

Executive Summary

Key trends in China outbound travel

- Over the past decade China has been, and still is, the fastest-growing tourism source market in the world. Thanks to rapid urbanisation, rising disposable incomes and a relaxation of restrictions on foreign travel, the volume of international trips by Chinese travellers has grown from 10 million in 2000 to 83 million (2012), equivalent to an average growth of 21% a year over the 12-year period.
- In 1995, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) predicted that China would generate 100 million arrivals annually around the world by 2020, and many at the time considered this forecast to be overly optimistic. Yet, thanks to far more rapid growth than predicted, the market is now on course to reach that target in or before 2015.
- Expenditure by Chinese tourists abroad has increased almost eightfold since 2000. In 2012, Chinese travellers spent a record US\$ 102 billion on international tourism, boosted by an appreciating Chinese yuan. Annual growth over the past decade has far exceeded targets, with the result that China has become the largest spender on international tourism globally (2012 data), surpassing both the former number two, the United States of America, and the top spender Germany.
- As in the majority of the world's source markets, outbound travel from China heads predominantly to regional destinations. Asia and the Pacific accounted for 91% of Chinese trips (64 million) in 2011, with the Special Administrative Regions (SARs) of Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China, taking the lion's share – respectively 28 million (40%) and 19 million (28%). Another 16 million (23%) were to other destinations in the region, with the Republic of Korea; Taiwan, Province of China; Malaysia; Japan; Thailand; Vietnam and Singapore all receiving between 1 million and 2.4 million.
- Beyond Asia and the Pacific, Europe is the largest destination region for Chinese travellers with over 3 million visits (4.4%) in 2011. The Americas followed with almost 2 million (2.7%) Chinese departures, while Africa was the destination of almost 1 million departures (1.4%).
- The United States of America is the only destination outside Asia receiving more than 1 million Chinese visitors a year.
- Outside Asia and the Pacific, Chinese growth has been fastest in departures to Africa, up an average 32% a year, albeit from a modest base. The growth in departures to the more mature regions of Europe and the Americas has been much more modest, at +10% and +12% a year, respectively.
- Nevertheless, in absolute terms, the increases in volume to both regions have been impressive, with arrivals roughly tripling in just over a decade, to 3.1 million for Europe in 2011 and 1.9 million for the Americas.

Inbound tourism to MENA countries

- The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region's rich and diverse historical and cultural heritage, combined with the importance of its religious sites and its position at the crossroads of East and West, all contribute to its growing reputation as an exotic, fascinating tourism destination, which has drawn visitors from all over the world for many centuries.

- Sadly, political unrest and conflicts have had a negative impact on tourism growth in recent years. According to UNWTO statistics, international tourist arrivals in MENA countries were down by 6.5% in 2011, and by a further 2% in 2012.
- Year-to-date estimates for 2013 point to a flat year so far for North Africa, but the Middle East is up nearly 5% over 2012's level. Details for North Africa are not available but this overall average means that the region is well on target to reach UNWTO's forecast 0%-5% growth in 2013 – in large part thanks to special measures being taken by several countries in the region to recover and stimulate demand.

Chinese travel to MENA countries

- The number of Chinese tourist arrivals in the MENA countries is still very modest, representing less than 1% of total arrivals in that region. However, in percentage terms, the growth over the past 12 years has been impressive. Between 2000 and 2012 tourist arrivals from China increased more than fivefold, growing an average 19% annually.
- An estimated 55,500 Chinese travellers visited the region at the start of the decade, according to data from destination countries reported to UNWTO. By 2005 the figure had nearly tripled, to 152,000, and by 2008 it had reached close to 300,000. Despite declines in 2009 and 2011, the growth curve continued to rise and, in 2012, the final MENA count for the Chinese market was 435,500.
- With 284,400 arrivals in 2012, the United Arab Emirates – or, more to the point, Dubai – is the preferred destination for Chinese tourists in the MENA region, followed a long way behind by Egypt (61,200) and Saudi Arabia (17,100). Dubai alone accounts for 44.5% of all Chinese travel to MENA, while the other two countries represent shares of 14% and 7% respectively.
- Despite Egypt's number two position in the ranking, Chinese arrivals are down more than 60% since their peak of 106,000 in 2010 – attributed to the overthrow of the Mubarak government and accompanying civil unrest and violence which, after a lull in 2012, has been renewed in 2013. Chinese visitors to Saudi Arabia are predominantly business travellers.
- The United Arab Emirates, which only became an Approved Destination Status (ADS) country in September 2009, owes its rapid rise to the fact that it has strengthened its promotional efforts in China in the last few years, established close co-operation with Chinese travel agencies, and increased direct flights.

Profile of Chinese travellers and their trips to MENA countries

- Group tours are still the first choice of Chinese leisure travellers to MENA countries, since they feel more secure travelling in an unfamiliar region in an organised group, when all decisions are taken for them. However, there are signs that tour products and programmes are becoming more diversified as the Chinese gain travel experience and start to ask for more than run-of-the-mill, standard itineraries.
- More and more Chinese are also seeking customised tour products and services to provide them with personalised travel experiences. This is especially true of high-end leisure travellers and corporate clients, which are the main groups travelling to the MENA region.
- Chinese tourists visiting MENA countries can be divided into three categories. The most prominent are those who are experienced travellers, having previously been to Asia, Europe and/or America, and who are seeking new, exciting destinations. The second, much less common, are first-time travellers, but they usually have a special interest in the MENA region, its history and civilisation, and in visiting unique heritage sites.

- The third category comprises corporate and MICE travellers and those who have official government business with MENA countries. Although quite small, this last category is seen as having strong growth potential because of increased trade links between China and countries in the region, as well as good investment opportunities.
- For Chinese leisure travellers, there are significant differences in the appeal of North Africa and the Middle East. In North Africa, including Egypt, the main attractions for Chinese are the natural environment (e.g. the River Nile, Sahara Desert in Egypt) and historical and cultural heritage (e.g. the Pyramids, Luxor and the Valley of the Kings).
- In the Middle East, largely epitomised by Dubai for Chinese, they are primarily interested in the concept of the modern metropolis, which offers deluxe facilities and services, world-class entertainment and high-end shopping – all at reasonable prices.
- As far as China's different source regions are concerned, most Beijing-based tourists are very interested in the historical and cultural heritage of North African destinations, notably Egypt, while Shanghai tourists want shopping, relaxation and entertainment, and are interested in Dubai in the Middle East. Guangdong visitors, meanwhile, seek enriching family holiday experiences in either destination.
- Lack of awareness means that many Chinese tourists who travel to MENA countries assume that the region has less than adequate sanitary conditions and are concerned about safety and security issues. However, after they return from their trips, they are usually very satisfied with the services provided, and few of them complain.

Factors constraining Chinese travel to the MENA region

- Since 2010, political unrest and uprisings, which continue to dominate the news in Egypt and Tunisia, and which have spread to civil wars in Libya and Syria, have all had a huge impact on demand for tourism in the MENA region, not least in the Chinese market.
- Although full market recovery clearly cannot be expected in the short term, some countries in the region are far removed from the conflicts and crises, and could benefit from increased marketing and promotions in China. Ensuring tourists' safety and security is nevertheless paramount.
- It is also currently very difficult for Chinese people to learn about the region, except through overly negative, uninformed media reports. More Chinese-language information on the different destinations is needed.
- Little effort has been made by the majority of MENA NTOs to understand the Chinese market and assist suppliers in adapting their products and tour programmes to meet Chinese needs and preferences.
- Improved air access is also a major source of complaint as there are very few direct flights and indirect services are not user-friendly and do not provide sufficient capacity, either. This is particular bad during official long holiday periods.
- Similar criticisms are made of tourism services and facilities at the destinations during peak periods for Chinese travellers – notably a lack of qualified tour guides and ground handlers.
- Finally, tour products and programmes are considered to be too standardised and lacking in imagination. Chinese say that there has been little effort to adapt to the needs and preferences of different traveller target groups. And more, and better, Chinese cuisine would be very welcome.

Organised travel to MENA countries

- By May 2012, among 19 countries in the MENA region, eight countries had been granted ADS approval: Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Syria, Oman, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon. Among the eight, Egypt was the first one to apply for ADS, in 2002.
- Chinese tour operators and travel agencies believe that MENA countries have rich tourism resources that offer huge potential for the development in the Chinese market. But, for the time being, although there are some 200 tour programmes/itineraries available on the Chinese market, only two destinations, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (Dubai), feature significantly in tour programmes to MENA countries.
- Apart from in-depth, single-destination tour programmes for Dubai and Egypt, which dominate Chinese market demand, a few 2 to 3 destination tours are on offer, with the most popular being Egypt + Turkey, Dubai + South Africa, and South Africa + Egypt + Turkey. Very specialised, high-end, customised tours are confined to the more affluent Chinese who have much more extensive travel experience, but a growing number of these Chinese are seeking more sophisticated, quality tours.
- Among the competitive advantages of MENA countries' tourism, the Chinese travel trade cites their unique tourism attractions and the fact that visas are relatively easy to obtain.

Future prospects

- The MENA region's tourism prospects for the medium, if not the short term, out of China look very bullish. As Chinese travellers gain more long-haul travel experience, MENA destinations are expected to feature more prominently in the list of popular Chinese long-haul destinations – assuming the political situation in those countries improves.
- Egypt and Dubai will continue to dominate over the next five years, but Morocco and the Near East/Levant (with the exception of Syria) should start to attract more interest, as long as marketing and promotion in the Chinese market is stepped up.
- Due to the debt crisis in Europe and America, the Chinese Government is assisting trade-oriented enterprises to expand their businesses into emerging markets. As a result, economic co-operation and exchanges between China and MENA countries are expected to be further strengthened, and this in turn will stimulate demand for business and official travel to the region.
- Some Chinese, although they are expected to be in the minority and largely focused on point-to-point business travel, will move to booking travel to MENA countries through the Internet. The Internet will nevertheless become an important source for Chinese in researching their travel options.

The next steps

- **Market research:** In order to understand the Chinese market and to target their products and services accordingly, MENA countries must undertake serious market research. China is a vast country, and there are huge differences between regions, both in terms of consumer behaviour and travel preferences.
- **Raising awareness:** If the region is to fulfil its potential, concerted efforts will need to be made to put the MENA region more firmly on the world tourism map for Chinese travellers. In addition to better marketing and promotion, this will require improved air links and flight frequencies, more thoughtfully designed tour products and programmes, and greater attention paid to issues of concern, such as Chinese fears over safety and security, or their need for qualified Chinese-speaking guides and Chinese cuisine.

- Marketing and promotions should highlight the unique natural and cultural tourism resources of MENA destinations, as well as their rich historical heritage and examples of ultra-modern attractions. All kinds of suppliers, from government agencies to airlines, hotels, inbound tour operators and destination marketing companies (DMCs) should be involved in these promotional campaigns so as to provide as rich a picture as possible of the tourism products and services available.
 - Awareness can be raised through advertising, road shows, press conferences, FAM trips and other measures. Chinese consumers can be targeted through television, magazines, newspapers, radio or Internet. Public media is particularly effective, especially print media and television (i.e. travel satellite TV, web TV, video websites, advertising on buses, subway advertising, etc.).
 - Almost all the Chinese outbound travellers are holders of the China UnionPay card, so tourism suppliers in MENA countries, such as shopping stores, restaurants and hotels, are strongly recommended to accept payments using this card, which will likely encourage Chinese to spend even more. Joint tourism promotions with Chinese financial organisations can also generate good returns.
 - Social media is also an increasingly important channel for communication and marketing. Billions of Chinese netizens are signed up to Sina microblog (weibo.com) and Tencent microblog (t.qq.com), for example.
 - Also very popular with the Chinese are movies or short films from well-known film production companies, or featuring famous stars, shot in different destinations. By way of example, the hot movie Transformers in 2009 highlighted the beautiful scenery of Egypt, which attracted many young Chinese travellers to the country.
- **Professional training:** For NTOs and suppliers, means investment in professional training of Chinese tour operators and travel agents, as well as in local tour guides and ground handlers, is very important. Greater communication, not to mention co-operation, between Chinese and local travel agencies is critical to generating increased Chinese interest in the MENA region.
 - **Co-operation with Chinese tour operators:** MENA destinations and suppliers should co-operate more closely with Chinese tour operators to promote their tourism products and tour programmes. They can help them to deliver the tourism information related to their destinations directly to their target customers. Employing Chinese staff or representatives would also facilitate communication.
 - **Establish a presence in China:** MENA countries should either set up their own offices through their NTOs, or appoint a marketing representative or PR company. Experience has shown that this is the best way of raising awareness of a destination, creating and reinforcing a destination's brand, and communicating to potential customers and the travel trade.
 - **Outbound tourism fairs and other events in China:** Attending or, better still, exhibiting at tourism fairs and exhibitions is an effective way of promoting travel products and destinations, and it also provides a good opportunity to do business with Chinese outbound tour operators.

This growth parallels that of Chinese GDP and GDP per capita (both +17% a year) over the same time period. In 2012, the China Tourism Academy (CTA) expects Chinese travellers to increase their expenditure considerably, partly boosted by an appreciating Chinese currency.

In addition to expenditure by Chinese outbound travellers in the destinations visited, another US\$ 6.4 billion was spent in 2011, for example, on passenger transport contracted from foreign companies.

Chinese tourists spend an average US\$ 1,226 per outbound trip (2012 data), although their spending is much higher for destinations outside Asia and the Pacific. A survey of Chinese tourists in 2005 by CNTA showed that travellers to various EU states spent about € 3,000 per trip (US\$ 3,734). Of this, 34% was on shopping, 18% on accommodation, 17% on the airfare, 9% on entertainment, and 3% on travel agency services. The overall average is much lower due to shorter stays and lower expenditure in nearby destinations like Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China.

Chinese travellers on Approved Destination Status (ADS) group tours tend to look for the lowest possible package prices and are reportedly ready to switch from one operator to another to make even modest savings. Yet once these same travellers reach their destinations, they seem to stop worrying about how much they can afford. Different surveys suggest that shopping accounts for a much higher share of total spending abroad by Chinese travellers compared than for any other market – 30% of the total trip price, excluding airfares, or the same share as for accommodation.

1.2 Main Destinations

Information on the destinations around the world visited by Chinese travellers is available from two major sources: Chinese departures to foreign destinations as reported by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA); and Chinese arrivals in destinations, as reported by destination countries around the world and published by UNWTO. Both sources represent the same travel flows, but measured differently, and the two sets of data therefore contain inevitable discrepancies as the official outbound statistics refer to first point of call only. Nevertheless, they provide very interesting insight into major trends.

1.2.1 Asia Dominates Travel Flows

Although there are now 113 destinations around the world with Approved Destination Status (ADS), which allows them to receive official leisure tour group business from China, Chinese outbound travellers still predominantly travel to neighbouring countries and, in particular, the Special Administrative Regions (SARs) of Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China. Also significant are Taiwan, Province of China, the Republic of Korea and South-East Asian countries. Greater China – i.e. Hong Kong, China; Macao, China, and Taiwan, Province of China, – account for more than 70% of all Chinese outbound travel, whether measured in outbound trips (CNTA) or arrivals at destinations (UNWTO).

Of the remaining 24 million or so trips abroad in 2012, according to CNTA figures, 68% were to other Asian countries. Europe attracted 14%, followed by the Americas, Oceania and Africa. Only 5% of Chinese outbound travellers went to Africa and no separate figures are available for the Middle East region, which is treated by CNTA as part of Asia.

- **CITS** – Established in 1954, it is a leading travel group and a listed company issuing shares on Chinese stock market. It ranked 10th in terms of revenue in China's outbound travel business in 2010, and 23rd nationwide in number of Chinese travellers to MENA destinations.
- **China Comfort Travel Group Co., Ltd** – Established in 1984, it has the highest number of retail travel branches of all travel agency groups in China. It ranked 9th in terms of revenue from outbound travel business in China in 2010, and 25th nationwide in number of Chinese travellers to MENA destinations.
- **China Ocean International Travel Service Co., Ltd** – Established in 1994, its UNIWAY Royal Travel subsidiary is a wholesaler operating tours to the Middle East and Africa. It ranked 15th in terms of revenue from outbound travel business in China in 2010, and 49th nationwide in number of Chinese travellers to MENA destinations.
- **Beijing Jiedajiaqi International Travel Service Co., Ltd** – Established in 1997 it ranked 49th in terms of revenue from outbound travel business in China in 2010, and 62nd nationwide in number of Chinese travellers to MENA destinations.
- **CTS MICE Service Co., Ltd** – A professional conference and exhibition service company within the CTS Group, it organises business travel, conferences, exhibitions and incentive trips for large enterprises and major clients. It is the second most important MICE specialist company in China.
- **China Comfort Travel MICE Service Co., Ltd** – A MICE specialist within China Comfort Travel Co., Ltd, its major clients are from business groups, and it handles all aspects of travel for clients attending/organising international conferences, incentive trips (international and domestic), domestic conferences and exhibitions, business and official trips, etc.

Beijing travel agency groups' main criteria for selecting a MENA destination are:

- A stable political and social environment, attracting no – or only very few – negative reports in the major Chinese media;
- a good diplomatic relationship with the Chinese Government, and a country known for being friendly to Chinese tourists;
- unique tourism resources, a long history and rich culture, with a distinctive urban and natural landscape;
- a strong tourism brand among Chinese tourists, generating good market demand;
- a sound tourism infrastructure of high quality and reasonable prices;
- easy access in terms of visa requirements, with convenient direct or connecting flights;
- adequate tourism facilities and quality services;
- good shopping malls and a wide range of tax-free products on sale; and
- frequent high-level international conferences, strong economic, trade and cultural ties with China, abundant business investment opportunities with good market development potential.

The strengths of Beijing travel agency groups in terms of operating outbound tours to MENA countries:

- Excellent human and financial resources, a good brand image, well respected by the Chinese travel industry and consumers;
- covers North China, Central China, North-east China and even the whole country, giving it huge advantages in terms of buying power;
- professionally trained and qualified sales and administrative staff, who are familiar with the inbound business in MENA destinations;
- excellent co-operation with the embassies of each MENA country, as well as with airlines, local travel agencies, hotels and other suppliers;
- strong capabilities in marketing, promotion and business development, boasting a comprehensive distribution network covering the region or the whole country;
- an e-business platform to expand its on-line sales channel;
- a good relationship with relevant departments of the Chinese Government;
- good partnerships with different foreign operators and private companies;
- qualified to handle visa applications, air tickets and hotels services for tourists travelling to MENA countries.

Their criteria for developing new destinations in MENA countries:

- The destination views China as an important market, and have actively promoted their country in China.
- The destination has rich tourism resources with huge potential in the Chinese market.
- A convenient transport infrastructure with liberalised air access from China.
- Travel products in the destination are unique and distinctive, as well as being reasonable priced.
- Chinese companies are seeking greater business co-operation with the country and making official visits to the destination.
- The destination offers good investment and trade opportunities for Chinese companies, and has abundant natural resources.
- Customers have already shown interest in travelling to the destination, whether for exhibitions, international conferences, high-end business negotiations, or incentive travel.

Their perceptions of attractive MENA destinations with great development potential:

- For tour operators who organise leisure tours to MENA countries, destinations with great development potential are mainly those that are stable, popular among Chinese, and with a good tourism infrastructure, e.g. the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Tunisia and Morocco.
- For tour operators who organise official and business travel, travel to conferences and exhibitions in MENA countries, the most promising destinations are those with abundant natural resources and a good investment environment, and which are seeking business co-operation opportunities with China, e.g. the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. Trips can also be arranged to non-ADS countries, e.g. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Yemen, Bahrain and Sudan.

4.3.3 Agencies in Shanghai

- **Shanghai Business International Travel Service Co., Ltd** – Established in 1996, it is one of the major outbound travel wholesalers in Shanghai. In 2010, it ranked 58th in terms of revenue from outbound travel business in China, and 14th nationwide in number of Chinese travellers to MENA destinations.
- **Shanghai Spring International Travel Service Co., Ltd** – Established in 1981, it is one of the largest travel agency groups in China. In 2010, it ranked 4th in revenue from outbound travel business, and 20th nationwide in number of Chinese travellers to MENA destinations.
- **Shanghai Jinjiang International Travel Co., Ltd** – It is one of the largest travel agency groups in China, as well as being a listed company. In 2010, it ranked 14th in terms of revenue from outbound travel business in China, and 43rd nationwide in number of Chinese travellers to MENA destinations.
- **Shanghai China International Travel Service Co., Ltd** – Established in 1954, it ranked 24th in terms of revenue from outbound travel business in China in 2010, and 54th nationwide in number of Chinese travellers to MENA destinations.

Their main criteria for selecting an MENA destination:

- Suitable for leisure holidays and shopping;
- quality travel products and comfortable accommodation meeting the demands of middle and high-end tourists;
- tourism resources are abundant, travel itineraries are flexible depending on the season;
- safe and hygienic environment.

Their resources for operating outbound tours to MENA:

- Professionally trained staff with good knowledge of the MENA region, both in terms of business development and tour guides;
- good long-term co-operation with local travel agencies, including foreign companies operating in MENA countries;
- good co-operation with the airlines;
- good experience in tour group operations;
- stable markets in East China.

Their criteria for developing new destinations in MENA countries:

- The destination has gained ADS approval and offers good social security.
- Local tourism suppliers are equipped with excellent facilities, offering high-quality services at reasonable prices.
- Good transport links, with direct airline access, or convenient connecting flights.

The most attractive MENA destinations with the best development potential are the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Morocco and Oman.

4.3.4 Agencies in Guangdong

- **Shenzhen TopTour International Travel Service Co., Ltd** – Established in 1993, it is a major wholesaler of Middle East and Africa tours. It ranked 94th in terms of revenue from outbound travel business in China in 2010, and 5th nationwide in number of Chinese travellers to MENA destinations.
- **China Travel Service of Overseas Chinese Town, Shenzhen** – Established in 1986, it was one of the first outbound travel agencies in Shenzhen qualified to engage in outbound travel, as well as one of the largest outbound travel wholesalers in Guangdong. It ranked 84th in terms of revenue from outbound travel business in China in 2010, and 7th nationwide in number of Chinese travellers to MENA destinations.
- **Guangdong China Travel Service Co., Ltd** – Established in 1956, it was one of the first outbound travel agencies qualified to engage in the outbound travel business in China. It ranked 5th in terms of revenue from outbound travel business in China in 2010, and 18th nationwide in number of Chinese travellers to MENA destinations.
- **GZL International Travel Service Co., Ltd** – Established in 1980, it is one of the largest travel agency groups in South China. It ranked 1st in terms of revenue from outbound travel business in China in 2010, and 26th in number of Chinese travellers to MENA destinations.

Their main criteria for selecting a MENA destination:

- Relaxing and comfortable itineraries, suitable for family tours or parent-children tours;
- high demand for business and official visits from China, with good potential for international market development, and comprehensive tourism facilities;
- unique natural landscape and rich cultural heritage;
- easy visa requirements;
- safe and hygienic environment;
- good food and accommodation meeting the needs of Chinese tourists.

Their resources for operating outbound tours to MENA countries:

- Popular travel brands with a good reputation;
- continuously innovates and improve its marketing, generating increased interest from Chinese for MENA countries;
- good tourism resources, offering quality tour products at reasonable prices;
- stable tourist-generating market;
- good relationship with embassies with regards to visa processing;
- covers numerous branches and travel agents in Guangdong, which is the largest outbound tourist-generating region in China.

Their criteria for developing new destinations in MENA countries:

- Stable political situation with few disasters;
- abundant tourism resources with a distinctive culture;
- tourism resources meeting the demands of high-end, customised and independent travellers;
- good tourism infrastructure, with Chinese language services;
- convenient visa application procedures.

Attractive MENA destinations with great development potential in their eyes are Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Jordan and Tunisia.

4.4 Overview of Tour Programmes for MENA countries

4.4.1 Types of Tours

The MENA region is an emerging destination for the Chinese market, although most MENA countries visited by Chinese tourists are ADS approved. The region offers both high-end luxury tour products and programmes, priced at upwards of CNY 20,000, and also mid-range, medium-priced tours retailing at around CNY 7,000 to 8,000.

There are approximately 200 tour itineraries to MENA countries in the Chinese market, with the main MENA destinations on offer being the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. Tours to the United Arab Emirates account for about 67% of total tours, with Egypt making up a further 30% – in line with current demand.

Single-destination tour packages (e.g. to Egypt and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates) and tours covering two or three destinations tend to be sold as themed holidays, focusing on such things as historical and cultural heritage, luxury hotels, luxury cruises, safari trips, etc. Popular combinations are for Egypt + Turkey, Dubai + South Africa, South Africa + Egypt + Turkey, etc. Specially tailored packages are also offered to high-end tourists who have particular interests and requirements.

Table 4.3 Types and characteristics of outbound travel products to MENA countries

Types	Travel itineraries	Features
Intercontinental multi-country itinerary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 days classic tour in France, Italy and Dubai • 12 days tour in France, Switzerland, Italy and Dubai • 11 days supreme and romantic tour in Spain, Italy, Tunisia and Malta • 11 days tour in Italy, France, Spain, Vatican and Morocco • 15 days tour in Italy, Turkey, Greece, Spain and Morocco • 10 days cultural tour in Egypt and Turkey • 9 days tour in Greece and the United Arab Emirates • 11 days tour in Dubai, Tunisia and Morocco • 10 days enchanting tour in Morocco and Dubai • 10 days sightseeing tour in South Africa and Dubai 	High-end and luxury itineraries combining neighbouring countries in Europe, Africa and the Middle East; or combining countries complementing each other in terms of tourism resources, which provide travellers with distinctive experiences in different regions on one trip.

Types	Travel itineraries	Features
Multi-country itinerary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 days tour in South Africa, Egypt and Kenya • 12 day Arab cultural tour in Tunisia, Morocco and Sahara wild hot spring • 11 days tour in Iran and Lebanon • 9 days tour in Tunisia and Morocco • 9 days luxury tour in Syria, Jordan and Dubai • 8 days tour in the Middle East and Israel • 8 days experience tour in Israel and Jordan • 10 days Ocean Glory tour in the United Arab Emirates and Oman • 27 days in-depth tour in seven African countries • 10 days holy tour in Israel and Jordan 	Usually connecting North Africa, South Africa and the Middle East areas, provide travellers with distinctive experiences in different countries on one trip.
In-depth experience of one country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 days luxury cruise tour in Egypt • 11 days tour in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt • 7 days colourful tour in Tunisia • 6 days supreme tour in the United Arab Emirates • '5+1' days Arabic tour in Dubai • 4-night and 6-day fashion tour in Dubai • 11 days magical tour in Morocco • Touch of Casablanca: 11 days magical tour in Morocco • 9 days cross-country travel in Sahara Desert, Tunisia • Touch of Mission Impossible: 6 days luxury 7-star tour in Dubai • 8 days mystery exploration tour in Egypt 	Travel products offering in-depth experiences in one country are especially popular among Chinese tourists. They do not last long and are highly cost effective with comfortable itineraries. Some in-depth themed travel products are high-end products that meet the demands of wealthy, independent travellers.

Source: Ivy Alliance.

4.4.2 Differences between Tours to MENA and other Long-haul Destinations

MENA countries have many unique tourism attractions of interest to the Chinese market, as already discussed. Compared with other long-haul destinations, the prime draws are: in Egypt, the pyramids, the River Nile, the Valley of the Kings in Luxor, and the Sahara Desert; in Jordan, the ancient rose city of Petra; in the United Arab Emirates, Dubai's seven-star Burj Al Arab Hotel, and the religious centre of Sharjah, etc.

The majority of Chinese travellers to the MENA region are experienced outbound travellers with high disposable incomes, looking to try new destinations after visiting Australia, Europe and North America. Older Chinese are also interested in the distinctive religious culture and history of MENA countries and the fact that the region is at the crossroads of western and eastern civilisations.

The main strengths of tour products and programmes to MENA countries are:

- Simple visa application procedures and reasonable visa fees for MENA countries;
- unique natural landscapes are very attractive to travellers who love nature and are concerned about the environment;

- the region's ancient civilisations, long history and rich cultures appeal to Chinese travellers' cultural tastes;
- the local people appear to be simple and honest, and tour programmes are generally well organised;
- MENA travel products enable Chinese travellers to experience the unique local customs, which are new to them;
- some travel products, such as tours to Dubai, include shopping for luxury fashion goods – something all middle-class and wealthy enjoy;
- accommodation seems reasonably priced, and hotels are comfortable;
- some Chinese travellers really like the local cuisine.

The weaknesses are:

- Outbound travel to MENA countries started later than to South-East Asia, Australia and Europe, which means the region is still not familiar to Chinese, and tour programmes to MENA countries are not as competitive as to other regions.
- A visa for one MENA country cannot be used to visit other MENA countries, which makes it more difficult to do multi-destination trips – which first-time visitors tend to prefer.
- Not only are Chinese unfamiliar with most MENA destinations, but there is also a misunderstanding in China that they are backward countries with high levels of poverty and poor sanitary conditions.
- MENA tour programmes are not competitive enough in terms of price or quality with those to other regions.
- The current marketing efforts of MENA countries in the Chinese market are not sufficient, so the region's image is negatively affected by media reports about the political unrest in some MENA countries.
- At present, the number of direct flights from mainland China to MENA countries is limited, which restricts the number and type of tours that Chinese wholesalers and travel agencies can offer.
- Some MENA countries and regions have inadequate tourism facilities and services, and the level of ground handling, including tour guides, varies sharply from one country to another.
- In the peak seasons, there is a severe shortage of professionally trained Chinese-speaking guides and ground handlers.
- Political turbulence, safety and security concerns, and perceived poor sanitary conditions in some MENA countries, have a big impact on Chinese demand.

4.5 Future Development of Tours to MENA Countries

4.5.1 Changing Market Demand

Despite being an emerging destination, the MENA region has much to offer Chinese travellers as it includes not only two distinct sub-regions but also the southern and eastern Mediterranean shores. As the region become better known among Chinese, they will increasingly demand a wide range of diversified tour and holiday options – from stay-put holidays combining relaxation with sightseeing, entertainment and sports activities, to multi-destination tours, high-end luxury cruises, self-drive and adventure trips.

Change in market demand is not expected to be rapid – certainly not for the next couple of years because of the uncertain political situation. But the longer term should see strong development of the market, with tour programmes and products becoming more complex and ambitious. For the foreseeable future, the standard packages currently being sold to the United Arab Emirates and Egypt will still be the best sellers.

One thing that is changing is average length of trip. As air access becomes more streamlined, shorter trips of around 8 to 10 days will increase share. Longer trips will be preferred by small FIT groups looking for more in-depth experiences.

4.5.2 Favourite Tour Products and Programmes to MENA Countries

The following summarises the type of tour products and programmes of most interest to different Chinese groups:

- **Royal Dubai Tour:** package holiday, taking in famous scenic spots such as the seven-star Burj Al Arab Hotel in Dubai and other landmarks – all for a reasonable price;
- **Dubai FIT:** tailored tour package including some sightseeing, but primarily focused on fashion and shopping to meet the demands of young Chinese participants;
- **Egypt and Dubai Family Tour:** most cost-effective itinerary, with a programme to meet the demands of all age groups, from children to the seniors;
- **Egypt Luxury Cruise Tour:** high-end programme taking in beautiful scenery and unique historic sites;
- **Tunisia Desert Experience Tour:** combines the romantic, Europe-style Mediterranean and the wild Sahara Desert;
- **Israel and Jordan Tour:** strong focus on famous religious and historical sites;
- **Morocco Tour:** a relatively new tour programmes taking in a bit of Europe as well as a round-trip of major Moroccan cities and resorts.

The following are the basic conditions determining whether or not the Chinese Government will look favourably on a country's application. It needs to be assured that:

- diplomatic relationships with the Chinese Government and the country in question are friendly;
- the tourism resources of the respective country are attractive;
- there is no evidence of discrimination against Chinese tourists in the country;
- the destination is considered to be safe and secure for tourists;
- economic and trade links between China and the applicant country are good, contributing a balance of trade surplus.

Among all these factors, diplomatic relations between both parties play a decisive role. The most common problem facing the applicant countries during their ADS application are the frequent long delays in gaining the approval of Chinese Government. If MENA countries want to succeed in their application for ADS, they need to ensure that there is optimum co-operation and communication between their government and the Chinese Government at the highest levels.

MENA countries which do not yet have ADS should lodge an official application with the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA). This can be in the form of an official letter or formal note.

Furthermore, with regard to making the ADS application, MENA countries can seek assistance from local consulting companies. These can help them to determine the latest policy trends within the Chinese Government, track the progress of their application, and draft out the relevant documents to communicate with the Chinese Government in order to accelerate the application process.

5.3 Establishing a Marketing Office/Representative in China

5.3.1 Different Procedures

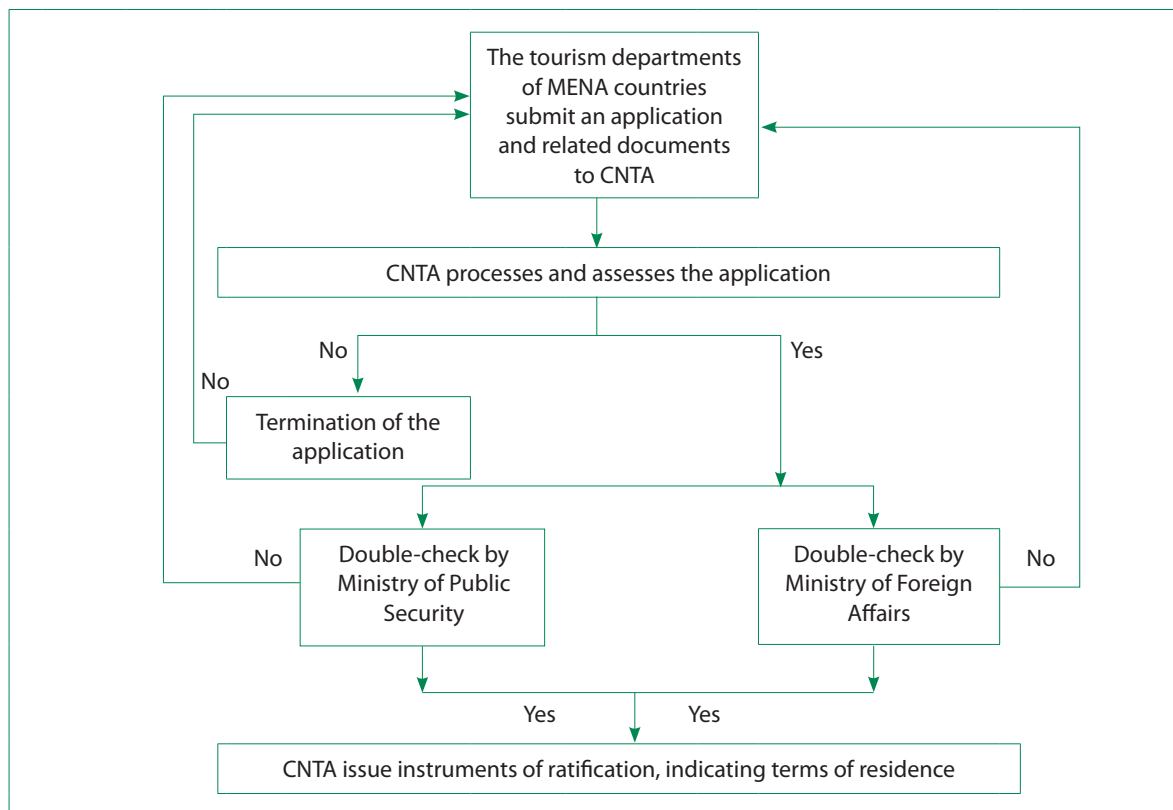
There are many different ways of promoting MENA destinations in China, including participating in exhibitions or forums, or conducting road shows. But the best approach is first to establish a presence in China – either through a full NTO-operated office or through a marketing representative.

The foreign government department which applies to the Chinese Government for approval to establish a representative office in China must already be approved by CNTA, and is usually the official national tourism organisation (NTO) or administration (NTA). Such offices may be engaged in non-profit activities in China, such as tourism promotion, consulting, liaison and co-ordination, but shall not carry out any commercial activities, openly or covertly.

The capital Beijing is the preferred location for a representative office, but some foreign NTOs have offices in Shanghai or Guangzhou – usually in addition to Beijing. In countries that have seen exceptionally strong growth out of China, it is also increasingly common for regional or municipal tourist offices to establish their own presence in China.

The timeframe for establishing an office in China for government departments of MENA countries (i.e. NTAs or NTOs) is determined by CNTA in consultation with the Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China. Based on past experience, this should not take more than three months, but there are exceptions. Some foreign NTOs are still waiting for approval after two years. Taking legal advice clearly speeds up the whole process.

Figure 5.2 Application procedures for establishing an office in China



5.3.2 Sharing Space with The Country's Embassy

Some countries have set up an office responsible for tourism promotion in their embassy in China, as the Egyptian Tourism Authority has done. It should be noted that this does not require prior approval from CNTA. The tourism office of the foreign embassy in China may engage in non-profit activities such as tourism promotion, consulting, liaison and co-ordination, but shall not carry out any commercial activities, openly or covertly.

5.3.3 Private Company/Operator Representation in China

According to regulations laid down by the Chinese Government, approval from CNTA must be obtained for foreign tourism enterprises to set up a representative office in China. Once set up, though, such offices may engage in non-profit activities such as tourism promotion, consulting, liaison and co-ordination, but shall not carry out any commercial activities, openly or covertly.

Applications to establish a tourism representative office in China require a letter of recommendation from a Chinese company, which will handle the application on behalf of the foreign enterprise.

Once approval is given, CNTA issues the 'instruments of ratification', specifying the duration of the 'licence' to operate such an office.

5.3.4 Using PR or Marketing Representatives

Local public relations or market representation companies are sometimes preferred by NTOs as a lower-cost alternative step to establishing a presence in China. Moreover, this does not need the approval of CNTA or the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China.

By way of example, Ivy Alliance in Beijing was appointed by the Guam Visitors Bureau (GVB) to launch various promotions on behalf of GVB in China, including holding road shows, organising FAM trips, attending tourism exhibitions, conducting public relations, liaising with Chinese outbound tour operators and travel agencies, providing consulting services for Chinese tourists and travel agencies, and acting as the liaison between the country's embassy and the Chinese Government.

5.3.5 Cost of Establishing an Office in China

The cost of establishing an office in China – including office rental, salaries of expatriate and local staff, administration, promotion and marketing, etc – varies from city to city, but it is costly. Appointing a market representative can be a lot less expensive.

Beijing is the best place in which to establish a presence as it is convenient in terms of building a relationship with the Chinese Government, as well as business relations with the largest travel groups in China.

5.4 Increasing MENA's Visibility in the Chinese Market

The responses from Ivy Alliance Tourism Consulting's 2011-2012 survey, which was conducted among Chinese outbound tourists in 22 provinces or municipalities, showed that 72% preferred destination countries or regions that are already highly popular and unique. This makes it especially important for MENA countries to raise awareness of the region in China and promote its many attractions, which in turn will help to build up a positive image of different destinations in the region, both in terms of being tourist-friendly and safe. This is of course critical for the lesser-known MENA destinations.

Clearly, the media can play a crucial role in the promotion and marketing of MENA destinations. The different types of media recommended – whether broadcast or print, consumer or trade, etc. – are listed in Annex 1.

5.4.1 Traditional Media

The strengths of traditional media – which include TV, newspapers, magazines, radio and outdoor advertising, etc. – lie in their widespread influence, broad coverage and established public recognition. Through advertising and promotions in traditional media, MENA countries can establish a positive image as a safe and secure destination, which can help erase the basic concerns of Chinese tourists considering travelling there.

- **TV** – In China, TV stations include CCTV and local TV stations. CCTV covers the whole country, with many channels such as CCTV1, CCTV2 finance channel, CCTV4 international channel, etc. There are a great number of local TV channels, which only cover their own regions or cities, such as Beijing TV, Shanghai TV, Guangzhou TV, etc. In addition, each province and municipality in China each has its own satellite channel covering nationwide news. Generally, TV charges a lot for the advertisements, but expenditure can be reduced for NTOs and NTAs through payment in kind, such as FAM trips for media, or sponsorship of TV programmes.
- **Magazines** – Destination coverage in magazines is relatively modest, and readership groups tend to be more diluted. Influential magazines include Chinese National Geography and other in-vogue magazines such as Fashion, Rayli and City Beauties. All these magazines have special pages/sections for travel, targeting readers with middle and high incomes, which are also the largest groups of people travelling outbound. NTOs can select suitable magazines according to their different readership segments, and promote destinations through advertorials, thus attracting Chinese travel enthusiasts and arousing their interest in travelling to MENA countries.

Tourism trade magazines and broadsheets are currently not very influential in China. The leading ones, all of which are distributed free of charge to travel industry staff, include Travel Weekly, TTG and China Travel Agent, etc. China Tourism News is a newspaper affiliated with CNTA, with its readers mainly from tourism administrations in different regions of China.

- **Newspapers** – Newspapers generally target local residents. The ones with the largest circulations include Beijing Evening, Beijing Times and Life Style in Beijing, Xinmin Evening News and Shanghai Morning Post in Shanghai, Yangcheng Evening News and Guangzhou Daily in Guangzhou. All of them have pages for travel advertisements, and travel agencies in China generally choose these newspapers to advertise their products.
- **Radio** – According to statistics, there are currently 86.5 million vehicles in China, and there are 20 private cars per 100 Chinese households. In May 2012, there were over 5 million vehicles in Beijing, followed by 2.5 million in Shanghai and 2.3 million in Guangzhou. Car owners usually listen to the radio as a means of relaxation when they are driving, especially in traffic jams to and from work and home.

NTOs can invite famous radio hosts or journalists to visit their countries for special reports, so as to promote their unique attractions among Chinese. Another approach is to do joint radio promotions of popular travel itineraries with Chinese travel agencies, thus boosting the popularity of the respective destinations.

- **Outdoor advertising such as billboards** – Billboards offering advertising space are available at major business and transport centres in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, and e-billboards are located in the elevators and halls of commercial buildings. These enjoy high visibility.

5.4.2 New Media

New media include the Internet accessed through PCs, hand-held devices and mobile phones mobile phones. Social media are now an extremely important channel of communication for Chinese, providing real-time travel information, as well as enabling interaction. Such media include microblogs, blogs, social network sites, video websites and mobile phone apps, etc.

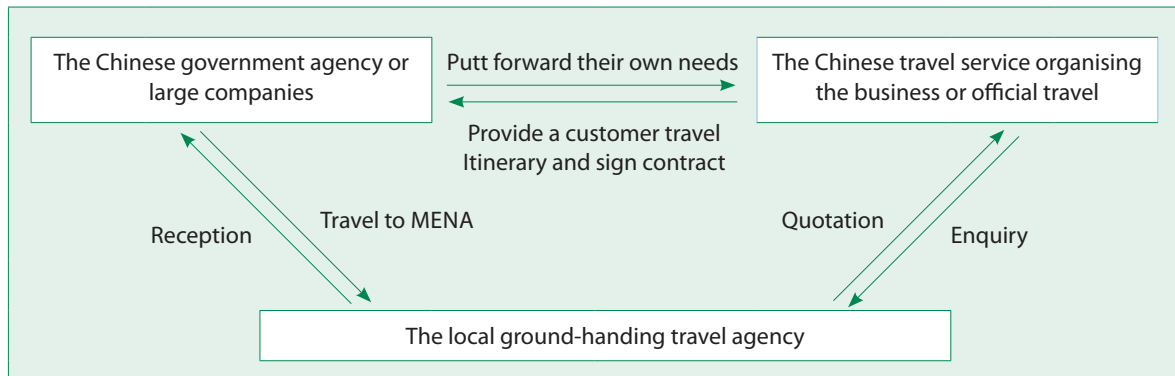
- **Microblogs and blogs** – The number of Chinese microbloggers grew from 63.1 million in 2010 to 250 million in Q3 2011. Microblogs and blogs have generated an entirely new media marketing mode, which is direct, convenient and efficient, enabling users to access travel information quickly and efficiently. Some NTOs are already seeing positive returns from blogging. Travel agencies attach great importance to microblog promotion and marketing. In China, the most influential microblog platforms are Sina microblog (weibo.com) and Tencent microblog (t.qq.com).
- **Social networking sites** – Although Facebook is banned in China, social network sites are very important in the country. The most popular are Renren.com, Kaixin001.com and Baidu Space (hi.baidu.com). The prime importance of social networking is that it provides a two-way channel for communication. Not only can Chinese tourists can easily locate the information they seek, but NTOs and other suppliers can also target their audiences more accurately.
- **Video websites** – Websites featuring videos of consumers expressing their views about tourism destinations and products have a big influence on public opinion, and can create brand-new perspectives for major media, as well as added value for NTOs and suppliers.
- **Mobile Internet** – Mobile phones are playing an increasing role in advertising and promotion as more and more Chinese access the Internet through their mobile phones. Mobile Internet has become part of the mainstream media for young people aged 20 to 35 years old, so it is an ideal channel for NTOs and suppliers to promote and distribute their tourism attractions and products.

Clearly, for MENA destinations entering the Chinese outbound travel market, direct marketing and promotions through the mobile Internet to consumers should serve as a complement to media marketing, not an alternative. But it is growing rapidly in importance and influence.

5.5 Accessing the Chinese MICE Market

The meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) sector is a very solid, stable market, and one well worth trying to tap, although destination choice has less to do with promotions than economic and trade links between China and the respective destination countries.

Nevertheless, MENA destinations boast abundant natural resources, are politically stable in most countries of the region, and provide good links with Europe and the rest of Africa. In addition, they are gradually opening up to Chinese investment, so they offer big opportunities for the development of business/official and incentive travel from China.

Figure 5.3 Procedures for organising a business/official tour

5.5.1 Profile of the Chinese Business/Official and Incentive Travel Market

Official trips and business group tours generally last up to ten days; very few are longer. On average, groups comprise around ten participants, although incentive tour groups can be much longer.

Since the MICE market tends to be high-end and customised, MICE groups travelling to MENA countries expect higher quality facilities and services at their destination. This partly explains why Dubai is so popular as an emerging MICE destination. It boasts deluxe hotels and conference venues, and service in the emirate is second to none. In addition, Dubai is a well-developed economic centre, with international influence and unbeatable shopping. It is also an important transport hub radiating linked to the whole MENA area, which makes it even more attractive to Chinese companies.

There are two main reasons why Chinese companies are drawn to MENA countries: opportunities for trade and investment. IT companies are generally looking for business co-operation opportunities and there are many international medical conferences in Dubai, attracting technicians and engineering experts as well as the medical profession.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Attracting the MICE Market

Business travellers offer huge potential for MENA countries, especially those to which very few Chinese leisure travellers visit. So marketing and promotions should focus heavily on the quality of facilities and service catering specifically for Chinese, including catering, translation services, etc.

Key recommendations include working closely with Chinese companies and the government (including the provincial and municipal governments) to identify and enhance potential opportunities, setting up a Chinese-language website specially for Chinese business travellers, which can provide detailed business information relevant to their needs, and simplification of visa regulations and processes for Chinese business travellers.

Staff training, both in MENA countries and among meetings planners, etc. in China, is of course critical as standards are even more important than for leisure travellers.

Business/MICE is a high-end market and it can stimulate leisure travel demand, so it is a sector in which it make sense to invest for the future.

5.6 Co-operation with the Chinese Travel Trade

Chinese outbound travel agencies not only act as sales channel for the destination's travel products, but are also key to promoting the attractions of a destination among customers.

Joint promotions

With the exception of Egypt and Dubai, which enjoy a certain reputation in the Chinese market, most Chinese know very little about MENA destinations. Given the events of the past few years, the general image of the MENA region with Chinese consumers is more negative than positive, alluding to political instability, poor social security and sanitary conditions. So image promotion is especially important to attract Chinese tourists to the region.

The experience of foreign NTOs suggests that the best approach is to work closely with the Chinese travel trade and, in particular, the large travel agency groups. CITS has worked closely with the Egyptian Tourism Authority to promote different tour programmes to Egypt, providing details of the tours and destinations visited, as well as an introduction to Egyptian history, culture and customs, on its main and branch websites.

Professional training programmes

MENA NTOs and suppliers should provide professional training for Chinese travel agency staff, so they can learn about the destinations' tourism resources, facilitating and boosting sales of MENA tourism products. Training programmes can be face to face or even organised on-line or through mobile phones.

Egypt has an on-line training programme for Chinese professionals called 'Egypt Tourism Expert Training and Certification System', which was launched by the tourism office of the Egyptian Embassy in China in 2010. Courses are free and, once a travel agent completes the course successfully, he/she is awarded an 'Egypt Tourism Expert Certificate'.

Strict employment laws in some MENA countries have resulted in a shortage of qualified Chinese-speaking personnel, e.g. tour guides and inbound operators and ground handlers. This has led to a number of complaints from Chinese tour group participants, Travel suppliers in MENA countries should work with Chinese travel agencies to strengthen the training of local tourism operators, increase the number of Chinese-speaking staff and improve service quality, so as to provide better treatment for Chinese tourists and to stimulate growth.

Road shows and FAM trips

Road shows should become a regular event in the Chinese market – in key tourism source cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shenyang and Chongqing – and FAM trips for travel agency staff should also be an integral part of MENA destinations' marketing and promotions. Such activities are good ways of educating the Chinese travel trade about their tourism destinations and tourism products.

Creating travel experience or theme stores

MENA countries' NTOs could also collaborate with Chinese travel agencies to set up travel experience or theme stores within their different branches in the first-tier tourist-generating regions of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Presentations about the respective countries' tourism resources unique cultures would enhance Chinese tourists' understanding of MENA destinations and generate interest in visiting them. This could also be combined with joint airline promotions.

Supporting Chinese large tourism wholesalers

Large tourism wholesalers and travel agency groups, which have thousands of contracted agents in provinces and municipalities all over China, have very effective promotional channels and distribution networks of their own. Financial support from MENA countries can help to enhance promotion of their destinations in branch offices, as well as through sales brochures, on the Internet, etc.

Appointing a local PR consultant

Since Chinese travel agents have a unique way of doing business, but are usually not fluent in English and therefore unable to communicate well with MENA tourism suppliers directly, the latter often benefit from appointing a local PR agency or consultant to act as the go-between. Such an intermediary can not only act as interpreter and inform the suppliers and NTOs about business etiquette and customs in China, but can also help to build trust and a co-operative spirit from the local travel agents.

The local PR agent/consultant or marketing representative can also handle a lot of the ground work involved in marketing and promoting a destination, e.g. attending smaller exhibitions and events in place of the NTO or supplier, and maintaining contact with local travel agencies.

Market research

Any foreign NTO looking to enter the Chinese market needs to carry out in-depth market research to understand market segments, trends and potential. This will help adapt products and programmes better to the Chinese market. Such research should ideally be carried out in co-operation with local Chinese experts who have a good handle on the characteristics and preferences of the Chinese.

Chinese-speaking tour guides and Chinese food in hotels and restaurants are of course critical, but other requirements are perhaps less obvious to suppliers unfamiliar with Chinese travel preferences and behaviour, and even knowledge of the Chinese society and how it function at every level and among different age groups.

China outbound tourism Quality Service Certification (QSC Program)

The QSC Program assists Chinese outbound travellers and buyers in identifying and selecting quality suppliers, and promoting these suppliers more efficiently in China. It certifies a destination's tourism suppliers according to different criteria and procedures, and educates and guides Chinese travellers to select quality supplier and high-quality tourism products and itineraries.

Ivy Alliance is officially entrusted by CNTA to draft the certification criteria of this programme and implement it. Certified companies will be officially released to Chinese outbound travellers and recommended to Chinese outbound tour operators and buyers. Today, there are 124 companies including travel agencies, tourist attractions and shopping stores from 14 countries, which have been certified by the QSC Program.

In order to attract more Chinese travellers and develop high-quality tourism products, the tourism suppliers (including inbound travel agencies, shopping outlets, hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions, etc.) from MENA countries are recommended to join the QSC Program, which will also provide them with exclusive online promotions and brand publicity in China. Website: <http://www.qualitytourism.cn>.

5.7 Marketing Strategy for the Chinese Market

5.7.1 A Unique Approach Required for Every Destination

Attracting increased interest in MENA countries' tourism requires a major promotional boost, especially for countries with which the Chinese consumer is not yet familiar. It goes without saying that this should be supported by investment in product quality and in Chinese-speaking staff in the destinations, as well as appointing staff or representatives in China who know the destinations well and can communicate with the local travel trade.

MENA countries can be divided into three types, according to tourism attractions, air access (e.g. direct or indirect flights) and their ADS status, and different marketing strategies are required for each. The first category includes the already popular destinations among Chinese, notably the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, which have already established a sound foundation in the Chinese market. The second group includes other ADS-approved countries, including Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Oman, Lebanon and Syria. And the third category destinations the non-ADS countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Palestine, Yemen, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania and Sudan.

5.7.2 First-category Destinations

These destinations are all relatively well known and mature. But the attractions of each are all slightly different to Chinese tourists, so they require tailored marketing strategies.

For Egypt, political stability and a safe/secure environment are priorities, so these must be taken into account. Sales are unlikely to soar during periods of instability and uncertainty. Chinese first-tier tourist-generating markets are already familiar with the destination and its main attractions, but they need sophisticated tour products and itineraries, with expert tour guides providing detailed information on the history and culture of places visited.

More direct flights to Egypt are also likely to be needed in the medium term if the political situation improves, or charter flights can be put on to increase capacity during the peak season. Second-tier tourist-generating markets, such as Shanxi, Sichuan, Chongqing and Hunan, will need far greater marketing activity as they are less familiar with what Egypt has to offer.

As far as the United Arab Emirates is concerned, the main weakness at present is a shortage of Chinese or Chinese-speaking staff at the destination. Hotels, restaurants and attractions need to cater more specifically for Chinese tourists, providing Chinese TV, Chinese-language brochures and signage, and improved quality of Chinese food. This is particularly important for the MICE segment.

5.7.3 Second-category Destinations

These comprise countries that already have ADS approval but which are not yet well known in the Chinese market. They can be divided into two groups: those countries that are politically stable; and war-stricken countries, or those where there is currently political and civil unrest.

The former include Morocco, Jordan and Oman. These should strengthen their promotion and marketing in the major tourist-generating regions (i.e. Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong) to increase their visibility in the Chinese market. They should also plan for growth by training more Chinese-speaking service staff, establishing different forms of co-operation and exchanges with Chinese travel agencies, and designing and promoting travel products of high quality, highlighting the destinations' unique attractions.

Once demand starts to pick up, it will be important to establish some kind of presence in China as well, either by opening an office, or appointing a market representative or PR agency.

The main goal for Tunisia, which has suffered from negative press in recent years since the Arab Spring, is to focus on improving its image through promotions, in order to reassure potential Chinese visitors.

With regard to Lebanon and Syria, however, this is not a good time to launch any big promotions as demand will not pick up until such time as the countries are politically stable and long-term peace can be assured. Continuing bilateral co-operation between the two countries and China in the energy, agriculture and trade sectors might still generate some business travel, but even this is unlikely in the short term.

5.7.4 Third-category Destinations

The first step for non-ADS countries wishing to enter the Chinese market is to apply for ADS approval and to ensure that lack of air access will not act as a deterrent.

5.8 Major Tourism Fairs and Other Events in China

The leading outbound tourism fairs and other similar events in China are: the International Forum on Chinese Outbound Tourism (IFCOT); the China International Travel Mart (CITM); Beijing International Tourism Expo (BITE); the World Travel Fair (WTF); Guangzhou International Travel Fair (GITF); the China Outbound Travel and Tourism Market (COTTM); and the China Incentive, Business Travel and Meetings Exhibition (CIBTM).

International Forum on Chinese Outbound Tourism (IFCOT)

Launched in 2003, IFCOT has now had eight successful years. IFCOT receives solid support from CNTA, UNWTO, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Beijing Municipal Commission for Tourism Development (Beijing Tourism Administration) and China Tourism Association, as well as from leading Chinese outbound tour operators and travel agencies.

IFCOT is considered to be one of the most valuable and influential platforms for promotion and marketing in the Chinese outbound travel market – an important forum for networking with Chinese outbound tour operators, buyers and the media. Scores of mainstream media players attend the event. Total visitor numbers are over 2,500.

Website: <http://www.outbound-tourism.cn>

China International Travel Mart (CITM)

CITM is the largest and most important travel mart in China, held in alternate years in Shanghai and Kunming, and usually in November. It was launched in 1998 by CNTA. CITM primarily promotes inbound tourism but it has attracted an increasing number of visitors and exhibitors from ADS countries. The outbound focus is stronger when the show is held in Shanghai as Kunming is not an important outbound tourism source region.

Website: <http://www.citm.com.cn>

Beijing International Tourism Expo (BITE)

BITE has been organised by Beijing Tourism Administration in Beijing in every June since 2004. In terms of exhibition size, BITE is smaller than CITM and most of the exhibitors are domestic companies and organisations. International exhibitors are mainly from Asia, with some from Europe and Africa. Since it is held just before the summer peak season, it attracts more domestic tourism buyers than outbound operators.

Website: <http://www.bjbite.com>

World Travel Fair (WTF)

WTF, which also focuses on outbound tourism destinations, is held in Shanghai in every March (since 2004). WTF is one of the key purchasing platforms for the Chinese tourism industry, providing overseas destinations and tourism-related institutions with the opportunities to display their products and services to travel agents and corporate buyers in China. Most of the buyers are from Shanghai and surrounding provinces (i.e. Jiangsu and Zhejiang). The exhibition is primarily business to business but also attracts some consumers.

Website: <http://www.worldtravelfair.com.cn>

Guangzhou International Travel Fair (GITF)

GITF has been recognised as an important annual event in the Asia Pacific region thanks to its extensive influence on the tourism industry and related sectors in China and abroad since 1993. It is not large in scale. Domestic destinations and companies account for a larger share of exhibitors than international suppliers, with international exhibitors coming mainly from Asia, Europe and Africa. The exhibition is useful to those destinations intending to enter the Guangdong market.

Website: <http://www.gitf.com.cn>

China Outbound Travel and Tourism Market (COTTM)

COTTM is a 100% business-to-business outbound travel and tourism exhibition, held in Beijing in every April or May since 2005. The exhibition provides a platform for international tourism boards and travel services to meet with China's key outbound tour operators. Its scale is smaller than that of CITM, BITE, WTF and GITF.

Website: <http://www.cottm.com>

China Incentive, Business Travel and Meetings Exhibition (CIBTM)

CIBTM, as part of the highly acclaimed IBTM Global Events portfolio, provides the ultimate platform for suppliers to the MICE industry to meet buyers who are responsible for organising and planning meetings, events and business travel, both in China, Asia and the rest of the world. It has been held in Beijing every July since 2005 and is very manageable in scale.

Website: <http://www.cibtm.com>

IT&CM China (Corporate, Business, Incentive Travel and Meetings)

IT&CM China has been held in Shanghai since 2007 as a MICE event in China. The exhibition provides the platform for international and Chinese players in the MICE industry to explore business opportunities on all fronts – inbound, outbound and domestic.

Website: <http://www.itcmchina.com>

China Luxury Travel Fair (CLTF)

CLTF is an annual luxury travel event held in Shanghai, providing a communication platform for Chinese high-end wealthy consumers and international luxury travel suppliers.

Website: <http://www.chinaluxurytravelfair.com>