

It's marvellous what Milo did for her

MS SHERMAINE Lee was 19 and part of a six-month exchange programme with the Maastricht University in the Netherlands when she experienced the darkness of winter for the first time.

"It was very cold. The days were really short, it got dark at 4pm," she recalls.

But a chance encounter at an Asian grocery store with a familiar green can – Milo, the chocolate malt beverage she'd had every day as a child – took her back home.

"It reminded me of the love and warmth of home," says Ms Lee, now 26 and assistant brand manager for Milo.

Prior to her Netherlands trip, the economics major from Singapore Management University had done an internship with Nestle.

It sealed her decision to join the company full-time in 2011.

She became part of the Milo branding team, managing on-ground and in-store campaigns.

She also had a hand in conceptualising and bringing to life several Milo collectibles, such as the small Milo vans and mugs that come free with the product.

She says: "The collectibles help to drive sales and also build brand love. The Milo vans from the various eras are something that many people, even my Dad, remember."

She then moved to a more strategic role, coming up with campaign and product development ideas, and expanding the brand's



Nestle's assistant brand manager Shermaine Lee says a can of Milo alleviated her homesickness during an exchange programme in the Netherlands.

digital reach.

She helped to grow its Facebook fan base from 43,000 to more than 209,000 fans, paying attention to what they say and talking to them.

"Knowing what consumers are saying about the brand helps us, and having a two-way conversation helps us understand them better," she says.

She even joined the Milo Youth Triathlon team to better understand "what an actual participant goes through".

She had not thought about marketing as a career until a study trip to China and Hong Kong in her second year of university sparked an interest in the psychographics – the study of values and lifestyles – of various regions.

Nestle – the world's largest food and beverage company by

revenue with over 10,000 products in its portfolio and about one billion products sold every day – seemed a great place to learn.

Her role gives her a hand in sales, trade marketing, supply chain and finance functions, so her day could involve anything from a photo shoot to setting up for events.

But the hobby photographer and long-distance runner constantly has to debunk the impression that "brand management" is all about advertising.

"That isn't the bulk of my job. We manage the business and work closely with different functions in order to drive our objectives.

"But understanding and delighting consumers is a huge part of this. As a career choice, you could say it's marvellous."