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# Inbound tourism developments and patterns in China

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## Abstract

The People's Republic of China is one of the world's most popular tourist destinations. This paper reviews the development of the Chinese inbound tourism industry after the cultural revolution and analyses tourist flows from Japan, which is the most important short-haul inbound market for China. Box-Jenkins univariate time series analysis facilitates an understanding of tourist arrival patterns in inbound tourism for China from Japan for the period 1986–2000. Tests for stationarity of tourist arrivals time series are also conducted.

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*Keywords:* China inbound tourism; Tourism developments; Seasonality; ARIMA models; Tests of unit roots

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## 1. Introduction

As part of the strategy to modernize the country, China, or the People's Republic of China in full, entered an era of economic reform under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping since the beginning of 1978. Gradually and cautiously, the country began to open the gates of the bamboo curtain to international trade and tourism. The "Socialist market economy", as it was called by Chinese leaders, was adopted in 1992, with the intention of driving China's economy in a direction that was guided by market forces [15].

China has enjoyed political stability and increasing economic prosperity due to its experimentation with the market economy which has brought about economic reforms. Between 1979 and 1997, China's economy grew by an average rate of 9.8% per annum, 6.5% higher than the world's average annual growth rate and 4.8% higher than that of developing countries over the same period [1]. The Chinese

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Table 1  
World's top 10 tourism destinations

Rank	Country	International tourist arrivals (million)		% Change 2000/1999	Market share (%) 2000
		1999	2000		
1	France	76.0	75.5	3.4	10.8
2	United States	48.5	50.9	4.9	7.3
3	Spain	46.8	48.2	3.0	6.9
4	Italy	36.5	41.2	12.8	5.9
5	China	27.0	31.2	15.5	4.5
6	United Kingdom	25.4	25.2	−0.8	3.6
7	Russian Federation	18.5	21.2	14.5	3.0
8	Mexico	19.0	20.6	8.4	3.0
9	Canada	19.5	20.4	4.9	2.9
10	Germany	17.1	19.0	10.9	2.7

Source: World Tourism Organization (2001).

government's market reforms had boosted productivity and attracted foreign investment. With the impact of a marked economic slowdown in the United States, global output in 2000 grew by only 4.8%. However, China, as one of the most widely recognised emerging markets in the world, experienced 8.0% growth in 2000 which was 3.9% higher than that of developed countries in the same year [10].

China has become one of the world's most popular tourist destinations. Table 1 presents the world's top 10 destinations in terms of tourist arrivals. China was the fastest growing destination in 1999 and 2000. According to [16], China was ranked fifth in international tourist arrivals in 2000, and seventh in international tourism receipts, earning US\$16,231 million. Furthermore, China had 4.5% of the world's market share of tourist arrivals in 2000. Within East Asia and the Pacific region, China was ranked first in international tourist arrivals and international tourism receipts in recent years. This information highlights the important role which China is playing as an integral part of the international tourism industry.

## 2. Inbound tourism development in China

Under Mao Zedong's regime, China was liberated by the Communist Party from Chiang Kai Chek in 1949. Subsequently, a near total ban on inbound travel for any purpose was enforced between 1949 and 1976. According to [18], the development of China's international tourism has been through several stages. It started with political visits, but 10 years of cultural revolution (1966–1976) had entirely suspended the development of China's inbound tourism. This enforced isolation had fostered widespread interest in China among foreigners. With the introduction of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms in 1978, this radical change in policy brought about the rapid development of inbound tourism in China. However, during the first 4 years from 1978 to 1982, the government focused mainly on educational and political visits to China. In 1982 the Government recognized tourism as an economic activity, and in 1986 China reiterated the importance of tourism nationwide by including the tourism industry in the national plan for social and economic development. The China National Travel Administration (CNTA), which is the national administrative body responsible for implementing short-term and long-term tourism policies in China, has played an important role in the development of the Chinese tourism industry at the national level

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