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App helps reduce queues at beauty and hair salons

The [Fleeker](#) platform, founded by four University of Cape Town (UCT) students, allows users to schedule appointments with hairstylists, barbers, make-up artists and nail technicians – and beat the long in-salon queues with the click of a button.

Asonela Gevenga, UCT economics and finance student and co-founder of Fleeker, said: "I spent a lot of time in queues at my barbershop and it made me think of ways to improve and streamline this system, just to make it more convenient for customers."

This novel idea is just what the country's COVID-19 epicentre (the Western Cape) needs, especially as personal care services start to reopen from this week. Social distancing, limited customer numbers and strict hygiene protocols mean trips to the barbershop, hair salon and beauty spa will look a lot different now as the industry reopens under lockdown "advanced" Level 3.

Gevenga said Fleeker requires stylists to register online by completing a simple registration form – the process takes just a few minutes. While there's no upfront cost involved, 10% of every successful booking goes to Fleeker.

Once stylists have signed up, the platform's location-sharing functionality ensures that potential clients can select a therapist in close proximity to them. Fleeker currently lists a range of local businesses and more than 100 UCT students make use of their service. Gevenga said a growing number of non-UCT students also make use of the platform.

As of March this year, the team has been hard at work coming up with creative ways to ensure stylists and beauty therapists would still generate an income once lockdown restrictions were eased and the sector reopened.

"As part of our mission to improve, while adhering to strict health guidelines during this pandemic and still accommodating our customers [stylists] and their customers, we had to make some changes," he said.

The system's improvements benefit stylists and their clients alike and are likely to last beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Working from a client's home is one such improvement the business has made; it enhances customer comfort and "ensures better control" as it eliminates the crowded salon.

“This means the stylist will have more control over the health and safety measures they have in place, like sanitising, because it’s a one-on-one service,” shared Gevenga.

In addition, Fleeker also introduced a cashless payment system, which allows users to transact online; that means handling cash is history too.

And a unique built-in feature enables stylists to track their monthly income, making financial planning a lot easier. “We’ve received such great feedback from our clients, as well their clients, especially during this time. This has [reinforced] our commitment to ensure all stylists, big and small, have a fighting chance in the market and are able to connect with customers in an efficient way,” he said.

ENDS

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