

MYSTERY SHOPPER

Whatever you're doing with your business, it doesn't mean squat if the customer doesn't like it. To give New Zealand salons a heads up on what customers really think of their service, we send in an ordinary punter to a salon they've never visited before to get a cut. Then we publish their comments – good and bad. It's the perfect opportunity to get unbiased advice and learn from it.

TARGET: STRAND SALON

LOCATATION: THE STRAND ARCADE, WHANGAREI

FINAL SCORE: 8/10

CUSTOMER SERVICE: Prior to the appointment I rang the salon to discuss options for haircuts and colours. I was asked a lot of questions about my hair and given a maximum quote for both, to be assessed on the day. While I wasn't given opening hours I was able to book in an appointment that suited me without any problems. I initially booked a cut and colour and then changed the booking to colour only the day before, an alteration that didn't raise any questions.

I arrived on time and was shown straight through to the salon by the receptionist. I was introduced to the stylist and offered a drink. As a new client I filled in a profile form that included the usual contact details, how I found out about the salon, and information about my hair, as well as a disclaimer form for the colouring procedure (I was going ash blonde from already home-lightened hair).

Throughout the appointment I was seen by three staff members, all of whom were friendly, well presented and made me feel quite comfortable.

THE ENVIRONMENT: The salon is bright, clean and tidy, although I did notice that some hair was left on the floor after one client left. The reception has a circular

reception desk and near to it is a couch, and opposite the couch are two styling areas. Clients pass the wash basins on their way to a large adjoining room, which has four styling areas on one side and five on the other, each with a large mirror. At one end is a wall made of squares of opaque glass to let light in, which is important given that the salon is located in a mall with no outside windows. The reflections of mirrors in mirrors and the white walls made the room seem all the more spacious.

The atmosphere was cheerful, although the background music was slightly loud for a good conversation. The salon had a constant flow of happy customers, which I consider to be an important indication about the professionalism of the business.

THE CONSULTATION AND ADVICE: The stylist quickly assessed my hair and worked out the best mixture of lightening product, noting that the ends had had a lot of colour put through them and therefore needed more attention. The lightening process took two hours, during which time I was offered magazines and drinks, and asked regularly if my scalp was sore. The toning process took another hour.

The stylist then blow-dried and styled my hair using product. I was advised to use a treatment for my hair as the lightening procedure had made the ends quite dry and brittle and to buy a purple shampoo to prevent any discolouration.

THE PRICE: The whole process cost me \$129, which was a competitive price for the professional lightening and toning service that I received. I would consider paying this amount for this particular colour again. A haircut would have cost an additional \$72.

THE FINAL COLOUR: I was very pleased with the colour. All traces of former dyes were removed and the final colour was the ash blonde that I had been hoping for. I would return to the salon to have my hair coloured again.

Our reviewer usually pays about \$120 for her colour and cuts her hair at home "but only because I have a short spiky cut and can get away with it!"



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