

Find Out What These MBAs Learned About Brand Management From Tesco In London

On Hong Kong's CityU MBA, students get to learn about brand management first-hand—by experiencing life at brands including Tesco, Bentley and Edwardian Hotels

Written by Amy Hughes | July 5, 2019 07:00 | [MBA Degree](#)



MBA students on the CityU MBA get to visit global brands at their offices in London

Translating a brand successfully across cultures is no mean feat. What works in one country might not work in another—just take Home Depot's [failure](#) to make it big in China.

In 2006, the US DIY giant failed to penetrate the Chinese market, due to overlooking the fact that, far from being the pleasant hobby it is considered in the States, in emerging nations DIY can be seen as a sign of poverty.

Businesses need competent cross-cultural thinkers to identify these problems ahead of time—and, moreover, to identify and execute successful brand expansion projects to drive business growth.

At the [City University of Hong Kong](#) (CityU), MBA director, professor Kevin Chiang, is aiming to provide these kinds of business thinkers, by crafting a program that gives students hands-on experience of the business problems they will need to be able to solve.

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Experiencing a new cultural climate

Logic dictates that any global brand management program worth its salt would take students around the world to observe the way that brands operate in different cultures.

The workshop run by CityU does just that—each year, CityU’s MBA cohort visits London, England, where they work with a rotating cast of brands that wish to expand their product lines to the Asian market, as well as attending lectures at Imperial College.

In the past, corporations on the roster have included the luxury automaker Bentley Motors, and Edwardian Hotels Group, with whom the students consulted on how the company could attract Asian ultra-high net worth customers.

Most recently, students worked on brand projects for the UK retailer Tesco, on both their ‘Tesco’s Finest’ and ‘Jack’s’ brands.

“It helped me to tackle problems in a more systematic way”



Mike Ng, an MBA who was involved in the trip, agrees.

Coming from a retail background, he thinks that the practical experience of digging deep into Tesco's brand identity and making a case to management was one that he can take into the next phase of his career.

"My team was responsible for Tesco's Finest brand, and we had to identify the problems of the brand," he recalls.

"We had to compare it to local and international competitors at different levels, and we also had to do the market research to support our solutions before presenting to senior management."

Going through the brand's mission, vision, and challenges with a fine-toothed comb in order to recommend new approaches was incredibly rewarding for Mike—particularly as it was a brand that he had not been closely familiar with before.

The rigorous research that he had to do, and the approach that the workshop encouraged, are two of the things that Mike is consciously taking forward in his career.

"The design thinking sections [of the workshop] were helpful, not only on this trip, but also to help my further career," he says. "It helped me to tackle problems in a more systematic way—in particular, how to brainstorm in a way that was really relevant and useful."



Students take in a presentation from executives at Tesco



Berg Lee, another workshop attendee, like Mike comes from retail background. With 12 years in retail for the biggest chains in Hong Kong, one might think he had little to learn from working with Tesco, but this couldn't be further from the truth.

"It was a good chance to come [to a business] from a totally different background," he enthuses. "This is the first time I've experienced school in the UK!"

As well as experiencing a new cultural climate, Berg also got the chance to mingle with his MBA cohort, who come from a range of countries, industries, and experiences.

"I learned how to share my own ideas in a group of people from different backgrounds, to understand others' thinking processes," he says. "I learned to not

only push others to accept and agree with my point of view, but also to understand others, and their comments.”

Working with his teammates and professors at CityU and Imperial College to produce a convincing final presentation for the brand was the most rewarding part of the experience for Berg—he says he would even recommend it over sightseeing!

Going back into a retail career in Asia, he believes that the experience the trip has given him in cross-cultural management will be invaluable.

Combined with the supervision students received on how to pitch their ideas to brand decision-makers, this teaching has optimized both Mike and Berg’s skillsets for the needs of international brands, and they are optimistic about the opportunities before them.



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