

Executive Summary - Asian Cities

Bloom Consulting

Digital

City

Index '18 - Asia

Powered by  Digital Demand

Measuring the digital reputation of cities:
www.digitalcityindex.com

Overview

The Digital City is the Real City.

Bloom Consulting is very proud to present the first Digital City Index 2018 Asia edition. After having successfully launched the Digital Country Index and Digital City Index Europe, we decided to further expand the data investigation and create a new Digital City Index focusing solely on Asia.

At Bloom Consulting, we firmly believe that what happens in the real world is quickly reflected in the digital world. City branding is Digital, and it is the new frontier. The Digital City Index 2018 Asia is an affirmation of this statement. Now that you can delve deeper into the data you can explore the insights of a data legacy. This enables you to pick, analyse and correlate if the different policies that you have implemented have created the desired effect on your perception and world reputation.

The Digital City Index 2018 Asia edition reflects the true demand that Global Citizens have for 34 carefully selected Asian Cities. Over 213 million searches have been performed on these Asian Cities over the past year, when you compare this with Europe, half of the number of cities have the same number of searches so, we can conclude that Asia has a greater number of searches than Europe.

The Index also allows us to see the positions of all of the selected Asian Cities in three Dimensions: Tourism, Investment and Talent. A position is not only determined by the number of searches, but also by the overall consistency of these searches within the Dimensions. By collecting data from previous years as well, we are able to show the evolution in the positioning of each City in the ranking.

Our research reveals that Dubai, Singapore and Hong Kong dominate the Asia City Index. One of the most surprising discoveries, is that Dubai, Singapore and Hong Kong, operate 50% of all overall searches performed. Dubai leads in Tourism, Singapore in Investment and Hong Kong in Talent. Dubai focuses on being the fun luxurious city, whilst Singapore is empowered by Entrepreneurs and Hong Kong leverages the Chinese mainland market.

The Digital City Index '18 Asia edition allows us to overcome our perceptions and see the real dynamics in Asia.

Welcome to the #DigitalCity

Executive Summary - Asian Cities

The top spots of the Index

Figure 1: Digital City Index 2018 (Asia edition) - 15 Top Performers

 Asia 2018		 Investment	 Tourism	 Talent
1	0  Dubai	2	1	2
2	+1  Singapore	1	2	3
3	-1  Hong Kong	3	3	1
4	0  Sydney	5	5	5
5	+1  Tokyo	9	6	6
6	-1  Melbourne	10	10	4
7	0  Bangkok	11	4	9
8	0  Shanghai	4	12	10
9	0  Abu Dhabi	6	11	11
10	0  Macau	15	7	8
11	0  Auckland	13	13	7
12	0  Mumbai	7	20	14
13	+1  Kuala Lumpur	16	9	16
14	+1  Beijing	12	17	15
15	-2  Brisbane	14	22	12

Winners of the Digital City Index '18 (Asia edition)

1st place: Dubai

Dubai dominates the desert, reinforcing its leadership in the Digital City Index Asia.

Figure 1: Dubai detail results



- Asia 2018 ▾
- Dubai ▾

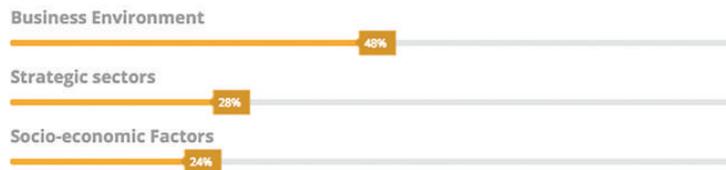
General Position

Asia **1** Variation since 2016 **0**

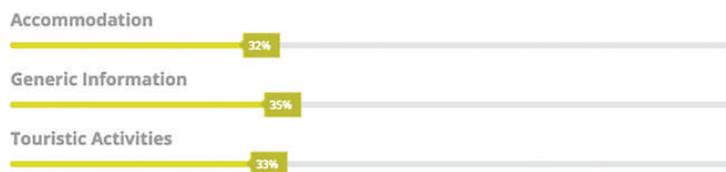
Dimension Position - Asia

Investment **2** Tourism **1** Talent **2**

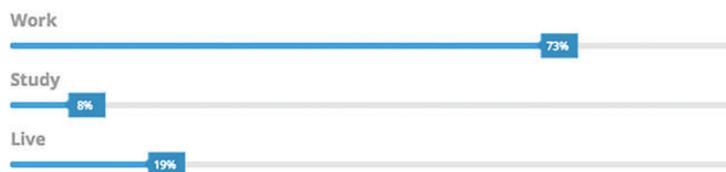
Searching for Investment - Share of results by "brandtag" family



Searching for Tourism - Share of results by "brandtag" family



Searching for Talent - Share of results by "brandtag" family



Winners of the Digital City Index '18 (Asia edition)

Dubai is the incontestable winner of the first Digital City Index Asia 2018 and is undoubtedly powered by Tourism, with the dimension growing modestly at 9% in comparison to the top 5 performers. Although, this low growth has not yet allowed competitors to overtake Dubai as they have over 3 times more searches than Singapore. It is no secret that Dubai's strengths lie in Shopping, Luxury and Fun Tourism. Dubai is pushing the boundaries with underwater hotels and offers of the best indoor skiing in the world. This proves that the city on the edge of the desert is not afraid to do anything and reinforces its digital appeal.

Despite ranking 2nd in Talent dimension, Dubai has managed to improve its positioning from 2016 moving up one place in the dimension. However, what is interesting is that the negative growth in this is fuelled by a reduction in growth for job searches, a trend that can be seen across the region. This contraction is the consequence of a decrease in interest from blue-collar workforce plus complex visa regulations. Despite this, Dubai's prowess in 'Work' remains, as it continues to be the absolute leader with 3 times more searches than Singapore and 6 times more than Hong Kong respectively in 'Work'.

Impacts of the ongoing oil crisis can be seen in the Investment dimension and are highlighted by a decrease in Digital Demand for Entrepreneurship and Financial & Professional Services. However, as Oil contributes a significant portion of the revenue streams in Dubai there has been uncertainty regarding proposed changes to their once favourable taxation rules, leading to an increase in the interest in Taxation searches (68%).

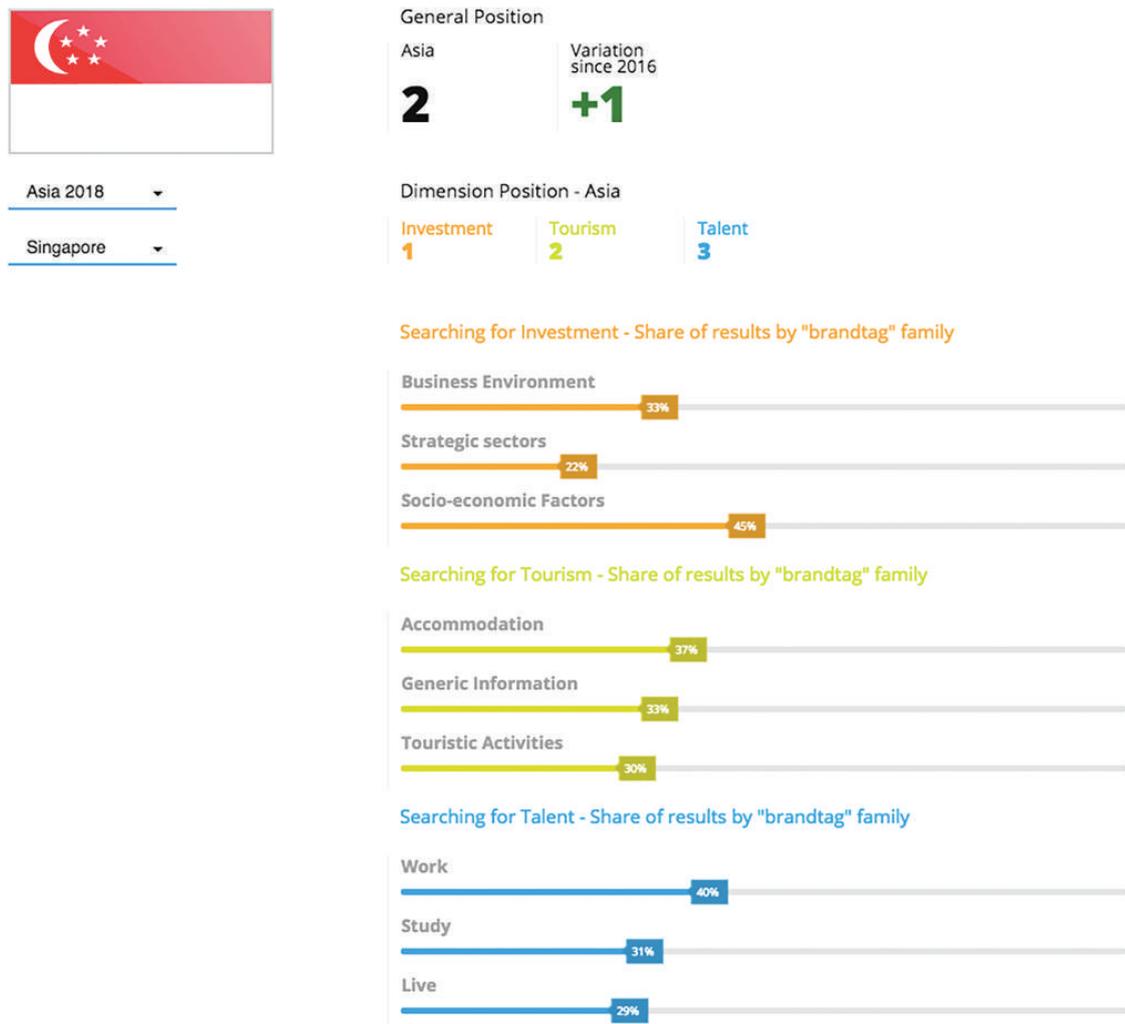
Exciting times lie ahead for Dubai. All eyes are on the playful desert city with no limits to see if the tensions within the region will impact on their digital appeal in the future, or if its sensational touristic offering stands the test of time.

Winners of the Digital City Index '18 (Asia edition)

2nd place: Singapore

Singapore asserts itself open for business and welcomes start-ups with a warm embrace.

Figure 3: Singapore City detail results



Winners of the Digital City Index '18 (Asia edition)

Singapore exhibits a strong lead in the Investment Dimension, positioned in 1st place, with a 25% growth, considerably more than its direct competitors Hong Kong and Dubai. It's clear to see that searches increase and stabilize after December 2016, with the end of a two-year negative inflation.

Singapore is the new city in Asia for investors and entrepreneurs. Amazingly, it has surpassed its fierce rival, Hong Kong, to rank 1st in the Investment Dimension for the first time. Popular searches for Singapore include 'Economic strength' and 'Start-ups'. Searches for 'Entrepreneurship' peaked in November due to the launch of a Chinese Singaporean incubation space, BLOCK71, in Suzhou China, to create business ties between the two cities. This initiative supports 'Start-ups' in the city and is the 5th most important brand tag for Singapore in Investment.

Singapore clinches 2nd in the Tourism Dimension achieving an impressive (22%) growth in searches, more than double that of the leader: Dubai. One of Singapore's most appealing touristic offers is 'Gardens'. It ranks 1st in Asia for this so it is no surprise that Singapore has gained the name 'City in a Garden' due to its multitude of green urban spaces. The city also ranks 1st in 'Cruises' with searches almost doubling. Singapore is clearly stationing itself as the Cruise hub in Asia, and it is succeeding.

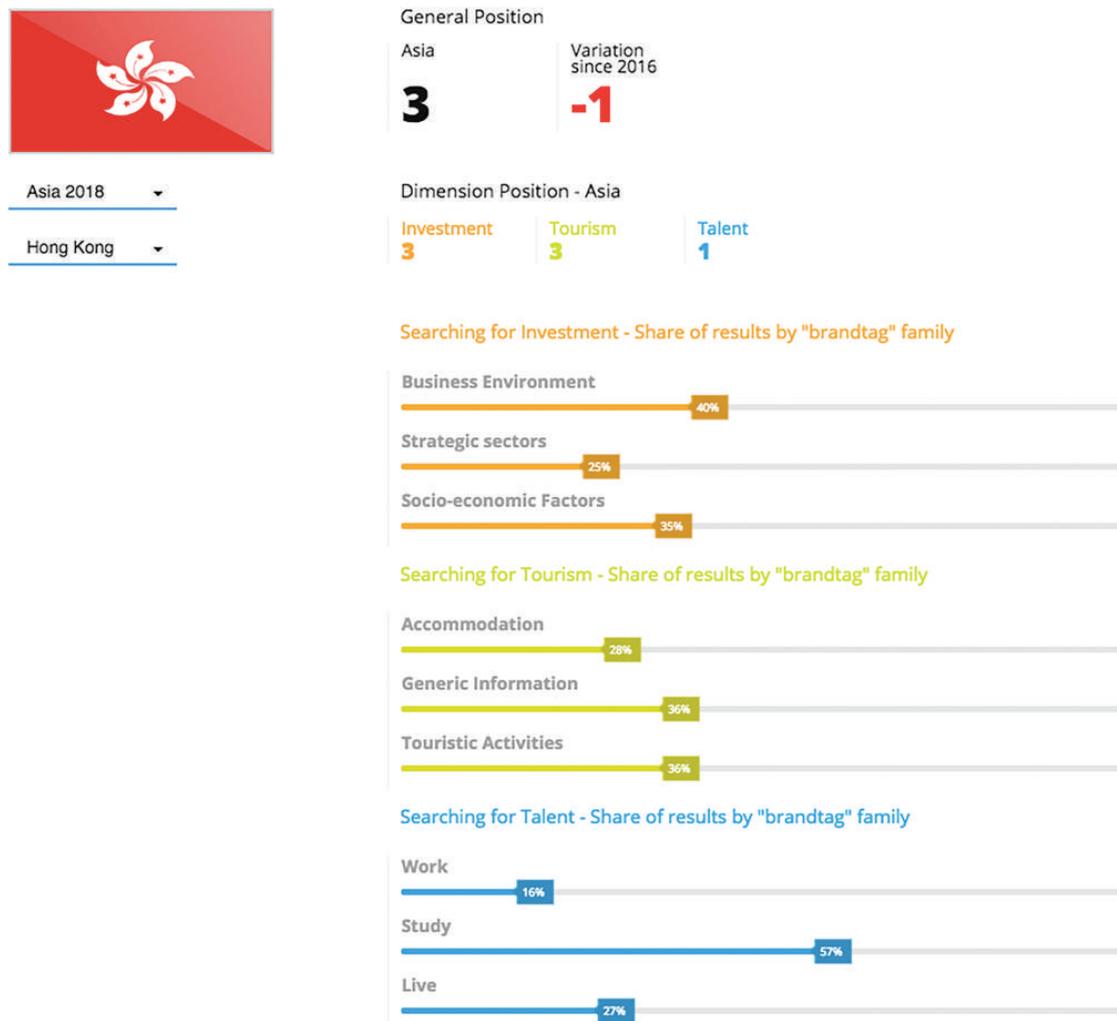
Singapore stormed the top 3 to achieve the highest growth in Talent in comparison to its direct competitors, Dubai and Hong Kong. Additionally, Singapore wins 1st position for searches for 'Living', and it's no surprise that the city is positioning itself as the most appealing in Asia to live in, and searches reflect this. Overall, Singapore shows muscle with an exponential growth in all dimensions. In this case, Dubai shouldn't relax as Winners of the first Digital City Index Asia, it has fierce competition hot its trail.

Winners of the Digital City Index '18 (Asia edition)

3rd place: Hong Kong

Hong Kong leads in Talent but proves it is too dependent on Mainland China

Figure 4: Hong Kong City detail results



Winners of the Digital City Index '18 (Asia edition)

Ranking 1st in Talent and dominating in Asia for interest in 'Universities' Hong Kong is displaying itself as the Talent hub in Asia. The city is seen as a very appealing place to live which is complimented by a growth in searches for 'Living' and 'Quality of Life'. However, Hong Kong has a huge reliance on the Chinese market, and without its share of searches, Hong Kong would not be positioned where it currently is. A huge 76% of Talent related searches from China are about 'Study' – asserting Hong Kong as the go-to educational city for aspiring students in China.

Hong Kong achieved its highest growth rate in Tourism, primarily driven by its lead in Asia for 'Restaurants' and more interestingly leading for 'Michelin Restaurants' clearly asserting itself as the culinary capital of Asia. However, despite this growth, Hong Kong still trails behind Dubai and Singapore, and continues to rely heavily on the Chinese market (63%) for Tourism.

In the Investment Dimension, Hong Kong leads in R&D Innovation, which is driven by searches for science and technology parks, thanks to Hong Kong doubling its spending in this field in 2017. The city also performs surprisingly strongly in Fintech, falling just short of Singapore, proving that hosting its own FinTech conference 'Hong Kong FinTech Week 2017' in October was a smart move for the city.

However, Hong Kong is dethroned as the leader in 'Entrepreneurship' as Singapore has overtaken it for the first time, leaving the city with some work to do if it wants to catch Singapore as the overall leader in Investment.

The Digital City shows that...

Australian Cities shine

Sydney puts the Australian cities in the spotlight.
Melbourne shines as a Study destination.

Figure 7: Sydney



Figure 8: Students in Melbourne



Sydney takes 4th place in the ranking, and Melbourne following in proximity with 6th place. Undoubtedly, Sydney attracts both travelers and investors to Oceania with a strong appeal in Tourism and Investment. However, it is Melbourne that takes the spotlight as the Talent magnet.

Sydney dominates in Asia for Performing Arts and takestop spot. The staging of many famous productions in 2017 saw a huge growth of (142%) in searches for Musicals. These figures may not seem surprising thanks to Sydney Opera House, but they demonstrate that Sydney continue to rise in popularity even with its already globally renowned success.

Melbourne holds a privileged 4th position in Talent, thanks to its University, which remains as Australia's best. Both Melbourne and Sydney attract students globally with Study related searches accounting for 68% and 74% respectively. Melbourne has growing searches for universities (8%), while Sydney experiences an increasing interest for 'Master's Degrees'. Still, the cities are challenged by a decrease in searches for jobs, and the cost of living in Australia rising substantially. Despite a static progression in Talent, Sydney's high quality of life offset its perception as the most expensive city to live in. In the meantime, Melbourne persists its title as the world's most livable city for the 6th year in a row.

The Digital City shows that...

Tel Aviv - A rising star

Tel Aviv strikes back as the Non-Stop City, with a vibrant start-up scene.

Figure 9: Tel Aviv on a Tuesday summer night



Tel Aviv is the 2nd fastest growing city overall in the Index and is one of the 'Rising Stars' in Asia. With a 67% growth in Tourism, its young-at-heart state of mind has given a big push for the city's Digital Demand-D2©.

Tel Aviv can also be considered the LGBT capital of the Middle-East. It is the second most searched city in Asia for LGBT, showcasing great progressions for Tel Aviv and Israel as a whole. Not to forget, 'Nightlife' in Tel Aviv has the most rapid growth of the competing cities, exhibiting their vibrancy once again as a super inclusive, fun City.

Israel's economic capital is the real innovation hub in the Middle East, with Tel Aviv taking the 4th position in Asia for 'Start-ups' and 'Entrepreneurship'. While other big players such as Hong Kong and Dubai reveal weak growth for these topics, Tel Aviv gets its chance to show-off. Having said that, Tel Aviv is still far from catching up to the "big guys" in terms of searches for 'Entrepreneurship', and not too far ahead of Shanghai.

Nevertheless, the City continues to invite startups to its innovative ecosystem, displaying its dynamic nature through the Investment dimension.

The Digital City shows that...

Bangkok - Play hard, work hard

Bangkok rocks and proves it is more than a timeless Tourist destination.

Figure 10: Street life in Bangkok



Unsurprisingly, Bangkok's strength lies in tourism with an impressive 18% growth rate and the city doubles the number of searches of Sydney.

Besides their timeless cultural assets, such as the thriving fascination in Temples', Bangkok has various other cultural things to offer. The city is diversifying its touristic appeal particularly in respect to gastronomy. The Michelin guide released the first 'Michelin guide Bangkok' celebrating the city's unique gastronomic experience, driving an amazing 111% increase in 'Gourmet Restaurants' and a 56% increase in searches for 'Michelin Restaurants'.

Bangkok proves it is a more than just a touristic destination as it battles with competing cities to become a Talent magnet in Asia, with a firm position in attracting a strong workforce. Additionally, it holds a significant advantage in being the only city in the top 10 that has a positive growth in searches for "Jobs". Following their talent appeal, 'Access to Health', 'Rent' and 'Buy' are popular and important areas for Bangkok to retain people to live in the city. Keep up the good work!

The Digital City shows that...

Astana - Expo 2017 legacy short-lived.

Big events don't guarantee city brand success

Figure 11: Astana 2017 Expo



Astana displayed a remarkable growth in Tourism, asserting itself as the fastest growing in the Index. A spike in searches towards Astana can be observed during the months of the Astana Expo 2017. However, although Astana achieved a growth in appeal from the Global Traveler during the 3-month Expo 2017, this attention did not transfer to prospective investors or potential Talent.

We can witness that after 3 months of the event taking place, Astana had no legacy, meaning the number of searches made towards Astana plummeted back down to the level of the previous year, leaving the city's reward extremely short-lived.

Sadly, one event cannot change everything for a city, and this example cements the need for more post event policies and planning to create a long-lasting legacy effect.

The Digital City shows that...

Shenzhen - The new player in City Branding

Chinese cities on the rise: Shanghai leads the way, while Shenzhen shows its true potential.

Figure 12: Shenzhen future skyline - Ping An International Financial Centre



China has a new rising star, Shenzhen, that is showing tremendous potential with a 50% increase in growth. The Chinese runner-up also shines in the Talent dimension, clearly reflecting its Digital Identity.

China is portrayed internationally as a manufacturing hub, and the searches still reflect this perception with high numbers in 'Logistics' and 'Labour Pool'. Nevertheless, the Chinese cities are en route to becoming leaders in tech innovation, driven by incentives issued in 'Made in China 2025' and the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020).

Untraditionally, Shenzhen has benefitted from an incredible growth over the past 2 years. The city offers a more diverse mix with an outstanding growth in Investment (50%), and the highest growth in all of Asia for Talent.

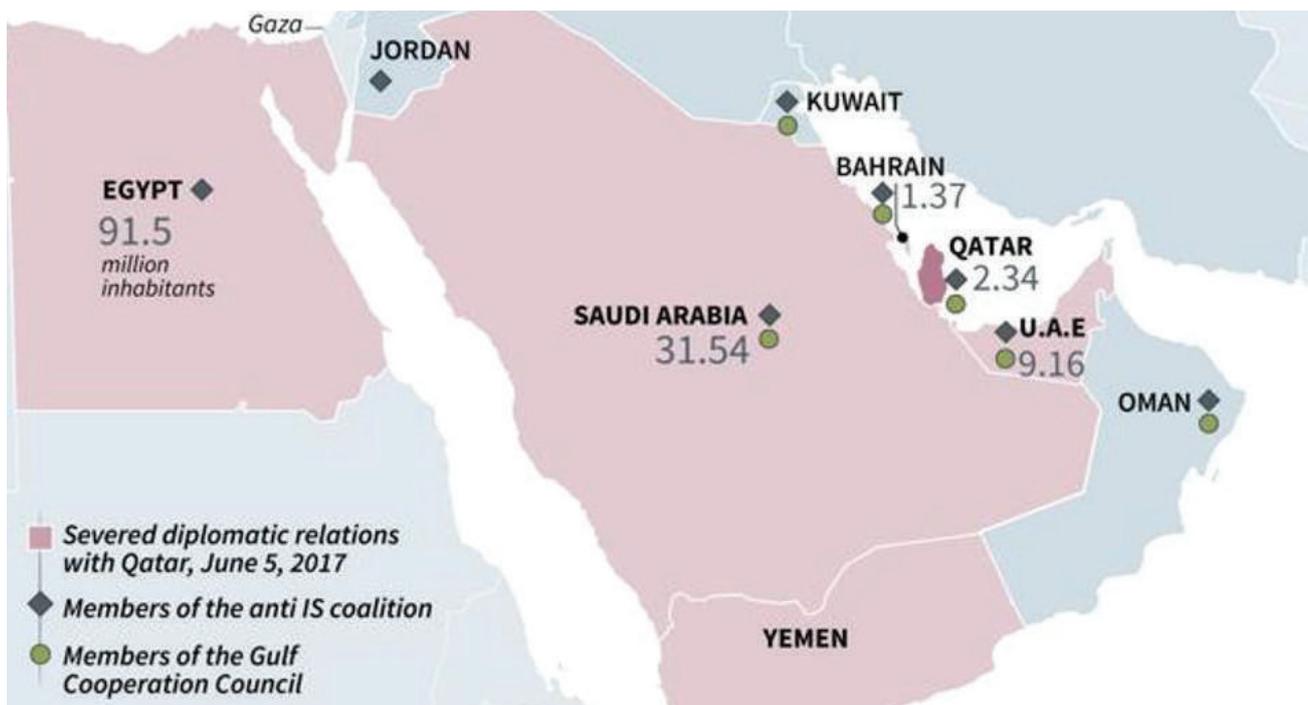
However, Beijing remains the Chinese go-to city for students as it is in 9th place in searches for 'Universities' in Asia, with the highest growth in the top ten cities. Although Beijing offers an incredible volume of education with 12 universities in the top 100 of the QS University Rankings, Shenzhen beats their number of searches for 'Study' and steals the show, proving to be one of a kind. Keep going Shenzhen!

The Digital City shows that...

Doha- The Country Brand affected the City Brand

Doha suffers from the Gulf diplomatic crisis

Figure 13: Map of the Middle East showing countries which have severed diplomatic relations with Qatar. (AFP)



The severe diplomatic crisis between UAE and Saudi Arabia has been a burden for Qatar at a country level but also for Doha as a capital across all 3 dimensions of Tourism, Talent and Investment.

The dimension that suffered the most immediate consequences was Tourism. Before the embargo in June 2017, Doha was growing on a trendline of 41% growth and immediately after the crisis the growth trend reduced three-fold. This has resulted in Doha experiencing a negative legacy impact (-29%).

Doha has also experienced a huge setback in Investment, since June 2017, and has not yet bounced back. Before the crisis, Doha was experiencing high growth especially in respect to Entrepreneurship (150%) and was driven by business hubs. However, Doha's Investment stalled in June 2017.

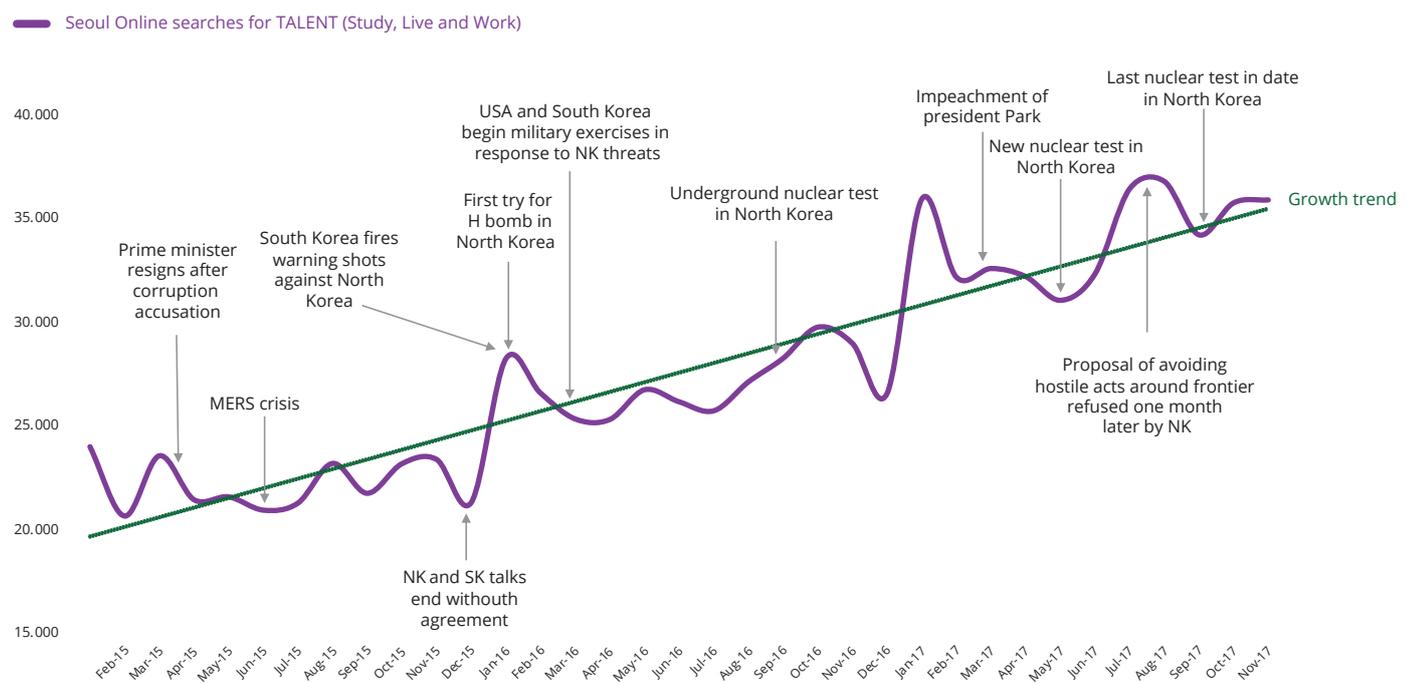
Doha is no longer seen as an attractive talent destination as the embargo has affected the willingness of people to live and to study and work within the city. Furthermore, after the FIFA corruption scandal, unrest broke out over workforce conditions and the World Cup in Qatar in 2022 is adding to the already growing tensions for the talent sector. We must wait and see what the future holds for Doha.

The Digital City shows that...

Seoul - A resilient cool Brand

Seoul's city brand defies political national chaos and proves its international resilience.

Figure 14: Seoul appeal in correlation with negative incidents over time (2015-2017)



The current political situation that first hit the city in 2017 has not endangered Seoul's city brand. Despite South Korea's devastating political corruption scandals, along with North Korea's deluded and controversial politics, Seoul's city brand has continued to prove its resilience again and again.

Seoul has grown comfortably in all 3 dimensions in the Digital City Index Asia'18. People's willingness to Visit, Invest, Live, Work or Study in Seoul has not been impacted; despite nuclear threats from the North, the international demand has not faltered, especially in respect to Investment which experienced the strongest growth for Seoul (56%). Investors clearly still see Seoul as a great place to put their money and the trust in the city is still there. This resonates with the other two dimensions and their growth. Naturally, we can observe dips in searches during each major event in Seoul, but they have an amazing bounce back rate with no negative legacy effect occurring from the events.

Putting this into perspective with other cities, such as Barcelona, London and Paris which have all experienced negative effects due to turmoil, Seoul is an outlier. The international demand for the city has not been harmed and people still want to go there, remarkable work Seoul!

More about #DigitalCity and the Digital City Index

The Digital City is a City that has triggered proactive interest from Global Citizens (tourists, investors and general citizens) towards that City in the Digital World. This definition was presented by Bloom Consulting in 2015 after determining through its own research and multiple other sources – including Google Intelligence - that when someone searches for information about a City in the context of Tourism, Investment and Talent, one of the primary sources used today is a “search engine”.

This act of “searching” can be triggered by something one may have read in a newspaper, heard in a conversation or simply out of curiosity. “Searches” represent the true level of interest in a City or a Place and therefore demonstrate a City’s genuine appeal. If measured, “searches” can also highlight the interests one may have with regard to any specific Country Region or City.

With this data, Cities can measure if their Actions Activities and Policies are causing any effect on their Brand appeal and on their overall perception.

The Digital City Index measures the performance of the #DigitalCity

Would you like to know more?

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Thank you!
