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Durable, Sleek, Modern: **Kitchens by W. Atelier Pte Ltd**



W.Atelier Pte Ltd, formerly known as Inhwa Marketing Pte Ltd, was founded in 1979 as the sole provider of TOTO sanitary products. Since 2010, W.Atelier has grown its business to include kitchen and furniture lines.

Currently, the company derives some 80 per cent of its revenue from its B2B business, while the balance comes from its B2C business. It is looking to expand its B2C business, and also in its kitchen fittings and fixtures range marketed as TOTO Kitchen. TOTO Kitchen is targeted at the mid- to high-end customer segments. This year, it will be bringing into its fold premium quality brands including SieMatic Kitchen and Next125 by ScullerKitchens, thus providing customers with a wider range of choices and price points.

The intense competition from the more established brands in kitchen fittings and fixtures may pose a threat to TOTO Kitchen. With the aim to understand the business environment and gain a leading edge, the company approached UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (AEI) for a brand audit of its kitchen fittings and fixtures business.

What's cooking?

A team of three student-consultants undertook the project under the UOB-SMU AEI SME Consulting Programme. Working under the supervision of a Project Adviser, and with the support of the UOB-SMU AEI, they embarked on primary and secondary research to determine the competitive landscape of the kitchen fittings and fixtures segment in Singapore, and the target consumers' understanding and perception of all three kitchen brands under W. Atelier. The research findings would pave the way for creating a value proposition and for crafting appropriate strategies to advance the company's objectives.

Applying the theories learnt in class, the student-consultants embarked on data collection and analyses, making meaning of the information they have. The PESTEL and Porter's 5 Forces frameworks provided a comprehensive analysis of the macro environment which has an impact on W. Atelier's goals and strategies. While the PESTEL framework analysed the relevant political, economic and social fabric of Singapore, and how they will affect the company's target market and thus its revenue, the Porter's 5 Forces framework was used to examine the impact of five key forces affecting the industry.

The primary research comprised an online survey as well as in-depth interviews. With these results, the team identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to W. Atelier, using the SWOT analysis.

The methodological approach – the hallmark of the SME Consulting Programme – was relatively robust in that insights were obtained from respondents belonging to the target customer group, and scientific methods were used to collate and analyse the results. During analysis, the responses/data were cross-checked using different frameworks, thus strengthening their efficacy. For example, insights relating to opportunities and threats identified in the analyses of information culled from the PESTEL and Porter's 5

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Forces frameworks were re-examined using the SWOT analysis. The primary data also validated Porter's 5 Forces' industry analysis about W. Atelier's current brand positioning.

Your dream kitchen

In formulating the unique value proposition – the core positioning statement – for the various kitchen brands under W. Atelier, the team considered the information obtained from the primary and secondary research. Paying heed to the respondents' preferences about brands, designs and the attributes of their kitchen fittings and fixtures, the team proposed a unique value proposition for the kitchen business, for its use in its website and marketing materials.

The student-consultants then recommended a series of actionable plans to help the client achieve their objectives. The three-stage Awareness to Advocacy model separated their recommendations into three different stages, from developing customer awareness through to increasing their purchase intent.

A sleek finish

Although W. Atelier has a track record dating back to 1979, its kitchen business started much more recently – in 2010. "We wanted a better understanding of the kitchen business, and find out more about the market, competition and environment," said Miacarla Ng, Marketing Director. She commended the "systematic analysis" and findings done by the student-consultants, and shared that "the recommendations were adopted immediately". The full effects, however, would take some time to be felt.

Although the timing of this consulting project overlapped with the student-consultants' final examination preparations and presentations, they took on the challenge as they wanted "to gain some insights into the working world and have hands-on experience as a brand consultant". They were glad for the opportunity to apply textbook concepts to a real-life situation and shore up on their marketing knowledge.

Project Adviser Jeanette Ng kept them focused on the tasks at hand, helping them to decide on the most relevant frameworks, and refine their understanding and application of these structures. "I did this in incremental steps so as to enable them to assess the impact of the changes to the analysis and perspective," explained Ms Ng. She also encouraged external research, such as that pertaining to the best practices of companies in the same industry or engaging in similar branding initiatives. "This type of research provided the team with a 'sanity' check on what is feasible, from a broader perspective," she said.

Ms Ng complimented the students for their "positive attitude" and for "managing the time pressure" well. "It was heart-warming to see how they stretched themselves beyond the original recommendations, to develop additional value-added recommendations as part of a continuous improvement mindset," she said.

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