

BUILDING A CAREER IN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: INSIGHTS FROM AN MUIC ALUMNI

THANYASTREE
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———— MUIC Class of 2021

Major: Intercultural Studies and
Languages

Position: Senior Business
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ABOUT THANYASTREE 'NICE'

I graduated with 2nd Class Honors from the Intercultural Studies and Languages program at MUIC, a major I deeply loved and one that sparked my passion for exploring the world. After graduation, I spent nearly a year working as a Project Coordinator at Sophia Global Education, under Sophia University, where I helped build international exchange programs to foster cultural connections between Japanese and Thai students.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit—but it couldn't stop my passion. I decided to pursue a one-year master's degree in the United Kingdom, enrolling in the International Marketing program at Newcastle University, a member of the prestigious Russell Group and highly ranked in marketing. I was awarded the Vice-Chancellor's International Scholarship, which supported my studies. During my time there, I was honored to serve as both a Business Ambassador and a Unibuddy Ambassador, representing the university to prospective students. I completed my master's degree with 1st Class Honors.

Upon returning to Thailand, all my efforts and passion came to life when I received an offer to join Agoda. It's now been nearly three amazing years working in a company where I continue to learn and grow every day. While many know Agoda as a popular digital travel platform for booking hotels, flights, and experiences, to me, it's much more. Since joining the Media Solutions team, I've come to see Agoda as a dynamic environment that goes far beyond travel—it's a place where innovation, strategy, and global connection come together.



COULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE AS A SENIOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST AT AGODA?

Many people see Business Development as just sales—selling products to customers. But in reality, it's about deeply understanding the market and effectively delivering the value of your product to meet that market's specific needs. This requires knowledge of market dynamics, cultural nuances, and the right marketing strategies.

In my role as a Senior Specialist in the Media Solutions team at Agoda, I work closely with clients every day, which demands strong problem-solving skills and a deep understanding of both our products and the people we work with. Knowing a client's cultural background and market context gives me a real edge—something I constantly trace back to my education at MUIC, where I learned to navigate and appreciate intercultural perspectives.

As a "Specialist," I'm expected to have in-depth expertise. In our team, advertising is at the core of what we do. We help businesses connect with Agoda's global traveler audience by running tailored ad campaigns across our platform. Our role is to recommend the most effective ad placements along the traveler journey—from inspiration and planning to booking and traveling—ensuring our clients reach high-intent travelers and drive real growth.



WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE A DEGREE IN INTERCULTURAL STUDIES AND LANGUAGES, AND HOW HAS THAT SHAPED YOUR CAREER PATH?



I grew up in a Thai environment, surrounded by family and friends who lived and communicated within Thai culture. But whenever I watched international films—hearing different languages, slang words, and seeing unique cultural behaviors—it sparked a deep curiosity in me. I wanted to understand the differences and similarities between cultures, their historical roots, and how they shape the way people think and behave.

That curiosity led me to pursue an “international” path, starting with MUIC, where I experienced a truly global environment for the first time. I chose to major in Intercultural Studies and Languages because the courses aligned perfectly with my desire to explore cultural dynamics in depth. To my knowledge, MUIC is one of the few universities in Thailand that offers such a unique and specialized program.

My background in Intercultural Studies and Languages, combined with my experiences at MUIC, has shaped my career by fostering a deep understanding of cultural dynamics. Growing up in Thailand, I was always curious about how different cultures communicate and behave. This curiosity guided me to pursue a career in global business, where cultural awareness plays a crucial role.

At Agoda, my role in the Media Solutions team requires me to navigate diverse markets and communicate effectively with clients from various cultural backgrounds. This ability to empathize with clients' needs and tailor solutions to specific cultural contexts has been essential in driving business growth. My academic and professional journey has equipped me with the skills to thrive in multicultural environments and apply strategic insights to reach the right audiences and create value for businesses.



YOU'VE HAD DIVERSE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES—FROM SOUTH KOREA TO THE UK. HOW HAVE THESE GLOBAL EXPOSURES IMPACTED YOUR PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL GROWTH?



These global experiences have had a profound impact on both my personal and professional growth. Receiving a scholarship from Mahidol University to join the Asia Pacific Youth Exchange 2019 marked a pivotal point in my journey—it was my first time traveling abroad alone, representing my university among students from around the world. Immersing myself in a local development project in South Korea, interviewing locals, and working with a multicultural team taught me how to navigate real-world challenges through diverse perspectives. Presenting our ideas to stakeholders pushed me beyond my comfort zone and strengthened my confidence in cross-cultural communication and teamwork.

Later that same year, I received another scholarship to attend the Asia International Model United Nations Conference, where I represented Nigeria in discussions around global diplomacy. This experience sharpened my negotiation, public speaking, and problem-solving skills in an international setting.

Additionally, serving as a master of ceremony and student liaison for the 2021 “ASEAN in Today’s World” conference—co-hosted by Mahidol University and Kyushu University in Japan—gave me hands-on experience in international event coordination. It enhanced my professionalism, adaptability, and ability to bridge communication between institutions across cultures.

This experience set the stage for my next chapter, where I moved to the UK for my master’s degree. The journey was far from easy, especially as it took place during the COVID-19 lockdown. Navigating the complex immigration process required not only academic credentials but also proof of my ability to adapt to life in the UK. Once there, I had to start fresh—setting up a bank account, registering for a GP, securing accommodation, and building new connections. Juggling these challenges while working as a Business Ambassador and striving for academic success meant late nights at the library, managing projects, and keeping up with my supervisor on my dissertation.

These experiences, from the Asia Pacific Youth Exchange to my time in the UK, have shaped me into a culturally aware, resilient individual. I’ve learned to navigate and appreciate cultural differences and gained the ability to communicate effectively across diverse backgrounds—skills that are invaluable in today’s globalized business world. My international journey has given me a unique perspective, one that helps me see the value in diversity and approach challenges with a broader, more empathetic lens. And with all of that, having this international advantage has opened up many more opportunities for me to travel and explore the world.



HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN MOTIVATION AND FOCUS DURING CHALLENGING TIMES IN YOUR JOB, ESPECIALLY IN A FAST-PACED COMPANY LIKE AGODA?

In a fast-paced environment like Agoda, staying motivated and focused during challenging times requires a strong mindset, clear communication, and self-awareness. I maintain a positive outlook by believing in my capabilities and setting high goals for myself. This helps me stay resilient and focused, even when things get tough, because I view challenges as opportunities for growth.



I break down complex tasks into manageable steps and stay adaptable when priorities shift. Regularly updating my manager, asking for feedback, and aligning on expectations helps me stay on track and feel supported. I also value teamwork—collaborating with my colleagues often brings fresh perspectives and renewed energy.

One unique advantage of working in the travel industry is that when things get overwhelming, we're naturally reminded of the joy and inspiration that travel brings. I often take the opportunity to travel when I need a reset. Exploring new places not only helps me recharge but also reconnects me with the very essence of our work—helping others discover the world.

These habits, combined with a growth mindset and passion for what I do, keep me motivated and grounded, even in a high-pressure environment.

WHAT SKILLS OR EXPERIENCES GAINED AT MUIC HAVE PROVEN TO BE THE MOST USEFUL IN YOUR CAREER SO FAR?

Critical thinking has become one of my key strengths throughout my career. This skill was first cultivated during my studies in Intercultural Studies and Languages, where assignments, projects, and exams were not based on finding a single “right” answer. Instead, they required deep interpretation of questions, connecting different concepts, and forming well-reasoned, original perspectives.

That foundation continues to support me in my professional role. In my day-to-day work, I regularly handle client requests and inquiries—some of which may have straightforward answers, but many require thoughtful consideration. It's not just about providing information, but about responding in a way that fits the specific context and needs of each client. This is where critical thinking truly comes into play: analyzing situations, understanding nuances, and crafting responses that are both strategic and appropriate.



HOW DID YOUR ACADEMIC AND EXTRACURRICULAR EXPERIENCES AT MUIC CONTRIBUTE TO LANDING YOUR ROLE AT AGODA?

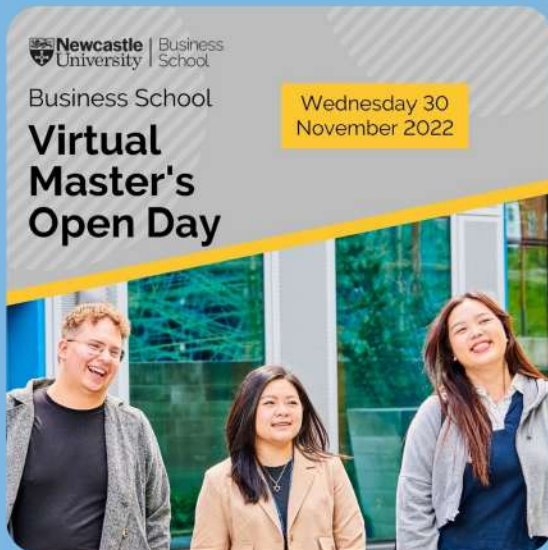
My academic and extracurricular experiences at MUIC played a significant role in helping me land my role at Agoda. Academically, my major in Intercultural Studies and Languages equipped me with a deep understanding of cultural diversity and communication—skills that are essential in a global company like Agoda, where the majority of employees come from international backgrounds. The coursework pushed me to think critically, work independently, and approach problems from multiple perspectives.

Beyond academics, MUIC offered a truly international environment that helped me develop adaptability, open-mindedness, and cultural sensitivity—all qualities that Agoda values highly. Through various group projects, student activities, and leadership roles, I learned to collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds, take initiative, and manage responsibilities—skills directly transferable to the fast-paced, multicultural setting at Agoda.

Agoda doesn't just look at academic performance; they also value how well a candidate can take ownership, think like a problem-solver, and thrive in diverse teams. My time at MUIC helped me build that mindset and gain the confidence to contribute meaningfully in such an environment.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO SAY TO THE MUIC COMMUNITY OR FUTURE STUDENTS WHO MIGHT FOLLOW A SIMILAR PATH?

Being open to risks and opportunities is important, but taking action is the real key to success. Don't just think or dream about what you want—start taking small steps toward it. Action brings you closer to your goals. Trust me, this mindset applies not only to your academic journey but also to your personal life in the long run.



MOTTO:

**TAKE SMALL STEPS EVERYDAY
AND ONE DAY YOU WILL GET THERE.**



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