



#ConversationsThatMatter

INTRODUCTION

Sinclair is a multi-award-winning independent communications agency, specialising in PR, digital, experiential and social media marketing. We work across industry and sector with one goal in mind – to create business impact for brands and corporations.

#ConversationsThatMatter is a content series curated by our expert consultants and strategists to ensure brands are harnessing the power of persuasive storytelling.

By dissecting the next marketing and PR catchphrases, we explore communications trends which shape conversations that can build value, inspire action, change opinion and ultimately grow reputation.



GBA

noun.

"An international, first-class bay area in the making"



- As one of the most open and economically dynamic regions in China, the Greater Bay Area (GBA) is a key national initiative, having great significance in the country's implementation of innovation-driven development, as well as a commitment to the reform and opening-up of China.
- GBA is comprised of nine municipalities in Guangdong Province, including Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing, as well as the two Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macao. These are also referred to as the "9+2" cities.
- GBA constitutes a total area of 56,000 km², with a population totaling over 86 million and a GDP surpassing 12 trillion RMB as of 2021.

- The blueprint has laid out a strategic vision to strengthen cooperation, policy co-ordination, enhance market integration, and improve connectivity of systems between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, while leveraging the international exposure of core cities to create a better business environment for attracting foreign investment and continuing the development of the "Belt and Road" initiative.
- With the aim of becoming an international first-class bay area, ideal for living, working and travelling, key policy areas focus specifically on innovation and technology, financial services, trade, professional and legal services, and other social factors such as medical, education, art and culture, as well as sustainability.





The GREAT integration

Since the introduction of the GBA initiative, the integrated development of the cities has accelerated exponentially with national and city governments putting forward various systems and support mechanisms to facilitate the integration of the “9+2” cities, as well as the free circulation of goods, services, capital and personnel.

With the completion of Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macao Bridge and Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, the concept of “one hour living circle” has stimulated the flow of citizens and talent within the GBA cities, supported by a wide spectrum of policies and government schemes that encompass many social concerns, from education, medical care, and finance, to the business environment.

To foster connectivity, key projects are in the works, with collaborations seeing universities, research institutes, and hospitals from Hong Kong setting up branches across the GBA. At the same time, a world-class cluster of multiple airports linking several cities is also taking shape, and the development of 11 Skies close to Hong Kong International Airport is set to become the cities’ largest hub for retail, entertainment, and wealth and health management, with each of these initiatives designed to accommodate the diverse needs of residents and visitors from across the GBA.

Trading made easy

To facilitate the cross-boundary flow of capital while promoting the use of the RMB currency and regional economic activities, the government and regulatory authorities from Hong Kong, Macao and Mainland have worked hand-in-hand to implement several initiatives.

The development of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) promotes free trade and investment within the area, enabling zero tariff on imported goods of Hong Kong origin. This will open doors for Hong Kong-based businesses, as well as foreign businesses operating in Hong Kong, to access the Chinese market, while at the same time, it will act as a springboard for Mainland businesses wanting to connect with the global market. This arrangement will continue to deepen the liberalisation and facilitation of trade across the GBA.

In recent years, the everyday use of Fintech has expanded vigorously throughout the GBA, allowing citizens to enjoy great convenience in the form of online shopping, e-payment and online banking services, among other things. To enhance connectivity between Mainland and Hong Kong, the introduction of cross-boundary mobile payment systems allowed Hong Kong citizens residing in the GBA to utilise digital payment for transportation, shopping and to pay bills. A robust cross-border digital payment ecosystem will soon facilitate faster and safer payment and transfer procedures across GBA as well as provide an alternative option for cross-border retail consumption.





Borderless business ecosystem

With the plan of developing the Greater Bay Area into a globally competitive business center that consolidates its status in several key areas, including finance, trade, technology and professional services, attracting and leveraging talent and resource supplies across the area, will be conducive to supporting a sustainable business ecosystem.

Under CEPA, the 9+2 cities have made significant efforts to enhance the appeal of the GBA to talent, start-ups, and global corporations, through various business-friendly policies including tax benefits, mutual recognition of qualifications, and a reduction of legislative procedures.



A “GBA talent centre” has recently been established in Guangdong, providing comprehensive services to assist global talent and their families to settle in the area. To attract talent from professional services such as finance, accounting and law to assist with the development of GBA, Hong Kong and Macao enterprises now enjoy the same freedom to trade their services when operating and practicing in their respective fields. Simultaneously, youth development is a key aspect of building talent. Schemes such as The Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme aim to encourage and support young people to pursue career advancement and entrepreneurial opportunities across GBA. Additionally, city governments have provided extensive support in the form of incubators and funding schemes to foster the development of business start-ups in the region.

For commercial registrations of Hong Kong and Macao businesses, they can now be completed through a one-stop service on an e-government platform. Through the GBA collaborative funds, over 200 financial institutions from Hong Kong and Macao have established bases in the GBA, while over 270 corporations from Guangdong have been listed on the Hong Kong Exchange (HKEX). In the post-COVID era, the integration of GBA will open up new forms of work models, making hybrid working and remoting work more feasible.



Communicate the sweet spot of each GBA city

At the initial formulation stage of the Greater Bay Area, the key narrative mainly centered on the overall vision and development plan of the bay area as a whole. As the plan evolves, it details how it is intended to leverage each city's industry focus and unique advantages to create synergies in achieving the overall goal. Building on the four core cities of Hong Kong, Macao, Guangzhou and Shenzhen as engines for regional development, each has been assigned a specific role that complements the others, whether being an industry hub or a base for supporting infrastructure.

Given the differences in functions, language and culture practices across the GBA, communication narratives are bound to be different. Localised narratives for each of the "9+2 cities" that highlight respective trending topics and the role of each city are essential to capture and resonate with the audiences. As the concept of the GBA becomes more materialised in core cities such as Hong Kong, Macao and Shenzhen, the public have become educated on the implications of the GBA and are increasingly open to the idea of this integration into the national landscape. Topics related to business and investment opportunities, as well as migration to the GBA, tend to capture the most attention. On the other hand, public awareness of the GBA in many other Mainland cities has yet to be solidified. In fact, the GBA term and concept only began gaining widespread attention due to recent entertainment shows and shopping festivals whose associated content were viewed and more easily digested by Mainland audiences.

Harness the stories of technology and innovation

To adhere to the Mainland government's high-quality development targets outlined in the "14th Five-Year Plan", technology development and the accelerated integration of new infrastructure are the foundation for transforming the GBA into the world's leading hub for innovation.

The innovation and technology scene in the GBA is propelled by a series of policies to support and nurture tech enterprises and R&D institutions within the region. Leveraging each city's industry and advantages to achieve synergy, collaborative schemes are implemented to develop smart infrastructure, such as industrial parks, to strengthen the exchange of innovative ideas and cooperation across the GBA. The application of 5G technology, IoT, A.I. and big data, will aid in the facilitation of region's digital transformation, particularly in the four sectors of insurtech, fintech, proptech and edtech.

With the continued growth of talent and technical resources in the GBA, digitisation will help drive regional economic development, promote the transition to a digital economy, and create opportunities for emerging industries such as WITMED, Intelligent Transport System (ITS) and the Industrial Internet. On a social level, smart cities and fintech will help to foster the integration and cooperation between GBA cities as well as improving overall living standards.

Going forward, brands and corporations need to demonstrate their understanding of the growth opportunities in the GBA market and be able to communicate their innovation and technology stories as the region gradually transitions into an international tech hub.





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