

 **BARRE 2 BARRE****Raising the Fitness Bar: Barre 2 Barre**

Founded by three friends with a passion for embracing a healthy lifestyle through barre — a full-body fitness regime that combines elements of ballet, yoga and Pilates — Barre 2 Barre offers online and in-person classes for enthusiasts of all levels. Launched in 2012 in Hong Kong, the boutique studio has since moved to Singapore, and established an app with virtual classes and more.

While the founders are passionate about various forms of barre, they currently offer a wide range of workouts, from the traditional Barre Mixed and Pilates classes to High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) and Low-Intensity Interval Training (LIIT) sessions. Dedicated to bringing the latest and best techniques in barre and movement to their clients, the founders strongly promote, and practise, the BarreAmped method, which was created by international fitness celebrity Suzanne Bowen. This method focuses on maintaining a neutral, “untucked” spine position that follows the natural curves of the spine, rather than the conventional “tucked” pelvis position that flattens the back. Barre 2 Barre also offers year-round teacher training for individuals who want to grow and develop their practice to the next level.



Catering to all skill levels, Singapore-based boutique studio Barre 2 Barre offers in-person classes as well as online workouts through its website and app for a flexible fitness experience.

Like many sectors, the fitness industry has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought changes in societal norms and heightened uncertainties. As a small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME), Barre 2 Barre adapted to the new normal within its operating landscape, aiming to implement strategies that will not only restore growth but also build future resilience.

Looking for assistance in developing a market research and strategies project, Barre 2 Barre turned to the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (UOB-SMU AEI) flagship SME Consulting Programme (SCP). Supervised by an industry veteran as Project Advisor and a Project Manager from the Institute, student-consultants gained knowledge of the barre landscape and clientele in Singapore, and ultimately proposed suitable customer acquisition and retention strategies.

Reading the rhythm of customer preferences

The hallmark of the SCP is the use of scientific research methodologies to systematically assess and address a business issue. Thus, to understand the customer journey funnel and establish a basis for the team's recommendations, the student-consultants conducted three forms of primary research: A quantitative research survey, one-to-one in-depth interviews with clients, and finally, on-the-ground research on Barre 2 Barre's competitors. The team used an online questionnaire to gather data from more than 100 respondents, to determine the exposure and knowledge level of Singapore barre enthusiasts. The survey also sought insights into the level of interest towards barre as a fitness option, the appeal of BarreAmped as an approach, and awareness of the Barre 2 Barre brand.

The student-consultants focused primarily on regular exercisers aged 20 to 25, and discovered that respondents enjoyed low-intensity cardio, high-intensity cardio, and core- and muscle-strengthening types of workouts. While the majority did not know about the BarreAmped method, more than 50 per cent of the respondents expressed an interest in trying it. The findings indicated a fragmented barre industry in Singapore, with Barre 2 Barre claiming about a 21 per cent market share in terms of brand recognition. Price emerged as a significant factor in the decision-making process for the target consumer segment.

The team also conducted in-depth, face-to-face interviews with Barre 2 Barre clients and potential customers to better understand which marketing strategies might entice the chosen target audience to pick Barre 2 Barre over its competitors. While these findings corroborated that pricing is an important consideration when choosing a workout class, the data showed that consumers who have tried and enjoyed barre, and the



Barre 2 Barre instructors skilfully guide participants through workouts during in-person classes, which are also the preferred mode of instruction for clients aged between 20 and 25.

BarreAmped method, are more willing to invest more for quality instruction. Fitness enthusiasts aged 20 to 25 also prefer in-person classes over livestreamed sessions due to the sense of community these provide.

In addition to the on-the-ground competitor research, the team conducted secondary research in the form of a competitor analysis to understand the unique value propositions and offerings of various market players. The student-consultants found that Barre 2 Barre rivals or surpasses its competitors in many aspects. However, they suggested that Barre 2 Barre could bolster its social media presence for more effective outreach to the fitness community and further optimise its pricing strategy.

Tapping into core strengths and opportunities

Having applied established data analysis methods and techniques to their findings, the student-consultants proposed a three-pronged approach. This takes into account Barre 2 Barre's existing advantages and the opportunities spotted during research. Given the importance of community for the target market — with many not just focusing on physical aspects and benefits of exercising but seeking a more holistic outcome — the team recommended that Barre 2 Barre design various types of classes. These could include themed classes, such as sessions featuring songs by a popular artist, or complimentary (or lower-priced) community classes conducted by trainee instructors. These types of classes not only bring like-minded people together, but also foster greater instructor-trainee interaction.

The student-consultants also suggested the implementation of value-based pricing. Barre 2 Barre could offer shareable packages or introduce special pricing for certain segments, such as student rates or promotional packages for pre- and post-natal women. The studio certainly has the potential to experiment with segmented prices to attract more customers, contributing to building a sense of community.

Lastly, Barre 2 Barre could enhance its social media presence with frequent high-quality posts. This is a cost- and time-effective way to raise brand awareness and promote offerings. To increase engagement and reach, Barre 2 Barre might consider investing in paid advertising on its social channels. These tactics should increase engagement clicks on Barre 2 Barre's website, improving its Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) score and making the brand more discoverable online to a larger audience.



Home workouts with Barre 2 Barre online exemplify the potential impact of strategic investment in paid social media advertising. Driving more clicks to the website can improve SEO, boost online discoverability and reach a wider audience.

Based on the team's primary and secondary research findings, Barre 2 Barre is well-positioned to expand and retain its customer base, especially given that the competitor analysis favoured Barre 2 Barre in many aspects.

Leaping into immediate value

Barre 2 Barre was “very satisfied” overall with the student-consultants’ findings and suggestions. Its Director, Mrs Jessica Felicia Anwar, was particularly impressed by the team’s science-based and methodological approach, saying that they provided “fresh insight” and “new ways to think outside the box when (one has been) in the business for too long”. Barre 2 Barre also implemented one of the ideas suggested by the group: Shared packages. “It was a good suggestion,” she commented.

The student-consultants relished the opportunity to work on a real-world project with an enthusiastic SME. “During academic projects, our recommendations can be realistic but less targeted towards the client or are less business-focused,” they shared. “However, for real-life projects, the recommendations needed to be really well thought out as they can greatly impact the client’s overall business.”

Project Advisor Kenneth Oh emphasised the importance of focusing on clear and consistent objectives. “Despite the students initially ‘wanting to do everything’, they managed to focus on key areas of value to the SME,” he said. “For the SME, success was to gain a better insight into what the market wants. This was delivered, as the students provided many insights that definitely added value to the business.”

Project Manager Lina Lee echoed this sentiment. “The SME found value in the market research study carried out by the team, and even went ahead to implement one of the ideas. This is a great testimony of the kind of feasible recommendations that our student teams are capable of proposing.”

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