

THE ROAD
AHEAD FOR
GCCS IN INDIA:

THE GLOCAL APPROACH



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India's dynamic market landscape, growing economy, and tech-savvy workforce, has become pivotal for the growth of Global Capability Centres (GCCs). Originally established to handle cost-effective back-office operations, these GCCs have evolved into innovation hubs driving business transformation and delivering strategic value. As of 2024, Indian GCCs have generated **\$64.9 billion** in revenue with **1.9 million people** employed.¹ However, as the competition intensifies, the challenge lies in not just establishing a GCC in India but building a distinctive brand that resonates with stakeholders such as employees, customers, and investors alike.² These centres face key challenges such as intense competition for **skilled talent, cultural adaptation** to the country's diverse market, and overcoming the perception of being cost centres rather than innovation hubs. To address these, GCCs must focus on **employer branding**, fostering innovation-led transformation, and leveraging technology for streamlined operations. Initiatives like **localised CSR and diversity and inclusion programmes** can enhance brand perception, while **collaborative ecosystems** with universities and startups further reinforce their innovation agenda.

Strategic communication also plays a pivotal role in transforming the brand narrative of GCCs. Communications professionals act as enablers of change by shaping employer branding to ensure visibility and aspirational pull among top-tier talent, especially in a competitive landscape. They also drive consistent internal messaging that helps employees understand the larger purpose and see their contributions to the company's overall strategy.

Over 20 leaders from multiple GCC organisations participated in a roundtable hosted by SPAG FINN Partners titled **“Building a Distinctive GCC Brand: A Framework for Engaging Talent and Shaping Corporate Identity”** in November 2024. These are the few highlights from the conversation:

- **Branding matters:** With no customer-facing storefronts in India, branding is essential to drive visibility and differentiation in the local market.
- **War for talent is real:** Campus placements are becoming increasingly competitive. Visibility among top institutions is crucial for creating aspirational value and attracting the right talent.
- **Beyond tech:** GCCs must shed their only-tech positioning and promote the diversity of roles and capabilities within their ecosystem.
- **Leadership buy-in is key:** Branding challenges are not just communications problems they are leadership and business challenges. Communicators must advocate for culture change from the top.
- **Autonomy attracts talent:** Talented professionals seek roles with autonomy and impact. Highlighting product ownership and decision-making power is a major differentiator.

This white paper outlines a comprehensive roadmap for GCCs to build a strong and differentiated brand in India, addressing key challenges, offering actionable strategies, and examining emerging trends that will shape the future.

INTRODUCTION

Initially viewed as a cost-effective market, global corporations started outsourcing their work to India. However, they slowly recognised the potential of India's skilled workforce, strong academic institutions, and rapidly growing technology ecosystem. Cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Pune emerged as thriving innovation hubs, attracting investments and talent from around the world.

These cities quickly became synonymous with cutting-edge technological advancements, offering a robust infrastructure, a favourable regulatory environment, and a steady pipeline of highly skilled professionals from premier institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).

Global tech giants, including Intel, IBM, Microsoft, and Google, established their presence, leveraging India's deep expertise in software development, semiconductor design, and research-driven innovation. Over time, these hubs evolved into vibrant ecosystems that fostered collaboration between multinational corporations, startups, and academia.

Special economic zones (SEZs) and technology parks, such as Hyderabad's HITEC City and Pune's Rajiv Gandhi Infotech Park, provided the necessary infrastructure to support this rapid expansion. In fact,

Telangana's life sciences ecosystem has experienced a 23% growth in recent years, surpassing the national average of 14%.³

As more companies set up their GCCs in India, the country's role evolved from back-office support to a key player in global R&D, product development, and high-value engineering solutions. The synergy between government policies, corporate investments, and entrepreneurial ambition transformed these cities into global technology epicentres, paving the way for India's dominance in areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, fintech, and cybersecurity.

Today, India's technology hubs stand as testimony to the vision set in motion in 1985. Hosting more than 1,700 of GCC's with over 2,975 centres, India continues to be a magnet for technological innovation, driving solutions that impact industries worldwide. As of 2024, Indian GCCs have generated \$64.9 billion in revenue with 1.9 million people employed. By 2030, the revenue is expected to grow to \$100 billion.⁴

GCCs are reshaping industries and strengthening the economies of their host countries. Given the evolving role of GCCs, they are investing significantly in comprehensive skill-building and investing in human capital.

POWERING PROGRESS AND PEOPLE



50% of GCCs have evolved into portfolio and transformation hubs, reflecting their growing strategic importance.



In the **past five years**, global roles and women in leadership positions within GCCs have seen a remarkable **40% CAGR growth**.



Nearly 90% of GCCs now operate as multi-functional centres, driving advancements across technology, operations, and product engineering.



Engineering Research & Development (ER&D) GCCs have expanded **1.3 times faster** than the overall GCC growth rate, underscoring India's transition toward higher-value, more complex innovation-driven work.⁵



A 2021 report found that over **50,000-60,000 future leaders** were groomed by GCCs in a span of **five years**. About **90,000 people** were hired in start-ups established by ex-GCC employees.



Nearly 1,75,000 households received economic benefits due to women at the workplace.⁶

In 2025, India's GCCs are poised to assert their prominence, illustrating India's ability in addressing international tech needs. However, the journey to building a distinctive and recognisable GCC brand in India comes with unique challenges and opportunities.

OPPORTUNITIES

With 40% lower operational costs than Europe, India is a substantially cost-effective destination for most GCCs.⁷ Infrastructure is another advantage as India provides a diverse range of office space options, from co-working environments to fully-dedicated tech parks in major IT hubs.

A strong technological infrastructure is crucial, depending on the services offered, encompassing data centers, cloud solutions, cybersecurity protocols, and seamless network connectivity. Additionally, selecting the right local partners for IT, HR, payroll, and legal services plays a vital role in streamlining operations and ensuring a smooth setup.

HIGH-VALUE TALENT POOL

India's transition from a 'low cost-low value' to a 'volume + value'⁸ market is mostly due to its extensive talent pool. To harness this demographic advantage, the government has also launched several skilling initiatives aimed at bridging skill gaps and enhancing employability. By leveraging AI and ML, the Skill India Digital Hub has connected 60 lakh users to skilling and employment opportunities. Also, the Model Skill Loan Scheme supports over 25,000 students annually. With these initiatives in place, India's AI talent pool is also expected to grow from 600,000-650,000 to >1,250,000 over 2022-27 at a 15% CAGR.⁹

Precious talent:



With over **5.4 million technology professionals**,¹⁰ India offers an ideal environment for GCCs to scale operations and drive innovation.



India has a young workforce, with 65% of the population **under 35**.



The country also **ranks 3rd** in the world in producing STEM graduates annually.



According to NASSCOM, ER&D contributes over **50%** of India's GCC revenue, driven by rapid digitisation and cloud adoption.¹¹

ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON THE RISE

Entrepreneurship and innovation have also gained significant momentum in India. India's startup ecosystem has also seen remarkable growth, with 157,066 startups recognised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) as of December 2024. The Startup India portal has registered 7,59,303 users, reflecting the surge in entrepreneurial activity.

Now, to stay ahead in technological advancements and industry trends, GCCs must cultivate a strong blend of diverse expertise and cutting-edge capabilities. This requires developing specialised skills in talent acquisition and workforce development, particularly in emerging technologies.

More and more GCCs are collaborating with leading academic institutions and start-ups to accelerate innovation and drive greater value creation. This approach, known as a partner ecosystem, fosters mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their external stakeholders.¹²

GCCs can engage in these collaborations to drive either incremental or disruptive innovation. They can access the latest advancements in technology, integrating them into their operations. They can also leverage external resources and expertise with these partnerships, all without significant capital investment.

Attractive entrepreneurship system:



TIER-2, 3 CITIES WELCOME GCCS

The decision to set up a GCC in a Tier-2 city is often influenced by a blend of challenges and opportunities. One key challenge is the escalating costs in Tier-1 cities in terms of real estate prices, higher salary expectations, and intense competition for skilled talent. As a result, companies are actively seeking cost-effective alternatives to maintain profitability.

At the same time, Tier-2 cities offer a compelling opportunity with their largely untapped talent pool. With a growing number of educational institutions producing graduates in engineering, IT, and business disciplines, these cities offer a workforce that is both skilled and eager to gain exposure to global business environments.



Divesh Singla, SVP, Global Operations and Managing Director at Signant Health said, *“The key reasons behind this expansion to tier-2 and 3 cities are firstly cost arbitrage. Hiring talent in these cities is significantly more cost-effective than in Tier-1 cities. Moreover, relying solely on Tier-1 cities for talent concentration poses risks. By diversifying into Tier-2 locations, companies create a more resilient talent pipeline and mitigate potential disruptions. Cities like Kochi, Coimbatore, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Chandigarh, and Lucknow have strong academic institutions, providing a steady talent pool that can be nurtured and trained.”*

Operating in Tier-2 cities presents long-term benefits, including lower attrition rates and a more stable business environment, free from the congestion and pollution challenges often associated with Tier-1 locations.

Moreover, both central and state governments are increasingly recognising the potential of these cities as emerging economic hubs. To attract investment, they are introducing incentives such as tax benefits, subsidies, and infrastructure development initiatives.

- Karnataka, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu have introduced R&D policies to enhance the GCC landscape in sectors like automotive, electric vehicles, electronics, pharma, and life sciences.
- Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu are developing innovation and technology parks to support EV and electronics manufacturing, offering subsidised land and flexible infrastructure for shared services, CoEs, and R&D hubs.
- Emerging hubs like Hosur, Nashik, and Aurangabad are evolving as twin cities to Bengaluru, Chennai, and Pune, benefiting from a skilled workforce, lower land costs, and strong MSME presence.
- Key policy incentives include infrastructure support for innovation clusters, R&D CapEx incentives, tax concessions, IP creation and licensing support, product testing facilities, collaborative research opportunities, and skilled workforce development for high-end manufacturing and R&D.¹⁴

This supportive ecosystem further strengthens the business case for establishing or expanding GCC operations in Tier 2 cities.¹⁵ Several companies have already established GCCs in cities such as Visakhapatnam, Coimbatore, Jaipur, Vadodara, Kochi, Chandigarh, and other emerging locations. These centres primarily provide services across finance and accounting, human resources, supply chain and procurement, engineering, research and development (R&D), quality assurance, as well as digital, cloud, and automation solutions.¹⁶

However, challenges remain. **Singla** said, ***“While fresh graduates from local academic institutions can be trained, finding experienced senior professionals willing to relocate remains a challenge. Many senior executives have strong personal and professional ties to Tier 1 cities. Moreover, the overall professional and business ecosystem in Tier 2 cities is still developing and may not yet offer the same infrastructure, networking opportunities, and business environment as established metro cities.”***

CHALLENGES

GCCs operate in a highly competitive talent market, contending with multinational corporations, domestic enterprises, and rapidly growing start-ups for the same pool of skilled professionals. The demand is particularly high for expertise in next-generation technologies such as AI, ML, cybersecurity, data analytics, and cloud computing. However, with an increasing number of companies setting up operations, the supply-demand gap is widening.

1 NAVIGATING STATE-WISE DIVERSITY

The attrition rate in GCCs often hovers around 15-20%, with some sectors, such as digital transformation and AI, witnessing even higher turnover.¹⁷ Salary inflation further complicates talent acquisition, with niche skill sets such as specialisation in AI and ML commanding a 30-50% premium over market averages.¹⁸

To address this challenge, GCCs need to invest in structured talent development programmes, reskilling initiatives, and partnerships with universities to create a steady pipeline of skilled professionals.

Additionally, India's diversity is both an asset and a challenge for GCCs. With operations spread across different states, organisations must account for regional variations in work culture, communication styles, and employee expectations while ensuring a consistent global brand identity. Language and cultural differences can influence employee engagement and productivity.¹⁹

Compensation structures, benefits, and incentives also need localisation, as cost-of-living differences between Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities can impact employee expectations.

2 OVERCOMING COST-CENTRE PERCEPTIONS

Despite their growing role in driving digital transformation, many GCCs are still perceived as cost-saving back-office units rather than strategic innovation hubs. This perception can limit their ability to attract top-tier talent, gain executive sponsorship, and secure long-term investments.

However, a transformation is happening with over **65% of such organisations** now using their GCCs to manage multiple functions, extending beyond finance, HR, IT, and procurement. Companies such as **JPMorgan Chase, Microsoft, and Bosch**, have successfully repositioned their GCCs as innovation engines, leveraging India's talent for high-value functions like AI, blockchain, and cybersecurity solutions.²⁰

- About **50%** of GCCs actively drive ESG initiatives for their parent companies, with social responsibility and diversity as key focus areas.
- Nearly **60%** also contribute to ESG reporting and related goals, with Indian GCCs serving as a key channel for ESG investments through NGOs and local partners.

Similarly, GCCs in the **life sciences and health sector** were initially established to cater to basic processes such as medical writing and regulatory documentation, to monitoring and pharmacovigilance activities. Now, parent companies have started collaborating with GCCs for drug discovery and development activities. For example, Bayer's Data Science and Analytics Centre in Hyderabad. It is set to be the firm's APAC hub, aiding innovation and discovery of new therapies.²¹

3 NAVIGATING REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

India's regulatory environment is also constantly evolving, requiring GCCs to stay agile and compliant with local laws. Regulatory challenges include data protection laws, tax policies, labour laws, and compliance mandates that differ across states. The introduction of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA) 2023 has added new compliance obligations for GCCs handling sensitive data, requiring investments in data security and governance.²²

- The corporate tax rate for new manufacturing units was reduced to 15%
- Other sectors continue to face a standard 22% corporate tax.²³

Moreover, state-specific labour laws dictate hiring policies, workplace safety, and employment contracts, requiring GCCs to adopt a region-specific compliance approach. Hence, GCCs must build strong legal and compliance teams, leverage regulatory technology (RegTech) solutions, and engage with government bodies to stay ahead of policy changes and mitigate risks.

While GCCs face several challenges, with strategic approach, they can move beyond operational support roles and establish themselves as global hubs for innovation and digital transformation.

BUILDING A GLOCAL GCC BRAND

There is ample runway for further growth. There is also opportunity for improvement amongst existing GCCs to increase through penetration in global operations, as well as attracting new GCCs from global organisations. To build a robust GCC brand, organisations can adopt several strategic approaches:

EMPLOYER BRANDING

Positioning GCCs as preferred employers involves fostering a culture of innovation, offering competitive benefits, and focusing on employee well-being. A strong **Employee Value Proposition (EVP)** is crucial in this endeavour.

- An EVP represents the unique set of benefits an employee receives in return for their skills and experience.
- It defines the essence of the company, highlighting its uniqueness and core values.²⁴

LEARNING WITH MICROSOFT

Microsoft's Global Capability Center (GCC) in India, one of its largest outside the US, exemplifies a strong EVP through career development, innovation-driven culture, employee well-being, and diversity initiatives. With multiple centres across Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Noida, Microsoft India play a crucial role in global operations, cloud computing, AI research, and cybersecurity solutions.

Due to its strong EVP, Microsoft India GCC consistently ranks as a top employer in India and has been recognised by LinkedIn's Top Companies List.²⁵ The key elements of Microsoft's EVP is through lifelong learning initiatives like **Microsoft Learn, Microsoft Aspire Program, and AI Digital Labs.**²⁶

GCCs are increasingly leveraging strategic communication to strengthen their brand and stakeholder engagement. Effective communication has long been a cornerstone of successful organisations, helping to align internal teams, build trust with external partners, and reinforce corporate identity. In today's competitive landscape, GCCs are recognising the need to shape their narratives proactively.

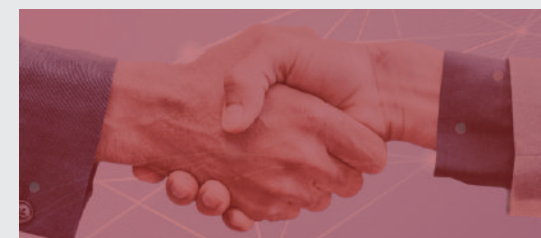
With the help of communications and public relations firms, GCCs can articulate their purpose and impact to both internal and external stakeholders. **Anuj Agrawal, Founder & CEO at Zyoin**, notes, *"In the last couple of years, there has been a shift in trend among GCCs. Most of them have become conscious about their image, and at least 25% to 30% have hired image and PR consultants."* This shift underscores the growing recognition of communication as a strategic function.

As GCCs scale operations and navigate increasing complexity, their communications leaders are stepping into larger, global roles. The evolving nature of these centres demands a refined approach to messaging, reputation management, and stakeholder engagement. Going forward, effective communication will not just support business operations but also drive organisational growth and global influence.



"When looking at talent acquisition trends in the GCCs, data shows that around 60% of talent hired by GCCs comes from other existing GCCs. This means that as a GCC, you are essentially competing with other GCCs for the same talent pool. In this competitive landscape, having a strong brand becomes crucial. A well-established brand helps attract top talent, whereas a weaker brand struggles to do so," Agrawal said.

Agrawal said, *"One of the most critical aspects of this branding effort is developing a strong employee value proposition (EVP). EVP defines the unique value your organisation offers to employees, influencing their decision to join and stay with you. Several factors contribute to a compelling EVP, including the nature of the role and the type of work, compensation structure and benefits, flexibility, and career growth opportunities. By differentiating your GCC from others through a well-defined EVP, you enhance your ability to attract and retain top talent in a competitive market."*



INNOVATION-LED TRANSFORMATION

Transforming GCCs into innovation hubs requires significant investment in research and development (R&D), fostering a startup-like culture, and driving intellectual property creation.

Learning with IBM

The IBM India Research Lab, established in 1998 with locations in Gurgaon and Bengaluru, serves as a hub for science and technology innovation, focusing on projects across hybrid cloud, AI, climate and sustainability, and quantum computing applications.

Furthermore, IBM's collaboration with the Indian Institute of Science led to the launch of an innovation lab aimed at advancing hybrid cloud research in India. This initiative brings together a community of scientists, faculty, and students passionate about solving complex research challenges. With the research work made accessible to the open-source community to accelerate innovation in AI for hybrid cloud.^{28 29}

Pancham Taneja, Country Head of Delta Capita, said, *"The role of GCCs has evolved significantly. We are no longer in an environment where clients simply outsource work for the sake of completing tasks. Clients today are looking beyond just cost arbitrage; they want smart, innovative solutions. Organisations that can offer low-code/no-code and AI-driven solutions that reduce risk for clients will stand out in the market. This shift is crucial for differentiation. Rather than just replicating traditional models, firms need to pivot from resource augmentation to a technology-driven approach. This demonstrates creativity and strategic thinking, setting a firm apart from its competition."*



Taneja said, *“Ultimately, it’s about delivering transformational value — not just executing tasks but enhancing and returning work to the client in a better, more efficient form. Clients appreciate this forward-thinking approach, and it plays a key role in establishing long-term partnerships.”*

Singla added, *“From a workforce transformation perspective, I’ve personally witnessed the significant operational impact brought about by AI, analytics, and automation. We are now moving towards intelligent process automation, going beyond traditional Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to cognitive automation. We’re seeing the emergence of predictive operations and AI-powered ecosystem integration, which helps break down traditional functional silos by connecting previously disparate systems. This is resulting in a significant disruption across operational models.”*



He further added, *“Looking ahead, I believe the most successful GCCs will be the ones that position themselves not just as implementers of AI, but as strategic partners, guiding their enterprise organisations through the profound business model transformations that AI makes possible.”*

GCCs that want to commit to innovation should establish strong governance mechanisms and metrics to quantify the success of their innovation programmes. Committed innovators have created a significant impact by rolling out PoCs across the organisation and creating IP and patents. They also partner with startups through accelerator programmes to drive innovation.

LOCALISED RESPONSIBILITY AND AGILE OUTLOOK

Studies suggest that about **51%** of GCCs in India have initiated efforts to help their global counterparts to advance the ESG agenda.³⁰ Engaging in meaningful corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives enhances a GCC's brand perception by demonstrating a commitment to the local community.

Embracing agile practices enables GCCs to remain responsive to market demands and drive faster innovation cycles. Agile models foster collaboration, improve decision-making, and enhance productivity. The collaboration between TCS and IBM to deliver cutting-edge IBM Power Systems solutions exemplifies this approach. This partnership offers a comprehensive suite of services designed to empower businesses in today's dynamic IT landscape.³¹

Adopting advanced technologies like **AI, Internet of Things (IoT), and blockchain** can optimise GCC operations and improve stakeholder experiences. Data-driven decision-making enhances efficiency and builds credibility.



To strengthen their position and drive sustained success, GCCs must focus on brand advocacy through leadership, diversity and inclusion, and fostering collaborative ecosystems. By adopting these strategies, GCCs can enhance their global reputation, attract top talent, and contribute significantly to their parent organisations.



Bhushan said, *“To ensure long-term success, GCCs must invest in building a strong leadership pipeline. Future leaders will carry the organisation forward, create more value, and enhance the GCC’s presence in India and globally. However, this is an area where many GCCs are currently falling short. Strengthening leadership development should be a key priority to drive sustained growth and competitiveness.”*



BRAND ADVOCACY THROUGH LEADERSHIP

When leaders authentically embody a brand’s values, they become its most powerful advocates. Their voices lend credibility, inspire trust, and humanize the brand for both internal teams and external audiences. Whether through thought leadership, public speaking, or social media engagement, visible and value-driven leadership helps shape perception, build loyalty, and differentiate the brand in a crowded marketplace.

Sushant Bhushan, Head of India, Circle K, and an experienced GCC leader, said, *“One critical aspect that many organisations overlook is leadership development. While company culture plays a vital role in shaping an organisation, leadership is essential to driving and sustaining it. GCCs need strong leaders who can act as brand ambassadors, effectively communicating the organisation’s vision, values, and work. These leaders play a crucial role in representing the GCC, not just internally but also on a broader, global stage.”*

Moreover, to establish themselves as industry leaders, GCCs must take an active role in shaping discourse within their sectors. Leaders at GCCs can drive brand advocacy through **strategic communication** in industry forums, publishing thought leadership content, and fostering stakeholder relationships.

Content marketing is also a powerful tool for GCCs to position themselves as pioneers in innovation. **White papers, research reports, and blogs** authored by **GCC leaders and domain experts** can help shape industry conversations. Companies like **Accenture**, and **Deloitte**, regularly publish industry insights, driving credibility and influence.





ALIGNMENT WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Engaging with policymakers, industry bodies, and business leaders ensures that GCCs remain at the forefront of regulatory and market developments. Establishing advisory boards with internal and external experts can provide strategic guidance and enhance industry relationships.

A commitment to diversity and inclusion (D&I) not only fosters a positive workplace culture but also strengthens brand equity and enhances organisational performance. GCCs must implement policies and initiatives that promote equitable hiring, inclusive leadership, and employee engagement. They should also cultivate a culture of diverse hiring practices.

Organisations with diverse workforces are **36%** more likely to outperform competitors in profitability, according to a McKinsey report.³²

GCCs must actively recruit talent from varied backgrounds, including gender, ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic diversity. Companies like SAP and Microsoft have successfully implemented diverse hiring programmes.³³ To foster an inclusive culture, GCCs must implement policies such as:

- Employee resource groups (ERGs) for underrepresented communities
- Leadership training on unconscious bias
- Flexible work arrangements and parental leave policies
- Mentorship and sponsorship programmes for diverse talent

For example, **JPMorgan Chase's Women on the Move initiative** has helped increase female representation in leadership roles across its GCCs in India and the Philippines.³⁴



BUILDING COLLABORATIVE ECOSYSTEMS

GCCs thrive when they leverage partnerships with academic institutions, startups, and technology hubs. Such collaborations enable access to cutting-edge research, emerging talent, and co-innovation opportunities. Initiatives such as joint research projects, internships, and faculty exchange programs can create a pipeline of industry-ready talent. Partnering with startups through incubators and accelerators allows GCCs to tap into disruptive technologies and agile innovation models.

Looking ahead with Walmart

For example, Walmart Global Tech India has launched an **Innovation Lab** that actively collaborates with Indian startups through accelerator programs. In 2023, it partnered with T-Hub, Hyderabad's innovation hub, to drive deep-tech innovations in areas like supply chain, retail tech, and sustainability. They also engage with academic institutions like IITs for talent scouting and research partnerships.³⁵

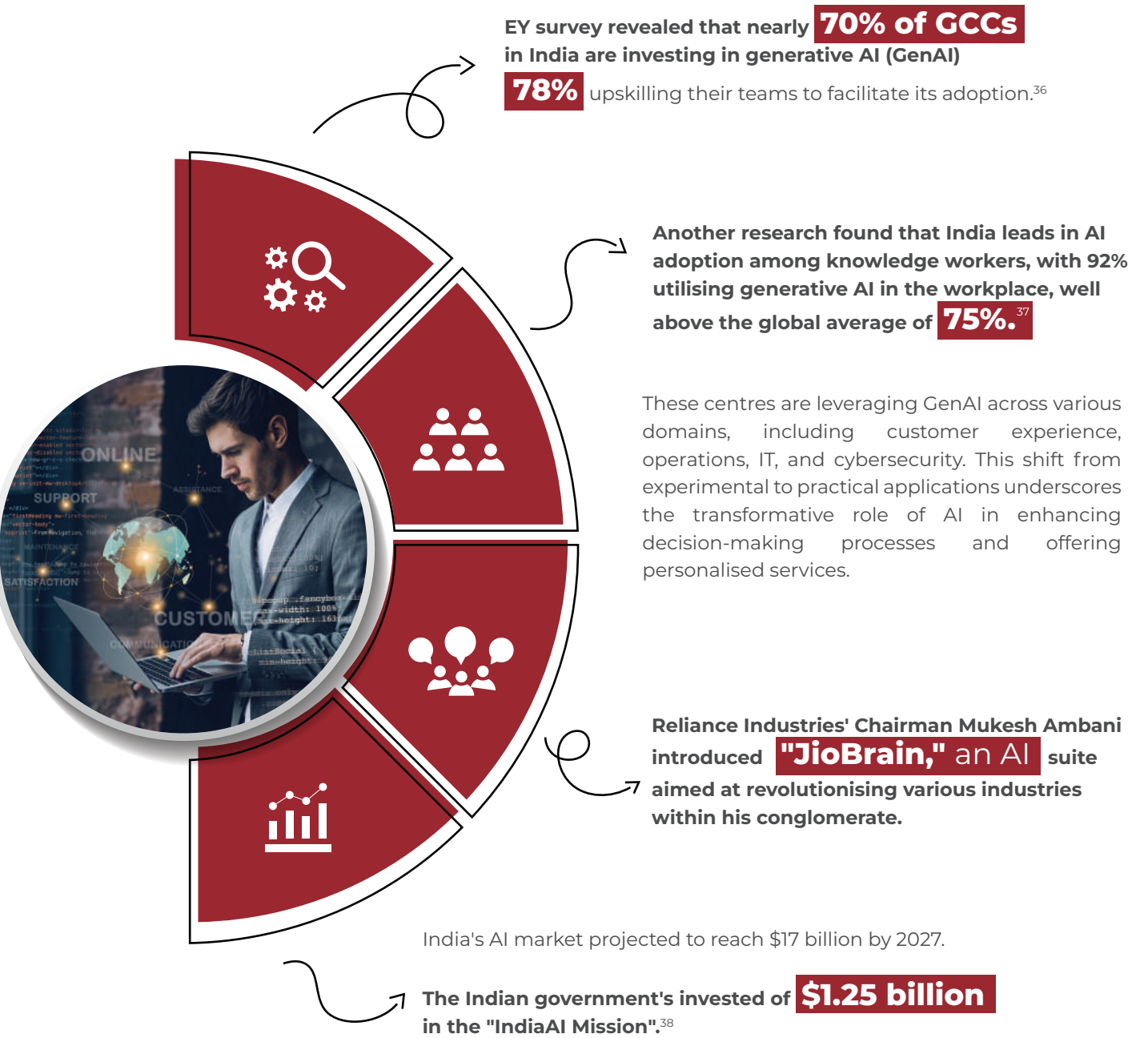
To solidify their position as global leaders in innovation, GCCs must prioritise brand advocacy through leadership, foster a culture of diversity and inclusion, and build collaborative ecosystems. Companies that embrace these strategies enhance their global reputation and contribute meaningfully to the digital and technological transformation of their parent organisations.

EMERGING TRENDS

To understand the communication strategies of the leading Pharma and MedTech companies in the Middle East, FINN Partners' Global Intelligence conducted an in-depth analysis of owned channel mentions, with a primary focus on X (formerly known as Twitter), which provided the richest dataset for examining how companies engage with their audiences and communicate key messages. The study encompassed a two-year period from 2022 to 2024, offering insights into trends, topics, and engagement strategies.

FOCUS ON DIGITAL-FIRST APPROACHES

As India's digital economy continues to expand, GCCs are increasingly integrating advanced technologies into their operations.



SUSTAINABILITY AND ESG GOALS

Aligning with global standards, GCCs are increasingly prioritising sustainability and ESG objectives to enhance their brand reputation and meet regulatory requirements. **The EY survey indicated that 100% of GCCs identified climate change and sustainability as top focus areas for the coming year.** This commitment reflects a broader recognition of the importance of integrating environmental and social considerations into business strategies.

However, the global sustainability profession is currently grappling with a significant digital skills gap, which could impede the effective use of AI technologies in addressing climate and biodiversity issues. Surveys indicate that many executives consider this skills gap to be **major** or **extreme**, underscoring the need for comprehensive reskilling programmes to harness AI's potential in sustainability initiatives.



RESKILLING AND UPSKILLING

Continuous investment in employee training programmes is crucial for GCCs to remain competitive and retain talent. The EY survey highlighted that 78% of GCCs are upskilling their internal teams to facilitate GenAI adoption, with a strong emphasis on data and analytics skills. This focus ensures that employees are equipped to handle emerging technologies, thereby enhancing the organisation's overall capabilities.

SUSHANT BHUSHAN
Head of the India Business Center, Circle K

Bhushan said, *“As GCCs take on more complex and high-value functions, the demand for specialized skills is rapidly increasing. With new GCCs being established and existing ones scaling their operations, continuous learning and digital upskilling have become essential. Organisations must invest in their workforce by offering structured learning programs that include technical training, cross-functional exposure, and leadership opportunities. Ensuring that teams are future-ready not only strengthens the organisation but also serves as a crucial strategy for attracting top talent. Today, professionals don’t just seek higher compensation, they look for a strong EVP that includes opportunities for career growth and skill enhancement.”*

“India has a vast pool of talented professionals, but the real question is: are you utilizing that talent effectively? But what GCCs need to see is are they giving the talent value-added roles, or are they assigning manual keying tasks that could easily be automated? This ties back to the earlier point around innovation. If you're assigning your people to do low-value, repetitive work—tasks that machines could do—you'll inevitably face high attrition. Employees will join, work for a while, and then move on. But if you want to retain top talent, you need to give them work that is complex, diverse, and intellectually stimulating. That's where innovation plays a key role,” Taneja added.

PANCHAM TANEJA
Country Head, Delta Capital

The government is also playing a crucial role in fostering AI talent:

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has introduced multiple interventions at the K-12 and higher education levels to develop a future-ready AI talent pool.

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has collaborated with leading technology companies under the ADVANTA(I)GE INDIA initiative. As part of this program, Microsoft is set to provide AI skilling opportunities to two million Indians.⁴⁰

Further reinforcing AI education and skill development, MSDE announced a partnership with Meta in October 2024.

This collaboration aims to enhance digital learning by launching an AI Assistant for the Skill India Mission and establishing five Centers of Excellence (CoEs) focused on Virtual Reality (VR) and Mixed Reality (MR).

These efforts collectively signal India’s strong push towards creating an AI-skilled workforce and advancing technological innovation.

HYBRID WORK MODELS

The adoption of hybrid work models has become a defining trend among GCCs, balancing global expectations with local needs to enhance employee satisfaction and operational efficiency. A report by NASSCOM, in collaboration with Boston Consulting Group, revealed that over 80% of IT companies and GCCs are likely to adopt a hybrid work model.⁴¹

Implementing hybrid work models presents challenges, including maintaining team cohesion, and addressing cybersecurity risks. GCCs are investing in technological solutions.

Additionally, it is enhancing cybersecurity measures to protect sensitive information accessed from various locations. A focus on employee engagement and well-being s also paramount, with initiatives such as virtual check-ins, training sessions, and team-building activities, being implemented to boost satisfaction and retention.

Leading with Cargill

Cargill, a global commodity trader, exemplifies the integration of these emerging trends. The company plans to add 500 jobs to its GCCs in India over the next two to three years, focusing on tech-based roles in data engineering, analytics, and AI. This expansion aligns with Cargill's strategy to boost its digital and tech workforce in India, reducing its tech outsourcing from 80% to 40% within the same timeframe.⁴²



The convergence of digital-first approaches, sustainability and ESG goals, reskilling and upskilling initiatives, and hybrid work models, is reshaping the operational landscape of GCCs in India. Continued investment in technology, talent development, and flexible work arrangements will be crucial for GCCs to navigate the evolving global business environment successfully.

THE FUTURE OF GCCS IN INDIA

The future of GCCs in India lies in their ability to transition into full-fledged value creation engines: ones that do not merely execute but lead. This requires a recalibration of priorities from cost-efficiency to innovation, from support to strategy, and from talent acquisition to talent empowerment. As India becomes the nerve centre for digital evolution, GCCs must focus on building long-term capabilities that go beyond operational success.

One of the **key pillars** of this transformation will be **authentic brand building**. To be seen as strategic entities and not back-office extensions, GCCs must invest in shaping a distinct, recognisable, and future-ready identity. This involves positioning themselves not only as innovation hubs but also as people-first workplaces, thought leaders in tech and transformation, and catalysts of positive social impact. Leadership will play a crucial role in this journey by consistently advocating for their brand values, participating in global conversations, and aligning internal culture with external perception.

Talent development will continue to be both an opportunity and a battleground. India's vast talent pool gives it a competitive advantage, but the rapid growth of the tech ecosystem also intensifies the war for skills. To remain ahead, GCCs must prioritise **continuous learning, cross-functional training, and future-focused skill development**, especially in areas such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, sustainability, and data science. Partnering with academia, government bodies, and edtech platforms can unlock new possibilities and reinforce the employer brand.

Another imperative is to **localise with intent**. India's cultural and regional diversity demands nuanced, approaches whether it's in communication, work models, or social responsibility. GCCs that embrace localisation while aligning with global brand values can unlock higher employee engagement, stronger community trust, and a deeper market understanding. Initiatives like hyperlocal CSR, inclusive hiring practices, and multilingual internal communications, can help in establishing a stronger emotional and social connect with employees and stakeholders alike.

Technology adoption must remain aggressive yet meaningful. While adopting AI, IoT, metaverse, and blockchain technologies helps in staying ahead of the curve, the focus should be on real-world impact and value delivery. GCCs that successfully align these technologies with business outcomes, be it in operational excellence, customer experience, or product innovation, will differentiate themselves from competitors.

Equally important is the need to align with **sustainability and ESG goals**. Environmental, social, and governance priorities are no longer peripheral concerns, but central to a brand's value and relevance. GCCs that proactively embed sustainability into their operations, from green campuses to responsible sourcing, to inclusive governance will not only comply with global standards, but also build lasting brand equity and investor confidence.

The **hybrid work model** is another area that demands long-term thinking. GCCs must move beyond temporary fixes and build resilient frameworks that enable flexibility, performance, and collaboration across geographies. Customising work policies to reflect both global priorities and local sensibilities will be key in retaining talent and sustaining productivity.

Finally, **ecosystem collaboration** will define the next era of GCC evolution. No centre can thrive in isolation. By forging strong partnerships with startups, academia, policy think tanks, and other ecosystem players, GCCs can co-create cutting-edge solutions, fuel research, and contribute to national innovation agendas. This collaborative approach can unlock synergies that multiply impact, accelerate scalability, and open up new growth frontiers.

India's GCCs are standing at a critical inflection, point one that calls for bold ambition, agile strategies, and purposeful action. The next phase will not be just about scaling numbers but about **scaling impact**. It will be about becoming global brands built in India known not just for delivering excellence but for shaping the future of work, technology, and leadership. For GCCs willing to innovate, invest, and inspire, the road ahead is not just promising, it's transformational.

Strategic communication will be the invisible force powering this transformation. Whether it's amplifying a GCC's innovation story, shaping employer perception, or articulating ESG commitments, clear and consistent communication can align internal aspirations with external expectations. Communicators play a pivotal role in shaping narratives that not only attract the right talent but also engage employees, inspire leadership, and build stakeholder trust.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PARTNERS CAN

Tailor messaging can craft culturally nuanced information dissemination that resonates with diverse regional talent pools, policymakers, and communities across India.

Boost employer branding can develop campaigns that highlight employee stories, DEI initiatives, innovation milestones, and career growth opportunities to attract top talent.

Campus outreach & visibility can build strategic communications for campus hiring positioning GCCs as aspirational employers through student engagement, alumni stories, and thought leadership on digital platforms.

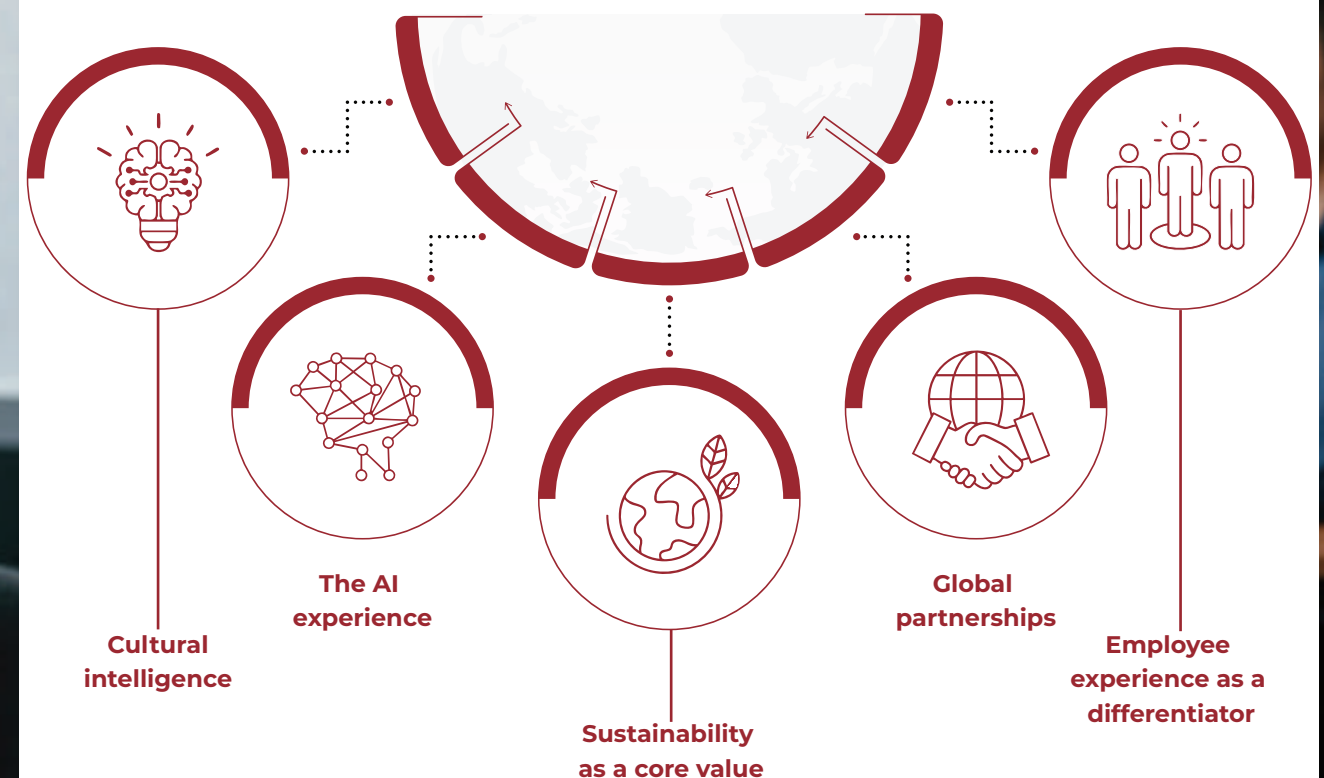
Thought leadership positioning can place GCC leaders in industry forums, media, and roundtables to build visibility as innovation and transformation partners—not just support functions.

Managing reputation proactively can Monitor media narratives, pre-empt issues, and manage crisis communication to protect and build the reputation of the GCC in a competitive landscape.

The future of India's GCC landscape depends on bold decision-making today. Will you take the lead in shaping a more agile, sustainable, and AI-driven future? The time to act is now.

2026 OUTLOOK: WHAT'S NEXT FOR GCC BRAND BUILDERS

As GCCs transition from transactional support units to strategic engines of innovation, 2026 will mark a new phase defined by digital depth and value creation. SPAG FINN Partners' Glocal Impact Framework outlines how GCCs can transform perception and performance through brand-action pillars:



CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

The future belongs to centres that use this cultural depth not just for service delivery, but to shape customer journeys, user design, and creative strategy, for their global brands.

THE AI EXPERIENCE

India's strong AI ecosystem enables GCCs to engineer predictive, personalised, and ethical digital experiences for their parent brands. The narrative must now shift from what AI can do to how it makes brands more human, intuitive, and trusted.

SUSTAINABILITY AS A CORE VALUE

By 2026, India's GCCs will serve as the data and innovation backbone for sustainability reporting, green operations, and ethical sourcing. The opportunity lies in transforming these capabilities into brand equity by communicating measurable impact through authentic storytelling that reinforces trust and reputation.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic partnerships with startups, academic institutions, and local innovation networks are creating intellectual property, pilot solutions, and new digital products. The more visible these collaborations are, the stronger the GCC's position as a global innovation partner.

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AS A DIFFERENTIATOR

GCCs have become some of India's top employers for tech and digital talent, investing in high-skill roles such as data science, cybersecurity, cloud engineering, automation, product design, and AI research. By communicating a clear, inspiring Employee Value Proposition and fostering leadership visibility, GCCs can convert culture into competitive advantage.

The Glocal Impact Framework positions communication as the new strategic advantage for GCCs and SPAG FINN Partners can help GCCs articulate this transformation, building stories that attract talent, strengthen reputation, and accelerate innovation.

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ABOUT SPAG FINN PARTNERS

Founded in 2014 on the core principles of being REAL, purpose-driven and driving change through innovation and collaborative partnership, SPAG has seen exponential growth in ASIA. SPAG, A FINN Partners Company, is globally recognised as Integrated Marketing and Communications agency specialising in dynamic realms of sectors such as Health & Wellness, Purpose and Social Impact, Technology, and Consumer.

The agency has earned some of the highest recognitions in the communications industry, with multiple prestigious wins from PProvoke Media, Exchange4Media, The Economic Times Kaleido Awards and many more — all widely respected benchmarks of excellence across Asia and globally. Accolades such as Large Agency of the Year, Midsize Global Consultancy of the Year, and top honours across sector-specific categories reflect the agency's scale, creativity and consistent impact. These recognitions underscore its ability to craft powerful, insight-led campaigns that shape narratives, shift mindsets, and deliver real outcomes for clients around the world.

As an integrated marketing agency, SPAG/FINN harnesses the potential of a phenomenally diverse universe of conversations to shape the narrative for a better world. With 10+ offices across Asia and over 175 professionals, we deliver full-spectrum, insight-led, impact-driven marketing and communication strategies. Our teams serve as trusted partners to global organisations navigating complex markets, helping them influence perceptions, engage stakeholders, and lead with purpose.

Office Locations: Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Thailand, Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore.

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