).

Telemedicine has also gained traction as a valuable tool for expanding access to dental care, particularly in regions with limited specialist availability (25). Virtual consultations have enabled practitioners to conduct preliminary assessments and follow-up appointments remotely, improving efficiency and patient convenience (4).

Furthermore, the adoption of digital workflow systems, such as electronic health records (EHRs) and practice management software, has streamlined administrative processes, reducing paperwork and enhancing operational efficiency (5). However, as technology becomes more integrated into dental practice, concerns about data security and patient privacy have also increased. Ensuring compliance with regulatory frameworks such as HIPAA is essential for safeguarding sensitive patient information (26).

The entrepreneurial landscape in dentistry is evolving rapidly, with practitioners facing both challenges and opportunities in establishing and managing successful practices. Business model selection, financial planning, patient engagement, and technological integration all play crucial roles in ensuring sustainability and growth. This study explores the entrepreneurial strategies employed by dental startups and private practices.

## Methods and Materials

This qualitative research employed a descriptive-interpretive approach to explore entrepreneurial strategies adopted by dental startups and private practices. The study design was based on in-depth semi-structured interviews, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, challenges, and strategic decision-making processes. A

total of 29 participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring a diverse representation of dental professionals, including startup founders and private practitioners from different countries. Participants were recruited through online announcements posted on professional dental forums, social media platforms, and entrepreneurial networks. Those who met the inclusion criteria and expressed willingness to participate were invited for an online interview via video calls.

The data collection process involved semi-structured interviews conducted in a virtual setting, allowing for broad geographic participation. The interview protocol was designed to cover key themes such as business model development, financial management, patient acquisition, technological adoption, and regulatory challenges. Interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes, with open-ended questions designed to facilitate deep insights into the entrepreneurial journey of dental professionals. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning no new themes or insights emerged from additional interviews.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data using NVivo software, which facilitated the organization, coding, and interpretation of interview transcripts. The analysis followed an inductive approach, allowing themes to emerge from the data rather than being predetermined. The coding process involved open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to identify patterns and relationships between themes. To enhance the reliability of the findings, peer debriefing and member checking were conducted, where selected participants reviewed preliminary interpretations to ensure accuracy and credibility. Through this systematic approach, the study aimed to uncover key entrepreneurial strategies that contribute to the success and sustainability of dental startups and private practices.

## Findings

The study included a total of 29 participants from diverse geographical locations, ensuring a broad range of perspectives on entrepreneurial strategies in dental startups and private practices. Among the participants, 18 (62%) were male and 11 (38%) were female. In terms of professional experience, 12 participants (41%) had more than 15 years of experience in the dental field,

while 17 (59%) had between 5 and 15 years. Additionally, the majority of participants—21 individuals (72%)—were located in urban areas, with the remaining 8 (28%) based in suburban or rural

regions. This varied demographic composition provided a well-rounded understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by dental entrepreneurs in different contexts.

**Table 1. The Results of Qualitative Analysis**

Category	Subcategory	Concepts (Open Codes)
Business Model Development	Practice Ownership Models	Solo practice, Group practice, Corporate chains, Franchise expansions
	Service Differentiation	Specialized care, Niche services, Targeted marketing, Value-added packages
	Partnerships and Collaborations	Strategic alliances, Shared resources, Co-branding opportunities, Interdisciplinary networks
	Scalability Strategies	Branch expansions, Online consultations, Workflow automation, Workforce training
Financial Management	Market Positioning	Brand identity, Competitive pricing, Unique selling points, Target demographics
	Startup Capital and Funding	Bootstrapping, Bank loans, Angel investors, Crowdfunding
	Cost Management	Overhead reduction, Resource optimization, Supplier negotiations
	Revenue Diversification	Insurance partnerships, Membership plans, Cosmetic or specialty add-ons
	Pricing Strategies	Tiered pricing, Subscription models, Sliding scale fees, Bundled plans
	Financial Risk Mitigation	Reserve funds, Comprehensive insurance, Diversified portfolios, Regular forecasting
Patient Acquisition and Retention	Investment and Growth Planning	Equipment upgrades, Expansion loans, Digital transformations, Staff development
	Digital Marketing Strategies	SEO optimization, Social media campaigns, Paid advertising, Content marketing
	Referral Programs	Patient-to-patient incentives, Local business collaborations, Loyalty benefits
	Patient Engagement Initiatives	Online portals, Post-treatment follow-ups, Patient satisfaction surveys
	Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	Automated reminders, Data-driven insights, Patient history tracking
	Reputation Management	Managing online reviews, Showcasing testimonials, Public relations
	Community Outreach	Public health screenings, Educational seminars, Free dental check-ups
Technological Integration and Innovation	Patient Education and Awareness Campaigns	Informative newsletters, Webinar Q&A sessions, Illustrated brochures, Social media tips
	Adoption of Digital Tools	Digital x-rays, Intraoral scanners, Practice management software, Online appointments
	Integration of AI in Dentistry	AI-based diagnostics, Predictive analytics, Virtual treatment planning
	Patient Data Management Systems	Cloud storage, Encrypted databases, Backup protocols, HIPAA compliance
	Remote Consultations	Teleconsulting platforms, Virtual follow-ups, Remote treatment planning, Patient triage
	Data Security and Privacy	Cybersecurity measures, Staff confidentiality training, Authentication systems, Regulatory compliance

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed four main themes related to entrepreneurial strategies in dental startups and private practices: business model development, financial management, patient acquisition and retention, and technological integration and innovation. Each theme comprised several subthemes, which are detailed below.

Regarding practice ownership models, participants described different pathways to establishing and managing their dental businesses, including solo practices, group practices, and franchise models. Some emphasized the autonomy of solo practices, while others highlighted the shared financial burden in group models. One interviewee noted, “Running a solo practice gives me complete control, but the financial risk is significantly higher compared to a group setting.” Others mentioned how corporate-owned dental chains provide structured business support, reducing administrative burdens but limiting independence.

In terms of service differentiation, practitioners focused on offering specialized care and niche services to stand out in a competitive market. Some reported implementing high-value treatments such as cosmetic dentistry and orthodontics to attract a specific clientele. One participant shared, “We specialize in minimally invasive procedures, and that has helped us build a strong reputation in the community.” Another noted the importance of personalized patient experiences to foster loyalty and word-of-mouth marketing.

Partnerships and collaborations played a crucial role in business growth and sustainability. Many participants described strategic alliances with specialists, co-branding initiatives, and interdisciplinary partnerships as effective means of expanding services and patient outreach. A participant stated, “I collaborate with orthodontists and periodontists to provide a full range of services under one roof, which increases patient retention and satisfaction.”

With regard to scalability strategies, practitioners explored various approaches to business expansion, including opening additional branches, offering online consultations, and automating workflows. One interviewee explained, “Our practice started small, but through gradual scaling, we now have multiple locations, and digital tools have streamlined our appointment scheduling.”

For market positioning, branding strategies and targeted marketing were crucial. Participants emphasized the need to create a strong brand identity to differentiate themselves from competitors. “Our practice is known for its family-friendly atmosphere, and that branding helps us attract more patients,” one interviewee explained. Others discussed pricing models tailored to specific demographics to improve market appeal.

Regarding startup capital and funding, many practitioners relied on bootstrapping, bank loans, and angel investors to launch their practices. Some reported success with crowdfunding and community-based financial support. “I started with a small personal loan, but later, investors showed interest once they saw our patient base growing,” a participant shared.

Cost management strategies focused on reducing overhead expenses, negotiating supplier contracts, and optimizing resources. Many practitioners highlighted the importance of financial discipline in maintaining profitability. One interviewee noted, “I constantly analyze our expenses to ensure we are not overspending on equipment and supplies.”

To enhance financial stability, participants implemented revenue diversification by offering additional services such as cosmetic enhancements and wellness programs. Some explored insurance partnerships and membership plans. “We introduced a membership plan that provides discounts for uninsured patients, which has been a game-changer,” one participant stated.

Pricing strategies varied, with some practitioners opting for tiered pricing and flexible payment plans to accommodate different patient demographics. A participant explained, “We offer premium packages for high-end clients but also have budget-friendly options to cater to a wider audience.”

To mitigate financial risks, participants employed financial risk mitigation techniques such as maintaining

reserve funds, securing comprehensive insurance, and forecasting financial trends. “We learned from the pandemic that having an emergency fund is critical to surviving unexpected downturns,” one interviewee reflected.

Participants also discussed investment and growth planning, emphasizing the role of equipment upgrades, expansion loans, and staff development in sustaining long-term business success. One practitioner shared, “Investing in state-of-the-art technology has given us a competitive edge in the market.”

For digital marketing strategies, practitioners highlighted the use of SEO, social media engagement, and content marketing to attract new patients. “We get most of our new patients through Google searches, so optimizing our website has been a priority,” one dentist stated.

Referral programs were widely used to encourage patient loyalty and word-of-mouth advertising. Participants described offering incentives for referrals, collaborating with local businesses, and establishing professional partnerships. “Our referral program rewards both the referrer and the new patient, which has significantly boosted our client base,” a participant noted.

Practitioners also implemented patient engagement initiatives to enhance retention, such as online portals, post-treatment follow-ups, and personalized communication. One interviewee emphasized, “Regular check-in messages and birthday greetings help maintain patient relationships and build trust.”

Customer relationship management (CRM) tools were crucial for automating appointment reminders, tracking patient history, and improving overall service efficiency. “Our CRM system sends automated reminders, reducing no-shows and keeping our schedule organized,” one dentist explained.

Reputation management was another critical strategy, with practitioners actively managing online reviews and engaging with patient feedback. One interviewee noted, “We encourage satisfied patients to leave reviews, which helps us maintain a positive online presence.”

Community outreach efforts included public health screenings, educational seminars, and free dental check-ups to increase brand visibility. “Hosting free dental camps has been a great way to give back to the



community while also attracting new patients,” a participant mentioned.

For patient education and awareness campaigns, participants used newsletters, social media posts, and webinars to provide oral health information. “We run monthly webinars on dental hygiene, which help educate our patients and build credibility,” an interviewee shared.

The adoption of digital tools was a key technological strategy, with many practices integrating digital x-rays, intraoral scanners, and online appointment systems. “Switching to digital records has made our workflow much more efficient,” a practitioner noted.

In terms of integration of AI in dentistry, participants reported using AI-based diagnostics, predictive analytics, and virtual treatment planning. One interviewee described, “AI has transformed how we analyze patient data and predict treatment outcomes.”

Patient data management systems focused on secure storage solutions, encrypted databases, and compliance with data protection regulations. A practitioner explained, “Ensuring HIPAA compliance in our digital records is a top priority for patient confidentiality.”

Remote consultations became increasingly popular, with practitioners utilizing telemedicine for initial consultations and follow-ups. “Virtual consultations allow us to assess cases before the patient even steps into the clinic,” a participant stated.

Finally, data security and privacy were emphasized as crucial elements in safeguarding patient information. One interviewee stressed, “With cyber threats on the rise, we have invested in multi-layered security measures to protect patient data.”

These findings illustrate the diverse entrepreneurial strategies employed by dental startups and private practices, highlighting key business, financial, marketing, and technological considerations in sustaining and growing a successful dental practice.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the entrepreneurial strategies employed by dental startups and private practices, focusing on four key areas: business model development, financial management, patient acquisition and retention, and technological integration. The results suggest that while practitioners

adopt various approaches to establish and grow their businesses, several common themes emerge, including the importance of practice ownership models, financial sustainability, patient engagement, and digital transformation. These findings align with existing literature on dental entrepreneurship, particularly regarding the challenges and opportunities faced by dental professionals in managing their practices in an increasingly competitive and technology-driven industry.

The study revealed that dental practitioners adopt different business models based on their financial capacity, professional goals, and market demands. Some participants favored solo ownership for greater autonomy, while others preferred group practices or franchise models to reduce financial risk and administrative burden. These findings align with previous studies that emphasize the importance of choosing an appropriate business model in dental practice management (1). Research suggests that solo practitioners often face higher financial risks but benefit from complete control over decision-making (4). In contrast, group practices and franchise models provide financial security and operational support but may limit individual decision-making (10).

Service differentiation was another critical strategy, with participants highlighting the need to offer specialized care, such as cosmetic dentistry, orthodontics, and minimally invasive procedures, to stand out in a competitive market. Previous studies confirm that specialized services enhance patient attraction and retention, allowing practitioners to build a strong reputation and command premium pricing (11). Additionally, strategic partnerships and collaborations were widely employed, with many dentists working alongside specialists to offer comprehensive care under one roof. This approach has been previously identified as an effective strategy for expanding service offerings and increasing patient satisfaction (1).

Scalability emerged as a significant consideration, with practitioners exploring branch expansions, online consultations, and automation to enhance operational efficiency. Research suggests that scaling a dental practice requires careful financial planning and technological integration to maintain service quality while expanding (12). Market positioning strategies, including branding, competitive pricing, and targeted

marketing, were also emphasized by participants, reinforcing findings from prior studies that highlight the importance of strategic branding in dental entrepreneurship (11).

Financial management was identified as one of the most significant challenges in dental entrepreneurship. Participants reported utilizing various funding sources, including bootstrapping, bank loans, and angel investors, to launch their practices. These findings align with prior research indicating that financial planning is crucial for the sustainability of dental businesses (2). Studies have shown that practitioners who secure diverse funding sources tend to have higher financial stability and long-term growth potential (15).

Cost management was a central concern, with participants emphasizing the importance of tracking expenses, negotiating supplier contracts, and optimizing resource allocation. Research supports these findings, indicating that effective cost management strategies help dental practices maintain profitability without compromising patient care (17). Additionally, revenue diversification was a key focus, with many participants introducing membership plans, insurance partnerships, and additional services such as wellness programs. Previous studies confirm that diversifying revenue streams helps mitigate financial risks and enhances long-term business viability (16).

Financial risk mitigation strategies, including maintaining reserve funds, securing comprehensive insurance, and implementing financial forecasting, were widely reported. These findings align with research indicating that dental practices that plan for economic downturns are more likely to withstand financial crises (5). The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of financial preparedness, as many practitioners experienced significant revenue losses due to reduced patient visits and increased operational costs (6, 8).

Participants highlighted digital marketing as a primary strategy for patient acquisition, with many using SEO, social media, and online advertising to enhance visibility. Previous studies support these findings, indicating that an active digital presence significantly influences patient decisions when selecting a dental provider (21). Research suggests that dental practices that engage in consistent digital marketing efforts

experience higher patient retention and appointment bookings (22, 23).

Referral programs were also identified as an effective strategy for attracting new patients, with practitioners implementing loyalty incentives and professional partnerships. Studies indicate that word-of-mouth marketing remains one of the most powerful tools for patient acquisition in dentistry (23). Furthermore, patient engagement initiatives, such as personalized follow-ups, automated appointment reminders, and patient education programs, were widely employed. These findings align with research demonstrating that proactive communication and engagement significantly enhance patient loyalty and trust (15).

Customer relationship management (CRM) systems were commonly used to streamline patient interactions and maintain comprehensive treatment histories. Prior studies suggest that the implementation of CRM software improves patient satisfaction and operational efficiency by reducing no-show rates and enhancing appointment scheduling (24). Additionally, reputation management through online reviews and public relations efforts was a priority for many practitioners. Research has shown that maintaining a positive online reputation influences patient perceptions and practice growth (9).

Community outreach programs, including free dental camps and educational workshops, were another strategy used to attract new patients and strengthen the practice's reputation. These findings align with prior research emphasizing the role of social responsibility in building patient trust and increasing brand awareness (20).

The integration of digital tools and artificial intelligence (AI) in dental practices was a key theme, with participants highlighting the benefits of AI-assisted diagnostics, digital patient records, and online scheduling systems. Research confirms that AI-powered tools improve diagnostic accuracy, enhance treatment planning, and optimize workflow efficiency (13). Previous studies have also demonstrated that digital imaging and virtual consultations expand access to care and improve patient experiences (24).

Telemedicine and remote consultations were widely adopted, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings align with research showing that virtual consultations enable practitioners to provide preliminary assessments and follow-ups while

improving patient accessibility (25). The adoption of secure patient data management systems was another critical area, with practitioners emphasizing the importance of data encryption, cloud-based storage, and HIPAA compliance. Studies indicate that robust cybersecurity measures are essential for protecting patient privacy and ensuring regulatory compliance (26).

While technological advancements have enhanced operational efficiency, some practitioners expressed concerns about the cost of implementation and staff training. Research suggests that while digital transformation improves long-term practice sustainability, initial investment costs can be a barrier for smaller dental startups (5).

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study relied on qualitative data from a relatively small sample size, which may not be fully representative of all dental entrepreneurs. While theoretical saturation was achieved, the findings cannot be generalized to the entire dental industry. Second, participant responses were self-reported, introducing the possibility of response bias. Some participants may have provided socially desirable answers rather than fully disclosing the challenges they face. Lastly, the study focused on practitioners from diverse countries, but regional differences in healthcare policies and economic conditions were not deeply analyzed, which could influence the applicability of certain strategies.

Future studies should explore entrepreneurial strategies in dentistry using a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to enhance generalizability. Additionally, research should examine the long-term financial outcomes of different business models to determine which strategies yield the highest profitability and sustainability. Investigating the impact of digital transformation on practice efficiency and patient outcomes would also be valuable, particularly in assessing the cost-effectiveness of AI integration. Moreover, comparative studies across different healthcare systems could provide deeper insights into the role of policy and economic factors in shaping entrepreneurial success in dentistry.

Dental entrepreneurs should prioritize comprehensive business planning, considering factors such as market demand, competitive positioning, and

financial sustainability before launching a practice. Cost management strategies, including supplier negotiations and expense tracking, should be implemented to maintain profitability. Practitioners should also focus on patient engagement through digital marketing, personalized communication, and loyalty programs to enhance retention. Finally, investing in technological advancements, such as AI-driven diagnostics and telemedicine, can improve operational efficiency and patient satisfaction, positioning dental startups and private practices for long-term success.

#### Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

#### Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

#### Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

#### Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who cooperated in carrying out this study.

#### Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

#### Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

#### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

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