



## China Outbound Tourism: A Bibliometric Review from 2008-2024

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines a substantial yet distributed body of research on outbound tourism from China in the hospitality sector. To ascertain the general performance and research themes in this area, we used bibliometric and content analyses on 1,484 peer-reviewed English articles published between 2008 and 2024. Co-occurrence analysis was used to identify four key research themes: (1) Factors affecting Chinese tourists' decision to travel abroad, (2) Economic Determinants of inhouse and Cross-Border Investment, (3) Business and Stakeholder Strategy, and (4) Technology and Innovation-Driven Markets. Factors affecting Chinese tourists' decision to travel abroad mainly consist of three subthemes: determinants of Chinese satisfaction behaviors, experience in niche tourism and special events, and impacts from social media platforms. Subthemes pertaining to Economic Determinants of in-house and Cross-Border Investment involve politics and government direction. The subthemes of Business and Stakeholder Strategy determinants primarily focus on tourism stakeholder outcomes, stakeholder relationship quality, and China's tourism destination trust. Subthemes within Technology and Innovation-Driven Markets include how they transform the tourism market in several significant ways. This work enhances our understanding of the progress, prediction of the future and limitations of research on China Outbound Tourism.

## INTRODUCTION

Chinese outbound tourism has been growing at an incredible rate, and the rapid expansion of the Chinese economy has made Chinese outbound tourism one of the major players in the global tourism industry. The size of the Chinese source market and the projected expansion of the country's growing middle class have led to an increase in research on outbound Chinese tourism in recent years (Keating & Kriz, 2008; Tse, 2015). Although the number of Chinese tourists traveling overseas is impressive in absolute terms, the proportion of Chinese citizens traveling overseas as opposed to their population is small in proportion. Due to China's strong economic performance, there is a lot of scope for growth and considerable attention in recent years. With outbound tourist departures rising from 10 million in 2000 to 130 million by 2017, and with expenditures totaling US\$115.29 billion (www.ctaweb.org, 2018), China is the world's largest source of outbound expenditure (CNN, 2013; FlorCruz, 2015), also the rapid growth of China's outbound tourists has drawn scholarly attention (Dai et al., 2017; King & Tang, 2009; Sun & Dong, 2003; Teare, 2007; Xie & Li, 2009).

Multiple fields and methodologies have been adopted by scholars to research tourism, including Chinese outbound tourism (Gyr, 2010). It is commonly known that the Chinese tourism sector has developed through an unique Chinese style. Chinese tourists' travel decisions are influenced by a variety of factors including Government Policy, Travel Accessibility, Visa Regulations, Social Media & Influencers, Cost, Events and Festival and Technological Integration. These elements show how a variety of factors, including both individual preferences and more general social trends, influence Chinese tourists' decisions. In particular, the emphasis is on how mindset and structural changes are changing both domestically and internationally, as well as how Chinese tourist characteristics are changing in terms of effectiveness. In order to evaluate the overall performance (structure) and identify research themes (contents), this study aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of China Outbound Tourism by using bibliometric and content analysis. This will help determine potential directions for future research. China Outbound Tourism can be defined as "When Chinese travel to and stay in other places for leisure, business or other purposes with their satisfaction" (Keating, Huang, Kriz, and Heung, 2015). This phenomenon driven by increased disposable income, a burgeoning middle class, and more accessible international travel options. It encompasses various travel patterns, such as organized group tours and independent travel, and often focuses on destinations that offer cultural experiences, shopping, and luxury accommodations.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

Outbound tourism is a travel activity carried out by residents of one country to another country for tourism, business, education, or other purposes. In this context, tourists leave their country temporarily and spend time abroad.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Data collection*

SSCI (Social Science Citation Index) within the WOS (Web of Science) were the sources of data collection, which can be accessed online and widely employed for bibliometric analysis (Zupic & Cater, 2015).

By combining different keywords associated with China Outbound Tourism (e.g., "China" and "Chinese") and keywords for hospitality (e.g., hotel(s), hospitality, and restaurant(s)), we obtain multiple combined search strings representing China Outbound Tourism in hospitality context (e.g., "China" AND "hotel"). In addition, we initially searched in three categories of WoS: "Business," "Management," and "Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism." This data retrieval strategy was conducted in one step by using the "Advanced Search" function of the WoS. The advanced search code in the WoS was ((TI=("China" OR "Chinese")) AND (TS=("outbound" OR "abroad" OR "overseas" OR "foreign" OR "international"))) AND (TS=("tourism" OR "visitor\*" OR "travel\*" OR "tourist\*" OR "explorer\*" OR "Package Tour" OR "Free Individual Traveler" OR "destination\*" OR "hospitality" OR "hotel\*" OR "accommodation" OR "restaurant\*" OR "trend" OR "flight" OR "booking" OR "experience" OR "social media" OR "Influencer" OR "tour operator" OR "leisure" OR "workation" OR "sport" OR "business" OR "incentive")) ) AND (WC= ("Business" OR "Management" OR "Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism"))

We restricted the language to English and document types to "articles" and "review articles" (excluding "book reviews" and "proceedings papers"). In total, we gathered 1,484 high-quality and high-impact documents for bibliometric analysis.

### *Data Analysis*

The main method used in this review study is bibliometric analysis, which is suitable when the dataset is too big for manual analysis (e.g., more than 300 articles) and the review's scope is huge (Donthu et al., 2021a). Titles, abstracts, author keywords, authors, author affiliations, citations, and cited references are commonly included in the data from bibliometric analyses. To do bibliometric analysis, this study used VOSviewer software, which is compatible with Excel and EndNote. We started our investigation of the literature on China Outbound Tourism by looking at its general structure using co-authorship, citation, and co-citation analyses. Next, using co-occurrence analysis of index keywords (keywords that appear in the title, abstract, and author keywords), we tentatively discovered clustering themes and their evolution tendencies. Finally, we carried out a content analysis by reading and manually classifying highly influential publications to designate subthemes for each clustered theme, as in-depth interpretations of bibliometric data require extensive reading and synthesis (Zupic & Cater, 2015).

## RESEARCH RESULTS

This review primarily employs quantitative bibliometric tools such as VOSviewer and supplementary tools like EndNote and Excel for data analysis.

VOSviewer is a reputable tool for efficiently evaluating and analyzing bibliometric data (Donthu et al., 2021b).

**Highly Productive Journals**

A total of 1,484 articles on China Outbound Tourism were published in 252 journals. The top 20 journals comprise 80% of all publications (as shown in Table 1).

**Table 1. Top 20 Journals Ranked by the Number of Publications**

| #  | Sources (252 in total)                             | N↓ | %      | Citations |
|----|--|----|--------|-----------|
| 1  | Chinese Management Studies                         | 48 | 3.232% | 358       |
| 2  | International Business Review                      | 46 | 3.098% | 2061      |
| 3  | Tourism Management                                 | 44 | 2.963% | 3061      |
| 4  | Current Issues in Tourism                          | 39 | 2.694% | 793       |
| 5  | Asia Pacific Business Review                       | 39 | 2.626% | 293       |
| 6  | Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research           | 35 | 2.357% | 4326      |
| 7  | Journal of International Business Studies          | 35 | 2.357% | 748       |
| 8  | Asia Pacific Journal of Management                 | 32 | 2.155% | 1449      |
| 9  | Tourism Economics                                  | 31 | 2.088% | 642       |
| 10 | International Journal of the History of Sport      | 30 | 2.02%  | 1069      |
| 11 | Journal of Business Research                       | 30 | 2.02%  | 177       |
| 12 | International Journal of Emerging Markets          | 27 | 1.818% | 245       |
| 13 | Asian Business & Management                        | 26 | 1.751% | 1047      |
| 14 | Journal of Travel Research                         | 26 | 1.751% | 998       |
| 15 | Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing              | 26 | 1.751% | 407       |
| 16 | World Economy                                      | 26 | 1.751% | 145       |
| 17 | Emerging Markets Finance and Trade                 | 25 | 1.684% | 922       |
| 18 | Journal of Business Ethics                         | 25 | 1.684% | 132       |
| 19 | International Journal of Human Resource Management | 20 | 1.347% | 2323      |
| 20 | International Journal of Tourism Research          | 20 | 1.347% | 482       |

**Highly Productive Authors, Institutions, and Countries**

Tables 2-4 present the top 20 authors, top 10 institutions, and top 10 countries/regions, respectively, based on the number of publications.

**Table 2. Top 20 authors ranked by the number of publications**

| #  | Author                | Documents ↓ | Citations ↓↓ | Total Link Strength |
|----|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|
| 1  | Huang, Songshan (Sam) | 16          | 601          | 44.00               |
| 2  | Liu, Xiaohui          | 11          | 1249         | 41.00               |
| 3  | Wu, Mao-Ying          | 11          | 458          | 51.00               |
| 4  | Zhou, Kevin Zheng     | 10          | 1918         | 34.00               |
| 5  | Cui, Lin              | 10          | 937          | 47.00               |
| 6  | Sutherland, Dylan     | 10          | 264          | 31.00               |
| 7  | Wen, Jun              | 9           | 747          | 32.00               |
| 8  | Li, Xiang (Robert)    | 9           | 632          | 66.00               |
| 9  | Pearce, Philip I.     | 9           | 443          | 38.00               |
| 10 | Cooke, Fang Lee       | 9           | 268          | 9.00                |
| 11 | Yang, Yang            | 9           | 105          | 19.00               |
| 12 | Quer, Diego           | 8           | 273          | 41.00               |
| 13 | Li, Zhiyong           | 8           | 149          | 12.00               |
| 14 | Lu, Jiangyong         | 7           | 812          | 40.00               |
| 15 | Ma, Xufei             | 7           | 606          | 22.00               |
| 16 | Zhang, Yan            | 7           | 465          | 5.00                |
| 17 | Song, Haiyan          | 7           | 220          | 17.00               |
| 18 | Law, Rob              | 7           | 159          | 42.00               |
| 19 | Gao, Hongzhi          | 7           | 135          | 11.00               |
| 20 | Lai, Kee-Hung         | 6           | 1000         | 1.00                |

Notes: Data in Tables 3-5 were generated by co-authorship analysis with VOSviewer and the counting method is fractional counting. The total link strength in Tables 3-5 represents the strength of the co-authorship links of a given item with other items. The number of citations is based on the WoS database

**Table 3. Top 10 Institutions Ranked by the Number of Publications**

| # | Institutions                        | Documents ↓ | Citations | Total Link Strength |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|
| 1 | Hong Kong Polytechnic University    | 76          | 3177      | 364.00              |
| 2 | Zhejiang University                 | 52          | 1186      | 276.00              |
| 3 | Sun Yat-sen University              | 48          | 1500      | 272.00              |
| 4 | Peking University                   | 42          | 1929      | 312.00              |
| 5 | City University of Hong Kong        | 35          | 2541      | 267.00              |
| 6 | The Chinese University of Hong Kong | 32          | 2311      | 266.00              |
| 7 | Renmin University of China          | 30          | 531       | 110.00              |
| 8 | Griffith University                 | 29          | 1380      | 271.00              |
| 9 | The University of Nottingham        | 27          | 973       | 97.00               |

|    |                     |    |     |       |
|----|---------------------|----|-----|-------|
| 10 | Tsinghua University | 25 | 424 | 57.00 |
|----|---------------------|----|-----|-------|

**Table 4. Top 10 Countries/Regions Ranked by the Number of Publications**

| #  | Country     | Documents ↓ | Citations | Total Link Strength |
|----|-------------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|
| 1  | China       | 894         | 27078     | 3125.00             |
| 2  | USA         | 377         | 15787     | 1937.00             |
| 3  | Europe      | 360         | 12906     | 1801.00             |
| 4  | Australia   | 226         | 7511      | 1395.00             |
| 5  | Asia        | 150         | 3745      | 516.00              |
| 6  | South Korea | 61          | 1574      | 189.00              |
| 7  | Oceania     | 42          | 1107      | 277.00              |
| 8  | Italy       | 27          | 480       | 183.00              |
| 9  | France      | 26          | 1000      | 230.00              |
| 10 | Scotland    | 18          | 412       | 93.00               |

**Highly Cited Articles and Authors**

Table 5 shows the top 10 most highly cited articles, focusing on the firms both domestic and foreign, evidence of government and corporate, and Chinese’ lifestyle and travel effect. Table 6 shows the top 10 most highly cited authors.

**Table 5. Top 10 Most Cited Articles based on Citation Analysis**

| #  | Documents         | Focus   | Citations ↓ | Links |
|----|-------------------|---|-------------|-------|
| 1  | Luo (2010)        | OFDI  | 740         | 72    |
| 2  | Li (2008a)        | Managerial firm survey  | 621         | 30    |
| 3  | Mcguinness (2017) | CSR performance   | 546         | 11    |
| 4  | Cui (2012)        | Method: Data analysis   | 527         | 68    |
| 5  | Rui (2008)        | SIP   | 516         | 47    |
| 6  | Giannetti (2015)  | Method: Data analysis   | 478         | 39    |
| 7  | Wen (2021)        | Literature review: Broadcasted Media and Authors’ experiences | 455         | 7     |
| 8  | Zhu (2008)        | GSCM  | 391         | 4     |
| 9  | Zhou (2010b)      | Method: Data analysis   | 373         | 13    |
| 10 | Choi (2011)       | Method: Data analysis   | 367         | 9     |

Note: OFDI = Outward Foreign Direct Investment, CSR = Corporate Social Responsibility, SIP = strategic intent perspective, GSCM = green supply chain management

**Table 6. Top 10 Most Cited Authors based on Citation Analysis**

| # | Author            | Documents | Citations ↓ | Total Link Strength |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Zhou, Kevin Zheng | 10        | 1918        | 34                  |
| 2 | Liu, Xiaohui      | 11        | 1249        | 41                  |

|    |                    |    |      |    |
|----|--------------------|----|------|----|
| 3  | Li, Julie Juan     | 5  | 1190 | 28 |
| 4  | Lai, Kee-Hung      | 6  | 1000 | 1  |
| 5  | Cui, Lin           | 10 | 937  | 47 |
| 6  | Peng, Mike W.      | 6  | 845  | 18 |
| 7  | Lu, Jiangyong      | 7  | 812  | 40 |
| 8  | Wen, Jun           | 9  | 747  | 32 |
| 9  | Li, Xiang (Robert) | 9  | 632  | 66 |
| 10 | Ma, Xufei          | 7  | 606  | 22 |

*Highly Co-Cited References*

**Table 7. Top 10 Most Co-Cited References from the Co-Citation Analysis**

| #  | Co-cited references | Focuses  | Citations↓ |
|----|---------------------|--|------------|
| 1  | Luo Yd, 2007        | EM MNEs  | 125        |
| 2  | Buckley Pj, 2007    | Method: Data analysis  | 122        |
| 3  | Johanson J, 1977    | Method: Data analysis  | 93         |
| 4  | Peng Mw, 2008       | Research Review and Strategy Tripod                                | 92         |
| 5  | Fornell C, 1981     | Behavioral Constructs Survey                                       | 88         |
| 6  | Child J., 2005      | EM MNEs  | 85         |
| 7  | Kogut B, 1988       | Method: Data analysis  | 80         |
| 8  | Peng Mw, 2003       | Literature review: the international strategic path of enterprises | 76         |
| 9  | Podsakoff Pm, 2003  | Literature review: behavioral research                             | 72         |
| 10 | Luo Yd, 2010        | OFDI   | 71         |

Note: EM MNEs = Emerging Market Multinational Enterprises, OFDI = Outward Foreign Direct Investment

**Table 8. Top 10 Most Co-Cited Authors from the Co-Citation Analysis**

| #  | Co-cited authors | Citations↓ | Total Link Strength |
|----|------------------|------------|---------------------|
| 1  | Luo, Yd          | 560        | 533.52              |
| 2  | Peng, Mw         | 493        | 468.22              |
| 3  | Buckley, Pj      | 423        | 402.89              |
| 4  | Dunning, Jh      | 267        | 247.66              |
| 5  | Child, J         | 258        | 252.80              |
| 6  | Johanson, j      | 236        | 224.50              |
| 7  | Meyer, Ke        | 227        | 222.20              |
| 8  | Hofstede, G      | 203        | 189.42              |
| 9  | Li, J            | 179        | 176.34              |
| 10 | Deng, P          | 174        | 169.53              |

Note: Web of Science data includes only the first author of a cited document. Other authors are not considered in a co-citation analysis of cited authors.

**Table 9. Top 10 Most Co-Cited Journals from the Co-Citation Analysis**

| #  | Co-cited journals                         | Citations↓ | Total Link Strength |
|----|---|------------|---------------------|
| 1  | Journal of International Business Studies | 4818       | 2802.44             |
| 2  | Strategic Management Journal              | 2438       | 1601.93             |
| 3  | Tourism Management                        | 2215       | 896.07              |
| 4  | Academy of Management Journal             | 1718       | 1163.87             |
| 5  | Journal of World Business                 | 1414       | 965.88              |
| 6  | Annals of Tourism Research                | 1282       | 517.96              |
| 7  | Academy of Management Review              | 1266       | 818.93              |
| 8  | International Business Review             | 1139       | 752.42              |
| 9  | Journal of Business Ethics                | 1045       | 567.96              |
| 10 | Journal of Business Research              | 950        | 624.37              |

***Co-Occurrence Analysis: Identifying Research Themes and Trends***

The co-occurrence analysis of index keywords from articles’ titles, abstract, and author keywords yielded four clusters of research themes (see Figure 1), which we named Factors Affecting Chinese tourists' decision to travel abroad (cluster #1), Economic Determinants of In-house and Cross-Border Investment (cluster #2), Business Strategy and Stakeholder Theory (cluster #3), and Technology and Innovation-Driven Markets (cluster #4). Additionally, Figure 2 presents the temporal overlay visualization of index keywords, allowing us to observe the shift in research interest over time.





investment (FDI), that China uses to great effect in accomplishing its international goals (An, Zhang, & Wang, 2020; Tse, 2013; Waisová, 2020).

First are economic factors including income levels, as China's middle class continues to grow, more people have the financial means to travel internationally. Higher disposable income allows for spending on international flights, accommodation, and tourism activities, exchange rates making destinations more attractive. A stronger yuan (CNY) compared to the local currency in the destination country can encourage travel abroad, as well as airfare and travel costs by affording international flights with budget airlines, special promotions, and cost-effective travel packages. Second is cultural and social influences because Chinese tourists often choose countries with cultural or historical ties to China, such as neighboring countries or countries with large Chinese communities and especially, celebrity endorsement & social media influence platforms like WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin (TikTok) play a huge role in influencing travel choices. The third is experience & lifestyle preferences. Chinese consumers frequently indicate intentions to engage in luxury shopping, motivated by elements like brand consciousness, social comparison, and innovative fashion (Zhang & Kim, 2013). According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, PRC (2019), 149.7 million Chinese tourists traveled abroad in 2018, a 14.7% increase over 2017. Travel bloggers, influencers, and celebrities can generate interest in particular destinations.

In addition to the increasing popularity of outbound travel, Chinese visitors frequently have purchasing power that is noticeably out of proportion to their income when traveling abroad (Dai, Jiang, Yang, & Ma, 2017). Individual preferences in the sports and events tourism market have been one of the fastest-growing segments of the global travel industry over the past 20 years. Within the larger tourism sector, it is a developing specialty that presents specific chances for businesses and places to serve a niche market of tourists. Attending major international sporting events and participating in active sports tourism activities, such as the Olympic Games (Winter/Summer), upscale golf outings, marathons, and running, have become increasingly popular among Chinese outbound travelers. This niche market offers a wide variety of options for Chinese outbound travelers, catering to affluent individuals, dedicated fans, adventure seekers, and sports enthusiasts. By targeting specific interests, whether it's attending high-profile international events, engaging in active sports experiences, or participating in themed tourism packages, businesses can tap into a growing and lucrative market.

#### *Cluster #2: Economic Determinants of In-house and Cross-Border Investment*

The rise of the Chinese market as a major source market for numerous other short- and long-haul travel destinations signifies a shift from Burton's "industrializing" to "industrialized" tourism phase, in which rising international travel participation complements widespread domestic travel (Burton, 1995). China remains one of the largest sources of outbound tourists, both domestic players in the tourism sector and foreign entities involved in Chinese tourism must consider these determinants when planning investments or launching

tourism-related initiatives. To break down the key economic determinants related to China's outbound tourism. For short-haul outbound Chinese travelers, learning new things is the most important motivator. This is followed by improving one's self-image and, lastly, forging closer bonds with others (Hanqin & Lam, 1999). Additionally, the allure of traveling to a capitalist culture is a major factor in Chinese people's long-distance travel (Hsu and Lam, 2003).

Despite the expected economic disruptions that usually accompany the shift from a manufacturing model to one of services-dominated product and business innovation, it is highly likely that Chinese people's eagerness to travel overseas will continue as China enters its "post-industrial" stage (WTCF, 2015). At the same time, the Chinese people has grown more devoted to travel as its many advantages for welfare and quality of life become more obvious (Chen, Lehto & Cai, 2013) and its connections to the Chinese Dream become more obvious (Weaver, 2015). Moreover, government policies and regulations importantly play the role of supporting outbound tourism and attracting more investment incentives abroad. The government has historically supported as part of its broader strategy to increase consumption and global influence (e.g., through the Belt and Road Initiative) and offering easier visa policies through bilateral agreements facilitating tourism exchanges.

#### *Cluster #3: Business Strategy and Stakeholder Theory*

Finding the Chinese market segments that are most likely to increase steadily and show trends of high spending is a significant problem for stakeholders. A burgeoning middle class, rising disposable incomes, and rising demand for overseas travel have all contributed to China's outbound tourism rise. Every company and stakeholder is essential to managing the demands of the diverse tourism industry, and all of the various stakeholders that work together to create and provide the tourist experience must be included in the effective management of tourist congestion (Fyall et al., 2012). To divide the explanation into two parts, first is Business Strategy. China tourism is highly segmented with various traveler profiles, such as luxury tourists, family groups, Free Independent Travelers (FITs), and younger, experience-seeking explorers. So, businesses adopt tailored marketing strategies and address banding strategies for being culturally sensitive. Another is Stakeholder Theory. The key unique interests and potential stakeholders include travelers, tourism agencies, domestic companies (hotels, tour operators, retailers), host governments, and local communities. To balance their interests, there are partnerships and collaborations among tourism sectors to cater to Chinese preferences more effectively, enhance their appeal, and ensure sustainable growth, benefiting all involved parties.

#### *Cluster #4: Technology and Innovation-Driven Markets*

Technology and innovation have driven new trends and creating enhanced travel experiences for Chinese tourists. With more than 1 billion users globally, WeChat is the most popular social media in China and one of the most used platforms in the world. In addition, the tech-savviness of Chinese outbound tourists warrants our discussion on the use of social media in ethnographic

research to be relevant and significant (Xiang, Citation2013). Chinese travelers rely heavily on digital tools as data-driven experiences for planning, booking, and reviewing. With AI-driven recommendations, Chinese travelers are offered highly personalized travel itineraries based on their preferences and past travel behavior. Data-driven itinerary planning tools, like those also provided by Mafengwo, enable Chinese tourists to craft tailored experiences, suggesting locations based on real-time factors like peak hours, weather, and travel trends. Moreover, Mobile payments, particularly through WeChat Pay and Alipay, are integral to the must. Many foreign businesses and destinations are increasingly accommodating these payment methods, making travel more seamless and convenient for Chinese tourists. By adapting to these technology-driven preferences and embracing innovative tools, destinations and businesses can better attract, engage, and retain Chinese tourists in a competitive global tourism landscape.

## DISCUSSION

During its economic reform, China has seen significant and extensive changes in its institutions, including those related to politics, the economy, and company ownership structures (Hoskisson et al., 2000). Outbound travel from China will keep expanding, with sustainability and technology determining its course. There are three main ways that China's outbound tourism contributes. First, given the expected trajectory of the Chinese tourism demand, it contributes to the larger conversation about how sociopolitical factors in China affect outbound tourism, which could have very significant ramifications (Zhu, Airey, & Siriphon, 2021). Secondly, it clarifies how China uses the power of outbound travel to exercise soft power in the global arena. Thirdly, one of the few that provides an empirical viewpoint on the relationship between tourism and diplomacy. The recent shifts due to discussion on current trends and influences are reshaping. New travel patterns impacted Chinese to seek unique, flexible, personalized itineraries and meaningful experiences, driving interest in niche tourism sectors, for example, eco-friendly tourism, sport or event activities, and local cultures. As well as digital Transformation, Chinese tourists are now accustomed to seamless, technology-integrated travelers. Embracing future directions and opportunities, Over the past three decades, there has been a double-digit increase in the number of foreign visitors each year since the government classified tourism as a major development sector (Shao, 2005). An topic is thoroughly examined when it has both economic and social significance (Hunt and Layne, 1991). The main focus should be an investment in smart tourism infrastructure through technology-driven personalization, digital payment, and service integration to streamline the travel experience, and sustainability and responsible tourism initiatives with the global conscious. Importantly, collaboration with firms or other organizations to maintain tourism awareness among Chinese travelers, also build a significant travel decision impact to ensure a competitive edge and foster sustainable growth, making the most of China's vast tourism potential.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study assesses the overall performance and research themes in the area of China Outbound Tourism using bibliometric approaches and content analysis. Four major research themes are revealed by co-occurrence analysis: (1) factors affecting Chinese tourists' decisions to travel overseas, (2) economic factors influencing domestic and international investment, (3) business and stakeholder strategy, and (4) markets driven by technology and innovation. Subthemes for each of these themes were identified by a subsequent thorough content analysis. Chinese outbound tourism is influenced by a number of important elements, such as the limitations imposed by government policy, the effectiveness of travel agencies and businesses, the choices and actions of Chinese tourists, and the impact of social media and technology. These factors influence the quantity of Chinese visitors to other countries and influence travel patterns in the future. By 2019, China was the world's largest source of outbound tourists, with spending that significantly boosted global tourism revenues. This phenomenon presents opportunities for foreign investment, local business growth, job creation, infrastructure development, and the expansion of industries reliant on tourism.

**Appendix Table A1 The results of co-occurrence analysis of index keywords**

| Cluster | Label                 | Occurrences↓ | Links | Total link strength | Avg. pub. year>  |
|---------|-----------------------|--------------|-------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1       | china                 | 611          | 85    | 3498                | 2016.2782        |
| 1       | chinese               | 316          | 85    | 1696                | 2017.8703        |
| 1       | impacts               | 194          | 85    | 1255                | 2018.4536        |
| 1       | economics             | 148          | 85    | 885                 | 2017.8581        |
| 1       | models                | 137          | 83    | 792                 | 2017.292         |
| 1       | cultures              | 133          | 84    | 831                 | 2018.0902        |
| 1       | tourism               | 133          | 76    | 615                 | 2017.9323        |
| 1       | policy                | 126          | 83    | 676                 | 2018.627         |
| 1       | asia                  | 119          | 83    | 648                 | 2015.7815        |
| 1       | tourists              | 100          | 82    | 546                 | 2018.04          |
| 1       | behaviors             | 88           | 79    | 465                 | 2018             |
| 1       | social media          | 88           | 84    | 510                 | 2017.5568        |
| 1       | travel                | 88           | 60    | 412                 | 2017.0341        |
| 1       | globalisation         | 84           | 82    | 551                 | 2017.4762        |
| 1       | satisfaction          | 80           | 76    | 463                 | 2017.675         |
| 1       | <b>risk</b>           | 79           | 80    | 468                 | <b>2019.7089</b> |
| 1       | value                 | 78           | 81    | 467                 | 2017.1667        |
| 1       | international tourism | 75           | 77    | 422                 | 2018.1333        |
| 1       | <b>trade</b>          | 70           | 78    | 395                 | <b>2019.2</b>    |
| 1       | social networks       | 68           | 82    | 437                 | 2018.3088        |
| 1       | destinations          | 66           | 54    | 350                 | 2017.7121        |
| 1       | analysis              | 65           | 80    | 364                 | 2018.5077        |
| 1       | behavior              | 65           | 75    | 370                 | 2016.8308        |

|   |                           |     |    |      |                  |
|---|---------------------------|-----|----|------|------------------|
| 1 | <b>experiences</b>        | 65  | 82 | 432  | <b>2019.5231</b> |
| 1 | <b>information</b>        | 65  | 79 | 428  | <b>2019.8615</b> |
| 1 | niche tourism             | 65  | 68 | 281  | 2017.8154        |
| 1 | countries                 | 59  | 80 | 436  | 2018.8305        |
| 1 | north america             | 59  | 81 | 356  | 2015.3559        |
| 1 | perceptions               | 58  | 73 | 326  | 2017.2759        |
| 1 | cross-cultural            | 55  | 78 | 330  | 2016.4           |
| 1 | consumers                 | 54  | 70 | 302  | 2018.4815        |
| 1 | quality                   | 52  | 76 | 301  | 2018.8077        |
| 1 | <b>sport</b>              | 52  | 54 | 196  | <b>2019.0769</b> |
| 1 | event                     | 48  | 61 | 206  | 2017.4583        |
| 1 | nationality               | 47  | 72 | 253  | 2017.4043        |
| 2 | firm                      | 375 | 83 | 2899 | 2017.8           |
| 2 | performance               | 317 | 85 | 2333 | 2017.3785        |
| 2 | foreign direct investment | 239 | 80 | 1854 | 2018.364         |
| 2 | strategy                  | 225 | 85 | 1790 | 2016.2711        |
| 2 | institutions              | 187 | 82 | 1519 | 2018.1658        |
| 2 | market                    | 151 | 85 | 1098 | 2016.6093        |
| 2 | corporations              | 147 | 85 | 1041 | 2018.1497        |
| 2 | emerging market           | 144 | 79 | 1257 | 2017.8472        |
| 2 | investment                | 128 | 84 | 932  | 2017.5625        |
| 2 | foreign                   | 121 | 82 | 944  | 2018.2231        |
| 2 | government                | 109 | 82 | 800  | 2018.2661        |
| 2 | ownership                 | 109 | 76 | 856  | 2017.9083        |
| 2 | international             | 107 | 81 | 859  | 2017.1495        |
| 2 | determinants              | 106 | 83 | 837  | 2018.1226        |
| 2 | <b>politics</b>           | 97  | 83 | 745  | <b>2019.5464</b> |
| 2 | states                    | 84  | 80 | 661  | 2017.9524        |
| 2 | entry                     | 83  | 80 | 746  | 2016.2048        |
| 2 | location                  | 80  | 77 | 668  | 2018.3           |
| 2 | environments              | 78  | 80 | 560  | 2018.6795        |
| 2 | experience                | 72  | 80 | 531  | 2018.4861        |
| 2 | <b>finance</b>            | 68  | 78 | 423  | <b>2019.25</b>   |
| 2 | enterprises               | 67  | 75 | 525  | 2018.0149        |
| 2 | boards                    | 66  | 73 | 486  | 2018.5606        |
| 2 | choice                    | 55  | 82 | 435  | 2017.7455        |
| 2 | emerging markets          | 53  | 77 | 457  | 2016.4906        |
| 2 | law                       | 53  | 75 | 388  | 2016.8679        |
| 2 | transitions               | 52  | 76 | 435  | 2014.1346        |
| 2 | directions                | 51  | 73 | 402  | 2017.7059        |
| 2 | international-business    | 51  | 77 | 437  | 2018.8824        |

|   |                          |     |    |      |                  |
|---|--------------------------|-----|----|------|------------------|
| 2 | <b>cross-border</b>      | 48  | 72 | 375  | <b>2019.3125</b> |
| 2 | acquisition              | 46  | 74 | 421  | 2017.5435        |
| 2 | diversity                | 45  | 66 | 339  | 2017.5778        |
| 3 | business                 | 286 | 83 | 1990 | 2016.511         |
| 3 | management               | 224 | 85 | 1538 | 2016.536         |
| 3 | collaboration            | 179 | 84 | 1328 | 2016.659         |
| 3 | familiarity              | 101 | 79 | 721  | 2016.782         |
| 3 | organization             | 81  | 80 | 603  | 2016.716         |
| 3 | network                  | 79  | 81 | 619  | 2016.633         |
| 3 | stakeholder              | 63  | 80 | 445  | 2016.032         |
| 3 | human-resources          | 54  | 77 | 345  | 2014.963         |
| 3 | perspectives             | 53  | 82 | 399  | 2016.736         |
| 3 | trust                    | 52  | 77 | 386  | 2016.442         |
| 4 | innovation               | 159 | 81 | 1119 | 2018.931         |
| 4 | technology               | 127 | 84 | 822  | 2017.811         |
| 4 | knowledge                | 112 | 83 | 856  | 2017.563         |
| 4 | industry                 | 87  | 81 | 620  | 2017.126         |
| 4 | competition              | 85  | 79 | 609  | 2017.282         |
| 4 | products                 | 70  | 83 | 510  | 2018.329         |
| 4 | entrepreneurship         | 56  | 74 | 427  | 2018.571         |
| 4 | research and development | 54  | 67 | 446  | 2017.944         |
| 4 | growth                   | 53  | 71 | 373  | 2017.774         |

Notes: The research hotspots (excluding research methodology) highlighted in red have an average publication year greater than 2019.00.

### ADVANCED RESEARCH

Further research could examine the post-pandemic impact on Chinese tourist behavior, compare destination countries' strategies in attracting Chinese tourists, explore the influence of social media and digital technologies, and analyze cross-border investment in the tourism sector. In addition, it is important to examine the demographic changes and segmentation of Chinese tourists, as well as the displacement and environmental impacts of the increasing number of outbound tourists from China.

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