

# Red tourism in China: Emotional experiences, national identity, and behavioural intentions

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This research examined the linkages among emotional experiences, national identity, and behavioural intentions for red tourism in China.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied to data from two rounds of surveys of 1,095 on-site visitors to Zunyi and Yan'an, two well-known red tourism cities in China.

**Findings** – Emotional experiences significantly affect national identity, with positive emotions significantly affecting national identity. Positive emotions also significantly influenced behavioural intentions, national identity positively influenced behavioural intentions, and national pride mediated the relationship between "positive emotion → behavioural intentions". In addition, previous experience played a moderating role in the relationship of "positive emotion → national pride".

**Originality/value** – This research applied the cognitive appraisal theory of emotion (CATE) and social identity theory (SIT). It clarified the structural relationships among emotional experiences, national identity, and behavioural intentions in red tourism. It revealed the significant role of red tourism in cultivating national identity.

**Keywords:** Red tourism; emotional experiences; national identity; behavioural intentions; cognitive appraisal theory of emotion; social identity theory

## 1. Introduction

The concept of red tourism originated in China in the late 1990s. In 1999, Jiangxi Province proposed the red tourism concept, which quickly gained widespread recognition nationwide (Tang, Zhang, & Yang, 2021). In 2004, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the *General Plan for the Development of Red Tourism in 2004-2010*, in which a comprehensive plan, guidance, and direction for red tourism development were elaborated. After that, red tourism was promoted as a national strategy in China. Now, red tourism has become an indispensable part of China's modern tourism industry and plays a significant role in strengthening the education of revolutionary traditions, inspiring patriotic feelings, cultivating the national spirit, and promoting the coordinated economic and social development of China's old revolutionary base areas (Zuo, Huang & Liu, 2016). The annual volume of red tourism trips in 2019 was 1.41 billion (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of PRC, 2021). In 2020, although the national tourism industry was hit severely by COVID-19, red tourism visitors exceeded 100 million (People's Daily Online, 2021).

As a type of spiritual tourism activity, red tourism's political attributes and educational functions are becoming increasingly prominent (Zhao & Timothy, 2015; Hung, 2018). It not only promotes the revolutionary spirit of the Chinese people but also enhances cultural confidence, strengthens national identity, and promotes national rejuvenation (Zheng, 2016; Wall & Zhao, 2017). Thus, the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the central government have repeatedly proposed that red tourism should be vigorously developed to enhance the sense of national identity and belonging and to play an active role in creating a shared spiritual home for the Chinese nation.

Emotional experiences are an essential feature of red tourism (Lin, 2015; Hu, Liu, Wen, & He, 2022). Red tourism evokes mixed emotions, such as pride, excitement, sadness, and shock, by exhibiting revolutionary martyrs' outstanding achievements and historical struggles (Hu et al., 2022; Liu, Yue, & Bai, 2018). The appraisal theory of emotions suggests that emotions are subjective psychological reactions to external stimuli, which induce behavioural responses through specific cognitive processes (Mingione, Cristofaro & Mondì, 2020). How do emotional experiences affect

psychological responses and post-trip behavioural intentions in red tourism? What factors impact the relationships among emotional experiences, national identity, and behavioural intentions? These are questions worthy of in-depth study.

Previous studies of red tourism focus on its connotation and functions (e.g., Zhou, Yan, Wang, & Lin, 2020; Zuo, 2014), development models (e.g., Chai, 2020), and existing problems and countermeasures (e.g., Ivanova & Buda, 2020; Zuo, Gursoy & Wall, 2017), whereas red tourist psychologies and behaviours are lacking sufficient academic attention. Although some scholars have conducted fruitful studies on emotions and identity in red tourism (Meng, 2005; Zuo, 2014), most are anchored with an independent perspective, failing to link the two constructs in an integrated framework. The structural relationships among emotional experiences, national identity, and behavioural intentions have yet to be investigated.

Building on the cognitive appraisal theory of emotion (CATE) and social identity theory (SIT), this research constructed an integrated theoretical model by linking emotional experiences, national identity, and behavioural intentions. On-site questionnaire surveys were conducted at Zunyi and Yan'an, two of China's most renowned red tourism cities. The findings can advance the theoretical understanding of red tourists' psychological and behavioural characteristics and assist in formulating management policies for red tourism sites.

## **2. Literature review and hypotheses development**

### ***2.1 Theoretical background***

CATE defines emotions as a dynamic, emergent phenomenon that results from processing or appraising personally relevant information (Roseman, Spindel, & Jose, 1990; Tuerlan, Li, & Scott, 2021). Scholars argue that evaluations and interpretations of events, rather than events per se, determine whether an emotion is felt and which emotion it will be (Roseman et al., 1990). This stream of theories also emphasizes that the elicitation of emotions influences individual behaviours (e.g., Arnold, 1960; Lazarus, 1991).

SIT is a cornerstone framework in social psychology proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). SIT

differentiates between “in-group” (“us”) and “out-group” (“them”) members from a variety of perspectives, such as social class, family, interests, and nationality (Tajfel, 1981). SIT involves the three key concepts of categorization, identification, and comparison (Chiang, Xu, Kim, Tang, & Manthiou, 2017). According to SIT, individuals classify people to recognize their social circumstances. By understanding to which groups they belong, they understand details about themselves and define appropriate behaviours by figuring out the norms and rules of the groups to which they belong (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Also, social members gain individual self-esteem, pride, and a sense of value through in-group affirmation and out-group derogation, leading to a strong sense of identity and belonging (Abrams & Hogg, 2006).

CATE and SIT are essential theories for understanding tourists' emotional experiences and identities. Underpinned by CATE, Hosany (2012) revealed that appraisals of pleasantness, goal congruence, and internal self-compatibility are the main determinants of joy, love, and positive surprise. Grounded on SIT, Chiang, Xu, Kim, Tang, and Manthiou (2017) demonstrated that festival visitors' social identity influences their self-esteem, which further affects revisit intentions and electronic word-of-mouth. These theories have been widely used in tourists' psychology and emotions and have been shown to have good explanatory power. Therefore, this research applied the two theories to clarify the relationships among emotions, national identity, and behavioural intentions in red tourism.

## ***2.2 Red tourism***

"Red tourism" began in the late 20th century in China. The Chinese government and academia have defined the concept and connotation of red tourism in many ways. Some scholars argue that red tourism is a form of patriotic, educational tourism built upon the memorial sites and symbols, as well as the spirit and culture formed by the people under the leadership of the CPC during the revolution and war. This understanding has received recognition in mainstream academia (e.g., Li, & Hu, 2008; Xiao, 2013). Although later scholars have put forward other relevant explanations of red tourism (e.g., Xu, 2016), in general, it contains the following features: (1) as one form of

heritage tourism, the core essentials of red tourism are traditional revolutionary education and patriotic education; (2) red tourism is a form of political education with both sociocultural and economic functions and unique Chinese characteristics; and (3) compared with general tourism activities, red tourism focuses more on spiritual experiences and understanding (Li, Hu & Zhang, 2010; Wall & Zhao, 2017).

There are many concepts similar to red tourism worldwide, the most typical of which are communist heritage tourism. Communist heritage tourism, as a subset of heritage tourism, appeared in the late 20th century in the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (Light, 2000). It generally refers to tourist activities with visits to places associated with the socialist past or to sites that interpret or commemorate that past (Light, Young, & Czepczyński, 2009). Recently, the educational value of communist heritage tourism has gained increased scholarly attention (e.g., Lukasz, 2015; Ivanova & Buda, 2020). Researchers argue that communist heritage has significant values and meanings for tourists, such as learning about the history of socialism and experiencing the communist atmosphere (Light, 2001), reminiscing, and seeking a new national identity (Makhotina, 2020). Therefore, red tourism and communist heritage tourism have some similarities. However, the concept of red tourism better reflects the unique situation of China, especially the spiritual heritage formed in the CPC process that led the Chinese people to build a new China (Zuo et al., 2016).

The value of national identity and spiritual education is one of the core topics of red tourism research. Compared to other forms of tourism, red tourism has a valuable role in strengthening patriotic, ideological, and political education (e.g., Zhou, Yan, Wang & Lin, 2020). Red tourism cultivates patriotism, strengthens political party identity, and maintains the historical legitimacy of the ruling Communist Party of China by evoking memories, telling historical stories, and delivering situational experiences (Susanna & Nam-Jo, 2015; Zuo, Huang & Liu, 2016). Red tourism stimulates memorable experiences based on social reality, shapes people's memories of significant events, and builds a unique social identity system (Shen, Wang, Liu, Wu & Zheng, 2021; Ping, 2013). This form of travel stirs national emotions and political enthusiasm and enhances the sense

of national identity (Hu, 2011). Red tourism is not only an emotionally rich experiential activity but also has a pivotal role in strengthening social and national identity.

The psychological and behavioural characteristics of red tourists are attracting increasing attention from scholars (e.g., Tang et al., 2021). Prior studies suggest emotions are critical to red tourism experiences (Liu, Huang, Yu, Bao & Mo, 2021). Scholars argue that red tourists' emotional experiences are generally dominated by positive emotions, with low intensity of negative emotions. Liu et al. (2018) proposed that red tourism readily evokes positive emotions, such as people being moved, surprised, and shocked. These emotions influence attitudes toward the destination, including satisfaction and loyalty. Cao (2020) found that infrastructure and supporting services in red tourism scenic areas positively influence tourists' perceptions of service quality, which directly affects their behavioural intentions. To sum up, red tourism is a type of spiritual activity rich in emotions. Emotions are significant indicators of the characteristics of red tourism and influence post-trip behavioural intentions.

## ***2.2 Emotional experiences***

Emotional experience is a conscious, subjective experience characterized primarily by psychophysiological expressions, mental states, and biological reactions (Turner, 2009). Emotions are a result of biological evolution and individual social adaptation. Situations that meet the subject's needs and desires elicit more positive emotions and, conversely, negative emotions (Shiota & Kalat, 2015). Mehrabian and Russel (1974) proposed a three-dimensional structural model of emotions (pleasure, arousal, and dominance) to capture an individual's emotional responses to environmental stimuli. Russell and Pratt (1980) argued that pleasure and arousal each account for significant proportions of individual emotional experiences. With the deepening of related research, scholars tend to classify emotions into positive and negative dimensions. For example, Rashid (2013) suggested that individuals' emotional experiences are constituted of both positive emotions (e.g., joy, happiness, excitement, calm, and pleasant surprise) and negative emotions (annoyance, upset, frustration, anger, sadness, and boredom).

Emotions are a core and the innate component of tourist experiences triggered at specific points or episodes along the travelling process (Hosany, 2012). Scholars have extensively explored emotional tourism experiences and the antecedents and consequent influences on tourists' psychologies and behaviours (e.g., Kim, Guo & Wang, 2022). For example, Liu, Cui, Wu, Cao, and Ye (2021) found that emotions can be divided into positive and negative emotions triggered by the perception of destination products and services and influence tourists' behavioural intentions. Akgün et al. (2020) found that destination image partially mediates the relationship between nostalgic emotions and behavioural intentions. Emotional experiences, therefore, are closely related to psychologies and behaviours.

Red tourism, as a highly spiritual tourism activity, is likely to elicit various emotional responses that differ from hedonic tourism (Liu et al., 2018). At red tourism sites, learning about the heroic deeds of revolutionary martyrs and historical scenes of hard struggles makes it easier to stimulate various positive emotions, such as gratitude, excitement, affection, and sympathy. However, historical sites, materials, and atmospheres associated with suffering, death, torture, and bloodshed quickly lead to negative emotions, such as depression, misery, indignance, and scaredness (Liu et al., 2018; Hu et al., 2022). Scholars have also found that the red cultural atmosphere has a significant positive influence on attitudes and advocacy. In contrast, attitudes mediate the relationship between the influence of the red culture atmosphere and advocacy (Xu, Zhu, and Zhang, 2016). Therefore, red tourism is a type of spiritual activity rich in emotions, and such emotions are significant indicators of the characteristics of red tourism and influence post-tour behavioural intentions.

### ***2.3 National identity***

National identity, generally described as the close link established between individuals and nations, has attracted scholarly attention (Triandafyllidou, 1998). Fan (2010) defined national identity as the irrational psychological bond that binds fellow nationals, usually termed “a sense of belonging”. The existing literature has investigated the constituent dimensions of national identity. For example,

Pollmann (2008) divides national identity into four dimensions: national civic identity, ethnic-national identity, national pride, and supranational attachment. Wu, Liu, and Wang (2010) divided national identity into the two dimensions of national identity criteria in the objective sense (i.e., traditional criteria and civic criteria) and national pride in the subjective sense (i.e., national political pride and national cultural pride).

The relationship between tourism and national identity has received increasing attention from scholars. It has been investigated in a wide range of research areas, such as heritage tourism (Zhang, Xiao, Morgan & Ly, 2018), festival tourism (Zhang, Fong, Li & Ly, 2019), and rural tourism (Silva & Leal, 2015). The focus is on the interaction between tourism and national identity promotion and building tourists' national identity. Researchers suggest that tourism significantly contributes to forming national identity (e.g., Packer, Ballantyne & Uzzell, 2019; Yang, French, Lee & Watabe, 2020). Lepp and Harris (2008) noted that government officers in Uganda considered tourism to construct a national identity for foreign consumers. Packer et al. (2019) emphasized that war heritage interpretation positively impacts national identity.

National identity is a critical issue in communist heritage and red tourism (Yu Park, 2011; Wang, Shen, Zheng, Wu & Cao, 2021). Existing research has stressed the positive effect of communist heritage tourism in fostering citizens' national identity. For socialist countries, people visiting communist heritage sites not only deepened their understanding of the pursuit of communist ideals but also strengthened their loyalty to the government and country (Li et al., 2010). Zhang and Liu (2021) concluded that character memory has a central role in the national identity of red tourists. However, most of the literature is based on a single perspective exploring the relationship between red tourism and national identity. The accumulated research does not include broader emotional experiences, national identity, post-trip behavioural intentions, and other elements into an integrated framework, and exploring the relationships among variables is insufficient. This research attempted to fill this literature gap by analyzing the causal relationships among emotional experiences, national identity, and behavioural intentions.



## ***2.4 Research hypotheses***

Human emotions generate cognitive outputs, i.e., numerous information processing changes or biases (Paul, Harding & Mendl, 2005). In tourism research, scholars have identified the significant role of emotional experiences on psychological cognition (e.g., Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, & Del Chiappa, 2017; Jamalain, Kavaratzis & Saren, 2020). For instance, Wang et al. (2021) revealed that visitors to a memorial museum generated a sense of awe, which boosted their national identity. Liu et al. (2018) found that visiting red tourism sites stimulates unique negative emotions, such as sadness, regret, and frustration, which trigger introspection or reflection, thus positively acting on national identity. In addition, Liu et al. (2021) argued that red tourism emotions, a construct containing positive and negative aspects, positively influences national identity. This research attempted to separately verify the effect of positive and negative emotional experiences on national identity red tourism. National identity was divided into a two-dimensional structure of a sense of identity and national pride based on Pollmann's (2008) study. Accordingly, the following research hypotheses were proposed:

H<sub>1</sub>: Positive emotional experiences positively influence the sense of identity in red tourism

H<sub>2</sub>: Positive emotional experiences positively influence national pride in red tourism

H<sub>3</sub>: Negative emotional experiences positively influence the sense of identity in red tourism

H<sub>4</sub>: Negative emotional experiences positively influence national pride in red tourism

CATE maintains that emotional experiences influence individuals' behaviours (Lazarus, 1991). Behavioural intentions are considered a crucial predictor of actual behaviour in tourism, including intentions to revisit and willingness to recommend destinations to others (Ahrholdt, Gudergan & Ringle, 2017). Researchers have found that emotional experiences influence visitor evaluations and behavioural intentions (e.g., Akgün, Senturk, Keskin, & Onal, 2020; Ratnasari, Gunawan, Mawardi & Kirana, 2020). Yang et al. (2011) found that festival attendees emotional experiences positively influenced their behavioural intentions. Leri and Theodoridis (2019) stressed that emotions predict destination images, influencing behavioural intentions. Liu et al. (2021) found that red tourists' sense of awe drives their intentions for civilized tourism behaviour. Hu et al. (2022)

confirmed that mixed emotional experiences (positive and negative emotions) exert a U-shaped influence on travel intentions. To further clarify the relationship between emotional experiences and behavioural intentions in red tourism, the following research hypotheses were proposed:

H<sub>5</sub>: Positive emotional experiences positively influence behavioural intentions

H<sub>6</sub>: Negative emotional experiences negatively influence behavioural intentions

Identity is a prominent precursor of individual behaviors (Cast, 2003). The marketing literature suggests that national identity influences consumption behaviour (Carvalho, Luna, & Goldsmith, 2019). Tourism scholars have identified a significant relationship between identity and behavioural intentions (e.g., Agyeiwaah, Pratt, Iaquinto, & Suntikul, 2020). Zou, Wei, Ding, and Xue (2022) found that place identity influenced tourist loyalty. Shen et al. (2021) discovered that national identity significantly impacts revisit intentions. Thus, it can be deduced that national identity also intensifies behavioural intentions in red tourism. The following hypotheses were put forward:

H<sub>7</sub>: Sense of identity positively influences behavioural intentions in red tourism

H<sub>8</sub>: National pride positively influences behavioural intentions in red tourism

CATE proposes that an individual's emotions induce behavioural responses through a particular cognitive process (Bagozzi, 1986). This chain influence has been validated in tourism and hospitality (e.g., Walsh, Shiu, Hassan, Michaelidou & Beatty, 2011). Han, Back, and Barrett (2009) found that restaurant customers' satisfaction fully mediated the influence of emotions on behavioural intentions. Lee (2016) concluded that heritage tourists' cognition (involving curiosity, historical cognition, spatial cognition, and nostalgia) fully mediated the effects of emotional experiences on behavioural intentions. Accordingly, this research inferred that red tourists' national identity, as a psychological factor, mediated the impact of emotional experiences on behavioural intentions. The following hypotheses were posited:

H<sub>9</sub>: Sense of identity mediates the relationship between positive emotional experiences and behavioural intentions

H<sub>10</sub>: National pride mediates the relationship between positive emotional experiences and behavioural intentions

H<sub>11</sub>: Sense of identity mediates the relationship between negative emotional experiences and behavioural intentions

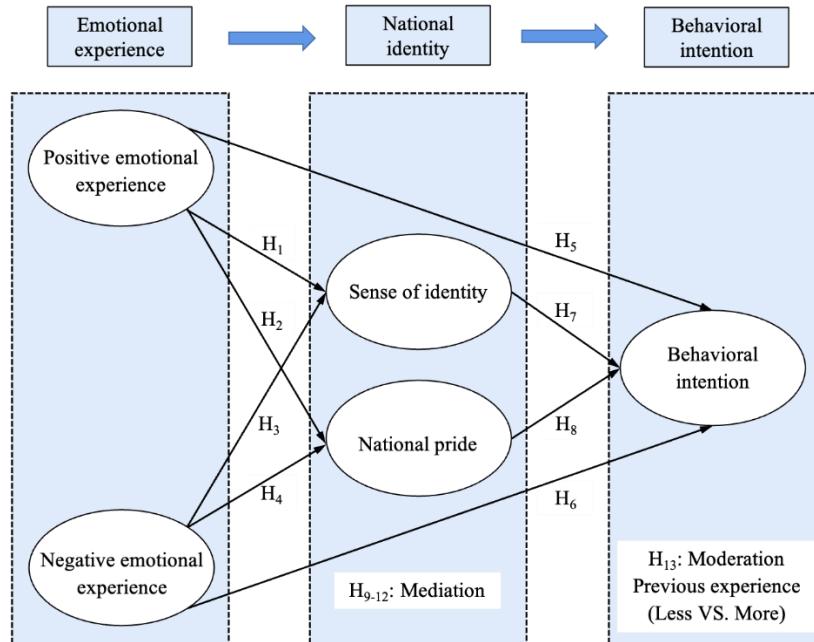
H<sub>12</sub>: National pride mediates the relationship between negative emotional experiences and behavioural intentions

Previous experience is a crucial factor influencing tourists' perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural intentions (Li, Wang, Lv & Li, 2021). Scholars argue that previous experiences represent an individual's knowledge level and are vital for decision-making (Hyde & Teichmann, 2011). The existing literature in tourism and hospitality has also determined the biasing effect of previous experiences (e.g., Rasoolimanesh, Seyfi, Rastegar & Hall, 2021; Suess, Woosnam, Mody, Dogru & Sirakaya Turk, 2021). For example, Tran, Nguyen, Le, and Tran (2021) revealed that visit frequency moderated the effect of self-congruity on perceived destination quality and tourist satisfaction. The following hypothesis was proposed:

H<sub>13</sub>: Previous experience (less vs. more) moderates the relationships between emotional experiences, national identity, and behavioural intentions

## ***2.5 Research model***

Based on these hypotheses, a theoretical model was established (Figure 1). The model contains three constructs, i.e., emotional experiences, national identity, and behavioural intentions, and aims to examine the influences among them. The moderating role of previous experience was incorporated. The findings could generate a nuanced understanding of tourists' psychology and behavior in red tourism and broaden current research on CATE and SIT.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual research model.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research site

Zunyi and Yan'an were selected as the research sites in this study (Figure 1). Both cities are holy places, occupying a significant position in the history of the Chinese Revolution and the CPC. The two cities have prominent red cultural heritage and rich red tourism resources and are typical of the development of red tourism in China (Figure 2). Zunyi is located in Guizhou Province in southwest China. In 1935, the CPC began one of its most important conferences -- The Zunyi Conference, regarded as a crucial turning point of the Long March. The Zunyi Conference, Long March, and other historical events have bestowed Zunyi with significant red relics, which laid a strong foundation for red tourism. In 2021, Zunyi received more than 30 million red tourists (Zunyi Daily, 2022). Yan'an is located in Shaanxi Province, northwest of China, also known as the "Red Capital". From 1935-1948, CPC commanded a series of Chinese revolutions, such as the War of Resistance against Japan, the War of Liberation, the Rectification Movement, and the Seventh Congress of the CPC. Statistics show that Yan'an received more than 73 million visitors in 2019

(Guangming Net, 2021).

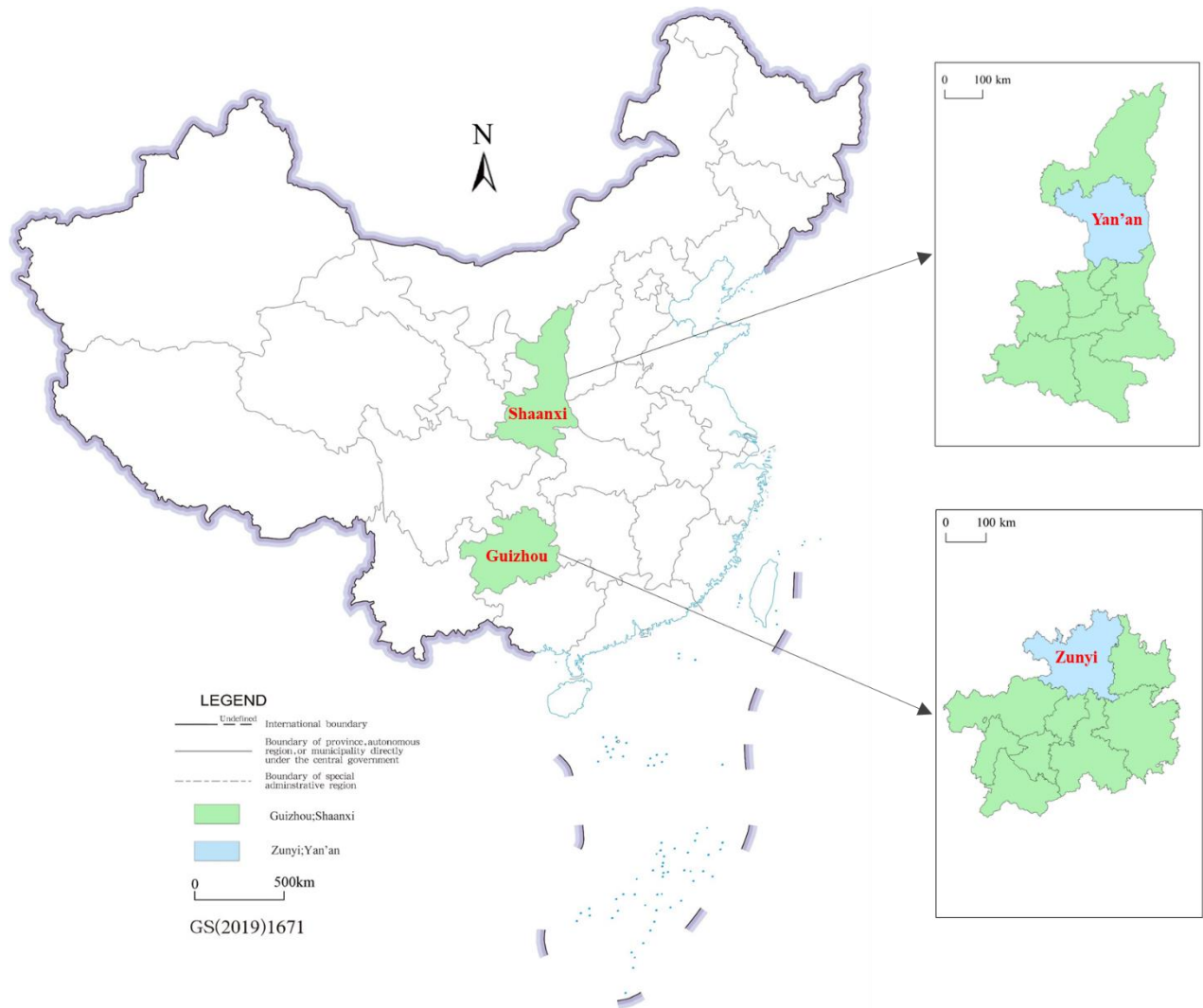


Figure 2. Location of Zunyi and Yan'an.



**Figure 3.** Landscape of research sites.

*Note.* a-c denote red tourism sites in Zunyi, d-h denote red tourism sites in Yan'an

**3.2 Questionnaire design**

The questionnaire was designed based on the existing literature, combined with the research team's previous fieldwork at the research sites. It contained four parts (Table 1). The first part was about emotional experiences. Referring to prior studies (Lee, 2016; Zheng et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2021), ten items were taken to measure positive and negative emotional experiences. The second part was about national identity, with twelve items taken from the works of Pollmann (2008), Wu, Liu, and Wang (2003), and Wang et al. (2021); The third part dealt with behavioural intentions, with four items incorporated based on the research of Prayag, Hosany and Odeh (2013) and Adam (2021).

**Table 1. Measurement index system.**

Constructs	Items	References
Emotional experience	Positive emotional experience (PE)	Rashid (2013); Lee (2016); Zheng et al. (2019); Liu et al. (2021)
	<i>PE1</i> : Gracious	
	<i>PE2</i> : Excited	
	<i>PE3</i> : Vigorous	
	<i>PE4</i> : Happy	
	<i>PE5</i> : Affectionate	
	<i>PE6</i> : Expectant	
	<i>PE7</i> : Cosy	
	<i>PE8</i> : Pleasant	
	<i>PE9</i> : Grateful	
	<i>PE10</i> : Thrilled	
	Negative emotional experience (NE)	
	<i>NE1</i> : Depressive	
	<i>NE2</i> : Disgusted	
	<i>NE3</i> : Miserable	
	<i>NE4</i> : Indignant	
	<i>NE5</i> : Scared	
	<i>NE6</i> : Sorrowful	
	<i>NE7</i> : Alert	
	<i>NE8</i> : Dangerous	
<i>NE9</i> : Shocked		
<i>NE10</i> : Gloomy		
National identity	Sense of identity (SI)	Pollmann (2008); Wu, Liu & Wang (2003); Wang et al. (2021)
	<i>SI1</i> : I will exercise my civil rights correctly	
	<i>SI2</i> : I will conscientiously fulfill my civic duty	
	<i>SI3</i> : I respect our political system	
	<i>SI4</i> : I don't think the identity of Chinese sons and daughters will bring trouble	
	<i>SI5</i> : I think Chinese culture influences my words and actions	
	<i>SI6</i> : I consider myself to have retained traditional Chinese customs and practices	
	National pride (NP)	
	<i>NP1</i> : The country's political system makes me proud	
	<i>NP2</i> : The country's economic system makes me proud	
	<i>NP3</i> : The country's income distribution system makes me proud	
	<i>NP4</i> : The country's revolutionary history makes me proud	
	<i>NP5</i> : The development of national culture and arts makes me feel proud	
<i>NP6</i> : The development of national science and technology makes me feel proud		
Behavioural intention	Behavioural intention (BI)	Prayag, Hosany & Odeh (2013); Adam (2021)
	<i>BI1</i> : I will recommend the red tourism sites to others	
	<i>BI2</i> : I will revisit the red tourism sites in the future	
	<i>BI3</i> : I will share positive opinions of red tourism sites with others	
	<i>BI4</i> : Even if the entrance fee is charged, I will also choose the red tourism sites	

### ***3.3 Data collection***

On 18 May 2022, the research team conducted a pilot survey at the red tourism sites of Zunyi. An on-site preliminary questionnaire survey was carried out. According to the on-site respondents' feedback and expert opinions, items that needed to be clarified and easier to understand were modified. The formal surveys were carried out in both Zunyi and Yan'an. From 21 May to 29<sup>th</sup>, the research team conducted the first round of questionnaire survey at red tourism sites of Zunyi, such as Zunyi Conference Memorial Museum, Loushanguan Resort, Gouba, and Huamao Villages. Afterward, from 2 November to 6<sup>th</sup>, the second round of field investigation was carried out in famous red tourism sites of Yan'an, such as Yangjialing, Hongjie Street, and Feng Huang Mountain.

The convenience sampling method was selected to approach on-site tourists at the red tourism sites. It is a non-probability sampling strategy with the advantage of cost-effectiveness (e.g., saving time and money) (Speak, Escobedo, Russo & Zerbe, 2018). Convenience sampling is considered suitable for an on-site tourist survey and is frequently used in behavioural sciences (Rachão, Breda, Fernandes, & Joukes, 2021). The researchers first introduced themselves to the on-site tourists, explained the research purpose and asked if they would like to complete a self-report questionnaire. They were informed that the questionnaires would be used only for academic research and that individual information and privacy would be strictly confidential. A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed in Zunyi, and 623 were returned; a total of 600 questionnaires were sent out in Yan'an, 573 of which were returned. To ensure the quality of the sample data, the questionnaires with the following characteristics were filtered out: (1) incomplete filling; and (2) multiple identical answers. A total of 1,095 valid questionnaires (549 in Zunyi; 546 in Yan'an) were finally obtained, with an effective rate of 91.56%.

Table 2 presents respondent demographic characteristics. The proportion of men (56.3%) was slightly higher than women (43.7%). Most respondents were 21-30 (44.6%), followed by people aged 20 and below (19.5%). People with junior college and postgraduate degrees had the highest percentages, at 25.4% and 24.9%, respectively. Regarding occupation, most participants were students (22.1%), followed by self-employed (20.7%).



**Table 2.** Respondent demographics ( $n = 1,095$ ).

Characteristics	Items	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	479	43.7
	Female	616	56.3
Age	20 and below	213	19.5
	21–30	488	44.6
	31–40	200	18.3
	41–50	96	8.8
	51–60	53	4.8
	Above 60	45	4.1
Education level	Junior school and below	82	7.5
	Senior high school	269	24.6
	Junior college	278	25.4
	Undergraduate	193	17.6
	Postgraduate	273	24.9
Occupation	Civil servant	75	6.8
	Professional technicians	136	12.4
	Staff of companies and institutions	165	15.1
	Self-employed	227	20.7
	Service/sale staff	116	10.6
	Farmer	97	8.9
	Student	242	22.1
	Other	37	3.4

### **3.4 Data analysis**

Partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed for data analysis. Different from traditional structural equation modelling, PLS-SEM is variance-based. It has relatively low data distribution assumptions and sample size requirements (Barnes, Mattsson, Sorensen, & Jensen, 2020). PLS-SEM is considered suitable for predictive, exploratory, and theory development studies, and is robust in testing complex models and indirect effects (Li, Wang, Zhang, & Cao, 2019).

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Common method variance

Considering that the questionnaire survey was conducted simultaneously from a single source, common method variance (CMV) may be an underlying issue. Thus, Harman's one-factor test was performed to check for CMV using SPSS 25.0. The results suggested that the first factor accounted for 25.87% of the variance at the unrotated stage, significantly exceeding the recommended threshold of 50% (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). Therefore, CMV was not an issue in this study.

### 4.2 Measurement model analysis

PLS-SEM 3.0. software was used to evaluate the measurement model. Referring to the study of Chen, So, Hu & Poomchaisuwan (2021), item *SI6* was removed as its factor loading was lower than 0.6. The model was re-estimated after this item was removed. As can be seen in Table 3, the factor loadings of all indicators exceeded 0.7, except items PE10, NE1, and NE9, slightly below 0.7, meeting the recommended threshold suggested by Barclay, Higgins, and Thompson (1995). The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients of all constructs were greater than 0.8, suggesting the constructs had good internal consistency (Kearney, Achten, Lamb, Parsons & Costa, 2012). The CR values of all latent constructs were greater than 0.85 ( $> 0.7$ ), indicating high internal consistency of the measurement scales (Henseler, Ringle & Sinkovics, 2009). The AVE values of all latent constructs were greater than 0.55 ( $> 0.5$ ), demonstrating adequate convergent validity for all constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The Fornell-Larcker criterion was used to evaluate the discriminant validity of all latent constructs. The square roots of AVEs were higher than the correlation coefficients between latent constructs, indicating sufficient discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (Table 4).

**Table 3.** Assessment of measurement model.

Construct	Measurement items	Mean values	Factor loadings	Cronbach's $\alpha$	CR	AVE
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PE				0.919	0.932	0.581
	PE1	3.900	0.727			
	PE2	3.719	0.757			
	PE3	3.726	0.766			
	PE4	3.879	0.784			
	PE5	3.882	0.835			
	PE6	3.866	0.791			
	PE7	3.731	0.757			
	PE8	3.878	0.812			
	PE9	3.921	0.718			
	PE10	3.649	0.659			
NE				0.925	0.934	0.586
	NE1	2.407	0.695			
	NE2	2.142	0.738			
	NE3	2.102	0.842			
	NE4	2.156	0.805			
	NE5	1.879	0.816			
	NE6	2.237	0.769			
	NE7	2.134	0.730			
	NE8	1.797	0.779			
	NE9	2.406	0.632			
	NE10	1.995	0.823			
SI				0.846	0.890	0.619
	SI1	4.650	0.817			
	SI2	4.664	0.801			
	SI3	4.627	0.841			
	SI4	4.524	0.756			
	SI5	4.637	0.712			
NP				0.889	0.915	0.644
	NP1	4.606	0.841			
	NP2	4.506	0.860			
	NP3	4.291	0.805			
	NP4	4.712	0.730			
	NP5	4.600	0.789			
	NP6	4.679	0.782			
BI				0.858	0.905	0.707
	BI1	4.311	0.864			
	BI2	4.198	0.895			
	BI3	4.260	0.884			
	BI4	3.587	0.705			

**Table 4.** Discriminant validity.

Construct	PE	NE	SI	NP	BI
PE	<b>0.762</b>				
NE	-0.117	<b>0.765</b>			
SI	0.310	-0.099	<b>0.787</b>		
NP	0.355	-0.097	0.701	<b>0.802</b>	
BI	0.442	-0.056	0.307	0.344	<b>0.841</b>

Note. Diagonal elements (in bold) are the square roots of the AVE values of all constructs.

### 4.3 Structural model analysis

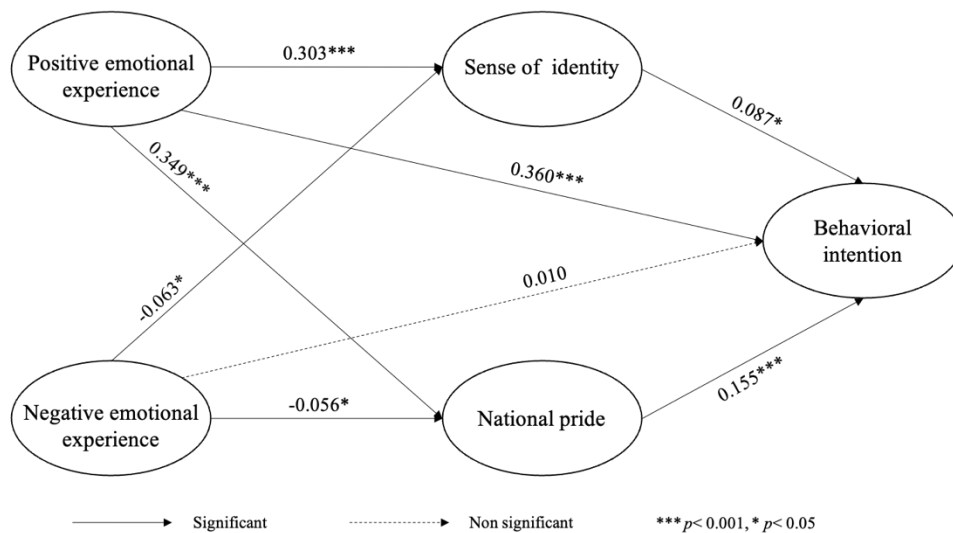
In PLS-SEM, the strength of relationships among latent constructs is generally measured by  $R^2$ ,  $Q^2$ , and path coefficients. Chin (1998) maintained that  $R^2$  values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 are substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively. The  $R^2$  values of BI reached 0.238, while the  $R^2$  values of NP and SI were relatively weak at 0.100 and 0.130, respectively. One possible reason for a relatively small  $R^2$  is that one independent variable can have many potential influencing factors in social science research (Cameron & Windmeijer, 1997). A blindfolding procedure was employed to generate the cross-validated redundancy measure  $Q^2$ . The  $Q^2$  values of SI, NP, and BI were 0.053, 0.082, and 0.165, which were all greater than zero, demonstrating that the proposed model had good predictive capability (Chin, Peterson & Brown, 2008). Lastly, the structural model's goodness of fit (GOF) index was 0.618, meeting the high threshold value of 0.36 proposed by Wetzels, Gaby, and Oppen (2009), implying that this model possessed a good fit.

A bootstrapping program tested the significance of the path coefficients via Smart-PLS 3.0 (2,000 bootstrapped). As can be seen in Table 5 and Figure 3, PE exerted a positive effect on SI ( $\beta = 0.303$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), NP ( $\beta = 0.349$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and BI ( $\beta = 0.360$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>5</sub> were supported. NE exerted a significant positive effect on SI ( $\beta = -0.063^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and NP ( $\beta = -0.056^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), while there was no significant effect on BI ( $\beta = 0.010$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, H<sub>3</sub> and H<sub>4</sub> were supported, and H<sub>6</sub> was rejected. In addition, SI had a positive effect on both BI ( $\beta = 0.087^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and NP ( $\beta = 0.155^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thus supporting H<sub>7</sub> and H<sub>8</sub>.

**Table 5.** Hypothesis test results.

Hypothesis	Influence path	Effect	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Supported
H <sub>1</sub>	PE→SI	0.303***	10.731	0.000	Yes
H <sub>2</sub>	PE→NP	0.349***	12.846	0.000	Yes
H <sub>3</sub>	NE→SI	-0.063*	1.968	0.049	Yes
H <sub>4</sub>	NE→NP	-0.056*	2.020	0.043	Yes
H <sub>5</sub>	PE→BI	0.360***	11.434	0.000	Yes
H <sub>6</sub>	NE→BI	0.010	0.302	0.763	No
H <sub>7</sub>	SI→BI	0.087*	1.965	0.050	Yes
H <sub>8</sub>	NP→BI	0.155***	3.656	0.000	Yes

Note. \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .



**Figure 3.** Test result of the conceptual model.

#### 4.4 Mediating effect test

The bootstrapping technique was employed to examine the mediating effect of national identity. The resampling times of bootstrapping were set to 2,000. The output provided the bootstrapped confidence interval at 95% with lower and upper limits. As can be seen in Table 6, in the relationship of “PE→SI→BI”, the indirect effect value of the sense of identity was non-significant, suggesting that SI did not play a mediating role in the relationship of “PE→BI” (Deng, Lu, Lin & Chen, 2021). Hence, H<sub>9</sub> was rejected. In the relationship of “PE→NP→BI”, the indirect effect value of national pride was 0.054,  $p = 0.001$ , with the 95% confidence interval [CI: 0.022, 0.086]

excluding 0, implying that NP has a mediating effect in the relationship of “PE→BI”. Therefore, H10 was supported. For the relationship of “NE→SI→BI” and “NE→NP→BI”, the indirect effect values were non-significant, respectively, proving that no mediating effect exists in the above relationships. Thus, H11 and H12 were rejected.

**Table 6.** Results of mediating effect test.

Hypothesis	Path	Indirect effect	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% confidence interval		Supported
					Lower bound	Upper bound	
H <sub>9</sub>	PE→SI→BI	0.026	1.842	0.065	0.001	0.057	No
H <sub>10</sub>	PE→NP→BI	0.054**	3.450	0.001	0.022	0.086	Yes
H <sub>11</sub>	NE→SI→BI	-0.006	1.331	0.183	-0.015	0.000	No
H <sub>12</sub>	NE→NP→BI	-0.009	1.673	0.094	-0.020	-0.001	No

Note. \*\**p*<0.01.

#### 4.5 Moderating effect test

A multi-group analysis (MGA) was performed to assess the moderating effect of previous experiences via Smart-PLS 3.0. Respondents were divided into groups with less previous experience (*N*<sub>1</sub> = 511, reported 0-2 times visiting red tourism sites in the last year) and more previous experiences groups (*N*<sub>2</sub> = 584), reported three times or more visiting red tourism sites in the last year). The MGA results showed that only the influence path “PE→NP” had a significant coefficient difference (*p* = 0.012 < 0.05) for the two groups (Table 7). Hence, H<sub>13</sub> was partially supported. Specifically, in the relationship “PE→NP”, compared with tourists with more previous experience, their counterparts’ positive emotional experiences ( $\beta_{N1} = 0.411^{***}$ , *p* < 0.001;  $\beta_{N2} = 0.280^{***}$ , *p* < 0.001) exerted a higher positive impact on national pride.

**Table 7.** Results of multi-group analysis.

Influencing path	Less previous experience (N1=511)	More previous experience (N2=584)	Coefficient difference	<i>p</i>
PE→SI	0.348***	0.255***	0.093	0.102
PE→NP	0.411***	0.280***	0.132*	0.012
NE→SI	-0.051	-0.053	0.002	0.992
NE→NP	-0.008	-0.097*	0.088	0.184
PE→BI	0.335***	0.385***	-0.049	0.436
NE→BI	0.024	-0.009	0.033	0.667
SI→BI	0.149*	0.061	0.088	0.310
NP→BI	0.105	0.205***	-0.100	0.234

Note. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

Red tourism is an effective approach to reinforce the public's national identity in China. However, the antecedents and consequences of national identity in red tourism still need to be determined. Building upon CATE and SIT, this research constructed a theoretical model to test the empirical linkages among mixed emotional experiences, national identity, and behavioural intentions. The moderating effect of previous experiences was also examined. Survey data were collected in Zunyi and Yan'an, two recognized red tourism cities in China, and were analyzed through PLS-SEM. The findings and implications are as follows.

### 5.1 Findings

First, this research found that red tourists' positive emotional experiences positively impacted two dimensions of national identity (sense of identity and national pride), suggesting the significant role of red tourism in enhancing national identity. This is similar to the results of Wang et al. (2020), that awe positively affected the national identity of tourists at red tourism sites. This finding revealed that at red tourism sites, national identity is reinforced through on-site positive emotional experiences. The results also showed that negative emotional experiences negatively influenced

the two dimensions of national identity. The possible reason is that, in the current research, emotional experiences were dominated by positive emotions (mean value = 3.82), and negative emotions (mean value = 2.16) were relatively weak. Red tourists' negative emotions "transformed" into positive emotions, thus reinforcing national identity. This indicated that in red tourism, it is essential to stimulate positive emotions to strengthen national identity.

Second, the results showed that positive emotional experiences positively affected behavioural intentions. This finding is consistent with Prayag et al. (2013)'s study in that tourists' joy, and positive surprise fostered behavioural intentions. It was also found that negative experiences had no significant influence on their behavioural intentions, which contradicts the conclusion of a prior study (e.g., Kim, Guo & Wang, 2022). This can be explained by the fact that although the red tourism experience can arouse a series of negative emotions, such as fear and sorrow, they represent a self-transcendent spiritual experience. Wang et al. (2020) also found that awe had no significant impact on behavioural intentions.

Third, a sense of identity and national pride positively influenced behavioural intentions. This is consistent with Fang, Oh, Yoon, and Teng (2019) in that national identity positively influences the intention to purchase national brands. It also concurs with the previous tourism literature concerning the positive effect of identity on behavioural intentions (e.g., Zou et al., 2022). Furthermore, national pride mediated the relationship between positive emotional experiences and behavioural intentions, and national pride effectively transmitted positive emotional experiences into behavioural intentions. This also supported CATE since emotions triggered behavioural responses through cognitive processes (Bagozzi, 1986).

Lastly, the moderation analysis suggested that previous experience moderates the relationship between "positive emotional experiences → national pride". For tourists with less previous experience, positive emotional experiences had a more significant positive influence on national pride than those with more previous experiences. The possible reason is that tourists with few red tourism experiences may have incomplete knowledge of this thematic tourism activity. Thus, their national pride is more easily stoked through on-site emotional experiences. By contrast, tourists



who visit red tourism sites frequently possess rich knowledge of red tourism. Thus, the relationship between positive emotional experiences and national pride is not as robust as their counterparts.

### ***5.2 Theoretical contributions***

The possible contributions of this research are four-fold. First, although emotional experiences have received broad attention in tourism, such research is scarce for red tourism. This research contributes to the extant literature by categorizing red tourists' emotional experiences into positive and negative valences. Second, although red tourists' psychologies and behaviors have attracted scholarly attention, few have explored the antecedents and consequences of national identity. The findings advance the theoretical understanding of red tourists' psychologies and behaviors by testing the empirical linkages among emotional experiences, national identity, and behavioural intentions. Third, validating the research model in supported CATE and SIT, thus extending the application of these theories. Fourth, previous experience is considered an important indicator that influences tourists' psychologies and behaviors and has been frequently examined in various contexts (e.g., Suess et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Notwithstanding, it remained unexplored in red tourism. Hence, this research added knowledge to the current research on red tourist psychologies and behaviors by discerning previous experience as a boundary condition in the research model.

### ***5.3 Practical implications***

This research generated several practical implications. First, given the significant role of positive emotional experiences in evoking national identity and fostering behavioural intentions, it is necessary to take measures to stimulate positive emotions. Destination managers should further excavate the connotations of red culture so that visitors more deeply comprehend the heroic deeds and revolutionary spirit. Red tourism sites should keep innovating the means of presentation and exhibition via digital technologies, such as VR, AR, and metaverse, to recreate vivid historical scenes. Red tourism sites should avoid excessive commercialism and try their best to protect the

revolutionary cultural relics and historic sites. Second, the results showed that national identity positively affected behavioural intentions, so it is significant for red tourism sites to elevate the sense of national identity during visits. DMOs should present the outstanding achievements since the founding of the People's Republic of China and guide tourists to recall the bitterness in the old society and contrast it with happiness in the new era. Third, the results demonstrated that red tourism is a spiritual and educational activity. Thus, the government must further strengthen marketing and communications to attract more tourists. For example, DMOs can produce documentary films by interviewing on-site visitors, organizing educational events on important China holidays (e.g., red tourism art performances), and launching creative activities regularly (e.g., red tourism experience sharing contests) to attract greater public attention.

#### ***5.4 Limitations and future research directions***

There are some limitations to this research, which point to directions for future research. First, although Zunyi and Yan'an were selected, which are revolutionary shrines and typical red tourism destinations in China, the applicability of the findings of this research to other related heritage sites around the world (e.g., the communist heritage in Eastern European Countries) needs to be further verified. Second, emotional responses vary from person to person, and this research failed to distinguish and identify them. A more in-depth comparative study should be conducted on tourists' demographic characteristics and emotional differences in red tourism venues to provide detailed and accurate decision-making references for the marketing and sustainable development of red tourism destinations. Third, this study produced cross-sectional data for a single period. Longitudinal studies should be conducted in the future to capture the changes in emotional experiences fully.

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