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Headline: SMU alumnus rebrands campus eatery



SMU Alumni Association general manager Edwin Lim is also the manager of B3, which stands for "burger, beer, bistro", and oversees its operations. ST PHOTO: LAU FOOK KONG

## SMU alumnus rebrands campus eatery

In June last year, food and beverage entrepreneur Edwin Lim was given the mammoth task of rebranding an eatery at Singapore Management University that had been struggling to pull in the crowds.

Within just two months, he had to hire and train a new team for the restaurant, and come up with a new theme, concept and menu. "It was a very tight timeline, but this challenge made the whole process more fun and exciting," said Mr Lim, 31. The previous restaurant, known as Tonic-X, was an initiative by the SMU Alumni Association (SMUAA), which aimed to provide a gathering spot on campus for alumni and students to network.

"They had wanted to mould the concept after the Shibuya streets of Japan, with neon lights and funky drinks... But the concept was not too well received as the place was too dark and the price point too high, so the brand didn't feel right with the students," said Mr Lim, an SMU alumnus himself, who had opened two gelato shops and started a soft-drink company after graduation.

He launched the new concept, B3 - which stands for "burger, beer, bistro" - last August, and it continues to be owned and operated by SMUAA.

Located in the basement of SMU's School of Information Systems (SIS) along Stamford Road, it gives off a laidback vibe, with warm lighting and cosy furnishing.

Burgers that come in fusion flavours, like satay or chilli crab, are a mainstay of the menu, but there are also options like pasta or salmon, alongside beers and cocktails. Prices of main courses range from \$7 to about \$18.

As SMUAA's general manager, Mr Lim doubles as B3's manager and oversees its operations. Profits will go towards the association's reserves, which will be channelled towards the costs of an alumni guild house that it hopes to set up in the future.

The fact that the space is run by the association rather than solely as a profit-driven company means that it can better meet alumni's needs, said Mr Lim.

At least 400 customers now frequent B3 daily, and though the bulk of them are still students or faculty, the bistro also caters, food or hosts professional development workshops organised by SMUAA at least once a month.

B3 is now stepping up efforts to raise awareness of its brand, especially among alumni.

Two undergraduates from the SIS, Mr Jackson Kwa, 26, and Mr Lee Teck Hui, 27, are working with B3 on a project that aims to build customer loyalty and encourage repeat customers.

They will come up with a prototype for a membership card system that can store money, track purchases and allow customers to collect points by August.

Mr Lee said that they came up with this idea as they hope to give back to the school community.

"We're both graduating soon, so we understand what alumni are looking for, and we are creating a solution that we will use in the future."

Yuen Sin

FUN AND EXCITING

**It was a very tight timeline, but this challenge made the whole process more fun and exciting.**



**MR EDWIN LIM**, who came up with a new concept for the eatery in SMU within just two months.

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