

FAMILY TOURIST EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE: EMOTION-GENERATIVE AND REGULATORY PROCESS

HIGHLIGHTS

- Family tourists' emotional fluctuations are tracked throughout an outbound trip.
- Thirteen emotion regulation strategies are identified from EDA-assisted interviews.
- Family members are the primary drivers and important means of regulating emotions.
- This study extends Gross's process model of emotion regulation.

ABSTRACT

Family tourism has received much scholarly attention, but few studies have examined family tourists' experience by viewing them as active agents that generate and regulate emotions. This study aims to disclose family tourists' dynamic emotional experiences through probing into their emotion generative and regulatory process. An extended Chinese family taking a six-day overseas trip was recruited and each member was interviewed multiple times throughout the pre-, during- (assisted by participatory observation and psychophysiological data), and post-trip phases. The family tourists reported sixty-four emotional episodes, thirty-two discrete emotions, and thirteen emotion regulation strategies. Their emotion-generation and regulation were revealed as an interdependent and cyclical cognitive appraisal process occurs in complex social settings. The proposed psychological mechanism model contributes to tourism and psychological literature by highlighting the dynamic and social nature of family tourists' emotions and the role of memory in their emotion dynamics. Future research directions on family tourists' emotion regulation are suggested.

KEYWORDS: Family Tourist, Emotional Experience, Emotion Regulation, Memory, Whole-family Methodology, External Regulation.

1. INTRODUCTION

As one of the fastest-growing segments in the global tourism industry, family travel serves as an ideal way for families to reunite and spend quality time together, fostering enjoyable experiences and creating positive memories (Schänzel, Urie, & Lynch, 2022). Unlike general tourism research that often examines tourists as solitary, disembodied subjects without family or friends (Melvin, Winklhofer, & McCabe, 2020), family tourism is an important research arena examining the gregarious and social nature of tourists. It involves small-group dynamics that possess unique characteristics (e.g., permanent membership) and exhibit different requirements (e.g., improving emotional bonding) from other types of travel companionship (Lehto, Chen, & Le, 2020). Existing research on family tourism primarily examines the motivation, decision-making process, and perceived benefits of family tourists (Liu, Li, & Xu, 2024; Qiao et al., 2022). These studies often regard family tourists as rational agents, thereby overlooking the emotional aspects of their experiences. In addition, research subjects are often limited to couples, parents or underage children (Yi et al., 2023). Although research interest in multi-/cross-generational family travel, especially adult children-parents travel, has grown in recent years, relatively less attention has been paid to the experience dynamics among all family members by considering each member as an independent yet interdependent agent, whose actions contribute to shaping the family's collective experience and memory. This insufficiency limits the field's contribution to knowledge regarding family tourists' joint travel experiences, interaction and family relationships (Hu et al., 2024).

Chinese society comprises various family structures within complex, dynamic, interactive kinship networks. The Chinese family structure is "extended" in nature, with close relationships among extended family members (Xu & Xia, 2014). With China's urbanization, reconnection holidays have become popular for geographically dispersed family members to bond, spend time together and create memories (Wang et al., 2018). The tourism industry

needs to evolve their offerings to accommodate these bigger, more complex and fluid family units. Researchers have noticed changes in the family tourism market and new publications on multi-family, intergenerational (Gram et al., 2019), and adult children–senior parents (Yi et al., 2023) travel have emerged, but the focus has remained on motivation and decision-making. Therefore, both academy and industry require an in-depth understanding of complex, dynamic, and interactive family tourism experiences on both the individual and collective levels.

Tourist experience has been defined and measured in many ways (for a review, see Godovykh & Tasci, 2020). Despite the ongoing debates, tourism scholars generally agree on the subjective, multi-dimensional (i.e., cognitive, affective, sensory, and conative), sequential (i.e., different stages of consumption), and dynamic nature of tourist experience (Packer & Ballantyne, 2016). Growing evidence from experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience has been convincingly demonstrated that emotions are the core building blocks of experiences, given that the succession of instantaneous emotional responses during an experience determines how the experience is evaluated and remembered (Bastiaansen et al., 2019). Tourist experience can thus be defined as a subjective emotional journey full of affective, cognitive, and social meanings, in which the three stages of pre-trip expectations, during-trip perceptions, and post-trip memories are integrated into one psychological process (Stienmetz et al., 2021). Although the most frequently examined components of tourist experience are typically affective in nature (Godovykh & Tasci, 2020), our understanding of the dynamic emotional experience during travel remains limited because of conceptual or methodological limitations.

The traditional static perspective views emotions as static at each point-in-time during vacation, yet ignores the transient, variable, and fluid nature of emotions (Gao & Kerstetter, 2018). Additionally, methodological and technical limitations in previous tourist experience

research cause an inability to effectively capture tourists' real-time, embodied, dynamic emotions in natural settings. Even the pioneering scholars who took a dynamic perspective and measured traveller's continuous and variable embodied emotions (e.g., Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Shoval, Schvimer, & Tamir, 2018) could only describe the ebb and flow of emotional experience, failing to explain the underlying psychological processes (Hsu, Chen, & Zhang, 2023). Although social scientists strongly advocate to combine psychophysiological techniques (e.g., electrodermal activity, lab experiments) with traditional methods (e.g., self-report scales, experience sampling) to capture variable and fluid emotional experience (Godovykh & Tasci, 2020; Li, Scott, & Walters, 2015), tourism studies adopting such a mixed method remain limited (Li, Sung, Lin, & Mitas, 2022). Empirical evidence for objective, real-time, location-specific measurement of tourist emotions remains scarce (Scuttari, 2021; Shoval et al., 2018). The **first objective** of this study is thus to examine family tourists' dynamic and interactive emotional experience across a reconnection holiday trip through daily interviews assisted by psychophysiological measures.

Larsen (2007) commented that if the focus of tourist experience research does not shift from spatiality to its underlying psychological processes, tourist experience will always be an ambiguous construction, because it is essentially a complex and dynamic psychological process in which many environmental, social, cognitive, and personality factors interact. However, tourism emotion research has overemphasized the physical environment but relatively overlooked individual psychological mechanism and inconstant socio-situational factors (Tuerlan, Li, & Scott, 2021). Therefore, questions about *why* and *how* tourists develop different emotions in response to the same stimulus/event, and how these emotional patterns affect their overall experience remain unsettled (Hsu et al., 2023). Gross (2015) suggests assessing emotion-generative and regulatory processes simultaneously could better the understanding of underlying psychological processes, compared with assessing the emotion-

generation process alone. But little attention has been devoted to how tourists, as active agents, generate and regulate emotions during travel and integrate meaningful affective moments/experiential episodes in constructing retrospective evaluations and memories (Bastiaansen et al., 2019). Gao et al. (2018, 2019) extended knowledge regarding tourists' emotions by exploring their dynamic use patterns of emotion-regulation strategies during vacations. But their studies aimed to identify common regulation strategies used in leisure trips, rather than to understand the real-time, dynamic process of emotion-generation and regulation. Moreover, the retrospective self-report methods they adopted are prone to recall bias and distortion, limiting the understanding of tourists' micro-level emotion dynamics in specific contexts. Given that less is known about tourists' emotion-regulation in the context of family travel, the **second objective** of this study is to explore family tourists' dynamic emotion-generative and regulatory process during a reconnection holiday trip.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Family Tourism

Despite increased research over the past 15 years, family tourism is still an under-researched area with three major streams: (1) managerial studies focusing on holiday decision-making processes among family roles (e.g., parents vs. children, wives vs. husbands) (Liu et al., 2024; Wang & Li, 2021); (2) tourist studies examining family vacation motives and perceived benefits (Qiao et al., 2022), young children's experiences, and the social construction of the family (Obrador, 2012; Yi et al., 2023); (3) historical studies on the Western family vacation tradition and cultural accounts of family photography (Lehto et al., 2017). These studies provide valuable evidence of the significance of family tourism, but insufficient attention has been paid to family tourism experience from perspectives other than that of mothers and young children (Kelly, 2022; Lehto et al., 2020). Only in recent years has

research on family travel experience evolved significantly, with the increase in multi-/cross-generational family travel and the diversification of family structures and roles. However, studies that specifically focus on the experiences of different family members together on holiday (Gram et al., 2019; Yi et al., 2023), or how group dynamics affect individual experiences and vice versa (Chen et al., 2021; Schänzel, 2010), are still in the nascent stage. This research gap needs to be filled, given the social nature of family tourism experiences and an increasing interest in customer-to-customer interactions (Melvin et al., 2020). As Lehto et al. (2020) commented, the work done in understanding family tourism experiences is far from sufficient.

Previous studies on family tourism have mainly focused on Western nuclear families with young children (Gram et al., 2019; Qiao et al., 2022). Chinese families, influenced by traditional Confucian cultural values (e.g., filial piety, harmony, face, group orientation, and interdependence; Mok & DeFranco, 2000) and the one-child policy, are different from Western families. As Bond (1986, p.53) stated, “the Chinese are brought up to remain an integral part of their families throughout their lives, instead of being trained to function independently of the family network”. In general, the younger generation is expected to respect, conform to and take care of the aged whereas the senior owes the junior protection and consideration (Mok & DeFranco, 2000). Research on Chinese family tourism has thus revealed that tourists pay more attention to children’s learning experiences (Pan & Shang, 2023) and the tourism preferences and needs of elderly parents (Hu et al., 2024). However, the family structure in contemporary China has become increasingly diverse; merely focusing on children and elderly parents cannot fully understand the interactions between family members with different roles and the travel experience of all members. According to Lehto et al. (2017), enhancement of familial harmony, cohesiveness, and communication is achieved through collective experience. Harmony has been recognized as one of the dominant cultural

values that influence Chinese tourist motivation and behaviours (Hsu & Huang, 2016; Mok & DeFranco, 2000), but its impact on family tourists' experience remains unknown. To achieve harmonious interpersonal relationship within the family, individuals may need to practise forbearance and the suppression of personal goals/emotions. Therefore, how socio-cultural factors (e.g., cultural values) affect family tourists' experience dynamics warrants further investigation.

Although family tourism research has long treated family tourists as rational agents, family travel experience itself is suffused with various emotions, playing an essential role in the processes of being, doing, performing and recalling (Gram et al., 2019). There is an increasing recognition among psychologists that emotions do not just concern psychological states, but are also social and relational (Parkinson, 2021). Tourism scholars have also called for greater attention to complex and subtle emotions, which are core building blocks of tourist experience (Bastiaansen et al., 2019). Family tourism provides the most ideal natural setting to examine the dynamics and sociality of tourists' emotional experiences.

2.2 Tourist Emotional Experience

Three major schools of theories have dominated emotion psychology for decades: basic/discrete emotion theories, constructivist emotion theories (i.e., valence appraisal), and appraisal theories of emotion (Scherer, 2022; Tuerlan et al., 2021). The definition and underlying process of emotion vary among different schools, leading to a divergence in tourism research on emotions (Hosany, Martin, & Woodside, 2021). Many studies “opportunistically selected or extended a limited number of theories or models from the marketing literature and established the relationship between cognitive constructs and emotion without sound justification” (Tuerlan et al., 2021; p. 2760).

Specifically, the research stream embracing basic/discrete emotion theory mainly investigated specific emotions within various special-interest tourism contexts (Prayag et al., 2017), such as empathy in dark tourism (Podoshen, 2013). Studies have also examined a complete set of primary/basic emotions (e.g., happy, sad, angry) in leisure settings, such as mountaineering (Faullant et al., 2011). In these studies, specific emotions were typically regarded as “biologically hardwired and subject to cognitive processes” (Buda, d’Hauteserre, & Johnston, 2014, p. 107). The stream following constructivist theories conceptualized emotions by a position in a two dimensional “valence x arousal” space or as an accumulative emotional “meta-experience” (Russell, 2017), and thus measured emotion as an integrative construct. This stream often examined emotion as an antecedent of experience satisfaction, loyalty/commitment, and behavioural intentions through a structural equation approach (Buda et al., 2014). Such research limited understanding of tourists’ emotional experience, because “our ... most immediate and intimately felt geography is the body, the site of emotional experience and expression... Emotions take place within and around this closest of spatial scales” (Davidson & Milligan, 2004, p. 523). Emotion research thus calls for embodied methodology to deepen understanding of the emotion-generative and regulative processes, which involves a continuous interaction of the body, brain, and world (Volo, 2021). Another research stream adopted the cognitive appraisal theory or the S-O-R model to investigate the relationship between multisensory perceptions and emotional experience, such as the role of listening (Waite & Duffy, 2010) and multisensory experience of food tourism (Everett, 2008). Although efforts have been made to understand tourist emotions in typical touristic environments and through multi-sensual embodiment, further studies of how emotional experiences are operationalized in and through tourism are required. Because sensory stimulation is only one of the external stimuli that account for emotion generation, while

tourist emotional experiences are related to several cognitive, personality, and social processes (Larsen, 2007).

Cognitive appraisal theories have been widely accepted by tourism scholars to understand the generation of emotions (Hosany et al., 2021), although many studies did not elucidate their theoretical origin in cognitive psychology and/or simply claimed adopting dimensional or categorical (i.e., discrete) approaches (Skavronskaya et al., 2017). In fact, neither dimensional nor categorical approach deny the essential role of cognitive appraisal in emotion generation. Increasingly more cognitive psychologists believe that with the development of neuroscience, theoretical convergence is an inevitable trend (Moors, 2017; Scherer, 2022). Scherer (2022) proposed a general model of the architecture of emotion process, conceptualizing emotion as episodes of coordinated changes in multiple components (e.g., neurophysiological activation, motor expression and subjective feeling, cognitive processes, action tendencies and regulation potential) in response to external or internal events of major significance to the organism. This model can serve as a potentially unified, comprehensive theoretical framework, integrating major concepts and theories in emotion psychology and suspending the dispute.

Most tourist emotional-experience studies have been over-concerned with “the spatiality” of emotions, rather than their psychological and social nature (Tuerlan et al., 2021). Tourist emotional experience should be examined under general psychological frameworks because tourist experience is a psychological phenomenon by nature, formed within individuals through interaction of environmental, social, cognitive, and personality factors (Volo, 2021). But tourism researchers’ exploration of psychological mechanisms underlying tourists’ blended, continuous and dynamic emotional experience is still in its infancy.

Recent studies have emphasized that tourist experience is a dynamic process which at any specific moment reflects both the overall summation of all (previous and anticipated) experiences and the immediate emotions raised through actions (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015). The tourism experience can be, therefore, conceptualized as a temporally extended series of “microevents” or activities that together form the narrative of an episodic memory trace (Bastiaansen et al., 2019); where each event (activity) results in emotions which are “understood” within the overall setting of the trip (Bowen, 2002). Although studies have been conducted on how the nature, strength, and timing of emotions determine overall trip experience assessment, findings remain inconsistent. Some support the primacy effect, others favour the recency effect, and yet others advocate the peak effect. Recent research suggests that all three effects and the variation throughout the trip are important drivers of the overall experience (Chark, King, & Tang, 2020). Therefore, the timing and nature of emotions raised at the beginning, middle, and end of the trip as well as the “resting points” in-between are crucial when modelling the overall trip experience (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015).

This study aims to explore family tourist emotional experience by disassembling it as a series of dynamic “scenes” comprising activities that raise specific emotions and define elements of the emotional journey. Recent psychological research achievements in emotion regulation will be utilized to disclose the sequential and dynamic emotion-generative and regulative process of family tourists underlying their emotional experience. Moreover, tourist experience is constantly mediated through social interactions and relationships, but their role in tourist emotion dynamics remains unknown (Scherer, 2022; Volo, 2021). This study context provides an ideal setting to examine the impact of social interactions on tourists’ emotion dynamics because families represent a ‘social bubble’ full of close social ties (Melvin et al. 2020).

2.3 Emotion Regulation and the Theoretical Framework

Emotion regulation is the process by which people modify which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express them. People modulate their emotions consciously or unconsciously through cognitive and behavioural strategies (Gross, 2015). To systematically examine the emotion-generation and regulation process underlying tourist experience, Gross's (2002) Process Model of Emotion Regulation was adopted as the theoretical framework. The model provides a rich theoretical foundation to help understand the generative and regulatory processes through which various discrete emotions become meaningful and memorable for individuals. It systematically organizes multiple regulatory strategies (Webb, Miles, & Sheeran, 2012), facilitating the analysis of potential strategies that tourists would employ during leisure trips and understanding of their affective, cognitive, and social consequences, both immediately and over time. As the process model is still undergoing continuous improvement and expansion, adopting such a comprehensive and flexible model provides space for this study to accommodate innovative findings and indicate productive directions for future tourist emotion research.

The process model distinguishes five clusters of emotion regulation strategies – Situation Selection, Situation Modification, Attentional Deployment, Cognitive Change, and Response Modulation – by the point in the generative process where their primary impact occurs (Gross, 2002). Situation Selection refers to taking actions that make it more or less likely for one to be in a situation that generates a certain emotion. Situation Modification aims to alter a situation that may provoke an emotion. Attentional Deployment attempts to redirect attention to desirable aspects of the situation. Cognitive Change means modifying appraisal of a situation or capacity to manage it to alter its emotional impact. Response Modulation denotes directly controlling experiential, behavioural, or physiological emotional responses after the response tendency has already been activated. Only two types of

regulation strategies from the five clusters have been thoroughly examined in psychological studies: cognitive reappraisal under Cognitive Change and expressive suppression under Response Modulation (Gross, 2015). Reappraisal is a cognitive regulation strategy that involves changing the way one thinks about an emotion-eliciting situation to reduce its emotional impact. Suppression is a behavioural regulation strategy that aims to inhibit ongoing emotionally expressive behaviours. Other regulatory processes that individuals regularly undertake have not received adequate scientific investigation. Failing to include a broader repertoire of emotion regulation strategies may result in an inadequate understanding of the affective realities associated with people's emotional experiences (Heiy & Cheavens, 2014).

Relatively little is known about how individuals make emotion-regulation-strategy choices in particular contexts when regulation is warranted, an issue recent empirical research has examined (Matthews et al., 2021). Beyond individual differences, emotion regulation should be understood as the result of a complex interplay among contextual factors, momentary affect, and situation-specific goals (Colombo et al., 2020). Given that most empirical studies on emotion-regulation heavily rely on laboratory experiments, situated and momentary aspects have been relatively understudied. Tang and Huang (2019) examined how social context, location, emotion valence and personality traits influence people's selection of broad and specific emotion-regulation strategies. They found that in daily life, people typically adopt strategies rarely studied in the laboratory, while commonly studied strategies were the least frequently selected across the sample. This suggests a need to explore tourists' emotion-regulation in an actual travel setting. To date, the only two empirical studies on tourist emotion-regulation outside the lab were conducted by Gao and colleagues. Gao and Kerstetter (2018) discovered 11 types of emotion-regulation strategies used during vacations; and Gao et al. (2019) revealed that emotion-regulation-strategy use varied over different

vacation stages. Neither study took specific travel contexts, tourists' motivations and previous experiences into account, and stopped short of revealing the sequential and dynamic process of emotion-generation and regulation.

Additionally, less emphasis has been placed on social and cultural aspects of emotion regulation because of the focus on intrapersonal processes (Barthel et al., 2018). As social beings, human often experience, express, and regulate emotions with and through others. Emotion-regulation choices are more limited when being with others, because individuals can select from a wide range of regulation-strategies when they are alone – they have the mental and social space to do so, and also have the freedom to opt for overt strategies. But covert - especially cognitive, regulatory - strategies are often deployed when individuals are with others (Zaki & Williams, 2013). In the context of family travel, interpersonal emotion-regulation may be more frequent and important than intrapersonal regulation. Interpersonal emotion-regulation emphasizes the influence of social components on individuals' capability of managing their own and others' emotions, directly or indirectly. Recent studies argue that the social environment could influence capability to regulate emotions, and it is more efficient and common for people to regulate their emotions with the support of others (Williams et al., 2018). The occurrence of interpersonal emotion-regulation has been supported by theoretical models, developmental research, and research on relationships and human interaction as well as social networks (Barthel et al., 2018). However, until now, no research has explored how socio-cultural contexts influence tourists' use of emotion-regulation strategies during travel.

3. METHOD

This study adopted a whole-family methodology in an ethnographic style inclusive of the group and individual perspectives of all family members (Schänzel, 2010), underpinned

by a conscious effort to document family trip through a deep immersion within the context of tourism encounters, rather than focusing only on what is represented. This methodology constructs every family member as an active agent in family life, whose actions contribute to shaping that family's interdependent life together and apart; the family thereby generates its own culture by producing individuals, relationships, and interactions (Cheong & Sin, 2021). As Handel (1997, p. 346) emphasizes, no single member is a sufficient source of information for their family because "a family constructs its life from the multiple perspectives of its members". This lays the foundational groundwork for our analysis on how the extended family members create, interpret, and manage their emotional experiences, alone and together, throughout a multi-day overseas trip. In-depth interviews with each family member were conducted at each stage of travel (pre-, during-, and post-) and augmented with an auto-ethnography by two participant observers. When relied solely on interviews, the inherently private nature of family travel could limit research access to families' travel experience, especially subtle emotional experiences; and invite the risk of obtaining purely representational responses which possibly overlook or conceal nuances of individual embodied experiences embedded in the whole-family experience.

3.1 Participants

Eight Mainland Chinese outbound tourists from the same extended family (profiles in Appendix I), joining a 20-people, six-day all-inclusive package tour to New Zealand in Dec 2019, were recruited through convenience sampling. The sample size is small but meets the requirements of ethnographic methodology (Mackenzie, 1994). The extended family comprised three couples (three siblings and their spouses) aged between 64 and 69 years, their niece (52 years), and a daughter of one couple (36 years). This family can well represent the extended family structure of the first generation one-child parents (Xu, Hu, & Wang, 2024), who grew up in a multi-children family but only have one child. The relationship

among their only children is normally much closer than the cousin relationship of previous generations. These one-child families account for one-third of all Chinese families (Wang et al., 2020). Two or three letter initials were used to identify participants to protect their privacy. The study panel comprised five females and three males, with a household income above ¥20,000 per month. All participants identified themselves as somewhat experienced domestic travellers, with seven travelling at least twice a year. Six considered themselves somewhat experienced outbound travellers, with four having travelled overseas more than three times.

As the extended family members were the first author's immediate relatives, critical reflection on positionality is warranted. Two research team members joined the package tour to observe participants' emotional responses and/or expressions in various situations. The first author served as a "complete participant" because of the kinship with the participating family and participants habitually viewed her as a family member and a travel companion, often neglecting her identity as a researcher; while her colleague took the role of "participant as observer" (identity revealed). This double-observer strategy not only helps overcome the insider/outsider binary and destabilize the power inequalities between researchers and informants (Cheong & Sin, 2021), but also facilitates the cross-validation of their observations (Bowen, 2002). Being viewed as an "insider", the first author's position as a relative extended the longevity of shared information beyond the time-frame of this study, and this exceptional researcher–researched relationship created an environment for sharing delicate emotional experiences. Although the research assistant was viewed as an "outsider" of the family, she was regarded a closer travel companion if comparing with other strangers in the tour group. At the beginning of the trip, her outsider position might inhibit some informants from frankly sharing personal experience in managing emotions in daily life; but these questions were revisited in the post-trip interview. As the trip unfolded and she became

friends with the younger family members, participants gradually forgot her identity as a researcher. Moreover, two interviewers agreed on the division of work after two initial interviews, following two principles. First, the quality and richness of the information collected from informants is always the primary consideration; second, each couple must be interviewed separately by different interviewers to ensure a comprehensive and unbiased understanding of the cause and process of a typical emotional episode.

3.2 Procedure

A three-phase longitudinal research design was implemented. First, pre-trip expected experience and antecedents of emotion-regulation were examined via in-depth interviews. Second, tourists' emotional-experience and emotion-regulation during the trip were examined through two techniques: (1) daily interviews assisted by electrodermal activity (EDA) data, collected using Empatica E4 wristbands, enabling subjects to recall and interpret their explicit and implicit emotional experiences; and (2) participant observation capturing tourists' expressive emotional responses (facial, vocal, and bodily expressions). Third, the participants' recalled experiences, emotion regulations throughout the trip and in daily-life, were explored through post-trip interviews.

Pre-trip interviews with the participants were conducted in a specially selected quiet and private area of the departure lounge or on the international flight, each lasting about 40 minutes. To ensure privacy and avoid interference, all couples were divided for interviews by two researchers separately. Major questions included expectations of the upcoming trip, recent emotional states and perceptions of emotion-regulation. Observation field notes during the trip were taken separately by the participant observers, focusing on key events, interpersonal interactions, and each subject's reactions. Daily EDA-assisted interviews were conducted in private hotel rooms and controlled within 30 minutes. Two interviewers

reviewed the day's EDA raw data visualized on E4 Connect (Empatica's cloud platform) every evening, then asked participants what had happened and how they felt based on the time points corresponding to the significant peaks on the EDA curve, the itinerary, and/or experiential episodes recorded in the field notes. Given that EDA is the most useful index of changes in sympathetic arousal that is trackable (via sympathetic fibres) to emotional and cognitive states (Stadler, Jepson, & Wood, 2018), EDA-induced interviews could effectively help participants recall more emotional episodes, subtle emotional experiences – some of which were not even explicitly recognized at the time of occurrence, and the regulation-strategies they adopted when necessary. EDA data per se is not helpful in detecting specific emotions, thus only used as an auxiliary tool and not analysed quantitatively in this study. Post-trip interviews occurred by phone two weeks after return, each lasting about 50 minutes, to collect participants' overall trip evaluation, memorable experiences/events, use of emotion-regulation-strategies and perceived effectiveness. All interviews were conducted in Chinese, audio-recorded, then transcribed verbatim. Although there were only eight participants, each was interviewed eight times, generating a 320,000-word transcript that provides a thickly described account of travel experiences and emotional dynamics. The data analysis process included analysing interview transcripts and field notes.

Two analysts engaged in the content analysis of all interview transcripts and coded the data separately according to the process model of emotion-regulation (Gross, 2002). Because of the prior agreement on coding purpose and the categorization criteria, an agreement of 85% was achieved between the analysts' coding results. The classifications of emotional experiences and emotion-regulation-strategies by the two coders were iteratively compared to improve consistency, and disagreements were further discussed with the project leader. A consensus was achieved after several iterations. Field notes were also utilized to triangulate the self-reports of participants and two coders' different interpretations. The researchers'

interpretations were then returned to the informants for member checking. The trustworthiness of this study was thus established through investigator and theoretical triangulations.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Pre-trip Expectations and Concerns

All family members held great expectations for the very rare overseas travel as an extended family. Everyone claimed that (s)he sincerely cherished this opportunity and hoped every member would have a smooth and happy travel experience; this heartfelt wish functioned as the major motivation for regulating emotions throughout the trip. Potential events predicted to affect their mood/emotions include: physical health and fatigue; safety threats caused by natural disasters (flood or volcanic eruption) or transportation; unsatisfactory facilities, inconvenience, or negative interactions with others; and bad weather. Generally, everybody prepared mentally for possible surprises or unsatisfactory situations during the trip, while maintaining a strong sense of optimism and anticipation.

4.2 Emotional Experiences During the Trip

Daily interviews assisted by EDA data revealed that the best-recalled emotional experiences were attached to particular attractions, activities, or events. Therefore, major attractions in the itinerary and key events/experiences mentioned by subjects were constructed as a sequential emotional journey with 64 episodes (see Appendices II and III). These facilitated the identification and understanding of specific emotions.

Informants reported 13 positive, five neutral, and 14 negative emotions throughout the six-day trip (see Table 1 and Appendix IV), either directly derived from respondents' self-expressions or labelled by the researchers and confirmed with the informants. Positive

emotions, especially those high in arousal (happy, excited, aesthetic emotions, novel, satisfied, and pleasantly surprised; see Yik, Russell, & Steiger, 2011) were more frequently reported on Days 2, 5, and 6. Positive emotions low in arousal (amused, thankful, pride, comfortable, relaxed, and curious) were reported more on Days 3, 4, and 5, similar to the pattern of neutral emotions commonly expressed as “good/fine”, “acceptable” or “ordinary”. Negative emotions concentrated on Days 1, 3, and 4. Appendix III demonstrates the fluctuation of positive, negative, and neutral emotions over the six days: the horizontal axis lists the 64 emotional episodes in chronological order and the vertical axis reflects the number of emotion types (lines) and the frequency of each reported emotion (bars).

Table 1.

Emotions Experienced During the Trip

	Emotions	No. of References	No. of Informants	Day1	Day2	Day3	Day4	Day5	Day6
Positive Emotions	[1] Happy	73	8	2	11	14	9	22	15
	[2] Excited	56	8	2	12	11	3	14	14
	[3] Novel; Refreshing	53	8	4	6	9	3	18	13
	[4] Satisfied	44	8	1	14	6	6	8	9
	[5] Aesthetic Emotions (e.g., Awed, Beautiful, Amazed)	34	8	7	8	5	1	6	7
	[6] (Pleasantly) Surprised/ Astonished	20	7	0	2	3	1	6	8
	[7] Benign Envy	11	2	2	5	0	4	0	0
	[8] Amused; Fun	11	5	0	0	3	3	2	3
	[9] Thankful; Lucky	11	5	0	1	3	1	1	5
	[10] Pride	10	6	1	1	3	4	1	0
	[11] Curious	8	5	0	0	1	3	4	0
	[12] Comfortable/ Enjoyable	7	6	1	1	1	0	3	1
	[13] Relaxed; Peaceful; Romantic	7	5	0	1	0	4	2	0
Neutral Emotions	[1] Ordinary/ Acceptable/ Fine; Familiar	65	8	5	8	17	15	11	9
	[2] Uninterested	13	7	4	0	0	3	0	6
	[3] Aesthetic Fatigue	7	4	0	2	2	1	0	2
	[4] Reluctant to depart/leave	4	4	0	0	0	0	1	3
	[5] Compassion	3	3	0	0	0	3	0	0
Negative Emotions	[1] Regretful	33	8	3	6	7	5	5	7
	[2] Anxious; Uneasy Worried/Concerned	32	6	3	5	8	9	3	4
	[3] Dissatisfied/Complaining; awful /displeasing	32	8	15	0	4	6	2	5
	[4] Tired; Weary	30	8	10	5	6	4	1	4
	[5] Disappointed	20	8	5	1	3	3	5	3
	[6] Scared/fear/startling; Nervous	19	7	2	2	2	6	6	1
	[7] Dislike/Disgust; Unhappy	17	7	5	1	1	6	3	1
	[8] Impatient; Fretful	14	7	2	0	6	1	2	3
	[9] Helpless; Dejected	13	6	4	0	5	4	0	0
	[10] Compunctious; self-condemned; depressed	10	5	4	2	1	2	0	1
	[11] Angry	9	7	4	0	2	2	1	0
	[12] Unwell	9	3	1	3	1	2	0	2
	[13] Uncomfortable	9	6	1	0	0	7	0	1
	[14] Embarrassed	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Types of Positive Emotions				8	11	11	12	12	9
Types of Neutral Emotions				2	2	2	4	3	4
Types of Negative Emotions				14	8	12	13	9	12

Note: the top frequencies of each emotion were color-coded to show their varying occurrence over the six days.

Table 2 summarizes the external stimuli of participants' emotions, divided into three types: environmental, affective events, and human. Positive emotions were mostly triggered by natural scenery, exciting activities/interaction experiences, cultural sites that can provide

authentic experience, as well as good food and accommodation. Relatively fewer positive emotions were induced by other people, but taking photos (especially group photos) could often push positive emotions like joy and happiness to a higher level of excitement. In contrast, negative emotions were mostly triggered by unpleasant activities and experiences, unsatisfactory facilities, unreasonable itinerary arrangements, and family members. Family members were more likely to trigger negative emotions in participants than strangers were, but these negative emotions (worry, regret, helpless) are lower in intensity and more transient than those aroused by strangers. Neutral emotions were mostly related to touristic attractions and activities. The feelings of ordinary/familiar and uninterested/dull were derived from the subjects' distant and proximal comparisons. They compared not only the current attractions/experiences with those at home or other foreign destinations, but also what they saw/experienced each day (see Appendix IV).

While family tourists shared the same/similar emotional experiences because of the shared itinerary and close relationship, they also experienced different emotions due to different scopes of affective events and personal factors. Specifically, negative events within a nuclear family (e.g., lost something) did not always affect everyone in the extended family, and senior and younger members often had different emotional experiences due to different physical strengths, interests and responsibilities. Importantly, each member's personality and emotion-regulation capability are different, although they had the same goal – to regulate negative emotions of themselves and those close to them, and create a pleasant atmosphere for the whole family.

Table 2.***Stimuli of Emotions***

		Positive Emotions	Neutral Emotions	Negative Emotions
Environmental Factors	[1] Natural Attractions (<i>incl. weather</i>)	13	3	7
	[2] Food, Accommodation, & Other Facilities (<i>e.g., Hilton resort, Minibus, Cold pool</i>)	8	1	10
	[3] Cultural Attractions (<i>e.g., Queenstown, Arrow town, Maori Cultural Village</i>)	11	3	3
Affective Events	[1] Activities (<i>e.g., Star-gazing, Boating, Feeding animals, Shopping at DFS</i>)	12	3	13
	[2] Unreasonable Itineraries (<i>e.g., Tight and exhausting schedule, Long drive, Unexpected changes, or Short stay</i>)	5	1	9
	[3] Incidents (<i>e.g., Getting lost, Lost property, Quarrels, Encountering a crying kid in the bus</i>)	0	1	12
Human Factors	[1] Family Members (<i>incl. activities such as taking photos and chatting</i>)	2	2	8
	[2] Service Personnel (<i>incl. tour leader, local tour guides and flight attendant</i>)	2	1	2
	[3] Tour Group Members and Other Strangers	0	0	5
	[4] Self	0	0	4

Note: Numbers in the table indicate the number of emotion types.

4.3 Emotion Regulations During the Trip

Thirteen emotion-regulation strategies were identified from the subjects' recall assisted by EDA data (see Appendix IV) and listed in Table 3 according to the frequency of adoption. In addition to the well-recognized strategies in Gross's model (i.e., cognitive reappraisal, suppression, distraction, and situation selection/modification), nine new strategies were identified and highlighted in red in Table 3. According to Webb et al.'s (2012) expanded taxonomy of emotion-regulation-strategies and subtypes, five of the nine new strategies (acceptance, let it go, compensation expectation, self-consolation and self-reflection) can be

grouped into the cluster of Cognitive Change, one grouped into Attentional Deployment (behavioural disengagement), and three (mental preparation, expression, and external regulation) are beyond the existing five clusters.

Table 3.

Emotion Regulation Strategies

Emotion-Regulation Strategies	During Travel	In Daily Life	References	No. of Informants	Clusters of Emotion-Regulation-strategy
1. Cognitive (Re)appraisal	33	4	43	8	Cognitive Change
2. Acceptance	25	2	32	7	
3. Suppression	21	2	34	8	Response Modulation
4. Let it go	17	3	28	6	Cognitive Change
5. Mental Disengagement (Distraction/Concentration)	13	7	26	7	Attentional Deployment
6. Behavioural Disengagement	12	4	16	7	
7. Mental Preparation	11	0	11	8	Pre-set Emotion-Regulation
8. Expression	11	10	33	7	Emotion Expression
9. Compensation Expectation	6	0	6	4	Cognitive Change
10. Self-consolation	5	1	6	5	
11. Self-reflection	5	2	7	5	
12. Situation Selection/Modification	5	2	8	5	Situation-Selection/Modification
13. External Regulation	4	0	4	4	Interpersonal Emotion-Regulation

Note: The nine emotion-regulation strategies newly discovered are highlighted in red.

The numbers in columns 2 and 3 indicate the frequency of each strategy's adoption during this trip and in daily-life respectively.

Among the strategies beyond existing clusters, mental preparation was preventive and commonly used by tourists. All participants had mentally prepared before the trip by predicting problems that may arise based on previous travel experiences and reminding themselves to adjust emotions timely and respond positively. Additionally, unlike the traditional focus of emotion-regulation literature on expressive suppression, respondents claimed that emotion expression/vent was an effective way to decrease negative emotions:

It's hard to suppress your anger/dissatisfaction in some situations ... I complained to the tour leader and talked to family members. Complaining may help solve the problem, if not, it makes me feel better. [MDX]

The most unique finding was that family tourists not only regulated their own emotions through family members (e.g., social sharing and seeking support), but also proactively regulated each other's emotions (i.e., external regulation). For instance, YQJ once interrupted his wife's complaint at dinner and tried to cheer her up, because he did not want it to impact family members' good mood. The co-occurrence of intra- and inter-personal emotion regulation or interpersonal coregulation of negative emotions could often be observed. The Tekapo stargazing tour is a good example as the event aroused the largest number of negative emotions during the entire trip. Although all family members felt dissatisfied with the tour, the types, intensity, and sources of their negative emotions were dissimilar: some were disappointed/bored/irritated by the presentation, some worried about companions' physical health, and others felt exhausted; therefore, motivations to regulate negative emotions of their own and others and choices of regulation-strategies also varied (see Appendix V). MYY recalled that she became increasingly worried about the health of several family members and thus decided to negotiate with the tour leader, even though she had suppressed her own displeasure since the beginning of presentation. Not everyone in the family joined the collective complaint because of different appraisals and concerns: two concerned about the collective image of the family or even of the whole Chinese tourist group (YQJ & WHY), one believed the priority was to solve the problem (MDL), and another did not want to cause more unhappiness (CWS).

Three main features/patterns can be observed from the family tourists' emotion-regulation process. First, emotion regulations were mostly reported when respondents felt negative emotions, and the most frequently utilized strategy was cognitive reappraisal. This strategy was usually adopted in highly negative emotional episodes, such as the most

complained stargazing event on Day 1, the disappeared lone tree in Lake Wānaka due to floods on Day 2, and several unpleasant episodes (see [36]-[38] in Appendix II) on Day 4. An interesting finding is that reappraisal became less effective at changing the experience of negative emotions as the journey continued. In the first two days, respondents were able to adjust negative emotions to positive ones through cognitive reappraisal, probably because they were still in high spirits and had sufficient energy. When their fatigue gradually deepened, they used this strategy less frequently; or even when they used it, they could only reduce negative emotions but not turn them into positive ones. This fully demonstrated that reappraisal is a cognitively demanding regulation strategy because it involves “active reinterpretation of the meaning and significance of emotional stimuli” (Troy et al., 2018; p.69), and thus requires a high degree of cognitive effort and resources. In contrast, leisure tourists were rarely aware of employing emotion-regulation strategies, unconsciously or habitually, to prolong or enhance the sense of pleasure. According to researchers’ observation, the most common positive-emotion regulation strategies include social sharing (talking to companions, taking photos for/with each other) and actively showing positive emotions. Sharing joyful emotions with family members not only helped subject(s) to revel in the moment but also lifted their family members’ positive emotions.

Table 4 summarizes participants’ main motivations to regulate negative emotions, including both hedonic and instrumental goals (Tamir, 2016): hedonic goals were prominent because of the leisure trip context; instrumental goals included behavioural, epistemic, and mainly social goals. Participants with hedonic goals pursued pleasant and avoided unpleasant travel experiences for themselves and for their family members, while those with instrumental goals were more likely to pursue good social relations, desired behaviours and worldview confirmation. In addition to maintaining harmony and emotional bonding within the family unit, participants were also motivated to suppress complaints to maintain positive

individual and collective images when traveling abroad. Epistemic motives (Tamir, 2016) drive people to experience emotions that reflect positively on the self (i.e., epistemic enhancement), such as pride, compassion, and contempt, or that provide self- or belief-consistent information, such as worry and compunction for sick family members, thereby verifying existing self- and worldviews (epistemic verification motives). Taking care of each other's feelings and maintaining harmony confirmed Chinese family values (Hsu & Huang, 2016), even if it involved suppression of individuals' positive emotions. For example, MDX suppressed her excitement to show concern for her sick father, which is valued in filial piety culture.

Table 4.
Motives for Emotion Regulation

Emotion-Regulation Motives		MYY	CWS	MDL	GQ	MSY	YQJ	MDX	WHY	Total
1. Hedonic	▪ Don't want to affect my own travel experience	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	7
	▪ Don't want to affect others' mood	√	√	√	√		√		√	6
2. Social	▪ Maintain good interpersonal relationship	√	√		√		√	√		5
	▪ Strengthen the bond among family members	√				√		√		3
	▪ Maintain a positive collective image (family and Chinese)	√					√			2
	▪ Maintain the group harmony	√						√		2
3. Behavioural	▪ Keep Physical and Mental Health	√			√	√				3
	▪ Bad mood may affect judgement and cause misunderstanding	√					√			2
4. Epistemic	▪ Don't want to affect personal image/reputation and others' trust in you		√	√						2
	▪ Caring for parents' feeling							√		1
	▪ Be considerate of others (incl. tour guides and other group members)						√			1

Note: The letters represent initials of participants.

Second, multiple emotion-regulation strategies were often utilized simultaneously or consecutively by tourists in realistic settings, not necessarily in the temporal order suggested by Gross' (2015) process model. For instance, cognitive reappraisal may need to invoke the pre-trip mental preparations to help tourists decrease both expressive behaviour and the experience of negative emotions. Decisions to suppress emotional expression often stem from Cognitive Change – as a consequence of acceptance and let it go. Sometimes, suppression is followed by Attention Deployment, because suppression of behavioural responses may fail in decreasing the experience of negative emotion and even increase physiological responses (Webb et al., 2012). Attention Deployment was thus utilized to distract subjects from negative stimuli or emotions through either mental or behavioural disengagement strategies. Behavioural disengagement was given a new meaning in this study – it refers to intentionally disengaging oneself from the source/stimuli of negative emotions and engaging in other activities to calm oneself down, which is similar to problem-solving. In traditional coping literature, behavioural disengagement means reducing one's effort to deal with the stressor or give up the attempt to attain goals with which the stressor is interfering, conveying a sense of helplessness (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Our study found that tourists also actively utilized behavioural strategies to regulate negative emotions, such as devoting themselves to activities that could please themselves or taking actions to change the situation. For example, MSY suppressed her fidgeting and tried to change the situation by regulating others' emotions:

The crying kid on bus was very annoying, because everyone wanted to sleep on the return journey ... I wanted to upbraid his guardian but then thought it was not easy for a mother to travel with two kids ... so I tried to soothe the kid and suggested the mother to calm down her son.

Third, a comparison of the first two columns in Table 3 shows that respondents chose different emotion-regulation strategies in travel settings, but the familiar atmosphere of

family travel allowed them to adopt their habitual daily strategies. This implies that individuals' regulatory/coping styles and prior coping experiences with similar emotional episodes could affect their choice of regulation strategies during leisure travel, especially in the context of family tourism. Consistent with psychological research findings, cognitive reappraisal was still the most frequently adopted strategy in this family-travel setting but its scope was greatly broadened – beyond the reappraisal of emotional stimuli and responses. Cognitive Change can be accomplished through perspective-taking, positive thinking (self-consolation and compensation expectation), and self-reflection. Acceptance and suppression were more commonly used during travel. After arriving at an unfamiliar destination, tourists typically became more tolerant and willing to accept reality and other people to ensure a pleasant experience. Some realized they could do little to change a situation, so chose to accept or let it go. As the most common regulation strategy used in daily life, expression was also used by participants, albeit less frequently. This suggests that family travel provides a familiar and safe environment for members, enabling them to freely express emotions. As MSY stated, “*family travel reduced the odds of bad emotions and the need for regulation.*” A few others believed that although travel increased the need to regulate negative emotions, it was much easier during a trip than in daily life because leisure trips provided lots of distractions.

4.4 Post-trip Memorable Experience

In the post-trip interviews, all subjects claimed they had a pleasant experience in New Zealand. The memorable affective events were marked using emoji in Appendix II. A few impressive emotional episodes everyday entered long-term memory; and the recalled positive episodes (n=17) outnumbered negative ones (n=5). Participants' most memorable travel experiences were characterized by: (1) novel/dissimilar, (2) unexpected fortuitous or adverse

experiences, (3) performing (dynamic) rather than observing (static), and (4) actively interactive with other members.

Except for MDX, the youngest family member who keeps a diary, other members mostly failed to accurately remember specific place names when recalling their trips, especially the sites offering similar natural landscapes. But they could vividly remember how they felt when arriving at each destination, possibly due to enhanced concentration aroused by novelty. Their depiction of natural scenery stored in memory sounded like the brain had deeply processed the landscape information through combination and reconstruction, producing coherent pictures full of emotions. The last two days became the most exciting in their memory because of the diverse and interactive activities. The stargazing was the only negative episode recalled by all family members, supporting previous findings that tourists' memorable experiences are strongly characterized by emotions – both positive and negative, not all of which were linked to hedonic enjoyment (Knobloch, Robertson, & Aitken, 2017).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study represents the first attempt to explore extended-family tourists' dynamic emotional experience using the process model of emotion regulation, to reveal the complex, dynamic, interacting emotion-generation and regulation process in a realistic travel setting. A three-phase longitudinal research was conducted through a combination of psychophysiological-measure assisted interviews and participant observation. Two research objectives were achieved through an integrative analysis of the empirical data.

5.1 Family Tourists' Dynamic Emotional Experience

Pre-trip interviews and participant observation identified that, apart from some concerns about health, safety, and the itinerary, outbound tourists were in a very pleasant and expectant emotional state. However, during-trip emotional experience is complicated because

it is affected by many intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Tourist emotional experience is a series of “collisions” between external stimuli (from environment, events/activities, and other people) and individuals’ unique features (including interests, past experiences, physical, psychological, cognitive, and social capabilities). Individuals tend to process and adjust these collisions consciously or subconsciously to derive positive feelings; meaningful, impressive, memorable emotional-experience is thus produced.

Comparison with remembered prior travel experiences is an important emotion-generating mechanism. If the current experience is better than previous experiences, positive emotions are produced; if it is not as good as or similar to previous experiences, negative or neutral emotions arise. Only when there is no reference experience for comparison, tourists would have highly intensive positive emotions, such as novelty, excitement, and pleasant surprise, as well as aesthetic emotions, such as awe and admiration. These emotions were mostly reported when participants could immerse themselves in the moment, as if entering a state of flow that is completely free from memory interference. This feeling was consistent with human’s ultimate desire for existential authenticity (Wang, 1999), well explained why tourists always instinctively pursue novel experiences that they have never had before. The subconscious mind appears to be completely open and present when tourists experience new stimuli for the first time, thus amplifying the opportunity to experience one's true self. Existential authenticity is related to tourists’ subjective feelings and a state of being which is activated from the liminal process of tourist activities that convey an enhanced sense of genuineness or uniqueness, connection with the environment and others, and self-expression (Wang, 1999; Yu & Liu, 2024). However, the memory of previous similar experiences (if any) would naturally intervene tourists’ encoding of experiences that are not entirely new. As Pearce and Packer (2013) suggest, the role of memory in framing travel experiences has been underplayed by tourism research. Memory stores experiences as actual and virtual existence,

and past lived moments are recollected through the lens of the present (Anaya & Lehto, 2023).

The emotional experience recalled post-trip supports a “rosy view” (Mitchell et al., 1997), reflecting the human inclination to embellish memories by making positive experiences more positive and negative experiences less negative (Knobloch et al., 2017). Participants also reflected on their emotional-experience by exchanging and flipping through photos taken during travel, replaying happy/excited moments in their mind, and talking with each other, then wove impressive experiences into their travel memories. This is consistent with Gram et al.’s (2019) findings that family photos are sites of collective memory, constituting a past that is not only commonly shared but also jointly remembered. To summarize, tourist emotional experience can be evoked by all stimuli encountered in the pre-, during-, and post-phases of tourism consumption. Both the physical surroundings and socio-situational factors in which they engage are continuously filtered and processed through individual factors (previous experiences, personality traits, motives and expectations) to (re)shape meaningful experiences (Stienmetz et al., 2021).

5.2 Psychological Mechanism Underlying Family Tourists’ Emotion-Generation and Regulation

Findings of this study support emotion-generation and regulation as distinct yet intertwined psychological processes (Gross, 2015). To illustrate the complex, sequential, and dynamic process of family tourists’ emotion-generation and regulation, we developed an integrative model describing the underlying psychological mechanism (see Figure 1), based on Gross’s (2015) extended process model of emotion regulation and our research findings. Gross identified three distinct stages of emotion regulation strategy employment – identification, selection, and implementation – and incorporated spiral four-step valuation

cycles to present the emotion-generation and regulation process as recurrent valuation systems.

As shown in Figure 1, the first-level valuation cycle (situation, attention, appraisal, and emotional response tendencies) describes the process of emotion generation. It starts from interfacing with the environment/situation full of various stimuli (human, events, and environmental factors), paying attention to the significant stimuli, then evaluating these stimuli in relation to personal goals and initiating physiological, experiential, and behavioural systems to facilitate adaptive responses. Once the subject identifies certain emotions needing to be regulated, the second-level valuation cycle, emotion-regulation process, is initiated. Individuals will select appropriate emotion-regulation strategies from their own repertoire and implement those best suited to the situation.

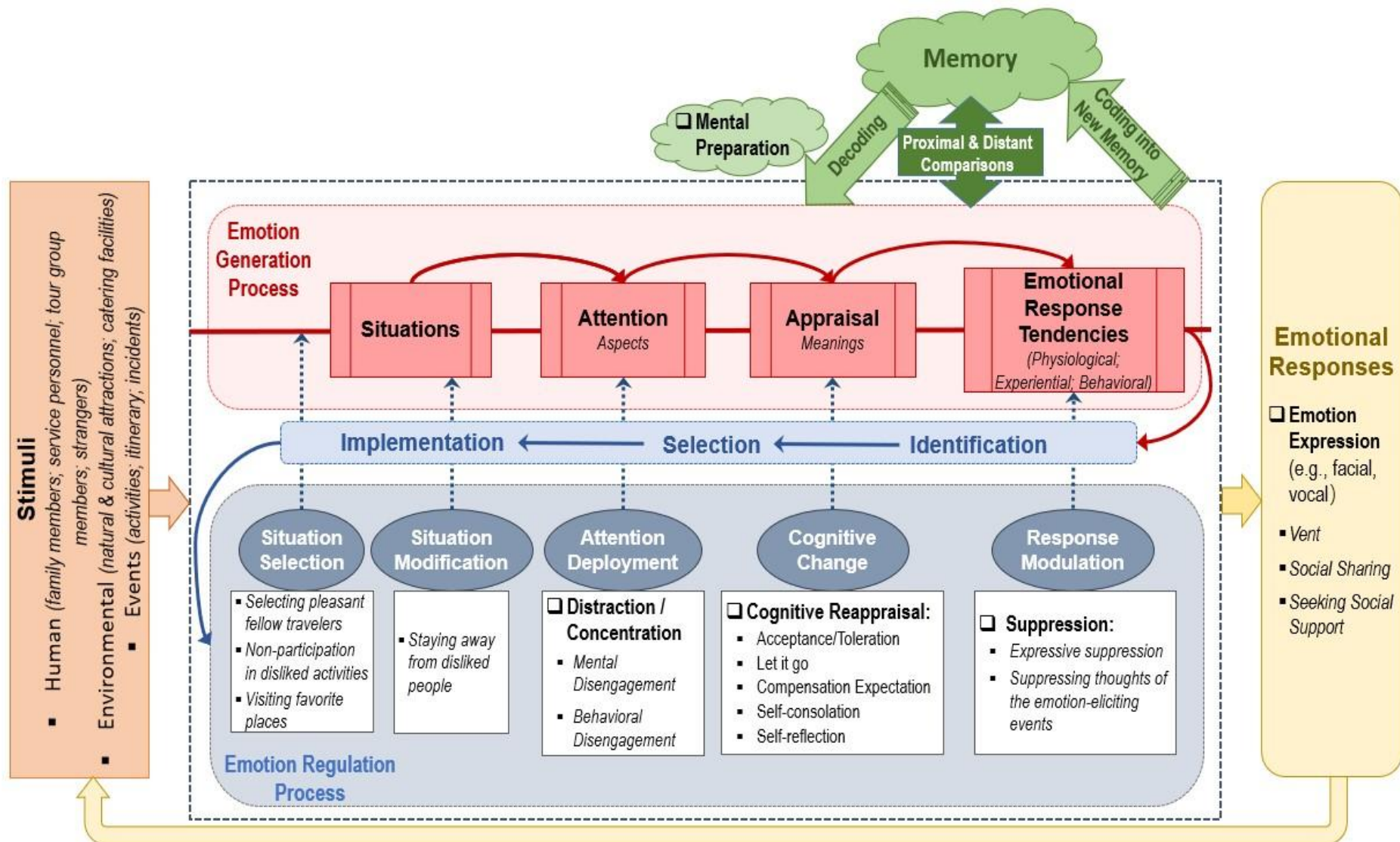


Figure 1. Psychological Mechanism underlying Emotion Generation and Regulation of Family Tourists

As discussed, 10 of the 13 emotion-regulation strategies identified in this study can be classified into Gross's (2002) five clusters. Although some of them have been discussed in the stress/emotion coping literature (Skinner et al., 2003), such as behavioural disengagement and expression, they were reported in the tourism literature for the first time. Some strategies are similar to Gao and Kerstetter's (2018) findings, such as let it go and planning/preparing. The latter was called mental preparation in this study and placed outside the emotion box because it precedes any emotion generation as an outcome of decoding previous travel experience from memory before starting the trip. The new strategy of emotion expression was placed in the emotional responses box on the right, but it is different from natural emotional response in terms of conscious control and intentionality (Skinner et al., 2003). Additionally, the object of regulation can be one's own or others' emotions because of external regulation strategies reported by the family tourists. The successful implementation of regulation strategies will change the trajectory of original emotion and lead to new emotions. If a selected strategy failed, individuals may redeploy other strategies to achieve the desired emotional state. The emotional responses after regulation will become new stimuli through external expressions, entering a new cycle of emotion-generation and regulation as indicated by the feedback arrow. The loop operates iteratively to enable an individual to adaptively respond to changing situations.

This study also suggested an indispensable role for memory in the process of emotion-generation and the function of high-intensity emotions in effectively encoding episodic memory (Bastiaansen et al., 2019). All participants reported automatic comparisons of sensory inputs from ongoing experiences against similar past experiences stored in memory, by which forming various emotional experiences. The comprehensive model not only covers all the new findings, but also extends Gross's process model of emotion regulation by depicting emotion-generation and regulation as an interdependent and cyclical cognitive

appraisal process and highlighting its socio-interactive nature in a family tourism context. The model also supports Scherer's (2022) interpretation of emotion episodes. Scherer states that emotion episodes are recursive in nature, involving the repeated application of a procedure to successive results, because "the outcome of the emotion process is determined by a succession of processing cycles in which information is successively added to allow continuous re-evaluation" (p.158).

5.3 Academic Contributions and Practical Implications

This study makes unique contributions to tourism researchers' understanding of the emotional experience of families in the travel space by revealing the dynamic and social nature of the emotion-generation and regulation process. First, this study employed a dynamic, longitudinal perspective to examine family tourists' emotion-generative and regulatory process rather than treating emotions as a static response. Compared with traditional questionnaire survey, the combination of EDA-assisted interviews and participant observation discovered rich discrete emotions, including embodied (e.g., amusement from feeding alpaca) and implicit (e.g., fear of heights) ones, from family tourists. EDA data truthfully recorded those momentary fluctuations and successfully helped subjects recall the specific situation. For example, participants with acrophobia or entomophobia felt scared when crossing a suspension bridge or seeing swarms of glow-worms, but they did not report fear on their own initiative. It wasn't until the interviewer made a detailed inquiry according to EDA peaks that they recalled the feeling at that moment. These context-specific emotions facilitated our understanding of distinct tourists' profiles in terms of subjective experience, physiology and behaviors (Tuerlan et al., 2021). Moreover, tracking emotional trajectory changes across full emotional episodes not only facilitates the identification of new emotion-regulation strategies, but also clarifies the timing, pattern, and effectiveness of regulation

strategies implemented by family tourists (Kalokerinos et al., 2017). These findings not only break the limitation of existing studies on family tourist experience and static tourist emotions, but also contribute to psychological literature on emotion-regulation with evidence from natural settings (Brockman et al., 2017). The psychological mechanism model we developed integrates all findings, elucidating the process of emotion-generation and regulation and illuminating the external and internal influential factors.

Second, the social nature of family tourists' emotional experience and emotion-regulation was revealed in this study. On one hand, family members were co-creators of positive and memorable emotional experiences. As Wang (1999, p. 364) states, "tourists are not merely searching for authenticity of the Other. They also search the authenticity of, and between, themselves." The participants demonstrated a strong desire for a sense of togetherness, which is existential authenticity beyond the originality of objects and cultures. The participants met other people inside and outside the tour group, but rarely left their immediate social networks. The findings demonstrated that family travel experience was fluid and provisional, dependent on each member's performance and interactions among them (Hu et al., 2024). On the other hand, family members could trigger transient negative emotions but also served as the primary driver and an important means of regulating negative emotions. This study found that Chinese family travel was mostly harmonious. Although occasional minor emotional conflicts occurred, every member agreed that individual goals should subordinate to family goals and prioritized collective well-being over individual desires. Therefore, the subjects actively and flexibly utilized various intra-and inter-personal emotion regulation strategies to create a pleasant travel experience for themselves and their family members. Generally, they preferred cooperative, rather than confrontational, approaches to resolve conflicts and employed emotion suppression and interpersonal regulations more frequently than in daily life, to make sure individual or internal issues within a nuclear family

would not affect other members in the extended family. In particular, adult children and their aging parents made many compromises for each other by virtue of harmony and happiness within the extended family, which is different from previous studies that focused on unilateral compromise by adult children (e.g., Hu et al., 2024).

Findings from this study also offer clearer tailored guidance to various stakeholders on how to optimize family tourists' emotional experiences. For example, tour operators can work closely with destinations to design and promote attractions and programs that generate positive emotions, such as fun participatory activities. Sufficient rest time should be allowed for senior tourists after a long flight before starting any sightseeing activities. When designing products, tour operators should take the complexities of families and the multifaceted needs of all family members into account. More free time and thrilling activities can be provided to young members while additional attention should be paid to the physical health or fatigue of the elderly. Additionally, tour operators should put themselves in the contextual experience of different types of tourists and reduce potential triggers of negative emotions. For instance, providing sufficiently detailed and reliable information can help participants set reasonable expectations and avoid feelings of dissatisfaction or being cheated. Tour guides/leaders should be observant of tourists' emotional change patterns and regulatory ability and try to alleviate or defuse "incidents" that generate negative emotions. For planners and managers of destinations, tourist attractions, and other hospitality providers, the emotional needs of family tourists should be fully considered when designing tourism infrastructure, public spaces, amenities, and activities. For instance, creating functional spaces that facilitate emotion regulation, such as designated family-friendly zones and activity areas that promote bonding and stress relief. Different needs of multi-generational families should also be catered to facilitate the formation of positive experience and holiday memories.

Furthermore, a better knowledge of tourists' emotion-regulation-strategy choice and the influence of socio-contextual factors would enable tourism professionals to recognize and respond to tourists' emotion-regulation-strategy usage pattern and emotional outcomes. For tourists who habitually adopt overt regulation strategies (e.g., venting), tour guides should demonstrate empathy and provide emotional support to ease their negative emotions, rather than attempt to suppress venting through persuasion. Tour operators could even try to proactively regulate their customers' emotions. For instance, tour leaders could find amusing ways to distract tourists from negative stimuli or guide tourists' cognitive reappraisal implicitly. The proactive regulation of tourists' emotions could generate greater emotional benefits to both customers and service providers, thereby bringing greater economic benefits to tourism businesses. It is, thus, imperative to provide professional training for frontline employees to enhance their sensitivity towards and regulation capability to tourists' emotions. Additionally, a better understanding of family tourists' emotion dynamics could facilitate tourism providers' engagement in emotionally intelligent marketing and communication with potential customers. By demonstrating their understanding of the complexity of emotions during travel and highlighting how their offerings accommodate the emotional needs of families, they can attract and better serve families seeking premium travel experiences. With the assistance of advanced technology, such as AI, tourism operators may be able to develop specialized programs or packages that incorporate emotion regulation nudges to help family tourists better navigate challenging emotions during their trips.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Three limitations of this study should be noted. First, only one extended Chinese family was investigated due to practical constraints – the pandemic disrupted travel activities. Therefore, these findings may not be generalizable to other extended families who travel

together. Moreover, the emotional experience and regulation-strategy usage pattern of extended family tourists who travel with a package tour can be very different from those of nuclear family tourists (especially with young children) or independent family tourists whose itinerary allows more flexibility, challenges, and interactions with locals. To further understand family tourists' dynamic emotional experience and emotion-regulation process, future research could investigate the family tourist experience across contexts and conditions. Second, the emotion-regulation strategies identified in this study are not meant to be exhaustive. Family tourists may employ other strategies in different travel contexts. However, given the limited evidence on spontaneous emotion-regulation strategies, this study provides an initial exploration of family tourists' emotion regulations, especially interpersonal emotion-regulation strategies in a realistic setting. Much work still remains to explore both intrapersonal and interpersonal emotion-regulations in the tourism context, as well as the antecedents and consequences of various emotion-regulation strategies. For example, how does emotion regulation during travel affect tourists' short- and long-term mental health, well-being, and responsible consumption behaviour? What's the role of interpersonal emotion-regulation in building sustainable host-tourist relationship and family-friendly destinations? These questions of great significance for sustainable tourism development remain to be answered. Third, the results are based on a qualitative research paradigm, so experimental studies are encouraged to test the proposed impacts of various individual (e.g., personality traits), contextual/momentary (e.g., intensity of negative emotions), and social factors (e.g., the presence of strangers) on emotion-regulation-strategy choice; emotional and functional outcomes of emotion-regulation strategies; and interaction effects of personality traits with other contextual variables.

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