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ASIA-PACIFIC

Bangkok is one of the most innovative cities

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Capital porous to outside influence despite unique culture; tops society category

A recently-released ranking of the most innovative cities in Asia-Pacific puts Singapore on the top of the list for making "a distinct statement through dramatic and perpetual improvements for the past 25 years".

Solidiance, a Asia-focused management consulting firm, measured six main categories - human talent, knowledge creation, technology, society, government and global integration.

Bangkok was 12th out of the 16 cities ranked in the research. At a glance it seems that the city has unequivocally outperformed with no merit, but actually it ranked first in the society category, which included culture, value systems and ideology.

Since Bangkok was never really colonised by any foreign forces, its society is one of the most open to the outside in the region. Bangkok is very proud of its unique culture, yet is still very accepting of other cultures. Westernised education system, Sanskrit architecture, heavily Japanese-influenced pop culture and the Hong Kong-inspired movie industry are a few proofs of this city's porosity to diversity and new ideas.

Being innovative or not doesn't apparently lessen Bangkok's appeal to foreigners - 20 million of them still visit it every year. The city is fast changing and debunking prejudices. The idea of Bangkok as a place with high connectivity and a burgeoning movie and advertisement industry was not envisioned back then.

Managing partner Damien Duhamel says Bangkok is a rising force to reckon with.

Most potential to climb

"Hard to define and hard to grasp. Among our Asia-Pacific city list we believe Bangkok has the most potential to climb in the ranking in the future. An open mind is a basic requirement to build an innovative ecosystem and Bangkok has proven to be very open."

"Bangkok is fast changing and it is challenging the most entrenched preconceived ideas. Not long ago people would have laughed when the idea of a modern Bangkok subway and Skytrain connectivity was mentioned. Just a while ago people would have also laughed when told that they would soon be watching Thai action movies. People would have again laughed when told that Bangkok is becoming the Asean creative/advertising hub where hilarious ads are created and re-transcribed into other Asian languages and markets.

"People laugh less these days. They smile and recognise the changes happening all over Bangkok". CNN was first to spot that by electing Bangkok as the World's Greatest City back in 2009.

Bangkok has pushed Thai food and Thai restaurants to the far corners of the world. Thai boxing has become mainstream all over the world. Thai movies are no longer a curiosity and Hollywood is rushing to the city of angels to shoot more blockbusters.

How will this benefit businesses? Expect more credibility in the future for Bangkok architect firms venturing overseas, expect more regional respect for the fast growing Bangkok advertising and media industry, expect even more global interest for Bangkok as a tourist, art, healthcare, culinary, sports and MICE hub. The world is about to discover and welcome a few more Jaa Panoms and Aitthipat Kulapongvanichs.

Solidiance opened its Thailand office in Bangkok in 2009 and runs seven more offices in Asia-Pacific.



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