ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ETHNIC NICHING

The case of Vietnamese in the US nail industry

Signs of the nail niche

- Popularity of Vietnamese manicurists
- Manicurists as workers
- Salon owners as entrepreneurs
- Vietnamese and nails
- Nail business in New England

History of the nail industry

- size of nail industry
- beauty services in the old time: expensive, for the wealthy, no blacks
- Vietnamese entrance: refugees & Tippi Hedren
- acrylic nails, quick training, cheap labor
- raise of nail salons and decline of home use
- share of nail in beauty sector
- specialized salons today

Tippi Hedren in Hitchcock's movie "The Birds"

Actress Tippi Hedren, center, wearing a traditional Vietnamese tunic, celebrates with some of the Vietnamese refugees she helped get nail training.

Figure 3-1: Market size of the nail industry in billion dollars, 1991-2008

By way of contrast, box office movie revenue totaled $9.8 billion in 2008.

Figure 3-4: Number of nail salons in the United States 1991-2008

Figure 3-2: Sales of home-use nail products in million US$ since 2001 and projected(*) to 2011

Figure 3-3: Share of revenues in the beauty sector 1999-2007, by type of shop

Millie's Beauty Salon, 6310 N. Western, c. 1945. Photograph by Henry Green. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society, ICHi-25611.)

Laser Care
SKIN & LASER CENTER
J Farleys' Hair Salon
St. Mary's Nails
The Wine Press
WINES • SPIRITS
WINE PRESS

ST.MARY'SNAILS
617-487-4343
BUSINESS HOURS
MONDAY - SATURDAY
9:30AM - 8:00PM
SUNDAY
10:00AM - 6:00PM

Formation and sustenance of the ethnic niche

- demand & supply: working women, African American
- short training, low investment, family labor
- high & quick income => American Dream
- ethnic resources: training schools & job ads on ethnic newspapers

Unintended consequences of the nail niche

- Intra-ethnic competition
- Inter-ethnic monopoly

Figure 3-6: Mean annual wages (in dollars) of beauty workers 1999-2007, by type of occupation

Figure 3-7: Median hourly wages (in dollars) for beauty workers 1999-2007, by type of occupation

Cargi
9554

Q & A