

dermedex

DERMATOLOGY • MEDICAL • EXPRESS

Best Face Forward: Dermedex

Dermedex's beginnings are steeped in the founder's mission to bring the best beauty products from around the world to the customers. With over two decades of experience, the professionally-trained and certified skincare therapist paired passion with practice, and transitioned from therapist to entrepreneur when she spotted the absence of a skincare range that could provide quick, effective and long-lasting results to address skin issues.

Her pursuit for beauty perfection has led her on a continuous search for the highest quality beauty products from across continents to create the most ideal skincare line – one that combines the best technologies from the East and West, so as to effectively solve a range of skin problems. Underlying the quest for top-notch quality is the belief that beauty products must be made by professionals for professionals, and that they should also be made available to the everyday women. Thus, Dermedex is stocked at over 1,000 select beauty salons, and also sold at its online store.

The name Dermedex is the combination of “dermatology”, “medical” and “express”, which encapsulate the philosophies behind the company's products.

Mirror, mirror, on the wall...

It is often said that beauty is only skin deep. However, the fact remains that first (second, third and subsequent) impressions count, so it is important to appear neat and even polished when the occasion calls for it. It also explains why the beauty and aesthetics industry continues its upward trajectory even during difficult economic times. The quest for beauty has seen increasing numbers seek out “permanent” solutions as they go under the knife, but many others are content to choose non-invasive treatments, potions and creams.

A recent UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (AEI) survey reveals that customers of beauty products have pre-set notions about the quality of a product vis-à-vis its geography. A product from France, for example, is perceived to be of higher quality than one from, say, an Asian country, and customers are willing to fork out more for it *by virtue of its country of origin*. However, in the longer term, the product's effectiveness remains of prime importance.

As with other products, customers expect their facial beauty items to be efficacious over a period of time, provide a total solution to satisfy their different requirements and yet remain affordable. When it comes to getting refills and replenishments, the process should be seamless and convenient.

Who's the fairest of them all?

When in doubt, listen to your mother... or relatives, or friends. This appears to be the adage of most people when it comes to their choice of facial beauty brands and products. Comments such as “My friend tried it and said it's good.”; “My mum has been using this forever, and she looks great!” and “My beautician knows my skin type and recommended this.” suggest that endorsements from people they trust are a major factor in the purchase decision. But the affinity for the familiar is not an insurmountable hurdle for competing product providers eager for a share of the consumer dollar.

Promotions and prices, product reviews and advertisements also influence the purchase decision. Just take the example of the annual Great Singapore Sale (GSS), where tangible, positive outcomes have resulted from attractive offerings – some of the outcomes would, in all probability, involve a change in brand allegiance by the customers.

UOB-SMU

Asian Enterprise Institute

For the last 20 years of GSS, retailers have been rolling out sizeable discounts, bundle deals, giveaways and more, and the crowds – both local and from overseas – have responded by chalking up impressive figures that escalate year after year. In addition to the retailers, other organisations and service providers spanning accommodation, food and airline companies, telecommunication firms, credit card companies and banks, have also jumped on the bandwagon with their own offers. In short, Singapore becomes one huge shopping paradise during the two-month GSS as eager buyers keep the cash registers ringing.

With the advent of the Internet and more recently, the pervasive use of the social media, e-marketing efforts are used to reach out to net-savvy consumers. Blog, Facebook, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn, MySpace, Pinterest, Second Life, Tumblr, Twitter, WordPress, VK... As more social media platforms flourish in the online sphere, and user-generated content can “go viral” in a matter of clicks, within split seconds – with the potential to engage and influence massive numbers of people – businesses have come to realise that the social media has become part of mainstream media. This has in turn fuelled a surge in online advertising and sponsored product reviews, and even made “Blogging” a profession.

These days, it would come as no surprise if someone said, “I read a good review on a blog, so I am giving this product a shot.” – even if it were a review of a *sponsored* product by someone they have never met.

Beauty that lasts...

Dermedex had specific objectives when it approached the AEI to participate in its flagship Consulting Programme. The SME was looking to “get feedback and validation from the ground, and to find out more about our competitors and where we stand,” shared Ms Natasha Toh, Business Development Manager, Dermedex.

“Our expectations were fully met,” she said, citing the value of the “in-depth interviews and on-the-ground research” as they provided the company with crucial feedback. She lauded the student-consultants as “a great resource to help the entrepreneur find out more information about what the market feels about the brand and where the company currently stands in relation to the competition; this is very important to ensure that the company is headed in the right direction,” she added.

In addition to the practical recommendations provided by the student-consultants, the company also tapped on the Institute’s online marketing toolkit (<http://usaei.smu.edu.sg/sme/toolkits/marketing>). The toolkit, launched in collaboration with SPRING Singapore and Ogilvy Singapore, “provides a good basic framework to address the marketing needs of an SME and helps us in planning our marketing strategies and direction,” said Ms Toh.

The three student-consultants concurred that the project gave them a taste of real-life challenges an SME faces in its marketing and branding efforts. They were glad for the opportunity to apply their textbook knowledge to the client’s two business models – B2C and B2B – and had proposed practical solutions based on their analyses and findings.

Project Advisor Ms Jeanette Ng praised the team for being “very thorough” and doing a “really great job” in the market research as the student-consultants were “detailed in drawing up conclusions based on their qualitative and quantitative analyses”.

Project Advisor:	Ms Jeanette NG
Student Consultants:	Jolie LEE Jia Ling Bachelor of Science (Information Systems)
	Radeya PARVEEN Bachelor of Science (Information Systems)
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