

THE BEAUTY BUSINESS

Is your salon a standout?
This is all you need to be one!

Words | Bindu Gopal Rao



SUCCESS FACTOR

YLG believes that there a combination of multiple factors which make a salon successful. Opines Rahul Bhalchandra, CEO & Director, YLG Salons, "Consistency of service quality is very important. This simple thing is the most difficult to achieve unless a

According to the report titled 'Indian Beauty Salon and Spa Industry: Trends & Opportunities (2012-2017)', "the beauty services consumption in India has been increasing exponentially since last couple of years. Consumers are becoming more aspiration driven which has led to the evolution of the concept of grooming and beauty for both the male and female segment in order to enhance their appearances. Consumers are ready to pay a premium to pamper themselves with the spa services." The FICCI 5th Annual Wellness Conference held in August 2013 projects that the wellness industry is expected to touch 1 trillion INR by 2015, growing at CAGR of 15-17%. So what does it take to become part of the industry and do it well?



host of support systems like recruiting the right people, effective training to drive desired behaviour and standard SOP of service are documented by a salon. The other thing is value for money – whatever target segment a salon operates in, the customer has to feel that every service it is worth her money paid – a simple thing which many salons believe does not matter if the salon looks luxurious." Adds Vibha Khanna Rastogi, Director, Sawadhee Traditional Thai Spa, New Delhi, "Apart from the location and ambience, you must also focus on the approach, on the type of spa you would like to have



Indiranagar Salon

personal and sensitive matter and with this way of functioning, the customer is thoroughly informed and aware of what product goes onto their skin and what is the procedure of the service," says Rahul Dash, Co-founder & COO, Purpille.com. A salon can differentiate on certain unique products and services, or based on the higher the skill level of its service providers, or on the customer experience. The differentiating factors that make a salon / spa successful include ambience, beautiful décor, quiet and peaceful surroundings are certainly a plus. Of course there must be no compromise as far as cleanliness and hygiene are concerned and an effective reception to guide you through the right kind of therapy helps. Well-trained therapists who understand the individual requirement of the client and never compromise on the quality of service work well for a spa / salon. According to Abhilash K Ramesh, Director Kairali Ayurvedic Group, "The service offering itself should be unique and stand out from others. Excellent services, cleanliness and educated well trained therapist / staff are must. Along with that customer seeks for an expert consultation where she may want to discuss her problems and look for suggestions as well, so an Expert consultation is very important. Customer satisfaction and customer retention is key, adopting to location,

- whether you want an Ayurveda Spa, Thai Spa, Foot Spa or Medi Spa. After this, focus on including innovative therapies and good quality natural organic products as part of the service offering." A salon's greatest strength is in understanding what its customers want and building their service around the same. "Personalising / customising the services is the key unique feature and it can be achieved by ensuring the availability of all necessary products (based on skin type, the requirement of the client, functionality of the product), proper education and implementation

of technique, availability of the tools / machinery to execute the same," says Swati Gupta, Creative Director, Bodycraft Salon Skin and Cosmetology Pvt. Ltd.

MAKING THE DIFFERENCE

A salon's greatest strength lies in understanding the needs and expectations of its customers and thus, building their service around it. "Purpille Salon believes in maintaining complete transparency with regards to any service information a customer requires. Anything to do with the skin is a

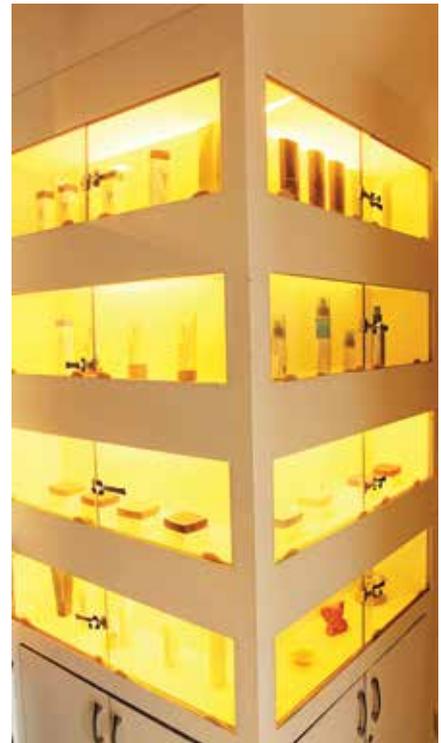
locale and seasons matters too." Adds Latha Mohan CEO of Oryza Spa and Bounce Salon chain, "The key to run a successful spa and salon business is to have staff that is well-trained and equipped to handle client's needs. It is very important to have a team that can service the needs of today's well travelled clients." Brand association is another way to create a difference. "One key element of brand value and brand trust comes from the associations we have to be able to provide the service at a bench-marked standard. The second key element to the brand value and brand trust comes from the service executors. Their education, their technique, their ability to deliver the service at the benchmark level set by you. The qualitative essence or personalised touch that the client can associate with in terms of hospitality, space and trust are important. The way we greet, the way we present ourselves, the way we cater, these small things matter a lot to the clients and are something they hold on to. This could be



a very small gesture, but could have a massive impact," says Swati.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Proper primary and secondary research to understand the demo-graphical essentials for a Spa / Salon business to be sustainable is important. Also the presence of competitors and the factors which differentiate you from them have to be studied. Location and visibility is



the first important aspect in success. "The salon needs to have a reasonable catchment of its target segment in a radius of 1km or so, depending on the city and density of population. The rent of the salon should not exceed 15% of the revenue on a steady state basis – the temptation of 'prime location' will be the cause of death of many salons," says Bhalchandra. A strong leadership team complemented by motivated service providers is the next challenge to build before expecting success in any salon.

A balance between spending on capital costs vs. salon interiors or look and feel – every rupee spent on the look and feel adds to the interest and setup costs, which weigh down a salon's success. "Product knowledge, having well-trained therapists, using new products – blends of oils, balms, scrubs and being able to stick to your core identity are factors that are challenging. Adhere to the best global standards and practices to create a world class spa centre and guests should be made to feel welcome so that they would like to come back, time and again," says Vibha. "Understanding each and every customer requirement and need very deeply, and ensuring that the customer happily availed the services. Day to day hygienic routine to keep the spa neat and clean, creating a soothing ambience with music and aroma, maintaining laundry, steam/bath are some challenges," says Abhilash. "The beauty and grooming industry is ever evolving; customers nowadays

are experiential and are always on the lookout for the latest trends and services. The biggest challenge is to provide all these latest services, using excellent quality products and living up to the expectations of your customers. Maintaining this amalgamation of services, products and customer satisfaction is where the challenge lies. Purple Salon strives to provide this experience to its customers by giving the right training to the staff, using the right kind of products and maintaining the highest levels of hygiene," adds Rahul.

So if you want to have a successful spa, remember to have attractive packages. In a spa customer service and satisfaction is key. "Create a comfortable, clean and safe atmosphere, keeping cost in control and finally implement a smart and effective marketing strategy," advises Abhilash. **SS**

