



Dragon Trail
INTERNATIONAL

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Chinese Outbound Travel Trade Survey

Dragon Trail Research

July 2026





Dragon Trail
INTERNATIONAL

Solutions to build and strengthen your connections to the Chinese travel trade



Digital Solutions

Dragon Trail's digital trade hub solutions include training courses and webinars optimized for WeChat, product catalogues, and data management systems to ensure you get the best results.



Trade Representation

We identify and introduce you to key partners and contacts in the Chinese travel trade, and work with them to promote your product or destination, while keeping you up to date on this dynamic market.



Events Management

We're experienced at organizing fully offline, hybrid, and online events for the Chinese travel trade, including road shows, conferences, and FAM trips for both the leisure travel and MICE sectors.

SELECTED CLIENTS



Dragon Trail is proud to
provide official travel
advisor training for:



Let's get started!



Introduction: Chinese outbound travel agents are upbeat about market growth in 2026, with potential from new travelers and technologies

The travel industry has faced headwinds around the world in the first half of 2026. War in the Middle East resulted in closed airspace and governmental travel advisories, while rising jet fuel prices impacted flights thousands of miles from the conflict zone. What's more, around half of flights between China and Japan have also been canceled following a diplomatic incident in late 2025. But to what extent has all of this actually impacted Chinese outbound travel plans and demand?

To find out, Dragon Trail Research surveyed 310 Chinese travel trade professionals currently engaged in selling outbound travel products. Our sixth Chinese travel trade survey since 2023, the questionnaire covered China's outbound travel market in 2026 and summer travel trends, as well as MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) travel and AI.

The results highlight the resilience of the Chinese outbound market – travel agents report continued growth in demand so far this year and into the summer season. Even Japan remains a top destination, with other countries throughout East and Southeast Asia maintaining strong performance. A promising indication for the future, survey respondents identified young Chinese travelers aged 18-35 as the market segment with the most potential for growth.

This summer's survey is Dragon Trail's first time taking a deeper look at the MICE market in our research – the results reveal the value of destination safety and stability, alongside opportunities to develop experiences and wellness offerings for corporate travelers. Our breakdown of priorities by type of corporate/MICE travel should prove particularly helpful for destinations seeking to attract this market.

We also revisited some of the same questions about AI that we asked travel agents one year ago, revealing – unsurprisingly – an uptick in adoption and nearly universal use of this technology by China's outbound travel trade. Over the last year, Dragon Trail has been rolling out new AI tools for B2B marketing, including AI-powered support for live events and AI-enhanced travel trade marketing hubs, helping our clients to connect more easily to the Chinese travel trade and empower travel agents to keep selling to this highly receptive market.

Sienna Parulis-Cook
Director of Marketing
and Communications

Janice Meng
Market Research Analyst

Tiana Tian
Market Research Analyst

Chinese travel trade survey findings: Our 5 top takeaways from the report

1) Chinese travel agents say outbound travel demand has remained robust

International travel has faced strong headwinds in 2026, including mass flight cancellations, geopolitical conflict, and rising fuel costs. But Chinese travel agents maintain that the market remains robust, with 78% reporting increased demand for outbound trips in the first half of 2026 compared to one year earlier, and 70% saying demand for summer trips has increased since last year.

2) Regional destinations stand out, with strong performance for Thailand

Survey results underscore Thailand's comeback as the leading outbound travel destination for mainland Chinese, with the country's visa-free policy and good value for money helping it to stand out. But demand for trips to Japan remains high, survey respondents maintain, despite diplomatic tensions and reduced flight capacity. South Korea and Singapore also top destination lists for 2026.

3) Young Chinese travelers represent the fastest-growing market segment for outbound trips, while top-tier cities still dominate

Chinese travel agents identified young travelers aged 18–35 as the fastest-growing market segment for outbound trips, chosen by 47% of respondents. Meanwhile, 40% said that travelers from Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities were the fastest-growing group – compared to just 6% who saw the most growth potential from lower-tier Chinese cities.

4) MICE trends overlap with the outbound leisure market, including high demand for safe destinations and immersive experiences

Safety and security is a top factor for leisure travelers when choosing a destination, and our research shows that this priority also applies to Chinese corporate groups traveling outbound. Travel agents identified customized and immersive experiences and wellness as the biggest growth opportunities for MICE travel in the coming years.

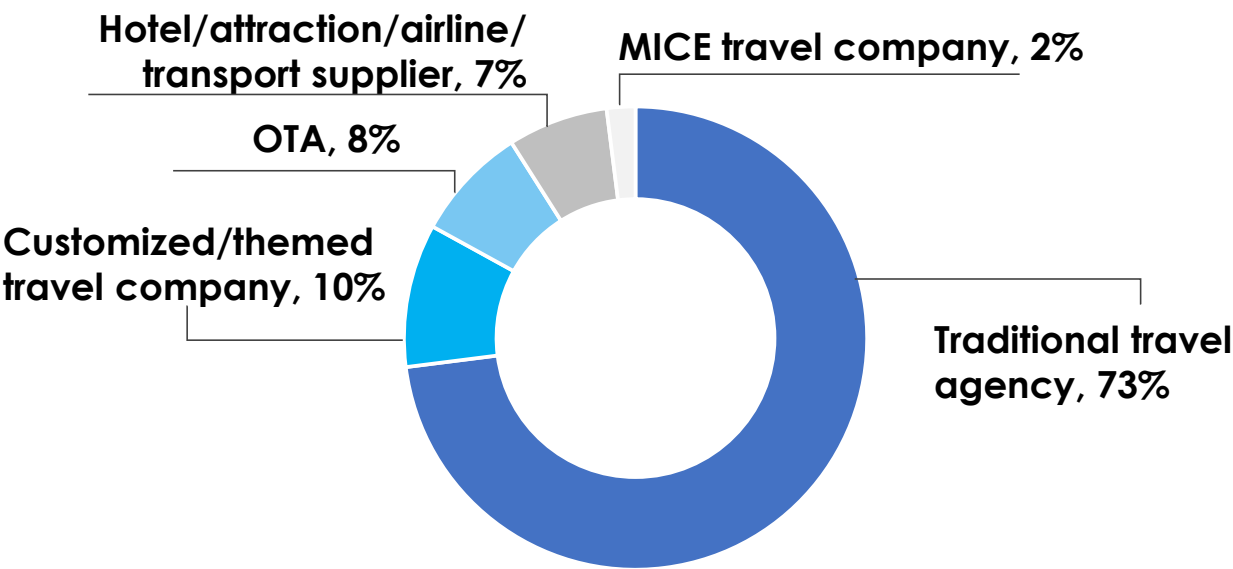
5) Nearly all Chinese travel agencies are using AI, with accelerated use expected for the future

99% of survey respondents said their companies were using AI, up from 82% one year ago. 89% expect increased AI adoption in the coming year. AI technology is being used in a variety of scenarios, with product data management and language tools chief among them. There is strong potential for AI to drive greater personalization, but obstacles around customer data use limit results so far.

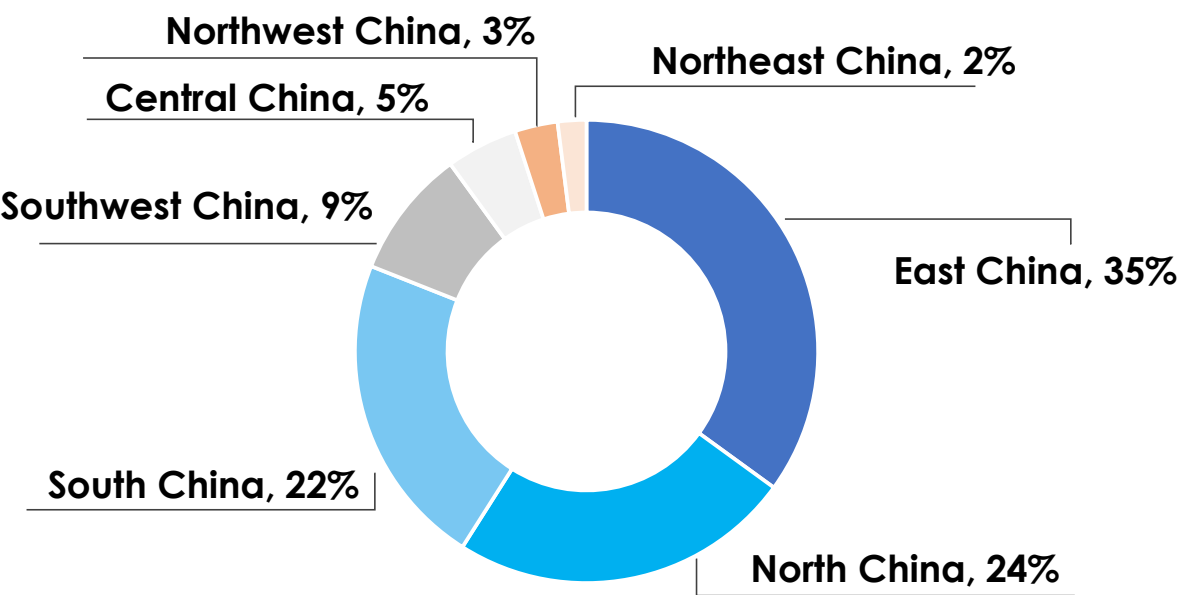
Methodology

From 15-26 June 2026, Dragon Trail Research conducted a 33-question online survey of travel agents currently selling outbound travel to mainland Chinese travelers. Survey respondents were strictly vetted, and our data cleaning process identified and removed invalid responses, resulting in a total of 310 valid responses.

Company category of respondents



Company region of respondents



01/ 2026 Market



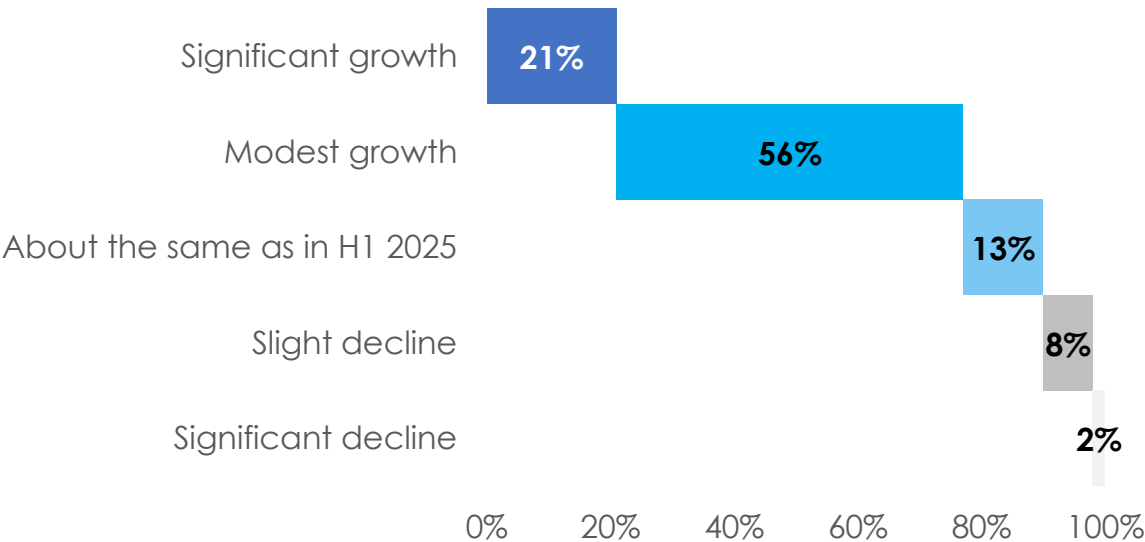
In the first half of 2026, China's outbound travel market is still on the rise, say outbound travel agents. This section of the survey explores the international destinations driving market growth, as well as the products and customer segments with the best sales performance and opportunities this year.

Photo by Humphrey M, Unsplash

More than three-quarters of surveyed Chinese travel agents say outbound travel demand is still on the rise in 2026

Despite numerous challenges to the global tourism market this year, 77% of surveyed travel agents said they saw rising demand in Chinese outbound travel demand in the first half of 2026, with 21% noting significant growth and 56% observing modest growth. Just 10% of travel agents said that demand had declined compared to the same period last year, with most of this group observing a slight decline. Over the following pages of this section, we will dive into the destination regions, countries, product types, and traveler segments that are driving this continued growth.

How does Chinese outbound travel demand in H1 2026 compare with H1 2025? N=310

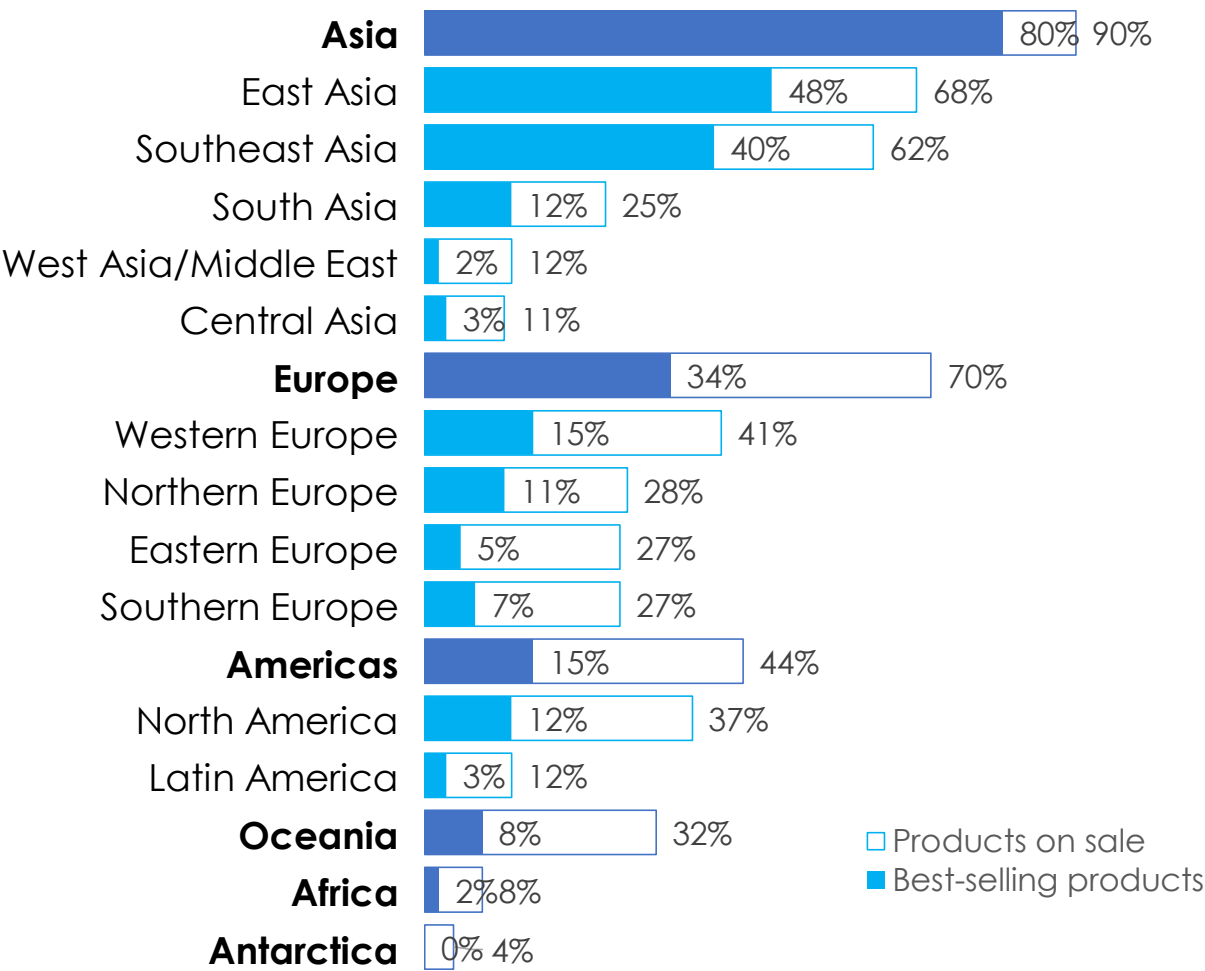


East Asia remains the leading sub-region for sales, closely followed by Southeast Asia

Asia remains the top region for both product availability and sales performance (90%; 80%) in H1 2026. East Asia is the leading sub-region (68%; 48%), closely followed by Southeast Asia (62%; 40%). 70% of surveyed travel agents offer European travel products, with 34% of total respondents choosing Europe as a top-performing region for outbound travel sales. Within Europe, Western Europe is the strongest sub-region in both product availability and sales performance (41%; 15%).

On sale and best-selling Chinese outbound travel market products in H1 2026 (by region)

N=310



Thailand and Japan lead travel agency demand, with two North American countries also securing spots as noteworthy destinations for 2026

We asked the Chinese travel trade about the most noteworthy outbound destinations for 2026, and found that Thailand and Japan ranked 1st and 2nd, mentioned by 19% and 16% of travel agents, respectively. South Korea secured the 3rd place spot (13%). Singapore and the USA followed, each chosen by 7% of respondents. Overall, the noteworthy outbound destinations are mostly located in Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Europe, with North American countries (the USA and Canada) also represented.

Most noteworthy outbound destination for 2026 (N=310)

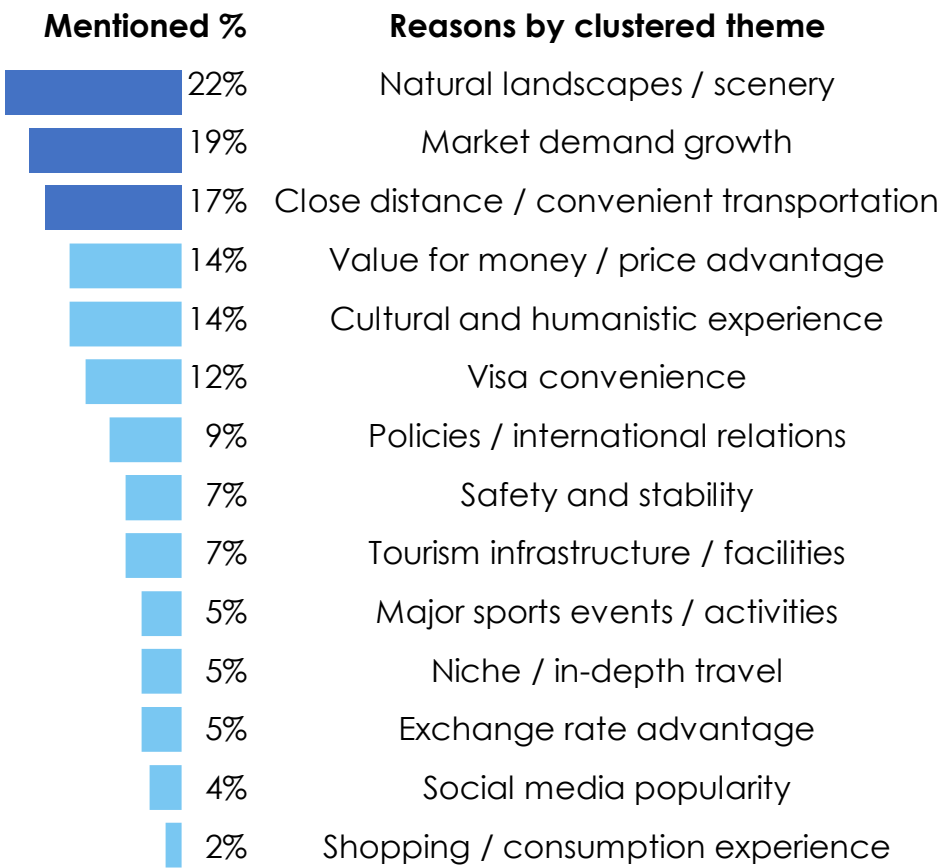
Region	Destination	*Mentioned %
Southeast Asia	Thailand	19%
East Asia	Japan	16%
East Asia	South Korea	13%
Southeast Asia	Singapore	7%
North America	USA	7%
Europe	Iceland	5%
South Asia	Maldives	5%
Oceania	New Zealand	4%
Europe	Russia	4%
Europe	UK	4%
Europe	Spain	3%
North America	Canada	2%
Southeast Asia	Malaysia	2%

**Only destinations with a mention percentage greater than 1% are shown here.*

Natural scenery, growing market demand, and accessibility are the top factors that make outbound destinations stand out in 2026

From the perspective of the Chinese travel trade, attractive natural landscapes and scenery are the top factor driving destination popularity, mentioned by 22% of respondents in our survey. Growth in market demand, and close distance/convenient transport are also leading reasons that make destinations the most noteworthy in 2026, mentioned by 19% and 17%, respectively. See Appendix A for a list of destinations most closely associated with each reason by survey respondents.

Reasons for becoming the most noteworthy outbound destination for 2026 (N=310)

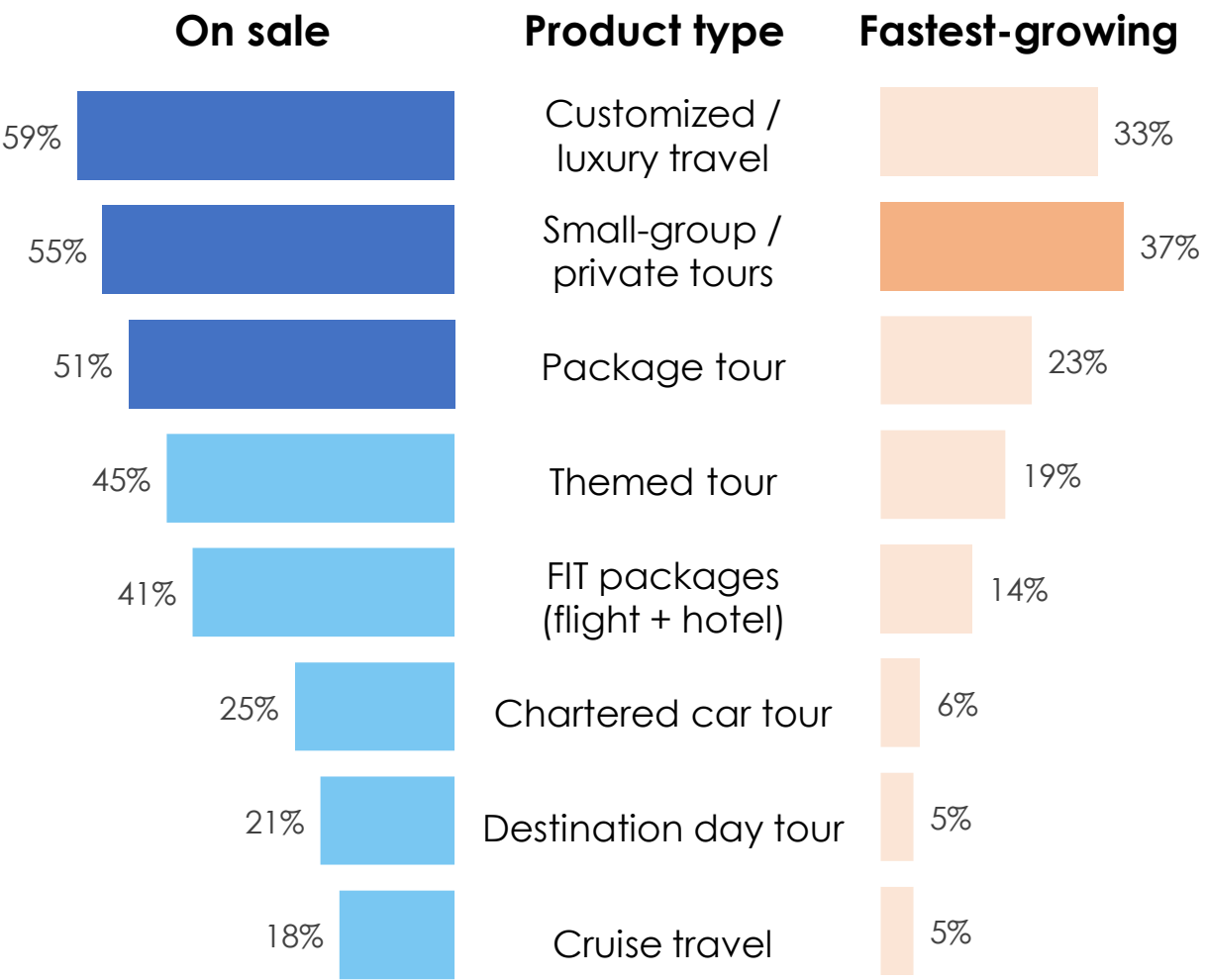


Customized and small-group tours are driving both present sales and future opportunity

Customized and luxury travel rank as the most widely offered products, sold by 59% of surveyed travel agents. Small-group and private tours take the lead in growth, with 37% of respondents identifying them as the fastest-growing category in H1 2026. Customized and luxury travel follows closely in growth performance, chosen by 33% of respondents. Traditional package tours remain a staple offering (sold by 51%), yet their growth potential lags far behind customized and small-group tour options, chosen by only 23%.

On sale and fastest-growing Chinese outbound travel market products in H1 2026 (by product type)

N=310

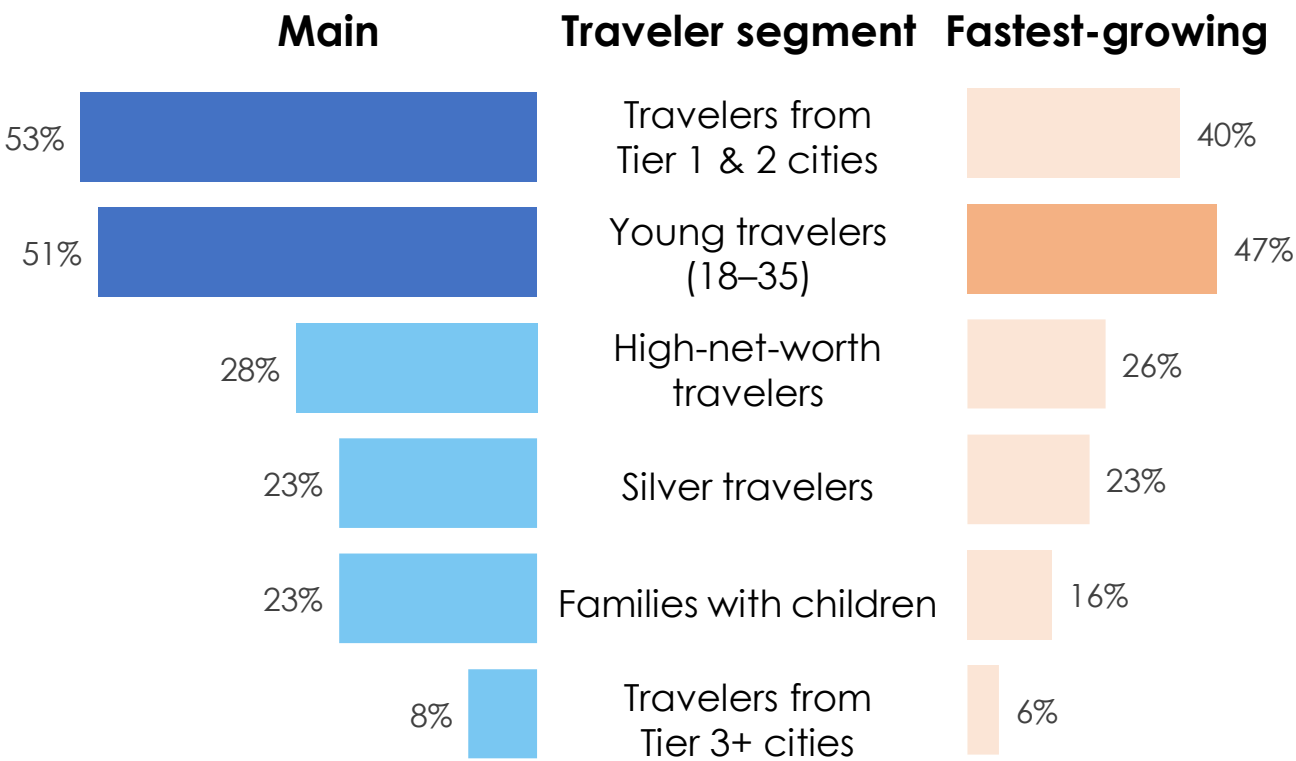


Young travelers make up the fastest-growing market segment for outbound travel in 2026

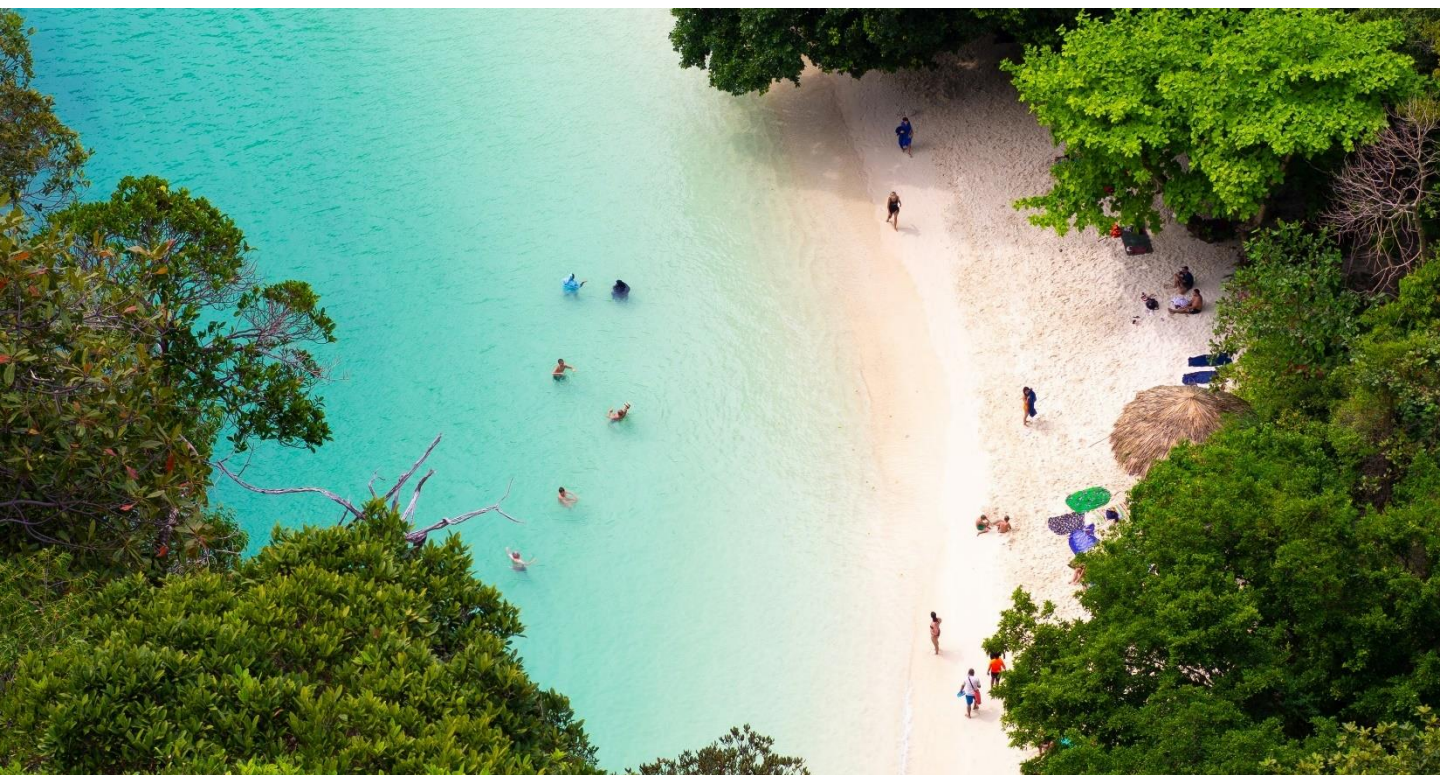
We asked Chinese travel agents to identify the primary outbound traveler segments and fastest-growing customer groups in H1 2026. Travelers from Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities were the primary customer group among 53% of agents, and 40% also said these travelers were the fastest-growing group – compared to just 6% who saw the most growth potential from lower-tier cities. Young travelers (aged 18–35) were identified as the dominant and fastest-growing segment by 51% and 47% of respondents, respectively.

Main and fastest-growing customer segments in H1 2026

N=310



02/ 2026 Summer Travel



Who is traveling outbound this summer, where are they going, and how has summer travel demand been impacted by recent geopolitical events? Chinese travel agents report a robust market, with particularly strong demand for luxury travel products, and beach and island travel.

Photo by Yoav Aziz, Unsplash

70% of Chinese travel agents say outbound travel demand is stronger this summer than last

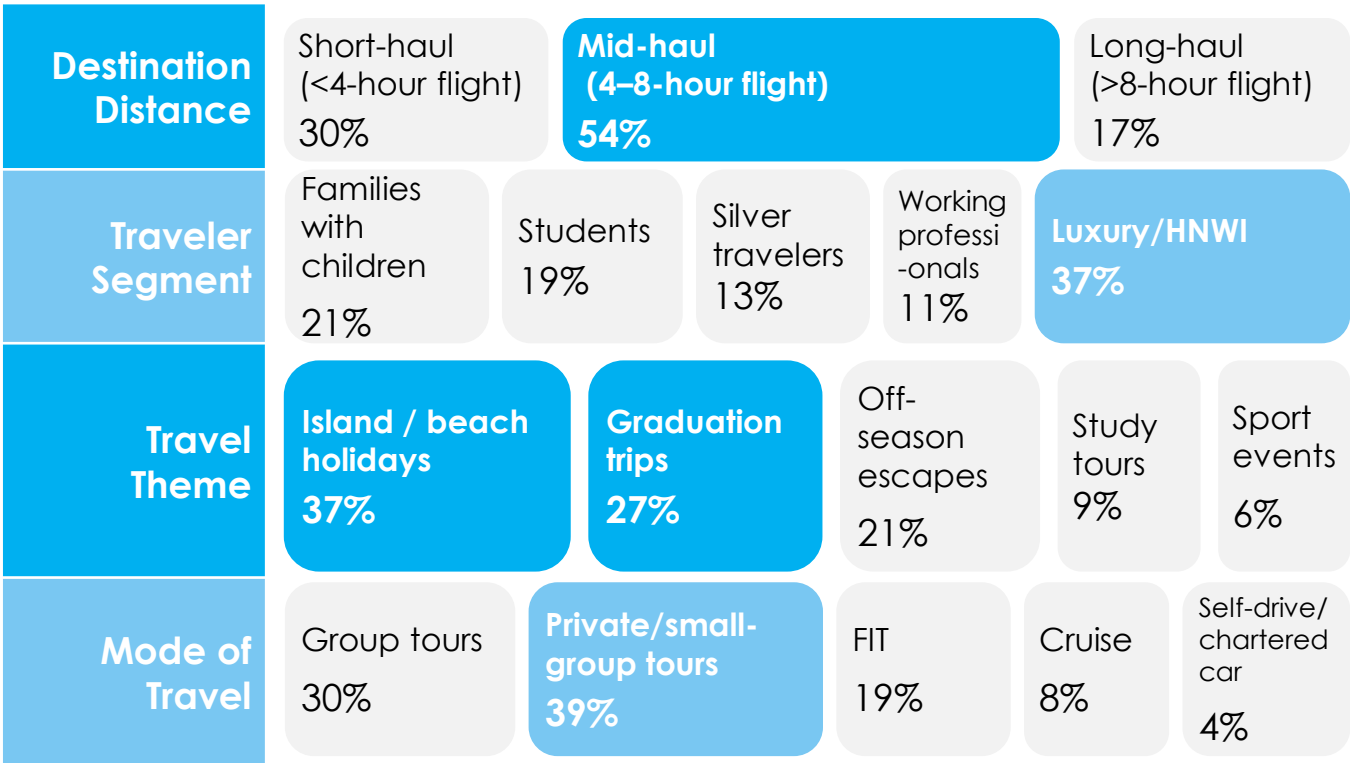
Despite geopolitical tensions and rising fuel costs earlier in the year, Chinese travel agents say outbound travel demand remains robust. 70% said demand for outbound trips this summer had increased compared to last year, with just 6% saying demand is down. More than half (54%) said mid-haul (4-8 hour flight) destinations are the most popular for summer trips. Survey respondents identified luxury travelers (37%) as the leading market segment, with island/beach holidays (37%) and graduation trips (27%) the top themes. Private/small group tours offer the best sales potential for 39% of travel agents.

How does demand for summer 2026 outbound travel compare to summer 2025? N=310



■ Demand increased ■ Roughly the same ■ Demand decreased

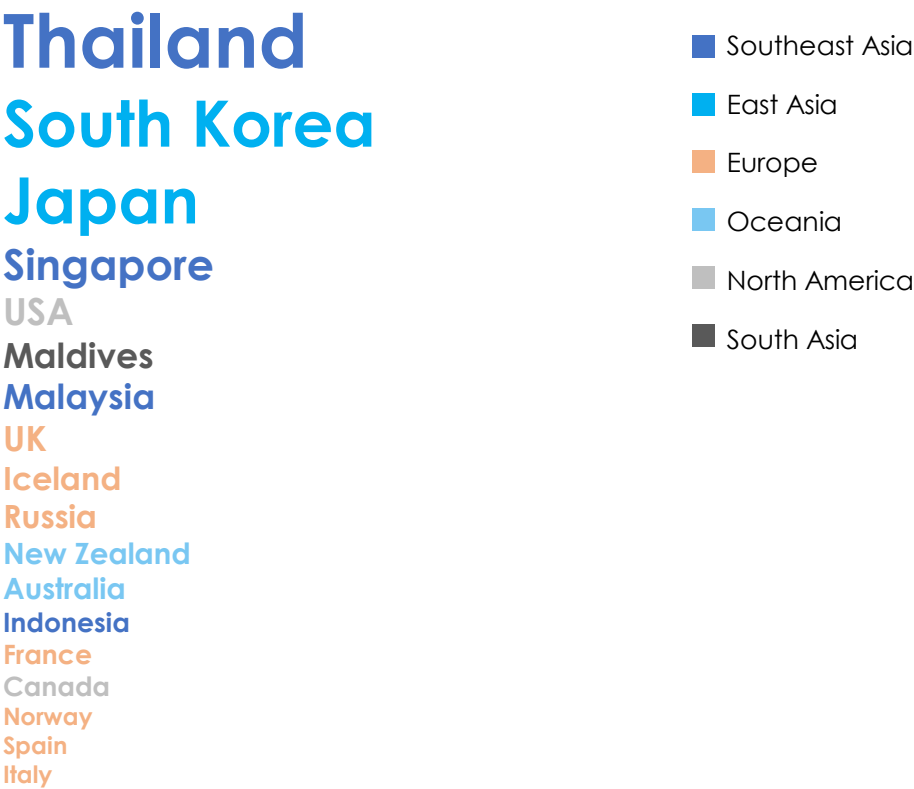
Which outbound travel products for summer 2026 are selling best? N=310



Thailand tops the best-selling destination list for summer 2026, followed by Korea and Japan

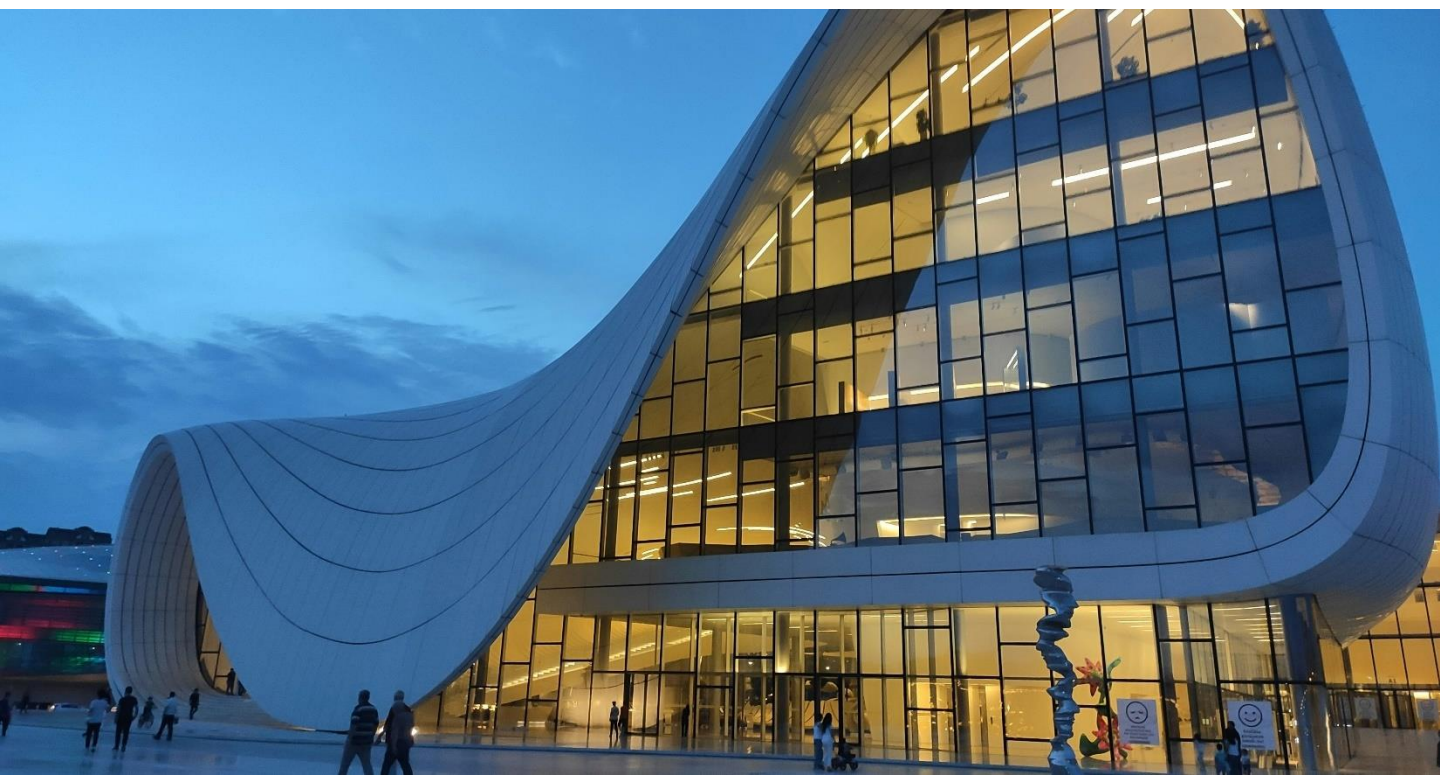
Thailand's comeback as the favorite international destination for Chinese travelers continues this summer – travel agents identified it as the best-selling destination, followed by South Korea. Despite a drop in visitation, Japan remains the third most popular summer travel destination according to Chinese travel agents. Travel agents also mentioned Singapore, the USA, Maldives, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Canada as summer 2026 best-sellers, alongside a diverse list of European destinations: the UK, Iceland, Russia, France, Norway, Spain, and Italy.

Best-selling destinations for summer 2026 N=310



**Destinations mentioned ≥1% are shown here; font size represents mention frequency.*

03/ MICE



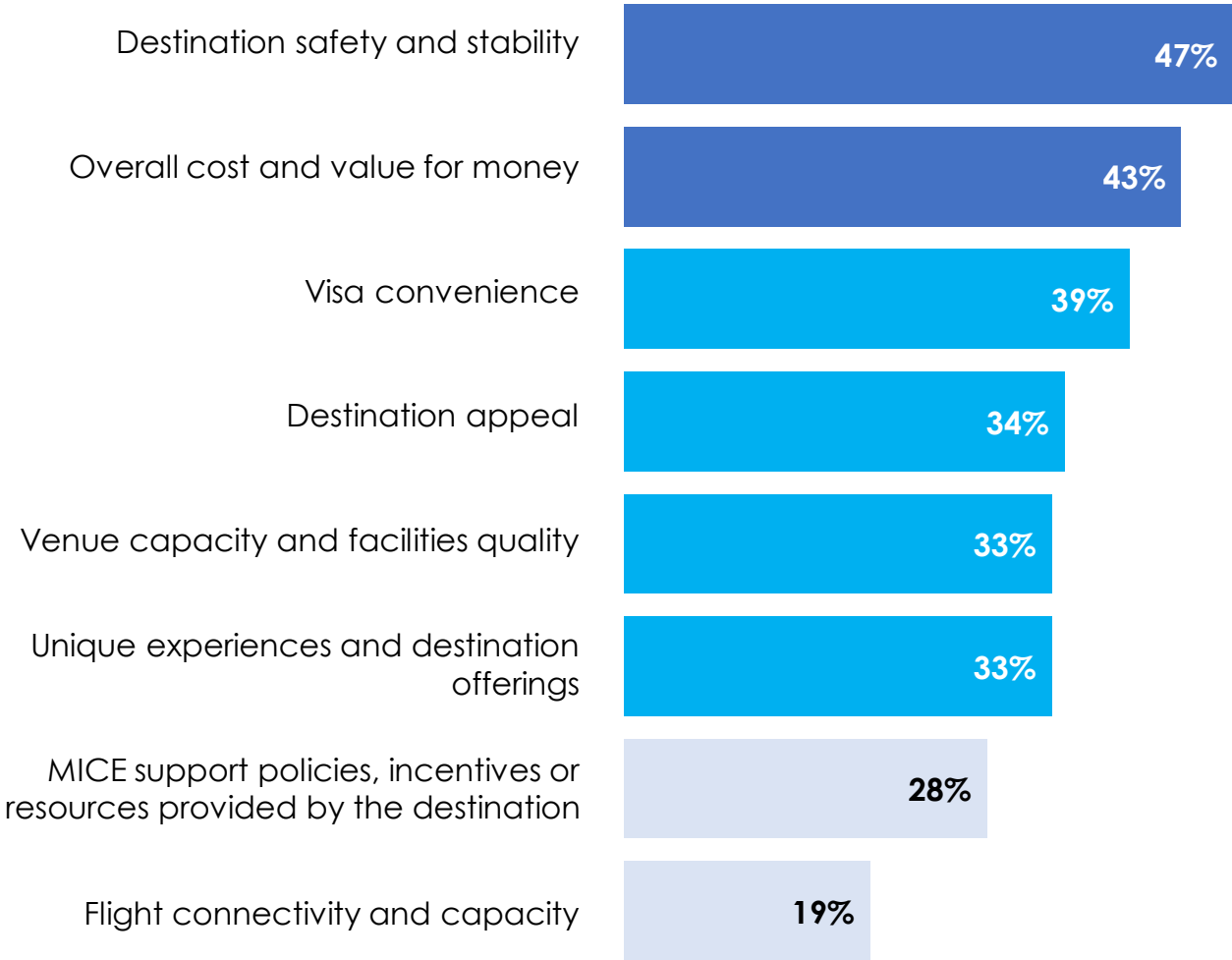
Beyond leisure, we also explored China's MICE travel sector, including destination considerations, emerging trends and demands, and destination support to drive conversion. Our survey results reveal the importance of safety, value for money, and visa accessibility, as well as growing demand for customized, immersive experiences at overseas MICE events.

Photo by İltun Huseynli, Unsplash

Safety is the top priority in outbound MICE destination consideration, followed by cost

Safety and security is a top factor for leisure travelers when choosing a destination, and this is also a priority for Chinese corporate groups traveling outbound. 47% of the 302 surveyed travel agents who have organized at least one type of outbound corporate group in the last two years (see Appendix B for detailed information) identified destination safety as the most critical factor for their clients. Overall cost and value for money ranked second, selected by 43% of respondents. Other key consideration factors when selecting overseas MICE destinations include visa convenience (39%), destination appeal (34%), venue and facilities (33%) and unique experiences at the destination (33%).

When selecting an overseas MICE destination, which of the following factors are most important to your clients? N=302

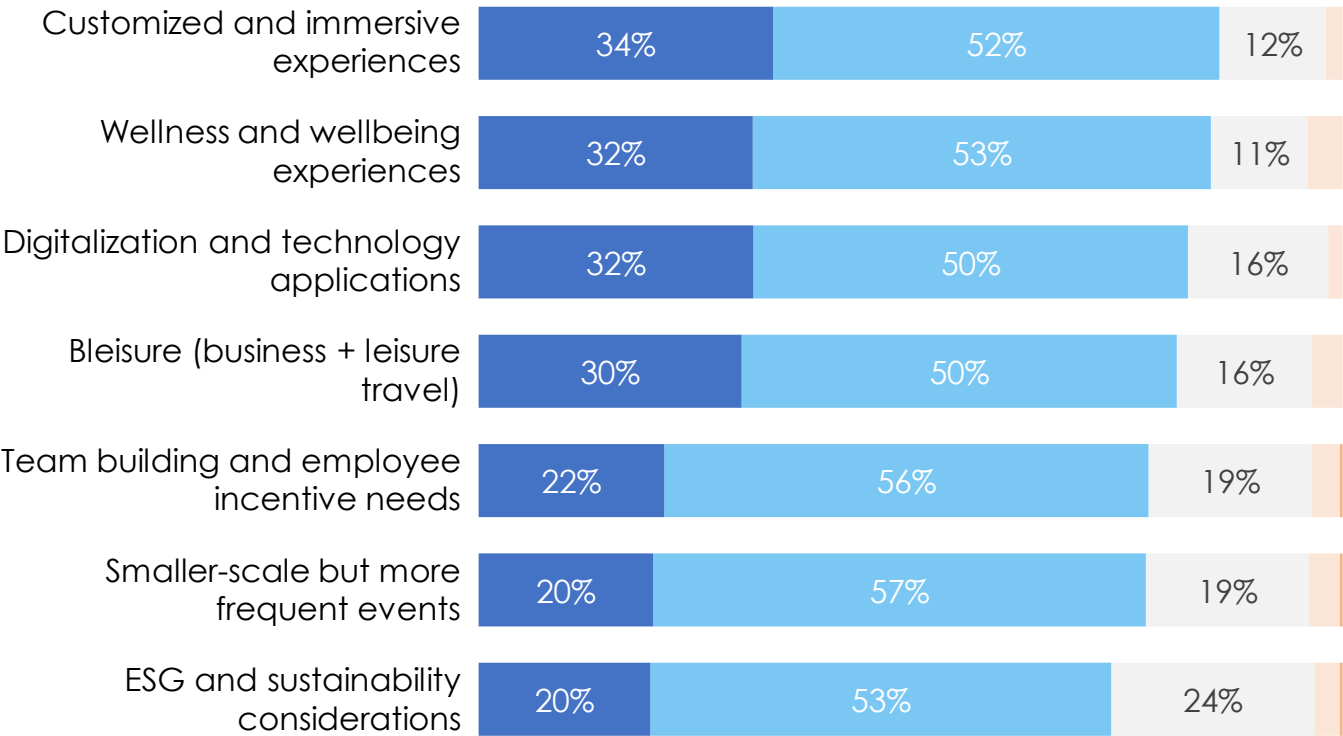
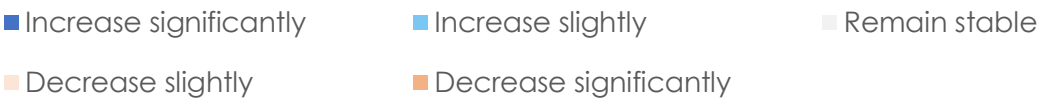


Customized immersive experiences and wellness will shape the future of the outbound MICE market

Which emerging trends and demands will influence the future of the Chinese outbound MICE market? 86% of travel agents anticipate increasing demand for customized and immersive experiences at overseas MICE events over the next three years. Wellness and wellbeing experiences are another growing trend, chosen by 85% of respondents. Additionally, most respondents predicted that the integration of digital technology into the outbound MICE market (82%) and the combination of business and leisure travel (81%) would continue to rise.

How do you expect demand for the following overseas MICE trends among Chinese companies to change over the next 3 years?

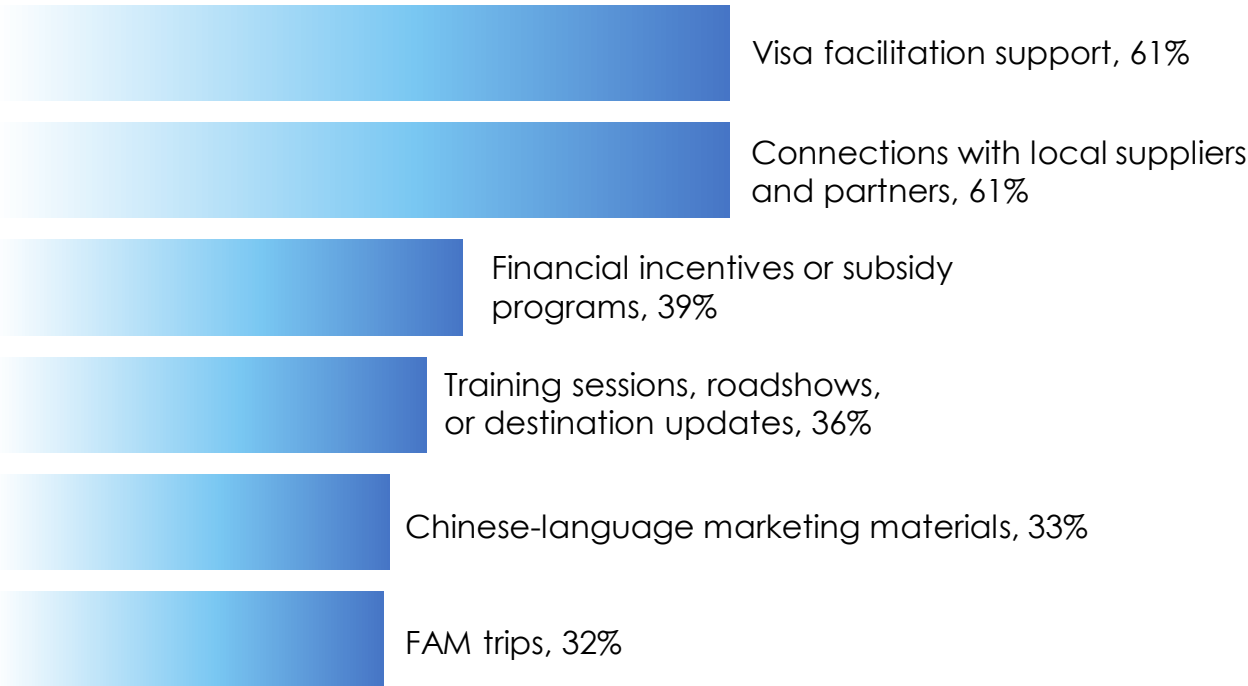
N=302



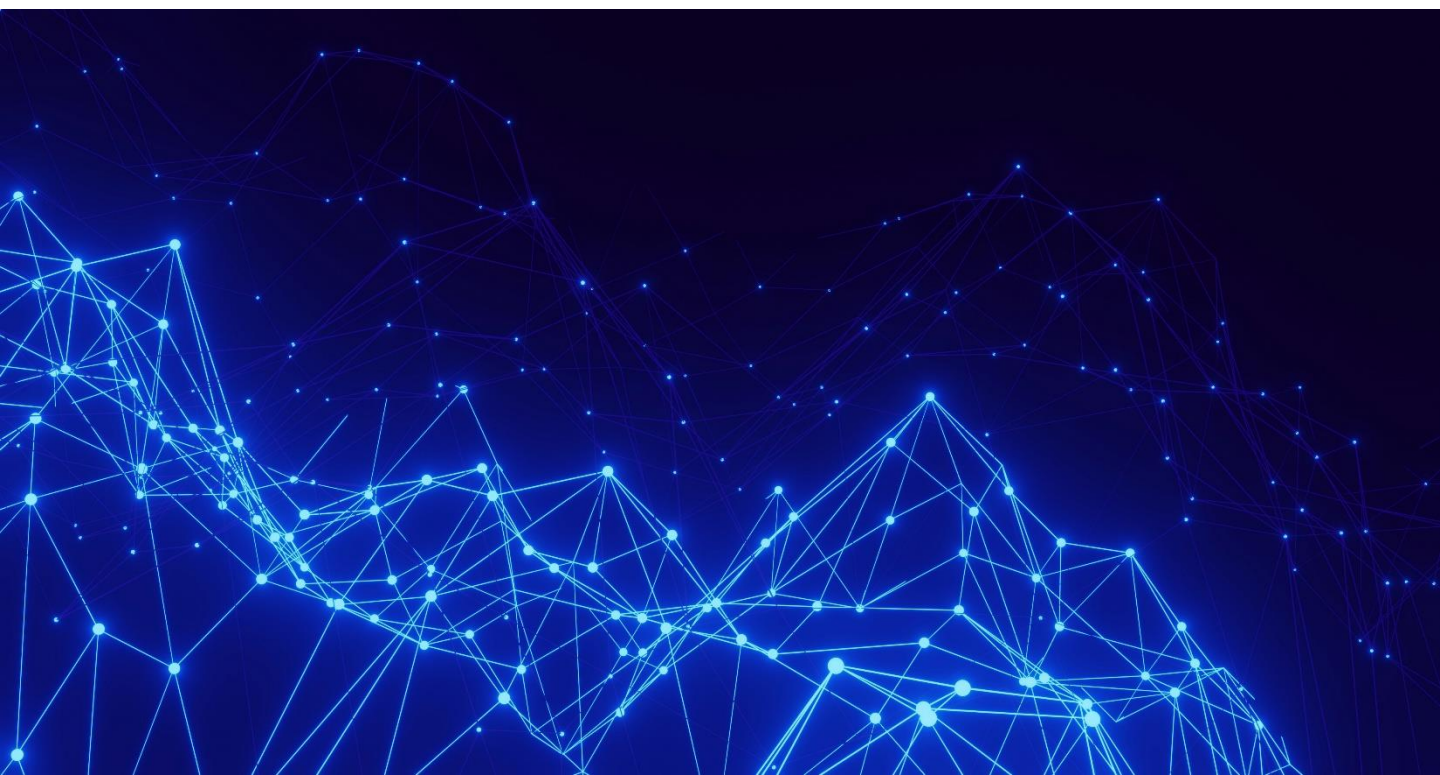
Chinese travel agents expect more visa facilitation policies and resource matchmaking

When asked which forms of support from overseas destinations were most helpful when recommending them to corporate clients, over half of survey respondents considered practical support that reduces operational barriers – such as visa facilitation (61%) and access to local suppliers and partners (61%) – to be the most valuable. Still, around one-third of respondents said they would benefit from marketing-oriented support such as roadshows and training sessions (36%), Chinese-language marketing materials (33%), and FAM trips (32%).

Which types of support from overseas destinations would most help you recommend them as MICE destinations? N=302



04/ Artificial Intelligence



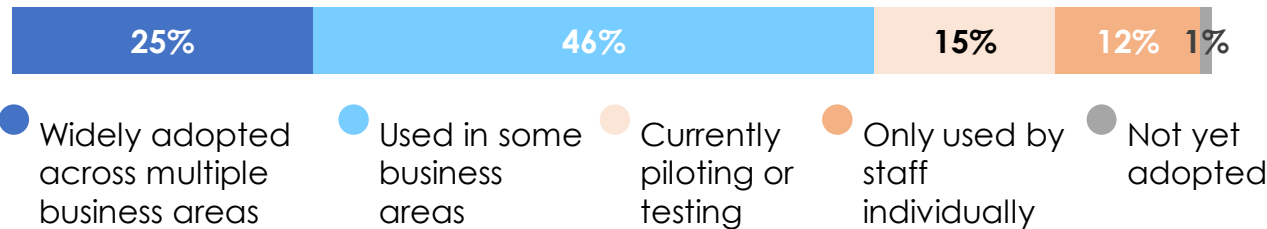
In Dragon Trail's summer 2025 Chinese Outbound Travel Trade Survey, 82% of travel agents said their company was already using AI – one year later, the proportion has risen to 99%. This summer's survey reveals how Chinese travel agents are using AI now, as well as the technology's current limitations and opportunities for future improvement.

Photo by Connie Schneider, Unsplash

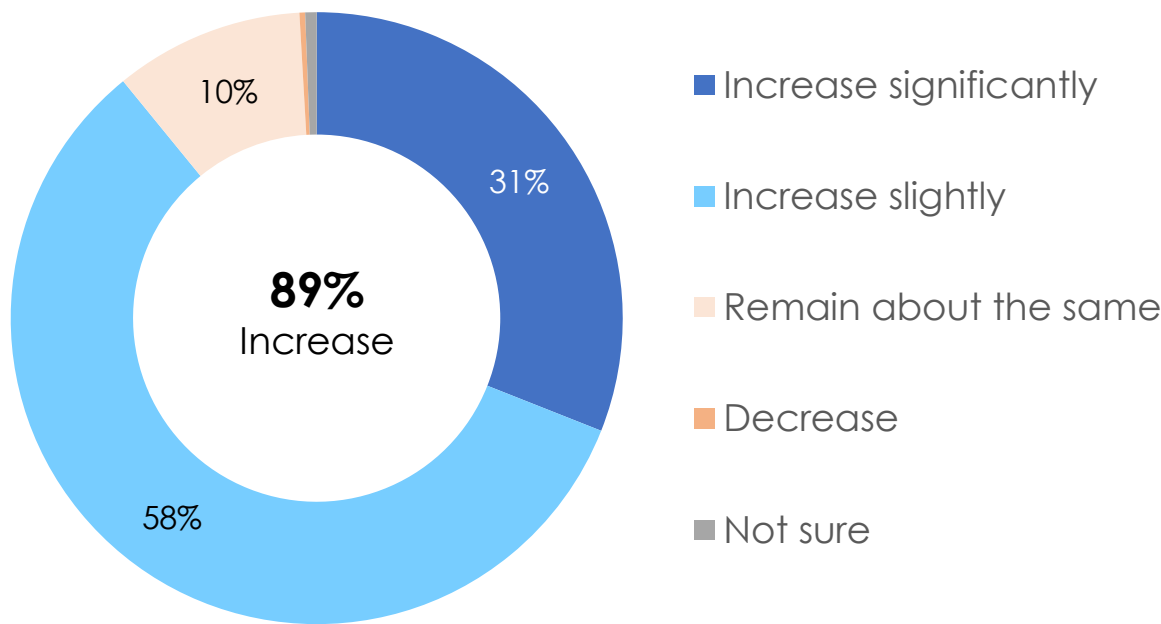
AI adoption is nearly universal for Chinese travel agencies, with most expecting increased use

99% of travel agents reported at least some AI adoption by their companies, with 25% saying the technology has been widely adopted across multiple business areas and another 46% saying it is used in some business areas. Looking forward to the next 12 months, 89% of survey respondents expected AI adoption by their companies to increase.

What is your company's current AI adoption status? N=310



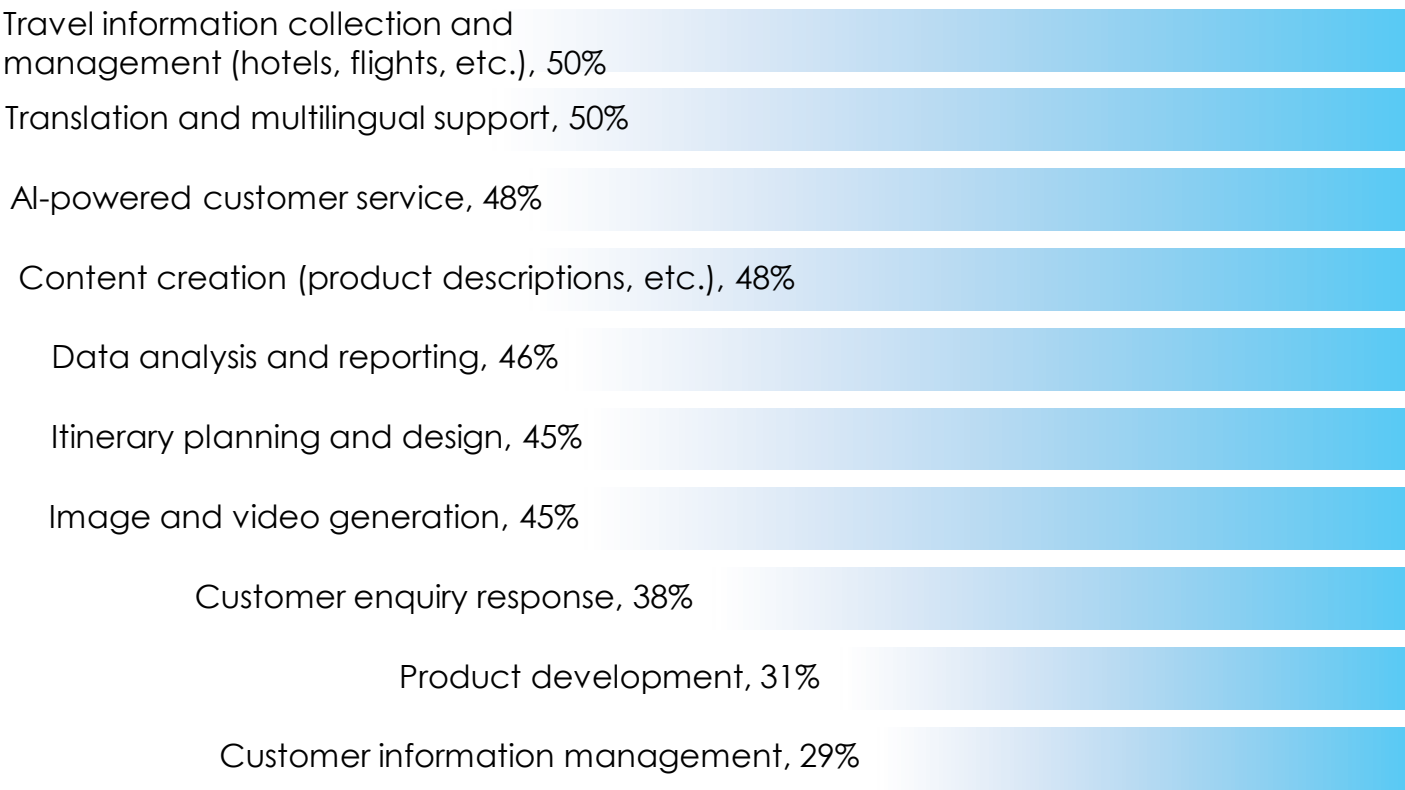
How you expect your company's AI adoption to change over the next 12 months? N=310



Information management and language support lead for AI use cases

Chinese travel agencies are using AI for a wide variety of business areas, the most popular of which are travel information collection and management for products such as hotels and flights, and translation and multi-lingual support, both selected by half of respondents. 48% each reported that their companies currently use AI to power customer service and create content such as product descriptions. Other popular uses of AI technology include data analysis and reporting (46%), itinerary planning and design (45%) and image and video generation (45%).

In which business areas does your company currently use AI technology? N=307



Travel agents want to use AI to enhance personalization, but face challenges in doing so

Chinese travelers increasingly seek more personalized services and products, and 53% of travel agents say this is the area where AI has the greatest potential to help them improve their business. But at the same time, customer information management is currently the area where travel agencies are least likely to be using AI (see previous page), and data security and privacy concerns are seen as the biggest challenge to applying AI to their business by 63% of respondents.

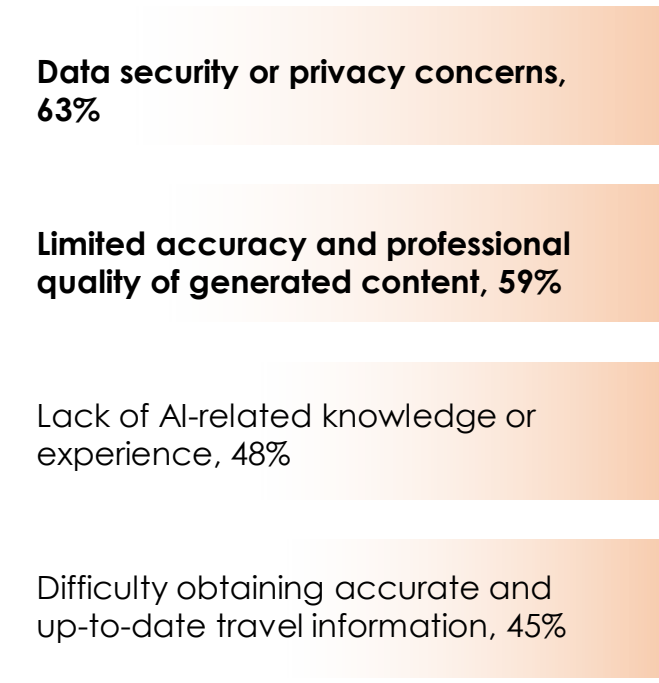
Where do you see the greatest potential for AI to help travel agencies improve their business?

N=310



What are the main challenges in applying AI to your travel agency business?

N=310



Chinese travel agencies are looking to AI to further improve outbound travel businesses in...

Itinerary Planning & Personalization

“Quickly customize personalized outbound itineraries, automatically generating multiple travel options based on travelers' budgets, travel groups, and preferences.”

“Recommend suitable destinations and local food experiences based on travelers' past travel history.”

Travel Intelligence & Real-time Information

“I hope AI can act like a professional travel consultant, providing real-time updates on global information, exchange rates and transportation changes before and during the trip, while instantly suggesting alternative arrangements when unexpected situations arise to ensure a smooth travel experience.”

“Information collection is the key issue. At present, AI mainly searches websites for information, but much of it is inaccurate or misleading.”

Multilingual Service & Customer Support

“AI translation tools can help overcome language barriers in outbound travel by translating attraction information, restaurant menus and local conversations in real time, while also providing multilingual customer service to support seamless communication abroad.”

“It would be helpful to provide translation support for more minor languages.”

Customer Insights & Marketing

“AI can mainly help with promotion and customer targeting by using big data to accurately identify target audiences and marketing priorities for different travel products, which is what we need in the future.”

“By analyzing customers' browsing behavior, AI can accurately recommend outbound destinations and travel products that match their interests, thereby improving conversion rates.”

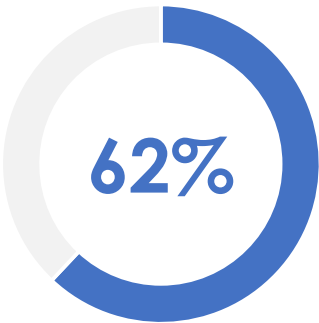
Appendix A

Reasons for becoming the most noteworthy outbound destination for 2026 (N=310)

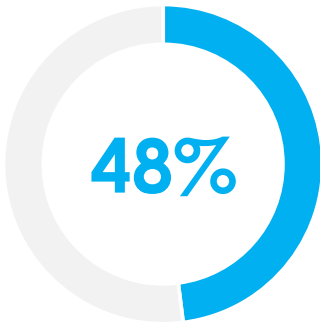
Mentioned %	Reasons by clustered theme	Destinations most closely associated with theme (mentioned frequency)
22%	Natural landscapes / scenery	Iceland (12), Thailand (11), Japan (9), New Zealand (8), Maldives (6)
19%	Market demand growth	Thailand (13), South Korea (10), Japan (5), Iceland (4), New Zealand (4)
17%	Close distance / convenient transportation	South Korea (17), Thailand (15), Japan (11), Singapore (3), USA (2)
14%	Value for money / price advantage	Thailand (20), South Korea (9), Japan (8), Indonesia (3), New Zealand (2)
14%	Cultural and humanistic experience	Thailand (10), Japan (7), South Korea (4), Singapore (4), UK (4)
12%	Visa convenience	Thailand (13), South Korea (7), Russia (4), Japan (3), New Zealand (3)
9%	Policies / international relations	Russia (8), Thailand (6), South Korea (5), Japan (2), Singapore (2)
7%	Safety and stability	Thailand (5), Singapore (5), Japan (4), South Korea (3), Russia (2)
7%	Tourism infrastructure / facilities	Thailand (8), Japan (5), USA (2), South Korea (1), Singapore (1)
5%	Major sports events / activities	USA (9), Canada (4), Spain (2), Thailand (1)
5%	Niche / in-depth travel	Iceland (5), New Zealand (3), Thailand (2), Japan (2), South Korea (1)
5%	Exchange rate advantage	Japan (8), South Korea (4), Thailand (1), Indonesia (1)
4%	Social media popularity	Egypt (2), Thailand (1), South Korea (1), USA (1), Iceland (1)
2%	Shopping / consumption experience	South Korea (3), Thailand (1), Japan (1)

Appendix B

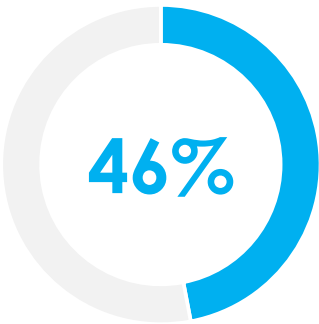
Which of the following types of corporate outbound groups has your company organized in the past two years? N=310



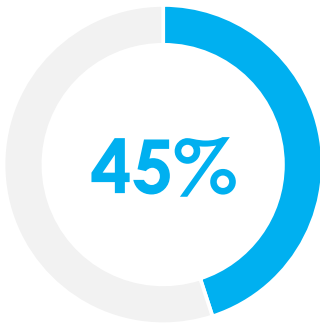
Corporate team-building activities



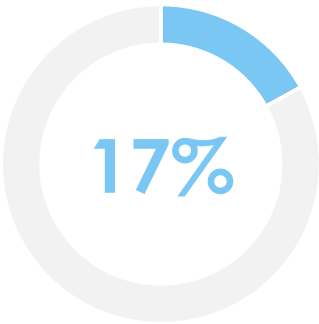
Incentive travel



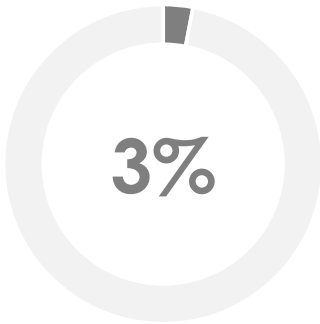
Exhibition / trade show delegations



Corporate study tours / business exchange programs



Corporate meetings



None of the above

Appendix C

Overseas MICE Destination Consideration Factors By MICE-related experience of surveyed travel agents

	Total	Corporate team- building	Incentives	Exhibition/ trade shows	Business Exchange	Corporate meetings
base	302	191	150	144	139	53
Safety & stability	47%	47%	52% ▲	49%	45%	42%
Cost and value	43%	45%	43%	42%	43%	49% ▲
Visa convenience	39%	38%	41%	37%	35%	36%
Destination appeal	34%	38% ▲	35%	31%	32%	36%
Venue and facilities	33%	37% ▲	36%	37% ▲	35%	34%
Unique experiences	33%	36%	33%	33%	37% ▲	36%
MICE support	29%	27%	28%	31%	32% ▲	26%
Flight connectivity	19%	15%	18%	22% ▲	25% ▲	26% ▲

▲ Percentage is significantly higher than total sample



Dragon Trail
INTERNATIONAL



Copyright © Dragon Trail Research



ABOUT DRAGON TRAIL RESEARCH

Dragon Trail Research empowers decision-making for the travel industry. Founded in 2019, Dragon Trail Research delivers quantitative and qualitative research fueled by statistics to help our clients uncover market trends, evaluate tactics, and engage their target audience.

SERVICES WE PROVIDE

- Traveler Sentiment Analysis
- Awareness & Satisfaction Studies
- Competitor Analysis
- Travel Trade Surveys
- Customized Research

To discuss cooperation and partnerships, contact:

info@dragontrail.com

www.dragontrail.com/resources

Dragon Trail Research | Dragon Trail International

