

## ALISMIA AI as a Tool for Digital Empowerment: Redesigning Client Interaction in Beauty Businesses

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### ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** This study examines how the ALISMIA AI platform - a management system purpose-built for professional beauty businesses - changes the way salons and studios interact with their clients, and what that change means for trust, satisfaction, and commercial performance. The investigation proceeds from a straightforward empirical observation: beauty businesses that deploy this platform consistently report outcomes that exceed what administrative automation alone should produce, suggesting that the mechanism of impact is relational rather than merely operational.

**Methods:** A convergent mixed-methods design was adopted. Survey data were collected from 347 clients and 89 business owners across Ukraine, Poland, Germany, France, Italy, and the Netherlands. Quantitative relationships were estimated through structural equation modeling (SEM). Ten business owners who had used the platform for at least six months participated in semi-structured interviews analyzed via reflexive thematic analysis. Results: Personalization quality predicted client trust ( $\beta = 0.61, p < .001$ ) and satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.54, p < .001$ ), but the strength of these relationships depended substantially on whether clients felt they retained meaningful influence over how they were served. Business owners reported reductions in appointment non-attendance averaging 38%, increases in repeat bookings of 29%, and improvements in internal satisfaction scores of approximately 25%. Breadth of feature adoption and duration of use were stronger predictors of performance gains than business size or geographic location.

**Conclusions:** The most consequential effect of ALISMIA AI in the businesses studied is neither scheduling efficiency nor automated marketing - it is the conversion of individually held practitioner knowledge into a shared organizational asset. This transformation addresses what is arguably the deepest structural vulnerability of small independent beauty enterprises: the fragility of client relationships that depend on the memory and continued presence of a single person. The implications extend to debates about service authenticity, the organizational conditions of digital empowerment, and the design of client-facing technology in high-relational service sectors.

**Keywords:** ALISMIA AI; beauty businesses; digital empowerment; client trust; personalization; service relationships.

### INTRODUCTION

Walk into a well-run beauty salon and what strikes you, long before you notice the equipment or the decor, is the quality of the attention. The stylist who has cut your hair for four years knows things that no intake form would capture: that you always want it slightly shorter than you initially ask for, that you are anxious in the chair when

you are in a hurry, that you responded badly to a certain product formulation last spring. This knowledge is not trivial. It is precisely what separates the experience of returning to someone you trust from the mild discomfort of starting from scratch with a stranger.

The structural problem facing small beauty businesses is

that this relational knowledge is, in most cases, privately held. It lives in individual practitioners' memories, and sometimes in fragmentary notes, but it does not belong to the business as an institution. When a senior stylist leaves - and in an industry with historically high staff turnover, this is a routine event rather than an exceptional one - she takes her accumulated knowledge of her clients with her. When a client visits during a practitioner's absence, or books an appointment at a second location, the warmth of prior relationship does not transfer. The business begins again from the beginning, and the client notices.

ALISMIA AI is a management platform designed specifically for professional beauty businesses - salons, nail studios, spas, aesthetic clinics, and related establishments. What distinguishes it from the generic salon management software that has been available for some years is not primarily its administrative functions, though these are present: scheduling, reminders, billing, and inventory are all supported. The distinction lies in what the platform does with the relational data that these functions generate. Client preferences, service histories, product reactions, communication patterns, seasonal booking tendencies - these are not merely recorded but organized in ways that make them actionable across the entire team, in real time, regardless of which practitioner is handling a given appointment.

Whether any of this actually changes how clients feel - whether knowing that a reminder was system-generated rather than personally composed by one's stylist makes it feel less like care - is a question the platform's logic does not automatically answer. Clients of beauty services are perceptive about the difference between felt attention and its simulation, and a disclosure that undermines what had seemed personal can do real relational damage. This study takes that risk seriously rather than assuming it away. How ALISMIA AI fares on this dimension, and what determines whether it fares well or poorly, is one of the things we set out to establish.

The study is organized around three questions that felt worth asking precisely because they are not easy to answer from existing literature. To begin with, what actually changes in the practitioner-client encounter when a business runs on this platform - not in theory, but in practice, as described by the people doing the work and receiving the service? Then, does the quality of personalization a client experiences genuinely shape her trust in the business, and does it matter whether she feels she has some say in how that personalization is configured? Finally, which businesses get the most out of the platform, and why - what does effective adoption actually look like on the ground? These questions are pursued through a mixed-methods design combining a client and business-owner survey across six countries with extended interviews conducted with proprietors who had lived with the platform long enough to have real opinions about it.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 works through the existing research on personalization, trust, service authenticity, and the particular situation of small beauty businesses facing digital transformation - not to summarize the field but to identify what it leaves unresolved. Section 3 describes the study's design and analytical approach. Sections 4 and 5 present findings and discuss what they mean. Section 6 offers conclusions and, more importantly, the questions this study raises that future work should pursue.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Particular Character of Beauty Service Relationships**

Treating the beauty sector as simply one variant of high-contact personal services is a reasonable starting point, but it runs into trouble fairly quickly. What makes a beauty appointment different from a physiotherapy session or a visit to a notary is not just the physical intimacy, though that matters. It is the aesthetic dimension - the fact that the practitioner is making judgments about your appearance, and that those judgments carry weight in relation to how you will present yourself to other people. The client is not merely purchasing a service; she is, in a real sense, delegating something personal. That delegation requires trust of a particular kind, and it makes the relational quality of the encounter - the practitioner's memory, attentiveness, and calibrated judgment - directly constitutive of the service rather than merely incidental to it.

Research on what clients actually value in beauty service encounters confirms that technical skill, while necessary, is rarely the primary driver of loyalty. O'Higgins and Fatorachian (2025) find that trust in personal care contexts depends heavily on whether clients experience themselves as known - as individuals with histories and preferences that the practitioner holds in mind, rather than as a sequence of appointments to be processed. Coelho and Imamović (2025) document that the accuracy of personalization is among the strongest predictors of return visit intention, which makes sense when you consider that the alternative - being served competently but generically - is an experience available at any chain salon for less money.

The trust literature in service management distinguishes among cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (Tam et al., 2025). Cognitive trust is a rational assessment: does this system do what it says, consistently? Affective trust is emotional: do I feel safe and comfortable relying on it? Behavioral trust is the downstream expression: will I actually use it for consequential decisions, share data with it, recommend it? The three components interact and do not always move in the same direction - a client may rationally assess a scheduling platform as reliable while feeling emotional

discomfort at a communication whose automated origin is apparent.

In beauty service contexts specifically, the technology a salon uses is not evaluated by clients on its own terms. It is evaluated as an expression of the business - evidence of what the proprietor values, how the team thinks about its clients, what kind of institution this is. The practical consequence of this is asymmetric and worth stating plainly: when the platform fails, the business takes the blame; when the platform works well, the credit goes to the practitioner. The technology contributes but remains invisible in the client's accounting of the relationship. That invisibility is, in one sense, the goal - good tools should not draw attention to themselves - but it means that the business bears the downside risk of technology malfunction without routinely capturing the upside credit of technology-enabled care. Managing this asymmetry requires deliberate attention to how the platform is communicated and framed.

Among younger demographics - Generation Z clients in particular - trust dynamics carry an additional ethical dimension. Guerra-Tamez et al. (2024) find that this cohort evaluates digitally mediated brand interactions not merely on functional grounds but on questions of data respect, transparency of intent, and the authenticity of the care being expressed. Beauty businesses with a younger client base therefore operate in a more demanding trust environment, where the consequences of perceived inauthenticity extend well beyond a single disappointed client.

Ask any experienced independent beauty practitioner what she knows about her regular clients and the answer is often startling in its detail - preferences, sensitivities, histories, the small things that matter and the large ones that cannot be written on an intake form. That knowledge is real and it is valuable. What it is not, in most independent studios, is institutional. It belongs to a person, not a business. Chakraborty et al. (2024) describe this gap in terms of digital empowerment - the uneven distribution of capabilities that allows large organizations to act systematically on client data while smaller ones rely on individual memory and goodwill. In the beauty sector the gap has a specific shape: independent practitioners often know their clients better than any chain could, but they cannot make that knowledge portable, durable, or available to anyone else in the building.

There is a trade-off that most people who have run a small beauty business will recognize without being told: the things that make you worth choosing - you know your clients, you remember what worked and what did not, you have built something that feels personal - are also the things that make you fragile. The relationship is yours, not the business's. It does not survive your absence, it does not scale, and it does not outlast you. ALISMIA AI

is, among other things, an attempt to break that trade-off. Whether it actually does so is something we set out to examine, not assume.

Coelho and Imamović's (2025) concept of technology fit is useful here. Generic CRM platforms tend to underperform in beauty service contexts not because they lack functional capability but because their implicit model of the customer relationship - transactional, data-extractive, focused on purchase frequency rather than service quality - sits badly with the relational culture of the businesses that adopt them. A platform built around the assumption that client data is primarily a service resource, and that the purpose of recording preferences is to serve clients better rather than to market to them more efficiently, will feel different to practitioners and clients alike. Whether ALISMIA AI genuinely embodies this alternative model, and whether clients experience it that way, is part of what the present research examines.

### **Methodology**

This study used a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), collecting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously from different participant groups and integrating findings at the interpretive stage. The decision to combine methods was substantive rather than merely procedural: the study's central questions require both the measurement of relationships among constructs, for which survey methods and structural equation modeling are appropriate, and the interpretation of organizational processes and individual experiences, for which qualitative interviews are necessary. Neither method alone could have produced the account this paper attempts to give.

The client survey sample comprised 347 individuals who had used a professional beauty service at a business operating with the ALISMIA AI platform for at least three visits in the preceding twelve months. Participants were recruited through social media advertising, partnerships with beauty industry associations, and snowball referral across markets in Ukraine, Poland, Germany, France, Italy, and the Netherlands. The business owner survey sample comprised 89 proprietors or senior managers of beauty businesses that had been using the ALISMIA AI platform as their primary management system for at least four months. These participants were recruited through professional networks, industry events, and a platform subscriber registry maintained by the operating company under a formal data-sharing agreement.

Interview participants (n = 10) were selected purposively from the business owner sample to ensure variation in business size (one to two practitioners: three participants; three to ten: five participants; eleven to twenty: two participants), service specialization (hair, skin, nails, and

comprehensive), and geography (seven Ukraine-based, three EU-based). All had used the platform for at least six months; duration ranged from seven months to three years. Interviews were conducted via encrypted video conference, lasted between 47 and 71 minutes, and were audio-recorded with written consent.

The client survey measured four constructs. Personalization quality was assessed with six items adapted from Feng and Kim (2024), revised to reflect the beauty service context. Trust was measured using eight items drawn from Tam et al. (2025) and O'Higgins and Fatorachian (2025). Perceived client control used five items from Han and Ko's (2025) autonomy scale. Service satisfaction used four items from a standard service quality instrument. All items used five-point Likert response formats. The survey was translated into Ukrainian, Polish, and German with independent back-translation verification for each language pair. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .81 to .87 across constructs. Attention check items were embedded in both surveys; respondents failing checks were excluded, yielding final analytic samples of 331 clients and 84 business owners.

The business owner survey measured adoption breadth (number of distinct platform features used regularly), duration of use, staff training investment, and self-reported performance on three operational metrics: appointment non-attendance rates, repeat booking rates, and client satisfaction scores, each reported as a percentage change relative to the period before platform adoption.

## **Results**

The confirmatory factor analysis yielded acceptable fit: CFI = .94, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .056 (90% CI [.048, .064]), SRMR = .061. Factor loadings ranged from .67 to .84 and were all significant at  $p < .001$ . Average variance extracted values ranged from .53 to .61, all above the .50 threshold. Discriminant validity was confirmed for all construct pairs by the AVE criterion. Harman's test explained 23% of variance in a single factor, and the unmeasured latent factor approach produced no substantive changes to parameter estimates, suggesting common method bias is not a serious concern in these data.

The structural model fit the data adequately: CFI = .92, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .061, SRMR = .065. Personalization quality predicted trust ( $\beta = 0.61$ , SE = 0.07,  $p < .001$ ) and satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.54$ , SE = 0.08,  $p < .001$ ) significantly. Trust predicted satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.48$ , SE = 0.06,  $p < .001$ ), consistent with partial mediation. The interaction between personalization quality and perceived client control was significant for the personalization-to-trust path ( $\beta = 0.22$ , SE = 0.09,  $p = .014$ ), confirming that higher perceived control amplifies

the trust-building effect of personalization quality.

Bootstrapped moderated mediation analysis confirmed that the indirect effect of personalization quality on satisfaction via trust was significant at high levels of perceived client control (indirect effect = 0.37, 95% CI [0.26, 0.49]) and attenuated, though still significant, at low levels (indirect effect = 0.19, 95% CI [0.07, 0.31]).

Self-reported performance improvements among business owner respondents were substantial. Mean reduction in appointment non-attendance relative to the pre-adoption period was 38.2% (SD = 11.4%). Mean increase in repeat bookings within a six-month window was 29.1% (SD = 9.8%). Mean improvement in internal client satisfaction scores was 24.7% (SD = 8.3%). These figures are retrospective self-reports and should be interpreted accordingly; the Discussion addresses the limitations of this measurement approach.

Regression analysis of the business owner data identified adoption breadth as the strongest predictor of reported performance improvement ( $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by duration of platform use ( $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and staff training investment ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $p = .003$ ). Business size and geographic location were not significant predictors. The absence of a size effect is particularly noteworthy: micro enterprises reported performance gains comparable in magnitude to those reported by medium businesses, suggesting that the platform's benefits are not reserved for better-resourced operators.

Analysis of the interview transcripts produced four themes. The first and most consistently prominent was what participants described as the transformation of client knowledge from individual to organizational. In all ten interviews, proprietors described a version of the same structural problem: before platform adoption, knowing a client meant that a specific practitioner knew her. The knowledge did not transfer when the practitioner was absent, was lost when she left, and was unavailable to new team members. The platform changed this, and participants described the change as more significant than they had anticipated.

One Kyiv-based proprietor, running a five-practitioner nail studio for eight years, put it directly: "I had a client for six years. My master left last year, and I lost that client within three months. The client's preferences, her history, her relationship with the salon - it all walked out with the master. That does not happen anymore. The knowledge is ours now, not the individual's." Several participants used variations of the phrase "institutional memory" - a concept they appeared to have arrived at independently to describe what the platform had given them.

The second theme concerned a change in the texture of practitioner attention during appointments - something that several proprietors had not anticipated before

adoption. A nail studio owner in Lviv described it this way: "My master used to arrive at her shift carrying fifteen things in her head - confirmations, messages, who ordered what product. Now that's handled before she walks in. She sits down with a client and she's actually there. The clients notice. Two of them mentioned it without being asked." The mechanism is simple enough: remove the administrative noise that practitioners manage around client contact, and the quality of the contact itself changes. Nobody in the research team predicted this would be among the more cited benefits; it came from the interviews.

The third theme was harder to characterize neatly, because it involved genuine tension rather than straightforward gain. Proprietors described the ongoing challenge of managing client perceptions of personalized communications that were, in whole or part, platform-generated. The situation they faced was this: clients had received messages, recommendations, or reminders that felt personal, and some of them - particularly long-standing clients with established practitioner relationships - later understood that a system had generated what they had experienced as individual attention. Reactions varied. Some clients reframed the discovery positively: the salon had invested in tools to make sure they were never forgotten, which they read as a form of institutional care. Others felt, to some degree, that something had been performed rather than felt - that warmth they had attributed to a specific person was partly manufactured. What determined which interpretation prevailed was not the content of the communications but the timing and framing of how the business explained its use of the platform. Proprietors who had been transparent from the start of new client relationships - who had described the platform as a tool they used to serve clients better - consistently reported more favorable responses than those who disclosed only when directly asked.

The fourth theme is about loyalty, and it emerged in a way that felt more personal than the others. Most of the proprietors interviewed had a version of the same story somewhere in their history: a talented team member leaves, the business wishes her well, and over the following months a quiet exodus begins - not dramatic, not announced, just clients who stop rebooking. Everyone in this industry knows the pattern. Several participants described noticing, after a year or more on the platform, that the pattern was becoming less reliable as a prediction. Clients who in earlier years might have followed a departing practitioner out the door were, more often, staying. Some rebooked with a different team member without being asked. A few referred friends specifically to the salon rather than to any individual within it. The proprietors who noticed this attributed it, with varying degrees of confidence, to the consistency of the experience the platform made possible - the sense a client gets, regardless of who takes her appointment, that the business knows her. One proprietor who had grown

from solo practice to a team of seven described the change plainly: "I used to panic when someone on my team seemed unhappy. I thought: if she goes, half her clients go with her. That fear has not entirely gone, but it is much smaller now. The relationship with the client belongs more to us, as a business, than it used to."

## **Discussion**

The moderation finding is the one that deserves the most attention. That personalization quality predicts trust is not a surprise - the direction of that relationship is well established in related literatures. What the data add is a condition: the effect is substantially stronger when clients feel they have some influence over how the personalization is shaped. A client who experiences recommendations as arriving at her unbidden, generated by a process she cannot see or question, responds differently from one who feels she contributed to what the system knows about her and can push back when it gets something wrong. Feng and Kim (2024) laid out the theoretical architecture for this in their trust matrix, but the present data give it empirical grounding in a service context - professional beauty - where the stakes of getting it wrong are meaningfully higher than in the advertising contexts where most of this work has been done.

The practical upshot is not complicated: client-facing features should make it easy to articulate preferences, understand why a recommendation is being made, and disagree with it without penalty. Han and Ko (2025) make the theoretical case; these data extend it to a sector where it matters in a particularly direct way. The harder design question - how much preference input to request, and when - is not one this study can fully answer. Ask too much too early, before any relationship has formed, and the questionnaire feels like an interrogation. The better approach is probably to begin with observation and gradually make the observations explicit as the client relationship matures. That is a testable hypothesis, and longitudinal work is the right way to test it.

There is, however, a design tension worth acknowledging. Platforms that ask clients for extensive explicit preference inputs before a relationship of trust has been established risk producing the opposite of the intended effect: clients may experience the data collection as invasive or presumptuous rather than as evidence of attentiveness. The optimal design probably involves calibrating the depth and explicitness of preference engagement to the maturity of the client relationship - beginning with observation and gradually making the accumulated knowledge explicit as trust develops. This is a hypothesis that future research, particularly longitudinal work tracking client responses over the arc of a service relationship, could test directly.

The qualitative finding that the platform transforms client knowledge from individual to organizational property is,

in retrospect, perhaps the most commercially significant result of the study. The problem it addresses - the vulnerability of small service businesses to the departure of practitioners who carry client relationships in their heads - is not a minor operational inconvenience. It is a fundamental constraint on the growth and resilience of independent beauty enterprises. A business that cannot grow beyond a certain size without risking the relational quality that distinguishes it from larger competitors, and that cannot sustain client relationships through the inevitable disruptions of staff change, is a business whose competitive position is structurally precarious.

The platform's response to this problem is not to replace the relational intelligence of skilled practitioners but to make it portable and durable. The practitioner who has served a client for three years has accumulated knowledge that is genuinely valuable; the platform ensures that this knowledge remains available to the business when the practitioner is absent, changes role, or eventually leaves. This changes the terms on which small independent businesses can compete with franchise operators, who have historically had the advantage of consistency but have lacked the relational depth of well-established independent studios.

The performance data carry a message about patience that proprietors considering adoption should hear plainly. Breadth of feature use and duration on the platform predict gains more strongly than anything else in the model - more than business size, more than geography. The logic is straightforward: the platform gets more useful the more it knows about each client, and it learns by accumulating history. In the early months, that history is thin. The recommendations are generic. The gains that established users describe are not yet visible. Businesses that evaluate the platform at six weeks and conclude it is not delivering are almost certainly measuring too early. The size finding is the other thing worth noting separately: micro enterprises - one or two practitioners - reported performance improvements comparable to businesses with ten or twenty staff. If digital empowerment means anything in practice, that is what it should look like.

The third theme from the interview data - the negotiation of perceived authenticity - resists straightforward resolution, and the research would be misleading if it presented one. The question of whether technology-generated communications and recommendations can be authentically expressive of human care is genuinely contested, and the answer appears to depend less on the technical facts of how the communication was generated than on the relational context in which it is received and the narrative within which it is understood.

O'Higgins and Fatorachian (2025) observe that consumer trust in technology-assisted personal care services tends to be highest when clients understand the technology as

extending the practitioner's capacity to care for them, rather than substituting for it. That framing does not arise automatically; it has to be built. The proprietors who came through the authenticity challenge with their client relationships intact were, without exception, those who had decided early on to be straightforward about how the platform works and why they use it. Not in technical detail - clients do not want a product briefing - but in plain terms: this is a tool that helps us remember everything about you, so that any member of our team can serve you the way you deserve to be served. That is a message most clients receive well, because it is true and because it says something about the business's priorities. Where it went wrong was when it was not said at all, or said defensively after a client had already felt something was off.

What this means, put plainly, is that authenticity in service relationships that involve digital tools is not something a platform can deliver. It is something the business has to perform - through the way its practitioners talk about what they do, the way the proprietor explains the tools she uses, the consistency between what the business says it cares about and what clients actually experience. A salon that uses ALISMIA AI to remember its clients better is not being inauthentic. But a salon that relies on the platform to perform a warmth that nobody in the team is actually generating - that is a different thing, and clients, eventually, notice the difference.

## **Conclusion**

The argument this paper has made is narrower and, it hopes, more precise than the broad claim that technology is transforming the beauty industry. The specific argument is this: ALISMIA AI, when effectively implemented, performs a function that is fundamentally organizational - it converts individually held relational knowledge into a shared institutional asset - and this function addresses a structural vulnerability of small beauty businesses that no amount of practitioner skill or personal dedication can resolve on its own. The relational capital that accumulates through years of client interaction is extraordinarily valuable; the platform's contribution is to make it durable.

The data support this from more than one direction. Among clients, the quality of personalization they experience predicts how much they trust the business and how satisfied they feel - but only when they also feel they have some say in how that personalization is shaped. Among business owners, the gains from platform adoption are not reserved for those with larger budgets or more staff: micro enterprises reported improvements comparable to medium-sized ones, which matters if the argument about empowerment is to hold. And in the interviews, what came through most consistently was a change in how proprietors think about retention - not as something that lives in a single practitioner-client bond and disappears when that bond breaks, but as something

that can, with the right infrastructure, attach to the business itself.

Several questions remain open and worth pursuing. How does the trust-building effect of personalization evolve over the arc of a longer client relationship - does it deepen as the database grows richer, or plateau? How do clients from different cultural contexts respond to platform-mediated personalization, and what design adaptations might better serve those whose responses to current designs are less positive? What role do practitioners - as opposed to proprietors and clients - play in determining whether platform adoption succeeds or fails?

These questions matter beyond the beauty sector. The problem that ALISMIA AI addresses - how to preserve relational knowledge as an organizational asset in businesses whose competitive advantage depends on that knowledge - is a general problem of service industry management. What this study suggests is that the solution, wherever it is found, will be as much communicative and cultural as it is technical: not merely a matter of what the platform does, but of how the business and its practitioners understand and explain what it does to the clients whose trust it is designed to serve.

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