

EXQUISITE NAIL SPA

Elegance Beyond Your Fingertips: Exquisite Nails Spa

Exquisite Nails Spa is a beauty service provider which offers a comprehensive range of beauty services. Established in 2002 as a nail spa, it has grown in stature to attract a loyal customer base, as well as expanded its repertoire of beauty services to include foot and body massage, waxing, make-up, eyebrow embroidery, hair-styling, and fashion and design.

With its rich experience in beauty services, a stellar track record and a team of professionally-trained therapists, Exquisite Nails Spa continues to deliver top-notch service and superior value to its customers.

The SME is constantly looking for new ways to raise the bar on service and product delivery, and this includes a commitment to research and development and innovation. Its joint venture in 3D nail art is testament to how Exquisite Nails Spa pioneers the integration of technology into the beauty service industry, with the aim to delight customers through a novel experience.

As it marks its 15th anniversary this year, Exquisite Nails Spa wants to take a definitive step towards becoming a market leader of beauty services in the eastern part of Singapore. Through the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (AEI)'s flagship SME Consulting Programme, the SME received a high-quality brand audit and a comprehensive report featuring practical, cost-efficient strategies aimed at helping it progress towards its market leadership goals.

Look Good, Feel Great

A team of student-consultants, supervised by an industry veteran and supported by the Institute, undertook the Exquisite Nails Spa brand audit. Using a combination of primary and secondary research methods to identify the SME's current market standing vis-à-vis its competitors and derive insights about consumer behaviour, the data identified the key challenges and opportunities for the SME. Such salient information was used to create a unique value proposition that would enhance its position in its target geographic area in the eastern part of Singapore.

Leveraging scientific methodologies, the team tapped on a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis to ascertain Exquisite Nails Spa's standing among competing establishments in the vicinity. Consumer perceptions were garnered largely through primary research – engaging a representative sample of the SME's customers in in-depth interviews, mystery shopping experiences at Exquisite Nails Spa as well as at its competitors' outlets, a street intercept survey and an online survey. Qualitative and quantitative questions were employed in order to make detailed evaluations. Secondary research focused on finding best practices in the beauty industry so that the SME could adopt and adapt them in order to keep ahead in a saturated industry.

Customer feedback showed that the SME ranks high for quality of service, creativity, cleanliness and location. At a time when consumers are becoming more affluent and willing to splurge to look and feel good, aesthetic service providers like Exquisite Nails Spa can do more to take advantage of this growing consumption trend. After all, as a full-service beauty parlour, it has under one roof a host of beauty services that could benefit its nail spa customers.

Personalised Experience

After a careful analysis of the data, the team crafted a new value proposition for Exquisite Nails Spa that differentiates it from the other salons. With emphasis on indulgence and a pampering, personalised

experience, the three student-consultants proposed a set of recommendations aimed at helping the SME fulfil its customer commitments. From the spa layout and décor to the seamless and personalised service delivery, every aspect of the customer's experience is planned to ensure a truly unparalleled and memorable outing.

Technology can boost business, and the digital and online platforms are an effective and cost-efficient way to reach out to a wide base of existing and potential customers. Today's consumers are not passive as social media has allowed people to have a hand in creating and augmenting the very content that they assume. Thus, it is essential for Exquisite Nails Spa to be on-trend as it curates new ways to engage and interact with its customers.

Engaging with customers does not have to come with high costs. The SME can incorporate a membership portal on its website to build brand community and encourage co-creation. To increase brand awareness, content marketing via social media has proven to be inexpensive and very effective. YouTube, with over one billion unique visitors each month, is one of the most effective marketing tools for small businesses. Partnerships and collaborations, promotions, loyalty marketing and public relations initiatives can also be explored.

The student-consultants provided a timeline for the recommendations to be carried out, prioritising them from high to low so it is clear which changes are the most critical. This provides an organised and manageable transition so that the SME can continue its daily operations with minimal disruption, while improvements are being made.

Different Faces Of Beauty

Exquisite Nails Spa owner Edwin Choo had approached the UOB-SMU AEI to ascertain the "current position within my business area", with a view to bringing the business forward. "Yes, my expectations were met," he said. He was satisfied with the results and recommendations, garnered from the methodical and scientific approach to address business issues. The use of such an objective approach is a key benefit of the SME Consulting Programme.

"We adopted some of the recommendations, for example, digitalisation, and have engaged a full-time staff to manage our presence on Facebook and Instagram," shared Mr Choo.

The student-consultants, who had wanted to "learn more about SMEs as well as the opportunities and challenges of working in today's challenging business environment", and get a "realistic experience in consulting-related work", said their objectives were met. "We conducted various kinds of marketing research and recommended strategies that were well-received; many of the strategies were also carried out immediately."

Project Advisor Dolly Chin complimented the team for its reports and presentations, which were "very well done"; they were also "very responsive to feedback and suggestions". For example, she had reminded the team to consider the practicalities of the recommendations – "whether suggested budgets, strategies, vendors, resourcing for implementation, etc, would be within the capabilities of the SME. SMEs tend to be very short-term focused, thus, recommendations should ideally include a timeframe to help guide them to execute and stay on the path of execution instead of dropping out halfway". The final report showed that the student-consultants had indeed heeded Ms Chin's advice.

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