Not losing our collective face: social identity and Chinese tourists' reflections on uncivilised behaviour

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Abstract

The dramatic increase in the number of Chinese outbound tourists has sometimes generated negative media reports about their 'uncivilised' behaviour. The academic literature has only partially analysed such behaviour and its impacts on Chinese tourists in terms of their group identity. Building on the recognition of the interactive and interdependent nature of social identification, the study examines Chinese tourists' reflections on and responses to the negative image projected on them by others. Using historical resources, a conceptual appraisal of the concept of face informs the empirical work. The researchers conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews to explore ways in which educated Chinese tourists acknowledged and rationalised the prevalent ascribed negative images. The study found that the fear of 'losing collective face' prompts Chinese tourists to adopt and promote civilised behaviour. Practical implications derived from the findings include specifying promotional themes about face and advice for individuals and groups to monitor each other. Limitations and future research directions were also discussed.

Keywords: social identity, Chinese tourist behaviour, reflection, *lian*, *mianzi,* collective face

1. Introduction

'All people from our country are brothers' – Confucius (551-478 B.C.)

In recent years, tensions have been identified between Chinese tourists and the communities they visit. Such tensions are due to increasing perceptions that these new waves of tourists often behave in uncivilised ways. The importance of the concept can be crystallised using the concept of mutual gaze (Maoz, 2006). The ideas here are that interacting parties tend to react to and sometimes take on the characteristics that others ascribe to them, especially if language and cultural differences prevent easy communication. With a rising concern about overtourism, friction rather than friendship will flow from a failure to understand the ways hosts and guests look at one another. The problem behaviours have been reported widely in the global media. For example, Pile (2017) named Chinese tourists the world's worst, saying, 'we're all familiar with the airport check-in-desk meltdowns, assaults on cabin crew, and vandalism at archaeological sites – not forgetting a propensity to urinate in public places. And who hasn't thrown a few coins into a jet engine for good luck?'

News articles often point out that the overall perception often rests on the behaviour of small numbers of Chinese tourists. Nevertheless, the actions of the few have been magnified into a well-recognised and negative nationality-based image. By 2006, the Chinese government had already recognised the projected negative images of Chinese tourists and became concerned about the wider impact on the image of the country. The Central Committee on Spiritual Civilization Construction and the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) jointly promulgated the *Guide to Civilized Behaviours of Outbound Chinese Tourists* (China.com.cn, 2006). The rapid growth in the numbers of Chinese outbound tourists exacerbates these earlier concerns about the perceived problem behaviours and indicates such guideline has not yet solved the problem. When typing 'tourists uncivilised behaviour' on Google news, most contemporary articles are related to either Chinese tourists' uncivilised acts or call for urgent measures (e.g. Xinhua, 2015). The potential scale of the problem is reinforced by the growth of outbound Chinese

tourists. In 2017, mainland Chinese made 130.51 million outbound trips, a 7.0% growth rate compared with 2016 (CTA & Ctrip, 2018).

In a broader sense, Chinese tourist behaviour has become a well-studied topic (Bao, Chen & Xin, 2018). Many of existing studies have addressed motivations and specific behaviours (such as shopping) to examine the way in which destinations can engage this profitable and growing market (e.g., Pearce, Wu & Osmond, 2013; Wang & Lau, 2001). The economic benefits of attracting Chinese tourists rather than associated growing negative perceptions have tended to dominate the literature, especially in studies published in English (e.g., Loi & Pearce, 2015; Tolkach, Pratt & Zeng, 2017). Without understanding the full impacts of Chinese outbound travel, both the academic understanding of the topic and smart management will be limited. As tourism is often discussed as an international hedonistic experience, inappropriate behaviour tends to occur abroad rather than at home (Chen, 2016; McKercher, 2015). Nevertheless, there are some challenges to this generic view. Tolkach et al. (2017) found that while 'Western tourists are more likely to engage in unethical behaviour on holiday rather than at home' (p.83), in Hong Kong, some mainland Chinese tourists seem to practice great degrees of restraint and self-control. This noticeable difference between Chinese and Western tourists indicates that although some other nationality groups' tourists have acquired similar negative connotations, studying the Chinese context may unearth different forces at work.

Given that uncivilised behaviour has been perceived as a salient group characteristic of Chinese tourists, questions can be asked concerning how individuals reflect on these imposed identities. This study applies the social identity concept to understand this reflective process. This concept is particularly useful to understand individuals' attitudes towards the self and others (Tajfel, 1979). The important role of social identity has been well-established in the domain of social psychology to understand intergroup relations and behaviour (Hornsey, 2008; Hogg, Abrams & Brewer, 2017). It explains individuals' self-image, which derives from the social categories to which they belong.

Social identity has already been used to inform various topics in tourism: host communities' identity (Chen, Hsu & Li, 2018; Palmer, Koening-Lewis & Jones, 2013; van Rekom & Go, 2006); tourists' behaviour in national heritage sites (Gielling & Ong,

2016); sport tourism and individuals' identity formulation (Fairley, 2003; Green & Jones, 2003; Shipway & Jones, 2007), and environmental behaviour change (Baca-Motes et al., 2013). Although the socially constructed group identity often involves continuous interactions between the self and others (Haslam, Reicher & Reynolds, 2012), previous studies have often focused on people' behaviours within a context that nurtures a sense of group. Hence, the current study argues that the sense of group is not only created through enhancing self-relevance connotations, but also interactions between self and others.

To situate this interactive and interdependent nature of the society-based identity in China, the concept of face is introduced. This linkage draws on the recent efforts of using the slogan 'do not lose face' in the Chinese media to remind citizens to behave well when they travel abroad (e.g. Xinhua, 2015). More importantly, as face describes the desire to generate a positive self-concept through interactions with others (Qi, 2011), linking face with social identity offers a pathway to interpret Chinese tourist behaviour. In this study the researchers embed the indigenous Chinese knowledge of self-concept (face) within the broader term social identity (Brown, 2000; Tajfel, 1982). Such identities are entangled in the social-constructedness of everyday travel experiences (Hollinshead, 1999). Drawing on the interlink between social identity and face, this study aims to understand the ways in which educated Chinese tourists reflect on the recent negative images about their "brothers". The findings are believed to be able to enhance our theoretical understanding of a significant international set of tourist behaviours and benefit future tourism policy-making and destination management.

2. Literature review

2.1 Social identity

Social identity has traditionally stressed salient group characteristics which promote intergroup differentiation (Brown, 2000; Hogg et al., 2017). An individual's self-concept builds heavily on social identity, which is best defined as the emotional and evaluative consequences of belonging to a specific, readily labelled group (Hornsey, 2008; Tajfel, 1982). The basic idea of social identity is that individuals have a fundamental need to belong to social groups. Further, in this system of understanding social life, society is viewed as a collection of different social groups (e.g., such as those specified by nationality, political affiliation, education, gender, work and leisure/sports). The sense of belonging to certain groups either consciously or unconsciously provides a pivotal reference in terms of key normative values (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995). Tajfel (1979) argues that although individuals might behave in distinctive ways, common intragroup behaviour connects individuals with the social structure in which they live. Hence, social identity concepts are particularly useful to understand collective behaviour in the global tourism context (e.g., Chen et al., 2018).

Social psychologists believe three interlinked components may contribute to one's social identity: a cognitive, an evaluative and an emotional component (Ellemers, Kortekaas & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Hogg et al., 2017; Hornsey, 2008; Tajfel, 1982). The cognitive component, in the sense of awareness of one's membership in a social group, highlights the individual's self-categorisation process. It depends on a basic understanding of the essential features characterising ingroups and outgroups (Ellemers, et al., 1999). Individuals often identify themselves as belonging to a social group in which their cognitive understanding of self or ideal self could also be fulfilled; hence, cultural symbols, which reach beyond the obvious physical ways of categorising groups, often provide an imagined community for group members (Anderson, 1991; Smith, 2009). For example, the Chinese often regard themselves as descendants of the dragon: a classification which generates a powerful and distinctive ethnic based identity of being Chinese.

Based on the understanding of cognitive characteristics of ingroups and outgoups, the evaluative component of the formulation links group awareness to select value

connotations attached to this group membership (Hornsey, 2008; Tajfel, 1982). Some perceived group features can regulate the individual's behaviour based on normative values associated with group membership (Hogg, et al., 1995). For example, loyalty to one's in-group may be expected even when the behaviours in question are not particularly desirable. The emphasis on evaluation indicates that members of a group are strongly motivated to adopt behavioural strategies for maintaining a positive ingroup identity compared to outgroups (Tanti, Stukas, Halloran & Foddy, 2011). As this comparison often aims to construct an ingroup superiority, positive self-esteem is often an outcome of being well integrated into a group (Haslam et al., 2012; Tajfel, 1982). To understand intergroup boundaries, social identity maintenance or enhancement is largely based on avoidance of losing self-esteem (Brown, 2000). As self-esteem is influenced by the perceived group status within the social structure, individuals actively attempt to manage their social environment to avoid or reduce any decrease in esteem (Ellemers et al., 1999; Tajfel, 1982). Further, since social identity is interactive and interdependent, the evaluative process is not only limited to intergroup comparisons but also drives the monitoring of intragroup conduct. For example, Zhang, L'Espoir Decosta and McKercher (2016) find that the threat of the superior Chinese identity of Hong Kong citizens has often motivated the city's tourism promotion to differentiate Hong Kong people as separate from the Chinese.

The third component in the social identity formulation consists of an emotional investment in the other two processes - awareness and evaluation (Tajfel, 1982). The cognitive process of understanding positive and negative value connotations of a group results in emotional commitment to a group (Hornsey, 2008). Individuals are emotionally committed to the selected groups as they search for a distinctive self-concept (Hogg et al., 2017). The emotional needs for similarities among ingroup members drives affective commitment to a group (Brewer, 1991). If people are strongly attached to a group, they are also emotionally invested to improve the group's status. One can think here of the value of being an alumnus of a prestigious University. By boosting the University image (perhaps through a generous donation) the individual and the group both benefit. This emotional component of social identity implies that as self-esteem and group esteem are

strongly associated, boundaries between self and the group are often blurred (Smith, 2009).

As social identity is fundamentally about continuous social interactions and its effects on social differentiation (Brown, 2000; Tajfel, 1982), it has been recognised as a useful theory to predict or influence collective behaviour (Baca-Motes et al., 2013; Hornsey, 2008). In the tourism sphere, nationality based social identity has always been employed as an important predictor of tourists' behaviour as well as being used to describe hosts' behaviour towards out-groups (Palmer, et al., 2013; Chen, et al., 2018; van Rekom & Go, 2006). Social identity comes from evaluative comparison between 'us' and 'others' (Haslam et al., 2012; Hogg et al., 2017). National identity based stereotypes influence destination interactions (e.g. Jaworski, Ylänne-McEwen, Thurlow & Lawson, 2003; Chen, Lai, Petrick & Lin, 2016). There is, though a necessary cautionary note An essential point is that it can be too simplistic to conceive of the interacting parties as occupying static positions (Palmer, et al., 2013); rather there is an evolving and developing process of mutual influence.

Intergroup interactions have often been prioritised in social identity research in tourism (e.g., Gielling & Ong, 2016; Green & Jones, 2006; van Rekom & Go, 2006). It is valuable though to underpin such studies with a comprehensive understanding of intragroup interactions (Tajfel,1979). In recognising the interactive aspects of social identity, a key topic to study in more detail lies in the ways tourists respond to the behaviours ascribed to members of their own group. We do not yet understand how tourists evaluate the importance of belonging to a group and its internal evaluations compared to the impact of the way outsiders view them. The gap in the existing analysis presents an opportunity for the current research effort.

2.2 Concept of face, identity and tourist behaviour

In response to the call for indigenous tourism knowledge, and to de-link work from Western epistemologies (Tucker & Zhang, 2016), this study specifically situates the discussion of social identity and tourist interactions within the Chinese concept of face. Face is 'the social anchoring of self in the gaze of others' (Qi, 2011, p.280) and focuses on intergroup behaviour based on perceptions and interactions with the self and others

(Ho, 1976). Face is commonly recognised as one of the most salient social characteristics of being Chinese and is an important socially shared concept to normalise Chinese behaviour (Lin, 1976). The inclusion of face in this study ensures that the social identity aspects of self-concepts and group collectivity are considered (Spencer-Oatey, 2007). As social identity is based on the simple motivational assumption of individuals preferring a positive to a negative self-image (Tajfel, 1979), the concept of face is arguably a self-reflective assessment of interactions. The face concept therefore ties the interest in Chinese tourists' reactions to the assessment of others to the social identity literature.

While both *mianzi (面子)* and *lian (脸)* often translate as face in English, these two phrases have some fundamental differences. According to Hu (1944), *mianzi* is strongly associated with reputation and recognised achievement, and this kind of earned recognition relies substantially on interactions with others. *Lian* is a fundamental virtue of fulfilling obligation and being a decent human being. Both *mianzi* and *lian* are strongly associated with the Confucian ethical system of propriety and virtue (in Chinese: 礼，德 in pinyin *li, de*). Confucius said '不知礼，无以立' (in pinyin: *bu zhi li*, *wu yi li*. In English translation, without knowing the principle of propriety, a man cannot be a man). Within a highly hierarchical society, individuals in different social positions should be aware of their identity and its associated propriety. Achieving an individual ideal identity in the Confucian system is done often through a reflective process between the self and others. When a person maintains his/her *lian* and maximises his/her *mianzi*, moral power (virtue) is eventually gained through others' recognition of his/her achievement (Cheng, 1986, Qi, 2011). Hence, *lian* is the basic dignity and moral reputation that one has. It is a more limited and narrower concept than *mianzi* (Hu, 1944; Liu & Jin, 2011).

The concept of face has also been used in understanding individual's social value and status in non-Chinese contexts. One notable example potentially familiar to many Western scholars exists in the work of Goffman (1955). In his work on the presentation of self in everyday life, Goffman attends carefully to the ways in which social observers influence the sense of appropriate behaviour of the individual. Goffman's conceptualisation of face, however, has a clear assumption of Americans being an independent self within social interactions. Here, interactions between *li* and *mianzi* remain at an individual level. Hwang (1997) utilises the term 'interdependent self' to

differentiate Chinese ways of thinking from the independent self in Western conceptualisation. This recognition of an individual's identity embedded within its social structure differentiates the oriental concepts from Western counterparts (Liu & Jin, 2011).

The collective face of a social group is not simply a summing up of individual faces within a group, but the total social identity of such a group. For the present interests and context, the collective face is neatly characterised by the phrase 'us Chinese' (Spencer-Oatey, 2007). 'Gaining' or 'losing' group face becomes an important judgement of the appropriateness of individuals' behaviour within a social group (Ho, 1976). It is commonly agreed that gaining face primarily focuses on *mianzi* as exemplary conduct adds not to one's *lian* but to one's *mianzi*. Also, as *lian* is one's basic dignity, its loss is a disgrace in the eyes of others or oneself; one can afford to lose *mianzi,* but one cannot afford to lose *lian* (Cheng, 1989; Liu & Jin, 2011). Losing *lian* represents the loss of basic social respectability; a serious deficit in a society governed by strict rules of propriety (Ho, 1976). Jin (2002) argues that the notion of shame which accompanies losing face influences all Chinese behaviour. It is the desire to protect face that motivates individuals to behave according to the social norm (Chen, 2006). Ellemers, Doosje & Spears (2004) and Qi (2011) find that feeling ashamed is often magnified more by outgroup perceptions rather than ingroup appraisals. In summary, it is desirable to see the value of face in the Chinese tradition as involving collectively supportive behaviours; that is, by protecting the face of others especially when appraised by the outgroup, individuals protect their own face. These perspectives will be re-examined in interpreting the empirical work in this study.

Despite the significant role that face plays in understanding interpersonal and intergroup behaviour, the association between face and tourism has been insufficiently charted in English and Chinese academic research. Within the limited face research in tourism (e.g., Gao, Huang, Brown, 2017; Pan, 2003; Zhang & Bai, 2015), *mianzi* rather than *lian* has often become the focus. Many studies have regarded face, especially *mianzi*, as an important element to understand Chinese tourists' consumption behaviour (Hsu & Huang, 2016; Gao et al., 2017). Other studies have tried to understand the role of *mianzi* in interpersonal relationship development in China (Pan, 2003). The existing studies have often overlooked the roles that face, especially *lian*, plays in understanding Chinese

tourists' reflective understanding of the recent negative images. Although a recent quantitative article by Chinese researchers argues that the protection of one' face has an impact on civilised behaviour of tourists (Zhang & Bai, 2015), the absence of the connection between self-concept (face) and social identity means that the study's findings remain at the individual identity level. The present work adopts a more integrative view and explores the tourists' reflections on the negative images projected on them by host communities. The approach is consistent with the individual's social-constructedness of everyday travel experiences (Hollinshead, 1999).

2.3 Encouraging civilised behaviour of Chinese outbound tourists

Since the *Action Plan to Promote the Civilised Qualities of Chinese Tourists* was jointly promulgated by the Central Civilization Office and CNTA in 2006, there has been increasing scholarly interest in both the civilised and uncivilised behaviour of outbound Chinese tourists. In particular, this topic has been a major theme of interest in studies published in Chinese. Although the current studies have not used social identity to understand such behaviours, they have in fact implicitly referred to the three components within social identification: cognition, evaluation and emotion (Tajfel,1982). Several studies have summarised the types and/or manifestations of uncivilised behaviour among Chinese outbound tourists (e.g., Chen, et al., 2018; Liu, 2007; Loi & Pearce, 2015; Tolkach, et al., 2017). Common uncivilised behaviours include: talking loudly, spitting in public, littering, jumping queues, and being unhygienic in toilets. Such uncivilised behaviours have become salient cognitive characteristics to define the Chinese tourists and Chinese in general.

A second group of studies have summarised the reasons why such behaviours occur: cultural differences (e.g., Liu, 2007), a lack of public spirit (e.g., Liu, 2007; Tolkach et al., 2017), lack of civic education (e.g., Xu & Pan, 2016), and the absence of legislation and regulation (Chen, 2016). Based on the understanding of the cognitive characteristics of Chinese tourists, the second group of studies select educational level as the pivotal characteristic influencing desirable and less desirable behaviour (e.g., Tolkach et al., 2017; Xu & Pan, 2016). A growing number of researchers have offered solutions to promote behaviour among Chinese outbound tourists. The suggested measures are mostly

centred on strengthening civic education and tourism practitioner training (e.g., Xu & Pan, 2016), and at the same time promoting legislation and regulation by governmental agencies to control these kinds of actions (e.g., Qi, Jiao, & Yang, 2009).

The core points of our present concern can be summarised as follows. The select behaviour of some Chinese tourists has potentially downgraded the status of all Chinese (e.g. Wu & Zhou, 2016). Numerous Chinese news articles have used the slogan 'do not lose face of our motherland when you travel aboard' (e.g. Xinhua, 2015). This injunction has tried to arouse emotional responses to encourage in-group civilised behaviour. The tactic relies on outgroup perceptions generating an in-group sense of shame (Ellemers, et al., 2004). Previous studies have recognised the seriousness of the topic and its relevance to all Chinese. A more in-depth study is needed to understand the deep psychological meaning for the Chinese of belonging to the group and how these meanings determine the collective behaviours when travelling aboard. Through linking the social identity theory and the concept of face, the current study addresses the interactive nature of social identity, and ensures that both self-concepts and group collectivities are considered (Spencer-Oatey, 2007). Through adopting an integrative view (i.e., marrying the Western concept of social identity with the indigenous Chinese concept of face), the research seeks to examine Chinese tourists' reflections on the negative image projected on them. Further, the research attempts to draw out the dominant themes which underpin this reflection on the social identity of Chinese citizens.

3. Research Methods

Researchers studying cross cultural interactions have often criticised 'Anglo-Western centric' epistemology and allied methodologies (McKercher, 2018; Tucker & Zhang, 2016). To avoid being trapped by Western epistemology, the present study employs the Chinese indigenous concept of face to understand social identity and reactions to uncivilised behaviour. By employing an interpretivist paradigm and acknowledging the interdependent nature of being Chinese, the study adopts a relativist ontology and argues that realities are socially-constructed in the Chinese outbound tourism context. An exploratory qualitative approach was adopted to collect the data through semi-structured in-depth interviews. This approach enabled the researchers to explore the topic broadly but with some structure to ensure that the interview questions were relevant to the research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The interview protocol consisted of two main sections: participants' socio-demographics and their reflective understandings of being an outbound Chinese tourist. The interview questions were designed around three components of social identity (cognitive, evaluative and emotional). The term face was not used explicitly in the interview format. Instead, the idea of face often emerged through participants' own conceptualisation of intergroup and intragroup interactions in the outbound Chinese tourism context. More specifically, the interview questions were designed around the following themes: 1) self-awareness and conceptualisation of belonging to the Chinese outbound tourist group; 2) positive and negative reflections on intergroup and intragroup interactions aboard; 3) emotional reactions and justification of their outbound travel attitudes and behaviour; and 4) understanding of the participants' own role in outbound travel behaviour. Before the data collection, the interview questions were translated from English to Chinese. They were then cross-checked by two of the Chinese authors to ensure that questions were understandable and reflected the researchers' aims.

Face related studies have often concluded that those who are in a higher social position (e.g., due to education) are more likely to care about their face (Bai & Zhang, 2015; Hwang, 1997). Additionally, educational background has been considered an important defining factor in explaining the causes of uncivilised behaviour (e.g., Chen, 2016; Xu & Pan, 2016) and plays an important role in determining Chinese tourists' civilised behaviour (e.g., Yang, Tian & Chang, 2015). We therefore used theoretical sampling to target well-educated (at least with a junior college degree) tourists who had travelled to a foreign country (excluding Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Taiwan) for pleasure purposes in the past two years.. With the primary

theoretical objective of linking face and social identity, theoretical sampling focuses on the likelihood of providing theoretically relevant results; data coding and selection of the sample are often done simultaneously to provide heterogeneous and rich cases (Coyne, 1997).

A total of 25 interviews were conducted between February and March 2018. The first, 12 interviews were conducted by four China-born research assistants, who conducted the face-to-face interviews while spending Chinese new year at home in February. Chinese authors in the research team analysed this primary interview data and recruited another 13 participants while conducting the analysis of the data (Coyne, 1997). Interviews were conducted by both Chinese authors through face to face Skype interviews. To achieve a heterogeneous theoretical sample, different social-demographic characteristics and levels of travel experience were considered. The researchers terminated the data collection when it was apparent that the information being gathered was highly repetitive; effectively when the material being assembled had reached the point of saturation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Jennings, 2005). All of the interviews were conducted in Mandarin. The average duration of the interviews was 40 minutes. Table 1 gives details of the participants.

Table 1. Profile of Research Participants.

No.	Age	Gender	Usual place of residence	Occupation	Educational level	Travel frequency	Household monthly income (Yuan; RMB)	Stratum by household monthly income*
P1	63	Female	Kunming	Retired doctor	Master	1 or 2 times a year	20,000-29,999	Upper Middle Class to Affluent Class
P2	34	Female	Ningbo	Freelance	Master	Very frequently	50,000-59,999	Affluent Class
P3	30	Female	Kunming	Primary school teacher	Undergraduate	1 or 2 times a year	10,000-19,999	Middle Class to Upper Middle Class
P4	32	Male	Tianjing	Analyst	Doctoral	2 times a year	30,000-39,999	Affluent Class
P5	67	Male	Guizhou	Retired civil servant	Undergraduate	1 time a year	10,000-19,999	Middle Class to Upper Middle Class
P6	30	Female	Shenzhen	Consultant	Master	2 times a year	30,000-39,999	Affluent Class
P7	31	Female	Hangzhou	English teacher	Master	Very frequently	More than 100,000	Middle Class
P8	33	Female	Shanghai	Family business	Master	Very frequently	More than 100,000	Middle Class
P9	50	Male	Shanghai	Doctor	Undergraduate	2 times a year	70,000-79,000	Affluent Class
P10	40	Male	Beijing	Photographer	Master	Very frequently	30,000-39,999	Affluent Class
P11	22	Female	Beijing	Student	Undergraduate student	Only once	10,000-19,999	Middle Class to Upper Middle Class
P12	31	Female	Harbin	Sales	Junior College	Very frequently	10,000-19,999	Middle Class to Upper Middle Class
P13	23	Male	Yantai	Student	Undergraduate student	Only once	20,000-29,999	Upper Middle Class to Affluent Class
P14	37	Male	Hangzhou	Finance	Undergraduate	Only once	20,000-29,999	Upper Middle Class to Affluent Class
P15	47	Female	Jilin	Finance	Junior College	Occasionally	10,000-19,999	Middle Class to Upper Middle Class
P16	55	Male	Yizhou	Firm staff	Junior College	Occasionally	10,000-19,999	Middle Class to Upper Middle Class
P17	22	Female	Chongqing	Student	Undergraduate student	Only once	10,000-19,999	Middle Class to Upper Middle Class
P18	22	Female	Chengdu	Unemployed	Undergraduate	Only once	10,000-19,999	Middle Class to Upper Middle Class
P19	23	Male	Guangzhou	Student	Master student	Occasionally	10,000-19,999	Middle Class to Upper Middle Class
P20	35	Male	Guangzhou	University teacher	Master	1 time a year	20,000-29,999	Upper Middle Class to Affluent Class
P21	29	Female	Ningbo	Administrative staff	Undergraduate	Occasionally	20,000-29,999	Upper Middle Class to Affluent Class
P22	28	Female	Taiyuan	Consultant	Master	1 or 2 times a year	30,000-39,999	Affluent Class
P23	27	Male	Shanghai	Project manager	Master	Occasionally	30,000-39,999	Affluent Class
P24	28	Female	Shenzhen	Primary school teacher	Master	Occasionally	20,000-29,999	Upper Middle Class to Affluent Class
P25	45	Male	Shenzhen	Architect	Undergraduate	Very frequently	More than 100,000	Middle Class

* According to China Industrial Information (2018), by monthly income, households in China are classified into *Low Income Class* (below 5200 Yuan), *Emergent Middle Class* (5200-8300 Yuan), *Middle Class* (8300-12500 Yuan), *Upper Middle Class* (8300-24000 Yuan), and *Affluent Class* (above 24000 Yuan)

As revealed in Table 1, the sample was heterogeneous in terms of participants' outbound travel experiences, age, gender, geographic location, professional background, and household income. As noted previously, it is a purposeful feature of the present study design that participants had relatively high levels of educational attainment and the data indicate that this was achieved in the selection of the participants. In Table 2, the age and gender characteristics of the participants in the current study are noted and are very similar to those of the Chinese outbound tourists in a report recently published by the China Tourism Academy and Ctrip (CTA & Ctrip, 2018; see Table 2). In addition, most (72%) of the participants were from cities that are among the top 20 outbound markets (e.g., Shanghai, Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Hangzhou, Tianjin, Chongqing, Kunming, and Harbin) in terms of the number of outbound Chinese tourists.

Table 2. Age and gender information of participants in the current study and CTA and Ctrip (2018).

		The current study (%)	CTA & Ctrip, 2018 (%)
Age	Born in the 1990s/2000s	24	28
	Born in the 1980s	48	31
	Born in the 1970s	12	17
	Born in the 1950s/1960s	16	24
Gender	Female	56	59
	Male	44	41

The interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants. They were then transcribed verbatim in Chinese for further data analysis. Following the suggestions of Decrop (1999), portions of the transcripts were cross-checked among the authors and research assistants to ensure accuracy in the transcription process. Subsequently, the data from the interviews were analysed following a qualitative inductive approach, which requires in-depth exploration of the data over a not particularly large sample (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As in a previous study (Smith, Chen, & Liu, 2008), the researchers considered the text in the original language, Chinese. Following the grounded theory methodology procedures suggested by Strauss (1987), all of the transcribed interviews were analysed inductively in three steps: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Specifically, line-by-line coding (open coding) of the data was first conducted by the authors, who read through the transcriptions multiple times in order to reveal the key ideas. The data were later aggregated into higher order concepts through categorising and selecting recurring themes in the codes (axial coding and selective coding). The highest-level core categories and major themes were eventually identified, thus helping the authors specify the themes characterising outbound Chinese tourists' reflective efforts.

Qualitative studies have traditionally been questioned for their dependence on subjective judgements (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). To enhance the credibility, dependability and objectivity of the study, the data analysis was first conducted independently and then cross-checked by the two Chinese authors; one is a Chinese national who has lived abroad for over seven years and who can therefore be considered as both an 'insider' and an 'outsider' based on the restricted definition of being an outbound Chinese tourist. Another Mandarin speaking researcher is a Chinese national who has resided in China for more than 30 years. The non- Mandarin speaker author assessed the adequacy of the category labels for their ability to communicate clear findings in English. Concerns about subjectivity were addressed by recognising the different theoretical sensitivities of the authors, from complete 'insider' and 'outsider' during the coding verification stage (Strauss, 1987). Hence, the identified themes were confirmed through consensus after comparative analyses had been undertaken by the authors.

4. Findings

Data collected did offer an overview of Chinese tourists' reflections on the negative image projected on them by others. Three identified themes are strongly associated with three interlinked components of social identity (cognitive, evaluative and emotional). In this coding the three elements to be considered are: knowing and being involving self-differentiation; rationalisation of the uncivilised behaviour of others and the self; and feeling ashamed and face protection as it relates to general civilised behaviour.

4.1 Knowing and being: self-differentiation

The cognitive perceptions and classifications used by the Chinese tourists to position themselves are presented in Table 3. Key impressions expressed by the group were linked both to the growing number of outbound Chinese tourists and their associated uncivilised behaviour, which included: talking loudly, littering everywhere, jumping the queue, being shopaholics, being unhygienic and showing no respect for the local culture (e.g., Chen et al., 2018; Loi & Pearce, 2015). Such behaviours were denounced by the participants, who often differentiated themselves from such actions using such factors as their educational level, tourism interests and their own conduct in destinations (cf. Tajfel, 1982). This self-differentiation behaviour within a social group implies that social identity is a self-selected process. It reinforces the view that individuals purposefully create sub-groups within in-groups to differentiate themselves from those who are negatively perceived by others (Brown, 2000; Hogg et al., 2017)

Table 3. Cognitive perceptions of Chinese tourists towards the group and self

Cognitive classification about the group	Paticipants No.	Self-categorisation
Age:Younger versus older	P2, P3, P4, P6, P10, P14, P17, P19, P22, P23, P24	Young & civilised
	P20	Backpacking & non-hedonistic
Behaviour: Civilised versus uncivilised groups	P1, P5, P15	Civilised
Consumerism: Shopaholic & uncivilised versus nature/culture interests	P11, P13, P16	Non-shopaholic & culturally oriented
	P18	Non-shopaholic & civilised
Tour type: Basic package tour, high end tour & individual travel	P7, P8, P9, P25	High-end & civilised individual traveller
	P21	Civilised individual traveller
Tourist skills: Unsophisticated versus civilised & friendly tourist role	P12	Culturally oriented & civilised

As shown in Table 3, while most of the participants recognised the numerical increases in Chinese tourists abroad and their varying demographic profiles, several of the younger participants tended to divide the outbound Chinese group into two distinctive groups, younger and older people, as follows:

> P2: *Older people should be more careful about their behaviour when they travel abroad…I am a well-mannered Chinese outbound tourist.*

> P14: *We have time and money now. Younger people who are educated will behave in more civilised ways, they will pay attention not to litter everywhere.*

As shown in the quotations, individuals tended to view their sub-ingroup (young tourists) as superior to the sub-outgroup (the older tourists). The well-known negative images with the sub-outgroup are used as a point of contrast to gain self-esteem as a civilised traveller through intragroup comparison (Hogg et al., 2017; Tajfel, 1982). Additionally, while tourism is all about hedonism (McKercher, 2015), the occasional participant (P20) differentiated himself from this intrinsic nature of tourism and associated his meticulously civilised behaviour with his relatively lower travel budget.

Unlike the first cognitive perception, some participants divided the outbound Chinese group into civilised and uncivilised groups (see Table 3), as shown below:

> P1: *We have a chance to see the outside world now. Some people do not have a very good sense of personal hygiene and always let their rubbish fly everywhere…I am an educated, civilised Chinese tourist, who tries to protect the image of my country abroad.*

The relatively older participants often immediately mentioned the uncivilised behaviour of Chinese tourists abroad when asked to describe the group. Those individuals often used their educated background to differentiate their identities from those people with uncivilised behaviour. P5 added '*China is a country of ceremonies, we need to show this when we travel abroad'.* It is argued that the relatively older generation often notice that some uncivilised images are projected towards their age cohort. Hence, they differentiate themselves not only from those uncivilised Chinese tourists in general but also from older people who are uncivilised. Cognitive understanding of intragroup conduct and perceived subgroup images guide such categorisation (Tajfel, 1979).

With the increasing economic power of China, some participants tended to associate Chinese tourists' uncivilised behaviour with the devotion to shopping, as follows:

> P16: *When I was in Cheju Island, I saw so many buses with Chinese tourists who had purchased numerous rice cookers. Those upstarts* (in Chinese Pinyin: 'Baofahu', a derogatory term to describe the newly-rich) *are everywhere in duty free shops. They talk very loudly as no-one is around them. When they see a thing, they want to have it. Like a group of locusts……they are not there to enjoy the cultural and natural beauty of the island.*

> P11: *I think Chinese tourists are addicted to shopping……I am not addicted to shopping especially those luxury brands. I am more interested in purchasing local souvenirs.*

As culture and nature oriented motives are perceived as morally superior for Chinese tourists, most of the participants, in common with P11 and P16, use this kind of description to differentiate themselves from shopping tourists who were perceived as often having a shallow experience of destinations (Hsu & Huang, 2016). As shown in the quotation, the metaphor '*locust*' is often used as a derogatory word to describe Chinese tourists in the international media. The respondent P16 borrowed this phrase to describe the frenetic shopping experience of some Chinese tourists and their associated uncivilised behaviour. Chen et al. (2018) found that the shopping behaviour of mainland Chinese travellers in Hong Kong often encourages Hong Kong residents to differentiate themselves and feel superior to Chinese tourists. This reflective comparison between the self and others in the same social group serves the purpose of constructing intragroup superiority to establish self-esteem (Haslam et al., 2012).

Those who had a relatively higher monthly household income provided a fourth set of cognitive impressions (see Table 1 & Table 3). Such study participants tended to use their economic position to separate themselves as a social group from those who bought package tours.

> P8: *Those who travel with a package tour often create a mess behind them. They have no experience abroad. ...Individual travellers or those booking a tailor-made tour often have a better manner. They require quality travel, explore the niches and enjoy interesting things.*

> P25: *They are too loud. I was in the Louvre for a week. After 1 or 2 days I noticed the high and low peak times in the museum so I often went at the low peak time when the Chinese package tourists were not everywhere in front of my camera…but not all Chinese tourists behave this way, individual travellers are much better.*

It is instructive to observe that although those individuals who have a relatively high income often mentioned purchasing some luxury branded products when they travelled abroad, they never used shopping behaviour to categorise themselves. P7 explained, '*we*

are not upstarts, blind shopping everything famous, I have my taste and I purchase niche brands not LV'. In comparison with P16's statement above, the phrases reveal that individuals often try to avoid negative cognitive perceptions of their sub-ingroup. Hence, they often chose a salient group characteristic (basic package tour, high end tour & individual travel) that completely prevents them from being viewed negatively when participating in other behaviours such as shopping. Intragroup differentiations guide their travel behaviour and self-concept (Tajfel, 1979). Additionally, although P12 did acknowledge some minor negative behaviour of Chinese tourists, her attitudes towards the group's identity were very positive. She also differentiated herself as a more culturally oriented tourist compared to other people on the same package tours. These findings indicate that the cognitive component and evaluative comparison between the self and the intergroup motivates individuals to create a sub-ingroup identity that distances them from the perceived negative images. The following section examines in more detail the reflections behind such self-differentiation.

4.2 Rationalisation of uncivilised behaviour of others and the self

Social identity is self-selected, and individuals have the flexibility to choose one identity over another to enhance their self-esteem (Ellemers et al.,1999). While nearly all the participants expressed different degrees of disapproval towards uncivilised tourists, the social identity of being a Chinese outbound tourist was itself perceived as permanent. For example, P4 said, '*even though I do not behave that way, I am Chinese, and those images will influence my identity abroad*.' While individuals differentiated themselves from the perceptions of the masses, such perceptions of an unchangeable social identity often motivated them to rationalise the uncivilised behaviour. Such rationalisation could also be understood as a way to protect socially constructed self-esteem (Hogg et al., 2017).

Social identity is fundamentally about intergroup differentiation (Brown, 2000). Twenty out of 25 participants tended to compare ingroup uncivilised behaviour to the outgroup and concluded that the uncivilised behaviour was in fact universal behaviour for tourists, as shown below:

P11: *People are different not because of their nationalities. You get uncivilised Americans as well. China has the world's largest population; a quarter of the world's population are Chinese. So with the same ratio, we will have one quarter of the world's uncivilised people. It is simply because we have more people.*

P20: *When I was abroad, I saw that Western tourists are so loud. They also cross the street when the red light is on. In every country, you will have some people with good manners, and some without. It is a universal phenomenon.*

P7: *The Korea aunts and uncles groups are as loud as the Chinese, sometimes even worse.*

Although outgroup tourists (e.g., Western tourists or Korean tourists) tend to be perceived with relatively positive images, the Chinese outbound tourists used direct observations to conclude that incivility is not limited to the Chinese but is a global phenomenon. Some travellers tended to rationalise foreigners' behaviour, for example P5: 'I *asked my son, why are those Westerners so loud in a beach restaurant in Barcelona? My son told me Westerners advocate freedom and self-expression'.* It is apparent that loud Westerners and loud Chinese are not seen equally negatively in the global mindset of evaluating tourists. It is interesting to find that intergroup evaluation and observation of non-Chinese tourists did not motivate Chinese tourists to behave the same way as Western tourists. Rather, residual feelings of inferiority among some Chinese appear to be motivating them to rationalise Western tourists' inappropriate behaviour. Such concerns about inferiority can still play a role in social interactions abroad for Chinese (Hogg et al., 1995)

More importantly, nearly all tourists believe that the widely recognised uncivilised behaviour of the Chinese are derived from exaggerated perceptions of a few cases and they often seek to pardon their "brothers".

P8: *I understand them. Those people who take package tours, they do not speak English. They have never been abroad or have limited experience. What they did in fact is normal in China, especially in rural areas.*

P15: *I think the manners of Chinese people has improved. Sometimes, it is just not convenient for you to find a rubbish bin or you simply have no knowledge about a foreign place and their standards.*

P21: *In term of manners, we have much room to improve. It takes time. Although we do negative things, I think the Western media always belittle us. You feel that if anything small happens, they will find a chance to magnify it and claim that all Chinese are like that. If you are tired on the underground, you sit on the floor or squat; they will take a picture and post it online, claiming the Chinese have no manners. I've seen many Western people do that as well. Nobody cares about taking a picture. In rural villages, sitting on the floor and squatting is a habit. We just have different habits. I think it's all about race discrimination.*

The above quotations not only show the reasons behind uncivilised behaviour, but also depicts the psychological process of treating those with such behaviour as part of 'us' in a large social group: China (Tajfel, 1982). These ideas are central to the finding of this research that there is a collective protection of identity operating in some of the views of the educated Chinese tourists studied. In adopting this view, some participants thought that extreme comments from the outgroup on the Chinese tourists as an ingroup could be understand as '*discrimination*' (Brown, 2000). Additionally, having a positive view on the future improvement of the behaviour (e.g., P15 & P21) can often strengthen individuals' self-concept of the social identity (Smith, 2009). It is also noticeable that cultural differences were utilised to rationalise the behaviour as cultural rather than personal or social. This reflective process of rationalising those uncivilised behaviour of intragroup members is needed for protecting the social image of the self and the group. This interdependent interaction between self-concept and social collectivity very much illustrates the concept of face as discussed earlier in this paper (Spencer-Oatey, 2007).

The following section pursues the interaction of the self-concept and social identification to further clarify the role that face plays in Chinese outbound tourists' civilised behaviour.

4.3 Feeling ashamed and face protection: general civilised behaviour

Findings reported in the previous two sections indicated that as they become aware of the negative group image, individuals differentiate themselves from this undesirable ingroup behaviour. They also find ways to justify this differentiation. This section argues that both differentiation and rationalisation are influenced by the concept of face (cf. Hogg et al., 2017). As noted previously, face as self-image is recognised as an important socially shared concept to normalise Chinese behaviour based on the gaze directed at the individual by others (Lin, 1976; Qi, 2011). Losing face, especially losing *lian,* was mentioned by all of the participants, who used the words '*ashamed*', '*self-condemned*', and '*embarrassed*' to further express their affective response towards the uncivilised behaviour of Chinese tourists (Jin, 2006). The following section explains how losing face (both *lian* and *mianzi*) normalises civilised behaviour abroad.

As noted earlier, *Lian* is the basic dignity of an individual or a group. The majority of the participants felt that losing *lian* abroad was shameful and more serious because of the negative images coming from the outgoup (Ellemers, et al., 2004; Qi, 2011), P19 expressed the view that, '*I think we should report this issue more inside China, so our fellows pay more attention. If they lose face among family and friends, they will notice more. I do not like Western media to do the same*.' This shows that face can be very personal and that protecting the face of the self and the ingroup plays an important role in social behaviour (Spencer-Oatey, 2007). The following quotations illustrate how this individual behaviour is related to losing face in China as a social group:

> P3: *Those uncivilised behaviours abroad mean losing the face (lian) of China. Foreigners will not care which Chinese cities you're from. They know you are from China.*

> P13: *I feel ashamed and lose face (lian). I am also shocked about their behaviour…Because I think when you are abroad, you are not representing*

yourself but representing your country. Foreigners will understand the world through observing you. You are a name card. If you smudge your card, they will change their views on everyone in your country.

Individuals typically prefer a positive image to a negative one (Tajfel, 1979); the distressing feeling of losing one's dignity (*lian*) provides a powerful stimulus to avoid such losses. Eight participants (P1, P3, P5, P8, P9, P12, P20, and P25) shared their experiences of negative interactions with host communities and explained how losing the face of your group can have consequences for other tourists. For example, P3 said, '*I was in a leather bag shop. When I entered the shop, the sales assistant immediately ran to me, not smiling, but shouting 'don't touch!'' But she did not do this with Western tourists.*' Many of the participants felt that with the well-known negative Chinese images prevailing in host communities, they often feel embarrassed instead of angry about such inappropriate behaviour by service providers. P9 explained, '*when you're standing in the queue, some people think you are going to jump the queue. You will be more careful about your personal behaviour.*' While the perceived negative images might immediately influence an individuals' behaviour, it is the actual reflection that stimulates the emotionally important and enduring feelings and shapes identity.

Additionally, as *lian* is one's moral reputation (Hu, 1944), manners and civilised behaviour are extremely important for one's *lian*, and the perception of losing *lian* is regarded as disgraceful behaviour in the eyes of not only others but also the self (Cheng, 1989). P15 used herself as an example to illustrate her minor uncivilised behaviour:

I was in Singapore. It was too hot and humid. I had a small water bottle in my hand that I had held so long without seeing a rubbish bin and I had too many things in my hand. I looked around, nobody was looking at me. So I threw it in round the back of a tree. After a while I felt condemned. If anyone saw me, I would lose my face.

The sentence '*nobody was looking at me*' highlights that losing face is a reflection on the predicted contempt in the eyes of others (Hu, 1944). Here, P15 mentioned she was

afraid, not just that she would be seen by local residents in Singapore, but also by people on the same package tour. *Lian* is a more basic concept compared with *mianzi,* when *lian* is lost in the eyes of others, reputation (*mianzi*) is also diminished as in the Chinese minds they are interdependent (Hwang, 1997; Qi 2011). *Mianzi* is often viewed as important for intragroup relations (Cheng, 1986). For example, P6 said

> '*I always told my mum we should not do things here and there. When she goes on a package tour, everyone thinks she has good manners and knows a lot. She is quite happy… when I'm back home, I will be more aware of my manners in China. My friends also ask me questions before they travel abroad.*'

Having good manners and associated *mianzi* from ingroup members back home and during vacations seems to motivate individuals to behave in a more civilised way. Participants also mentioned that tour guides reminded them about inappropriate behaviour in areas where people are more aware of those ingroup behaviour, as individual do not want to lose *mianzi* and *lian* on their package tour.

For younger individual travellers, the phrase '*collective supervision*' was utilised to ensure that all members within the small group behaved appropriately. As P12 said, '*we will remind each other and make sure everyone is behaving appropriately when we travel abroad.*' However, when asking whether participants would stop any inappropriate behaviour of other Chinese, all of them said no. For example, P1 said '*I am not the police. If I do not know them, I won't see anything, maybe walk away.*' Hence, supervision of any intragroup misbehaviour is more relevant for smaller in groups, where their behaviours might cause the loss of individual's face.

Twenty out of 25 participants expressed the view that they changed their behaviour and became more careful when abroad. Those participants that did not mention this change of behaviour said that they were already doing well abroad and at home. P10 provided an example:

> *I remember seeing news about eating on the underground. When you are in Beijing, you're always in a rush and you will eat in the taxi, car and underground.*

But I never did that when I travelled abroad. You do not want your inappropriate behaviour to influence their normal life.

Many participants felt that even though they were very experienced travellers, a well-planned trip could assist their understanding of appropriate behaviour. Behaving appropriately in a foreign culture was often conceptualised by participants as a way of making sure their travel experience did not disturb others' life. P2 explained that, '*I will feel embarrassed if people think I behave inappropriately*'. The remarks indicate the self-consciousness of face (Qi, 2011). Even if they did misunderstand information and instructions many of the young participants took measures to accommodate any possibility of losing face, as explained by P23:

My English is not good. Chinese English. I'm always afraid if I pronounce words incorrectly, they may be offensive. If I do, I will immediately apologise for my behaviour and my English. If I keep saying sorry, I think it will solve the issue. I need to apologise because it is my mistake.

Because of the widely disseminated image of Chinese outbound tourists, the majority of the tourists felt that they would normally take the blame for any problems. P20 mentioned

The restaurant waitress brought the wrong food for us. I told her. She said sorry first. Thank god. I do not want to her to think that I want to take advantage and not pay for this. You know you will always reflect and think it was your own fault first.

Such remarks reveal the role that face plays in individuals' reflections on the perceived negative image of Chinese tourists. Many remarks demonstrate how individuals justify their behaviour and indeed call for a more civilised behaviour pattern for their social group. The emotional response and the fear of losing face motivate some individuals to make carful behavioural choices. Face is 'the social anchoring of self in the gaze of

others' (Qi, 2011, p. 280). As face is important in motivating civilised behaviours, it is the negotiations between gaze of others (both intergroup and intragroup) and self-concept are essential here.

5. Discussions

Tourist behaviour is affected by the interactions between self and social identity. Chinese tourists have an 'interdependent self'; a view of themselves in the world which is constructed in part by how others react to their faux pas (Haslam et al., 2012). Through employing a relativist ontology, this exploratory qualitative study linked to social identity theory contributes to a more theoretically and practically rich understanding of tourists' reflection on projected identities and associated behaviour.

5.1 Theoretical implications

The finding of this paper provides empirical results for a conceptual framework that describes the links between social identity and self-concept (see Figure 1).
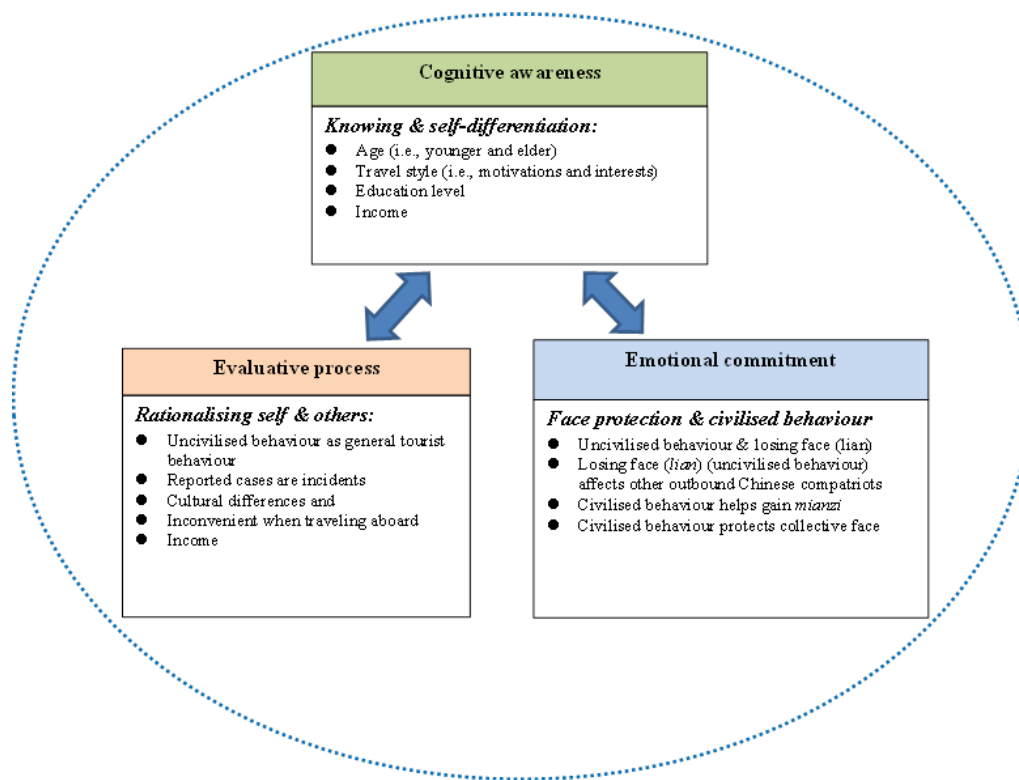
(Please insert Figure 1 here)

Figure 1: Social identity and behaviour change through face

Through marrying the powerful Western concept of social identity with an indigenous epistemology built on the facets of the concept of face, the study provides an alternative way of knowing about a significant international set of tourist behaviours (Tucker & Zhang, 2016). As social psychologists believe, three interlinked elements may contribute

to one's social identity: a cognitive, an evaluative and an emotional component (Ellemers, Kortekaas & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Hogg et al., 2017; Hornsey, 2008; Tajfel, 1982). These three components are included in the framework to reveal the psychological processes underpinning reactions to the behaviour of those travelling aboard. As shown in Figure 1, through cognitive awareness of the projected group image of being Chinese outbound tourists, individuals are more likely to self-differentiate from intragroup members. Further, this cognitive awareness creates ideas for different evaluative process between 'us' and 'other'. It is the sense of belonging to China (Tajfel, 1982) that motivates the individual to rationalise uncivilised behaviour for intergroup and intragroup members. The emotional commitment shows it is the feeling of being ashamed about the projected negative images of some Chinese tourists, that drives individuals to protect the self and collective face. The expression used in this study to characterise these insights is collective face; a summary term to indicate that preserving face is both about oneself and others' face - the concern with the latter is a route to protect both one's own social identity and positive individual perceptions.

Through connecting self-concept with social collectivity (Spencer-Oatey, 2007), the concept of face embraces the culturally specific form of knowledge and becomes a self-reflective assessment of intergroup and intragroup interactions. With this understanding, self-differentiation and rationalisation are influenced by face. It is the continuous reflections of cognitive, evaluative and emotional components that makes face an important construct for understanding Chinese social interactions and behaviour change. The study also found that within the contemporary tourism context, the interactive and interdependent nature of identity formation can contribute to the continuing efforts to understand host-tourist interactions.

The explicit exegesis of the two terms *lian and mianzi* builds a resource for further studies of Chinese tourists and the way they feel when travelling abroad. The study found that the protection of *lian* in the eyes of outgroups and gaining *mianzi* among intragroup members are important to understand the contemporary issues of problematic Chinese behaviour. By documenting the subtle historical and cultural differences within these indigenous linguistic constructions, it should be easier for other researchers to use the terms precisely. Although the examination of face is underpinned by the

Confucianism conceptualisation of Chinese as 'interdependent self' (Hwang, 1997), the researchers do not claim that face is solely relevant to China. The recognition of face as the self-reflective measurement of interactions between self and others is crucial to approach tourist behaviour in a wider Asian and global context. The work of Goffman and face was mentioned previously, and further overviews of the linkages among the terms and western constructs could provide insights for developing new work.

5.2 Practical implications

This study also contains some practical implications. Tourist behaviour is never merely about the tourist as an individual but rather depends on interactions between fellow travellers, and potentially multiple ingroups and outgroups. Identifying problem behaviours is not the exclusive purview of those who live and belong to destinations. Rather, as this study shows, Chinese tourists who travelled abroad constructed a group identity that responded to the hosts and other Chinese tourists' perception and behaviour. These insights based on the tourists' reflection can be noted by destination managers.

First, clearly in the contemporary world, educated Chinese tourists are aware of the need to behave well in the eyes of the hosts. Clarity of instructions, especially guideline for proper behaviours addressing the cultural differences at key points in the journey (i.e., departing for, arriving at, and on-site visiting an outbound destination) would be particularly helpful to many Chinese tourists. Such clear messages and guidelines may potentially decrease their anxiety about behaving inappropriately and make it easier for them to preserve *lian* and build *mianzi*.

Second, of course, this study focused on the newer waves of educated Chinese outbound visitors. Undoubtedly those with little travel experience, and who are less well-educated, may continue to contribute to the negativity and poor image recorded by Pile (2017). It is apparent, however, that educated Chinese tourists care about these issues and respect for their attempts to behave well should be applauded. They may even become agents of positive changes and management among their fellow travellers. It is culturally accepted that knowledgeable individuals should guide or give instructions to those with less knowledge on proper behaviour abroad. Such in-group collective policing should be further encouraged by tourism management authorities (i.e., governmental agencies),

travel agencies, and marketing organizations in both tourist originating countries/regions and destinations.

Third, the study also confirmed the credibility of the government and media's efforts in utilising losing *lian* and gaining *mianzi* to promote the civilised behaviour of Chinese tourists. As face is recognised as the most influential concept to normalise Chinese behaviour (Lin, 1976), the researchers conclude that attempts to shape Chinese behaviour should consistently take the concept of face into consideration. For example, immediate education and communication efforts, centred on the application of the ideas of *lian, mianzi* and social identity, should be further promoted by government agencies, especially those of the tourist originating countries/regions. The message is clear and legible: as a tourist you need to preserve and protect the collective face. Feeling ashamed relates to face protection in facilitating civilised behaviour. Tourism management authorities (i.e., governmental agencies) should promote the idea that individuals are the face of a country and that behaving properly should prevent losing such face. It is therefore hoped that with rising educational standards and a growing familiarity with the wider world, Chinese tourists of the future may be burdened less with the undesirable image of being troublesome and disruptive.

5.3 Limitations and future research directions

Several limitations of the present study should be acknowledged and some future research directions succinctly specified. First, although the reasons why only well-educated Chinese tourists were chosen as participants has been explained, it would be interesting to examine how Chinese tourists with relatively lower educational levels reflect on the negative image projected on them and how such reflections influence their behaviours. Fellow researchers are therefore encouraged to conduct empirical studies to verify and compare the findings with those of this present study. Second, it should be acknowledged that although face is widely recognised as one of the most salient social characteristics of being Chinese, it is not solely relevant to Chinese. Future studies therefore could focus on exploring the multiple versions of the concept of face when cultures meet to have a better understanding of international tourist behaviour (Pearce & Wu, 2017).

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