



The Business of Green Therapy

Although therapeutic horticulture may be a relatively new concept in Singapore, significant opportunities await market leader Hort Therapeutics to become the consultant of choice in this field.

Singapore-based social enterprise Hort Therapeutics is dedicated to promoting physical and mental wellness through a holistic and systematic approach to landscape design and therapeutic horticulture. This practice, which uses gardening and plant-related activities to enhance physical, mental and emotional well-being, is recognised globally across healthcare, rehabilitation and community initiatives.



The Hort Therapeutics team is driving innovation in therapeutic horticulture. (From left: Ms Chen Cai Ting, Ms Pearlina Sim, Mr Pong JunXiang and Mr Tham Xin Kai.)

Employing an approach based on the latest market survey findings and evidence-based design principles, Hort Therapeutics aims to develop therapeutic gardens and horticultural activities catered to diverse groups. These include children and young adults with special needs, adults in trauma recovery, seniors with dementia, and individuals seeking to improve their mental well-being.

Amid a burgeoning demand for mental well-being solutions, Hort Therapeutics sees an opportunity to position itself as a prominent provider of therapeutic horticulture in Singapore. However, despite the industry's significant growth and recognition internationally, local challenges, such as consumer reservations and misconceptions about therapeutic horticulture, remain.

Cultivating minds, nurturing well-being

To address these challenges and devise effective business strategies, Hort Therapeutics enlisted the help of student-consultants from the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (UOB-SMU AEI) SME Consulting Programme (SCP). With guidance from an industry veteran as Project Advisor and a Project Manager from the Institute, the team undertook an in-depth market survey. They delivered a detailed report with actionable short- and long-term strategies, a project timeline, and proposed collaborators.

The SCP's distinctive approach is characterised by meticulous market analysis and a reliance on data-driven insights, combining secondary data collection with primary survey methods. The student-consultants aimed to thoroughly understand the prospective markets, geographical areas and target demographics that could provide growth opportunities for Hort Therapeutics.

Their fact-finding strategy included reviewing available databases — such as Statista and Euromonitor Passport — and complementing this data with online surveys and in-depth interviews with the general public. They also conducted detailed interviews with potential corporate clients and sought viable partnerships by assessing their interest and willingness to collaborate.

Sowing the seeds of wellness



A session in bloom at Hort Therapeutics: Participants find joy and healing through painting terracotta pots and learning plant propagation techniques.

The student-consultants' data-gathering efforts revealed promising statistics: the Serviceable Addressable Market for corporate wellness in the Asia Pacific [was valued at US\\$4.9 billion \(S\\$6.6 billion\) in 2020](#), with projections to swell to US\$8.6 billion by 2028. This trajectory

anticipates a robust CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 7.6 per cent from 2021 to 2028, positioning the Asia Pacific as the region poised for the fastest growth. Singapore's slice of the corporate wellness pie stood at [US\\$200 million in 2020](#), securing the 30th spot globally. Moreover, the city-state's wellness economy is ranked 14th among 45 countries in the Asia Pacific region, and 44th globally out of 218 countries. This growing demand in the corporate wellness space aligns with Hort Therapeutics' business direction, which is primarily to serve corporate clients.

The team's key online survey findings unveiled a substantial lack of awareness of therapeutic horticulture among participants, and limited exposure to relevant information. However, the sentiment towards embracing therapeutic horticulture to boost mental well-being was overwhelmingly positive. In particular, respondents expressed a keen interest in scientifically backed and evidence-based benefits. The survey and interviews pinpointed online platforms, especially social media and digital sources, as critical channels for spreading awareness about therapeutic horticulture.

These insights spotlight meaningful opportunities to raise awareness of therapeutic horticulture in Singapore, provide accurate information and foster open discussions about horticultural therapy's potential benefits. Such efforts lay the ground for Hort Therapeutics to become the preferred consultant or provider in this emerging area.

Growing awareness and blossoming opportunities

In synthesising the data and insights, the student-consultants proposed a detailed marketing funnel strategy for Hort Therapeutics. At the wider part of the funnel, where tactics for increasing awareness among potential clientele should be used, they recommended deploying accurate and engaging horticultural content to spark interest among target audiences.

To further guide these potential customers towards choosing Hort Therapeutics, the team suggested enhancing the company's website with content that aids in the decision-making process. This would include augmenting the site with authoritative, science-based information and articles, as well as compelling case studies and testimonials.

However, producing high-quality content alone is wasted if the desired audiences do not visit the site. Hence, the team recommended enhancing the website's discoverability online through a search engine optimisation exercise. They also suggested interactive elements to keep audiences engaged and potential collaborations to boost visibility.

This holistic and strategic approach was designed not only to bridge the identified awareness gap but also to deepen public understanding and appreciation of therapeutic horticulture — ultimately solidifying Hort Therapeutics' position as a prominent advocate and provider of the practice.



Hort Therapeutics' unique sessions include creative reflections that allow participants to craft mandalas using materials gathered during a nature walk.

Harvesting the fruits of labour

Mr Pong Junxiang, Co-founder of Hort Therapeutics, expressed his “extreme satisfaction” with the team’s efforts, noting that the overall analysis was thorough and comprehensive. “We’ve gained consumer insights into what the market wants,” Mr Pong said. “There were many good recommendations relevant to our company’s goals.”

For the students, flexing their classroom knowledge on a real-life project that helped an SME move forward in its business proved to be an eye-opening and valuable experience. “This project significantly differed from academic work as it required us to adapt theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios, consider practical constraints and collaborate effectively with a diverse team,” they noted. “Additionally, it gave us the opportunity to develop skills in project management, communications and problem-solving.”

Indeed, working with an SME provided the student-consultants with a deep understanding of the challenges faced by businesses in general. “We gained insights into the importance of agility, adaptability and customer-centric strategies in a competitive marketplace,” they observed.

Project Advisor Dionysius Chia concurred, highlighting that an educational objective for the students was “learning client management skills, which includes objection handling, leading

meetings and managing client expectations”. “I prefer to let the students take a stab at the issue first at each stage, before giving them suggestions to improve... to help guide them rather than instruct,” Mr Chia said.

Project Manager Lina Lee praised the team’s “meticulous work”, which “combined primary and secondary data collection methods, each complementing the other”. “Their recommendations garnered a positive response from the SME,” Ms Lee shared. “The team adequately addressed online strategies aimed at enhancing brand visibility, and provided insights into organising corporate wellness engagements, a crucial aspect for the client.”

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