



TAKING FLIGHT WITH SINGAPOREAN MILLENNIALS: NAM HO TRAVEL SERVICE (S) PTE LTD

This homegrown business leveraged UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute's flagship SME Consulting Programme to craft a plan that would engage millennial travellers on social media.

Over six decades, Nam Ho Travel Service has established a leading presence in the hospitality industry by helping individuals and businesses with their travel needs. As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic receded, the company was keen to develop capabilities that would enable it to capture a sizeable share of pent-up travel demand. In particular, Nam Ho sought to target millennials who value highly personalised travel itineraries with some measure of luxury experiences. As such, the company was keen on developing a series of digital campaigns designed to engage these young travellers on their favourite social media platforms.

To embark on this endeavour, Nam Ho sought the assistance of the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (UOB-SMU AEI) to conduct market research and implement a suitable social media marketing strategy. Under AEI's SME Consulting Programme+ initiative, a team of three student-consultants — supervised by an industry veteran as Project Advisor and supported by a Project Manager from the Institute — undertook this digital marketing project that also involved bite-sized implementation work.

During the 20-week project, the team found that the barriers to entry for new players in the travel market were low, and that consumers favoured abundant travel planning options. Thus, it recommended that Nam Ho carve its niche by launching a novel itinerary-sharing platform.

Narrowing the focus

Nam Ho tasked the project team first to analyse the state of the post-COVID-19 travel industry and its implications for the firm. The team would then propose recommendations to support the development, marketing and implementation of Nam Ho's digital itinerary sharing platform.

Project Advisor Yasmin Begum advised the student-consultants to relook the client's priorities and decide on the best objectives that could be achieved, given the time and resources available. "I am glad they managed to scope it tightly after a few discussions," she shared. "The final agreed project objectives were aligned with SMU's requirements, (and) the client's requirements and achievable in the given time period."

To better understand the state of the travel sector, the project team employed two frameworks: Porter's Five Forces Framework, to analyse the competitive forces within the Singapore travel industry; and the Business Situation Framework, to understand the relationships existing between the company and its products, customers and competitors.

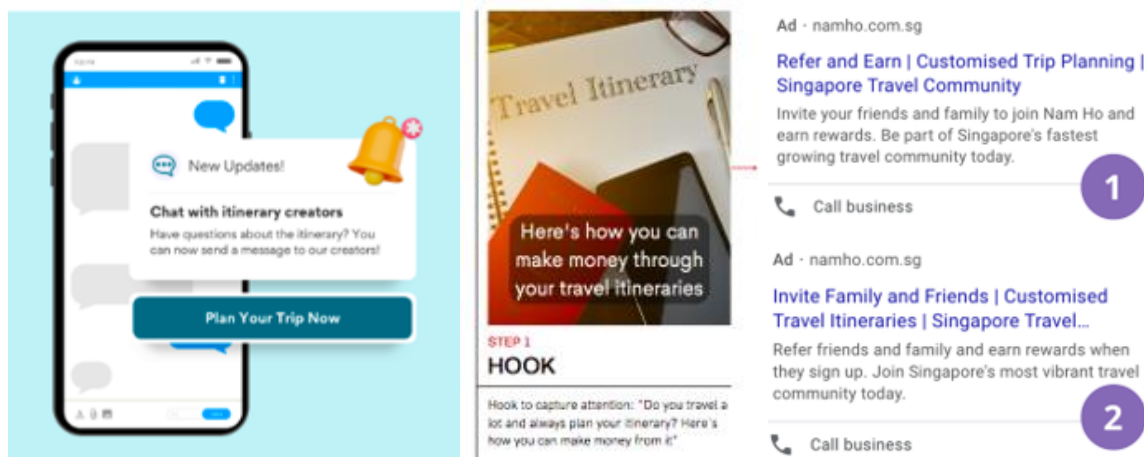
Using Porter's Five Forces Frameworks, the student-consultants sought to understand the threat of new entrants, the threat of substitutes, the bargaining power of buyers, the bargaining power of suppliers and the rivalry among existing competitors. Meanwhile, they employed the Business Situation Framework to better understand Nam Ho's customers, competition, the company itself and its product.

A voyage of discovery with travel's new trends and social media

The team utilised both primary and secondary research as the key methodologies to gain relevant insights for this project. They started by conducting secondary research to gain a general sense of the global travel landscape, focusing on post-pandemic Singapore, and to understand the target audience of Singaporean millennials aged from 18 to 40.

To do so, they consulted travel websites, official publications, analyst reports, news articles and social media. The student-consultants then conducted primary research using one survey and six focus group discussions to obtain relevant insights into the target market's travel planning habits and preferences.

From their extensive research, the team crafted distinct customer personas that Nam Ho could potentially target. To effectively engage these personas, the student-consultants proposed that Nam Ho launch a social media campaign on Instagram, TikTok and Google Ads that delivers relevant content in three phases: pre-launch, launch and post-launch. The proposed marketing strategies were included in a guidebook, which the company could refer to when the platform was ready for launch.



Social media campaign in the form of Instagram, TikTok and Google Search Ads deliverables

A “well-executed” blueprint for action

As there were significant delays in the launch of Nam Ho's new digital platform due to COVID-19, plans for implementing the project proposals were pushed back. As such, the team could not launch any live campaigns on the company's social media platforms.

“A major challenge that we faced was pivoting the project scope when we realised the digital platform that our implementation project was centred on would not be launched

during our project,” said the project team in their reflections. “While encountering this challenge, we also understood the difficulties a business would face when developing a platform, especially with the setbacks posed by COVID-19.”

Instead, the student-consultants prepared an Implementation Guidebook for future use, comprising platform name ideas, project deliverables for Instagram, TikTok and Google Ads.

Nam Ho’s Company Director Marshall Ooi noted that he was “extremely satisfied” with project work and that “the bite-sized implementation work was overall well executed by the student team.” Furthermore, the company would consider continuing with the team’s work after the project had been handed over. In fact, Mr Ooi revealed that Nam Ho Travel is planning to launch the portal in Q3 of 2023 during the travel fair season.

Yasmin noted that the ability to listen and provide what the client requires is a measure of success, which the team has achieved well. “They even received job offers from Marshall, which is definitely another measure of success that the client is pleased with the project result!” she revealed.

Despite being unable to implement their ideas, Project Manager Chen Shanshan said that the team’s “research insights and the end-deliverable of the implementation guide proved to be absolutely useful for the SME to incorporate it immediately”.

Project Advisor	Yasmin Begum
Project Manager	Chen Shanshan
Student-Consultants	<p>Aanya Jain Bachelor of Social Sciences (Psychology and Marketing) / 2018</p> <p>Aida Mohamed Redzwan Bachelor of Business Management (Marketing and Strategic Management) / 2018</p> <p>Veronica Bella Arifin Bachelor of Business Management (Marketing) / 2018</p>