

Research article

Rise through coping with service failures in tourism

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ABSTRACT

Service failure, a common stressor experienced by tourists during their travels, can have a far-reaching impact beyond the travel domain. This research investigates how tourists cope with service failure during their travels and its influence on their ability to rise through challenges and achieve personal growth. Through semi-structured interviews and four scenario-based experiments, we found that problem-focused coping generates a stronger sense of pride and a weaker sense of shame compared to emotion-focused strategies, fostering self-confidence and personal growth in tourists. Additionally, supportive companion reactions reinforce the positive effects of problem-focused coping, while non-supportive reactions may weaken it. The findings offer important theoretical insights, with implications for the tourism industry to develop effective recovery strategies and provide meaningful travel experiences.

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Introduction

Travel goes beyond providing immediate experiences; it possesses transformative effects that influence individuals' life choices over time (Kirillova et al., 2017; Su, Tang, & Nawijn, 2020). Despite its enriching aspects, tourists often encounter service failures during their travels, resulting in distressing experiences (Gelbrich, 2010; Liu & Li, 2022; Xu, Liu, & Gursoy, 2022). However, the existing literature predominantly focuses on the negative consequences of service failure and pays scant attention to the potential positive outcomes for individuals who have faced such challenges (Hossain et al., 2023; Xu, Liu, & Cai, 2022; Ying et al., 2021). Notwithstanding the negative nature of service failure, the experience itself can yield positive impacts on tourists' personal growth, depending on their coping strategies for the stress arising from these situations (Woolley & Fishbach, 2022).

The theory of stress coping posits that individuals engage in cognitive appraisal when confronted with threats or challenges (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This process involves initially evaluating the stimulus event (primary appraisal) and subsequently re-evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of coping behaviors (reappraisal). While existing research in the field of tourism primarily focuses on primary appraisals, such as tourists' emotional responses, there is limited exploration of tourists' reappraisal of coping behaviors, which can have significant long-term implications. Among the two common coping strategies that individuals employ to deal with stressors are problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (Duhachek & Oakley, 2007). Problem-focused coping is generally regarded favorably and is associated with recognition and esteem. It fosters a sense of pride and contributes to enduring personal resources, such as self-confidence and personal growth (Barbalet, 2001; Fredrickson, 2001; Hossain

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et al., 2023). In contrast, society tends to discourage emotion-focused coping, which can potentially result in scrutiny and the internalization of feelings of shame (Goldring & Heiphetz, 2020; Lazarus, 2006; Mkono & Hughes, 2020). In the stress coping process, social support can help mitigate the negative effects of stress and facilitate individuals' adaptation and recovery from stressful situations. It is widely recognized that travel companions offer social support (Hamilton et al., 2021; Su, Cheng, & Swanson, 2020). However, there is a lack of research investigating how travel companions can moderate the effects of stress coping behaviors on adaptive outcomes.

The main objectives of this research are to examine how tourists' coping strategies in response to service failures during travel influence their subsequent emotions, self-confidence, and personal growth. In addition, we test the potential moderating effect of travel companions' reactions on the relationship between tourists' coping behaviors and their outcomes, considering that a majority of tourists (85.6 %) travel with a companion. To test our hypotheses, we conduct a semi-structured interview study and four scenario-based experiments.

This research contributes to our knowledge in three key areas. First, it provides insights into how tourists' coping strategies during travel extend to their daily lives, thus enhancing our understanding of tourism experiences from a life course perspective (Bernardi et al., 2019). Second, it reveals a specific serial mediation mechanism whereby coping with service failures positively influences tourists' personal growth by adopting a problem-focused approach. Third, the study uncovers a boundary condition regarding the moderating role of travel companions' social support in this mechanism.

Literature review

Service failure and customer stress coping

Service failure constitutes a stressful situation, and customers often undergo stages of reactions and evaluations (Tsarenko & Rooslani Tojib, 2011). Initially, they appraise the situation, considering the losses, gains, and uncertainty resulting from the incident. Subsequently, they evaluate their emotions and make efforts to alleviate them. Moreover, they assess the fairness of the situation and explore coping options. They may recognize ineffective coping strategies and inappropriate emotional states. Furthermore, the presence of others can influence their emotional balance (Tsarenko & Rooslani Tojib, 2011).

The stress coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) postulates a cognitive appraisal process that precedes coping behavior when an individual is confronted with a stressful event. The theoretical model consists of five components:

- a) Factors influencing the individual and the environment,
- b) Cognitive appraisals,
- c) The stressors themselves,
- d) Coping responses, and
- e) Adaptational outcomes.

This model emphasizes the impact of personal and situational factors on how individuals perceive and react to their circumstances. Various mediating variables, including cognitive appraisals, coping responses, and social support, significantly influence the outcomes of adaptational outcomes.

The appraisal process comprises two cognitive appraisals: primary appraisal, which refers to the evaluation of the event as either a threat or an opportunity, and secondary appraisal, which concerns the perceived level of control one has over the event (Lazarus, 2006). These cognitive appraisals subsequently inform the selection of coping strategies, which determine the emotional and behavioral outcomes of the individual's coping response. Primary appraisal outcomes are categorized as harm/loss, threat, or challenge. The subsequent phase involves coping mechanisms in response to stressors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When individuals successfully cope with stressors, they may experience positive adaptational outcomes such as heightened resilience, increased self-efficacy, and a sense of mastery, fostering personal growth (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Problem-focused vs. emotion-focused coping

Coping denotes an individual's attempt to handle challenging situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The choice of coping strategies, such as problem-focused or emotion-focused coping, depends on the individual's personality and the specific situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Problem-focused coping involves taking constructive actions to address the problem, while emotion-focused coping involves attempting to avoid or suppress thoughts related to the unpleasant situation (Han et al., 2016). In the context of service failure, customers are likely to employ problem-focused coping strategies to actively address the issues (Hossain et al., 2023). However, some customers may also resort to emotion-focused coping as a means to effectively release negative emotions and regulate their emotional state (Ying et al., 2021).

Prior research has demonstrated that individuals often reflect upon and contemplate their travel experiences at a later time (Arnould & Price, 1993). According to stress coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), when tourists employ problem-focused coping behavior in response to a service failure during their travels, they may experience a sense of pride when recalling this coping behavior in the life domain. This is because problem-focused coping behavior is generally valued by society and can enhance one's sense of achievement and ego-identity (Fredrickson, 2001). On the other hand, if tourists are unable to engage in their desired coping behavior and instead resort to emotion-focused coping during their travels, the evaluation of their coping mechanism

may trigger feelings of shame in the life domain. This stems from a perceived failure to meet one's ideal self-image (Lazarus, 2006) and the fear of others questioning one's abilities or morals (Mkono & Hughes, 2020). Therefore, we propose that:

H1a. Problem-focused (versus emotion-focused) coping behavior is more likely to increase tourists' feelings of pride.

H1b. Emotion-focused (versus problem-focused) coping behavior is more likely to increase tourists' feelings of shame.

Adaptational outcomes: Self-confidence and personal growth

The pride resulting from problem-focused behavior can trigger a cascade of psychological processes that enhance self-confidence and promote personal growth (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2017). As outlined in the stress coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), coping with stress can be a transformative experience, leading to self-confidence and personal growth, which are among a host of adaptational outcomes, such as resilience, emotional well-being, improved physical health, and enhanced problem-solving skills.

Self-confidence entails a positive assessment of one's abilities, skills, or competence in dealing with various tasks, challenges, or demands (Crocker & Major, 1989), and it can contribute to perseverance and diligence (Zimmerman, 2000). Personal growth refers to an individual's inclination towards self-improvement and active learning (Dykman, 1998). Positive emotions, such as pride, self-confidence, and supportive social relationships, are critical factors in fostering personal growth (Lee et al., 2017).

Conversely, shame can reduce an individual's self-confidence and self-esteem by diminishing perceived abilities (Barreto et al., 2006; Tracy & Robins, 2006). Moreover, shame may lead tourists to conceal and avoid social interactions (Mkono & Hughes, 2020). When tourists reflect on their emotion-focused behavior during their travels, they may experience shame for not meeting social expectations (Barreto et al., 2006), leading to doubts about their coping abilities (Tracy & Robins, 2006), reduced self-confidence, and hindered personal growth. Thus:

H2a. Problem-focused (vs. emotion-focused) coping behavior is more likely to increase tourists' feelings of pride, enhancing self-confidence and personal growth.

H2b. Emotion-focused (vs. problem-focused) coping behavior is more likely to increase tourists' feelings of shame, weakening self-confidence and hindering personal growth.

The moderating role of companion's reactions

The environment and presence of others can shape an individual's appraisal and emotional response to stressful events, as proposed by the stress coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Within the context of travel, the presence of a travel companion is one such factor. Previous research has demonstrated that a companion's mere presence, attitude, and reactions can have a significant impact on an individual's emotional and behavioral responses (Shi & Wang, 2021; Su, Cheng, & Swanson, 2020). The dynamics and interactions with a travel companion play a role in shaping an individual's experience and responses during the trip. Travel companions have the potential to provide support and assistance in overcoming specific travel-related challenges (Su, Cheng, & Swanson, 2020). They can offer emotional support, practical help, and companionship, all of which contribute to a positive travel experience. Conversely, a non-supportive companion can evoke negative emotions and disrupt the enjoyment and satisfaction of the trip (Hamilton et al., 2021).

Social support is recognized as a potential buffer against the negative effects of stressors and can fulfill individuals' needs (Orrick et al., 2011). When faced with service failure events during travel, a tourist adopting a problem-focused coping approach may receive approval from their companion for their coping behavior. The companion may join them in finding a solution to the issue at hand (Shi & Wang, 2021). Such supportive reactions from the travel companion can help alleviate the stressful situation and reinforce the tourist's sense of pride in their coping behavior. On the other hand, in situations where the tourist adopts an emotion-focused coping approach, the companion may offer acceptance and encouragement for the expression of negative emotions (Shi & Wang, 2021). While this support can help alleviate the stress associated with emotional venting (Garbas et al., 2023; Orrick et al., 2011), it is less likely to elicit the same level of pride as problem-focused coping.

If a travel companion reacts in a non-supportive manner, it has the potential to hinder the tourist's ability to engage in problem-focused coping or regulate negative emotions. This can counteract any pride the tourist may feel regarding their problem-focused coping behavior and eliminate the possibility of experiencing pride in their emotion-focused coping behavior. As a result, there may be no discernible difference in the level of pride experienced by tourists when comparing the two types of coping behaviors. Therefore, we propose that the companion's reaction acts as a moderating factor in the relationship between coping behavior and the tourist's sense of pride. In light of the above discussion, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3a. When the companion's supportive reaction is salient, problem-focused (vs. emotion-focused) coping behavior will be more likely to increase tourists' feelings of pride.

H3b. When the companion's non-supportive reaction is salient, the coping behavior will not have a significant impact on tourists' feelings of pride.

In situations where the companion reacts in supportive ways, the support provided for the tourist's emotional venting can counteract the initial sense of shame associated with their emotion-focused coping behavior (Orrick et al., 2011). On the other hand, when the travel companion responds in non-supportive ways, the lack of support can exacerbate the tourist's sense of shame for their previous emotion-focused coping behavior. For tourists who have adopted problem-focused coping behaviors, a non-supportive reaction from the travel companion may imply that their image or behavior is being questioned, which could lead to feelings of shame (Mkono & Hughes, 2020). However, these feelings of shame may not be as intense as in the case of emotion-focused coping. Thus:

H4a. When the companion's supportive reaction is salient, the coping behavior does not have a significant impact on tourists' feelings of shame.

H4b. When the companion's non-supportive reaction is salient, emotion-focused (vs. problem-focused) coping behavior will be more likely to increase tourists' feelings of shame.

When tourists recall their past experiences of problem-focused coping, they may experience an intensified sense of pride as it involves self-affirmation and positive evaluation from both oneself and others (Zhang et al., 2017), which can lead to increased self-confidence and personal growth. In the presence of a supportive travel companion, problem-focused coping can result in even greater levels of pride, further enhancing self-confidence and personal growth. Conversely, when it comes to emotion-focused coping, a travel companion's affirmation may help reduce the shame experienced by tourists, but it may not elicit the same level of pride as observed with problem-focused coping. Based on these considerations, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5a. When the companion's supportive reaction is salient, problem-focused (vs. emotion-focused) coping behavior will generate a stronger sense of pride, enhancing self-confidence and personal growth.

When a travel companion reacts in a non-supportive manner to the tourists' emotion-focused coping, it can lead the tourist to question their coping behavior and experience an intensified sense of shame due to negative evaluations from both themselves and others (Tracy & Robins, 2006). This, in turn, can have a detrimental impact on the tourist's self-confidence and personal growth. Similarly, in the case of problem-focused coping, a non-supportive reaction from the travel companion may result in questioning of the coping behavior and potentially evoke feelings of shame (Mkono & Hughes, 2020), though not to the same extent as with emotion-focused coping. With these considerations in mind, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5b. When the companion's non-supportive reaction is salient, emotion-focused (vs. problem-focused) coping behavior will generate a stronger sense of shame, weakening self-confidence and personal growth.

Fig. 1 summarizes the hypotheses in a research model.

Research design overview

In this research, we conducted a semi-structured interview study and four scenario-based experiments. We used semi-structured interviews as a pilot study to understand participants' experiences of past coping behaviors during travel. In Study 1, we employed a one-factor between-subjects experiment to test the main effects and serial mediating effects of pride (vs.

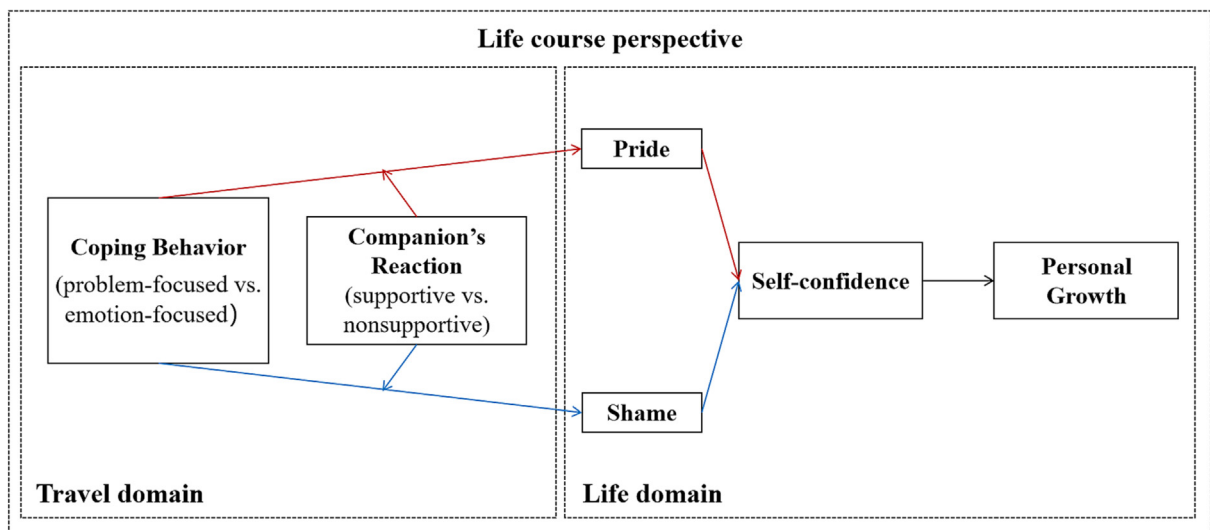


Fig. 1. The research model.

Table 1
Study overview.

Study	Design and stimuli	Methods	Data collection	Hypothesis Testing	Material scenario	Control variables in materials
Pilot study	–	Semi-structured interview	Face-to-face or by telephone	H1a, H1b	–	–
Study 1	2 (problem-focused, emotion-focused) between-subjects	Scenario-based experiment	Online	H1a, H1b, H2a, H2b	Hotel reservation failure	Locus of service failure (agent), Result of coping (nonsolved)
Study 2	2 (problem-focused, emotion-focused) between-subjects	Scenario-based experiment	Online	H1a, H1b, H2a, H2b	Hotel noise	Locus of service failure (situation), Result of coping (solved)
Study 3	2 (problem-focused, emotion-focused) × 2 (supportive, nonsupportive) between-subjects	Scenario-based experiment	Online	H3a, H3b, H4a, H4b, H5a, H5b	Hotel reservation failure	Locus of service failure (agent), Result of coping (solved)
Study 4	2 (problem-focused, emotion-focused) × 2 (supportive, nonsupportive) between-subjects	Scenario-based experiment	Field	H3a, H3b, H4a, H4b, H5a, H5b	Hotel noise	Locus of service failure (situation), Result of coping (nonsolved)

shame) and self-confidence between coping behavior and tourists' personal growth, testing hypotheses H1a, H1b, H2a, and H2b. In Study 2, we modified the experimental materials to retest the main effect and serial mediating effects. In Study 3, we employed a 2 × 2 factorial experiment to examine the moderation effect of the travel companion's reaction (H3-H5). Study 4 replicated the procedures of Study 3 using a field experiment to test external validity. Table 1 presents an overview of the research design.

Pilot study

The pilot study utilized a semi-structured interview design to obtain preliminary insights into individuals' encounters with service failure events during travel and the coping strategies they employed. Additionally, the interview data served as the basis for developing stimuli to be used in subsequent scenario-based experiments.

Method

Semi-structured interviews

We recruited a total of 31 interviewees using the snowballing technique, known for effectively increasing interviewees' willingness to share information and enhancing data richness (Hung, 2018). The interviews, conducted in October 2022, focused on three major themes identified by Ying et al. (2021): a) service failures encountered during the trip; b) coping behaviors; and c) the emotions and feelings associated with recalling coping behaviors. We conducted the interviews via telephone (comprising 64.5 % of the sample) and in-person settings. Each interview was recorded and later transcribed, with an average duration of approximately 10 min. Appendix A contains the profiles of the interviewees, the interview outline, and the coding criteria.

Coding

Following the approach adopted by previous researchers (e.g., Ying et al., 2021), we enlisted the assistance of two doctoral students to thoroughly read the interview transcripts and blind code the coping behaviors and emotions of the interviewees based on the dimensions provided by Han et al. (2016), Fredrickson (2001), and Lazarus (2006). The presence of "problem-focused coping" was coded as 1, and if absent, it was coded as 0. For instance, an example of a 1 is "I immediately checked to see if there were other accommodations and then contacted my guide to see if there were any cheap accommodations" (Interviewee 8, female, 25). In the coding process, a value of 1 was assigned to indicate the presence of "emotion-focused coping" (e.g., "Then queue up, there is no other way"; Interviewee 11, male, 25), while a value of 0 was assigned if it was not present. Similarly, the presence of "pride" was assigned a value of 1, exemplified by "I gave him a flat refusal" (Interviewee 12, female, 24), and a value of 0 was assigned in the absence of pride. Likewise, the presence of "shame" was assigned a value of 1, as evidenced by the statement "I feel like I haven't been proactive enough" (Interviewee 7, female, 25), and a value of 0 was assigned if shame was not present. The consistency of coding exceeded 95 % (Perreault & Leigh, 1989). For the remaining inconsistent comments, we engaged a third coder, a professor in tourism management, to assist with the coding process.

Findings

When confronted with a service failure incident in tourism, 13 of the interviewees employed problem-focused coping, while the remaining 18 utilized emotion-focused coping. Among the interviewees who adopted problem-focused coping, all of them (100.0 %) expressed feelings of pride, and none (0.0 %) reported experiencing shame. Among the interviewees who employed emotion-focused coping, two of them (11.1 %) expressed pride, and 11 of them (61.1 %) expressed shame. The results of a chi-

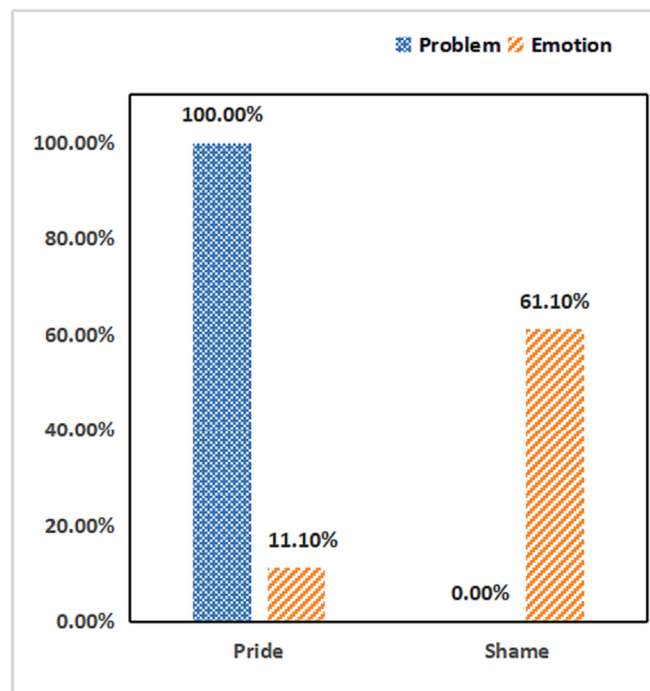


Fig. 2. The impact of coping behavior on tourists' pride and shame.

square test with an exact test indicated that the impact of different coping behaviors on tourists' feelings of pride and shame was statistically significant ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 19.067, p < 0.001$) (see Fig. 2).

Discussion

The results obtained from the pilot study provide evidence supporting the research claim that tourists may experience different emotions in response to various coping behaviors during travel. Specifically, when compared to emotion-focused coping, tourists who engaged in problem-focused coping may demonstrate a higher level of pride and a lower level of shame.

Study 1

Study 1 employed a scenario-based experiment to comprehensively examine the results from the pilot study and further explore the serial mediation effects of tourists' emotions and self-confidence, investigating hypotheses H1 and H2. The experimental design employed a one-factor between-subjects approach, with problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping as the two conditions.

Pretest

We conducted a pretest to verify participants' understanding and accurate differentiation of the two types of coping behaviors presented in the situational experiment materials. To mitigate the social desirability effect (Su et al., 2023), we carried out an online experiment.

Materials

The scenario materials utilized in Study 1 were developed based on the hotel reservation issues revealed in the pilot study. The scenario depicted the tourism destination as "City A." We controlled the locus of service failure (e.g., agent) and the outcome of coping in the scenario materials, following the approach of Hossain et al. (2023). Further details can be found in Appendix B.

Procedure

We recruited a sample of 30 participants (63.3 % females, 50.0 % aged 26–35 years) through Credamo, an online market research platform in China. Random allocation was used to assign participants to the two coping conditions. They were prompted to answer questions pertaining to the authenticity of the scenario (e.g., "Such a scene could realistically occur in everyday life," "I find the given situation easy to understand") on a 7-point scale (Yi et al., 2013). For the manipulation check, participants rated statements such as "In the above scenario, I contemplated different ways to improve the situation" and "I let negative emotions

out somehow to feel better” on a 7-point scale (Han et al., 2016). Additionally, participants provided basic demographic information. Further details can be found in Appendix C.

Results

The results indicated that participants perceived the scenario as realistic and easily understandable ($M_{\text{real}} = 5.87$, $SD = 0.97$, $t = 10.51$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{understand}} = 5.40$, $SD = 1.87$, $t = 4.11$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the manipulation of coping behavior was effective, as problem-focused coping ($M_{\text{problem}} = 5.97$, $SD = 0.72$, $t = 10.60$, $p < 0.001$) and emotion-focused coping ($M_{\text{emotion}} = 5.57$, $SD = 1.37$, $t = 4.42$, $p < 0.01$) scores were significantly higher than the average rating of 4. These findings suggest that participants were able to differentiate between the two types of coping behaviors presented in the scenario materials, indicating successful manipulation of coping behaviors and suitability of the stimulus materials for the main experiment.

Main experiment

Participants and procedure

The sample consisted of 143 participants recruited through an online survey panel provided by Credamo.com in October 2022 ($N_{\text{problem}} = 70$ vs. $N_{\text{emotion}} = 73$; 58.7% were females, 44.0% were aged 26–35). Participants received nominal compensation of approximately \$0.15 for their participation. First, participants' emotional state in the past 30 days and physical health were assessed to control for potential confounding effects (Lee et al., 2017). Subsequently, participants were instructed to read scenario materials and complete a four-part questionnaire. The scenarios were considered realistic and easily understandable by the participants ($M_{\text{real}} = 5.82$, $SD = 0.97$, $t = 22.44$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{understand}} = 6.04$, $SD = 1.17$, $t = 20.91$, $p < 0.001$). The manipulation of coping behavior (problem-focused vs. emotion-focused) was successful, as evidenced by significantly higher scores in the problem-focused condition ($M_{\text{problem}} = 6.24$, $SD = 0.61$, $t = 30.65$, $p < 0.001$) compared to the emotion-focused condition ($M_{\text{emotion}} = 5.62$, $SD = 1.04$, $t = 13.38$, $p < 0.001$).

We adapted key construct measures from existing studies. Participants' pride was examined using three items from Blader and Tyler (2009) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.940$), while shame was measured with four items based on Tracy and Robins (2006) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.941$). Self-confidence was assessed with two items from Lee et al. (2017) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.887$), and personal growth was measured using three items from Wolf et al. (2021) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.860$). All items were rated on a 7-point scale, and mean values were calculated for subsequent analyses.

Results

We used a one-way ANCOVA to examine the main effects, with coping behavior (coded as problem-focused = 1, emotion-focused = 0) as the independent variable. The dependent variables were pride and shame, while emotional state and physical health served as covariates. The data revealed that tourists who engaged in problem-focused coping exhibited higher levels of pride compared to those who employed emotion-focused coping behavior $F_{(1,139)} = 240.87$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.634$; $M_{\text{problem}} = 5.65$, $SD = 0.95$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 2.88$, $SD = 1.22$; see Fig. 3). Conversely, emotion-focused coping behavior resulted in

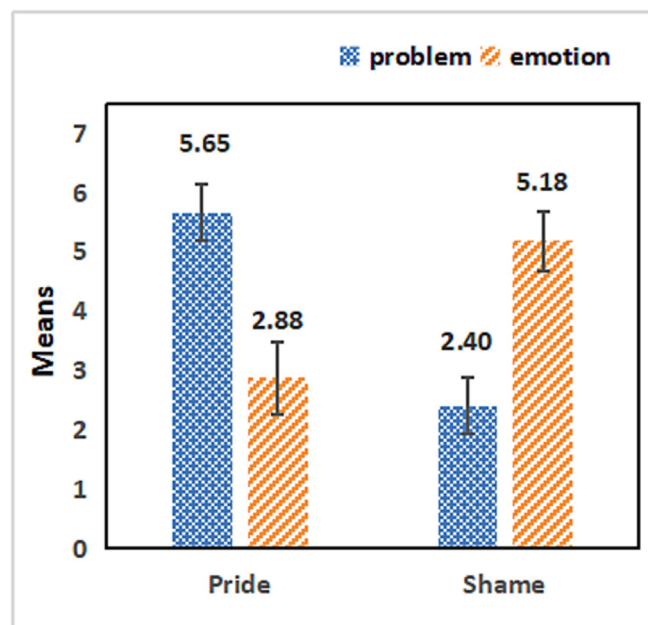
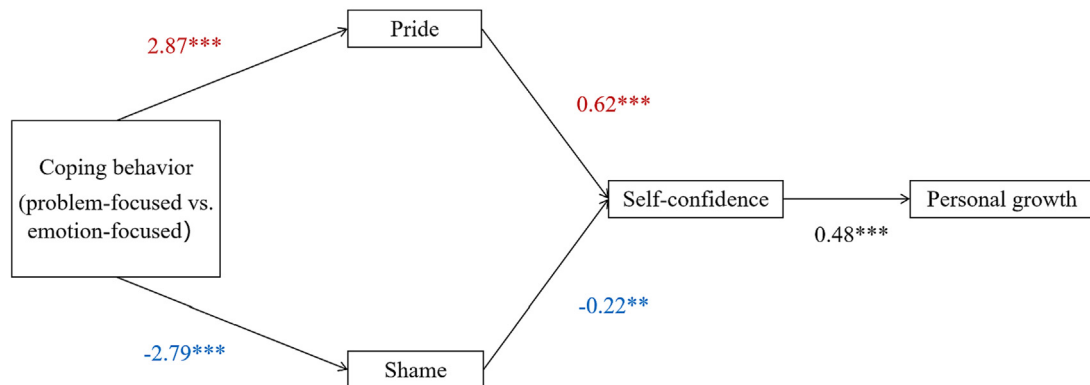


Fig. 3. The impact of coping behavior on tourists' pride and shame.

$b=0.65$, $SE = 0.17$; not include 0 at 95%CI; LLCI = 0.3313, ULCI = 1.0126;

The sequential mediation is significant.



$b=0.23$, $SE = 0.10$; not include 0 at 95%CI; LLCI = 0.0411, ULCI = 0.4558;

The sequential mediation is significant.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Fig. 4. The impact of coping behavior on personal growth.

higher levels of shame among tourists compared to problem-focused coping behavior ($F_{(1,139)} = 259.83$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.651$; $M_{\text{problem}} = 2.40$, $SD = 1.01$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 5.18$, $SD = 1.00$; see Fig. 3). These findings provide support for H1a and H1b.

To test the hypothesized pathway of coping behavior \rightarrow pride \rightarrow self-confidence \rightarrow personal growth and coping behavior \rightarrow shame \rightarrow self-confidence \rightarrow personal growth, we ran a serial mediation analysis using the bootstrapping method with 5000 samples (Model 80, Hayes, 2013). The independent variable was coping behavior (problem-focused vs. emotion-focused), while the mediators were pride, shame, and self-confidence. Personal growth served as the dependent variable, with emotional state and physical health included as covariates.

The results revealed significant serial mediations for both pathways. The pathway of coping behavior \rightarrow pride \rightarrow self-confidence \rightarrow personal growth was significant, with an indirect effect of 0.6527 ($SE = 0.1732$, 95 % CI: [0.3313, 1.0126]). Similarly, the pathway of coping behavior \rightarrow shame \rightarrow self-confidence \rightarrow personal growth was also significant, with an indirect effect of 0.2278 ($SE = 0.1029$, 95 % CI: [0.0411, 0.4558]). However, the remaining direct effects were not significant: coping behavior \rightarrow self-confidence (coeff = -0.1729 , $SE = 0.2355$, 95 % CI: [-0.6386 , 0.2927]), pride \rightarrow personal growth (coeff = 0.1012 , $SE = 0.1099$, 95 % CI: [-0.1162 , 0.3185]), and shame \rightarrow personal growth (coeff = -0.0345 , $SE = 0.1029$, 95 % CI: [-0.2381 , 0.1690]). These findings support the proposed serial mediation model, providing support for H2a and H2b. Additional information on the mediation using normalized data can be found in Fig. 4.

Discussion

In Study 1, we conducted a scenario-based experiment to test the main effects and serial mediating effects of pride (or shame) and self-confidence (H1a, H1b, H2a, and H2b). The results suggest that engaging in problem-focused coping in the past can lead to increased pride among tourists, subsequently boosting their self-confidence and personal growth. Conversely, past emotion-focused coping may elicit feelings of shame in tourists, which, in turn, diminish their self-confidence and personal growth.

Study 2

To enhance the generalizability of the results obtained in Study 1 and improve the external validity of the findings, Study 2 aimed to use different experimental stimuli. The objective was to reexamine the robustness of the main effect and mediating effect. We replicated the procedures employed in Study 1 and incorporated variations in the locus of service failure and the outcomes of coping within the scenario materials.

Pretest

Materials

Study 2 adopted a new set of experimental scenario materials, specifically focusing on the situation of hotel noises, which were adapted from Gelbrich's (2010) research. Similar to Study 1, we maintained control over the locus of service failure

(e.g., situation) and the outcome of coping (e.g., solved) within the scenario materials, ensuring consistency with Hossain et al.'s (2023) approach. For additional information, please refer to Appendix B.

Procedure

We randomly assigned the sample of 30 participants (50.0 % females, 46.6 % aged 26–35 years) recruited from the Credamo platform into two groups (problem-focused vs. emotion-focused). Participants responded to questions regarding the authenticity of the scenario, manipulation checks, and demographic variables. The measurement scales used were consistent with those employed in Study 1.

Results

The new scenario was confirmed to be realistic and understandable ($M_{\text{real}} = 5.53$, $SD = 0.74$, $t = 7.99$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{understand}} = 6.20$, $SD = 0.86$, $t = 9.89$, $p < 0.001$). The manipulation of coping behavior was deemed successful, as reflected in the significantly higher than average (4) values of problem-focused coping ($M_{\text{problem}} = 6.13$, $SD = 0.69$, $t = 11.91$, $p < 0.001$) and emotion-focused coping ($M_{\text{emotion}} = 6.00$, $SD = 0.71$, $t = 10.95$, $p < 0.001$).

Main experiment

Participants and procedure

In October 2022, we recruited a sample of 150 participants through Credamo ($N_{\text{problem}} = 75$ vs. $N_{\text{emotion}} = 75$). We recruited a sample of 150 participants through Credamo in October 2022 ($N_{\text{problem}} = 75$ vs. $N_{\text{emotion}} = 75$). Of the participants, 52.0 % were females, and 48.6 % were aged 26–35. They received a nominal compensation of approximately \$0.15 for their participation. The study began by assessing the participants' emotional state and physical health, which were treated as control variables. Subsequently, the participants were presented with the scenario materials and asked to complete a questionnaire.

The participants rated the scenario authenticity ($M_{\text{real}} = 5.89$, $SD = 0.95$, $t = 24.27$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{understand}} = 6.09$, $SD = 1.27$, $t = 20.14$, $p < 0.001$) and responded to manipulation check questions ($M_{\text{problem}} = 5.97$, $SD = 0.63$, $t = 27.32$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 5.72$, $SD = 1.52$, $t = 9.80$, $p < 0.001$). The measurement scales used for participants' pride (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.948$), shame (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.939$), self-confidence (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.914$), and personal growth (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.869$) were the same as those used in Study 1.

Results

We performed a one-way ANCOVA with the two control variables as covariates, pride or shame as the dependent variable, and coping behavior as the independent variable (coded as problem-focused = 1, emotion-focused = 0). The results indicated a significant difference in the impact of the two coping behaviors on tourists' pride ($M_{\text{problem}} = 5.75$, $SD = 0.73$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 3.10$, $SD = 1.62$; $F_{(1,146)} = 168.03$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.535$; see Fig. 5) and shame ($M_{\text{problem}} = 2.51$, $SD = 1.16$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 4.96$, $SD = 1.53$; $F_{(1,146)} = 122.94$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.457$; see Fig. 5). These findings support H1a and H1b once again.

We then ran a serial mediation analysis using the bootstrapping method with 5000 samples (Model 80, Hayes, 2013). We treated coping behavior (problem-focused vs. emotion-focused) as the independent variable, pride, shame, and self-confidence as mediators, personal growth as the dependent variable, and emotional state and physical health as covariates. The results

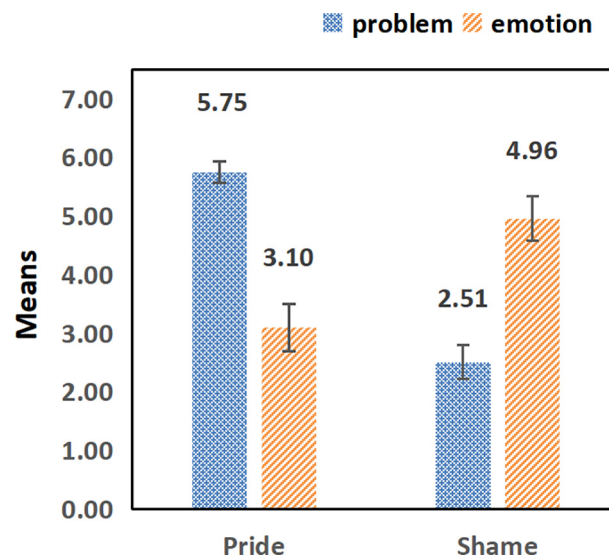


Fig. 5. The impact of coping behavior on tourists' pride and shame.

Table 2
The results of serial mediation analysis in Study 2.

	Pride				Shame				Self-confidence				Personal growth			
	coeff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI	coeff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI	coeff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI	coeff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.47	0.30	2.87	4.07	4.57	0.33	3.91	5.22	3.28	0.62	2.06	4.51	1.34	0.72	-0.09	2.77
Coping behavior	2.65	0.20	2.25	3.05	-2.46	0.22	-2.90	-2.02	0.14	0.22	-0.30	0.59	-0.13	0.24	-0.60	0.35
Pride	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.54	0.08	0.37	0.70	0.11	0.10	-0.08	0.31
Shame	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.16	0.08	-0.31	-0.01	0.06	0.08	-0.11	0.22
Self-confidence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.59	0.09	0.42	0.77
R ²	0.5382				0.4600				0.6792				0.5100			
F	56.7283				41.4582				60.9824				24.8046			
p	0.000				0.000				0.000				0.000			
Indirect effect									<i>b</i>		<i>SE</i>		<i>LLCI</i>		<i>ULCI</i>	
Coping behavior → Pride → Self-confidence → Personal growth									0.61		0.14		0.37		0.90	
Coping behavior → Shame → Self-confidence → Personal growth									0.17		0.09		0.01		0.38	

indicated that both serial mediations were significant. The pathway of coping behavior → pride → self-confidence → personal growth showed a significant indirect effect (indirect effect = 0.6129, SE = 0.1352, 95 % CI: [0.3665, 0.9029]). Additionally, the pathway of coping behavior → shame → self-confidence → personal growth also exhibited a significant indirect effect (indirect effect = 0.1655, SE = 0.0949, 95 % CI: [0.0053, 0.3802]). Therefore, the findings provided support for H2a and H2b. Table 2 presents the detailed mediation results based on normalized data.

Discussion

Study 2 again confirmed the main effects and serial mediating effects (H1a, H1b, H2a & H2b). Study 2 and Study 1 jointly tested the locus of service failure (agent vs. situation) and the result of coping (solved vs. non-solved). Thus, Study 2 expanded the external validity while excluding the endogeneity of incident scenarios.

Study 3

Study 3 aimed to investigate the moderating effects of travel companions' reactions on tourists' coping behavior and their experience of pride or shame (testing H3a, H3b, H4a, and H4b). Additionally, the study examined the potential moderated mediation effects of companions' reactions. We employed a between-subjects design with a 2 (problem-focused vs. emotion-focused coping behavior) × 2 (supportive vs. nonsupportive companion reaction) factorial design.

Pretest

Materials

We utilized the same situational scenario as in Study 1, but with variations in the control variables (specifically, the result of coping: solved). To manipulate the supportive and nonsupportive reactions of the travel companion, the scenario materials were modified to include the companion's reactions, drawing inspiration from the work of Shi and Wang (2021); see Appendix B for more information.

Procedure

We recruited a sample of 60 participants (55.0 % females, 53.3 % aged 26–35) through the Credamo. We randomly assigned them to one of four groups, based on a combination of two coping behaviors and two companion reactions. They were requested to check the authenticity of the scenario and complete manipulation checks for both coping behavior (using the same scales as in Study 2) and the travel companion's reaction (assessed with two items based on a 7-point scale, adapted from Shi & Wang, 2021) in City A. Finally, participants provided basic demographic information using the same scales as in Study 1.

Results

The results indicated that, even after including the description of the travel companion's reaction, the majority of participants still found the information to be accurate and understandable ($M_{\text{real}} = 6.10$, $SD = 0.84$, $t = 19.42$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{understand}} = 6.40$, $SD = 1.08$, $t = 17.27$, $p < 0.001$). Participants were able to correctly differentiate between different coping behaviors ($M_{\text{problem}} = 6.02$, $SD = 0.74$, $t = 14.99$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 6.12$, $SD = 1.12$, $t = 10.36$, $p < 0.001$) and companion reactions ($M_{\text{support}} = 6.53$, $SD = 0.63$, $t = 22.07$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{nonsupport}} = 5.97$, $SD = 0.89$, $t = 12.10$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the manipulation of both coping behavior and the travel companion's reaction was deemed successful.

Main experiment

Participants and procedure

We recruited a sample of 211 participants ($N_{\text{problem and support}} = 57$ vs. $N_{\text{problem and nonsupport}} = 48$ vs. $N_{\text{emotion and support}} = 51$ vs. $N_{\text{emotion and nonsupport}} = 55$; 57.8 % females, 45.9 % aged 26–35 years) through Credamo.com in October 2022. Each participant received nominal compensation of approximately \$0.15 for their participation. They were distributed to one of the four conditions randomly. Their emotional state in the past 30 days and physical health were assessed.

Participants indicated the scenarios were deemed realistic and easily understandable ($M_{\text{real}} = 5.93$, $SD = 1.06$, $t = 26.43$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{understand}} = 6.03$, $SD = 1.35$, $t = 21.88$, $p < 0.001$). The manipulation of the coping behavior ($M_{\text{problem}} = 6.08$, $SD = 0.66$, $t = 32.39$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 5.34$, $SD = 1.16$, $t = 11.87$, $p < 0.001$) and companion's reaction ($M_{\text{support}} = 6.10$, $SD = 0.92$, $t = 23.83$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{nonsupport}} = 5.93$, $SD = 1.09$, $t = 18.04$, $p < 0.001$) were deemed successful. Participants' pride (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.944$), shame (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.937$), self-confidence (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.911$), and personal growth (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.886$) were measured using the same scales as in Study 1. The mean scores of each construct's measures were used for further analysis.

Results

We ran a 2×2 ANCOVA to test the moderation effect of the travel companion's reaction, with coping behavior (coded as problem-focused = 1, emotion-focused = 0) and companion's reaction (coded as support = 1, nonsupport = 0) as independent variables, tourists' pride or shame as the dependent variable, and emotional state and physical health as covariates. The results show that the interaction effects on pride ($F_{(1, 205)} = 7.74$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.036$) and shame ($F_{(1, 205)} = 23.57$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.103$) were significant.

In addition, we ran a one-way ANCOVA to examine the moderating effect of the companion's reaction. The results indicate that under the situation that the travel companion's reaction is supportive, tourists have stronger pride for problem-focused coping ($M_{\text{problem}} = 6.10$, $SD = 0.69$) than emotion-focused coping ($M_{\text{emotion}} = 5.12$, $SD = 0.98$; $F_{(1, 104)} = 36.55$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.260$); and their feeling of shame had no significant difference between the problem of emotion-focused coping ($M_{\text{problem}} = 2.28$, $SD = 0.88$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 2.61$, $SD = 0.82$; $F_{(1, 104)} = 3.87$, $p > 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.036$). When the travel companion's reaction is nonsupportive, tourists have stronger shame for emotion-focused coping ($M_{\text{emotion}} = 5.97$, $SD = 0.55$) than problem-focused coping ($M_{\text{problem}} = 4.55$, $SD = 1.08$; $F_{(1, 99)} = 75.46$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.433$), and their feeling of pride had no significant difference between the problem of emotion-focused coping ($M_{\text{problem}} = 2.73$, $SD = 0.79$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 2.42$, $SD = 1.05$; $F_{(1, 99)} = 2.733$, $p > 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.027$). Therefore, H3a, H3b, H4a, and H4b were supported (see Fig. 6).

We ran a bootstrapping with 5000 samples (Model 83, Hayes, 2013) to assess the moderated serial mediation. The results showed significant moderated serial mediation effects with the companion's reaction as a moderator for pathway 1 (coping behavior → pride → self-confidence → personal growth; index = 0.1659, SE = 0.0665, 95 % CI: [0.0399, 0.3044]) and pathway 2 (coping behavior → shame → self-confidence → personal growth; index = -0.2506, SE = 0.0717, 95 % CI: [-0.4061, -0.1248]).

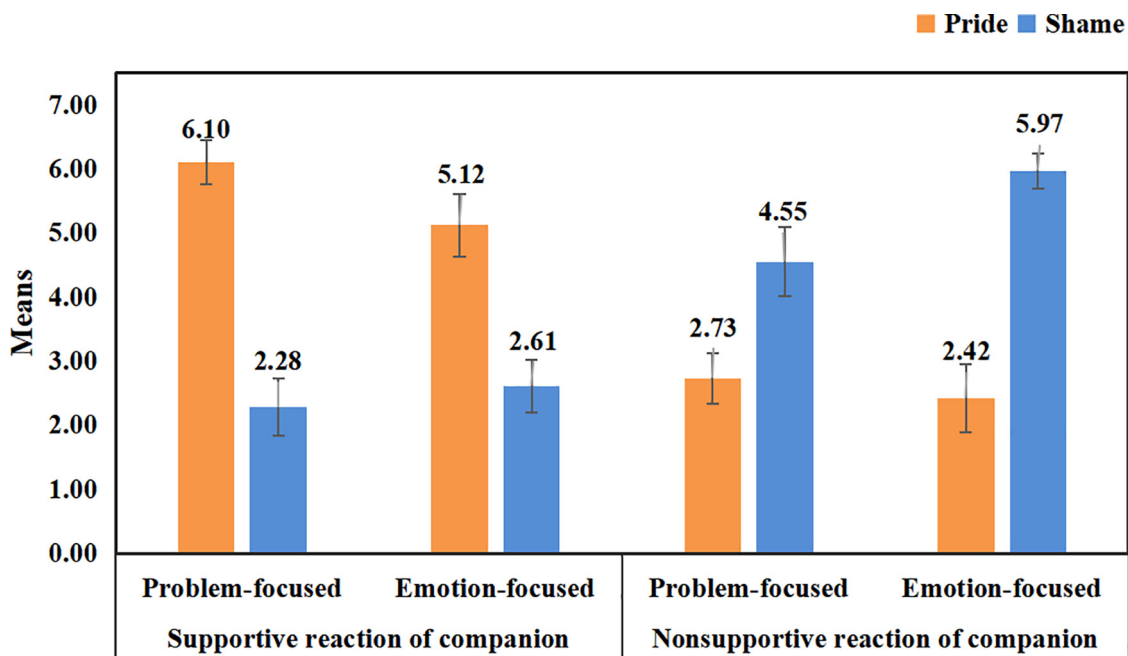
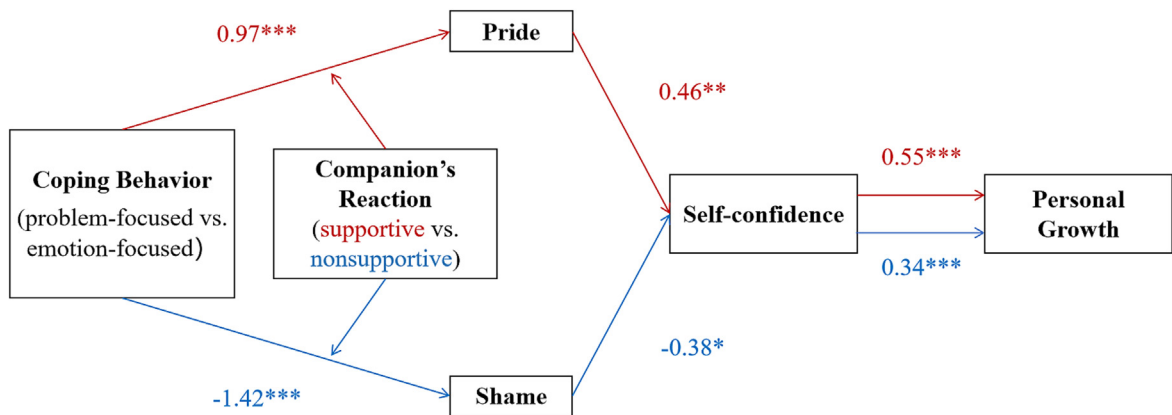


Fig. 6. The moderating effect of travel companion's reaction.

$b = 0.24$, $SE = 0.06$; not include 0 at 95%CI; LLCI = 0.1281, ULCI = 0.3653;

Under the supportive companion's reaction, the sequential mediation is significant.



$b = 0.32$, $SE = 0.07$; not include 0 at 95%CI; LLCI = 0.1929, ULCI = 0.4753;

Under the nonsupportive companion's reaction, the sequential mediation is significant.

- Under the supportive companion's reaction, the sequential mediation pathway
 - Under the nonsupportive companion's reaction, the sequential mediation pathway
- * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Fig. 7. Results of the moderated serial mediation model.

Specifically, under the companion's supportive reaction, the pathway (coping behavior → pride → self-confidence → personal growth) was significant (indirect effect = 0.2395, $SE = 0.0604$, 95 % CI: [0.1281, 0.3653]), while the other pathway (coping behavior → shame → self-confidence → personal growth) was not significant (indirect effect = 0.0720, $SE = 0.0394$, 95 % CI: [-0.0012, 0.1553]). Therefore, H5a was supported.

Under the companion's nonsupportive reaction, the pathway (coping behavior → shame → self-confidence → personal growth) was significant (indirect effect = 0.3226, $SE = 0.0726$, 95 % CI: [0.1929, 0.4753]), while the other pathway (coping behavior → pride → self-confidence → personal growth) was not significant (indirect effect = 0.0736, $SE = 0.0483$, 95 % CI: [-0.0121, 0.1764]). Therefore, H5b was supported (see Fig. 7).

Discussion

Study 3 confirmed the moderating role of the travel companion's reaction (supportive vs. nonsupportive) and the moderated mediation model, supporting H3, H4, and H5. The findings reveal a boundary condition in the effects of coping behaviors on tourists' pride and shame, and subsequently, on self-confidence and personal growth.

Study 4

Study 4 aimed to strengthen the external validity of the study findings by inviting real tourists from tour sites to participate in the experiment. The experimental material used in Study 3 was replaced with new materials for this purpose.

Pretest

We run an online survey to test whether participants recognized the description of the coping behavior and travel companion's reaction.

Materials

We adopted the same situation scenario as in Study 2, which focused on hotel noises. However, we used different conditions for the control variables, specifically the result of coping, which was set as non-solved. The materials also included a description indicating the travel companion's reaction adapted from Shi and Wang (2021). More details can be found in Appendix B.

Procedure

We recruited a total of 60 participants (75.0 % females, 58.3 % aged 26–35 years) via Credamo and randomly assigned to four groups (2 coping behaviors \times 2 companion reactions). They were requested to evaluate the authenticity of the scenarios and respond to questions regarding the manipulation checks of coping behavior (using the same scales as in Study 2) and travel companion's reaction (using the same scales as in Study 4) in City A.

Results

The results showed that after including the description of the reaction of the travel companion, the majority of participants believed the information was still accurate and understandable ($M_{\text{real}} = 5.93$, $SD = 0.95$, $t = 15.69$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{understand}} = 6.32$, $SD = 1.21$, $t = 14.78$, $p < 0.001$, both exceed the median value of 4), and they could correctly distinguish different coping behavior ($M_{\text{problem}} = 6.11$, $SD = 0.85$, $t = 13.68$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 5.35$, $SD = 0.91$, $t = 8.12$, $p < 0.001$, both exceed the median value of 4) and companion's reaction ($M_{\text{support}} = 6.23$, $SD = 0.90$, $t = 13.63$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{nonsupport}} = 6.00$, $SD = 0.87$, $t = 12.58$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, the manipulation was considered successful.

Main experiment

Participants and procedure

We conducted the main experiment using convenience sampling at Yuelu Mountain, a renowned 5A picturesque location in Changsha, China. Two research assistants approached every tourist sitting in the rest areas and invited them to participate in the experiment. They collected 210 valid responses from the 260 participating tourists ($N_{\text{problem and support}} = 54$ vs. $N_{\text{problem and nonsupport}} = 50$ vs. $N_{\text{emotion and support}} = 55$ vs. $N_{\text{emotion and nonsupport}} = 51$; 58.1 % females, 42.3 % aged 26–35 years).

Similar to Study 3, tourists answered questions about their emotional state and physical health, followed by questions for the scenario authenticity test ($M_{\text{real}} = 5.10$, $SD = 1.35$, $t = 11.85$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{understand}} = 5.27$, $SD = 1.43$, $t = 12.85$, $p < 0.001$) and manipulation check of the coping behavior ($M_{\text{problem}} = 5.50$, $SD = 0.99$, $t = 15.46$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 5.41$, $SD = 1.07$, $t = 13.62$, $p < 0.001$) and companion's reaction ($M_{\text{support}} = 5.63$, $SD = 1.03$, $t = 16.50$, $p < 0.001$; $M_{\text{nonsupport}} = 5.13$, $SD = 1.29$, $t = 8.77$, $p < 0.001$). The measures for relevant constructs are the same as in Study 1, including pride (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.887$), shame (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.923$), self-confidence (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.801$), and personal growth (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.746$). The subsequent analysis used the mean score of each scale.

Results

We performed a 2×2 ANCOVA with pride or shame as the dependent variable, emotional state and physical health as covariates, coping behavior (coded as problem-focused = 1, emotion-focused = 0) and the companion's reaction as independent factors. The results showed a significant interaction effect on pride ($F_{(1, 204)} = 5.97$, $p < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.028$) and shame ($F_{(1, 204)} = 10.17$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.047$).

To corroborate the direction of the moderating influence of the companion's reaction, we also performed a one-way ANCOVA. The results indicate that tourists feel more pride in their problem-focused coping when their travel companions react supportively ($M_{\text{problem}} = 5.13$, $SD = 1.03$) than they are in their emotion-focused coping ($M_{\text{emotion}} = 4.43$, $SD = 0.93$; $F_{(1, 105)} = 16.22$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.134$), but there was no significant difference in shame between the problem-focused and emotion-focused coping ($M_{\text{problem}} = 2.75$, $SD = 0.98$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 2.72$, $SD = 0.70$; $F_{(1, 105)} = 0.01$, $p > 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.000$).

When the travel companion's reaction is non-supportive, tourists have stronger shame for emotion-focused coping ($M_{\text{emotion}} = 5.27$, $SD = 0.72$) than problem-focused coping ($M_{\text{problem}} = 4.47$, $SD = 0.97$; $F_{(1, 97)} = 20.60$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.175$); however, there was no significant difference in the feeling of shame between the problem of emotion-focused coping ($M_{\text{problem}} = 3.09$, $SD = 1.00$; $M_{\text{emotion}} = 3.07$, $SD = 1.17$; $F_{(1, 97)} = 0.01$, $p > 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.000$). Therefore, H3a, H3b, H4a, and H4b were supported (see Fig. 8).

We adopted a bootstrapping approach with 5000 samples (Model 83, Hayes, 2013) to test the moderated serial mediation. The results revealed significant moderated serial mediation effects with the companion's reaction as the moderator for pathway 1 (coping behavior \rightarrow pride \rightarrow self-confidence \rightarrow personal growth; index = 0.1659, SE = 0.0790, 95 % CI: [0.0302, 0.3406]) and pathway 2 (coping behavior \rightarrow shame \rightarrow self-confidence \rightarrow personal growth; index = -0.1798, SE = 0.0667, 95 % CI: [-0.3225, -0.0643]).

Specifically, under the companion's supportive reaction, the relationship between coping behavior, pride, self-confidence, and personal growth was significant (indirect effect = 0.1713, SE = 0.0578, 95 % CI: [0.0750, 0.2948]), supporting H5a. However, the other pathway (coping behavior \rightarrow shame \rightarrow self-confidence \rightarrow personal growth) was not significant (indirect effect = 0.0031, SE = 0.0396, 95 % CI: [-0.0759, 0.0826]).

Under the companion's non-supportive reaction, the pathway (coping behavior \rightarrow shame \rightarrow self-confidence \rightarrow personal growth) was significant (indirect effect = 0.1829, SE = 0.0530, 95 % CI: [0.0896, 0.2948]), supporting H5b. However, the other pathway (coping behavior \rightarrow pride \rightarrow self-confidence \rightarrow personal growth) was not significant (indirect effect = 0.0054, SE = 0.0535, 95 % CI: [-0.1012, 0.1154], see Table 3).

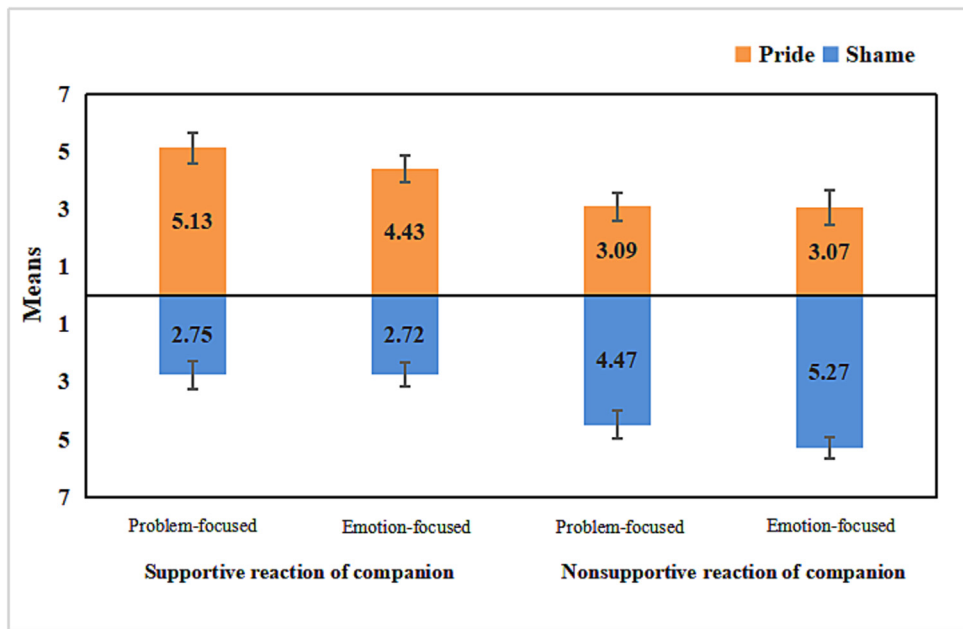


Fig. 8. Moderating effect of travel companion's reaction.

Table 3

The results of moderated-mediation analysis in Study 4.

Mediation pathway: Coping behavior → Pride → Self-confidence → Personal growth													
	Pride				Self-confidence				Personal growth				
	coeff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI	coeff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI	coeff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI	
Constant	3.31	0.24	2.83	3.78	2.02	0.27	1.50	2.55	2.39	0.25	1.89	2.88	
Coping behavior	0.02	0.21	-0.39	0.43	0.13	0.13	-0.13	0.39	-0.06	0.11	-0.27	0.16	
Companion's reaction	1.37	0.20	0.97	1.77	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Coping behavior×Companion's reaction	0.71	0.29	0.14	1.28	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Pride	-	-	-	-	0.52	0.05	0.43	0.62	0.05	0.05	-0.05	0.15	
Self-confidence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.44	0.06	0.33	0.56	
R ²	0.4316				0.3759				0.3512				
F	30.9750				30.8630				22.0854				
p	0.000				0.000				0.000				
Moderated mediation effect													
Supportive reaction: Coping behavior → Pride → Self-confidence → Personal growth													
Nonsupportive reaction: Coping behavior → Pride → Self-confidence → Personal growth													
Mediation pathway: Coping behavior → Shame → Self-confidence → Personal growth													
	Shame				Self-confidence				Personal growth				
	coeff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI	coeff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI	coeff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI	
Constant	4.98	0.20	4.59	5.37	6.05	0.26	5.54	6.55	2.81	0.42	1.98	3.65	
Coping behavior	-0.77	0.17	-1.11	-0.44	0.14	0.13	-0.11	0.39	-0.06	0.11	-0.27	0.16	
Companion's reaction	-2.53	0.17	-2.86	-2.20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Coping behavior×Companion's reaction	0.76	0.24	0.29	1.23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Shame	-	-	-	-	-0.54	0.05	-0.63	-0.45	-0.06	0.05	-0.16	0.04	
Self-confidence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.44	0.06	0.32	0.56	
R ²	0.6374				0.4119				0.3520				
F	71.7318				35.9019				22.1635				
p	0.000				0.000				0.000				
Moderated mediation effect													
Supportive reaction: Coping behavior → Shame → Self-confidence → Personal growth													
Non-supportive reaction: Coping behavior → Shame → Self-confidence → Personal growth													

Discussion

In Study 4, we recruited real tourists from tourist attraction sites to participate in a scenario-based experiment, which provided further support for H3, H4, and H5. The materials used in the experiment reflected the four specific conditions (2 loci of service failure \times 2 results of coping) of control variables, ensuring study rigor and external validity across Studies 1–4. To address potential influences, such as service failure severity and question order effects, we conducted an additional study, which is presented in Appendix D.

General discussion and conclusions

This research attempts to uncover how tourists can rise through coping with service failure during their travels, by using these experiences as opportunities for personal growth. The findings offer valuable theoretical insights and practical implications for the tourism industry to develop recovery strategies that enhance meaningful travel experiences for tourists.

Theoretical contributions

This research makes three significant contributions. First, it provides insights into how tourists' coping behaviors in the tourism domain can have spillover effects on their daily lives. Unlike previous tourism studies (e.g., Hossain et al., 2023; Ying et al., 2021), this research goes beyond the tourism context and examines the subsequent outcomes of tourists' coping behaviors in the life domain. Few studies have examined the long-term impact of tourists' reevaluation of their coping behaviors during travel. Our findings suggest that when tourists return home and reflect on their problem-focused coping behaviors, they experience a sense of pride, which then enhances their self-confidence and promotes personal growth. Conversely, emotion-focused coping may lead to feelings of shame, negatively impacting self-confidence and personal growth.

Second, our research contributes to the understanding of the potential positive effects that arise from coping with service failure, addressing a gap in the existing literature that primarily focuses on the negative consequences of service failure (Hossain et al., 2023; Xu, Liu, & Cai, 2022; Ying et al., 2021), while neglecting the possibility that service failure aftermath could have potentially positive outcomes (Han et al., 2016). Our findings expand the service recovery literature (Liu & Li, 2022; Lu et al., 2021; Xu, Liu, & Gursoy, 2022) and align with the notion that reappraising coping experiences can have long-term effects (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and that discomforting experiences can contribute to personal growth (Woolley & Fishbach, 2022).

Third, this research contributes to our understanding of the significant role played by travel companions in moderating the effects of tourist coping behaviors. Previous studies examining travel companions (e.g., Hamilton et al., 2021; Su, Cheng, & Swanson, 2020) have largely overlooked the cross-situational impact of companion reactions on tourists' feelings of pride (vs. shame), self-confidence, and personal growth in their daily lives. Our research demonstrates that a supportive reaction from a companion strengthens the positive pathway of problem-focused coping behaviors, while a non-supportive companion reaction may weaken it. This finding provides empirical evidence supporting the notion that social support can act as a buffer against the impact of stressors (Orrick et al., 2011).

Practical implications

This study provides valuable implications for tourism and hospitality management. First, it highlights the potential positive effects of properly handling service failure events. Service recovery managers should have confidence in engaging with customers and encouraging them to adopt a problem-focused coping approach. This not only helps to resolve the immediate problem but also has long-term positive effects on tourists' feelings of pride, self-confidence, and personal growth.

Second, recognizing that recalling the coping experience can trigger a positive effect, service recovery managers should initiate follow-up communications to acknowledge and applaud customers for choosing a problem-focused approach. This is particularly important because many service companies do not make an effort to follow up with customers once the service has been successfully recovered.

Third, considering the moderating effect of a supportive travel companion's reaction, service recovery managers may need to communicate with tourists' travel companions and encourage them to provide support. By emphasizing the importance of focusing on the problem rather than the emotion in dealing with service failure events, the travel companion's support can help mitigate the negative effects of shame and potential damage to self-confidence and personal growth. Even in cases where tourists adopt an emotion-focused coping strategy, encouraging the travel companion to offer support can be beneficial.

Limitations and further research

The study has limitations and calls for further research. One limitation is the reliance on participants recalling past experiences, which may not fully capture real-time impacts on daily life. Future studies should explore the real-time effects of tourism experiences. Another limitation is the use of scenario-based experiments, which limits external validity. Thus, quasi-experimental designs (Viglia & Dolnicar, 2020) should be considered. Additionally, employing long-term longitudinal tracking could enhance the understanding of coping behaviors and outcomes over time (e.g., Su et al., 2022). Furthermore, cultural background influences

should be considered, and future studies should explore diverse cultural contexts. Lastly, investigating the reciprocal relationship between the life domain and tourism experiences would provide a more comprehensive understanding (Kirillova et al., 2017).

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used ChatGPT to improve the language. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

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