

# Smart Tourism in the Greater Bay Area: Big Data, AI and Ecosystem

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## Report

### **Organized by:**

Hospitality and Tourism Research Center  
School of Hotel and Tourism Management  
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### **Supported by:**

School of Tourism Management  
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&  
Macao Institute for Tourism Studies

## **Description**

Technology development involves everywhere in our society and tourism destinations as well. New technologies are driving a whole range of different disruptions in the industry, and streamline for creating connections among various tourism stakeholders, industries, and cities. To enhance the connectivity and knowledge/technology spillovers between the member cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), it is becoming more important to understand what smart tourism destination is, how the new developments and innovations support the smart tourism ecosystem, and how destinations can benefit from these new technologies. Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in the GBA should pay great attention to the changes so that each member city and the whole area can maximize the benefits and competitiveness through technological developments.

According to the “Development Plan for Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area” which has been published by The State Council of the People's Republic of China in 2019, the plan aims to integrate the industries, technologies, peoples, and the region across the borders. In 2018, the infrastructure inter-connectivity greatly improved with several landmark projects, such as the Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macao Bridge and Guangzhou–Shenzhen–Hong Kong High-Speed Rail Link, and several infrastructure projects are in the pipeline. These projects facilitate the intra- and inter-regional mobilities as well as spillovers of tourism demand. Beyond these transport infrastructure connects and boosts the GBA economy, the development of info-structure (or smart infrastructure) should also be encouraged to discuss in collaborative research and development.

The GBA is now becoming an ‘experimental field’ of transboundary regional integration and smart destination region. Tourism collaborations between local institutions across borders in the GBA have heightened to pave a way for the transformation of the GBA into an innovation and technology hub. More various stakeholders should be taken into consideration for justifying the effectiveness of cross-border tourism collaboration and governance. To this end, a full-fledged cross-border organization that can promote the symbolic breaking down of administrative obstacles and can launch a unified database platform for the smart GBA. Based on the relevance to the above-mentioned, the Tripartite Forum was organized to create the opportunities for local authorities, businesses, and scholars to develop and examine their ideas, deepen the discussion, connect with cross-border partners, and drive innovative and digitally-driven growth. It also provided a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners, and decision-makers to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions adopted in the fields of smart tourism and big data.

**Smart Tourism in the Greater Bay Area Forum** aimed to bring together leading researchers and key stakeholders in the region to exchange and share their experiences and research outcomes on all aspects of smart tourism. Under the theme of this Forum, the focuses placed on a broad range of contemporary topics related to smart tourism and big data in both conceptual and technical aspects as described in the following section of Deliverables and Outcomes.

## **Deliverables and Outcomes**

### **Achievement 1: Smart Tourism in the Greater Bay Area Forum**

Smart Tourism in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) Forum aims to bring together leading researchers and key stakeholders in the region. The forum focuses on what makes a smart tourism destination and how the new developments and technological innovations can support the smart tourism ecosystem. Scholars and practitioners in Hong Kong, Guangdong, and Macao were invited to exchange insights and share experiences in developing a “Smart GBA”. It would foster mutual opportunity and collaboration for the development of GBA smart tourism, and further strengthen GBA governance, coordination, and integration. A total of 218 international attendees registered for this forum, including 38 in-person and 180 online participants.

The forum was held on 21 May 2021 with a warm welcome from Professor Jin-Guang Teng, President of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Dean Kaye Chon of the School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM). This was followed by the session entitled “Knowledge Sharing Keynotes – Academic Perspectives” chaired by Professor Haiyan Song, Associate Dean and Mr and Mrs Chan Chak Fu Professor in International Tourism. The first featured speaker, Professor Dimitrios Buhalis of Bournemouth University delivered the concept of smart tourism and its application in the GBA. Professor Sangwon Park from Kyung Hee University shared his research highlights related to the development of smart destination design. They commonly brought up future directions worth considering with key stakeholders in the GBA for developing smart tourism destinations.

Following the academic perspectives, the “Knowledge Sharing Keynotes – Industry Perspectives” chaired by Dr Fanny Vong, the president of Macao Institute for Tourism Studies. Three featured speakers from the tourism and hospitality industry, including Dr Jason Ni of Wynn Palace, Dr Yuzhou Huang of Figgy Travel, and Mr Joseph Wang of Travel Daily China, shared industrial experience and knowledge of smart tourism development. Online and in-person attendees could learn their insights on state-of-the-art technologies in designing and managing smart tourism development in the GBA.

In the afternoon, two panel discussions were held on knowledge co-creation. The first, entitled “Smart GBA Tourism – Big Data Application in the GBA” was chaired by Dr Dan Wang of the SHTM of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Insights on all aspects of smart GBA tourism encompassing big data and analytics were offered by Dr Yi Liu of Sun Yat-sen University, Dr Shanshan Qi of Macao Institute for Tourism Studies, Dr Yang Xu of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and Mr Vallois Choi of Hotel ICON – the teaching and research hotel built for the SHTM by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The second panel discussion entitled “Smart GBA Tourism – Developing Smart Ecosystem” was chaired by Professor Honggang Xu of Sun Yat-sen University. Joining her were Professor Leonardo Anthony Najarro Dioko of Macao Institute for Tourism Studies, Ms Heana Seongsin Kim of Wild China, Professor Anthony Wong of Sun Yat-sen University, and Mr Steve Hood of STR SHARE Centre. A wide range of issues related to smart ecosystem development was discussed to integrate smart technologies with the GBA destinations’ resources and stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industry.

## **Achievement 2: GBA Smart Tourism Strategies Youth Challenge 2021**

As part of the Smart Tourism in the GBA forum, the GBA Smart Tourism Strategies Youth Challenge 2021 was held on 22 May to promote knowledge exchange to younger generations in Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macao. It provided a platform for undergraduate students across three locations in the GBA to present their ideas on developing smart tourism strategies in the region. A total of six teams entered the competition after a screening process. Each team conducted political, economic, social and technological (PEST) analysis of the GBA tourism as well as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of smart tourism development in the GBA. Based on PEST and SWOT analyses, student teams proposed the vision and mission of the GBA smart tourism and strategy plan. The Champion went to the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies who proposed “E-Private Tour Guide for Senior Travelers in the GBA”. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> runner up went to the Sun Yat-sen University (“GBA Smart Tourism Transportation”) and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (“Building GBA as a Smart Travel Destination”) respectively.

The two-day activity of the Smart Tourism in the Greater Bay Area Forum and GBA Smart Tourism Strategies Youth Challenge has concluded successfully with closing remarks from Professor Haiyan Song.

More information can be found on the event website: <https://www.smarttourismgba.com/galley>

## **Achievement 3: Students participation**

The students from the SHTM of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University actively participated to assist this two-day event. The forum on the first day and youth challenge on the second day was managed smoothly by SHTM students who studied event management in the classroom. The students could have an opportunity to work for a real event in five teams, such as marketing team, program team, registration team, overall design team, and strategic partnership team. Although students took several theory courses related to event management previously in their studies, Smart Tourism in GBA Forum in their final year provided a unique opportunity for these students to have a first-hand experience on organizing a successful hybrid academic event. Students were responsible for a variety of duties and responsibilities such as stakeholder management, registration, logistics, marketing, IT, and graphic design just to name a few, and were granted invaluable learning experiences by ‘doing’ rather than simply reading or listening about the subject-matter. Because of the highly competitive nature of this industry where recent graduates are expected to be both proficient and knowledgeable, having real-life experiences can provide the extra edge for students when they venture out into the job market after graduation. Furthermore, this event allowed students not only to practice what they have learned in the past in theory courses, but also to cultivate their soft skills such as communication skills, time management, interpersonal skills and organizational skills which are all invaluable for their future careers without a doubt.