



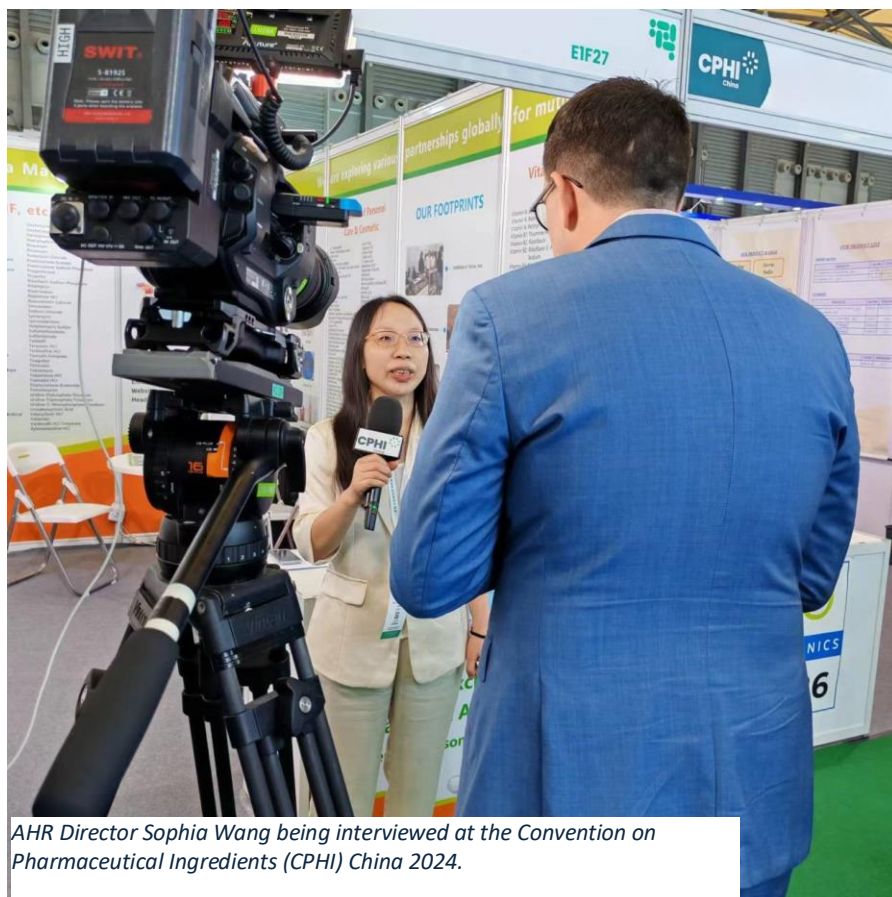
## Charting a healthy path to growth

*Alongside helping its clients grow, pharmaceutical ingredients distributor Apollo Healthcare Resources is getting ready for its own advancement in the industry with a strategic optimisation of its plans and approach.*

In business for 14 years, Apollo Healthcare Resources (AHR) stands as one of Singapore's most comprehensive distributors of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), and excipients (which are the inactive substances formulated alongside APIs in medication). AHR boasts an impressive inventory of more than 1,000 products catering to the pharmaceutical, personal care and food industries.

Supported with certifications such as GMP, CEP, FDA, DMF and others, AHR serves clients in more than 60 countries. The tailored services of AHR fulfils its clients' various requirements, such as providing support in their R&D projects, sourcing of new products, obtaining government approvals, selection of packaging materials and more.

AHR is committed to high-quality products and exceptional client service, and is continuously seeking improvement. In today's ever-changing business landscape, especially post-pandemic, it is essential to develop and implement a sustainable business growth plan.



AHR Director Sophia Wang being interviewed at the Convention on Pharmaceutical Ingredients (CPHI) China 2024.

## Diagnosing new opportunities

To identify opportunities in client acquisition, retention and satisfaction — as well as to explore viable business expansion — AHR sought the expertise of student-consultants from the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (UOB-SMU AEI) SME Consulting Programme (SCP). Guided by an industry veteran as Project Advisor and a Project Manager from the Institute, the team conducted an in-

depth market survey as part of the project. This effort resulted in a series of systematic strategies that were mapped out in a three-year quarterly implementation timeline.

Meticulous science-led surveys and data-based analysis with established models are hallmarks of the SCP. To this end, the student-consultants utilised primary and secondary survey methodologies to develop a thorough understanding of the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry, AHR's current and prospective markets, and target user segments that are potentially viable for the company.

Besides secondary data collection and analysis using established models — such as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis; political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal (PESTEL) analysis; Keller's Brand Equity; and Customer Journey Mapping — the team also carried out primary investigations. These included conducting in-depth interviews and a questionnaire with AHR's clients and key opinion leaders in the pharmaceutical industry.

### **A prescription for data-driven insights**

The team's primary survey revealed that complying with strict regulations is paramount for pharmaceutical businesses worldwide. These companies, which are now increasingly transitioning to online sourcing, are cost-sensitive but ultimately prioritise reliability over price in the long run.



*The bustling AHR booth at CPHI China 2024.*

A SWOT analysis — a framework that evaluates a company's position by assessing internal and external factors, and current and future potential — showed that AHR is well-positioned to maintain its price competitiveness and high levels of client satisfaction. Opportunities

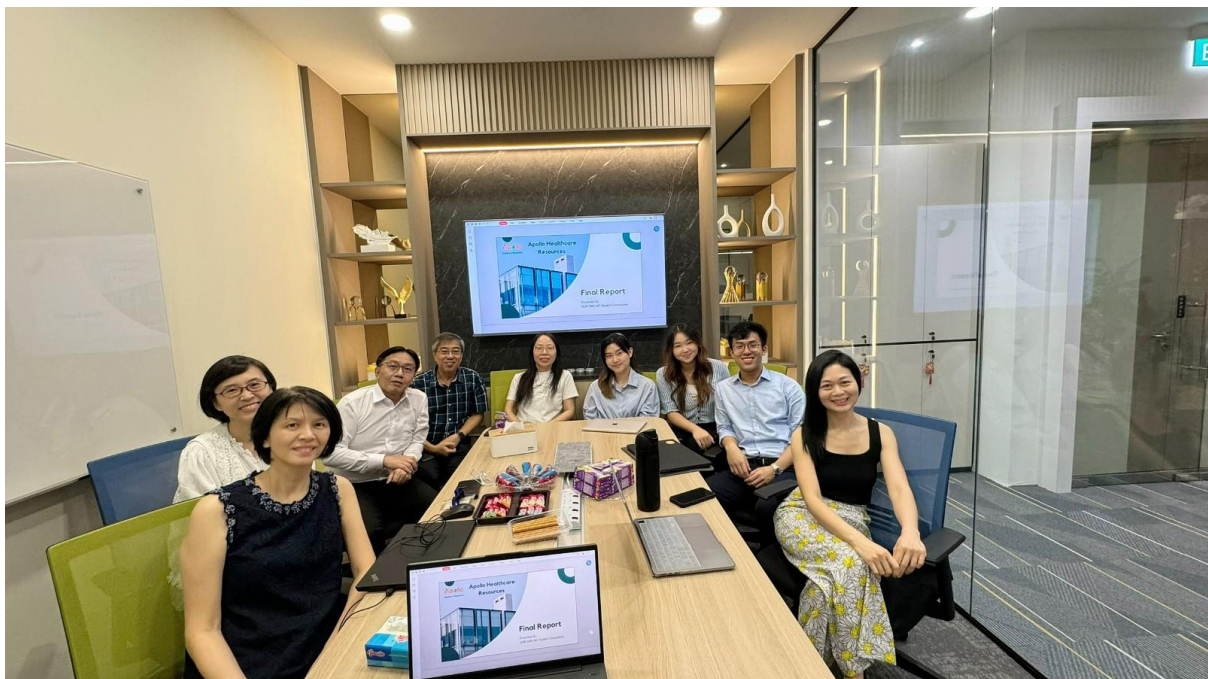
include venturing into different industries and segments, and capturing a larger market share in Singapore.



This was confirmed by the team's analysis using Keller's Brand Equity, a model that is used to evaluate clients' perceptions of a brand. Price and credibility are the two strongest and most important factors in AHR's relationship with its clients. The team concluded that AHR should consistently demonstrate its competitive advantages, and emphasise them in its marketing and communications.

A PESTEL analysis, which evaluates the external environment impacting the industry, highlighted various developments that could be both advantageous and challenging for AHR. For instance, supply chain issues and changes in government policies can delay growth. Conversely, demand for AHR products and services can be heightened by socio-cultural changes, such as a growing health-conscious and ageing population with higher life expectancies.

To identify further opportunities for the company, the students employed the Customer Journey Mapping model, which categorises a client's journey into five stages: awareness, consideration, decision, purchase and advocacy. Additionally, they implemented a Value Proposition Map, which visually represents and analyses the values of products and services that AHR offers.



*A team photo taken at the final report presentation (from left to right): AHR Sales Executives Wendy Hung and Sandy Wong; Senior Business Advisor, SME Centre @ SMF, Remy Khung; Project Advisor Paul Teo; AHR Director Sophia Wang; student-consultants Pandhita Chuanromanee, Audrey Felicia Lay and Andrew Brian Tan So; and Project Manager Lina Lee.*

### **Nurturing client relationships**

From its comprehensive analysis of the collected data, the team proposed several client-centric strategies for AHR to grow not only from continued client retention, but also from pursuing targeted and sustainable new business.

Overall, digital enhancements are key. Among others, the student consultants recommended AHR to enhance its website to more clearly signal its unique selling points (USPs), and align the look and feel with its other marketing collaterals by developing a branding guide. Pursuing search engine optimisation would also result in better and stronger brand recognition.

The student-consultants stressed the importance of customised client feedback. They recommended that AHR actively seek detailed feedback from clients to enhance both the client experience and overall business performance. By building a reputation for thoroughly understanding their clients' needs and resolving pain points, AHR will become more appealing to potential clients. In fact, [research from McKinsey in 2023](#) found that 71 per cent of consumers prefer companies that tailor their approach to individual needs.

Technology can further enhance this process. AHR can incorporate enterprise resource planning and client relationship management software to help track and consolidate data within the organisation.

Along with these internal enhancements, the team recommended that AHR consolidate its position in the Singapore market and prioritise local expansion in the short term. To boost AHR's chances for regional success, the company should then focus on refining its business processes, strengthening its client relationships and leveraging data-driven insights. Ultimately, in the long term, AHR should pave the way for global growth by positioning itself as a preferred supplier for multinational corporations.

### **Tangible outcomes and real-world impact**

The team's detailed exploration and resulting recommendations paid off, as AHR confirmed its ability to implement the suggestions. AHR Director Sophia Wang noted that the consultants' focus on specific improvements — which were grounded in a deep understanding of the company's current performance and operations — made "our company more professional".

The students, too, found significant value in their real-life experience of working with an established small- and medium-sized enterprise. "This project was very different from an academic project. We weren't working for a grade but rather for an actual business entity," they said. "We were able to apply some soft skills such as teamwork, communication and conflict management, as well as hard knowledge from management theories and models during our surveys and analysis."

Project Advisor Paul Teo praised the team for their "positive learning attitude". "They showed good initiative in overcoming challenges and issues faced during the project," he remarked. "It was very fulfilling to see how they developed from novices to confident student-consultants."

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Project Manager Lina Lee agreed. “The project team consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to their own learning and self-improvement,” she shared. “This dedication was evident in their numerous revisions and the significant strides they made before presenting the final outcomes to the company.”

Project Advisor: **Paul Teo**

Project Manager: **Lina Lee**

Student-Consultants: **Andrew Brian Tan So**  
**Bachelor of Business Management / 2023**

**Audrey Felicia Lay**  
**Bachelor of Business Management / 2022**

**Pandhita Chuanromanee**  
**Bachelor of Business Management / 2022**