

Messe Frankfurt celebrates three decades of success in Asia

Hong Kong, 30 July 2024. Three decades ago, when China's GDP was growing at 13%¹, global trade fair organiser Messe Frankfurt was busy inaugurating its first office in Asia. This strategic decision would later be recognised as one of the most consequential in the company's some 800-year history. Beginning with a small team in 1994, Messe Frankfurt (HK) Ltd now serves as the regional headquarters for Greater China, overseeing a network of seven offices, and boasting a dedicated workforce of over 600 employees. Today, the company organises more than 60 events in 13 cities across the region, positioning it as one of the most substantial trade fair organisers in China, and a rising force in wider Asia.

From a singular trade fair in Hong Kong for the textile industry in 1987, today Messe Frankfurt (HK) Ltd has expanded its footprint across Asia, with 45 taking place in Greater China. Last year, this regional portfolio attracted over 1.6 million global trade visitors to do business with almost 40,000 international exhibitors.

According to Mr Wolfgang Marzin, President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Messe Frankfurt Group, putting the right infrastructure in place to accommodate growth has been crucial to Messe Frankfurt's journey in Asia. "Although we initially started in the textile industry, we have gradually expanded our trade fair operations to cover 11 dynamic industry segments across diverse regions of China and further afield in Asia. This expansion has necessitated the establishment of an extensive network of offices to support our clients, and also to facilitate regional exhibitors' participation in Messe Frankfurt's trade fairs worldwide. Hong Kong, with its strategic location, robust legal system and international business environment, was the natural launching pad for this."

Messe Frankfurt in Greater China: past and present

In the early years, Messe Frankfurt organised a flurry of international trade fairs, including Automechanika, Intertextile and ISH in China, all of which remain widely influential today. Yet, these provided the foundations to build on the knowledge, know-how and networks needed to bring these brands from Germany to the local market.

"While Hong Kong provided us with a solid position for international connectivity, it was crucial to gain an early foothold in Greater China to handle an increasing number of trade fairs, joint ventures and outgoing business," explains Mr Stephan Buurma, Member of the Board of Management of Messe Frankfurt Group. Seeing the need to frame a more comprehensive operation for the business, the company set up the Taiwan branch in 1995

¹ National Data, National Bureau of Statistics of China, (Year: 1994, indicators, Contribution of the three Strata of Industry to GDP_Growth to the increase) <https://data.stats.gov.cn/english/easyquery.htm?cn=C01> (accessed on 20 February 2024)

to support outgoing business, closely followed by the Shanghai subsidiary in 2002 as a first base on the mainland.



Messe Frankfurt's growth in Greater China stems from flagship events that have been extended from Frankfurt and tailored to the local market. Top left: Interstoff Asia (the company's first trade fair outside of Germany); top right: Intertextile Shanghai Apparel Fabrics; bottom left: ISH China; bottom right: Automechanika China.

As of 2024, Messe Frankfurt operates seven offices across Greater China in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Taipei. This network is responsible for organising some of the region's largest trade fairs, including Automechanika Shanghai, Guangzhou International Lighting Exhibition, Intertextile Shanghai Apparel Fabrics, ISH China & CIHE, Music China and Prolight + Sound Guangzhou.

From just six employees at its opening, the Shanghai office has grown to some 170 staff inclusive of the branch in Beijing, handling a diverse portfolio and a significant amount of outgoing sales from mainland China to Messe Frankfurt trade fairs around the world. More recently, a pillar of Messe Frankfurt's success has been establishing a presence in China's highest-potential regions. In 2020, the company further expanded the operations of its Shenzhen subsidiary, situated in the Greater Bay Area (GBA), a national strategy in South China promoting the innovation and financial integration of the region and overseas. The company's coverage now features 20 trade fairs in the automotive, consumer goods, entertainment, manufacturing, technology, and textiles sectors across GBA, including Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

A growing presence in Asia

Messe Frankfurt's activity in Asia continues to grow, not just in China but in other hotspots of the region as well, with the Hong Kong office overseeing eight events in Southeast Asia. This year alone, the company introduced two new trade fairs, opening up access to emerging market opportunities in the textiles and mobility sectors.

In February, VIATT was Messe Frankfurt's first Texpertise event to take place in the ASEAN region and spotlight the potential of Vietnam's textile industry. As one of the

fastest emerging global economies, the country is well placed for growth, even claiming the position of the world's third largest textiles and garment exporter.

Asiabike Jakarta was the other debuting exhibition held in April. Under the Mobility & Logistics sector, the show is geared towards the thriving two-wheeler market, with themes that endorse micro-mobility solutions as an integral part of sustainable urban transportation.

More events in Southeast Asia include:

- Automechanika Ho Chi Minh City
- Automechanika Kuala Lumpur
- Intelligent Manufacturing Kuala Lumpur
- Meat Pro Asia
- Secutech Thailand
- Secutech Vietnam

Looking to the future

“Moving forward, we will rely on strong connections built over the past three decades around the Asian continent to spotlight the prosperities of regional markets and industries. This network positions the company favourably as we can enter markets confidently, assured by our extensive experience and expertise in successfully organising events in any environment we step into,” adds Mr Buurma.

In view of this, the company has also begun extending its reach in the Central Asian market with seven brand events in Uzbekistan. The country itself sits along a transport route in China's Belt and Road initiative, a plan promoting economic development and connectivity between Asia and Europe. In addition to its strategic geographical location, Uzbekistan's consumer market, as well as its opening political and business landscape, make it an attractive trade partner and investment destination. Messe Frankfurt's stronger presence is set to promote opportunities in staple industries of the economy, such as cosmetics, textiles and clothing, automotive, logistics and transportation. These sourcing fairs include:

- Apparel Sourcing Tashkent
- Automechanika Tashkent
- Beautyworld Central Asia
- Futuroad Expo Tashkent
- Heimtextil Uzbekistan
- Scalex Tashkent
- Texworld Tashkent

Messe Frankfurt returns to the China International Import Expo 2024

From 5 to 10 November, Messe Frankfurt will participate as an exhibitor in the China International Import Expo (CIIE) with a 200 sqm booth located in the Trade in Service Hall (Hall 8.2). The fair itself is a major trading event in the country's exhibition industry with objectives set out by the highest levels of the Chinese government to further open up its market to the rest of the world.

This aligns closely with that of Messe Frankfurt's core business and motive behind every trade fair organised. “China has remained one of our most important international markets

over the last three decades, and we expect it to become even more integral as we diversify our trade fair coverage in various markets and economic hubs like the GBA and Belt and Road, in addition to our Southeast Asia shows. Thus, CIIE offers a valuable opportunity to promote this presence and global network to a largely Chinese audience,” Mr Buurma concludes.

For more information about upcoming events in Asia, please visit www.messefrankfurt.com.hk

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Background information on Messe Frankfurt

The Messe Frankfurt Group is the world's largest trade fair, congress and event organiser with its own exhibition grounds. With a workforce of some 2,300 people at its headquarters in Frankfurt am Main and in 28 subsidiaries, it organises events around the world. Group sales in financial year 2023 were around € 609 million. We serve our customers' business interests efficiently within the framework of our Fairs & Events, Locations and Services business fields. One of Messe Frankfurt's key strengths is its powerful and closely knit global sales network, which covers around 180 countries in all regions of the world. Our comprehensive range of services – both onsite and online – ensures that customers worldwide enjoy consistently high quality and flexibility when planning, organising and running their events. We are using our digital expertise to develop new business models. The wide range of services includes renting exhibition grounds, trade fair construction and marketing, personnel and food services. Sustainability is a central pillar of our corporate strategy. Here, we strike a healthy balance between ecological and economic interests, social responsibility and diversity. For more information, please visit our website at: www.messefrankfurt.com/sustainability With its headquarters in Frankfurt am Main, the company is owned by the City of Frankfurt (60 percent) and the State of Hesse (40 percent). For more information, please visit our website at: www.messefrankfurt.com