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THE CONNECTIVITY BRIDGE

How local expertise unlocks
global growth between East and West

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For Western organisations, expanding into Asia is often both a necessity and a challenge. The region drives the majority of global growth and has become the engine of digital commerce, but connectivity across Asia Pacific is complex, costly, and fragmented. Carriers and enterprises don't stumble here because there's no demand. They stumble because the market is decentralised, service is costly, and regulations shift from one jurisdiction to the next.

As trade and digital services between East and West accelerate, businesses need more than capacity. They need a connectivity bridge: a partner who can simplify expansion across multiple markets, navigate regulatory and cultural differences, and ensure resilient, reliable delivery.

This paper explores the challenges Western businesses face when entering the Asia Pacific region, from regulatory complexity and infrastructure gaps to service inconsistency and high barriers to entry. Drawing on industry data, regional knowledge, and customer experience, this whitepaper sets out the factors that make Asia Pacific unique, the risks of approaching it with a purely Western mindset, and the practical considerations leaders should consider when planning connectivity strategies.

Our aim is to provide actionable insights that help decision-makers build networks that are agile, compliant, and future-ready. In so doing, this paper underlines why bridging East and West isn't just about cables; it's the age-old story of people, knowledge, and the ability to turn complexity into a competitive advantage.

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INTRODUCTION

Asia is no longer a future opportunity. It is central to global growth, accounting for close to 60% of economic expansion worldwide and hosting some of the most dynamic digital ecosystems in the world. For enterprises and carriers in Europe, North America, and Australia, the path to growth increasingly runs through Asia Pacific.

But expansion into the region is rarely straightforward. Unlike the West, where carrier markets are commoditised and connectivity is relatively easy to procure, entering Asia presents a maze of challenges. The network landscape is fragmented. Costs are high. Regulations vary from market to market. Languages, customs, and cultural nuances add layers of complexity. For global organisations used to the standardisation of Europe or North America, this fragmentation can derail even the best-prepared strategies.

ASIA PACIFIC CONNECTIVITY PAIN POINTS

- Long provisioning times, restricted by red tape and legacy incumbents.
- Inconsistent service quality, depending on the operator or jurisdiction.
- Regulatory and compliance uncertainty, particularly around cross-border data.
- Costly infrastructure that's hard to scale.

However, the opportunity is too significant to ignore. Asia is home to emerging markets with enormous digital demand. Global hubs like Singapore, perfectly poised to connect East and West, and a rapidly expanding middle class underpin new waves of e-commerce, SaaS adoption, and media consumption.

The challenge for decision-makers is to build resilient, scalable connectivity strategies that account for this complexity without stalling growth. That means moving beyond a purely Western playbook and approaching Asia with local expertise, flexibility, and foresight.

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The Growth Imperative

Why East–West Connectivity is a Strategic Must-Have

Asia's Momentum and the West's Dependence

- In 2024, Asia accounted for roughly 60per cent of worldwide economic expansion and forecasts continue to show Asia outperforming other regions in resilience and potential.
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- Projected regional GDP growth is around 4.5per cent in 2025, compared to weaker outlooks in Europe and North America.
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- Meanwhile, Europe, North America, and Australia remain indispensable trading partners, supplying technology, services, capital, and infrastructure to Asian markets. It's a two-way street, one that has never been more economically critical yet technically and operationally fraught.

Digital Trade: The Modern Backbone of Commerce

- Physical goods still matter, but increasingly it's digital trade – e-commerce, SaaS, cloud APIs, media, and financial services – that underpins the East–West economy. Global digital service exports exceeded US$4.2 trillion in 2023, making up 53per cent of all service exports and 13.6per cent of total global trade.

> *"Asia is a powerhouse in this space. Digital commerce platforms are projected to hit US$36 trillion by 2026 and Asia Pacific is expected to capture over 80 percent of that volume."*

Asia Pacific Expansion Isn't Optional

For global organisations, connecting through Asia-Pacific is a strategic imperative. But when approaching Asia with existing Western infrastructure strategies and commercial models, companies often encounter harsh realities.

Markets across Asia Pacific are fragmented. The region is vast and no single market mirrors another. Languages, law, licensing, infrastructure, and carriers all vary, sometimes dramatically, from one jurisdiction to the next. Local languages compound the issue. While much of Europe and the Western world conducts business in a lingua franca, Asia Pacific is home to many dialects.

Higher costs and accessibility challenges are also a factor. The barrier to entry remains significant. Unlike the West's commoditised connectivity landscape, Asia Pacific carriers are often opaque, pricing can be complex, and setup times can stretch into months. All of this is wrapped in bureaucracy and slow service. Legacy carriers in the region are notorious for their slow response times, tangled contract negotiation, and lack of agility, creating friction where businesses expect flexibility.

In short, the playbook that works in Europe and North America fails in Asia Pacific.

Latency, Rapid Response, and System Interactions Matter More Than Ever Expansion Isn't Optional

Traditionally in telecoms, latency was the dominant metric. Today, while milliseconds matter, firms care more about reliability, responsiveness, and system coherence. Latency is still important, especially for real-time services, but outages, slow provisioning, or route failures have a more lasting impact on customer experience and brand trust. The ability to respond rapidly is essential not only to business continuity, but building trust. Time-to-market across multiple Asia Pacific locations can make or break strategic rollouts. Organisations need connectivity that can be provisioned in days, not months. It's also true that system interaction and interoperability across markets are mission-critical. APIs must connect, data must flow securely under varying compliance regulations, and trust must be maintained across landscapes. It's these operational factors, rather than raw speed, that are often the true differentiators in delivering a seamless experience between East and West.

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Why Asia Pacific Has Always Been Hard to Enter

No single APAC market looks like another.

For Western organisations, Asia is a market of immense potential, but also immense complexity. Unlike Europe, where connectivity is highly commoditised, and North America, where service delivery is relatively uniform, Asia Pacific remains a patchwork of operators, regulations, and infrastructures. This fragmentation creates structural challenges that too often catch new entrants by surprise.

Fragmentation

- Asia Pacific remains highly fragmented, with each market operating under distinct regulatory, commercial, and technical frameworks. This forces enterprises to manage multiple operators, contracts, and service standards across the region.

Cost

- Network deployment and connectivity costs in Asia Pacific are significantly higher than in Western markets due to limited competition, challenging infrastructure access, and expensive cross-border capacity. These costs are often passed through the supply chain to end customers.

Service

- Provisioning and service delivery across Asia Pacific can be slowed by bureaucracy, incumbent operator dependence, and inconsistent engagement processes. The result is longer deployment timelines and reduced operational agility for enterprises.

Decentralisation

- Asia Pacific lacks a unified regulatory framework, with each country enforcing its own rules on licensing, data localisation, customs, and competition. This regulatory diversity increases compliance complexity and operational risk for international operators.

Geography

- Asia Pacific's geography, including archipelagos, mountainous terrain, and reliance on submarine cable systems, creates inherent infrastructure challenges. Resilience often depends on multiple redundant cable routes, increasing both operational complexity and cost.

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A Bridge, Not a Barrier

Expanding into Asia Pacific takes more than ambition. It takes bridges. Western organisations face fragmented markets, inconsistent regulations, and complex infrastructure demands that can't be solved by capacity alone. What makes expansion possible is the creation of mechanisms and partnerships that simplify complexity. At the policy level, agreements like the **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)** provide frameworks for integration and predictability. At the operational level, Asia Pacific connectivity specialists turn a patchwork of markets into coherent, resilient networks. And at the organisational level, network carriers like SG.GS provide a focus on infrastructure ownership, local expertise, and service transparency to transform barriers into opportunities. Together, these bridges demonstrate that while Asia's challenges are real, they are not insurmountable, provided you connect across them the right way.

CPTPP is one of the most ambitious free trade agreements in the world. With the UK joining as its 12th member in December 2024, the pact now links markets across Asia, Oceania, and the Americas into a bloc that accounts for nearly 15% of global GDP.

A Bridge Built for Asia Pacific

Founded in Singapore in 2000, SG.GS was created to address the challenges that have long deterred Western organisations from entering Asia Pacific. What began as a small hosting business has grown into one of the world's most interconnected networks, consistently ranking among the top five most-peered globally.

The company's evolution reflects a broader truth about connectivity in Asia: success requires patience, local investment, and cultural fluency. Rather than attempting to apply Western models of commoditised service, SG.GS embedded itself in the region's fragmented ecosystem, building relationships with local operators and investing in critical interconnection hubs. This long-term approach has created a network fabric that allows international businesses to enter Asia Pacific without starting from scratch.

Equally, SG.GS highlights the importance of a service ethos in a region where bureaucracy and opacity remain common. By prioritising responsiveness and simplicity, the company has shown that connectivity can be delivered quickly and transparently.

SG.GS is not simply a provider, but an example of how connectivity can be made to work in Asia Pacific: by combining infrastructure ownership with local expertise, regional understanding, and a philosophy of openness.

The Need for Asia Pacific Connectivity Specialists

Trade frameworks open doors, but they don't connect networks. To succeed in Asia Pacific, organisations need connectivity partners who can bridge the region's complexity.

Specialists matter for three core reasons:

Simplifying Fragmentation

Asia Pacific's myriad operators and regulatory landscapes make direct expansion slow and complex. Connectivity specialists consolidate these relationships, providing a single point of access into multiple markets.

Delivering Service Agility

In a region where incumbents can take months to provision, specialists cut through red tape. By building infrastructure in advance and operating with leaner processes, they can deliver circuits in days, not months, which is critical for businesses that need to move fast.

Designing for Resilience

Submarine cables, regional power issues, and diverse topographies mean outages are inevitable. Specialists engineer redundancy into their networks, ensuring that services remain online even when primary routes fail.

By combining these capabilities, Asia Pacific connectivity specialists act as strategic enablers, turning a patchwork of markets into a coherent, reliable environment for international growth.

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Local Expertise, Global Reach

Bridging East and West is not just about cables in the ocean or data centres on a map. It is about understanding the local realities of markets while maintaining a global standard of service. Too often, Western organisations enter Asia assuming that a single regional strategy will suffice, only to find that the realities of language, licensing, and local infrastructure demand a more nuanced approach.

Singapore: A Natural Gateway

Singapore serves as Asia Pacific's primary digital gateway, combining strategic geographic positioning, dense submarine cable connectivity, and a stable, business-friendly regulatory environment. It provides organisations with a scalable, low-risk entry point into broader Asian markets.

Global Reach, Delivered Locally

Enterprises require globally consistent connectivity and compliance delivered with local operational precision. The strongest network partners combine international scale with regional expertise, enabling seamless service across Asia Pacific without exposing customers to market complexity.

The Value of Local Knowledge

Successful expansion across Asia Pacific depends on deep local expertise to navigate differing regulations, business cultures, and infrastructure realities. On-the-ground knowledge reduces operational friction, accelerates delivery, and strengthens resilience across diverse markets.

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WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

The theory of resilient East–West connectivity comes to life when translated into real-world conditions. We can examine a series of hypothetical scenarios to illustrate how different types of organisations might navigate the challenges of expanding into or operating across Asia Pacific. Each example reflects a common strategic pattern observed in the market rather than a specific customer case.

A European Carrier Expanding into Asia Pacific

Imagine a European wholesale carrier aiming to extend its network footprint into Southeast Asia. Its customers are already asking for on-net services in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Initially, the carrier approaches each market individually, negotiating with local providers to establish capacity. Every engagement introduces new contracts, regulations, and approval processes. Provisioning takes months, and maintaining consistent service quality proves difficult. However, if the carrier were to interconnect through a regional specialist already established across multiple IXs in Asia Pacific, they would obtain a single point of access to multiple markets and accelerate deployment from months to days. The carrier gains not only faster service delivery but also greater operational visibility. Expansion succeeds because the company leverages existing regional expertise rather than building a presence market by market.

A Global Cloud Provider Entering Southeast Asia

Consider a large cloud provider preparing to launch new availability zones across Southeast Asia. The technical challenge is not only performance, but compliance. Each market enforces different rules for data localisation and cloud infrastructure ownership. Instead of treating the region as a single territory, the provider designs for diversity from the start. Singapore becomes the operational hub for low-latency regional access. Workloads for countries with strict data localisation – such as Indonesia – are anchored in local data centres, with resilient peering links to Singapore and Tokyo. Routing decisions are automated to keep user data within compliant boundaries, using redundant submarine routes. Technical architecture and regulatory insight must align. Success in Asia Pacific depends on anticipating differences in law and infrastructure, not retrofitting after expansion.

A Regional Wholesale Partner Seeking Agility

Picture a mid-sized Asian wholesale carrier serving enterprises and ISPs across multiple emerging markets. Demand is rising sharply, but its activation processes and back-office systems have not kept pace. Customers want flexible bandwidth options and short delivery times, yet provisioning still relies on manual workflows. The company chooses to modernise – introducing automated provisioning tools and partnering with operators that can support real-time capacity scaling and transparent pricing. Within a few quarters, activation times fall dramatically and customers begin to view the provider as an agile alternative to larger, slower incumbents. Agility can be more valuable than raw scale. In fast-changing Asia Pacific markets, reputation for responsiveness and reliability often outweighs low pricing or legacy market share.

COMMON THREAD

Each of these scenarios reflects real market conditions. The constant factors are clear. Expansion succeeds when supported by pre-existing regional infrastructure and relationships, while compliance challenges are best addressed through local anchoring and intelligent routing, not post-hoc fixes. Agility and service transparency create competitive advantage in markets where bureaucracy and fragmentation persist.

These examples are not prescriptive, but indicative – showing how a strategic approach to connectivity, grounded in regional expertise, can turn Asia's complexity into a strength rather than a barrier.

THE CONNECTIVITY BRIDGE

Partnership in connectivity is about more than contracts – it is about trust and understanding. In practice, SG.GS provides a connectivity bridge between the East and West. Not another large incumbent, but a regional operator with global vision – one that has already built the routes, relationships, and resilience that others are still chasing.

The forces shaping global connectivity are shifting. Asia continues to power the world's digital and economic growth, while Europe and North America remain essential trading partners. The opportunity is immense – but so are the barriers. Fragmented markets, regulatory divergence, and physical fragility have made Asia Pacific one of the hardest regions to enter and one of the most vital to understand.

To succeed, organisations must think differently about connectivity. Capacity is no longer the defining advantage – resilience, localisation, and partnership are. The companies that will thrive in the decade ahead are those that see connectivity not as infrastructure, but as a living system of relationships.

That philosophy lies at the heart of SG.GS.

Founded in Singapore at the intersection of East and West, SG.GS was built to simplify what others complicate. Its infrastructure spans the region's most critical hubs, its network ranks among the world's most-peered and its people understand both the technology and the cultures that make connectivity work. SG.GS proves that when ownership, expertise, and service come together, Asia's complexity becomes opportunity, not obstacle.

For Western enterprises expanding into Asia Pacific, SG.GS provides the continuity and confidence to operate at speed. For Asian carriers extending westward, it offers a trusted partner fluent in the systems, expectations, and standards of Europe and North America. And for the digital economy as a whole, it stands as a model for what modern network partnership looks like – agile, transparent, and grounded in service.

The bridge between East and West exists in the cables that connect continents, the relationships that connect people, and the operators that make both possible. For Western organisations expanding into Asia Pacific, and for Asian carriers seeking to extend westward, SG.GS represents a pragmatic solution: technically strong, locally fluent, and globally connected.

THE PARTNER QUESTION

The complexities of connecting East and West demand a specialist. SG.GS was founded to answer the specific challenges of connecting to, into and around Asia Pacific. Fragmentation, regulatory diversity, and inconsistent service models have slowed Western expansion into the region, however SG.GS resolves those challenges by combining infrastructure ownership, regional depth, and a people-first service philosophy that makes the Asia-Pacific's complexity navigable.

Asia's carrier landscape remains decentralised. Dozens of operators, overlapping regulations, and uneven access rights make coordination difficult. SG.GS simplifies this environment through direct presence and infrastructure ownership across the region. From its base in Singapore – a neutral hub between the United States and China – the company connects to more than 20 carrier hotels and multiple submarine systems, giving businesses predictable access into markets that are otherwise difficult to reach.

Owning infrastructure enables SG.GS to manage routing locally, optimise for resilience, and offer transparency about where and how traffic moves. Western businesses benefit from fewer intermediaries, faster provisioning, and a clear view of their network paths – something rare in Asia's often opaque market.

Connectivity alone doesn't create competitive advantage – service does. Large incumbents in Asia Pacific can be slow to respond and bureaucratic in their delivery. People-first service is the key to fast activation, provides direct contact with engineers, and clear communication across time zones.

By focusing on responsiveness and transparency, SG.GS enables customers to treat connectivity as strategy rather than infrastructure. When a network can be activated in hours instead of weeks, market entry becomes quicker, innovation cycles shorten, and global operations become more agile.

Resilience is the defining benchmark for international connectivity. SG.GS builds it in at every level – physical, geographic, and logical. The company's network design incorporates diverse submarine and terrestrial routes, intelligent routing systems, and deep participation in global internet exchanges.

SG.GS connects openly with thousands of networks. This interconnection strength reduces dependency on single routes and ensures that data can move uninterrupted during outages or congestion. For enterprises crossing between East and West, it transforms uncertainty into continuity.

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