

# Report on the Chinese Cities Global Communications Impact Index (CCGCII) & Ranking of Chinese Cities by Global Communicaitons Impact

Jointly Published by  
Xinhuanet Co.,Ltd & Center for China & Globalization



May 2021

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# PREFACE

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# Alistair Michie

Winner of the 2013 "Friendship Award of the Chinese Government", Secretary General of British East Asia Council (BEAC), member of Foreign Experts Advisory Committee (FEAC) of China State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs (SAFEA), and Foreign Expert Committee of the International Study Centre of People's Daily. He has led top global experts on creating policy papers to advise the State Council and was appointed the first Honorary Associate of the NRI at Cambridge University. He is now a Business and Government Advisor to Hampton Group.

This initiative to support Chinese cities boost their international communication is most timely. The analysis, founded on detailed research, provides a valuable case study of how Chinese cities can rise fast to the challenge set by President Xi Jinping on 31st May 2021. In a speech that was widely publicized, President Xi Jinping stressed the importance of strengthening and improving how China communicates with the world. In the spirit of this report it should be noted that, for international communications, President Xi said, "It is necessary to conduct in-depth research from multiple perspectives...."

For over three decades I have studied communication both ways between China and the world. My motivation was the observation, as a non-Chinese person, that as China rises in the world, then it becomes of paramount importance that there is deeper dialogue and understanding between China and all nations of the world.

In the past thirty years of observing China, the communication out of China has been dominated at a national level out of Beijing. That is why this initiative to support Chinese cities communicate more effectively with the world is so valuable.

During my visits to China, I have been very privileged to visit and work in 28 of the 34 Provinces and Regions. That has made me aware of the massive scale and vast variety of China. Also, I have learned to marvel at the richness and diversity of Chinese culture. That means there are huge differences between Chinese cities. Knowledge of this variety is of very great significance for foreign investors or business leaders seeking success in China. In turn this treasure trove of cultural variety is of acute potential interest for tourists from other nations seeking to travel in China.

My observations of this rich diversity are that very little of this is known outside of China. That is where this research report creates an important foundation. I advise those driving this research that they have only started out on a truly important task. It will greatly reward Chinese cities if they invest in much more research to learn exactly what people outside China know about Chinese cities. That kind of research is a fundamental tool to create a successful communications strategy that will have optimal impact outside of China.

I stress how I applaud this report and its research initiative. But any reader should be aware of the narrow reach of the research. The primary focus of the research is an analysis of social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. There is a compelling need for research on the primary source of the image of Chinese cities. These are the websites curated and created by every city in China. I believe that the research will bring to the attention of the leaders of Chinese cities that there is a vast amount to be gained from a fresh and innovative approach to these websites. I have deep sympathy for these city leaders seeking to promote their cities. If they do not speak other languages than Chinese, how can they judge the value of their websites in foreign languages? The solution for them is to recognize the great importance of research. Then to use the research to create web sites of much greater impact on the target international

audiences.

City communication leaders across China will also greatly benefit if they grasp these core concepts that can optimize communicating from China to the world.

For millennia China has had its own distinctive approach to communicating inside China. At its simplest this style of communication can be described as directed messaging. The approach is embedded in Chinese culture. However, outside of China, and especially in the EU and the USA, the style of communication can be described as persuasion. This difference is truly fundamental and is the source of much friction and misunderstanding between China and other nations around the world. That means any Chinese city seeking international communication success must adopt strategies where the core messages persuade.

These are more specific differences:

- In Chinese communications orientation is the facts. Outside of China communication must stimulate the audience.
- Inside China the message is one way. For international audiences outside China there has to be two-way interaction.
- Within Chinese cities the leaders are the stakeholders and they are paramount. Especially in the EU and USA communications are created with an approach that is collaborative that draws together a range of skills and knowledge.
- Many websites of Chinese cities have a context of only Chinese culture; the websites assume a knowledge of Chinese culture that people outside of China have no understanding about. For Chinese cities to succeed with their communication, they must adopt a multi-cultural approach.
- I believe that the skills of translators between Chinese and other languages are greatly lacking in respect and status. So often Chinese cities use literal translation from Chinese and the outcome can be a highly negative impact on international audiences outside of China. It is crucial to use native language outside of China. For example, USA native English is very different from British native English.
- All too often inside China in cities the communications team is strictly limited to Chinese members. That approach will never deliver successful international communication outside of China. For optimal success in international communication, Chinese cities must build teams that embrace both Chinese and foreign experts who collaborate with deep trust to create compelling communication.

I wish the research team that created this report great success. They have started out on a crucial task for China.



## David Blair

David Blair is an economist specializing in banking and finance, macroeconomics, technological innovation, and entrepreneurship. Earlier, he was a senior business columnist for China Daily. He has a Ph.D. in economics from UCLA and was a MacArthur post-doctoral fellow at Harvard University's Center for Science and International Affairs. He is a retired economics professor and has been a business consultant in many countries.

China's rapid urbanization is well-known around the world, but less well-known are the great steps taken to ensure that the growing cities are both economically productive and pleasantly livable. China has built excellent infrastructure—roads, public transportation, hospitals, parks and so forth, in many, many cities. Most neighborhoods have very good transport connections, a local park, and walkable shopping.

Most Westerners have no idea of the high quality of life in China's cities. Of course, relatively few foreigners will ever have the opportunity to visit, much less live in, China. Even tourists, who see a few ancient sites, or businesspeople, who see a few business districts, have little experience of daily life in a Chinese city. The widespread highly mistaken views that many foreigners have about the quality of life of most Chinese people is, unfortunately, a very dangerous issue for the future of the world.

I have been trying recently to learn to be a "street photographer." But, for street photographers, the most powerful images are people in despair or obvious poverty. So, it's hard to be a real street photographer in Beijing because most of the photos I can find are happy people playing with children or dogs in beautiful parks. This is a good life, but it does not lead to powerful images. Of course, there are people without a lot of money. But I don't see the kinds of despair that I see (and that is well-documented) among poor or hopeless people in many Western countries.

The myth that only cities along the East Coast are developed also persists. This might have been true 15 or 20 years ago, but inland cities now have excellent infrastructure. Most are shiny and clean. I must admit that the first time I visited Yunnan province in China's southwest five years ago I was hoping to see my idea of the "real" undeveloped China. No luck. The highway system in Yunnan is just like driving around


the US, but the roads are newer and better maintained. Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan, has an excellent subway system and the airport and the new high-speed rail lines give great connection to the rest of the country and, soon, southeast Asian countries.

Many Chinese cities also exemplify the kind of lively streets that city planners in US cities aspire to, but seldom reach. The very popular school of architecture and urban planning known as "new urbanism" seeks to have jobs, and residential areas, and daily shops nearby. Chinese city planners call this a 15-minute city—meaning that people can quickly walk to transportation and to sites needed for their daily lives. In very large cities, this is accomplished by high rise apartment "gardens." Their density supports local stores and their protected yards give children great safe places to play. Streets in smaller cities are often lively and vibrant. Like the rest of the world, China's retailers are threatened by online sales, but many small stores and restaurants still survive, even after the pandemic.

China's cities do face problems such as maintaining sustainable city finances, the high price of housing, and inequality of schools and hospitals. All of them are well-known and are being addressed by the government, but they are difficult issues that may take decades to deal with.

As this report highlights, it is crucial to convey the economic and life-style progress in China's cities to the international public if we are to maintain international peace and stability. This challenging task can be partially achieved by the use of social media, but showing the true picture is made harder by the refusal of much Western mainstream media to present a balanced view of China. For both economic reasons and for promoting global peace and understanding, we should all hope that China's cities succeed in presenting the real





information to world audiences. But how can this be accomplished in the face of sometimes hostile governments and a highly biased Western press?

One phrase of this report is especially telling: "On social platforms, the international netizens have gradually changed from enjoying sharing landmarks to enjoying sharing "life". The true "look" of Chinese cities has also begun to penetrate deeply into the hearts of people, and the communication of cities has achieved the crossing from "let you see me" to "let you know me."

The big innovation of this report is that the Xinhua RIS Big Data Analysis Platform provides hard data on the amount of effective information disseminated through Western media and social media sites by China's top 100 cities. Astonishingly, the total number of pieces of information in 2020 was nearly seven times the total in 2019.

Of course, the huge cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou get the most international attention. And Wuhan is high on the list in 2020. But a bit smaller cities that many foreigners may not have heard of are also cited frequently in the international media. This helps all of China, not just a few places in the East, to globalize and to create business and cultural links around the world.

But, as the report summarizes, many smaller cities need to raise the maturity of their local media in order to improve global awareness of the opportunities they offer. Also, many cities currently have rather disorganized international outreach, so they need to work at integrating their message with world cultures, differentiating their cities from others, and having the government and business sectors work together to create a coherent message.

Many Chinese cities are working to get their message out

through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube—seeking to attract international eyeballs by talking about culture, cuisine and the economy. As any youtuber knows, it is difficult to breakthrough the immense flow of videos and other information on such platforms to get attention. Cities need to make use of multimedia integration and engaging visuals.

Conveying true information is made more difficult because some of the international mainstream media outlets, especially in the US and Europe, refuse to show positive information about China—even cultural and economic information. In many areas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, (especially Belt and Road Initiative countries), the flow of information about China is much more balanced.

For the sake of international cooperation and economic progress, we should all hope that this effort to convey both the nature of daily life and the economic opportunities throughout China succeeds. This report is a big step toward clearly understanding how this important mission is going. The data included in this report, and in future iterations, is crucial to understanding and measuring the international outreach of China's cities.

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## COMMENTS

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## Evan Due

Senior Fellow at the Institute of Asian Research, School of Public Policy and Global Affairs at the University of British Columbia, PhD at the University of Sussex, UK. He has worked for the Canadian International Development Agency (now Global Affairs Canada) and the International Development Research Centre, and is currently a senior advisor to the China Development Research Foundation (Beijing, China). His main research areas are public policy, political economy, international trade, environment and sustainable development, and economic governance.

Urban development in China has witnessed tremendous progress over the past decade with today over 60% of the population residing in cities. The growth of China's cities has transformed its economy, physical environment, and quality of life with highly developed infrastructure, public services, and digitization. That said however, the Chinese City Global Communication Impact Index Research Report contends that the recognition of Chinese cities as vibrant centers of technological innovation, culture, and economic opportunity has not been well communicated to international audiences. This detailed report constructs what is called an "impact index" – a composite metric based on a large number of indicators on how 100 selected Chinese cities

communicate their attributes abroad. It concludes that despite the remarkable achievements and qualities of China's cities, reflected in the index, their narratives are weak and lacking persuasion. This is true in terms of "hard power" – key economic development indicators – as well as "soft power", the cultural, social and historical dimensions that define the identity and distinctiveness of each of these cities. In today's world of global tension and disruption, the stories and reflections of China's different cities need to be told to build international understanding. This report no doubt has special value in its final edited form for international readers who are interested in China's urbanization and how different tiers of cities reflect opportunities in China.





## Harvey Dzodin

Following an outstanding career in American law and media, Dr. Harvey Dzodin is a columnist for "China Daily", a commentator of the China Global TV Network, and China Radio International and various China-based media. He is a Senior Consultant of the National Image Communication Research Center of Tsinghua University. Dr. Dzodin was appointed by former US President Jimmy Carter as his lawyer on a presidential committee. After being nominated by the White House and the US Department of State, he worked at the United Nations Office in Vienna, Austria. He also served as a director and vice president of the ABC TV Network in New York for more than 20 years.

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When I first visited China in 1988, so little was known to the outside world about Chinese cities beyond Beijing and Shanghai. With the publication of Chinese City Global Communication Impact Index Research Report & Chinese City Global Communication Impact List, scholars, policymakers and interested others for whom it is valuable tool, can see just how far Chinese cities have come, and how far, and where, they still have to go in terms of city-branding and telling China's story better.

With so many incredible Chinese cities that have morphed from ugly ducklings to beautiful swans, the competition for attracting eyeballs in our attention economy can be brutal. The Report and List provide a rich source of data for "threading the needle" and suggest a way forward on the road to success.

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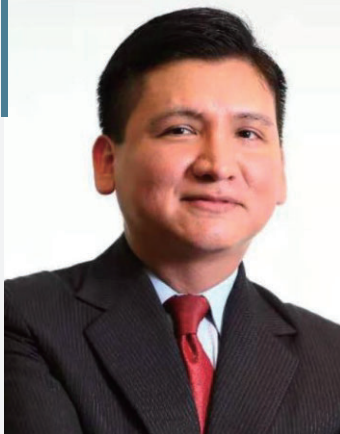
## Tatiana Prazeres

Senior fellow at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, China, columnist on international affairs for Folha de S. Paulo, Young Global Leader recognized by the World Economic Forum, and holds a PhD in International Relations. She was a senior advisor to the Director General of the World Trade Organization, and Secretary of Foreign Trade of Brazil.

It is probably fair to say that most foreigners still know very little about Chinese cities. At best, their knowledge is often limited to some big-name cities.

Such limited knowledge represents however an opportunity. That “blank canvas” provides a great chance for cities to impact how they are perceived abroad. Importantly, in order to be effective, these efforts need to embrace a communications style that is suitable to different foreign audiences and mindful of cross-cultural differences.

If it is important for Chinese cities to go global, a well-grounded methodology to assess the impact of their communication strategies is extremely useful. CCGCII offers a very good contribution to that effect.



## Edgar Perez

A published author and energetic keynote speaker, also an international consultant affiliated with Ponemon Institute, Gerson Lehrman Group and Guidepoint Global Advisors. He was the author of *Knightmare on Wall Street, The Rise and Fall of Knight Capital* and *The Biggest Risk for Financial Markets* (2013), and *The Speed Traders, An Insider's Look at the New High-Frequency Trading Phenomenon That is Transforming the Investing World*, published in English by McGraw-Hill Inc. (2011). He was a vice president at Citigroup, a senior consultant at IBM, and a strategy consultant at McKinsey & Co.

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The Report on the Chinese City Global Communications Impact Index (CCGCII) recently published by CCG, Xinhuanet Data Center and Xinhuanet Europe provides a groundbreaking evaluation of global communications impact initiatives undertaken by one hundred Chinese cities. Beijing and Shanghai can certainly thank their top positions in the ranking to the noticeable abundance of diverse topics in promoting both their “hard” and “soft” power. The onus falls then on lower-ranked cities to leverage “soft” power elements through the media universe: films, live streaming, radio, television, literature, arts, theater, music, sports, educational exchanges, technological prowess, cultural and financial cooperation, investments, and much more. As the report wisely notes, “soft” power should come not only from the municipal governments but also from the important work of local corporations, universities, foundations, societies, associations and “key opinion leaders” (KOLs) in general. For example, the fact that Tianfu International Airport is expected to

launch this year and make Chengdu only the third city in China, following Shanghai and Beijing, to operate two international airports, should have probably created more enthusiastic headlines around the world. Chengdu, which already operates Shuangliu International Airport, the second busiest airport in the country last year and the busiest airport during the Lunar New Year Holidays in 2021, can still proactively reach out to the world during the short window of opportunity that will open up once international travel is back in full force. Each and all of the other cities included in the ranking can certainly identify cultural “mirrors” to enhance their communications efforts in light of the hypercompetitive scenario for global cities vying for the world’s attention. In this regard, the report’s scientific theoretical framework for studying communication strategies brings much needed guidance and clarity to city leaders in the mainland.

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## Laurence Brahm

Laurence Brahm is a International Lawyer, Political-Economist, Author and many International Award Winning Film Director. He has written over thirty books on China's economic reforms, Asian finance, and sustainable development. He is a member of the United Nations Theme Group on Poverty and Inequality. He has pioneered one of China's first green social enterprises, serving as a model for sustainable development. He is also founder of Himalayan Consensus Institute, an environmental think tank concerned with water security and inclusive sustainability. He has been directing and producing series of films such as "Searching for Kungfu" and winning many international awards.

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The success of China's urban development lies in a combination of both planning and market. With China's national policy of Ecological Civilization, cities are being overhauled to become ecological cities with infrastructure that is smart, green and blue. This involves protecting the ancient sections of China's historic cities and establishing new urban landscapes. The combination gives China's urban centers aspects of both celebrating tradition while projecting into a future of high technology and globalization of finance and trade. Such a flourishing culture should be appealing to foreigners. Unfortunately, the lack of communication to international audiences makes Chinese cities less known to the outside world. How to change the situation? The Chinese City Global Communication Impact Index Research Report helps to explore ways of improving Chinese cities' image. The Report would be a guidance for foreigners who would like to travel or do business in China, and a tool for Chinese authorities to enlarge Chinese cities' fame.

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## Andy Mok

CGTN on-air commentator on technology and geopolitics. He holds an MBA from the Wharton School and an MA in China Studies from the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies where he was awarded the Loe Fellowship for Excellence in China Studies.

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As cities throughout China seek to more fully realize the benefits of reform and increasing integration with the rest of the world, the creation and maintenance of an effective communications function is essential. This communications function must be bi-directional – it must encompass both the creation and delivery of outbound messaging as well as the collection, interpretation and timely delivery of information that can advance or impede the goals of each Chinese city.

An important first step involves the regular review of reports like this because they provide an independent and comprehensive comparison for Chinese cities so their efforts can be linked to objective results.

However, while this report is necessary, it is only a first step. Communications, like any professional discipline, requires not only enthusiasm and commitment to realize success but it also requires true expertise and experience. As such, a crucial next step for many Chinese cities will be to identify sources of expertise and establish appropriate and productive partnerships with relevant professionals ranging from strategists to cultural experts to social media influencers.

Chinese cities, and the country itself, face a complex international environment with changes unseen in centuries. Such an environment presents not only historic opportunities but daunting challenges too. An effective communications function that is supported by proven professional expertise and experience is crucial in successfully navigating such an environment.

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## Wenshan Jia

PhD in Communication from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, USA. A prolific scholar of communication and global studies at Chapman University, he now serves as a Distinguished Professor of Culture and Communication at Shandong University and Dean of Global Engagement Academy Shandong University (Weihai). As a noted scholar and commentator well published in both English and Chinese, he serves as Editor-in-Chief of two scholarly book series: *Chinese Perspectives on Journalism and Communication* (Routledge) and *Belt & Road Initiative: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Peter Lang)

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The world has entered into a golden age of modern urban development propelled by China's remarkable urbanization achievements over the past decades.

The solutions of Chinese urbanization have transformed urban lifestyles. For example, modern infrastructure like high-speed trains provide a convenient, efficient, and comfortable life to citizens.

China's urban areas are generally safer than major cities in Europe, the United States, and the developing world. China's major cities are successful in combining tradition with modernity. In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a new form of infrastructure is being implemented in China's large and medium-sized cities.

These advantages of Chinese urbanization support Chinese cities going abroad, and can be used to exchange with the developed cities of the world. Therefore, this report is indeed timely. The report is well designed in terms of theoretical framework, construction of the cities' international communication impact index, and research methodology. The use of big data and the scientific processing and interpretation of this report are also commendable. This makes the report highly credible in terms of its research outcomes.

For me personally, the recommendation section of this report is the most valuable, providing very practical suggestions on how Chinese cities can enhance their international image in the new era. Finally, I suggest that Chinese cities can explore their unique resources sufficiently and develop an international exchange path that fits their characteristics.

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## Ali Shirvani

Researcher at the Middle East Institute of Northwestern University (Xi'an), Bachelor of Laws from the University of Isfahan, Master in International Law from Payam Noor University, and Doctor of International Law from Xiamen University. He focuses on interdisciplinary matters and transnational connections of international law and constitutional law.

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China has rendered a very successful and multidimensional model of keeping the Chinese identity and simultaneously turning international. This model is a potential need of other countries and cities to achieve through more effective communications with China's sample cities.

Many countries and their capital cities seek to use such a model to keep their identities and go international. As a suggestion, Chinese top cities may use more active sisterhood and brotherhood communications with twin foreign cities and elaborate individual and regional connections, a broader picture to smoothly introduce a true Chinese global identity.

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# 1.Introduction

## 1.1.Research background

In recent years, the “go global” strategy has spurred new trends and developments in global communications efforts to cultivate the image of Chinese cities. Given differences between China and other countries in terms of the communications environment and practices, it is important to systematically study and analyze the global communications impact of Chinese cities in both international mainstream media and social media.

To comprehensively investigate and evaluate the communication capabilities of Chinese cities as they “go global,” this report establishes the Chinese City Global Communications Impact Index (CCGCII) and the “Ranking of Chinese Cities By Global Communications Impact” as the core of its research.

## 1.2.Research significance

In terms of academic relevance, this study develops a system and data metrics for assessing global communications impact and outlines a scientific theoretical framework for studying communication strategies, addressing the current lack of systematic approaches to big data research on global discourse.

Regarding practical advice for municipalities, this study helps cities form a clearer understanding of their own reputation and the characteristics and impact of their global communications efforts. On this basis, it is hoped the study can help Chinese cities improve their communications and enhance their global impact.

## 1.3.Purpose of the study

The index in this study offers a comprehensive and multidimensional evaluation system designed to help cities optimize their global communications efforts and enhance their international image. The specific objectives of the study are to provide guidance for the global communications efforts of cities, provide think-tank consultation services for cities to continuously improve their global communication capabilities, and to identify pain points in cities’ global communications and propose solutions.

## 1.4.Research principles

This research adheres to the following five principles to ensure the validity and applicability of its findings.

•**Scientific:** The research and measurement of relevant indicators is based on scientific theories and methods to ensure findings are firmly grounded in empirical evidence and scientific laws.

•**Targeted:** The study of global communications dynamics takes account of the individual context of each city to ensure the accuracy and relevance of findings for each city.

•**Objective:** The data and semantic information include both Chinese and English data from international mainstream media and international social media channels. These sources are integrated according to the actual practice of global communications by cities to guarantee the objectivity of the underlying information used in this study.

•**Comprehensive:** In the initial stages of research, a deductive research framework was formed, and the logic of each point was examined through deduction and empirical investigation to ensure the integrity and completeness of the research.

•**Expandable:** The sample for this study was the top 100 cities in China as ranked by GDP in 2019. In the future, the study can be extended to other cities nationwide to cover a larger scope.

## 1.5.Features of this study

*Researching the new dynamics of cities "going global" from a communications perspective*

This study examines the global communications impact of Chinese cities through analysis of big data from the Xinhua RIS platform.

*Introducing the new Chinese City Global Communications Impact Index (CCGCII)*

The central innovation of this study is the Chinese City Global Communications Impact Index (CCGCII), which combines communications data from international mainstream media and social media platforms. The CCGCII is calculated by weighting the main data indicators using a quantitative method and adjusting these quantitative results by combining them with qualitative analysis methods.

*Expansive data collection covering a diversity of international channels*

This study captured more than ten million pieces of relevant information (after noise was removed) using data crawling methods. To ensure accuracy, data passed through five layers of data cleaning, screening, and processing.

## 1.6.Scope and subject of the study

The research sample for this study is China's top 100 cities in terms of 2019 GDP. The study uses an annual research and evaluation cycle to assess the global communications impact of these 100 cities in 2020.

## 2. Research framework

### 2.1. Theoretical framework

The index used in this study is based on communications big data, focusing on attributes such as quantity, level, content, and depth. The four main dimensions addressed are the penetration, breadth, dynamism, and responsiveness of communications. Based on a total of around 6,000 data units, a systematic assessment is developed and finally aggregated into the CCGCII.

### 2.2. Indicator system

The CCGCII provides an assessment of each city's global communications impact in terms of four characteristics, namely penetration, coverage, dynamism, and responsiveness.

Based on international communications data, a comprehensive assessment is made of the impact of each city's communications across international mainstream media and social media platforms, taking into account communications volume, reputation, and coverage.

#### *Breadth of global communications*

Take account of the intrinsic properties of each city relevant to global communications, including capabilities and advantages. This includes "hard" and "soft" strengths that have a significant impact on global communications.

#### *Dynamism of global communications*

This attribute captures the dynamism of a city's global communications – the ability of a city to promote and conduct global communications, including operating international social media accounts, international activities, and developing related functions.

#### *Responsiveness of global communications*

This variable measures the responsiveness of global communications to major international events and public opinion.

### 2.3. Data gathering and analysis

#### *Data gathering*

This study is based on big data from the Xinhua RIS big data bank, establishing over 300 text corpus related to China's top 100 cities. Over 10 million pieces of public information were gathered from overseas mainstream media and international social media platforms. This includes various international media outlets and public data from platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

#### *Index calculation*

The data was processed and analyzed across multiple dimensions to derive internal logical relationships. Processed data were adjusted using the entropy weight method to attain indicators covering different aspects, which were then aggregated into the final CCGCII.

### 2.4. Multi-dimensional communications impact ranking

Based on the findings of this study and the calculation of each city's CCGCII, the top 10 Chinese cities as ranked by global communications impact are listed below.



# 2020 Chinese Cities Global Communication Influence

## TOP10

CCGCII

Penetration Breadth Dynamism Respon-  
siveness

1 Beijing	28582	1	1	1	2
2 Wuhan	17481	2	3	3	1
3 Shanghai	14525	3	2	2	14
4 Guangzhou	7892	4	4	9	5
5 Tianjin	6699	5	8	6	3
6 Xiamen	6320	6	19	5	6
7 Chengdu	6256	7	17	7	9
8 Chongqing	6126	8	14	8	4
9 Shenzhen	5971	9	5	22	8
10 Dalian	5639	10	13	4	7



### 3. Assessing the global communications ability of Chinese cities

*The global communication of Chinese cities is improving in terms of both quality and quantity*

Data shows that the total number of pieces of effective information disseminated by China's top 100 cities exceeded 10 million in 2020, nearly seven times the total in 2019. Against the backdrop of COVID-19, January 2020 became a "watershed" month for global communications as the volume of information disseminated by Chinese cities rose significantly. Removing the impact of the pandemic, the total number of pieces of effective information disseminated by the top 100 Chinese cities in 2020 was more than 7.3 million, about 3.6 times the number in 2019.

*Leading cities continue to set the pace*

Looking at the data, the "long tail" structure of global communications by China's top 100 cities is clear. The top 10 cities as ranked by communications volume account for over 90% of communications. Out of the top ten cities ranked by global communications impact, nine also rank in the top ten nationwide by GDP.

*Chinese cities "going global" win international recognition*

In 2020, issues related to COVID-19 became hot topics of international public debate. During this period, China's decisive and effective anti-pandemic efforts and the important role China played in international cooperation to deal with the pandemic were widely recognized by the international community. At the same time, China's cities made good progress in improving their communications on issues such as environmental protection, economy, and healthcare, and the overall trend of city global communication efforts was positive.

*Social media platforms have become the key channel for global engagement*

Analyzing the main channels of global communication for China's top 100 cities, it is clear that social media platforms are the primary channel for global engagement. Taken together, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube accounted for more than half of communications (55.28%), exceeding the volume delivered via overseas mainstream media (44.72%).

*Cities search for a "new face"*

Analysis of the top 100 cities' global communications shows that the international exposure of Chinese cities has increased significantly. Aside from first-tier cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou, the study also found that other cities such as Datong, Chengdu, Chongqing, Hangzhou, Wuhan, and Nanjing were frequently mentioned in overseas media.

*Leveraging home resources*

Chinese cities show an increasing ability to take advantage of their own unique resources and characteristics so as to differentiate their communications and enhance their global image.

In summary, the global communications of China's top 100 cities maintained a stable trend in 2020. There was a significant increase in the volume of information disseminated compared to 2019 and a gradual improvement in international reputation. New features and modes of information dissemination were developed, increasingly taking advantage of "soft power" elements such as culture, environment, and social consideration. Overall, these trends contributed to a steady increase in the impact of Chinese cities' global communications.

## 4. Top 100 cities by global communications impact

### 4.1. Ranking of Chinese cities by global communications impact

Ranking	City	CCGCII Index	City	Global Communications Penetration	City	Breadth of Global Dissemination	City	Dynamism of Global Communications	City	Responsiveness of Global Communications
1	Beijing	28582	Beijing	70672	Beijing	25633	Beijing	5855	Wuhan	95171
2	Wuhan	17481	Wuhan	44674	Shanghai	6992	Shanghai	4041	Beijing	92796
3	Shanghai	14525	Shanghai	42010	Wuhan	5009	Wuhan	3907	Tianjin	83408
4	Guangzhou	7892	Guangzhou	25528	Guangzhou	2810	Dalian	1318	Chongqing	72544
5	Tianjin	6699	Tianjin	22457	Shenzhen	1995	Xiamen	1070	Guangzhou	56042
6	Xiamen	6320	Xiamen	16660	Dongguan	1564	Tianjin	766	Xiamen	53013
7	Chengdu	6256	Chengdu	15891	Zhongshan	1295	Chengdu	700	Dalian	52085
8	Chongqing	6126	Chongqing	14828	Tianjin	1279	Chongqing	466	Shenzhen	49758
9	Shenzhen	5971	Dalian	12589	Foshan	971	Guangzhou	458	Chengdu	48874
10	Dalian	5639	Shenzhen	11398	Yantai	941	Nanjing	456	Zhuhai	46113
11	Qingdao	5053	Qingdao	11312	Kunming	900	Foshan	441	Hangzhou	46071
12	Suzhou	4764	Suzhou	11290	Dezhou	864	Zhengzhou	404	Qingdao	44475
13	Hangzhou	4635	Hangzhou	10834	Dalian	808	Jinan	370	Nanjing	43049
14	Nanjing	4608	Nanjing	10692	Chongqing	799	Hangzhou	361	Shanghai	42038
15	Urumqi	4530	Harbin	10113	Qingdao	716	Xi'an	289	Changchun	39532
16	Zhuhai	4353	Fuzhou	9910	Zhuhai	683	Harbin	287	Zhengzhou	39314
17	Harbin	4257	Urumqi	9573	Chengdu	674	Dongguan	286	Lanzhou	38528
18	Changchun	4183	Zhuhai	9455	Nanjing	620	Kunming	284	Suzhou	37090
19	Wenzhou	4036	Wenzhou	9436	Xiamen	593	Wuxi	234	Harbin	36925
20	Xi'an	3983	Xi'an	9217	Hangzhou	491	Linyi	232	Urumqi	36582
21	Fuzhou	3706	Changchun	9051	Harbin	483	Yueyang	219	Yichang	36157
22	Luoyang	3583	Shijiazhuang	8815	Quanzhou	467	Shenzhen	209	Jinan	35817
23	Dongguan	3128	Hefei	8759	Wuxi	466	Chengde	201	Xi'an	35247
24	Jinan	3078	Luoyang	8476	Xi'an	463	Zhongshan	193	Nanning	34644
25	Hefei	3074	Foshan	7689	Changsha	450	Texas	162	Taiyuan	34108
26	Yantai	2935	Zhengzhou	7279	Jinan	442	Wuhu	150	Dongguan	34068
27	Zhengzhou	2933	Jinan	5754	Zhengzhou	438	Zibo	149	Zhanjiang	33342
28	Foshan	2900	Shenyang	4600	Urumqi	432	Yichang	113	Kunming	32536
29	Shenyang	2782	Dongguan	3561	Taiyuan	429	Fuzhou	112	Shaoxing	32230
30	Changsha	2750	Wuxi	3480	Zibo	419	Wenzhou	106	Nanchang	31960

Comprehensive list of Chinese cities' global communications impact

Chart: Top 30 Chinese cities in terms of global communications impact

(Source: Xinhua RIS Big Data Analysis Platform, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube 2020.1 - 2020.12)

#### *Evaluating the global communications impact of Chinese cities*

This study looked at the global communications efforts of Chinese cities in 2020 in terms of information dissemination via overseas mainstream media and international social media platforms. Within the 100 cities studied, there is a clear gap between the top and lower-ranked cities in terms of communications impact, with the leading performers way ahead of the rest of the pack.

The study found that in 2020, the five cities with the biggest global impact were Beijing, Wuhan, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Tianjin. Against the backdrop of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Wuhan's efforts to overcome the outbreak helping the city to rank second in terms of communications impact.

In terms of communication channels, among the four international social media platforms, the exposure of Chinese cities is highest on Instagram and Facebook, which are relatively lightweight, convenient, and diversified in terms of information production and dissemination. These properties create more room for communications traffic growth for Chinese cities.

Chart: Frequency of keyword mentions in the global communications of Chinese cities

Instagram		YouTube	
Culture	25.26%	Healthcare	1.78%
Cuisine	20.88%	Economy	1.66%
Economy	15.23%	Politics	1.55%
Healthcare	10.29%	Transport	1.54%
Art	6.29%	Industry	1.53%
Travel	6.02%	Ecology	1.51%
Festivals	3.59%	Agriculture	1.51%
Events	2.81%	Environment	1.51%
Industry	1.38%	Festivals	1.49%
Transport	0.77%	Education	1.48%

(Source: Xinhua RIS Big Data Analysis Platform, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube 2020.1 – 2020.12)

In terms of content, the leading topics for city communications were culture, education, food, healthcare, economy, festivals, industry, and transport.

## **4.2. Big-name cities dominating**

#### *Evaluating global communications penetration*

In an era of mobile communications, social media platforms play a dominant role in boosting the dissemination of information. In this context, the analysis of China's top 100 cities in terms of global communications penetration mainly focuses on international social media platforms as the key reference to evaluate the global voice of Chinese cities in our new media environment.

### 4.3.Highlighting "hard" and "soft" communications topics

#### *Evaluating the breadth of global communications*

Data analysis shows that the top-ranked cities in terms of communications "breadth" were Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Tianjin, Foshan, and Yantai. Of these, Beijing had the widest coverage in terms of relevant social media accounts, while Shanghai showed the strongest diversity of topics in promoting the "soft" and "hard" power of the city. In addition, Foshan's colorful food and culture and the rich tourism resources of Dongguan, Yantai, and Zhongshan made them unexpected high performers regarding the diversity of global communications.

### 4.4.Established media resources aid cities in global communications

#### *Evaluating the dynamism of global communications*

Data analysis indicates a wide gap between cities regarding the dynamism of global communications. The top ten ranked cities were Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Dalian, Xiamen, Tianjin, Chengdu, Chongqing, Guangzhou, and Nanjing. In terms of dynamism, Beijing and Shanghai showed a clear advantage over other cities based on the maturity of the local media industry.

### 4.5.Leveraging hot international topics to enhance global communications

#### *Evaluating the responsiveness of global communications*

In the arena of international public discourse, it is important that Chinese cities develop the capabilities to respond effectively to hot topics such as major international events and topical issues. Data analysis conducted for this study showed that the top ten ranking cities in terms of global communications responsiveness were Wuhan, Beijing, Tianjin, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Xiamen, Dalian, Shenzhen, Chengdu, and Zhuhai. Of these, Wuhan stood out for its responsiveness to major events amidst the unprecedented impact of COVID-19.

## 5.Challenges

This study identified several major challenges that Chinese cities face in their global communications efforts. First, a high proportion of the information disseminated by cities is rather disorganized and the diversity of communications needs to be improved. Second, the ability to produce innovative content remains relatively weak and there is insufficient integration between Chinese and Western culture. Third, cities need to improve their ability to dig deeper and develop topics to differentiate themselves. Fourth, at present, there is a tendency for the government and official institutions to work alone as the main agents of communication. Fifth and finally, cities have not sufficiently integrated their efforts into the international discourse system or formed an effective shared semantic space with the global audience.



## 6. Recommendations for Chinese cities to raise global communications impact

### *Actively publish and increase the dissemination of information*

Cities should fully leverage the guiding role of official accounts and seek to limit the negative impact of disorganized or fragmented communications. They should also strive to develop richer and more diverse ways of showcasing their cities, not only via images and text, but also by tapping the advantages of short video and live streaming, which offer high visual impact and a wide spectrum of expression. Finally, cities should exploit the respective strengths of different communications platforms to amplify the dissemination of information.

### *Improve communications quality by producing differentiated content*

Starting with topic selection, interesting and unique topics should be taken as the entry point to capture the audiences' attention and create a good first impression. Building on these engaging topics, content should be relatable and create a dialogue with the audience, providing space for the audience to respond to and expand on the topic so as to enhance appeal and interactivity. In addition, attention should be paid to design and the quality of graphics and videos to enhance the aesthetic appeal of content.

### *Actively participate in popular topics and forge links to the international cultural sphere*

In the process of content planning and creation, cities should seek to link to popular international events and issues to enhance the timeliness and topicality of their content. Cities should also seek ways to bridge cultural gaps and highlight cultural "mirrors" (e.g. similarities, equivalences, or contrasts) to enhance their ability to bridge to international culture, topics and discussions.

### *Leverage diverse channels and multiple levels of communication to promote city image*

In the global social media environment, the municipal government is the core communications actor in promoting a city's image. However, due to the complexity and fragmentation of social media in terms of both content production and reach, cities should also undertake systematic communications programs that involve other actors.

For example, involving multiple actors and mass users on relevant professional media and international social media platforms can help to realize multi-level communications efforts. In addition, attention should be paid to the significant role played by "key opinion leaders" (KOLs) or influencers as they can help to amplify communications and enhance city image.

### *Create a comprehensive "communications matrix" through cross-media convergence and integration*

At present, China's top 100 cities still mostly rely on text and images when it comes to presenting their city to global audiences. Cities can take advantage of the trend towards multimedia integration on social media platforms to create richer visual content and increase impact.

For international social media, cities can make full use of multimedia integration with a focus on engaging visuals. Cross-media integration methods can also be used to form communications streams that include international mainstream media as well domestic mainstream media and social media.

### *Effective global communications require not only a shift of platform, but also a shift of mindset and culture*

As Chinese cities develop their global social media presence, they should pay attention to important differences in culture, language, and values that shape the global communications environment. It is also important to grasp the media consumption habits of users on different social media platforms so that Chinese cities can continuously optimize their communications efforts and enhance their global image.



Jointly Published by  
Xinhuanet Co.,Ltd. & Center for China & Globalization

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