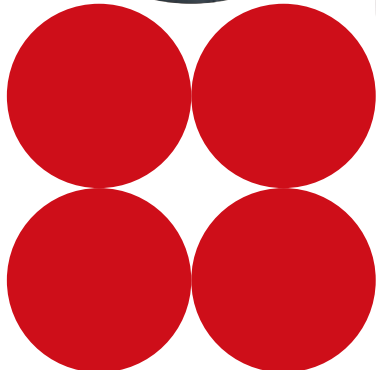
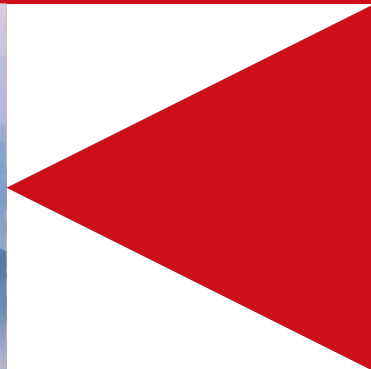




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TRAVEL TRENDS REPORT 2024/2025

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OVERVIEW

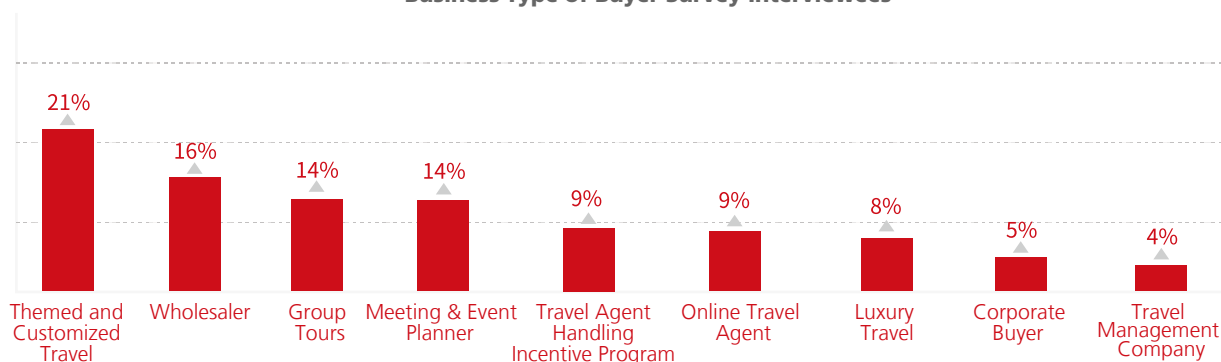


The ITB China Travel Trends Report (TTR) is an annual publication that provides global strategists and decision-makers with first-hand insights into the latest trends in the Chinese travel market, enabling them to adapt their business operations to the rapidly evolving environment.

As the business environment, economy, and consumer habits change, the Chinese travel market, the largest consumer travel market in the world, is proving to be a vibrant and promising one, and it, too, is changing in the course of a positive recovery. To gain a better insight into these changes, ITB China conducted comprehensive surveys, featuring over **1000 buyer representatives** from the ITB China Buyer Circle. In addition, a series of executive interviews with tourism boards, associations, leading travel agents, top industry newcomers, corporate buyers, MICE buyers, and key opinion leaders were carried out.

Partner of ITB China for the TTR 2024/25 is Trip.com Group - the world's leading one-stop travel service provider and holder of extensive tourism data resources on China's travel market, which were made available for comprehensive analysis, in-depth insights and forecasts.

Business Type of Buyer Survey Interviewees



(Source: ITB China Buyer Survey)

What to learn from the report

- The beat of the Chinese outbound travel market – popular destinations, what's propelling and impeding this segment.
- Generation Z becomes the key drivers of the future tourism market.
- Understanding what an enriching travel experience entails and how to focus on the same.
- Crafting an apt strategy for "New Media" in China and learning from the example of Chinese travel companies.
- Banking on the efficacy of AI – for the benefit of both travel companies and travellers.
- Collaboration among different stakeholders that is resulting in novel initiatives.
- MICE-related decisions and trends like "Bleisure".
- Counting on China's strengths to boost inbound tourism and refining overseas marketing.

CHINA TRAVEL MARKET OVERVIEW

If the travel and tourism industry is like an ocean, then a sizable chunk of it belongs to China.



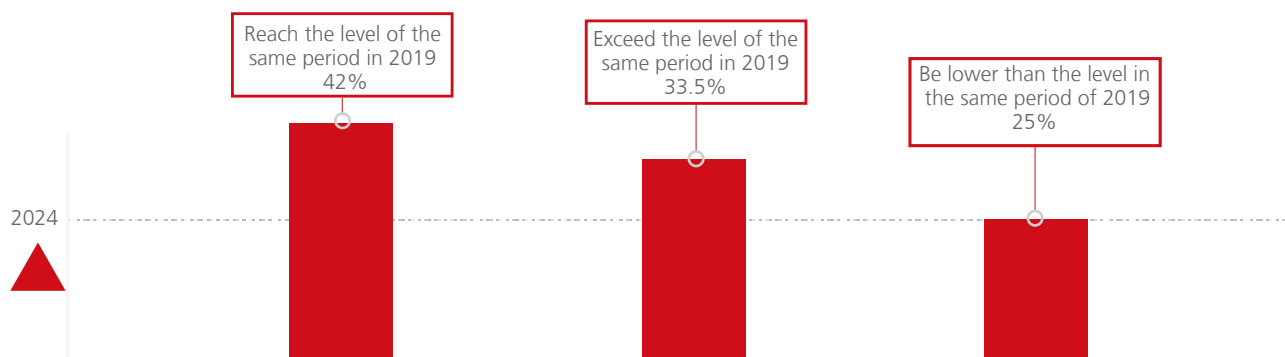
China's outbound travel market re-opened in 2023, and the recovery in 2024 is ramping up. In its recent report, the "Annual Report on the Development of Outbound Tourism from China (2023-2024)", China Tourism Academy (CTA) estimated that the number of outbound tourists exceeded 87 million last year, with a forecast of 130 million for outbound tourism in 2024.

The issuance of visas and flight capacity constraints are two main factors for the recovery in 2023.

The buyers, featured in the ITB China Buyer Survey, highlighted the issue of inconvenience resulting due to the issuance of visas, especially for Europe and the United States, where long queues are often witnessed. This has resulted in a reduction in travel bookings. Trip.com Group data showed the flight volume in 2023 was only 55% of that in 2019. However, the outbound flight and hotel booking volume on the Trip.com Group platform in the fourth quarter of 2023 recovered to over 80% of the 2019 level. This indicates a relatively urgent demand for the resumption of flights.

According to the ITB China Buyer Survey, the market players remain positive for their outbound business in 2024, **75%** among them believe they will reach or even exceed the level of the same period in 2019.

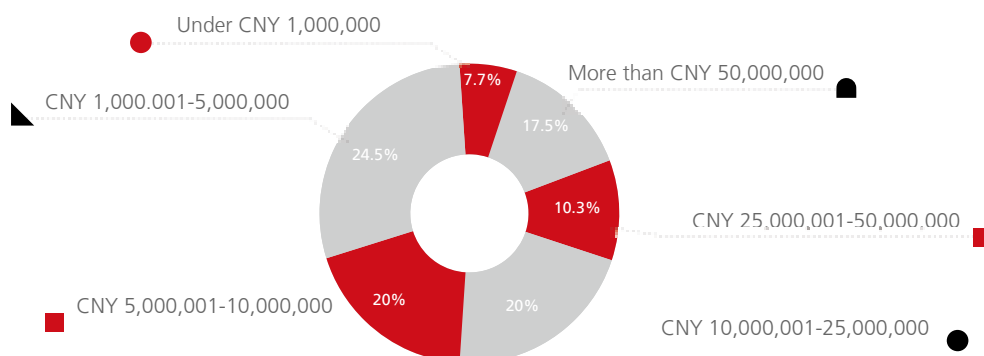
How do Chinese buyers anticipate their company's outbound business in 2024?



(Source: ITB China Buyer Survey)

Assessing the outbound purchasing volume of buyers in 2024, it is estimated that 24.5% of buyers are responsible for CNY 1,000,001 - 5,000,000, followed by around 20% for CNY 5,000,001 - 10,000,000 as well as 20% for CNY 10,000,001 - 25,000,000, and 17.5% for more than CNY 50,000,000.

What is the estimated outbound business purchasing volume the buyers are responsible for in 2024?



(Source: ITB China Buyer Survey)

CHINA TRAVEL MARKET OVERVIEW

Chinese Lunar New Year brings cheer

The 2024 Chinese New Year holiday period brought in a lot of cheer for the travel industry, as travel activity and spending featuring Chinese travellers witnessed a considerable surge. According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in China, around 633 billion yuan (about USD 89 billion) was spent on domestic holiday trips. The growth in outbound tourism activity was attributed to the relaxation of visa requirements, which played a vital role as compared to 2023. The Ministry also added that robust consumption during the festival is an encouraging sign, and should get a further boost with sustained economic recovery and steady growth in residents' income.

The spurt in outbound travel during the 2024 Chinese Lunar New Year was spearheaded by certain destinations, indicating the outbound travel recovery is uneven at this juncture.

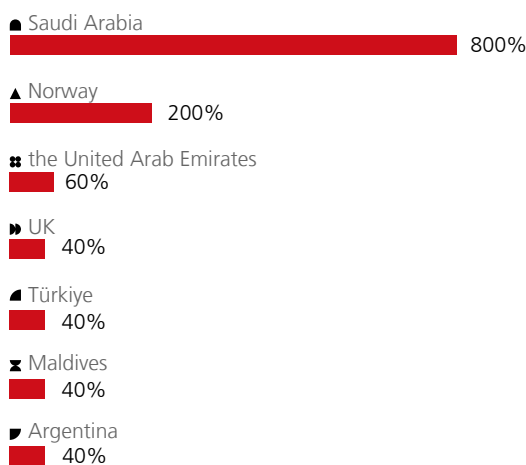
Trips to visa-free countries such as Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia increased significantly, totaling an increase of over 30% compared to 2019. Among other nearby outbound destinations, China's Hong Kong, China's Macao, Japan, and South Korea all achieved growth compared to 2019.

There were other destinations that fall in the medium- and long-haul outbound travel categories that also witnessed significant growth, with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Türkiye, and the Maldives, among others along the Belt and Road Initiative, experiencing high order growth rates, increasing by over 800%, 60%, 40%, and 40% respectively compared to 2019. Countries farther away such as the UK, Argentina, and Norway also saw significant increases, with growth rates exceeding 60%, 40%, and 200% respectively compared to 2019.

It is being expected that with the strengthening of ties with European countries, outbound travel is set to receive a boost in the region. Chinese travellers are not only opting for popular destinations such as France, Spain and Greece, but also showing interest in "niche" locations in Serbia and Montenegro, reported ChinaDaily.com.cn. According to the European Travel Commission, "Chinese travellers are beginning to return to Europe".

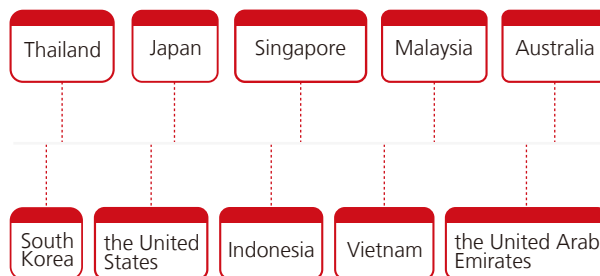
Overall, during the Spring Festival holiday, the top ten popular destination countries for outbound travel were Thailand, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, South Korea, the United States, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the United Arab Emirates.

Growth compared to 2019



(Source: Trip.com Group)

Top 10 popular destinations during 2024 Spring Festival



(Source: Trip.com Group)

It must be remembered that China is yet to recover completely. Imagine when more positive developments come from China, how much of a cheer it brings to the industry at a global level.

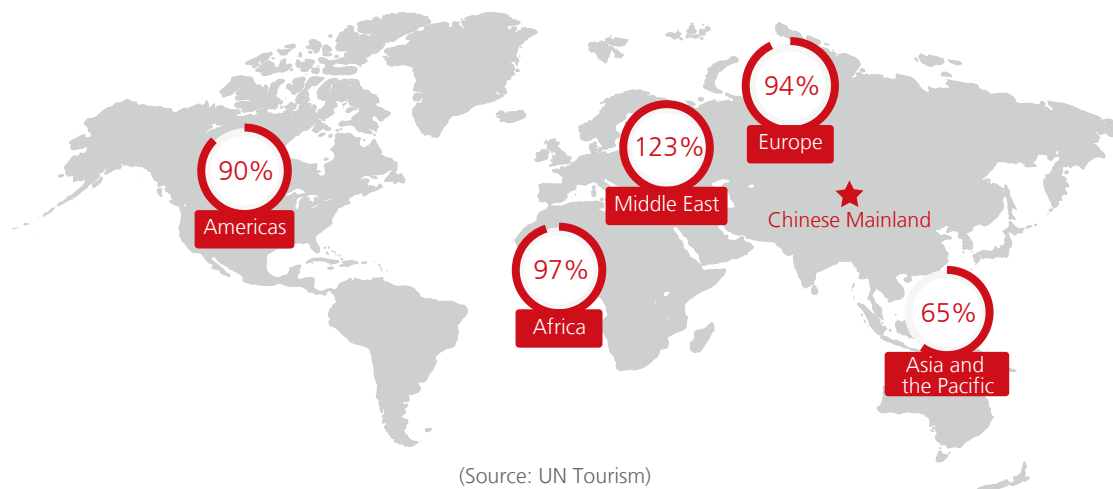
GLOBAL MARKETS UPDATES



2023 ended on a positive note for the travel and tourism industry, and the optimism around people prioritizing travel as an activity and related spending in 2024 remains afloat.

According to the UN Tourism Barometer earlier this year, international tourism ended 2023 at 88% of pre-pandemic levels, with an estimated 1.3 billion international arrivals. International tourism receipts reached USD 1.4 trillion in 2023 about 93% of the USD 1.5 trillion earned by destinations in 2019. The study goes on to add that pre-pandemic numbers are expected by the end of 2024.

Global Tourism Market Recovery by Region (by International Visitor Arrivals)



» Recovery led by the Middle East

UN Tourism stated that the Middle East led the recovery last year in relative terms as the only region to overcome pre-pandemic levels with arrivals 22% above 2019.

Among all the regions, the Middle East continues to be a standout performer, fueled both by increased interest in the region over the pandemic, the hosting of major events over the next few years and significant increases in air capacity. The likes of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Qatar have invested heavily in their infrastructure to support tourism growth including modern airports, transportation networks, hotels, and leisure facilities. Visa policy reforms and relaxed border entry have been key in increasing overall tourism – many countries are offered a visa-on-arrival, e-visa or extended visa, making the booking and arrival process extremely convenient for visitors. These markets have also successfully launched extensive promotional campaigns and marketing initiatives in key source markets worldwide to attract visitors. As highlighted by Tourism Economics – an Oxford economics company, digital marketing, social media, and partnerships with airlines have all helped to promote their destinations to a wider audience.

Referring to the United Arab Emirates, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) stated that international visitor spending surged by almost 40% in 2023 to reach over AED 175 billion, 12% above 2019 levels.

■ Growth in Asia Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region was relatively late in lifting international travel restrictions, with a temporary recovery of 65% overall in 2023. There are large regional variations within the region, with South Asia recovering to 87% and North-East Asia to about 55%. In its report released earlier this year, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) stated that one should not presume consistency in growth from source markets across all the destinations of Asia Pacific, “as many will increase their inbound counts at their own pace and in their own time”. PATA also added that Asia is likely to witness a strong edge in international visitor arrivals numbers each year from 2024 to 2026, capturing more than 70% of arrivals into and across Asia Pacific.

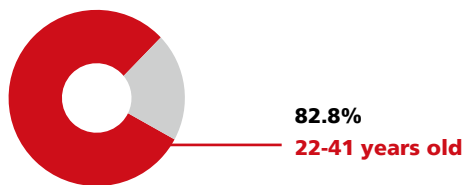
China's decision to slacken visa requirements or allow visa-free entry for certain of its key source markets has increased the number of overseas visitors. These are vital moves as China continues to steadily rebound from the effects of the pandemic.



The profile of the traveller coming out of the pandemic isn't the same, and more so from China, where the pandemic reigned for quite long and domestic tourism shaped up new preferences. It is imperative for tourism specialists to evaluate why and how Chinese travellers are undertaking trips today.

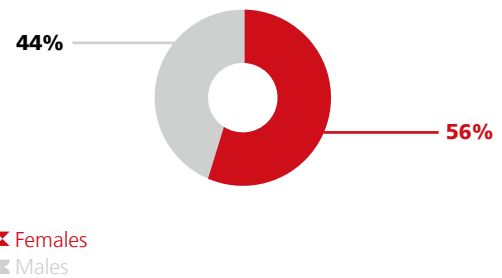
✂ Post-90s generation flex their love for travel

According to the analysis of China Tourism Academy (CTA), among outbound tourists from China, those with higher education levels and younger age groups account for a major chunk. Middle-aged and young tourists dominate, with the age group ranging from 22 to 41 years old accounting for as much as 82.8%.



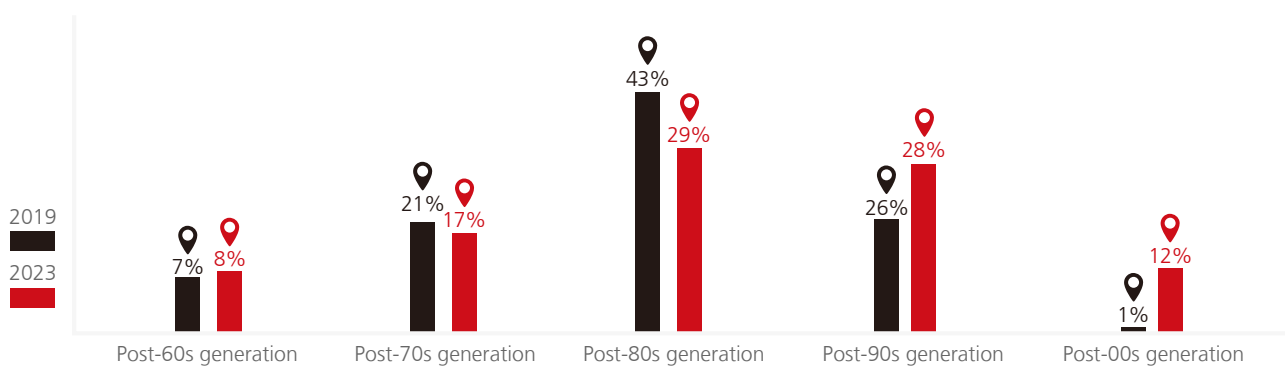
According to Trip.com Group, female travellers account for over 10% more than males.

Gender Distribution of Outbound Tourists in 2023



The data from Trip.com Group also shows the combined proportion of post-90s and post-00s has surpassed that of post-80s, becoming the dominant force in the outbound travel market. After all these years, the post-90s and post-00s generation have entered universities and the workforce, and their increased financial independence and adventurous spirit has driven a continuous surge in outbound travel demand.

Age Distribution of Outbound Tourists in 2019/2023



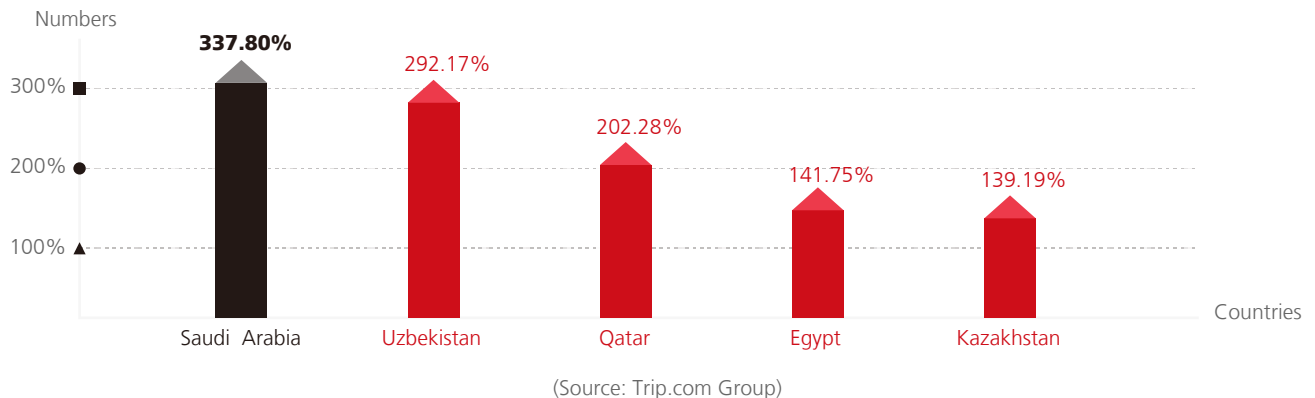
(Source: Trip.com Group)

» Middle Eastern and Central Asian destinations take the lead

In terms of popular destinations, countries with the highest relative growth from 2019 to 2023 were Saudi Arabia (337.8% growth), Uzbekistan (292%), Qatar (202%), Egypt (141.7%) and Kazakhstan (139%) in the Middle East and Central Asia, with visitor numbers increasing by over 100% according to Trip.com Group. The hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar garnered global attention and fueled the desire of Chinese tourists to visit.



Popular destinations with the growth from 2019 to 2023 in Middle East and Central Asia



CTA shared that since 2023, Chinese tourists' outbound choices have become more diversified, with increases in the proportions visiting Europe, North America, Africa, etc., while Asian countries and regions still rank at the top.

According to Tourism Economics, the overall recovery in outbound trips from China has not been uniform across destinations. Visits to short-haul destinations such as Japan and South Korea have recovered quicker than longer-haul trips to regions outside Northeast Asia.

■ Counting on an enriching travel experience

Travellers are now firm on relishing their experiences, in a way lending a new dimension to their lives. They want trips that inspire and rejuvenate them, be it via immersing in a new culture, learning a language, attending a concert etc.

The trend of smaller groups, self-guided tours and customized travel has picked up in the recent past:



Smaller Groups: According to UTour, the size of travel groups is shrinking, with around 20-person groups becoming the mainstream. The team at HH Travel mentioned that as the demand for more personalized, quality and diversified travel services goes up, they prefer to travel in small groups rather than large ones.



Self-guided tours: According to Trip.com Group data, last year self-guided outbound tours accounted for a significant increase over 2019. The reasons being - the visa-free policy came into action so that travelling becomes convenient to more destinations, and the supply chain of group tours and other services hadn't been fully restored to the pre-pandemic level. By 2019, the proportion of self-guided tours was over 30% and it rose to over 90% by 2023. The group tours came down from 63% in 2019 to 7% last year. During the Spring Festival period, outbound Trip.com car rental orders increased by 53% compared to 2019, while overseas scenic spot ticket orders increased by over 130% compared to 2019.



Customized travel: Since 2024, there has been a noticeable increase in demand for customized travel, characterized by customers becoming more proactive in their planning. Many customers begin planning for holidays like May Day and summer vacations immediately after the Spring Festival. Simultaneously, they have clearer expectations for high-quality resources, which increasingly resonate with the consumption preferences of high-end customers. Therefore, it is essential for travel agencies to deepen their understanding of destination resources, shared by HH Travel.



UTour shared that in addition to the emergence of themed products such as parent-child travel, photography tours, health and wellness travel etc., the company has also witnessed a rise in in-depth experiential activities, such as touring ancient cities by horse-drawn carriage, hands-on cooking of local dishes, and themed photo shoots, allowing tourists to participate in and truly immerse themselves in local life.

Talking of the booking window, it is expectedly returning to the way it used to be done earlier. This can be attributed to the fact that uncertainty related to travel, be it for visa, entry and exit from a particular destination, safety concerns in a destination etc. are being taken care of.



Also, it is worth evaluating how long travellers from China are staying in a particular region. Travellers are willing to stay in South America for 21 days, followed by North America (19 days), Oceania (14 days), Europe (13 days) and Africa (10 days). To Asia, travel length is around four days.



✂ Collaboration paving way for novel initiatives

Cross-border collaboration in the travel industry is increasingly becoming common.

Specialists like HH Travel are collaborating with companies from other sectors for an enriching traveller experience. The list features leading luxury brands such as Cartier, Dior and Tiffany & Co, as it is believed that there is a case for sharing an identical client profile. Through such collaborations, HH Travel grants special rights and caters to customers' interests, including customized jewellery and pearls. One of the highlights is events and exhibits exclusively curated for travellers.

For instance, New Oriental Education & Technology Group, a private educational service provider, has been working on plans to tap into cultural tourism. The company caters to a varied student population throughout China and is targeting this loyal user base with a travel offering that is focused on cultivating a sense of cultural well-being, knowledge acquisition, and personal pursuit. It also believes that its knowledgeable and experienced team of teachers, backed up by their excellent communication skills, can lend a new dimension to an offering that is going to be an exciting blend of tourism and culture.

There is no shortage of unprecedented moves in this sector in China.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

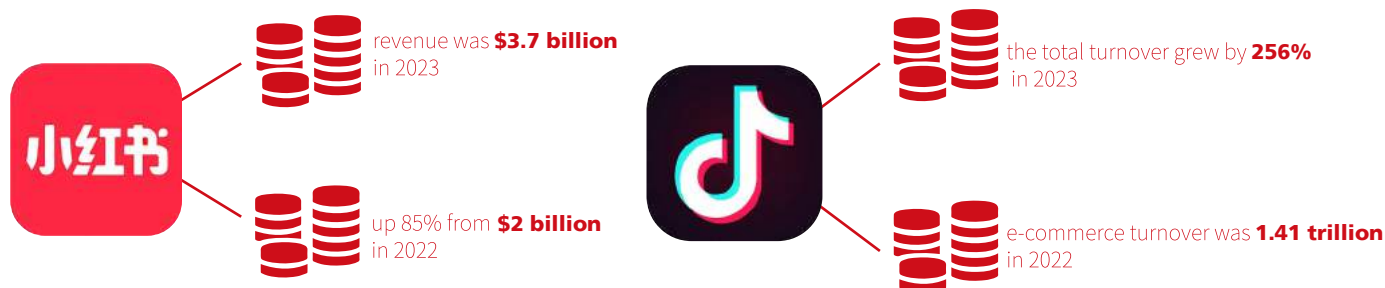
The travel industry must dig deep in order to understand Chinese travellers better, from what to offer, how to offer it and how to service them better during the entire trip planning, buying and in-destination cycle.

» Social media becomes a key trend for selling

Videos and live streaming, a trend that picked up during the pandemic, are now major tools to target potential travellers in China. There are novel marketing initiatives, too. For instance, online travel company Tongcheng Travel has been working on marketing initiatives around e-sports games to target the younger demographic, in addition to focusing on apps like Weixin and Alipay mini-program.

Travel intermediaries are ensuring that they make the most of the so-called new media, by constantly refining their presence of outlets like **WeChat**, **Douyin (Chinese TikTok)** and **Little Red Book (Xiaohongshu)** as well as other e-commerce platforms, including ones from the travel sector.

These platforms are showing growth in their revenue generation, too. Little Red Book's (Xiaohongshu) revenue was \$3.7 billion in 2023, up 85% from \$2 billion in 2022. And Douyin's e-commerce turnover in 2022 was 1.41 trillion, and the total turnover of Douyin's life service platform grew by 256% in 2023, with a total of more than 370 cities covered and more than 4.5 million shops involved.

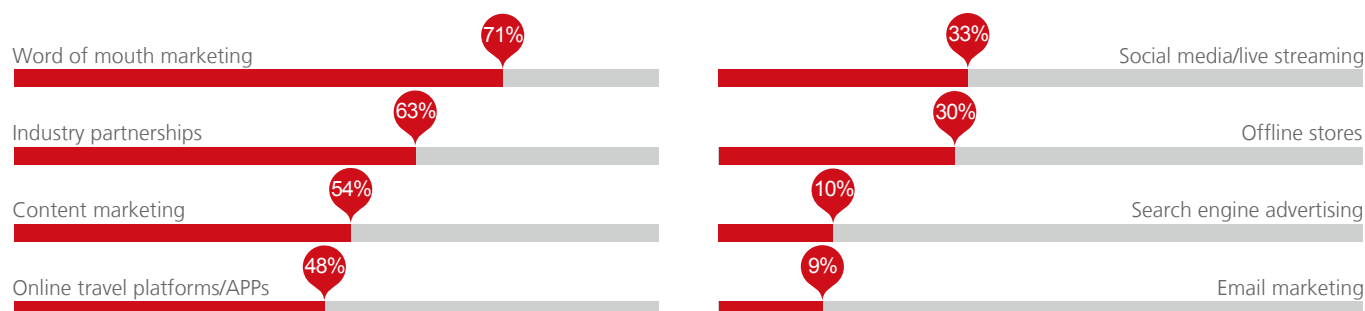


In order to make the most of the tools that these platforms have to offer, specialists are being hired to stay ahead. For instance, in the case of UTour, the company established a professional new media marketing team integrating product, customer service, operation, sales, influencer collaboration, content editing, photography editing, and video operations last year. UTour's e-commerce platform hosted over 6,237 live-streaming sessions last year.

Also, new media can be described as a fast-paced medium. Zhao Wenzhi, GZL told ITB China that the team focuses on real-time adjustments based on the feedback at the time of doing live-streaming, which is done on multiple accounts. Also, the objective is to gradually create the public persona of live-streamers and distinguish products. A travel agency affiliated to GZL, shared that its highest single day turnover on Douyin was CNY 1.13 million, and achieved a turnover of CNY 12 million in nearly 30 days.

The ITB China Buyer Survey also shows social media and livestreaming also become important channels for customer acquisition.

What are the primary customer acquisition channels?



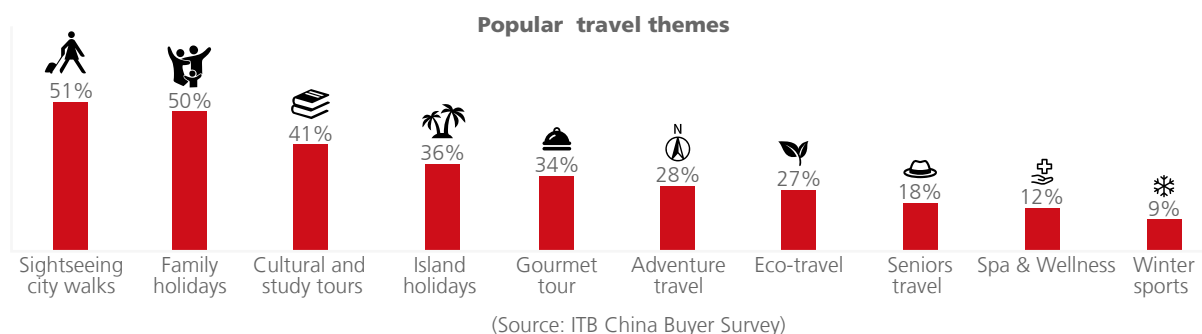
(Source: ITB China Buyer Survey)

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

■ Evaluating travel themes that click

One of the most important decisions for travel companies is now what to offer, especially considering the impetus of experiences that travellers long for. This means one has to evaluate what themes are resonating with a travel shopper, and accordingly crafting products around them.

Delving into travel themes that are most popular, the ITB China Buyer Survey indicated that Sightseeing / City Walks (51%) and Family Holidays (50%) came jointly on top with half of the respondents listing them as their choices. These two were followed by Cultural and Study Tours (41%) and Island Holidays (36%). Others on the list are Gourmet Tour (34%), Adventure Travel (28%), Eco-Travel (27%), Seniors Travel (18%), Spa & Wellness (12%) and Winter Sports (9%).



UTour launched their snow aurora-themed products from the latter half of 2023 to the Spring Festival in 2024, which have been in high demand, with products for peak travel dates during the Spring Festival being sold out a month and a half before the festival. UTour is optimistic about the niche market and continues to explore “tourism+” concepts such as “tourism + golf”, “tourism + duty-free shopping”, etc.

Travel intermediaries felt there was also an opportunity to come up new offerings, looking at what was working well in the growing domestic travel market.

✂ Banking on efficacy of artificial intelligence (AI)

As shown by companies across the globe, travel companies are looking at AI to improve upon their operations, as well as the overall traveller experience.

For travellers: The goal is to use AI to make them do less (for instance, predicting what travellers prefer and accordingly serving them offers that they would like to buy). An AI tool like ChatGPT has proved its utility and people now have a great alternative to sources like search engines. This has definitely changed how people get information about places, flights, hotels etc. Chatbots and AI assistants are now being deployed for various parts of trip-related services. One of the fast-maturing services is helping travellers finalise trips where AI tools do their job by analysing historical data, weather conditions, local events and other traveller reviews. Even the actual travel is becoming simplified, with AI technologies, such as facial recognition, being used for check-ins at airports.

For travel companies: The likes of airlines and hotels are looking at specific functions like customer service, fraud prevention and revenue management optimization (maximize pricing strategies based on factors such as demand trends, competitor pricing and historical data). Other than revenue generation, travel companies are also looking at cost reduction through intelligent automation.

HH Travel acknowledges the prowess of such technological development, which it believes will contribute to offering customized services on a large scale, which would mean that AI would have played its part with precision in matching supply (resources / services available) with personalised demand. In addition, the application of AI technology will accelerate the responses at the service-end. An example being in the case of customer service agents, that will be equipped with resources that save them time and effort, which in turn saves a department money. They will be able to provide more efficient service to travellers. HH Travel also believes the application of AI technology, which is an inevitable trend, will help the team to improve HR efficiency.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES



Some of the **other opportunities**, as shared by respondents in the ITB China Buyer Survey were as follows:

- ✂ The trend of demand differentiation is evident, with personalized services being more popular.
- ✂ Technological advancements such as the internet, big data, and artificial intelligence support the development of the tourism industry.
- ✂ The high-end tourism market still holds potential and requires further exploration of customer demands. Stable growth, new destinations, and routes added.
- ✂ Product innovation, pricing policies, and services are crucial for market development.
- ✂ Increased demand in outbound tourism.
- ✂ The importance of customer experience and product upgrades.



(Source: ITB China Buyer Survey)

There are specific challenges, too, that the travel industry needs to delve into:

- ✂ **Geopolitical tensions:** Geopolitical tensions affect the development of the tourism industry and deter people from travelling. Moreover, a critical factor such as a restriction on flying in a certain airspace affects not only one country but also its allies. So any conflict that leads to war, violence or unrest tends to have a negative impact on tourism.
- ✂ **Economic slowdown:** The economic scenario always has a say in holiday trends and patterns. For example, the overall economic environment influences disposable income and consumer confidence. People tend to reduce their travel spending due to uncertainty about future income stability. Consumption-related travel tends to fall during any period of uncertainty.
- ✂ **Professionalism:** Travellers' increased demand for quality travel products and their request for travel experiences will lead more and more practitioners to improve the professionalism of their services. Examples include in-depth knowledge of the destination's history, culture and customs, followed by a better overall understanding of the destination's attractions and activities, improved communication skills and a continuous improvement in service awareness.



MICE AND CORPORATE TRAVEL IN CHINA



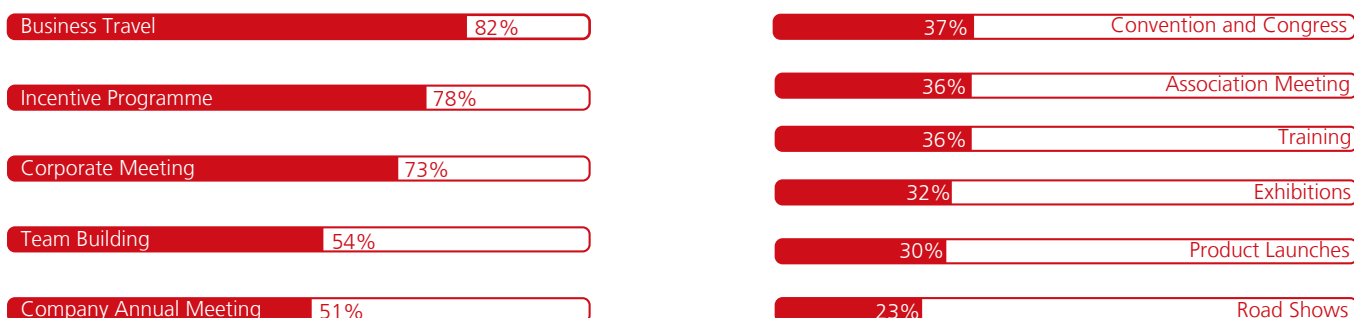
Planning a new MICE initiative for companies in China now requires a new set of considerations, from planning to organisation to contracting to execution. Specialists catering to the business travel category must not only assess which sectors are most attractive and where business organisations are sending their executives this year, but also evaluate a strong trend like business + leisure (Bleisure).

» Events lesser in size, but grow in number

Grand China MICE indicated that since 2023 till date the events have gone smaller in size as compared to the pre-pandemic era. The company shared that its team was servicing more than 6000 events per year before the pandemic, and last year it actually didn't fully recover to revenue generation of 2019, but the number of events significantly exceeded the number of events in 2019, reaching 7000-8000 annually. "This is a challenge for MICE companies and hospitality providers, meaning that the workload is likely to be greater now, the frequency of events is higher, and the industry may have to put in 1.5 times the effort to achieve the original revenue, which is a change that must be embraced," said the spokesperson.

As indicated by the ITB China MICE Buyer Survey, the activity they support the most is business travel (82%). Other activities and events in the priority list are: incentive programs (78%), corporate meetings (73%), team buildings (54%) and company annual meetings (51%).

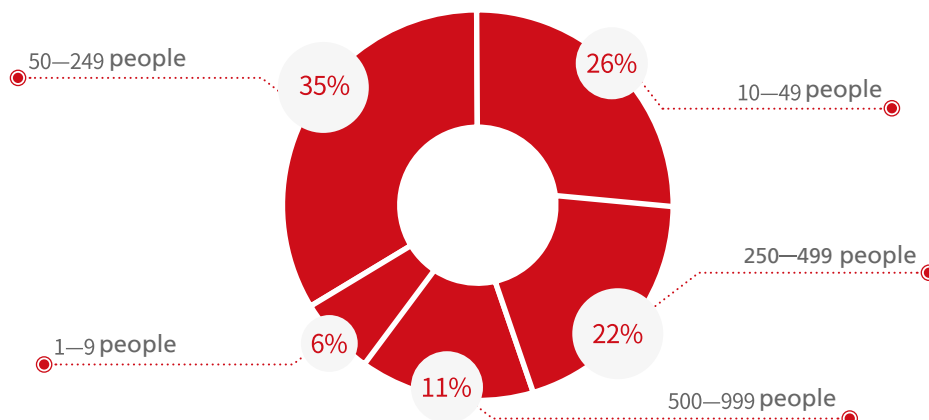
Type of MICE events that buyers' company organise



(Source: ITB China MICE Buyer Survey)

Also, in terms of the scale, MICE activities and events with a size of 50-249 people were the most common (35%), followed by 10-49 people (26%), 250-499 people (22%), 500-999 people (11%) and 1-9 people (6%).

How many people are participating in the MICE activity / event organized?



(Source: ITB China MICE Buyer Survey)

MICE AND CORPORATE TRAVEL IN CHINA



■ Combo of factors for choosing a destination

According to Trip.Biz data, popular outbound business travel destinations compared to 2019 were: Japan, followed by Singapore (going up by two spots as compared to 2019), Korea, Thailand (going up by two spots to fourth place), Vietnam (up by two), Germany (up by two), Malaysia (up by three), UAE, USA and France.

Ranking	TOP10 Country	region
1	Japan	East Asia
2	Singapore ↑2	South-East Asia
3	Korea	East Asia
4	Thailand ↑2	South-East Asia
5	Vietnam ↑2	South-East Asia
6	Germany ↑2	Europe
7	Malaysia ↑3	South-East Asia
8	United Arab Emirates NEW	Middle East
9	USA	North America
10	France	Europe

(Source: Trip.Biz)

A variety of factors - visa policies, flights, budget, and what to expect in terms of experience - all contribute to choosing a destination.

- ✂ MICE tour destinations are being chosen with a greater caution, with visa requirements being a significant factor, said David Yan, General Manager of Beijing Huacheng International Convention and Exhibition Co., Ltd. (BHICE).
- ✂ Xu Zheng, Managing Director of Jingda International said customers now choose their travel destinations based on key factors, such as political affinity, visa openness level, safety of destination, unique attractions of the destination, and local policy support. Preferred niche and unique destinations now include South America, Africa, the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iraq), and smaller countries in Eastern and Western Europe.

✂ Active contributors in terms of spending

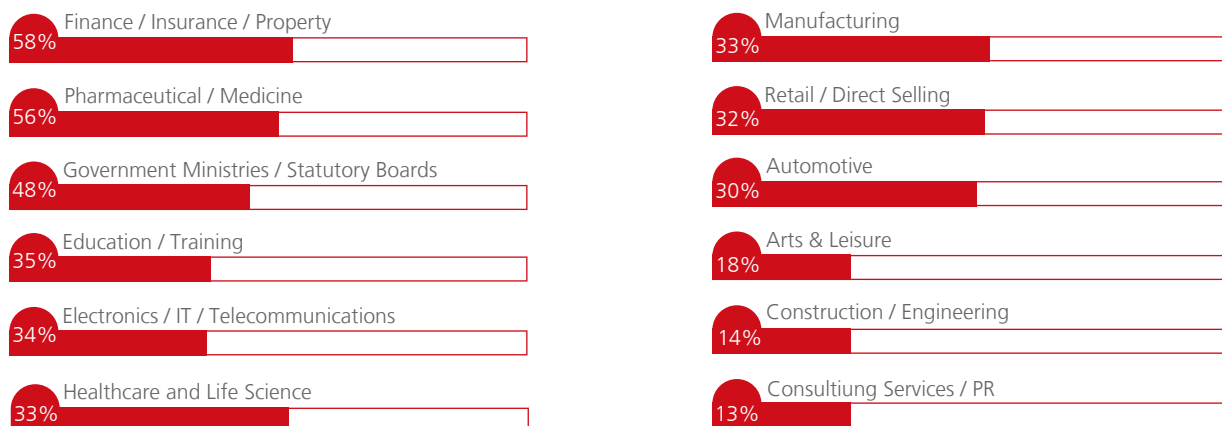
According to Trip.Biz data, as per the international business travel popularity across various industries in 2023, the major spenders were:



The ITB China MICE Buyer Circle indicated that MICE services are being provided for Finance / Insurance / Property (58%). This was followed by Pharmaceutical / Medicine (56%), Government Ministries / Statutory Boards (48%), Education / Training (35%), Electronics / IT / Telecommunications, (34%), Healthcare and Life Science (33%), Manufacturing, 33%, Retail / Direct Selling (32%) and Automotive (30%).

MICE AND CORPORATE TRAVEL IN CHINA

Which industries do buyer company provide MICE services for



(Source: ITB China MICE BuyerCircle)

■ Bleisure is here to stay

Business leisure (Bleisure) has indeed gained prominence.

In 2023, about 95% of business travellers were willing to engage in leisure activities during their business trips, an increase of 3.7% compared to 2022, according to data from Trip.Biz.



(Source: Trip.Biz)

Bleisure mode allows employees to extend their stay for leisure and tourism while on business trips. This allows them to allocate some personal time for leisure activities after fulfilling their work obligations. Also, there might be cases of self-funded extension of stay, willing to cover extra expenses for accommodation and transportation independently.

"The attitude of enterprises towards Bleisure may vary. Some enterprises may actively support this travel mode, believing that it contributes to employee well-being and work-life balance, while others are conservative due to possible concerns about cost, safety, compliance, etc. Nevertheless, given the evolving work dynamics and employees' pursuit of enhanced quality of life, the trend of business leisure is likely to persist and thrive," shared by Allen Ye, Vice-Chairman, Purchasing and Supply Chain Coalition.

✂ Keeping an eye on sustainability goals

A major area of focus going forward is participation in ecological conservation.

As a part of their overall corporate social responsibility efforts, travel companies are looking at working with those entities in the MICE sector that are willing to support businesses in their sustainability goals.

Grand China MICE acknowledges the significance of building its sustainability credentials and supporting green procurement policy for their own business. Its team has worked on a carbon management applet (a small computer program within an app that performs a specific task) for the calculation of carbon emissions of conference and exhibition activities, and incentive tours. The company today boasts of about 60 staff members who hold certificates of being greenhouse gas emission verifiers. In addition, Grand China MICE and the China Energy Conservation Association (CECA) are working together to formulate a carbon-neutral group standard for exhibition activities, which will be officially released in a few months' time.

Businesses like Amway are incessantly making concerted efforts to make a positive environmental impact, taking the responsibility on themselves to reduce adverse environmental impacts resulting from their operations. Amway (China) shared in their interview that they actively incorporate elements of charity and environmental protection into its overseas seminars. The company also promotes green and sustainable environmental protection practices, working together with marketing partners to protect the environment.



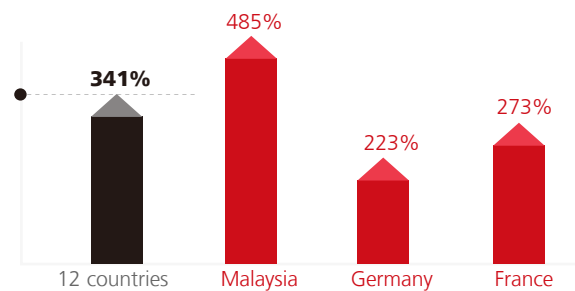
CHINA INBOUND TRAVEL MARKET

China's National Immigration Administration shared that the country welcomed 210 million inbound visits in 2023, about 62.9 percent of the total seen in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. And the inbound pie in China continues to shape up well, considering some of the recent initiatives.

To their credit, authorities in China have been focusing on visa-free schemes in order to support the tourism industry.

In a recent development, China has chosen to extend the short-term visa-free policy till the end of 2025, for citizens of 12 countries to visit China, further promoting the exchange of people between China and foreign countries. These 12 countries are: **Germany, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Malaysia, Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium, and Luxembourg.**

Trip.com Group's data shows that so far in 2024, inbound tour orders featuring tourists from 12 countries to China's mainland increased by 341 % year-on-year, of which inbound tourists from Malaysia, Germany, France, Italy and the Netherlands are featured prominently. So far this year, Malaysia's orders for inbound tours increased by 485% year-on-year, while also being the country with the highest growth rate; Germany's orders for inbound tours increased by 223%, and France increased by 273%.



(Source: Trip.com Group)

There have also been announcements of visa waivers for **New Zealand** and **Australia** in June this year. In order to sustain this momentum, it is imperative to evaluate infrastructure, logistics, and bookings i.e., making it easier to get into the country, plan a trip, navigate when there, and book attractions or experiences from overseas.

⚡ Highlighting strengths

To stay ahead, China should focus on its strengths as a destination.

Wendy Wu Tours shared in their interview that China can create branding campaigns, emphasising on diverse and rich experiences, modern infrastructure and scenic landscapes.

Other strategies to highlight its advantages includes:

Event-based tourism - Countries are increasingly leveraging international events to attract tourists. Singapore's strategy to capitalize on high-profile events like Taylor Swift's Eras Tour exemplifies this. These events provide a dual benefit of direct tourist spending and the global attention brought by the event's coverage. China could host global cultural, sports, or entertainment events that highlight its unique offerings and heritage to draw international travellers.

Technology and digital engagement - In places like Hangzhou, technology has been integrated into the tourist experience, with interactive kiosks and virtual guides enhancing visits to heritage sites. Japan and South Korea utilise augmented and virtual reality (AR / VR) experiences in their marketing to provide virtual tours of destinations. China can expand its use of such technologies, not only at the sites themselves but also in its global marketing efforts to give potential tourists a taste of China's attractions from afar.

Quality and diverse accommodation options - There's a growing preference for quality and diverse accommodation experiences, including boutique hotels and B&Bs, over traditional chain hotels. This shift indicates a desire for unique and personalised experiences. China can promote its range of accommodations that offer local flavour and experiences, which appeal to travellers seeking authenticity.

CHINA INBOUND TRAVEL MARKET

Health and wellness tourism - Destinations like Thailand have enhanced their health tourism services, capitalizing on a growing trend for wellness travel. China can leverage its traditional medicine and wellness practices to attract tourists seeking health and rejuvenation, providing holistic experiences in serene environments.

Cultural and heritage tourism - There's an increasing emphasis on cultural tourism, with travellers seeking immersive experiences that allow them to engage with local history and culture. China has an immense cultural heritage to showcase and could develop interactive and educational experiences that allow travellers to deeply engage with its history and traditions.

Sustainability and eco-tourism - Travellers are more environmentally conscious, and destinations that offer sustainable tourism options are becoming popular. Countries like Bhutan are known for their eco-friendly tourism practices. China can promote its natural landscapes and conservation efforts, emphasising eco-friendly travel experiences.

Social Media and influencer collaborations - Countries like Indonesia and the Maldives have successfully utilised influencer marketing to showcase their destinations. China could collaborate with influencers to create targeted campaigns that reach diverse audience segments.

» Enhance overseas marketing

In order to promote a destination, tourism boards are actively looking at solid networking opportunities and showcasing what they have to offer via an offline presence at popular B2B tourism events, plus they are also counting on digital marketing tactics.

Participation in international exhibitions has always been a judicious offline promotional tool, one that strengthens brand imagery. This year, the China Pavilion made a shining return to ITB Berlin and joined forces with 13 local destinations, including [Beijing](#), [Shanghai](#), [Jiangsu](#), [Zhejiang](#), [Sichuan](#), [Guangdong](#), [Anhui](#), [Hainan](#), [Harbin](#), [Ganzhou](#), [Hunan](#), [Shaanxi](#), [Yunnan](#). [Chengdu](#), [Huangshan](#), [Wuzhen](#) and [Trip.com Group](#) also made stunning appearances and the success of the 2024 ITB China Night during ITB, which welcomed 250 senior executives and representatives from the travel industry, fully demonstrated the vibrant and broad prospects of China's tourism market.



Offline promotional tool



international exhibitions

Other than showcasing what they have to offer via such events, destination marketing specialists are also making an effort to count on their first-party data for their digital marketing campaigns, which are being backed by in-house design and UX capabilities to better optimize digital experiences. Plus, social media management, content management and email marketing are being counted on for conversions. On one hand, [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [TikTok](#) are being targeted for luring visuals and entertaining videos, tying up with influencers and encouraging reviews (users also go on third party sites like [TripAdvisor](#) and [Google](#)), during the planning stage. On the other hand, the objective is to convert the traffic via social media advertising and search engine marketing, and keep track of bookings via analytics, linking them back to campaigns.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Positive signs for outbound travel:** Robust consumption during the 2024 Chinese New Year holiday period is an encouraging sign. But the popularity of certain destinations for outbound travel indicates recovery is uneven at this juncture.
- **Z-Generation becomes the force:** The post-90s and post-00s generation have entered universities and the workforce, and their increased financial independence and adventurous spirit has driven a continuous surge in outbound travel demand.
- **Clamouring for experiences at one's own pace:** Travellers in China now look for immersive trips that inspire and rejuvenate them. Consumers are more proactive in their planning, and the trend of smaller groups, self-guided tours and customized travel has picked up in the recent past.
- **Tactics for "New Media":** It is vital for any travel brand to understand how to choose media by looking at the role of the likes of WeChat, Douyin and Little Red Book as well as other e-commerce platforms in the entire trip planning and booking funnel. Local travel companies in China have restructured their marketing teams accordingly.
- **AI is proving its worth:** If on one hand, Chatbots and AI assistants are helping travellers in new ways, travel companies themselves are also looking at AI to augment specific functions like customer service, fraud prevention and revenue management optimization. At the same time, experts shouldn't overlook potential downsides of AI when developing and using it.
- **Evolving MICE and business travel categories:** A host of factors - visa policies, flights, budget along with what to expect in terms of an experience are contributing to the selection of a destination and other MICE-related decisions. Business leisure (Bleisure) has gained prominence.
- **China has plenty to offer as a destination:** China can create branding campaigns, emphasise on diverse and rich experiences, modern infrastructure and scenic landscapes in order to differentiate its positioning as a destination. Event-based tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, diverse accommodation options, sustainability and eco-tourism are some of the strategies that China can delve into.

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