

Companionship to an Aging Parent in International Tours: Conflict VS Harmony

Abstract: Senior tourism is a rapidly growing market in China, and global players have begun to attract senior tourists from China using diversified ways to help boost the industry in different destinations worldwide. However, scant research has been conducted to examine senior tours accompanied by offspring, let alone the Chinese senior context itself. This study utilizes autoethnography to examine a senior international tour accompanied by a young son. The study confirms the existence of six sources of conflict, but verifies that harmony is the more important feature in such a tour. Related practical implications on how to better arrange such tours are presented.

Keywords: senior tourist, young companion, autoethnography, international travel, tourist study

国际旅游中子女作为老年父母陪伴者的身份研究：矛盾与和谐

摘要：在中国，老年旅游正在迅速发展，而在全球市场上，各目的地国家也正采取多种方式来吸引中国的老年游客，以促进本国的旅游产业发展。然而，很少有研究关注老年游客在其成年子女陪伴下的出游行为，更不用说在中国老年旅游这一市场背景下的研究。本研究使用自我民族志的方法，对一次由成年子女陪伴老年游客出行的国际旅游进行探究。研究证实在这一过程中，有六种矛盾源头的存在，但和谐被认为是在这类旅行中，更重要的主题。最后，本文给出了如何更好安排该类型出行的建议。

关键词：老年游客；年轻的陪伴者；自我民族志；国际旅行；游客研究

Introduction

The senior population is growing worldwide. They consider travel an important means to achieve satisfaction in later life (Patterson & Balderas, 2018), and seniors who travel frequently are proven to be healthier and younger physically and mentally than those with less travel experience, thereby contributing to seniors' well-being (Mélon, et al., 2018). When traveling, senior tourists usually have longer time and more money to spend than young travelers (Reece, 2004). Therefore, the senior tourism market has become a lucrative segment for the tourism industry in recent years. The World Tourism Organization has estimated that by 2050, the number of international senior tourists will exceed 2 billion, which is nearly three times that of 1999 (Patterson & Pegg, 2009), indicating a large market potential worldwide. Academic concern on this field originated in the 1990s when an increasing global awareness of the influence of senior tourists on tourism emerged (Goeldner, 1992). By enhancing the understanding about senior tourism, destinations and the related industry can be better prepared for business opportunities. Thus, academic attention is developing as well (Daniels, et al., 2019).

Outbound tourism is developing rapidly in China. In 2018 alone, Chinese tourists went on nearly 150 million international tours, a twofold increase since 2008 (China Tourism Academy, 2019). The rise in China's outbound tourism is partially attributed to China's senior tourists who possess more leisure time and have stronger motivation than young travelers to travel abroad (Lu, et al., 2016). Similar to global trends, China's population is aging quickly, and they will comprise a large market share of Chinese tourists. Studies have attempted to examine general features of China's senior tourists, including factors that affect their motivation (Lu, et al, 2016), their perceptions about the service of group package tours (Wang, et al., 2013), and market opportunities among them (Huang & Xu, 2018). Most of these studies focus on the marketing perspective and seniors' domestic travel scenario. However, academic attention toward other social or cultural issues in China's outbound senior tourists is scant.

Given the inconveniences caused by seniors' health, senior tours are mostly conducted by seniors accompanied by other seniors or seniors accompanied by family members. Studies have indicated the importance of this companionship (Lee, Graefe, & Obenour, 2008; Hwang & Lee, 2019b) and identify it as a crucial factor that affects senior tourists' satisfaction. However, these studies adopt a quantitative paradigm and investigate the cause-and-effect relationship between established constructs, such as major dimensions that affect senior tourists' satisfaction. Scant research has attempted to address the complicated psychological process and communication involved in tours by seniors accompanied by others and resultant issues. The difficulty of conducting such an exploration may be attributed to the fact that it requires researchers to closely observe the communication between senior tourists and their companions, including friends, family members, or seniors in the same group, to understand the ever-changing psychological state during communication. Evidently, taking only a post-interview or a fixed questionnaire may not be sufficient to answer questions.

To address the research gap, this study uses autoethnography as the research method to investigate the psychological state and communication between the senior and the companion. Unlike the marketing orientation of most previous studies, this study examines senior tourism as a social phenomenon. Thus, we hope to offer insight into the examined phenomenon, possibly deepening practitioners' and academics' understanding toward seniors' mentality on international travel and improving services and marketing. Most importantly, the study can help participants of senior tourism to be better prepared to achieve the ultimate goal of senior tourism, which is satisfaction in their later life.

Literature Review

Overall features of senior tourism

Senior citizens are having longer lives with good quality and improved economic conditions. Senior tourists can be mainly divided into four categories, namely, explorers, livewires, vacationers, and homebodies, with different behaviors and attitudes toward travel (Tiago, et al., 2016). The heterogeneity of senior tourists enables them to become the target of global tourism. They can travel in an off-peak season, which is important for the industry because senior tourist arrivals are likely to help destinations reduce seasonal fluctuations (Yodmongko, Sangkakorn, & Reeveerakul, 2015). Seniors also favor slow tourism, eco-tourism, and wellness tourism (Lee and King, 2019). Therefore, these preferences qualify senior tourists as a niche market compared with tourists from other age groups.

Most research about senior tourism is market-oriented because of the economic benefits that this group of tourists can bring to the industry (Alén, Losada & de Carlos, 2017a). This group of studies focuses on three directions, including marketing based on the spatial features of senior tourists (Moal-Ulvoas & Taylor, 2014; Losada, et al., 2019), marketing based on profiles of these tourists (Hsu & Lee, 2002; Alén, et al., 2014; Chen & Shoemaker, 2014), and marketing based on destinations' attractiveness (Lemmetyinen, et al., 2016; Pezeshki, et al., 2019). To increase their benefits, destinations are suggested to improve their image by increasing the choice of barrier-free transport and accommodation facilities (Lee, 2016; Lee & King, 2019). The hotel industry also needs to cater to these needs and provide accommodation choices specific to seniors' needs (Losada, et al., 2017). However, cultural differences should be noted because seniors with differing origins may perceive the same travel product or service differently (Caber & Albayrak, 2014; Albayrak, Caber, & Bideci, 2016).

Regarding the leisure participation of seniors after family tragedies, Patterson (1996) first attempted to examine the loss of seniors' spouses, and the results verify that leisure participation at the early stage of a family tragedy is not useful to addressing the sadness of seniors, and taking trips is not considered by most seniors. Furthermore, male seniors play a more decisive role in the travel planning among senior couples (Wang, Chen, & Chou, 2007). Nicolau et al. (2019) verify that seniors' travel decision-making is a four-stage process rather than the conventional two-stage one. Thus, destinations that aim at this marketing should consider differing strategies in engaging seniors to stimulate their travel motivation and related consumption.

Motivations and satisfaction in senior tourism

As regards the motivation for seniors to travel, different factors have been acknowledged from varying forms of senior tourism, including indulgence, supra-personal motivations, and status (Otoo & Kim, 2020). On the whole, push and pull factors are the most widely used theory for explaining seniors' travel motivation (Alén, Losada, & de Carlos, 2017b). For

example, in senior recreational vehicle tours, destinations' attractiveness and the appeal of the rally itself are the driving push force (Guinn, 1980; Wu & Pearce, 2017). Furthermore, communication among senior tourists mediates between motivation and satisfaction (Pearce & Wu, 2018). For educated senior tourists, an escape from daily routine and being together with families and friends (pull factor) are the major motivations (Lee, Graefe, & Obenour, 2008) that are accompanied by the acquisition of spiritual benefits (Moal-Ulvoas & Taylor, 2014). In addition to traditional motives, gastronomy is becoming a new trend among senior tourists in recent years (Balderas, Patterson, & Leeson, 2019). Meanwhile, Otoo, Kim and Choi (2020) verify that seniors' travel motivation can be a vital indicator for segmenting this market and destination marketing organizations need to market differently based on this indicator. For instance, self-esteem is confirmed to be crucial in motivating Chinese seniors to travel overseas (Otoo, Kim, & Park, 2020). Thus, destinations that can stimulate Chinese seniors' self-esteem are inclined to be the major choice of this sort of tourists.

Multiple factors have been identified to influence senior tourists' satisfaction, including the aesthetic value of a destination (Oliveria, Brochado, & Correia, 2018), friendly hotel rooms (Chen, et al, 2014; Albayrak, Caber, & Bideci, 2016), and tourists' knowledge and experience during travel (Pestana, Parreira, & Moutinho, 2019). Senior tourists specially enjoy package tours because they prefer to be accompanied by like-minded travelers and obtain good value for money (Lee, et al., 2012). Thus, substantial research efforts have focused on senior package tours. For example, the rapport between senior tourists is confirmed to increase their satisfaction, and physical appearance and suitable behavior are the antecedents of rapport from the tourist perspective (Hwang & Lee, 2019b), whereas tour guides' professional competence is the incentive for rapport from the service provider perspective (Hwang & Lee, 2019a). Moreover, the brand prestige of a package tour agency and the related package tour attributes also significantly affect seniors' well-being in a package tour (Johann & Padma, 2016; Hwang & Lee, 2019d). The four dimensions involved in experience economy helps satisfy senior tourists as well (Zhang, et al., 2015; Hwang & Lee, 2019c).

Senior tourists also use mobile devices during travel, and tourism technology has been proven crucial in improving senior tourists' attitude toward heritage tours (Ramos-Soler, Martínez-Sala, & Campillo-Alham, 2019). Furthermore, their satisfaction is found to act as a mediator between motivation and positive emotions toward a destination (Pestana, Parreira, & Moutinho, 2019). Moreover, senior tourists' satisfaction from a destination may significantly stimulate their consumption even at the departure airport (Han, Hwang, & Kim, 2015).

Constraints in senior tourism

Literature advises that the change of senior tourists' behavior is closely related to the increasing number of constraints they are encountered (McGuire, 1983; Nimrod & Rotem, 2012). Health, finance, and travel distance are factors that constrain the travel of seniors (Fox, et al., 2017). Health is most evidently reflected in seniors' movement, and limitations in

movement are common among seniors aged over 80 (Pederson, 1992). Limitations in movement determine seniors' travel distance. Thus, this physical barrier requires more attention and measures from the industry so that more senior tourists from short-haul and long-haul countries of origin can be engaged accordingly. As previously noted, most seniors have a strong purchasing power for travel. However, it mainly refers to seniors from developed countries but not those from developing ones. Budget remains a major concern among seniors from developing countries who make travel decisions, and destinations with high value for money are their favored choices (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014).

Regarding the role that aging plays as a constraint to senior tourism, opinions are divided. Most studies confirm aging is a critical factor to hamper seniors' travel behavior (Wilson & Little, 2005; Chen & Wu, 2009; Kattiyapornpong & Miller, 2009) whilst Fleischer and Pizam (2002) find out that aging does not play such an influential role compared with budget and health. Different from the aforementioned studies, Huber, Milne, and Hyde (2017, 2018, 2019) adopt the biographical approach to examine constraints and facilitators in a combined way. Thus, microstructural and macrostructural factors can be better utilized to explain seniors' tourist behavior.

Most studies agree that the senior tourism market is heterogeneous in nature and clear sub-segments exist in the market, leading to the diversity of tourists' behavior (Huber, 2019). The origin of this concurrence stems from seniors' different aging processes that accordingly alter their attitudes and related behaviors in travel (Moschis, 1993). Another similarity of these studies is that quantitative methodology is prevalent, in which the tourism phenomenon can be examined in a presumed framework without the consideration of neither behaviors nor attitudes. Thus, a qualitative investigation on the deep mechanism involved in senior tours accompanied by young family members, especially one taken after a family tragedy, has merits. After entering the 21st century, the academia's interest in senior tourism has been increasing, especially among researchers from Europe, the United States, and Southeast Asia (Pezeshki, et al., 2019). However, academic attention from other regions remains limited, necessitating further exploration. All these considerations contribute to the present study.

Methodology

Autoethnography

Autoethnography originates from ethnography. The method places emphasis on the researcher who needs to be an active participant in the research event and his/her personal experiences, and the accompanied perceptions are the origins of the research materials that are to be analyzed thereafter (Reed-Danahay, 2009). This method facilitates an in-depth understanding of social or cultural phenomena that cannot be comprehended thoroughly when researchers are outsiders. Reed-Danahay (1997, p. 2) also points out that autoethnography is the connection of three differing types of writing, namely, “autobiographical ethnography,” “ethnic autobiography,” and “native anthropology.” No unified way exists to conduct autoethnography, but an extensive variety of applications can be adopted (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013, p. 57-83).

This study follows Denshire and Lee (2013) in depicting the scene observed first and conducts further analysis thereafter. The study mainly investigates the interaction between me (the first author) and my mother, and our traveling context. More specifically, it is depicted in the study on how I act in a tour accompanying my mother in an international destination, and an evocative and inward-looking approach is implemented. This study also follows the principle that Besio (2020) proposes as biographical autoethnography in which the researcher adopts an academically informed autobiographical writing to investigate his or her own experience as a sample of life with a simultaneously evocative and analytical function. The following section introduces the profile of the two characters in the senior tourism to lay the background for the research.

At present, in tourism studies, many strive to focus on parent–child trips, but most of them examine underage children. By contrast, an investigation of trips taken by aged parents and working children is scant (Wang, et al., 2018). My motivation to travel frequently with my mother in recent times is different from the motivation of my past trips. During our first trip to Thailand, I realized that something meaningful and special was occurring, and that situation was different from the concept introduced in textbooks. Our second trip to Switzerland further confirmed my thoughts. Thus, in our third trip to Korea, I decided to write a diary to note down meaningful moments during our travel and conducted research thereafter. Hence, the source of data for this study is the diary I kept at this trip.

To guarantee the credibility of the autoethnographic research, the study follows a three-step analytical procedure proposed by Wohlfeil, Patterson, and Gould (2019). First, all diaries written at this trip were read in entirety to obtain a first sense of the raw data which offers the researcher an initial understanding about the emerged phenomena worth investigating. Following this first impression, the data was broken into different manageable and logically coherent chunks for individual examination using part-to-whole reading method (Thompson, 1997). Subsequently, key issues arising from the data were selected for further analysis.

Finally, emerging themes related to the research question were summarized to address the social and cultural issues this type of senior tours may involve.

Profile of the two characters

My mother was just over 60. She dropped out of school after finishing junior high school because of the traditional emphasis on sons in Chinese families. She needed to replace my uncle in working in the countryside. At that time, she met my father, who was a widower with two children and was considered poor in their village. My father pursued her passionately, and she finally married her without considering the resistance from my grandparents and other relatives. Through my parents' efforts, my two brothers got married and I received my doctorate degree. All of our lives are improving. Thus, they became a model couple who were envied by most of their friends and neighbors. However, tragedy struck our family. An aged man on his electronic bicycle crashed into my father when he was walking to the park where he drank his morning tea every day. After 10 days in the intensive care unit, my father passed away. The man did not pay for any of the damages that he caused our family, further adding to my mother's pain after she lost her beloved husband. I tried every possible means to help her recover from grief.

I am a young tourism researcher working in a Chinese university. I am a workaholic. On the one hand, I want to realize my value in society. On the other hand, I want to give back to my parents because they have worked hard to support me. Although my hometown is not far from where I work, I seldom go back there. However, I try to call my parents once or twice a week and buy things for them frequently. Previously, I believed that giving back financially and buying them gifts were ways by which I could show my love for them. The day when I learned that my father had an accident changed my ideas completely. I regretted not spending enough time with them. Therefore, I was determined to spend more time with them. After my father's death, I decided to take my mother traveling to help her forget her grief. The first two trips to Thailand and Switzerland, which were taken shortly after my father's death, did not lessen her sadness. This feeling is in accordance with what Patterson (1996) examined. However, these two trips with my mother showed me the uniqueness of tours that are targeted to senior travelers. Thus, I was able to note down what transpired in our next trip and further analyze the material to provide an in-depth understanding of senior tourism from a different perspective.

The examined trip

The trip examined in this study was taken on August 1–6, 2019 in South Korea. Considering convenience and my mother's health condition, I decided that we would only travel in Seoul. Thus, the trip was not too tiring for my mother, and arranging our itinerary was easy for me because I had been there previously. The trip took place nearly one year after my father's death, and this time, my mother's emotions were better during our first two trips.

Findings and discussion

After thorough analysis, two evident psychological phenomena were identified in the companion of the aging parent in international tours, namely, conflict and harmony (Figure 1). Conflicts in many scenarios may cause unhappiness or dissatisfaction in tours, but for this special type of tour, the aging parent understands in her heart that the child has already done well in accompanying her for the international tour and unhappy time is just a small episode that can add flavor to the trip. Hence, all of these conflicts are surrounded by harmony, the positive caring between the two generations. The third layer is also added to the model, namely, well-being and happiness (the positive outcome of the trip). In this way the purpose of such a trip is emphasized.

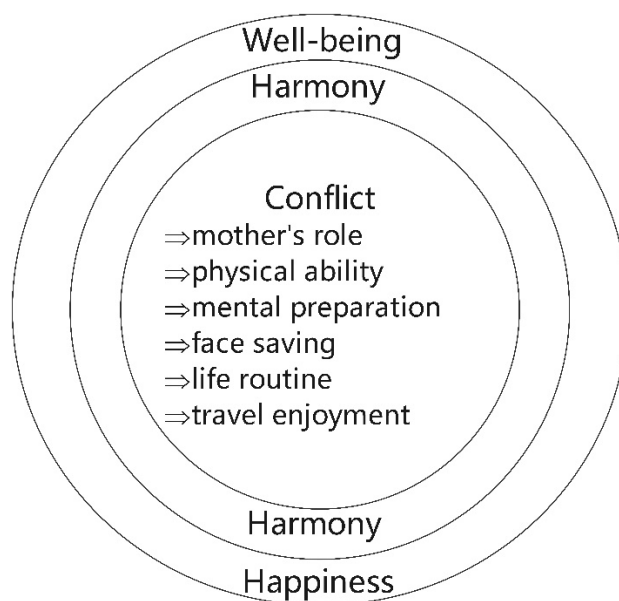


Figure 1. Psychological interaction between the two generations at trip

Conflicts

Mother's role in the face of the son

In many situations, if my mum travels with her friends, she will hold back her emotions to remain harmonious as Chinese seniors care about their image in the eyes of their peers (Yan & Ye, 2019). In contrast, she can act naturally when travelling accompanied by me. For example,

'It is unbearable to sit in the back row as the heat makes me feel uncomfortable.'

'It is really not a good idea to walk in the sun and even travel in summer.'

She directly expressed her state at that time without considering my feelings, which made me upset. As I was busy with work, I tried my best to allocate the time to accompany her in the hope of easing her sadness. Scenarios like this make up the first type of conflict originating from the mother's role in the face of the son.

Mothers always give their full love to their children and believe they play a crucial role in their children's lives. Hence, it is easier for them to enjoy a trip, as they can fully express themselves and do what they want while traveling with their children alone. This is hugely different from traveling with senior peers or in package tours, which require seniors to be reserved. In a word, the mother's role in the face of the son seemingly creates a type of conflict, but this conflict also gives the senior parents incentive to behave better at trips.

Physical ability

Great differences in physical ability also exist between the two generations (Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, & Yang, 2020). Hence, if the trip is not carefully planned, the physical inability of the senior tourist could make trouble for the tour and cause conflicts. In most previous trips, I arranged the trip with enough time for my mum to rest. However, on the third day of the trip, I arranged a trip to the Seoul Tower and something unexpected happened. Using Google Maps, we took a bus to a place near the tower and followed the map to walk for a while. When we took the route suggested by the map for twenty minutes, we found there were no roads ahead and the tower was on the top of a nearby hill. This means that we may have taken the wrong route or an inconvenient route. My mum was unhappy because she was tired and could not climb the hill.

'I am not young and I cannot walk further. You must make sure where to go or I will stay here and wait.'

I needed to repeatedly explain to my mum on the way climbing up the hill because she would express her irritation whenever she felt tired. When people are in such a mood, it can be easy to fall into conflict. In my past travel experience, I would encounter wrong routes and it was easy to solve the problem because I traveled either solo or with young friends and physical strength is not a problem at all. However, when traveling with seniors, physical ability is indeed a problem that could cause conflict.

Physical ability is bound to influence this type of tour as apparent strength differences exist between two generations. Hence, traveler should pay attention to this and address it early, as if the senior expends too much energy, it will not only affect the tour that day, but also the subsequent itinerary. Meanwhile, the young companion should fully evaluate the senior's physical ability, which is the basis of designing such a tour.

Mental preparation

While preparing for a trip with seniors, it is important to seriously consider their physical ability, or the aforementioned conflict may arise. However, helping seniors become mentally prepared is even more important. If there is insufficient preparation about the destination, it is easy for conflict to occur.

Given that our hotel was far from most scenic spots, we needed to take buses or trains to different places. I bought two cards for us ahead of arrival, and the first time we rode the bus,

she noticed that Koreans scanned the card when boarding and disembarking. She asked why they needed to do so, and I replied that this might show that passengers had already paid the fee. However, she insisted

'I will not scan the card twice when I get off as I may get charged twice.'

Hence, she did not do it, which I criticized afterwards. I informed her that her behavior may damage the image of Chinese tourists and she must correct it next time. Although she did scan the card twice the next time we took the bus, she reluctantly did it with worry and used her facial expression to show me her unhappiness.

For many Chinese seniors, outbound tours are still at the initial stage (Wen, Huang, & Goh, 2020). A lack of information and personal support, and a lack of suitable travel agencies and services are identified as constraints for Chinese seniors in outbound tourism (Wen, Huang, & Goh, 2020). These constraints can be partially solved in this type of tour as the young person accompanying the senior is experienced and can be a source of information and services. However, as is shown in the study, this constraint is not sufficiently tackled and becomes a source of conflict. Hence, it is suggested that the young companion educate, or at least inform the senior about the necessary tips for the international tour and knowledge about the target destination.

Face saving

Face saving is considered an important virtue in traditional Chinese culture. People of all ages tend to keep this rule in life. However, there exists a generational gap when perceiving what is proper behavior in saving face. Thus, it causes the emergence of the second type of conflict.

'It is too impolite to leave the restaurant after sitting for a while without ordering anything. You must get prepared before entering any restaurant.'

This scenario occurred on the first day at the destination. The restaurant was near the local community and mainly served local customers. Hence, they did not prepare an English menu for international tourists to use. Meanwhile, the senior boss and the waitress could not understand English as well, which made the ordering of food impossible. In reality, it was the restaurant's inability to provide proper service that led my mum and me to leave it. However, from my mum's perspective, we drank the complimentary tea and rested there for a while. Thus, we should have had something to eat to save face. She even mentioned that sometimes the image of senior Chinese tourists is not so good in the international travel market and she should do something to contribute to repairing the image. In this way she did not accept what I had explained to her and continued her murmuring about this 'improper behavior.'

In another case, I booked a one-day package tour to Nami Island which included transport, lunch, and the entrance tickets to the arranged attractions. At noon, lunch was offered at a popular restaurant near the scenic spot. When the food was served, my mum was surprised

because the amount was too small for four tourists to share. In her mind, the package tour provider should offer enough food. Hence, while eating, she reminded me:

'You should ask the tour guide to offer us more food to eat or I'll feel hungry in the afternoon.'

I declined her request because the tourists who shared the food at the same table were also a son and a mother and they did not show any indication that they wanted to ask for more food, which was a sign that the food was enough. Meanwhile, another table of four young tourists in the same group did not ask for more food, either. This further confirmed my decision. According to Chinese culture, to ask for more is considered greedy on many occasions (Wang, Wu, Sun, Feng, & Jin, 2013). Hence, I did not want to lose face by asking for more food. Actually, from the perspective of young tourists, they can purchase snacks when needed, which is another source of pleasure.

Face saving is regarded as one of the most representative features of Chinese culture, but it has not attracted sufficient research to investigate such behavior among Chinese outbound tourists (Long & Aziz, 2021). From this study, this behavior evidently exists with generational differences. Though both generations tend to save faces at international destinations, long-established convention influences their judgment on what face saving is and their subsequent behavior. Hence, as suggested by Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, and Yang (2020), the younger generation should actively communicate to lead seniors to make corresponding judgments in order to avoid conflict.

Life routine

It is normal nowadays for adult children to live independently from their parents in China, and the two generations may have different ways of living. Travel gives us a chance to look closely at each other's life routine, and whenever there is confrontation regarding certain habits, conflict will occur easily.

My mum really cares about cleanliness in her life and hopes her son can follow this style. Nevertheless, many young people are more concerned about ease and will place things where they are easily accessible. In this case, the two generations even argued about where clothes should be laid:

'Why did you place the clothes you wore outside today directly in bed? You are completely not like me in terms of cleanliness and I doubt how I gave birth to such a son.'

In my mum's mind, everything dirty should be kept away from the sleeping area. In contrast, I, the young person, do not care about this at all. The same type of conflict also came up in another situation. As my mum is a bit sensitive to safety, she will overreact when she feels unsafe. For instance, one day she could not find her medicine and I told her she might have left it in the hotel. Thus, when we arrived, she quickly searched the hotel room, but still could not locate the medicine. At that time, she angrily said,

'I told you leaving things in hotel rooms was unsafe and we should bring important things together with us!'

In the beginning I tried to keep calm, but when my mum continued the complaint, I responded loudly that her assumption was impossible because the hotel was licensed with high standards. At that time, I realized that my mother must have taken the medicine with her because she always thought that she was better at keeping things and would unconsciously put things in her bag or somewhere she believed was safe. Finally, I found the medicine in her bag, and her facial expression changed right away. She added that regardless of the circumstances, she was my mother and I should listen to her. However, after a moment of silence, she said that she would check her bag next time if we could not find something.

This type of conflict exists in our daily life, but only come up when we live together. Hence, traveling may trigger conflict when we deviate from our life routine, which needs both generations' concern if they intend to avert the occurrence of avoidable conflict.

A tour offers an escape from the daily routine, which is especially true for young tourists (Qun, Geoffrey, and Liu, 2011). This escape is represented by changes in three environments, namely, living, working, and interpersonal environments. However, senior tourists are accustomed to their daily routine, and they are unable to get rid of it. Evidently, generational differences in daily routines exist throughout the world, but these differences cannot be easily triggered in people's daily life. However, in such a tour, the experience of living together stimulates conflict that arises from these differences. Indeed, it is a difficult conflict to address, as the convention is well established among different generations. One possible solution is to follow the traditional Confucian ideology that the young should follow the senior's style to keep harmony, as one purpose of the trip is also to please the senior.

Travel enjoyment

A crucial element in any trip is the enjoyment tourists can achieve, but different tourist segments show great diversity in what they enjoy (Lee, Cui, Kim, Seo, & Chon, 2021). Differences in life experiences between my mum and me are bound to cause differences in our travel enjoyment, which further leads to conflict.

Tasting local delicacies is usually an essential experience for young tourists in China (Lin, Guia, Xu, & Cui, 2020). Hence, I once took my mum to dine at a local restaurant near our hotel and used a mobile app to communicate with the boss when ordering the food, because the boss and the waitress again could not speak English. When my mum asked me how much the food cost, I could not answer because of the difficult communication between me and the boss. As a traditional elder Chinese woman, she is economical; thus, she was afraid of the high price and ate in a worried state. She even said,

'I did not like the Korean food and it was even poorer than that offered at KFC. Next time please take me to have something with a fair price.'

For her, food was not what interested her and motivated her to visit Korea. Thus, she argued with me in the rest of the trip whenever I intended to dine at a seemingly nice restaurant. The disparity also exists in our taste in shows to watch. Three reasons motivated me to bring her to see the Nanta Show, a popular Korean musical: to avoid the hot weather in the afternoon, her passion for music, and ease of understanding. At first, my mother comfortably sat in the hall with the air-conditioner and was interested in watching the show. She also participated in by clapping and making sounds. However, after nearly half an hour, she lost interest and almost fell asleep because the music was different from her preference. One of her comments left a deep impression on me,

'It is not as good as what she and my father saw in previous trips. Hence, it was not worth such a price.'

After I found out that what she had seen previously was actually a 4D film, I felt surprised and slightly ashamed. For one thing, the artistic level of the 4D film cannot be compared with that of the show. For another, I had not taken her to see a film and she did not know what she had seen.

Finally, the conflict arising from travel enjoyment can be seen in my mother's habit of taking photos. On the second day of our trip, I organized a trip to the Korean Palace. I suggested that my mother take a picture with the soldiers in front of the palace, but she reluctantly took my suggestion, ending up with poor pictures. Upon entering the palace, I recommended that I take pictures of her in front of the building and some royal furniture. This time, she refused me directly and said,

'We should not take photos in these areas. This kind of behavior is not consistent with the old ideology of China and may bring bad luck.'

I argued that if she did not take pictures with these iconic sights, she would not have pictures to show that she had traveled to Korea. Regardless of my persuasion, she did not relent. However, when we passed by the pond and the woods in the palace, she asked me to take pictures for her. I asked her for any differences between the pond and the woods in Korea and those in our hometown. She replied that I just needed to follow her because she was my mother.

Senior Chinese tourists enjoy simple fun, which is different from the perspective of young tourists. For example, seniors enjoy photographs in natural scenes, sharing photos, and earning admiration from family and friends. However, from the young person's perspective, such enjoyment can also be achieved in areas near the senior's home. The next example is that the senior enjoys gaining new knowledge that she can share later with friends. Photos and new knowledge can demonstrate that the senior has taken an international trip, which is different from her previous domestic travel. Simple fun created by the senior's companion and the resultant companionship are what constantly make the senior happy. Therefore, the young companion's decision to bring the senior on a trip far exceeds the value of the trip

itself. In Chinese culture, filial piety is highly appreciated. However, in contemporary China, the young seldom take their senior parents to travel for multiple reasons. For them, occasionally visiting their parents is something they can do most of the time. Hence, if the young offspring can take their senior parents on a trip, they will gain the parents' admiration. This finding has not been confirmed in any previous study.

Harmony

In the minds of most Chinese parents, when their children are willing to take them for a trip, it makes them happy and proud. Hence, conflicts, even serious ones, cannot influence the emotions between me and my mum, as we know we care about each other. As an old Chinese saying goes, there is no overnight feud between the mother and the son. In most situations, the two remain harmonious at trip and share their happiness with others.

For instance, my mother would take every chance to ask me to send her photos. After careful selection, she sent the ones she liked to her close senior friend to make an e-album for her. Then she shared it within her family and friend groups. Whenever positive feedback was returned, she proudly expressed her happiness about traveling with her son and the beautiful scenery she enjoyed each day. Her facial expressions showed genuine happiness. She would also always tell her friends,

'My son is good to accompany me and to take these wonderful pictures for me.'

In another case, we had two incidents with food during our trip to Nami Island. Although the island is covered with trees, it was too hot to walk at 3 p.m. My mother liked the island because the trees, flowers, and decorations there matched her preferences for photography. While walking, she teased me by saying that she wanted ice cream. Coincidentally, we saw an ice cream stand. I teased my mother and hurriedly queued to buy ice cream for her. She responded immediately,

'Oh, my son, I was just kidding and I cannot eat cold food.'

However, I knew that she could eat cold food occasionally, and what she really worried about was that the food offered in scenic spots was expensive. I reassured her that the price was reasonable and the purpose of the trip was to enjoy life, not to save money. Finally, we bought two ice creams and she was happy to eat it. To my amusement, when I asked to take a photo of her eating ice cream, she did not hold the ice cream carefully and it fell to the ground. Thus, for the rest of the day, she was reminded of the fallen ice cream and said it was the only sad thing that happened that afternoon.

Sometimes, if the conflict can be well addressed, it will lead to harmony and happiness. As my mum had worried about the charges with the transportation card, I purposefully searched in Chinese websites on the use of this Korean card and assured her that it would only be charged once. Then, she reluctantly scanned the card twice the next time and found that we were not charged the second time. She was happy at the time. Later, we found that the card

could help us save money if we transferred to another bus within a certain period of time. She felt proud because not only could she keep the rule, but she could benefit economically as well. She added,

'I will tell my good friends about this travel tip and hope that they will use it if they visit Korea in the future.'

Essentially, harmony is at the core of interactions between the two generations, as both understand that they care about each other and the purpose of the trip is to comfort and please the senior. As long as they both take this purpose to heart, no conflict can influence the quality of the trip, but merely acts as flavoring.

Conclusions

The present study adopted an autoethnographic method to investigate international senior tours accompanied by their offspring. Through an in-depth narration of key scenarios, psychological interactions between the senior tourist and the young companion are presented. The conflict that such tours should address is discussed. Compared with other studies examining senior tourism, this study is among the early attempts to explore the practice from the perspective of this special companionship. The underlined theme is that the mother and the son in this international trip seem to have numerous conflicts, but the more important element in such a relationship is harmony and unity because the mother knows the trip is to help her recover from something sad and the two really cares about each other. Such a finding merits more concern not only for the academic purpose, but also for the general benefits of seniors. Thus, it has theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretically, it is the first study to investigate the psychological interaction between senior tourists and their offspring in outbound tourism. The study has identified six types of sources leading to conflict and their influence on the trip. On the one hand, this conflict construct enriches the current academic work on constraints affecting the seniors' tour, especially for the outbound or international tour. Thus, it lays a foundation to mitigate these constraints and to quantitatively investigate this type of tour. Meanwhile, research models regarding senior tours accompanied by the young offspring can be proposed and tested based on the findings of the study. On the other hand, it furthers the academia's understanding about companionship in senior tourism because it extends the role of companion from seniors' spouses, relatives, and friends to their offspring.

Methodologically, the autoethnographic method is verified to be useful in fulfilling the research objective in that it can help researchers collect data that surveys or questionnaires cannot. Meanwhile, this method allows researchers to constantly reflect what has been observed and collected in the research process, which facilitates generating a more complete understanding about the examined research phenomenon. Though this method is criticized for having no universal rule to do the analysis (Danzak, Gunther, & Cole, 2021), researchers can rely on rules borrowed from other qualitative methods to establish their own logic in doing the analysis to enhance the credibility of the findings.

Practically, the study has three implications. First, to please Chinese senior tourists and avoid conflict, the young companion should arrange travel activities on the basis of the preference of Chinese seniors. Popular attractions may not satisfy senior tourists. By contrast, entertainment with some extent of familiarity can better entertain them. Second, seniors and their companions should manage their expectations before traveling and each of them need to give more consideration to their companion when conflict appears in order to shorten the period of unpleasantness. Finally, destinations aiming to attract more international senior tourists need to improve their service level, including bilingual services at all touristic sites, better instructions on route designs, and culture dissemination at destinations. Overall, the

identification of conflicts paves a way for solving them and harmony acts as a mediator to facilitate the resolution of these conflicts. In the end, a positive outcome is hoped to achieve for senior travel accompanied by the young offspring.

The exploratory study has drawbacks. All research findings are based on a single trip between only two people, which is not adequate to generate a complete picture of the examined phenomenon. If additional research materials can be collected, a panoramic view can be presented. Also, the study did not invite more researchers to participate in the interpretation of the data, which may limit the full exploitation of the material. Hence, more research needs to be conducted to address the issues that emerged in the current study. Finally, as a typical criticism toward autoethnography, the one case design may limit the application of the study because the research context is fixed very rigidly and any change with the context may influence the result and the related interpretation. Hence, it needs further attention while utilizing the findings of studies adopting autoethnography.

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