



On-trend, On Health, On-the-go: Fruit United Pte Ltd

Fruit United Pte Ltd aims to provide a one-stop service which spans the growing, sourcing, cutting, packaging and distribution of raw fruits and ready-to-eat cut fruits, with a sustainable presence in Singapore and beyond. Established in 2013, the company is currently a local distributor of cut and prepacked tropical fruits. It counts among its business clients Fairprice supermarkets, franchised and convenience stores and kiosks including those located in the petrol stations, and customised cut-fruit packing (OEM) and online shops. With a factory in Iskandar Johor to fulfil the cutting and prepacking processes, the SME brings health benefits and convenience to customers who want to eat better by including fruits in their diet.

The company is looking to extend its footprint outside Singapore, and is eyeing Malaysia and China as potential new markets in the near term. Prior to its expansion, Fruit United would like to establish a strong brand identity that is associated with being healthy. With this in mind, the SME went to the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (UOB-SMU AEI) for its SME Consulting Programme (SCP), to help bring the business to the next stage of growth.

A team of three student-consultants, supervised by an industry veteran as Project Advisor and supported by a UOB-SMU manager, undertook the project. The brand audit seeks to understand the SME's target market segments, reposition the brand and develop strategies that can effectively increase its market presence in Singapore.

An Apple a Day or More?

One of the hallmarks of the SCP is the use of scientific methodologies, and the student-consultants tapped on a blend of primary and secondary research to better understand the industry that Fruit United operates in, and where the brand and its products stand. They reached out to the SME's target market segments (both existing and potential) through on-site and online surveys, as well as through focus group discussions. Having garnered salient insights from the customers and key buyers from the trade channels, a SWOT analysis was used to chart the SME and its products' relative strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Secondary research, via public databases and desktop research, served to validate the findings obtained from the primary research.

Given Singapore's push for a healthier lifestyle that includes a better work-life harmony, feedback from the survey respondents revealed a positive trend towards people exercising more and eating better, such as including fruits in their diets around two to four times a week. Fruit United's target segment comprises largely a generation that is weaned on technology, where everything moves at breakneck speed. This is a generation that values efficiency and quick returns. Meals on-the-go would appeal to them, and if the SME wants to ride on this on-the-go trend with its prepacked cut fruits, its products must stand out from its competitors' offerings.

It has often been said that we eat with our eyes, which gives credence to the power of visual appeal. Bruised fruits are often shunned while their fresh, brightly-coloured peers seem to shout, "pick me, pick me!" It is thus not surprising that "fruit appearance" ranks as the most valued attribute among survey respondents, followed by "convenience", "taste" and other attributes. With analyses that included benchmarking the diverse customers' perceptions and feedback on Fruit United and its competitors, the student-consultants discerned three key challenges facing the SME, that hinders it from being the go-to brand among its target segments.



A Cup of Customised Colours

After assessing the research findings, the student-consultants designed a novel brand narrative that would help elevate Fruit United's products and brand among its existing and potential target segments, and forward its sustainable development and expansion push.

The team devised a set of workable recommendations to support the SME's new brand positioning, which is encapsulated in an original, innovative tagline. Including detailed plans to address the areas where Fruit United had fallen short (when compared with its competitors), there were also strategies and tactics aimed at raising its profile and products among its target segments. Additionally, the team proposed ways for it to garner new market segments as well as expand its product lines.

The final project report also comprised a comprehensive communications campaign to achieve the desired outcomes. A 100-day implementation plan, with a series of corresponding, easy-to-follow action plans, was created for the SME by the team.

Palate-pleasing Packaging

According to Fruit United Director Alex Chong, "most of the recommendations are useful, and we will adopt them". He acknowledged that the brand audit has "highlighted business challenges and provided a direction of where the company should be headed", which fulfilled the SME's objective for the SCP.

The student-consultants were glad for the opportunity to contribute their collective knowledge and recommendations to a real-life organisation. In turn, they benefitted from their exposure to an SME's operations and resources, and learnt about the limitations that a smaller business faces on a daily basis. They credited Project Advisor Marcus Loh for introducing new concepts to them, such as the use of a brand narrative to frame and present the recommendations to Fruit United.

On his part, Mr Loh said he had allowed the students to "experiment, demonstrate initiative and arrive at preliminary recommendations of their own volition", which they were more than capable of doing, after which he stepped in to "steer the team towards understanding and applying the tested frameworks" for the final report.

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