

Tourism and reconciliation between Mainland China and Taiwan

Yingzhi Guo^a, Samuel Seongseop Kim^{b,*}, Dallen J. Timothy^c, Kuo-Ching Wang^d

^aDepartment of Tourism, Fudan University, Shanghai 200433, China

^bDepartment of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Sejong University, Seoul 143-747, Korea

^cSchool of Community Resources and Development, P.O. Box 874703, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-4703, USA

^dGraduate Institute of Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality Management, National Chiayi University, Chiayi 600, Taiwan, China

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Abstract

This study illustrates the features of tourism flow as well as politics, economics and trade between Mainland China and Taiwan. The Taiwanese visiting Mainland China have comprised the main tourist market between Mainland China and Taiwan. Conversely, the number of visitors from Mainland Chinese to Taiwan is very limited. The relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan is highly unbalanced. Some obstacles for tourism cooperation, including transportation, politics, and culture between the Mainland and Taiwan, have also been indicated in this study. Thus, the corresponding solutions to the above obstacles such as tourism cooperation, politics, transportation, and culture between Mainland China and Taiwan have been put forward. Finally, the role of tourism in reconciliation and peace between Mainland China and Taiwan is discussed and supported.

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1. Introduction

Many researchers have noted the potential role of tourism in reducing tension, conflicts, barriers to cooperation, and political mistrust, idealistically resulting in peaceful conditions (D'Amore, 1988; Hobson & Ko, 1994; Jafari, 1989; Lee, 1998; Matthews, 1978; Matthews & Ritcher, 1991; Richter, 1989, 1996; Var, Brayle, & Korsay, 1989; Var, Schlüter, Ankomah, & Lee, 1989). Furthermore, some studies have suggested that tourism might be a positive force in reconciliation efforts and peace building between partitioned countries (Alipour & Kilic, 2005; Butler & Mao, 1995, 1996; Kim & Crompton, 1990; Yu, 1997; Zhang, 1993). Litvin (1998), however, indicated that tourism is not necessarily a promoter or forerunner of peace and reconciliation, but rather a beneficiary of peaceful relations. Recently, Kim and Prideaux (2003)

suggested that tourism may be used as a political tool for building better relations.

Several studies have focused on the role of tourism development between partitioned countries, including Mainland China (officially, the People's Republic of China, or PR China) and Taiwan (officially, Republic of China) (Yu, 1997), Hong Kong and China prior to 1997 (Hobson & Ko, 1994), South Korea and North Korea (Kim & Crompton, 1990; Kim & Prideaux, 2003), and North Cyprus and South Cyprus (Akis & Warner, 1994; Alipour & Kilic, 2005; Altinay, 2000). However, with the exception of a few studies (e.g. Yu, 1997), little attention has been directed to the role of tourism in political reconciliation and peace building between PR China and Taiwan. This study, therefore, aims to examine the current situation. More specifically, the purposes of this study are: (1) to illustrate the dynamics of tourism flows between Mainland China and Taiwan; (2) to highlight several obstacles to cooperation in tourism transportation, politics, and culture between Mainland China and Taiwan; (3) to recommend solutions to these obstacles, and (4) to identify the role of tourism in improving relations between the Mainland and Taiwan.

*Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: yingzhig@sh163.net (Y. Guo), sskim@sejong.ac.kr (S.S. Kim), dtimothy@asu.edu (D.J. Timothy), wangkc@mail.ncyu.edu.tw (K.-C. Wang).

Table 1
Number of tourist arrivals between Mainland China and Taiwan

Year	Tourists from Taiwan to Mainland China (in thousands)	Growth rate (%)	Tourists from Mainland China to Taiwan (in thousands)	Growth rate (%)
1988	473.7	N/A	0.381	N/A
1989	541.0	23.60	4.838	1169.82
1990	947.6	75.16	7.520	55.44
1991	946.6	-00.11	11.074	47.26
1992	1317.8	39.21	13.134	18.60
1993	1527.0	15.87	18.343	39.66
1994	1390.2	-8.96	23.562	28.45
1995	1532.3	10.23	47.176	100.22
1996	1734.0	13.16	58.510	24.02
1997	2118.0	22.15	72.346	23.65
1998	2174.6	2.67	90.626	25.27
1999	2584.6	18.85	106.699	17.74
2000	3108.6	20.27	117.125	9.77
2001	3442.0	10.73	133.655	14.11
2002	3660.6	6.35	153.923	15.16
2003	3670.5	0.27	150.683	-2.10
2004	3686.0	0.42	145.000	-3.77
Total	34,819.1	15.62	858.912	98.96

Sources: Yearbook of China Tourist Statistics (1989–2004).

2. Tourism between Mainland China and Taiwan

Prior to 1978, when PR China began its reformation and opened up to the outside world, travel between the Mainland and Taiwan was heavily restricted. The years between 1978 and 1987 saw very little growth in cross-Straits tourism, although many Taiwanese actually visited the Mainland in spite of the heavy restrictions enforced by the government in Taipei. To avoid the restrictions, Taiwanese travellers simply travelled from Taiwan to another country (e.g. Hong Kong or Singapore) and then on to Mainland China, where immigration officials did not stamp their passports, thus leaving no indication of a visit (Timothy, 2001; Yu, 1997). Table 1 shows the number of tourist arrivals between Mainland China and Taiwan.

In 1987, Taiwan lifted its ban on travel to PR China, which prompted a flood of visits to the Mainland and caused a notable growth in cross-Straits travel. Immediately after the ban was lifted, only certain segments of society were permitted to travel to Mainland China to visit relatives and friends whom they had not seen for more than 35 years. This resulted in 473,700 Taiwanese travelling to Mainland China in 1988. Leisure-based tourism in the traditional sense and business contacts, however, were still heavily controlled at that time. In 1992, 1.3 million Taiwanese visited Mainland China, showing a 39 percent increase over the previous year. Since 1992, travel across the Taiwan Straits has grown considerably in both directions (Yu, 1997), although it was temporarily halted in 1994 as a result of the “Qiandao Lake incident” in China, in which 24 Taiwanese travellers, eight crew members, and four tour guides were ambushed and murdered during a sightseeing cruise. The ban lasted only a few months, but visitation rates from Taiwan declined

some nine percent from the previous year (Mark, 1994). After the incident, tourism continued to grow between the two entities. Visitors from Taiwan accounted for nearly a quarter of PR China’s international arrivals during the late 1990s. In 2004, 3.7 million Taiwanese visited PR China, representing a 18.57 percent growth rate from 2000.

In the opposite direction, the government of Taiwan first allowed Mainland Chinese tourists to visit their sick relatives living in Taiwan or to attend funerals, this beginning in 1988. This move signalled a departure from the strict prohibition against PR Chinese citizens from entering Taiwan, ushering in a two-way flow of people between Mainland China and albeit in limited numbers. From that event, the limited two-way flow of people between Mainland China and Taiwan started. During the next few years, Taiwan’s policy relating to Mainland Chinese travel to the island was also relaxed, and relations in the tourism realm between Mainland China and Taiwan gradually normalized. By 1993, the Taiwan government had further decided to allow PR Chinese to attend international conferences in Taiwan, gather news reports, produce movies and TV programs, and attend cultural and educational events. Mainland Chinese were also allowed to visit for personal reasons such as lawsuits and for the return of the remains of deceased relatives. In 2000, approximately 117,000 Mainland Chinese visited Taiwan, an increase of 62 percent from 1997. In 2004, approximately 145,000 Mainland Chinese visited Taiwan—23.9 percent more than in 2000 (Zhang, 2000). Between 1988 and 2004, some 858,900 Mainland Chinese visited Taiwan, with an annual increase of roughly 99 percent. Although the number of PR Chinese visiting Taiwan is much lower than that of Taiwanese visiting Mainland China, it is still noteworthy that most of the visitors from Mainland China

to Taiwan are high profile people such as scientists, technology leaders, journalists, actors, scholars, and athletes.

In summary, the flow of tourists between Mainland China and Taiwan since the early 1990s shows a high level of growth. There are two distinct characteristics of the tourist flow between Mainland China and Taiwan. First, the primary purpose of Taiwanese visits to the Mainland has changed from visiting friends and relatives in the earlier years to sightseeing, holiday vacations, business, cultural exchanges, and scientific and technological works in more recent years. Tourism from Taiwan to Mainland China occurs most often in the form of tour packages purchased through travel agencies. In recent years, the Taiwanese have been the main tourist market for Mainland China. Second, owing to the economic differences and standards of living between Taiwan and Mainland China, as well as Taiwan's restrictive policies, the tourism market shows an overwhelming uni-directional flow. That is, Taiwanese travel to Mainland China has constituted the primary pattern of tourism between these two entities or areas. The number of travellers from Mainland China to Taiwan is proportionally smaller, and the relationship between both states remains tenuous.

3. Political and economic development between Mainland China and Taiwan

The flow of travel between Taiwan and Mainland China is influenced significantly by the political relations between the two governments. In October 1949, PR China was established by the Chinese Communist Party. The Taiwan government of the Kuoming Party withdrew to Taiwan. Since then, the political relationships between the two polities have undergone three major phases.

The first phase was a period of military confrontation, which lasted from 1949 to 1977. Both sides were involved in several heated battles on the seashores and islands of southeastern PR China from 1949 to 1958 (Chun, 2002). From 1959 to 1966 some small-scale military conflicts also occurred, although the relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan had become more subdued (Yang, 1999). Between 1967 and 1977, during the cultural revolutionary period in Mainland China, the relationships from both states' perspectives had become significantly more relaxed than in previous years, although a few military conflicts still occurred (Li, 1999).

The second phase was a period of peace negotiations from 1978 to 1995. In 1978, PR China proposed a series of policies to promote negotiations and travel between Mainland China and Taiwan. In 1987, the government of Taiwan formally began permitting Taiwanese civilians to visit relatives in Mainland China. The negotiations between the two states developed from unilateral efforts by Taiwan to bilateral negotiations between both sides to some extent with higher and higher levels of understanding (Zhang, 2001; Shi, 2001).

The third phase was a transition period from 1995 to present. In 1995, PR China suggested that negotiations for peace and unification between the two polities should be done "on the basis of one China" (Li, 2001). Since 1995, the former president Lee Denghui and current president Chen Shuibian of Taiwan have argued for a system based on "two Chinas"—a situation that has led to strained relations and interruptions in contact negotiations. Even semi-official contacts and negotiations have not been conducted in recent years (Shan, 2002). On March 14 of 2005, "The National Law against Division of China" was got across by the Third Meeting of the National Tenth People's Representative Congress of the People's Republic of China (NTPRCPRC) in Mainland China (NTPRCPRC, 2005). From April 26 to May 3 of 2005, Mr. Zhan Lian, president of Kuoming Party in Taiwan had visited Mainland China. Later on, Mr. Chuyu Song, president of Qingming Party in Taiwan, had also visited Mainland China from May 5 to 13 of 2005, which had greatly promoted the relationship development between Mainland China and Taiwan (Tang, 2005). However, the official contact and negotiation between Mainland China and Taiwan still had a long way to go (Wang, 2005). Table 2 highlights some of the most important political and policy-related developments between Taiwan and PR China.

Notwithstanding these strained relations, economic and trade cooperation between the states has improved considerably since 1978, when PR China began its economic reforms and opened itself up to globalization forces. Since 1979, Mainland China has opened up to the outside world and begun a major economic reformation. With the reformation, Taiwanese investments in PR China have been permitted to flourish. In 1979, trade in imports and exports was USD \$7.8 billion via Hong Kong. In 2002, trans-Strait trade amounted to nearly USD \$5.1 trillion. In that year, PR China surpassed the United States as Taiwan's largest trade partner. Within the 23 years between 1979 and 2002, trade between Taiwan and PR China via Hong Kong had increased 651 percent (Hu & Fang, 2002). While during the past two decades the economic relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan (including tourism) has developed quickly, it has sometimes been suspended by political discord.

4. Current issues regarding tourism flows between Mainland China and Taiwan

Despite the rapid development of trans-Strait tourism, there are still several problems related to cooperation, transportation, politics and culture. These are examined in the sections that follow.

4.1. Problems of tourism cooperation

Six problems can be identified in the area of tourism cooperation. First, an outbound travel trend study by Wang, Guo, and Yen (2004) indicated that owing to the

Table 2
Some important political reconciliation and cooperation between Mainland China and Taiwan

Date	The import measures of communications between Mainland China and Taiwan
October, 1949	The People's Republic of China is set up. Kuoming Party receded to Taiwan Island. The communications of mailing, navigations and commerce had been interrupted completely.
From 1949 to 1958	There were many fierce sea or air battles along the southeastern seashore of Mainland China between military army of Taiwan and Mainland China.
October, 1971	The resolution by the 26th conference of United Nations that all the legal rights should be resumed in United Nations for China. Taiwan exited from United Nations.
January, 1979	Mainland China put forward the policies on communications of trades, economics, tourism and culture in actualizing mailing, navigations, and commerce by means of peace.
May, 1979	Taiwan government adjusted some policies on Mainland China, such as opening party bans, releasing from enforce martial law, permitting Taiwanese to have a trip to Mainland China, etc.
January, 1984	Taiwan government permitted Taiwanese might contact with Mainland Chinese professionals in the activities such as international academic conference, science and technology, sports, and culture.
July, 1987	Taiwan government declared to releasing from the "urgent enforcing martial laws" which had been put in practice for over 30 years. Free from bans of parties, newspapers and publish.
November, 1987	Taiwan government permitted Taiwanese to visit Mainland China for the purpose of families only.
November, 1988	Taiwan allowed some outstanding scientists and scholars from Mainland China to visit Taiwan.
February, 1990	Taiwan permitted Taiwanese who settled on the Mainland China before 1949 to return to Taiwan.
September, 1990	Red Cross of both Mainland China and Taiwan managed the "Jinmeng Agreement" at Jinmeng in Taiwan in which the stowaways and criminals must be repatriated.
April, 1991	Taiwan lowered the age limits on Mainlanders who moved to join their families in Taiwan.
December, 1992	Taiwan permitted indirect Mainland family members to visit Taiwan, such as grandparents.
July, 1996	Taiwan permitted Mainland journalists to stay in Taiwan on 1-year work visa which is renewable annually and governors/mayors were allowed to attend cultural activities and international gatherings in Mainland China.
January, 2001	Taiwan declared that Mainland Chinese could have a trip on Taiwan with conditions.
February, 2001	The passenger ship carried 74 Jinmeng residents living in Xiameng of Mainland China first navigated to Jinmeng in Taiwan to visit relatives and friends.
July, 2002	257 worshippers of Mother Ancestor in Taiwan took the passengers ship "Super star" in Taiwan first navigated to Quanzhou port in Fujin province of Mainland China.
From January to February, 2003	The planes of total six airline companies in Taiwan flew to Shanghai via Hong Kong and Macao airport with 16 flights, 32 sorties, 2478 Taiwan businessmen and their dependants, which was the first formal aviation to Mainland China for Taiwan civil airline companies.
From January to February, 2005	Mainland China and Taiwan official approved to let both sides' charter flights to cities like Taipei, Kaohsiung, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shanghai directly without stopping in Hong Kong or Macau. The first Mainland Chinese airplane owned by China Southern Airlines was permitted to land in Taiwan in 56 years at Taiwan's CKS International Airport; similarly, Taiwan's first flight to China was operated by China Airlines and arrived in Beijing on January 29, 2005.
March 14, 2005	"The National Law against Division of China" was got across by the Third Meeting of the Tenth People's Representative Congress of the People's Republic of China (2005) in Mainland China.
April to May, 2005	Mr. Zhan Lian, president of Kuoming Party in Taiwan visited Mainland China in April, 2005. Mr. Chuyu Song, president of Qingming Party in Taiwan, visited Mainland China in May, 2005.

Sources: Chinese Internet of Longitude and Latitude. <http://www.huaxia.com/zt/2003-15/pl.html> China Xinlang Internet. <http://news.sina.com.cn/z/lzfdl/index.shtml-2005-11-6>.

similarity in race, ethnicity, culture, and language, Taiwanese and PR Chinese tourists behave in a similar way but at different stages of travel development.

However, travel agencies and tour companies in PR China are still not allowed to market themselves in Taiwan and are severely limited by the lack of marketing cooperation between the two states. Hence, they lack an understanding of capitalist business principles and philosophies such as how to conduct market research, how to develop promotional campaigns, identify who their customers are, how to train human resources, and how to handle economic crises (Chen, 2001).

Second, PR China lacks international consulting information systems. Problems include incomplete tourism industry administration, unequal tourism staffing, and fundamental differences in service facilities and quality from an international perspective (Yan & Yu, 2002). Third,

tourism in PR China has experienced difficulties in recent years owing to overdue receivables, booking for short periods of time, and high rates of cancellations and itinerary changes (Lin, 2002). Fourth, there are differing opinions in the evaluation standard of tourism products and service quality, insurance and compensation, duty and attitude for tourists and methods of doing business and tourism ticketing, choices of markets, design of products, and standard of prices (Yan & Yu, 2002). Fifth, to most Taiwanese tourists, the tourism products offered by Mainland China still emphasize visiting relatives and friends, seeking ancestors (genealogy travel), as well as religious pilgrimages. These products are similar and predictable but not suitable for the new niche markets (Yang, 2002a).

Finally, and most importantly, the Taiwan government only permits Mainland Chinese travellers to go to Taiwan

if they are visiting relatives and friends. Sightseeing tours to Taiwan by PR Chinese have not yet been formally allowed by the Taiwan government, which means that most Mainland Chinese travellers cannot travel to Taiwan freely (Lin, 2002).

4.2. Transportation

Despite these conventional restrictions, as a service for Taiwanese businesspeople returning home for Chinese Lunar New Year holidays, PR China and Taiwan agreed on January 29, 2005, to let groups on both sides charter flights to cities like Taipei, Kaohsiung, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shanghai directly without requiring a stop in Hong Kong or Macau. The first Mainland Chinese airplane to land in Taiwan in 56 years at CKS International Airport was a China Southern Airlines craft. Similarly, Taiwan's first flight to China was operated by China Airlines and arrived in Beijing the same day. However, the problem still remains that travellers between Mainland China and Taiwan cannot fly directly on regularly scheduled flights but instead must travel via a third state such as Hong Kong, Macau, or Japan, which causes inconveniences such as having to spend more time and money on travel in both directions (Xiong, 2002). Also, transit through the third state is usually done through lines that cannot be contacted easily (Lin, 2002). Owing to the fact that direct transportation between PR China and Taiwan is not currently possible for most people, the flow of tourism between both sides has to be operated indirectly (Lu, 2002). If direct transportation between both sides could be initiated, transportation costs would be reduced at least 40 percent (Yu, 2001).

4.3. Political relationships

Instead of a warming of relations between Taiwan and PR China in recent years, there has been an increasingly cooler political attitude, which negatively affects tourism growth in both directions. Two issues regarding political relationships in tourism can be noted. First, the earliest official contacts between PR China and Taiwan took place in September 1990, when the Red Cross of both entities initiated the Jinmeng Agreement, which stated that stowaways and criminals must be repatriated to their state of origin. Following the Jinmeng Agreement, the relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan improved and became more relaxed. However, the situation was interrupted by Taiwan's adoption of the "Taiwan independence" policy from 1995 to the present. This has led to a cessation of official contacts and negotiations between PR China and Taiwan since the mid-1990s (Bei, 2002). Second, because the mutual agreement of "*no independence and no war*" has been tarnished, the dividing force has gained momentum. Mainland China has expressed its readiness to solve the problem with Taiwan by any means possible.

Currently, there exist more possibilities for war in the Taiwan Strait than ever before (Qian, 2002).

4.4. Cultural products

Despite political tensions, cultural ties between PR China and Taiwan have been relatively strong in recent years. After the 1980s, various representative dramas and operas in PR China, such as the Beijing Opera, Kung Qu Opera, Huang Mei Opera and Qing Qiang Opera, have performed in Taiwan (Peng, 1997). Since the 1990s, popular TV shows and movies from PR China have been broadcast in Taiwan. The increasing popularity of Mainland Chinese TV and movies continues (Zhang, 2000). In 2002, "*the Ninth Wonder of the World*," the national treasure of Buddhism, or the ashes of Fameng Temple were exhibited in Taiwan for 37 days, which attracted over four million Taiwanese observers. Meanwhile, the monks in Zhongtai Temple and Fa Gushang Temple also visited and made pilgrimages to Buddhist sacred locations in China.

Similarly, the golden Mother Ancestor of Mainland China had first travelled to Jinmeng, Taiwan, in 2001 (Yang, 2002b). Mother Ancestor in Quanzhou of Mainland China had also met with the ancestor in Penghu of Taiwan (Ding, 2003). The belief of the Mother Ancestor has become an important cross-Straits cultural tourism resource. Mother Ancestor was born on Meizhou Island, Fujian Province, in the lunar Chinese year 960 (Chinese year of the Song Jianlong Dynasty). She helped the poor, aided the endangered, cast her bread upon the waters, and accumulated virtues. Since her death, disciples have given thanks for her virtues and set up a temple in her memory on Meizhou Island, China, and worshipped her as a goddess. Now memorial temples of Mother Ancestor, stemming from the first original temple in Meizhou Island, have spread to over 22 countries and regions of the world. In Taiwan alone, there are more than 800 temples of Mother Ancestor and over 16 million believers (Wang, 2002). The Mother Ancestor has a significant impact on Taiwanese travelling to the Mainland. However, there are some problems in the development of cultural tourism resources related to Mother Ancestor tourism between Mainland China and Taiwan.

First, to attract travellers by setting up branch temples in local areas, many regions have even invented legends, events, and relationships with the original ancestor temple. However, they have no way to validate these claims through research, which has led to difficulties in receiving adequate recognition for their connections to Mother Ancestor. The cultural tourism resources associated with Mother Ancestor have been difficult to capitalize on owing to an incomplete and non-uniform image of tourism products (Lin, 2001). Second, because of limited knowledge about Mother Ancestor, many regions focus on the spiritual side of the tourism products (such as incense and grilling paper made to resemble money and burned as offerings to Mother Ancestor). This focus tends only to

attract purely religious travellers and lacks appeal for non-religious travellers (Peng, 2001). Third, in the development of cultural tourism resources related to Mother Ancestor in Mainland China and Taiwan, Mother Ancestor has been developed as an isolated tourist product. Therefore, other tourism products combined with local tourist resources have not been fully developed other than academic exchanges, pilgrimages, spiritual events, and conventions (Hu, 2003). Fourth, because of the late development of Mother Ancestor as a tourist attraction, tourism development was not planned over a long period and consequently it possesses some weaknesses in quality. Because of lack of complete planning and management, cultural tourism resources of the Mother Ancestor exist by “*every person engaged in tourism and everywhere engaged in tourism*” (Zhang, 2000).

5. Strategies for improving tourism cooperation between Mainland China and Taiwan

In light of the problems described above, solutions may be suggested in areas of tourism cooperation, transportation, politics, and culture between Mainland China and Taiwan.

5.1. Recommendations for tourism cooperation

As the first suggestion, Taiwan should permit travel professionals from Mainland China to market in Taiwan so that they can research the Taiwanese market, promote tourism products, understand the preferences of Taiwanese travellers, and choose suitable partners to benefit each other in promoting tourism flows between the two states. Second, the provinces, cities and autonomous regions of Mainland China should be able to set up a public, dynamic and international tourism information system. Meanwhile, a consistent tourism administration management system should be established to enhance and monitor the professional quality and training of travel agency, hotel and restaurant staff. Third, a tourism reservation system would be useful in confirming reservations at an international level, by regular communications to minimize large cancellation rates and high numbers of changes in tourist reservations. This would help in the management of tourism between Mainland China and Taiwan.

Fourth, areas such as tourism product standards and service evaluations, insurance, codes of conduct for tourists, target marketing, tourism product design, and prices should be reached in good faith to the best of either abilities on the basis of negotiations so as to further strengthen tourism cooperation between China and Taiwan. Fifth, travel agencies in China should continuously renovate and recreate the tourism product for Taiwanese travellers. The rich tourism resources of Mainland China should be prioritized and promoted according to the different needs of different market segments. Finally, cooperation should work toward opening the tourism market,

developing scenic areas and service establishments, and presenting local customs to tourists from both sides. Also, developing a series of characteristic tourist attractions could be designed to improve the communicational activities of folk culture.

5.2. Transportation issues

Perhaps the most obvious recommendation is that travellers, tourism products, and tour packages should not have to pass through Hong Kong, Macau or another third state. Transportation should be developed directly between the two states, which will save time and money for tourists from both sides. This will facilitate competition in the international market and will very likely result in decreased costs, more travel, and higher arrival numbers. The other solution will be that it is crucial to improve direct air transportation and direct sea transportation to urge direct tourism transportation. It takes only 30 min by direct flight from the nearest city in Mainland China to Taiwan, which would be obviously superior in terms of time, convenience, and comfort. Direct flights will be the most preferred form of transportation among more and more Taiwanese travellers to places in Mainland China.

5.3. Political relationships

If the interference between Mainland China and Taiwan could be eliminated and harmony advanced between both sides in political and tourism relationships, then the complete development of tourism could be advanced much further. The second solution is that Hong Kong's smooth reversion to Mainland China means that “*one country and two systems*” could solve the problems of the unification of China, which is the most referenced model for the settlement of Taiwan's problems. More and more people believe that “*one country and two systems*” is practical for both sides.

5.4. The solution for cultural problems between Mainland China and Taiwan

Four major solutions to the cultural tourism problems can be suggested. The first is that every location related to a temple of Mother Ancestor should be managed and interpreted according to cultural and historical facts which will create their own unique local relationships to Mother Ancestor. Second, the contents of the tourism products should be improved and the variety of types of tourism products should be expanded. The development of tourism products associated with Mother Ancestor should pay special attention to spiritual matters and be reflected in the tourism product development. Third, academic understandings of Mother Ancestor should be strengthened and the culture surrounding the traditional made more widely known through special events, conventions and the

Table 3
Main obstacles and corresponding strategies of current tourism flow between Mainland China and Taiwan

Item	Obstacles or problems between Mainland China and Taiwan	Solutions or strategies between Mainland China and Taiwan
Tourism cooperation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mainland China could not have tourism marketing in Taiwan. 2. There are great differences in management of tourism enterprises, fundamental facilities and tourism service between Mainland China and international advancing level. 3. There is a great possibility of cancelling and changing for tourism packages from Taiwan to Mainland China. 4. There are understandable differences in tourism products, marketing selection, service quality and price criteria between Mainland China and Taiwan. 5. There are a few innovations of tourism products of Mainland China for Taiwanese. 6. Taiwan government has not fully formally permitted Mainland Chinese to travel in Taiwan. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taiwan should permit the tourism professionals of Mainland China to market in Taiwan. 2. The differences of software and hardware construction in fundamental facilities and service establishment should be shortened between Mainland China and international advanced level. 3. The disadvantages of great possibility of cancelling and changing for tourism for tourism packages from Taiwan to Mainland China should try to be lessened. 4. The common knowledge in marketing selection, products designs, service quality, and price criteria should try to be set up. 5. The tourism products in Mainland China should be often renovated and recreated. 6. Taiwan government should fully permit Mainland Chinese travellers to travel in Taiwan.
Transportation cooperation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Most of travellers and tourism products between Mainland China and Taiwan have to pass through the third city or country. 2. The direct and indirect economic damages of tourism flow is surprisingly large because of the transferring carriages via the third place between Mainland China and Taiwan. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The total travellers and tourism products should shunt between Mainland China and Taiwan without passing through the third city or country. 2. The flight navigation should be improved by means of sea navigation so as to lessen high travel cost and time between Mainland China and Taiwan.
Political cooperation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The semi-official contacts and negotiations have been far away between Mainland China and Taiwan in recent 2 years. 2. There is almost less mutual confidence between each other because of the policies of "Taiwan Independence" by Taiwan government. 3. Compared to previous years, the possibility of peace and unification as well as reconciliation becomes less and less between Mainland China and Taiwan. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The political relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan should be further improved. 2. The mode of Hong Kong returning to Mainland China may play as a reference model for Taiwan. 3. Taiwan should have a close cooperation with Mainland China so as to acclimatize the regional economic cooperation trends in the world.
Cultural tourism cooperation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The common knowledge and prevalence of Mother Ancestor culture of tourism resources were difficult to be recognized between Mainland China and Taiwan. 2. There is a low attraction for Mother Ancestor culture between Mainland China and Taiwan. 3. There was singular tourism product of Mother Ancestor culture that was difficult to be broken through traditional types. 4. The development of tourism products of Mother Ancestor culture was lack of a long-term planning and was opened blindly sometimes. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The common knowledge and distinguished features should be recognized between Mainland China and Taiwan. 2. The contents of tourism products should be increased. 3. The academic communication between Mainland China and Taiwan should be strengthened in order to propaganda Mother Ancestor culture. 4. The development of Mother Ancestor should be planned in a long term, coordinated with development and sales promotions with unification.

promotion of pilgrimages. Fourth, tourism products ought to be developed cooperatively and to be promoted through joint efforts. This has found considerable success in other parts of the world (Timothy, 1999). In summary, the relationships between each cultural tourism region associated with Mother Ancestor should be based on shared knowledge to be used in developing a series of tourism products, shared tourism resources, joint advertising and cooperation to develop a common tourism market and product. The above obstacles and corresponding strategies for cooperation in tourism approaches, transportation, politics and culture are shown in Table 3.

6. Conclusion and discussion

The goal of this paper was to identify ways to activate tourist flow and tourism cooperation and eventually contribute to reconciliation between Mainland China and Taiwan. The results can be discussed in the form of four points.

First, although there are continuous twists and turns in the political relationship between China and Taiwan, the development of cross-border tourism has been affected by the factors such as politics and transportation issues between Mainland China and Taiwan. While travel, trade,

and other economic activities have continuously improved over the past 20 years across the Taiwan Strait, the transportation difficulties and political tensions have encumbered the growth of many types of tourism and affected the speed of growth.

Second, there are two contrary features in the growth of the tourism market between China and Taiwan. On the one hand, the flow of tourists and cooperation across the Strait have been developed and civilian communication, trade and economics, and cultural communication have also continued to develop. On the other hand, there are some significant problems in the areas of politics, transportation, tourism regional cooperation, and the development of cultural tourism products between China and Taiwan. Consequently, visitation demonstrates a rather uni-directional flow—from Taiwan to the Mainland, with only very limited travel from China to the island.

Third, Mainland China and Taiwan share many similarities in race/ethnicity, culture, and language (Wang, Hsieh, Yeh, & Tsai, 2004). For instance, the belief in the Mother Ancestor has formed a unique “culture of Mother Ancestor” that significantly influences cross-Straits tourism. Despite notable political differences, the two countries are united in their interest and treatment of the Mother Ancestor cultural phenomenon. Mother Ancestor beliefs are very strong in Taiwan and PR China could strengthen tourism market growth with Taiwan by enhancing its sites and heritage associated with Mother Ancestor.

Fourth, continuous efforts to improve political relations is the most important lesson for China and Taiwan. Under current political conditions, tourism will not be able to grow much more, until the deadlock is broken. Once both sides commit to improving political relations, tourism and other forms of economic development will grow at a rapid pace and harmony will take the place of conflict.

In conclusion, Taiwan has the ability to be an effective force in reducing tension with its nearby relative. This case can be compared to North and South Korea, where there is a growing volume of political activity at a high level, but at the grassroots level there is essentially no contact between ordinary people (Kim & Crompton, 1990; Kim & Prideaux, 2003). To a lesser extent, there are some similarities with North and South Cyprus as well (Akis & Warner, 1994; Alipour & Kilic, 2005; Altinay, 2000), although the situation in Cyprus began to change in 2004. Tourism may, as it has started to do in Cyprus, begin to act as a positive force for stimulating peaceful relations by reducing tension and suspicion between Mainland China and Taiwan.

This paper has aimed to describe the relationships between the flow of tourists and the current problems and solutions between Mainland China and Taiwan. This study is expected to contribute to an understanding of the potential role of tourism in reconciliation between Mainland China and Taiwan. On this basis it can be stated that tourism is one element of many that can assist in normalizing political relations between partitioned states.

Cooperation and political interaction within the context of tourism may help mend negative relations and play an active part in averting future conflict as people are able to meet other people at the grassroots level. This paper represents a small step on the path to understanding the role of tourism and reconciliation between partitioned states, particularly Taiwan and PR China. There is still much more work to be done to analyze and test these ideas empirically.

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