Digital Intraoral Scanner Usage Survey

A quick look at whether our readers have adopted this imaging technology

By Christopher Piehler

Every issue of this magazine presents readers with new, ever-advancing products, but how many orthodontists actually use anything beyond basic brackets and wires in their practices? To find out, Orthodontic Products has launched a series of reader surveys that will continue throughout the year.

The goal of our second survey was to discover if and how our readers use digital intraoral scanners. To gather our data, we sent an e-mail survey to our subscribers, with the incentive of a $50 gift card for filling it out. We received a total of 167 responses, although not all respondents answered all of the questions (and some questions allowed for more than one answer).

In the accompanying charts, each answer is labeled with the percentage of respondents who gave that answer. Here's what they said.

Do you use a digital intraoral scanner in your practice?

- Our poll suggests that digital intraoral scanners are still primarily in the hands of early adopters. Only 22.3% of respondents reported that they currently use a scanner in their practice. The population of users looks like it will grow quickly, however, with another 16.3% of our readers reporting that they plan to upgrade to a digital intraoral scanner within the next year.

If you answered “no,” why not? (Check all that apply.)

- The primary barrier to adoption of this technology is price: 73.9% of those who don’t use intraoral scanners said that it was because the machine costs too much, and another 18% cited lab fees. However, 29.7% of nonadaptors said that they did not see a clinical need for an intraoral scanner in their practice. For this question, we offered “Other (please specify)” as an option. Notable responses included the following:
  - “I do not believe all the bugs have been cleared up yet”;
  - “waiting to see what else comes on the market”; and
  - “We tried one and the staff did not like it!”
If you do use a digital intraoral scanner, what brand is it?

Among those who are currently using digital intraoral scanners in their practices, 72.1% have chosen the Invisalign iTero scanner, with the remaining 27.9% using SureSmile’s scanner. Three respondents noted that they use both iTero and SureSmile scanners, and others also mentioned that they were looking forward to Ormco’s DPI scanner.

What made you start using your scanner? (Check all that apply.)

The most commonly cited reason was patient comfort (60%), followed by the desire for cutting-edge technology (53.3%). Brand loyalty came into play as well: 50% of adopters bought a scanner to use with their Invisalign system, and 26.7% switched to treat SureSmile cases.

We also offered “Other (please specify)” as an answer to this question, and scanner users said they made the change in order to:
- “make retainers easier”;
- “replace alginate/PVS impressions”; and
- “save space and model time.”

How long have you been using your digital intraoral scanner?

It’s fair to say that most scanner users are new users. A clear 61.7% of our respondents have had the new technology for 6 months or less. The next largest group has been taking digital impressions for 3 to 5 years.

On the extreme side, one user replied that he has been using a digital intraoral scanner for 9 years.
To find contact information for all of the companies mentioned here, visit our Buyer’s Guide at OrthodonticProductsOnline.com.

For what types of cases do you use your scanner? (Check all that apply.)

- **Brand association was strong here:** 49.1% of users wield their scanner for Invisalign cases only, while 27.3% use theirs for SureSmile cases only. In the “Other (please specify)” category, respondents noted that they use their scanners for the following:
  - “digital study models and ... Invisalign Vivera retainers”;
  - “indirect bonding and other appliances”; 
  - “all retainers and Maryland bridges”; and
  - “lingual orthodontics cases only.”

All in all, this survey suggests that digital intraoral scanning is a technology near the beginning of its life cycle. A minority of our readers have adopted it, and those who have tend to use it only on brand-specific cases.

If new products come on the market as anticipated and the number of users grows as our data suggests, the next few years will see this technology become more widespread. Whether it becomes the industry-wide standard of care will depend on how many orthodontists decide that the cost is worth the benefits it provides.

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