

# Inbound and Outbound Tourism in China: A Perspective Article

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*Abstract. The tourism industry in China has undergone significant changes due to globalization, technology, and changing consumer preferences. This perspective article, based on a systematic literature review, examines examines trends, challenges, and opportunities in inbound and outbound tourism in China, focusing on the industry's dynamism. Both inbound and outbound tourism have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has prompted new strategies and environmental adaptations. China has changed its priorities within the country to encourage domestic travel and support local firms. The rise in internationalisation and the growing middle class in China have led to an unprecedented rise in outbound travel. Chinese travellers are affecting travel habits and spending all around the world in the tourism sector. Language barriers, cultural differences, and safety concerns are some of the challenges that come with travelling abroad. To reach its full potential, China needs to adapt to the shifting global environment and take into account the specifications and preferences of both inbound and outgoing tourists.*

*Keywords: Inbound Tourism, Outbound Tourism, Globalization, COVID-19, China*

## Introduction

China's tourism sector has expanded dramatically in recent years, both in terms of foreign and inbound travel, and it is currently making up an important part of the overall GDP of the nation [1]. The article seeks to examine current issues and perspectives in Chinese tourism, highlighting the elements shaping its expansion and discussing prospects and restrictions. Understanding one of the tourism markets with the greatest rate of growth in the world requires comprehension of this area of study. Although it is commonly known that tourism plays a significant role in the Chinese economy, there is an abundance of new perspective research on inbound and outbound tourism. Thus, through assessing the most recent advancements and challenges surrounding Chinese tourism, this research addresses a gap in the existing literature. China's tourist sector is becoming increasingly vital for the world economy as well as

for the country's own [2]. Millions of Chinese tourists travel overseas each year, making China one of the biggest outbound tourism markets [3]. Concurrently, China attracts an increasing number of foreign visitors, which is prompting the creation of fresh areas to serve this rising market [3].

The term "inbound tourism" indicates the arrival of visitors who are not citizens of a nation. With millions of tourists coming every year, China has grown in popularity as a travel destination for foreign travellers in recent years. Apart from assessing traveller data, the first step is to comprehend the current status of studies on inbound tourism from China. Several review assessments of China's travel industry have been published [4]–[7]. Therefore, it's critical to assess the amount that is known in order to understand the past, forecast the future, and even design it. Inbound tourism is quite significant for a country. It brings foreign dollars, aids in strengthening international communication, and enhances the perception of the country. As a result, inbound tourism has continually been seen as a crucial sign of a nation's tourism competitiveness globally [8]. Outbound tourism refers to the departure of residents of a country to travel overseas.

China has become one of the world's largest outbound tourism markets in recent years, with millions of Chinese tourists traveling abroad each year. According to recent studies on tourism development, outbound tourism from China started in the early 1980s and progressed through three initial stages as reported by Zhang H.Q and Heung V.C [9]. The first stage began in 1983 when the government authorized a limited number of organized tours to Hong Kong and Macao, arranged by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), solely for the purpose of visiting friends and relatives, with the cost borne by the friends and relatives of the Chinese traveler. The second stage started in 1990 when the government signed agreements with Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, allowing Chinese leisure tourists to self-fund travel to these countries through the newly established Chinese Travel Service. However, the real onset of international tourism from China happened in the third stage, when the Chinese government signed its first bilateral agreements with Australia and New Zealand in 1997, giving Chinese residents the chance to experience Western culture firsthand [10].

Building upon existing research, this paper will focus on inbound and outbound tourism in China. The research will provide novel insights into the dynamics of Chinese tourism, including current trends and perspectives in inbound and outbound tourism. It will be valuable to policymakers, and academics interested in the Chinese tourism industry. The paper will be divided into six parts: introduction, literature review, methods, results, detailed discussion in form of suggestions, and conclusion.

## 1. Literature review

### 1.1. Inbound tourism in China

The literature suggests that there are a number of factors that have contributed to the growth of inbound tourism in China. These include travel experiences [11], [12], motivations of inbound tourists [13], and post-trip reflections [14]. These issues have significant consequences for management and marketing, but they haven't gotten the attention they deserve. The earlier study is less concentrated and focuses more on the present situation, anticipated developments, and plans for Chinese inbound tourism [15].

The latter takes into account aspects that affect inbound tourism, such as the development of urban infrastructure, the availability of services, and economic conditions [16]. Only a few papers analyze regional variations in the growth of inbound tourism. The majority of these publications consistently describe regional inequalities in China using the Theil index. Numerous academics have verified the presence of inter-city disparities and regional concentrations of Chinese inbound tourism [17], [18].

Most Chinese cities are situated in eastern regions, where inbound tourism is extensively established. However, it has also been shown that there are fewer geographical differences in the growth of Chinese inbound tourism [19], [20]. Despite the growth of inbound tourism in China, there are challenges that need to be addressed. These challenges include environmental concerns, infrastructure development, and service quality improvement.

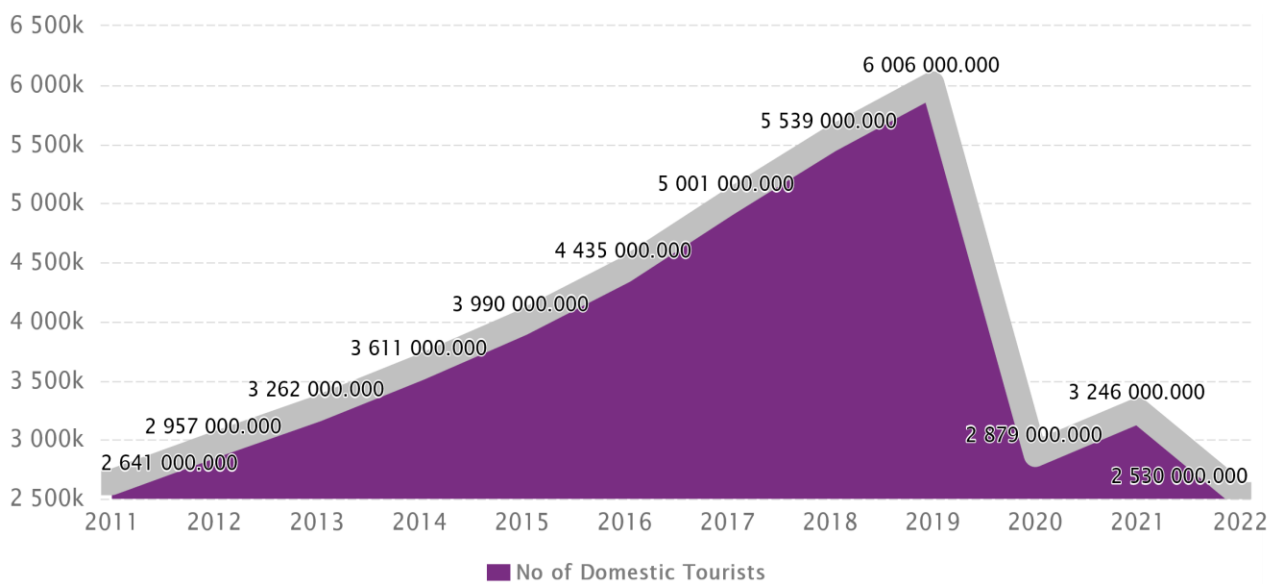


Figure 1: China's Domestic Tourist from 1990 to 2022; Source: [www.ceicdata.com](http://www.ceicdata.com) (Ministry of Culture and Tourism)

## 1.2. Outbound Tourism in China

Outbound tourism in China has experienced significant growth, positioning China as one of the world's largest outbound tourism markets. Figure 2 shows the number of Chinese outbound tourists from 2010 to 2020. Several factors have contributed to the growth of outbound tourism in China. These factors include rising incomes, changes in consumer behavior, improvements in transportation, and supportive government policies. A study by Hanqin et al. [21] utilized the push and pull factors model to investigate Chinese travelers' motivations for traveling abroad.

Compared to other research studies, the study suggests that Chinese travellers may have distinctive motivations and that these motivations are affected by sociodemographic factors. Moreover, a study conducted by Lehto et al. [22] highlighted the importance of shopping in determining Chinese outbound travellers' preferences for destinations. According to the survey, a number of factors, including age, gender, style, and purpose of travel, have a significant effect on destination choice and purchasing habits.

Authors	Key findings
Prideaux B [23]	This article examines several elements that affect Taiwanese tourism growth and provides an outline of the industry's expansion. Advertising campaigns, instruction of languages, catering specifications, and air transportation services are among the issues examined in this manuscript.
Hanqin QZ and Hailin Q [24]	The aim of this study is to comprehend Chinese tourists visiting neighbouring countries. The main causes of this upward trend are the increasing rate of China's economic expansion and the decreasing number of political restrictions allowing citizens to travel to countries nearby.
Zhou L et al. [25]	Chinese tourists tend to be attracted to popular foreign attractions that are markedly different from what they typically experience in China, regardless of the actual features of the destination. As a result, it is recommended that countries seeking to tap into the Chinese market simplify their booking processes promptly. Furthermore, these countries must increase their promotional efforts in China to raise awareness and understanding among travel industry professionals and potential consumers.
King L et al. [26]	This paper examined the prevalence of unethical practices within the Chinese tourism sector. The range and nature of the practices are outlined in the context of the structure of outbound operations in China and inbound operations in Australia. The impact of the practices on the growth of the market is evaluated, as are the negative impacts on destination image
Lim C and Wang Y [27]	The management and control of Chinese overseas tourism have been governed by the Approved Destination Status (ADS) framework, which is founded on mutual tourism agreements between China and foreign destinations. In this research, time series modeling is utilized to analyze the traveling patterns of Chinese tourists to a distant location (Australia).
Zhang G [28]	The rise of international tourism from China has emerged as a crucial economic matter. This research paper outlines the major phases of this growth and highlights significant transformations that have occurred over the last two decades. Additionally, it examines the prospects and obstacles that China's international tourism sector faces and recommends potential policies and approaches that the country should consider implementing to enhance its international tourism development in the new era.
Pan G.W and Laws E [29]	This article offers an evaluation of the surging demand for outbound tourism from China and highlights the unique features of this market.
Kim S.S et al. [30]	The research assessed the competitiveness of foreign countries as potential destinations for Mainland Chinese outbound tourists.

Moutinho L et al. [31]	The research paper utilizes a concise set of variables and neural networks to identify and predict the demand for travel to nearby destinations by Mainland Chinese tourists.
Qiu Zhang H and Morrison A [32]	The research investigates the significance of Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) travel agents in China. The results reveal that limited business size, a simple organizational structure, inadequate experience in management, and insufficient market recognition are significant obstacles that hinder their competitiveness.

Table 1. Literature review on outbound tourism in China; Source: Databases — ABI Inform (Proquest), Business Source Premier (EBSCO), Expanded Academic (Gale), Informaworld, ScienceDirect, Springerlink, Emerald Fulltext, Wiley Interscience.

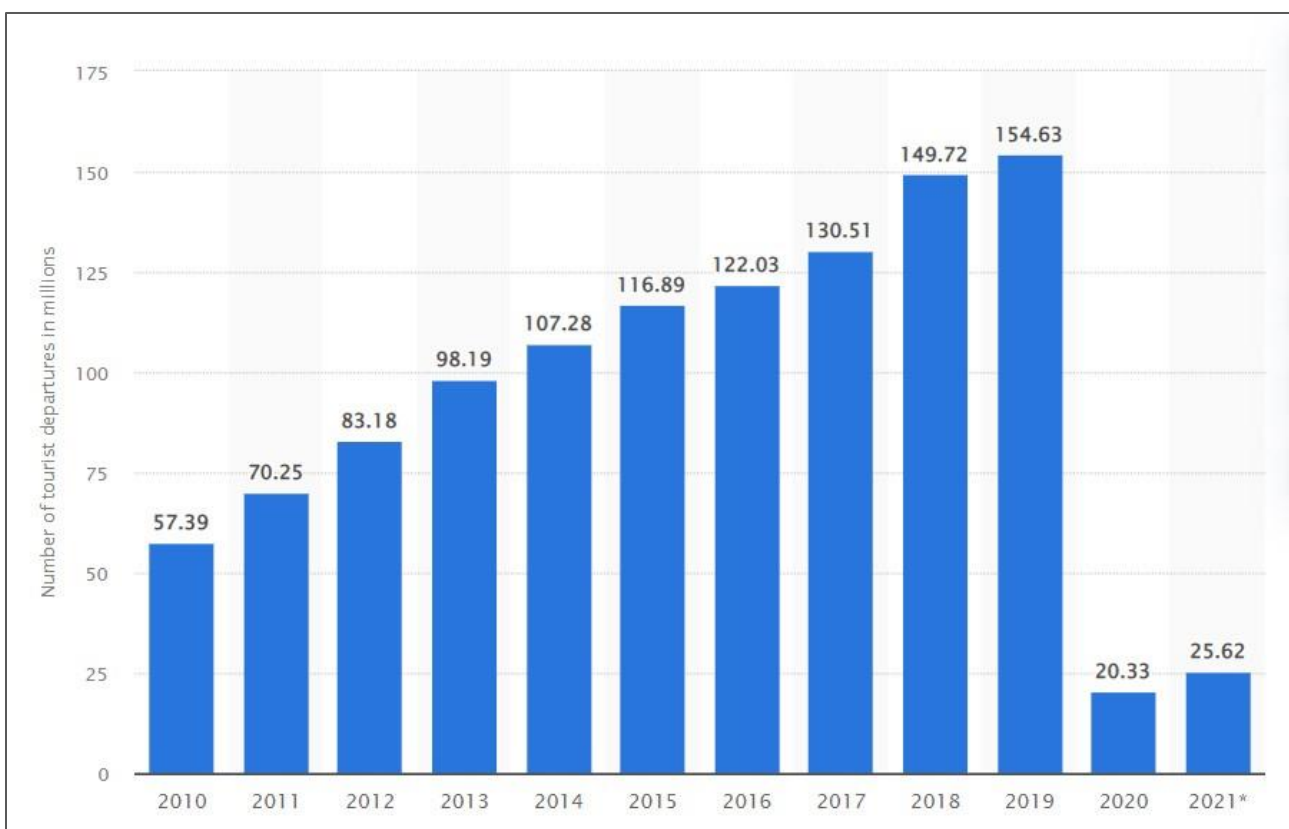


Figure 2: Number of outbound tourists departing from China from 2010 to 2020 with an estimate for 2021 (millions); Source: STATISTICA.

Despite the growth of outbound tourism in China, there are challenges that the industry must address. These challenges include safety concerns, visa restrictions, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The changing dynamics of global tourism, with new emerging markets like India and Brazil, pose a difficulty in terms of host-guest relationships. The traditional paradigm of Eastern developing countries serving Western visitors is being challenged as Chinese outbound tourism grows. The tourism sector needs to adapt to this transformation while gaining a better understanding of it.

In addition, the rapid development of information technology is having a great influence on Chinese outbound tourism. As Chinese travelers get more tech-savvy, they increasingly use social media sites

such as WeChat to spread traveled all the way around content and commentary. Further research is needed to assess the impact of these technologies on visitor satisfaction [33], [34].

## 2. Methodology

In this study, we adopt a perspective approach and carry out an extensive review of the literature to comprehensively analyze our selected research subject. Through the adoption of this perspective method, we considered various sides and arrive at a better understanding of the research issue. At the same time, through a systematic literature review [35], identification of relevant and important prior research on the topic must be undertaken. A comprehensive literature review has been a common practice in much tourism-related research [36], [37]. It is essential to comprehend the current status of studies on China's inbound and outbound tourism in order to assess its history and forecast its future. It is also necessary to increase the efficiency of Chinese inbound and outbound tourism. One of the drawbacks of this study is that it only contains publications and reports in English; papers in Chinese are excluded due to the language barriers. Several databases, including PubMed, IEEE Xplore, Google Scholar, and Scopus, were searched in order to guarantee a thorough evaluation [38]. To find pertinent material, search terms like "inbound tourism" and "outbound tourism in China," together with their variants, were employed.

Through a review of the literature, this paper addresses the important topic of Chinese inbound and outbound tourism and offers suggestions for more research to increase its efficacy. This research contributes to the body of knowledge by giving a comprehensive review of the current state of inbound and outbound tourism research in China, highlighting its shortcomings, highlighting its achievements, and offering suggestions for its future research agenda.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Factors of China's inbound tourism growth

#### 3.1.1. *Economic development*

A fast developing economy in China has been one of the driving forces for the growth of the inbound tourism in the country [39]. In addition to that, the country's strong economy has increased disposable income among its people thereby increasing domestic and international tourism uptake. Moreover, as the economy grows, disposable income increases leading to more spending on leisure activities and travel [40]. This is seen in China where economic growth has given greater purchasing power to individuals allowing them to take part in tourist activities.

The strong economy also brought foreign investments and international business, which resulted into more business related travels [41]. Such trend contributed not only towards an increase in the number of tourists coming into China but also boosted involvement by other countries through holding conferences and exhibitions internationally within China.

### *3.1.2. Government policies and infrastructure development*

Government policies to promote host tourism play a crucial role in its growth. The Chinese government considers tourism to be an important part of its economic development strategy and has taken several steps to encourage host tourism [42], [43]. These measures include visa easing, tax incentives, and investment in tourist infrastructure [44]. Visa facilitation has always been an important policy pursued by the Chinese government [45].

Tax incentives, for example, reduced value-added tax on hotel rooms, restaurants services and transportation for tourists have made tourism related activities more affordable thus boosting China's attractiveness as a destination [46]. The government has also massively invested in tourism infrastructure such as transport networks, airports and tourist destinations [47]. Developing new tourist destinations has enhanced China's magnetism as a tourist hot spot [48], while improved transport network has made it easier for tourists to travel within the country. Promotion of inbound tourism through government policies was one of the critical factors that led to growth of tourism in China. Visa facilitation, tax incentives and investments in the infrastructure of tourism played an important role in the sector expansion.

The opening up of national borders has attracted significant numbers of international tourists due to good reputation of China's accessibility and quality of transportation infrastructure and tourism facilities [49]. As a result, the increased number of tourists has translated into substantial economic benefits not only to the industry but also to the economy at large.

### *3.1.3. Marketing and promotion*

China's tourism promotion and marketing efforts have played pivotal roles in attracting international tourists to the mainland [50]. In China, both the Chinese government and tourism organizations have collaborated in showcasing China's rich cultures, its breath-taking landscapes, and modern cities [51]. Such campaigns as "China Beyond Your Imagination" and "Beautiful China" have made a great job of promoting various experiences within the nation [52]. On one hand, Beautiful China campaign focuses on natural scenery and cultural heritage while on the other hand, China beyond your imagination emphasizes on modernity and urban development. These campaigns targeted tourists who wished to view China's fusion of ancient culture with modernization.

Again, through hosting significant international events like Beijing Olympics 2008 and Shanghai World Expo of 2010, this country has gained its reputation as a holiday spot [53]. These occasions attracted visitors from all over the world who came to watch world-class sports events, experience Chinese culture, as well as demonstrate economic and technological progress. In addition to that, development of tourism infrastructure such as airports, hotels and tourist attractions has also been an important marketing strategy [54].

Diverse attractions combined with rich cultural heritage account for China's strong inbound tourism growth [55]. In addition, China's cultural benefits - particularly traditional Chinese cuisine and tea culture, as well as martial arts--have also been opportunities to showcase the deep richness of our own nation by providing insights into various aspects 'cultural heritage that serve not only interest in travel but even more importantly help stimulate people toward visiting firsthand [56].

## 3.2. Factors of China's Outbound Tourism Growth

### 3.2.1. Economic Growth

China's high rate of economic development and growing income levels are major sources for the country in its outbound tourism industry [57]. Many Chinese citizens have seen their disposable incomes increase as a result of economic growth, which makes going overseas possible [58]. China's GDP over the last two decades has gotten larger, which allowed for the gradual democratization of consumption.

The rise of China's outbound travel market has been related to economic growth and increasing incomes [59]. As Chinese people become richer, they give more funds to travel, adding to the large increase in the number of Chinese tourists going abroad [60]. This trend is particularly driven by the growing middle class, which gains from higher pay and better job stability. The continued expansion of China's economy and the middle class will likely continue to drive overseas tourist growth. It is important for tourism partners to notice and respond to the needs of Chinese tourists, as their travel spending will have significant effects on the global tourism industry.

### 3.2.2. Changing Lifestyles

Changing lives have played an important part in the growth of China's overseas tourist business [61]. As Chinese people have become more wealthy, relaxation and vacation have become higher concerns. They seek new cultural experiences and excitement, driven by factors such as greater exposure to foreign travel through social media and the internet and a desire to avoid urban stresses [62]. Social media and internet technologies have supported international tourism growth by making it easier for Chinese tourists to plan and book trips abroad [63]. Access to online flight information and tools allows for travel planning, price comparison, and quick booking [64]. This ease has made foreign travel more affordable and available to a larger community.

## 3.3. Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Tourism in China

### 3.3.1. Impact of COVID-19 on Inbound Tourism in China

The COVID-19 outbreak has hit tourism in China particularly hard [65]. And restrictions on travel and concerns over health combined to dramatically reduce the flow of foreign tourists into China [66]. In order to protect public health, the Chinese government adopted strict measures such as blanket bans on the borders and compulsory quarantine, making it difficult for tourists to visit the country [67]. This decline in demand brought job cuts and recession to the hotel business in China [68].

### 3.3.2. Impact of COVID-19 on Outbound Tourism in China

Outbound tourism in China suffered greatly from the outbreak of COVID-19. Drop in the number of coming Chinese tourists due to travel restrictions and health concerns [69]. Moreover, many countries also imposed travel bans on Chinese citizens which reduced the number of outward tourists even more [70]. The decline in international tourists made a big impact on the global hotel industry, bringing job layoffs and economic recession [71]. The pandemic spelled out the need for greater strength in this global tourist business, one that can withstand threats from outside.



### 3.3.3. *The Response of the Chinese Government*

During the COVID-19 crisis, initiatives to support the tourist business have been taken by Chinese government [72]. Steps like these included endorsing domestic tourism, providing financial help to struggling companies and establishing health-and-safety standards as well as promoting the restoration of international travel [73]. These efforts are intended to reduce the economic impact of this pandemic on tourism and ease its way back [74].

## 4. Discussions

### 4.1. Future directions to promote the development of tourism in China

#### 4.1.1. *Inbound tourism*

The realm of inbound tourism in China, constituting the activities of foreign tourists within the country, is increasingly recognized as a pivotal industry [75]. Despite this acknowledgment, China's performance in inbound tourism trails behind that of nations like Japan and Thailand. To address this disparity, a set of policy suggestions is proposed for comprehensive discussion.

Enhancing the foundations of tourism is imperative, encompassing improvements in transportation, accommodation, and overall facilities [76]. A focused effort on expediting the construction of high-speed railways and airports is essential to bolster accessibility to key attractions. Moreover, integrating cutting-edge technologies such as 5G, big data, and artificial intelligence into tourism formats promises innovative and immersive experiences. The strategic utilization of major international events, such as the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and Winter Paralympics, serves as an opportunity to not only promote Chinese tourism but also elevate its global image [77].

A robust strategy for advancing inbound tourism involves an increased investment in promotion efforts and the refinement of marketing strategies. Establishing tourism offices in major foreign countries is pivotal to actively disseminating information about Chinese tourism resources and fostering a positive image. Central to the success of inbound tourism is the caliber of service provided. Prioritizing the training of professional tourism service personnel and an overall improvement in service quality are essential [78]. Establishing a robust tourism service system that aligns with the diverse demands of foreign tourists contributes to an enriched visitor experience.

Strategies to address the supply-demand mismatch involve a multifaceted approach. Exploring high-quality tourism resources that seamlessly blend traditional Chinese culture with modern characteristics is key [79]. The development of innovative models, such as "tourism + cultural tourism + smart tourism + eco-tourism + health tourism," highlights the need for a diversified approach. Further emphasis on specific categories, including cultural tourism, parent-child tourism, ice and snow tourism, and night tourism, is essential. Support for the construction of comprehensive vacation facilities complements the goal of providing a holistic and fulfilling experience. Finally, enhancing the professionalism of tourism practitioners, establishing and refining safety guarantees, and developing a spectrum of high-quality and personalized tourism products catered to major sources of inbound tourists are essential facets of the strategy.

#### 4.1.2. Outbound tourism

Despite this growth, challenges such as limited tourism resources and inadequate service quality pose impediments to the further development of outbound tourism in China [75]. To surmount these challenges, the following policy recommendations are proposed for discussion.

Improving the quality of service within tourism is particularly important [80]. This means that stakeholders should strengthen supervision of outbound tourism agencies, improve their service quality and build a highly organized system for providing tourism related services. These initiatives not only protect the rights and interests of Chinese tourists, they also help establish a more stable and trusty tourism industry. This, in particular, could lead to a higher number of outbound tourists and sustainable development.

It is necessary to promote the harmonious integration of outbound tourism with other areas such as aviation, transportation and accommodation [81]. With support for the development of these industries aimed at outbound tourism, this will form a comprehensive and integrated structure. Through the application of such an approach, not only does it satisfy domestic and foreign tourists' needs; there is also potential to create economic growth and employment opportunities. More than this, China should vigorously join in bilateral and multilateral international cooperation on tourism and become involved with other countries in concerted action. And promoting cross-strait and to international tourism interaction, cooperation with regions such as Hong Kong Macao Taiwan can also be expanded [82]. International tourism trade fairs, the establishment of advisory committees and building up Chinese tourism brands all serve to raise China's overall image in international markets as well as their products' competitiveness [88] [89] [90].

## Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the woes of both inbound and outbound tourism. Travel limits, health fears and closed tourist sites led to a large drop in the number of visiting tourists in China. The hotel business suffered job losses, and economic issues. Other restrictions on travel also brought down outbound tourism, which in turn meant less demand and financial pain for the international hotel industry.

But this is precisely China's job of catching up with its international competitors. In order to accomplish this, suggested policy ideas focus often on expanding tourist infrastructures and taking advantage of cutting-edge technologies. It is also worthwhile getting some splash from big international events for the advertising that they can provide. Strengthening marketing efforts, boosting service quality, and solving the supply-demand gap through diverse tourism models are important strategies for encouraging growth in international tourism.

The international tourist industry, while having significant growth, grapples with challenges such as limited resources and service quality issues. Future goals focus on growing tourist resources, improving service quality, merging with related industries, and encouraging international cooperation. These steps aim to build a complete and integrated tourism industry that not only meets the needs of Chinese tourists but also adds to economic growth and job creation.

As economic growth, changing habits, and the effects of global events continue to shape the course of Chinese tourism, policymakers, industry practitioners, and scholars must remain vigilant to these dynamics. A forward-looking method includes extensive strategies to improve the roots of both inbound and outbound tourism, ensuring that China fully capitalises on its vast potential in the global tourism environment.

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