



Perfection, from the Top Down: Kelture Salon

Kelture Salon is a premium hairdressing salon located in The Paragon, an upmarket mall in the Orchard Road shopping precinct. Firm in the belief that hairdressing is an art, and that their customers – whom they refer to as “guests” – should leave the salon looking and feeling good the “natural way”, the salon uses Aveda with its naturally-derived and plant-based ingredients, an innovation from the Estee Lauder Group, to deliver a great experience.

Kelture has a clientele of mostly affluent individuals above 30 years of age. Though younger guests do visit from time to time, they usually turn up in the company of existing customers or are recommended by family members.

The salon has traditionally distinguished itself from its competitors through its service-first approach, going the extra mile to make every visit a blissful one. Guests are served Aveda tea, and essential oils and head massages form part of the relaxation ritual. There is no hard selling of services as the vision is for guests to perceive the salon as a haven to escape to, where they can be free of their worries. Kelture aims to provide all guests with an immersive journey that enables them to truly unwind.

Much of the salon’s earlier marketing efforts were dedicated towards advocating the value that Kelture offers – hairdressing creativity with botanical innovation that was so coveted that it sold itself. While this has worked for many years, digital technologies and a new generation of people are demanding a more contemporary way of marketing. Kelture’s competitors – early adopters of technology – have been proactive in raising their profiles and pushing their products through the use of platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and their own websites. The salon has also hopped on the bandwagon, with its own series of Facebook campaigns.

To connect with a new generation of consumers, Kelture approached the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute for its SME Consulting Programme, with the objective to discover what makes the digital natives tick, and the latest market trends in reaching out to them. A team comprising three student-consultants, under the supervision of an industry veteran as Project Advisor and supported by a manager from the Institute, undertook the project.

Be Gone, Bad Hair Day!

The SME Consulting Programme distinguishes itself through its use of objective and scientific methodologies. Leveraging a combination of primary and secondary research, the student-consultants collected and analysed the data, before crafting a set of workable recommendations for the SME.

Two primary research methods – focus group discussion and online survey – were used to uncover insights into the profiles, preferences and motivations of the target audience. The two focus group discussions, held over different days to accommodate more participants, looked at the factors that tertiary education students (the target market) consider most important when choosing a hair salon. The feedback provided salient information for further exploration, and these areas were investigated through an online survey. The online survey, which targeted respondents aged 16 to 26 years, was designed to also derive statistically significant insights into the millennial market.

The secondary research, which was done online using publicly-available resources, featured a competitor analysis of Kelture and its closest competitors. It spanned a review of their social media pages (Instagram and

Facebook) and websites, including the visuals, aesthetics and content. The student-consultants also delved into keywords and discussions on social media and forum sites to learn about consumers' sentiments towards hairdressing trends and brands.

The information garnered from the primary and secondary research provided much fodder for the student-consultants as they collated crucial feedback on the customers' level and frequency of consumption; what motivates them vis-à-vis which salon they go to, how often and how much they are willing to spend; their expectations for a salon visit, how they respond to different types of promotions and incentives, and loyalty to existing salons, among other things.

Tailored Cuts, Customised Colours

Branding is an important aspect of any marketing strategy and, according to the insights gleaned, Kelture needs to relook its branding in order to achieve its objective of connecting with potential millennial customers. A consistent, strategic branding leads to a stronger brand equity, and a crucial first step is to realign all its collateral. The student-consultants proposed a revamp of Kelture's website, using a palate of harmonious colours, font types and visuals to create a unique and compelling corporate identity that befits its standing. The new website would feature content that resonates with the millennials; for example, given their sensitivity to price, pricing transparency ranks high when they look for a hairdressing salon, and Kelture would need to take this into account. There would also be more well-located call-to-action buttons on the website, to make "next steps" an easy process. The website must also appeal to the salon's existing clientele.

With the perennial presence of social media in the millennials' lives, social media marketing is *de rigueur* to connect with them, as well as build on existing relationships. Within this platform is the growing clout of influencers, and a social media campaign should include influencer marketing as part of the plan.

The final project report featured a comprehensive proposal with clear strategies and action plans, with an implementation schedule of six months.





A Crowning Glory

The SME had participated in the SME Consulting Programme to “find out more about millennials and their consumption behaviours and expectations,” shares Ben Yeo, Manager of Kelture; they also wanted to “understand digital and its importance and potential”. The project delivered these and more, and the salon will look into implementing selected initiatives proposed by the consulting team, depending on their own limited resources.

The student-consultants gained valuable experience after working on this real-world project; they understood business processes better, and were able to put into action what they learnt in school. As the SME client had shared with the team “some of the management problems he faced – information that we wouldn’t be able to obtain through Google”, the team appreciated the opportunity to learn more than they expected. Project Advisor Shaun Yap was instrumental in “pushing our thinking”, says another student-consultant.

“I focused my guidance on the ‘why’ of most actions, rather than the ‘what’. Instead of telling them what to do, I explained what the thought process is, and the rationale. This helped them to think through how the SME could benefit, and at the same time, (the students can) benefit from this framework of thinking,” explains Mr Yap.

Project Advisor

Shaun Yap

Student-consultants

Chang Ci Yun

Bachelor of Business / 2016

Tan Chou Leong

Bachelor of Business / 2016

Tan Jia Min

Bachelor of Business / 2017