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Postgraduate Studies II 21

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Asian insights

Programme offered by Institute on Asian Consumer Insight allows Ms Kate McGhee minimise time away from home

Hazel Tan

FOR the past year, Briton Kate McGhee (right) has flown in from London every three months and stayed for three weeks each time — for school.

She is pursuing a Master of Science in Marketing and Consumer Insight programme at the Institute on Asian Consumer Insight (ACI) at Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

The programme is structured in such a way that students meet only once a quarter for an intensive two-week segment, and they must complete two to three modules in each segment. Students have to complete a total of 10 modules, over 12 to 18 months.

The modular approach meant Ms McGhee could focus on her studies in those weeks, although there were times when she got homesick and relied on Skype to stay in touch with her husband and children, aged seven and three years old.

"With a young family at home and a demanding portfolio career, part-time study is a challenge, and so, coming to Singapore once each quarter was a great way to dedicate myself to study, away from the distractions of home life and the day job, without having to pause my career again," says Ms McGhee, who graduates in August.

Knowing Asian markets

The 41-year-old entrepreneurial marketing consultant chose to do her master's here because it offered her an opportunity to understand Asian markets better.

"NTU is a great school and its



PHOTO: KATE MCGHEE

international reputation is growing," says Ms McGhee, who runs her own consultancy company, emBold, in London. Since 2012, she has acted as a consultant for a global energy supermajor, in its global recruitment marketing team, and has worked with Judge Business School at Cambridge University and LinkedIn on brand and strategic marketing projects.

"The ACI course has many unique and innovative qualities and advantages: its intensive, modular, part-time format, with world-class faculty, including visiting professors and the level of experience and seniority of classmates. This course felt more like the profile of an Executive MBA, but focused on an area of business that I feel truly passionate about," she adds.

Ms McGhee says most marketing master's degree programmes in Britain are aimed at students in their early 20s, without professional experience. In contrast, the ACI course "offered something different, relevant, refreshing and exciting; and a chance to study alongside fellow professionals".

With changes in the international marketing environment

in the past few years, Ms McGhee thought it timely to consolidate and update her skills in international marketing and research, gained over her 18-year career.

"It was a good time to recap on my industry experience, and boost my skills with newer disciplines across the new marketing mix: including digital marketing, design, analytics, neuromarketing and ethnography," she says.

New opportunities

Ms McGhee believes her postgraduate degree will open more doors in her career.

"The Master of Science gives me more options to pursue career opportunities outside Britain and consider putting myself forward for strategic marketing roles in multinational corporations," she says.

Ms McGhee can apply what she has learnt to her business.

"Western businesses are still keen to better understand how they can build profitable ventures in Asia and adapt their brands to local cultures. The knowledge I gained has made me more assertive in pushing for original solutions and recommendations, and identifying smarter ways to tackle new marketing challenges," she says.

Ms McGhee paid \$38,000 in tuition fees for the programme, excluding cost of flights, food and accommodation each time she flew to Singapore — about \$25,000.

"As an entrepreneur, you aren't sent on corporate training, so I justified this as five years' payback on continuing professional development and a worthwhile investment in my future," she says.