

PHOENIX STAR 2026 CHINA CITY HONORS Unveiled in Guangzhou, Highlighting the Distinctive Value of Chinese City Brands



Guangzhou, Guangdong Sep 16, 2026 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - On September 16, the Phoenix Financial Forum for the Greater Bay Area 2026 was held in Guangzhou. Under the theme “New Intelligence, New Openness”, the forum brought together government representatives, experts, scholars, and business leaders to discuss major topics including artificial intelligence, the internationalization of Chinese companies, new quality productive forces, and cross-border asset management.

As part of the forum, the PHOENIX STAR 2026 CHINA CITY HONORS were officially unveiled.

Developed by Phoenix TV in collaboration with Brand Finance, the honors draw on selected data and findings from the Brand Finance China City Index 2026 to highlight distinctive strengths of Chinese cities that have strong potential to resonate with wider audiences. Through Phoenix TV’s global media network, the honors aim to bring greater visibility to the unique value of Chinese cities and support their city-brand development.

The underlying Brand Finance research covered 70 major Chinese cities and surveyed approximately 12,000 respondents. It examined 46 city brand attributes across seven pillars: Business & Investment,

Liveability, Culture & Heritage, People & Values, Sustainability & Transport, Governance, and Education & Science.

This year's honors highlighted the distinctive strengths of city brands across China.

Guangzhou received the title 2026 City of Brand Influence in recognition of its openness and inclusiveness, strong public awareness, and business appeal. Hangzhou was named the 2026 City of Innovation and Entrepreneurial Vitality for its dynamic innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem and urban creativity.

Nanjing received the title 2026 City of Industry-Academia-Research Integration, reflecting its strengths in higher education and research, as well as close collaboration between academia and industry. Chengdu was named the 2026 City of Culture, Tourism and Consumer Vitality for bringing cultural and tourism experiences together with vibrant consumer offerings.

Changchun received the title 2026 City of Cultural Festival Appeal, reflecting its diverse cultural festivals and distinctive urban character. Xi'an was named the 2026 City of Historical and Cultural Influence for bringing its rich historical and cultural legacy to life through contemporary expression and wider engagement.

During the forum, Scott Chen, Managing Director of Brand Finance China, spoke to Phoenix TV about the findings of the Brand Finance China City Index 2026.

"The research shows that cities follow a wide variety of development models, and there is no single path that applies to all of them," Chen said. "Yet the cities that remain most memorable are often those that have developed one particular strength to an exceptional level, or those that possess a distinctive but under-recognized advantage. This is also the value of our collaboration with Phoenix TV on the PHOENIX STAR 2026 CHINA CITY HONORS: identifying the defining strength that makes each city memorable."

Chen added that conventional indicators used in city promotion, such as GDP and population, can describe a city's size but cannot fully explain why people aspire to visit it, trust it, or choose to stay.

"Helping wider audiences understand the aspects of everyday life that make local residents proud may be one of the most cost-effective investments a city can make in its brand today," he said.

From openness and inclusiveness to innovation and entrepreneurship, from consumer experiences and cultural festivals to academic collaboration and cultural heritage, the presentation reflected the diversity of Chinese city brands. A city brand is not only an expression of the city's image; it is also becoming an important form of soft power for attracting talent, industry, capital, and consumption.

Following the city honors presentation, the forum announced the Joint Initiative for Global Brand Communications of "Invest Guangzhou". The initiative was jointly launched by Phoenix TV's FengShows, the Canton Investment Development Commission (CIDC), and Guangzhou's coordinating office for city brand development and communications. The three parties will draw on their respective strengths to collaborate on the global promotion of the "Invest Guangzhou" brand, international economic and trade events, a global investment-promotion think tank, and regular communications and project implementation. The collaboration aims to enhance Guangzhou's visibility among global investors and encourage more international capital, industries, and talent to discover and engage with the city.

Looking ahead, Phoenix TV will continue to follow the development of Chinese city brands and use its global media network to bring their distinctive value to a wider international audience. Phoenix Go Glocal will also continue to support more Chinese city brands in reaching the world.

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