CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TRAVELLING WITH FRIENDS:

GROUP DECISION-MAKING AND DISAGREEMENT PREVENTION

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the group decision-making process of Chinese international students travelling with friends in New Zealand. Focusing on groups of friends, a neglected decision-making unit, it explores models of group decision-making and disagreement prevention and resolution strategies of Chinese international students making travel-related decisions. Qualitative research method governed by the interpretive paradigm was adopted. Sixteen Chinese international students from Victoria University of Wellington were interviewed. They were from eleven travel groups and had experience of independent leisure travel in non-family groups in New Zealand. Given that Chinese independent visitor market to New Zealand keeps growing, and Chinese international students have been referred as "China's first wave of independent travellers" (King & Gardiner, 2015), this study adds knowledge to the understanding of the travel behaviours and decision-making process of this market travelling in New Zealand.

Tourism attractions were the most discussed travel-related decision during the group decision-making process, followed by decisions on travel activities, food and restaurants, accommodation and transportation. Three group decision-making models were identified: leadership, division of work, and shared decision-making. Leadership includes three roles of leaders, namely the travel initiator who has the initial idea for the trip and who gets potential members together, the main plan-provider who is responsible for collecting travel information and travel tips to make the whole travel plan and arrange travel schedules, and the main decision-maker who makes the final decision in the travel group. The former two roles are with less dominance, while the latter is with higher dominance in the decision-making process. The division of work model refers to dividing the tasks (e.g. organising accommodation or transport) within the travel group and includes two roles: the plan-provider who is responsible for making the plan for the allocated task, and the decision-maker who made the decision on the allocated task. In the shared decision-making model, the group members make the travel-related decisions collectively by discussion and voting.

Most travel groups were found to use multiple group decision-making models conjointly, with a few groups only using the shared decision-making model. Overall, the most used models were shared decision-making and leadership. Most travel group who adopted the leadership model tended to then use either shared

decision-making model or the division of work model depending on the level of dominance of group leader.

Most interviewees indicated that there was lack of disagreement during the group decision-making process. Thus the research focus has shifted from the disagreement resolution to the disagreement prevention. Five disagreement prevention strategies and one influencing factor were identified: travelling with like-minded people, adequate preparation, empathy and mutual understanding, tolerance, compensation and external factors. If disagreements occurred, one or more of tight strategies were adopted by the interviewees to resolve them, namely making concessions, discussing and voting, looking for alternatives, persuasion, toleration, splitting up, accommodating and delaying. Implications and recommendation for industries and future studies are discussed.

Key words: travel-related decisions, group decision-making, friends, disagreement prevention, disagreement resolution, student travel

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1 CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Travel decision-making has been dominated by a focus on individual choice process and more recently has been studied in the context of family and couples as the decision-making units. However, the travel decision-making process of a group of friends, which is an important decision-making unit differing from families or couples, has seen a lack of attention. Moreover, group travel-related decision-making has rarely been examined in an Eastern context (Song, Sparks, & Wang, 2016). This thesis investigates how Chinese international students travelling with friends make travel-related decisions, bringing an Eastern cultural background. The study comprises interviews with sixteen Chinese international students studying at Victoria University of Wellington. They had all travelled independently (organising the trips by themselves without consulting any travel agents) around New Zealand with groups of friends for leisure purposes. On average, the interviews lasted for thirty minutes and were guided by a semi-structured interview schedule, focusing on exploring and gaining an in-depth understanding of the group decision-making process of Chinese young independent travellers.

This study contributes to knowledge in four ways. First, it contributes to the need for more studies on travel decision-making of non-family groups. Second, it explores the process of group decision-making. More specifically, it advances the knowledge of group decision-making models and the process of group decision-making of friends in these models. Third, it investigates disagreement issues during the group decision-making process and how the group members dealt with disagreement or differing opinions with each other. Lastly, it explores how information searching happened during the group decision-making process. Moreover, the qualitative research method used assisted the thesis to gain an in-depth understanding of the interviewees. In addition, the thesis provides the New Zealand tourism industry with a better understanding of Chinese visitors, especially group decision-making behaviours and the group decision-making process of young Chinese independent travellers.

This chapter discusses the study context introducing China as a visitor market for New Zealand, the Chinese international students market, student travel, and

international students as tourists to New Zealand. Then, the research objectives and research questions are presented, followed by the structure of the thesis.

1.2 STUDY CONTEXT

1.2.1 China visitor market and Chinese international student market

China was last on the list of the top 10 countries visiting New Zealand 20 years ago (Statistics New Zealand, 2002), but it has become New Zealand's second largest visitor market with its phenomenal increase rate of Chinese visitor arrivals. Using the data from Statistics New Zealand's International Travel and Migration statistics (Statistics New Zealand, 2016), in the year ending December 2015, total Chinese visitors arrivals was 355,904. Visitors with a holiday purpose was 272,464, representing almost three quarters of the total arrivals, while 4 percent were business visitors. China has become one of the fastest growing visitor markets of New Zealand. In terms of holiday visitors, the annual growth rate of the Chinese market was nearly 40 percent in the year ending December 2015, while that of the Australian market, which is New Zealand's largest source market, was 7.8 percent.

Chinese visitors have distinctive characteristics and travel preferences and are more likely to travel in package groups rather than organising independent travel. In the year ending February 2015, almost one third of total Chinese holiday visitors were free independent travellers (FIT), while two thirds were group travellers (Tourism New Zealand, 2015). Although travelling in groups still dominates, the growth rate of FIT (60 percent) on the previous year surpasses that of the package group, which was 8 percent (Tourism New Zealand, 2015). Thus, the Chinese FIT market has been identified as a promising market but is still in its infancy (Trivett, 2013). In addition, the implementation of the new China Travel Law in October 2013, which encourages independent travel, also contributes to the expansion of the Chinese FIT market. The time period between January to August 2014 saw a dramatic change in the travel style of Chinese visitors as shopping tours, which were dominating, have dropped to 43 percent of the market, while independent holidays have increased to 19 percent (Wait, 2014). Thus, gaining a better understanding of this expanding visitor market is important to the New Zealand tourism industry and organisations.

1.2.2 Student travel

Youth travel (travellers aged 15 to 29) represents approximately 23 percent of tourists who travelled internationally in 2015 and has become one of the most powerful segments of international tourism with its fastest growing speed (UNWTO, 2016). Driven by the increasing diversification and fragmentation led by the growth of youth travel, the student travel market has emerged along with other youth travel niche markets such as backpackers, volunteer tourism, internships and language travel (Richards, 2015; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Although receiving more and more attention these days, student travel was considered as a low-value travel market, and has gained little attention from tourism academics or practitioners (Richards & Wilson, 2004). UNWTO (2016) more recently has identified a clear tendency that youth tourism has shifted from leisure travel towards purposeful travel such as work and study overseas, volunteer travel and language learning. Furthermore, student travel has been recognized as an increasingly important economic driver because young people are more mobile and flexible, and often travel overseas to work and study (UNWTO, 2016). Consequently, an increasing number of countries and regions are beginning to welcome the youth and student travel markets, realising that students and independent young travellers often spend longer time and more money in total than other types of tourists (Richards & Wilson, 2004; UNWTO, 2016).

Relatively little research has been conducted focusing only on student travel. The sample of younger travellers has often been extracted from general national and international tourism analysis to be used as the research data of existing research (Richards & Wilson, 2004). In addition, student travel used to be associated with backpacker tourism and has been well studied under Western cultural background, as students from many Western countries, such as from Europe and North America, have tended to have a gap year to pursue the Big Overseas Experience before or after their university studies. This makes them a major source of both backpackers and independent travellers across the world (Richards & Wilson, 2004; King & Gardiner, 2015).

Students' travel behaviour and patterns, travel motivation and preference of university have been studied by a few researchers. Xiao, So, and Wang (2015) studied the preferable leisure activities of university students in Australia. Additionally, based on travel motivation, travel behaviour, and demographics of British university students, Bicikova (2014) identified four distinct clusters: "The sun-seekers", "The clubbers", "The sightseers" and "The in-betweeners". Furthermore, push and pull

motivational factors for US university students' international leisure trips have been identified by Kim, Jogaratnam and Noh (2006). Moreover, research has been conducted in this context. "Experiencing new and different styles" and "Take it easy and relax" have been identified as the most important travel motivational factors for university students from Hong Kong, followed by "Going to places I haven't been before" and "Outstanding scenery" (Heung & Leong, 2006). The travel style, motivation, and activities of students who travel internationally have also been studied by Richards and Wilson (2004).

Some research has been conducted in the Eastern context in addition to Western-based studies. 'Experiencing new and different styles' and 'take it easy and relax' have been identified as the most important travel motivational factors for university students in Hong Kong, followed by 'going to places I haven't been before' and 'outstanding scenery' (Heung & Leong, 2006). What is more, travelstyle, motivations, and activities of students who travel internationally have been studied by Richards and Wilson (2004). Richards and Wilson (2004) found that about half of students regard themselves as travellers, followed by approximately one third of them claiming themselves to be backpackers. The most important motivations for most of the respondents found in the study were exploring other cultures and looking for excitement, followed by increasing knowledge, relaxing mentally, and socially-oriented motivations such as interacting with local people, friendship, and visiting friends and families. Over 70 percent of respondents indicated that the activities they did most frequently were visiting historic sites, walking and trekking, sitting in cafes and restaurants, and shopping.

Some studies have also paid attention to the differences in travel behaviour and pattern, travel motivation and preference of students due to different cultures (Richards & Wilson, 2004). Field (1999) compared travel behaviour of international and domestic students in a US south-eastern university. Field (1999) indicated that although the attitude towards travel activities of domestic and international students did not show a significant difference, there are activities favoured significantly by one group over the other which may provide the tourism industry with useful information on similarities and differences between domestic and international segments of the college student market. In the research of Shoham, Schrage, and van Eeden (2005), travel behaviours of university students in the US, South Africa, and Israel have been studied and explained with important differences in culture. Moreover, Wang and Walker (2011) examined how face concern (Mian zi), an indigenous Chinese concept, affected travel behaviour of Chinese and Canadian university students.

These studies mostly focus on the travel behaviours of domestic students. With the recognition that travel behaviour varies due to different cultural backgrounds and the fact that travelling is part of studying overseas of international students, international students as tourists have received more and more attention.

1.2.3   International students as tourists

As mentioned earlier, few research efforts have been made to study the student travel market, although it was recognised as an important market with potential growth and constant demand. Richards and Wilson (2004) pointed out that it is the phenomenal expansion of the global population of international students and their explosively increasing enthusiasm of pursuing international tertiary education (Richards & King, 2003) over these decades that has attracted more attention from tourism academics and policymakers on the student travel market.

International students have left their home country and travelled to a foreign country with education as the primary purpose (OECD, 2013). Although having been recognized as a kind of tourist by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), international students were not taken into account by the later tourist definition , which stated "tourists are people who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure" (UNWTO, 1995), for they usually stay on average longer at the destination. In addition, in terms of the behaviour of travelling overseas for educational purposes, Huang (2008) compared the entire experience of international students with different tourist experiences derived from tourism literature and pointed out that international students are not just students for the host countries.

Not only has a great deal of effort been made by host countries to increase education income from international students, but the contribution they have made to the tourism industry is considerable (Hughes, Wang, & Shu, 2015). First, international students tend to travel independently when they are studying abroad (King & Gardiner, 2015). Second, as summarised by Ryan and Xie (2003), international students have more free time (such as school breaks) to travel because they are only allowed to work for a limited time and their home is too far away to visit. Third, international students may take travelling around the country where they are studying as part of their overseas education experience because they can gain an understanding of the people and culture of this land. Finally, King and Gardiner (2015) have highlighted that international students are the core reason that their

friends and families come and visit their countries of study (see example Weaver, 2003). However, these tourism opportunities brought by international education were neglected by previous researchers and policymakers (King & Gardiner, 2015).

1.2.4   Chinese International students as tourists in New Zealand

China has become the world's leading source of international students with 459,800 students studying globally in 2014 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2014). King and Gardiner (2015) stated that it is the result of the One-Child Policy (OCP) which was implemented in China: the current young adults grow up with no competition with their siblings, so they can easily obtain attention from their parents and grandparents. Parents and grandparents are "restrictive", "overly protective", and "emotionally unexpressive" and are willing to invest more energy and money to the future of their beloved only child (W. Wang, Du, Liu, Liu, & Wang, 2002, p. 42), which enables the current Chinese young people to access more resources and opportunities. Although less likely to suffer from depression than their counterparts with siblings, the current Chinese young adults who were born after the implementation of the OCP have been concerned about their social skills by consensus within China (Cameron, Erkal, Gangadharan, & Meng, 2013). Young Chinese people have been found to be less trusting, less trustworthy, more risk-averse (Cameron et al., 2013). Equipped with advanced technology, young Chinese people benefit from gradually eliminating cultural barriers between countries, which gives them more opportunities to pursue international education. In addition, the prosperous economic development of China enables Chinese parents to provide their children with financial support for studying overseas (King & Gardiner, 2015).

As mentioned earlier, the student travel market has been associated with the backpacker travel market in the Western context, while less research has been implemented in the Eastern context. Considering travellers' travel characteristics are culture-related, King and Gardiner (2015) argued the applicability of the existing models and characteristics of youth travellers (backpackers) to the Chinese international student travel market. The travel style and characteristics of Chinese international students are found to be distinctive from those of backpackers. Chinese students prefer travelling independently accompanied by friends and families, taking trips of relatively short duration, choosing hotels and motels for accommodation, and going sightseeing as a travel activity (King & Gardiner, 2015).

China has been recognised as an important traditional international student market by Education New Zealand (2015). China has become New Zealand's largest source country of international students, 27.4% of the international student population in 2014 (Education New Zealand, 2015). The number of Chinese international students in New Zealand has presented steady growth between 2010 and 2014. There were 30,179 Chinese international students studying in New Zealand in 2014, which has gained a 12 percent increase from 2013. The enrollment of Chinese international students in the university sector has seen a 15 percent increase from 8,700 (2013) to 9,994 (2014). Also, the population of Chinese international full fee-paying students, which has experienced stable growth since 2010 (21,256), increased 11 percent (2,718) from 2013 (24,682) (Education New Zealand, 2015).

Besides making contributions to New Zealand's education industry, corresponding to the phenomena of the general international student travel market, Chinese international students also contribute to the domestic tourism market of New Zealand: they are found to undertake travel activities during their period of studying in New Zealand. For instance, Ryan and Zhang (2007) found that Chinese students travelled at least once a year for two or more days in New Zealand. Most Chinese international students tend to travel in groups with friends and families and prefer to organise the travel themselves (Ryan & Xie, 2003). Richards and Wilson (2004) reported that today's international students may become keen and high-spending independent travellers who may repeat visits in the future. Similarly in the China context, Chinese international students are referred to as China's first wave of independent travellers and an expanding component of China's outbound travel market (King & Gardiner, 2015). Thus, it is crucial to understand Chinese international students' needs, travel behaviours and characteristics to provide insights to future Chinese independent travellers. In the case of this research, considering Chinese international students travelling independently in groups, understanding their travel-related decision-making in groups may inform the decision-making process of future Chinese independent travellers.

To summarise, New Zealand is embracing increasing free independent travellers from China. Student travel has been gaining more attention because they spend more time and money than other types of tourists. International students are found not only to contribute to the national education industry, but also to undertake travel activities during their period of studying. China has been recognised as a traditional and important international student market for New Zealand. Today's Chinese international students are refered to as future independent travellers which is an

expanding component of China's outbound travel market. The travel style and characteristics of Chinese international students are found to be distinctive from those of backpackers. For these reasons, New Zealand provides a suitable context to study travel behaviour of Chinese international students.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the group travel decision-making process of Chinese international students. With this aim, three research questions are addressed:

1. Are Chinese International Students (CISs) travelling around New Zealand engaged in discussions regarding travel-related decisions and which are the most discussed decisions?
2. What disagreement resolution strategies are used to make travel-related decisions?
3. How does information searching occur during the decision-making process and what are the most-adopted information sources?

All the research questions attempt to explore the decision-making process with the group of friends as the decision-making units. The first research question examines whether the group decision-making process involved group discussions and what travel-related decisions are discussed. The second research question investigates how group members deal with disagreements which happen during the group decision-making process. The third research question investigates the information searching behaviour in the group decision-making process.

1.4   STRUCTURE

This thesis is structured in six chapters:

Chapter 1 - An introduction to the thesis.

Chapter 2 - Relevant literature which has been reviewed is presented, which includes studies on decision-making, information search behaviour, disagreement issues, disagreement resolution and disagreement resolution strategies, and disagreement prevention. A conceptual framework of group decision-making of friends was developed based on the reviewed literature is introduced. Then it ends with stating

the identified research gap of the previous studies.

Chapter 3 - Discusses the interpretive research paradigm and the research design, including discussing the relation between the interpretive approach and qualitative research method, and introducing semi-structured interviews, an interview schedule, pilot studies, and sampling. Data collection and data analysis are presented covering analysis technique and an analytical framework, and the chapter finishes with discussing the research merits and limitations.

Chapter 4 - Presents the research findings. It starts with briefly introducing the profile of respondents. Then it provides the answers to the research questions and presents the new emerging themes from the analysis.

Chapter 5 - Reflects on the main findings of the research and refers back to some relevant studies. The most discussed travel-related decisions were discussed and compared, followed by illustrating the complexity of the group decision-making process. Disagreement prevention and disagreement resolution strategies were discussed and compared with the previous studies, followed by the comparison of the frameworks of group decision-making of friends in different group decision-making models, which are the major contributions of this study.

The 'Conclusion Chapter' summarises the main findings of this research and the contribution to the understanding of future Chinese independent travellers, and the implications for the future studies.

2 Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises of seven sections. After the introduction, the second section introduces the concept of decision making, specifically for individual choice, families and couples, and groups of friends. The third section further introduces relevant studies on student travel. The fourth section presents studies on disagreement resolution, introducing types of conflict, disagreement issues, disagreement resolution, and disagreement prevention. The fifth section introduces relevant studies on information searching. The sixth section presents a conceptual framework based on the reviewed literature. The last section summarises the research gaps of the reviewed literature.

2.2 Decision making

Historically, travel decisions and choice models have been associated with travel behaviour relating to the choice of travel destination. More recently, travel decision-making is considered as a complex process formed by decision behaviours involving multiple decisions (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002). Travel-related decisions have been studied by many scholars from many viewpoints. Bronner and de Hoog (2008) have correlated these various viewpoints into three main perspectives, namely individual choice process, information search accompanying decision-making, and the collective nature of decision-making.

2.2.1 Individual choice

A great deal of literature was found to follow the perspective of individual choice. To some extent "individualistic orientation" contributed to the application of the widely-used research methodology which adopts questionnaire-based surveys to explore tourist behaviour by collecting opinions from individuals even though most tourists actually travel with families or friends (Pearce, 2005, p. 113).

Starting from the individual choice perspective, research on travel decisions such as destination choice and other travel-related sub-decisions is reviewed. According to

Marcevova, Coles, and Shaw (2010), various studies have focused on the topics of motivation and destination selection exploring the holiday decision-making process from different perspectives. Consistently, literature reviewed in relation to destination choice/selection was found to be the most prevalent choice.

The choice sets model has often been employed to explain the process of individual destination selection due to its advantages of simplicity, practicality, and theoretical soundness (Jang, Lee, Lee, & Hong, 2007). In a tourism context, the choice sets model is used to demonstrate the destination selection process of potential tourists when cutting the number of potential travel destinations they have had in their minds (Jang et al., 2007). Based on the destination choice set model, studies have been conducted to profile destinations within the destination choice set of tourists, and examined factors influencing tourists' destination choice. For instance, Mutinda and Mayaka (2012) have conducted research to gain an understanding of which position the Kenyan destinations in the destination choice set of domestic tourists, and examined the influence of two sets of factors, namely environmental factors (such as source of information, culture, family, lifestyle, and destination features) and individual trait factors (such as motivation, personality, and previous experience).

2.2.2   Families and couples

Holiday decision-making of families and couples have been increasingly studied and well documented since many researchers realised the relevance of the collective nature of travel decision making. Jenkins (1978) was the pioneer who applied family buying behaviour in the context of family vacation decision-making. Travel-related sub-decisions were identified in the research, namely the collection of information, whether to take children, how long to stay, the exact time or actual date, the transportation to use, amount of money to spend, kind of activities to engage in, what commercial lodging facilities to use, and destination point(s). Spouses were asked to allocate travel-related decision-making responsibilities to each other in the research. The findings indicated that most vacation sub-decisions were either dominated by the husband or made jointly.

Due to the changes of society and family structure, the current situation of family decision-making may have changed and may not be reflected by existing literature (Kang & Hsu, 2005). Taking this concern into consideration and adopting Jenkins' research procedure, several researchers such as Litvin, Xu, and Kang (2004), and Bronner and de Hoog (2008) have revisited family travel decision-making across

time and space. In Litvin et al. (2004), the findings indicated there is a trend that all travel-related sub-decisions, which had been examined by Jenkins in 1978, tend to become joint decisions made by both husbands and wives. Similarly, findings of Bronner and de Hoog's (2008) research confirm the fact that family travel decisions have evolved into joint decisions. Furthermore, the findings in Decrop's (2005) research show that women in the sample initiate the idea of going on a vacation, while the final decision to go or not to go is dominated by men. Moreover, factors, such as life cycle, children, perceived risk and information preference influence family travel decision-making (Fodness, 1992; Howard & Madrigal, 1990; Maser & Weiermair, 1998).

In the context of selecting a destination for a honeymoon, couples were found to follow a choice-sets model which was developed by Jang, Lee, Lee, and Hong (2007) based on the individual choice-sets model. Jang et al. (2007) divided the destination decision-making process into three sets. The first set is Individual Early Consideration, in which each member of the couple may have their own preferred destination choices. The second set is Modified Early Consideration, in which they have the opportunity to learn about other's preferred choices through discussion. In the Late Consideration set, couples may reach their final decision or still hold their own preferences. Decisions and alternatives keep modifying during the whole ongoing discussion process. The results of the research showed that 56% of the couples still insisted on their own preference and could not reach agreement on the destination choice with their partners. This indicated the important role the situational inhibitors (e.g. time and money) play in leading a couple to reach consensus on the final decision in the Late Consideration set (Jang et al., 2007).

2.2.3 Groups of friends

Compared with families and couples, less attention has been paid to groups of friends as decision-making units (DMUs). Friends have been considered as part of the social environment which has influence on consumer behaviour and the decision-making process (Decrop, Pecheux, & Bauvin, 2004). Since groups of friends have become an important type of DMU in terms of leisure and holiday activities (Decrop, 2005), some research has been conducted focusing on the group of friends as a DMU to understand how members within this group make travel-related decisions.

Considering many studies have been conducted using quantitative research methods which fail to have a deep understanding of the complex group decision process,

Decrop (2005) conducted qualitative research to gain an in-depth understanding of the group process in vacation decision-making. According to Decrop (2005), delegation and groupthink are found to be two characteristic phenomena of groups of friends when making travel-related decisions.

Delegation refers to leadership that is often needed in a group of friends. Compared with family and couple DMUs, it is difficult to find a solution to completely take every member's demands and constraints into consideration. It is because each member may be faced with different personal and contextual factors, such as time schedules, budgets, involvement, and interests, which may often cause conflicts within the group. As a result, a leader emerges to act on behalf of the group. Other members' suggestions are listened to but the final decision is made by the leader alone. Decrop (2005) also points out negative moods, such as frustration and angriness, are not fostered in such a unilateral decision-making situations because friends are willing to sacrifice their original wishes to help and support someone to organise things.

In terms of groupthink, which often happens in a highly cohesive group, members prioritise the preferences and opinions of the group, and change their own opinions to conform to the group. In this why, individuals in the group gain a sense of commitment but temporarily lose the ability of critical thinking. With groupthink, participating in the group is regarded as more important than the result of the decision itself because members in this situation are more concerned about consensus of the group rather than the quality of the decisions. As a consequence, Decrop (2005) states that extreme and poor decisions are more likely to be made in such situations.

2.3 DISAGREEMENT RESOLUTIONS

The process of decision-making and the interaction between members of travel groups have lacked attention and research. Although realising the importance of social interactions in travel activities, most researchers have put their focus on interactions and relationships between the supply side (hosts) and the demand side (guests) rather than emphasising the interactions between members of their own travel parties (Pearce, 2005). To gain more understanding of the interaction between members in a travel party, issues on disagreement and disagreement resolution strategies have increasingly been studied in family, couple, and groups of friends contexts.

2.3.1 Types of conflict

According to Kirchler (1995), when faced with joint economic decisions, conflicts arise when members within a DMU (e.g. a family) have different opinions on the decisions. Based on the type, conflicts can be categorised as probability, value and distributional conflicts. Probability conflicts happen when members' assessment and preference on the decisions vary. Value conflicts are caused when members within the DMU have different fundamental goals. When members perceive that the cost and benefit of a decision are not allocated equally, distribution conflicts are caused.

In the tourism context, three conflict situations within group DMUs have been generated from Decrop's (2005) research, namely structural, organisational, and distributional conflicts. In the structural situation, the fundamental values and expectations of members may differ from others due to their different personal traits, and different evaluation of vacation and travel motives. For example, when some family members participate with a group of friends as a DMU, whose goals are having fun and sharing emotions, the original group orientation is disturbed because of the expectation and needs of these family members. In the situation of organisational conflicts, members may share the same travel motives but different assessment and preference on the actual travel activities, because members may face different situational factors which influence their evaluation on a particular decision. The distribution conflicts happen when members perceived they are not benefiting from vacation choices as much as other members in the group.

2.3.2 Disagreement issues

More recently, Song, Sparks, and Wang (2016) interviewed 28 young Chinese travellers who organised their trips themselves and travelled in groups of friends. Eight issues were revealed, on which these interviewees frequently have disagreements with others. These issues included destination selection, tourism activity, meal option, travel cost, travel timing, accommodation, transportation, and safety. The interviewees were found to have disagreements most frequently on tourism activities and meal options. Song et al. (2016) found that most decisions were made before the travel activity and during the travel activity, i.e. pre-vacation and during-vacation. The type of disagreements that members mainly had in the two stages varied. In the pre-vacation stage, group members mainly had disagreements on destination selection, tourism activity, accommodation, transportation, travel cost,

and travel timing. In the during-vacation stage, tourism activity, travel cost, meal option, and safety caused travellers' conflicts. Compared to members with more tolerance in the during-vacation stage, members in the former stage had higher disagreement levels and were more likely to voice their disagreement. Strong disagreement in the former stages often contributed to the cancelation of the group travel plan.

2.3.3 Disagreement resolution strategies

2.3.3.1 Families and couples

Most research on disagreement resolution has been conducted in the context of families and couples. Based on previous studies, Kozak (2010) has elaborated and expended a list of tactics used by members of DMUs to solve disagreements. Tactics, such as persuasion, bargaining, compromise, coercion, intimidation, sacrifice, giving priority to others, recommendation by sellers, recommendation by friends/relatives, and influence of children, were included. To understand how a husband and wife adopt tactics in the decision-making process, Kozak (2010) conducted research to compare the use of tactics when spouses make decisions about vacations and eating out. Compromising was found to be the most used tactic in both the decision-making process of the vacation and eating out. In terms of vacation, persuasion was used less frequently than compromising but was found to have greater influence on the planning process of the vacation and travel decisions. Besides, giving priority to the other spouse was the third most adopted tactic. Similarly, Bronner and de Hoog (2008) have examined several strategies which were adopted from the previous study in the husband and wife context. These disagreement resolution strategies include exchange, the golden mean, persuasion, emotion, an internal expert role, an external expert, white lies, authoritarian, and throwing a dice. The results show that the golden mean, which is a strategy of give-and-take-and-reach-a-compromise, was the most frequently adopted strategy by both husband and wife in the decision-making process, followed by the persuasion strategy.

2.3.3.2 Groups of friends

Disagreement resolution has been studied in a Western context but rarely in an Eastern cultural background. Besides, disagreement resolution with groups of friends

has been overlooked (Song et al., 2016).

In a Western context, Decrop (2005) found that in his sample the most popular solutions to conflicts were consensus (altruism), negotiation (give and take), dictatorship (one member imposes his/her ideas on the other members), or delegation. In more recent research with the same cultural background, compromising was found to be the most used solution when disagreements occurred within a DMU, and 44% of respondents indicated that they had to make compromises during the travel process (Marcevova et al., 2010).

In an Eastern context, Song et al. (2016) identified several strategies used by members in groups of friends to solve disagreements and explained by Chinese cultural values. These strategies included compromising, problem-solving, delaying, forcing, and accommodating. Similar to studies in a Western context, young Chinese travellers were found to adopt compromising most frequently to resolve disagreement when travelling with groups of friends. In addition, problem-solving, which refers to when members utilise resources (e.g. information) to assess the alternatives, was found to be most used when selecting the destination. Some strategies are especially salient in a Chinese context. In a collectivist society, such as the Chinese society, people tend to consider the group as the priority, and tend to avoid refusing others' requests directly. Hence strategies like delaying were implemented by groups to not resolve disagreements immediately but to leave them to settle naturally in the passage of time. Additionally, forcing was found to rarely exist in a Western context, where people value individualism. Majority members, who perceived that all group members should participate in group activities, were inclined to force the minorities to get involved. Song et al. (2016) has further confirmed that no matter which cultural background, individuals are willing to sacrifice their own needs and interests to accommodate the whole group in the friendship group context.

2.3.4 Disagreement prevention

In both the research of Marcevova et al. (2010) and Song et al. (2016), findings show that some young travellers (57% and 33%, respectively) perceived there was no disagreement in the group decision-making decision process. In the research of Song et al. (2016), some interviewees indicated that they did not voice their disagreements in the group decision-making process. Song et al. (2016) examined why Chinese travellers avoid disagreements and identified four reasons: maintaining close

relationships; achieving an enjoyable travel experience; obeying the role of the leader; and obeying the male authority. Chinese culture values "forbearance" and "authority" were used to explain these reasons due to the cultural background of the research. "Forbearance" was used to explain the first two reasons, and "authority" was used to explain the latter two reasons.

"Forbearance" refers to individuals within a group who try not to express their inner feelings in the decision-making process in order to maintain close relationships with other group members and to have a pleasant travel experience. This was found to have a great influence on participants' disagreement prevention in the research of Song et al. (2016). Similar to the "groupthink" mentioned earlier, interviewees tended to consider the needs and expectations of other group members as the priority, so they were willing to make concessions (sometimes even sacrificing their own needs and interests) to meet the expectation of others.

"Authority", which is similar to the "delegation" mentioned earlier, refers to individuals within a group who tend to follow a leader who is knowledgeable or an expert, or is familiar with the destination. Individuals were less involved in the decision-making process and tended to respect the decisions made by the leader in order to avoid conflicts. In both Western and Eastern contexts, leaders play an important role in the decision-making process. However, Song et al. (2016) pointed out the situation that male authority gains relatively more respect in Chinese society. Song et al. (2016) admitted similar opinions such as group cohesion and leadership were examined in a Western context but perceived forbearance and authority are stronger in the Chinese background due to the reserved and implicit communication style derived from traditional Confucian doctrines.

2.4 INFORMATION SEARCH

Information search has a close relationship to the travel decision-making process. Due to the fact that tourists plan their trips by selecting, acquiring, evaluating, and using the information, studies relating to information search on these aspects have gained much attention (Fodness & Murray, 1999). However, most studies have been conducted based on the individual perspective, thus research of information search behaviour in a group travel context is seldom found. From the individual perspective, Cai, Feng, and Breiter (2004) states that the information search behaviour of a potential tourist consists of what to search for (information content) and how to search (information channels). Fodness and Murray (1999) developed a model of

tourist information search behaviour to examine the correlation of tourists' information search behaviour. The results showed that tourist information strategies are related to search contingencies, individual (tourist) characteristics, and behavioural search outcomes. Moreover, tourists' external information search behaviour was found to be significantly related to information sources usefulness and accessibility, subjective norms, perceived personal risk, and ability to search (Albayrak, Caber, Erawan, Krairit, & Ba Khang, 2011). More recently, more focus has been shifted to the information channel due to the rising use of internet and e-commerce (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012). That is to say, understanding tourists' preference of information search could help tourism organisations, market operators, and travel agents market their products more effectively.

Taking couples as a different perspective, Hyde, Decrop, Bronner, and de Hoog, (2011) investigated the information search during the travel decision-making between couples. They perceived that information happened in two contexts, namely an individual context and a social context. In the first context, there is no discussion between couples and personal preference is formed and created at this stage. In the second context, information searching might be used as a tactic to persuade the partner in order to reach agreement on decisions. Different sources of information were found to be used in those two contexts (Hyde et al., 2011). Similarly, in Bronner and de Hoog's (2008) research, information search has been found to increase when couples hold views and have an unbalanced influence on each other during the travel decision-making process. In addition, males paid more attention to information search compared with their female partners who showed less interest due to either the preference of discovering unexpected things or relying on their male partners (Decrop, 2005). Moreover, the nature of information collected by female and male varies. Men pay more attention to more general, intellectual, geographic, and socio-cultural information using travel guides, books, or maps as information sources, while women tend to focus on more practical information on brochures or magazines (Decrop, 2005).

2.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
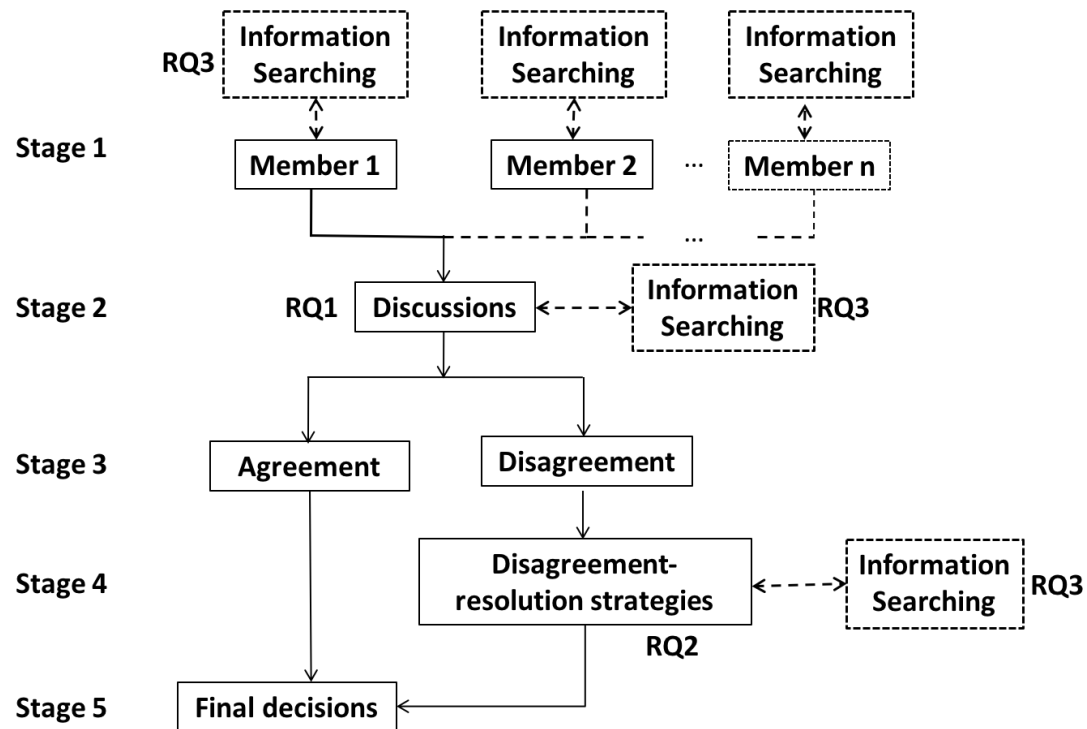
Figure 2.1 Group decision-making process of friends

Based on the literature reviewed, a conceptual framework of a travel-related decision-making process for a group of friends was developed to guide the research (Figure 2.1). At Stage 1, more than two people with their own ideas and preferences on various travel-related decisions are involved in the decision-making process. At Stage 2, they discuss, exchange opinions, and have the opportunity to learn about the other's preferences. At Stage 3, they may reach a consensus and make the final decision smoothly, or they may have conflicts on these decisions. When disagreement occurs, disagreement resolution strategies would be taken to help reach the final decisions. According to Jang et al. (2007) and Hyde et al. (2011), the information search may happen in the individual context (Stage 1) to help form individual perception or may happen in a social context (Stage 2). It also may happen at Stage 4, where information searching is used as one of the strategies by one to persuade the others. At Stage 5, the final travel-related decisions are made.

2.6 RESEARCH GAPS

Research gaps in the reviewed literature have been identified. Group travel-related decision-making has been largely studied focusing on families as a decision-making unit and the distribution of roles within the family (Decrop, 2005). Less attention has been paid to travel-related decision-making itself within non-family groups (e.g. groups of friends). The literature on disagreement resolution has mainly emphasised family members and only a few researchers have studied disagreement resolution with non-family groups (Song et al., 2016). In addition, quantitative methods have been mainly adopted to generate useful information to enhance theoretical and managerial knowledge, though they do not provide many insights into the complex group decision-making process (Khoo-Lattimore, Prayag, & Cheah, 2015). Moreover, most researchers only interviewed one person who had been nominated by other members of the travel group (Decrop, 2005). What is more, group travel-related decision-making has been rarely examined in an Eastern context (Song et al., 2016).

3 CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the group travel decision-making process of Chinese international students. More specifically, the study's objectives are to:

1. Explore what travel-related decisions have been made by group members

2. Examine if Chinese international students have any disagreements during the group travel-related decision-making process

3. Explore what disagreement resolution strategies are adopted to reach an agreement

4. And to explore the role of information searching during the group travel-related decision-making process.

This chapter is structured in six sections. After the introduction, the second section states the relation between the interpretive research paradigm and this research. In the third section, the research design is introduced, including explaining the choice of qualitative research, the application of semi-structured interviews, and the specific interview schedules. The fourth section introduces the pilot studies and the sampling strategies. The fifth section presents the data collection and data analysis. The analytical framework illustrating the analysis process is explained. The last section discusses the research merits and limitations.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The researcher's actions are guided and underpinned by a paradigm, which is a set of basic beliefs and reflects the world view of the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). There are four major research paradigms which have been adopted by researchers: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and interpretivism. Each paradigm provides researchers' flexible guidelines which connect theory and method and help researchers to organise and shape inquiries (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). A research paradigm consists of three main elements which determine how the

researcher conducts and interprets the research: ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

The researcher can identify the inquiry paradigm and its underlying basic beliefs by asking three essential questions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108): "the ontological question - what is the form and nature of reality, and what can be known about reality? The epistemological question - what is the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known? The methodological question - how can the researcher find out what he or she believes can be known?" These three questions are interconnected because the answer to any one question restricts the answers that may be given to the other two questions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). More briefly, according to the description given by Jones (1993), knowledge production depends on the definition of the reality of the researcher (ontology). The nature of the relationship between the research and knowledge (epistemology) relies on what knowledge the researcher counts as valid, which then determines the procedure and means the researcher seeks for such knowledge (methodology).

This thesis is governed by the interpretive paradigm (also known as the constructivist paradigm), which "assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjective epistemology (knower and respondent con-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). More specifically, instead of considering the world being organized by "immutable natural laws and mechanisms" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109), the interpretive paradigm perceives realities exist in multiple forms, corresponding to the context that "social life develops in a pluralistic fashion" (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004, p. 36). The interpretive social sciences researcher endeavours to develop explanations of phenomena using an inductive research approach, and uses the findings as the foundation for building a theory. In addition, the relationship between the researcher and the researched object is inter-subjective rather than objective (as is the case of the positivist paradigm) (Jennings, 2010) so that the understanding is "inextricably intertwined with the interaction between a particular investigator and a particular object or group" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110), and "argument and discussion are central to this approach to knowledge production" (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004, p. 36). Furthermore, the researcher who is convinced by the interpretive paradigm will use qualitative research approaches to acquire knowledge in the empirical world, and to gain understanding of the phenomena from an insider's perspective (Jennings, 2010).

The interpretive social sciences paradigm is appropriate for tourism and hospitality research exploring the experiences of individuals, because by conducting research with an interpretive social sciences paradigm the researcher can gain an in-depth understanding of the tourism phenomena or experience in the empirical world (Jennings, 2010). In addition, instead of focusing on predicting any future occurrence of behaviour in a particular situation, interpretive approach enables the researcher to explore the explanation and understanding behind certain behaviour (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). Furthermore, the interpretive approach enables the researcher to clearly reflect their world view on issues ranging from the selection of the research topic to the conclusion of the research by relatively transparent processes of data collection and analysis, which also allows the audience to justify and evaluate the decisions relating to the research (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3.1 Qualitative research

A qualitative methodology has been chosen to inform this research. The qualitative research methodology which is associated with the interpretive paradigm has gained increasing popularity as it assists the researcher to dig out people's deeper feelings relating to their tourism experience, and tourism events and phenomena (Jennings, 2010). Hence, given the purpose of this research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the group travel decision-making process of Chinese international students, the qualitative method provides interviewees opportunities to respond to open-ended interview questions rather than choosing established options on a questionnaire, and assists the researcher to explore broad patterns and trends (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). The qualitative methodology generates rich and detailed information based on a relatively small number of people reducing generalizability (Patton, 2001).

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

To achieve the research objectives, this study adopted semi-structured face-to-face interviews in order to collect descriptive data. As Jordan and Gibson (2004) summarised, there are many advantages of semi-structured in-depth interviews. First, it is an adaptable and flexible technique, as it enables interviewers to explore interviewees' experience and probe the themes of the project and also generates new

relevant information and insights which may help the interviewer to refine the interview schedule. Second, interviewers may develop empathy with interviewees and create a comfortable environment for interviewing. Third, valuable and valid insights can be drawn out as the interviewer re-phrases the questions to make sure interviewees can understand and give responses of high validity; and observe the body language and non-verbal form of communication to elicit information that could not be gathered by filling questionnaires. Fourth, although experiential and descriptive data with rich examples are generated, comparative analysis can be undertaken because interviewees were asked the same questions. Fifth, a semi-structured in-depth interview is easy for inexperienced researchers to carry out because there is some structure to help them lead the interview, and little equipment is needed and the location is adjustable according to the preferences of both the interviewee and the interviewer.

3.3.3 Interview schedule

The interview schedule consisted of three steps. First, the researcher introduced the research objectives; second, interviewees signed the consent form after reading the information sheet; and third was the interview. The interview was guided by a semi-structured question outline which had been developed based on literature review and the researcher's understanding of the topic (see Appendix A). There are four sections. The first section asked questions about interviewees' demographic information about their last trip taken with a group of friends in New Zealand to create a comfortable environment to communicate and more importantly to focus the interview on one trip. The second section explored interviewees' information search. The third section focused on interviewees' experience of group travel-related decision-making with questions about when and how group travel-related decisions had been made, what were their roles in the decision-making process, and their attitude towards those decisions and the way decisions had been made. The fourth section covered questions about whether any disagreement had happened during the decision-making process and whether disagreement resolution strategies were used. The question outline was provided in both English and Chinese, and a colleague who was fluent in both Chinese and English, and doing her PhD degree, was invited to review both of the two versions to make sure there was no ambiguity caused by translation.

3.3.4 Pilot study

As suggested by Jennings (2010), before going to the field, the researcher must check whether the tools developed for collecting empirical materials work. Indeed, pilot studies are a part of the research (Jennings, 2010). Conducting pilot studies may identify places where the research could fail in advance or are inappropriate or too complicated which need further revision (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). In the case of conducting interviews, a pilot study, working as a 'dress rehearsal' of the data collection process, enables the researcher to test the interview schedule and to make sure the interview questions are appropriate and well-structured in order to gather required data for the official research (Jennings, 2010).

Three friends of the researcher were invited to participate in pilot interviews. All were Chinese international students studying in New Zealand. Two interviews were conducted in cafes while one on campus, and recorded with the interviewees' permission. All interviews were guided by the interview schedule and questions were gone through in order to check whether every question could be well understood by the interviewees and whether rich information could be generated by the interviewees when responding. At the end of the interview, the interviewees were asked if there were any inappropriate or complicated questions, and for their suggestions. Recordings of each interview were listened to and transcribed to check whether the recordings were clear enough to listen to in order to make sure the environment for the interviews was appropriate.

Interviewees' suggestions, such as 'breaking up long questions into short questions', were adopted in order to make sure that every question is easy to understand. For example, the original question "How did you feel about those decisions and the way they were made?" was broken up into "How did you feel about those decisions?" and "How did you feel about the way these decisions were made?"

3.3.5 Sampling

The purposive sampling approach was adopted to target the appropriate interview participants for the reason that it "leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 2001, p. 46). Interviewees were Chinese international students and had to conform to the following criteria. First, within the last year, they had experience of travelling for leisure purposes in non-family groups in New Zealand.

Second, they experienced a group travel-related decision-making process and organised the trips themselves, not through a travel agency. Third, the aim was that more than one student from a travel party was interviewed. However, this was not always achieved.

In order to recruit interviewees, recruitment advertisements were put on notice boards in the campuses of Victoria University Wellington (VUW), including Victoria International office, and posted on social networks, including the Wechat group of Chinese Students' Association (CSA). The Chinese Students' Association of VUW is a forum where Chinese students can come for assistance, and there are more than three hundred Chinese students from different regions of China and various programmes and majors of VUW in this Wechat group. Additionally, the snowball sampling technique was also employed: interviewees were asked to recommend other suitable potential candidates, such as members from their own travel groups or from other travel parties.

The number of interviewees was not predetermined because of adopting a data saturation technique. The point of data saturation is reached when there are no more new insights emerging, only coinciding with previously gathered information (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014). Moreover, the data saturation technique has been widely used by qualitative researchers and worked well in tourism research (see examples: Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Song et al., 2016). According to the review of the sample size of qualitative tourism research conducted by Juvan and Dolnicar (2014), the average sample size in qualitative tourism research is 28, ranging from a minimum of 5 to a maximum of 65 participants.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Sixteen interviews were conducted and most interviewees were recruited through the Wechat group of the Chinese Student Association.

Data were collected in Wellington New Zealand because of the researcher's study location. One of the advantages was that it enriched the diversity of the research sample because interviewees from 11 provinces and 1 municipality of China have been reached. The interviews were conducted face-to-face over a coffee on campus. The materials (such as information sheet and consent form) provided at the beginning of the interviews were in both English and Chinese, while the interviews were conducted in Chinese as interviewees can describe and express themselves more accurately in their mother language in order to reduce ambiguities and

misunderstanding caused by language difference. The profile of the interviewees is provided in Section 4.2.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

3.5.1 Analysis technique

Data analysis of this study has been informed by thematic analysis, which is "a form of pattern recognition with the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis" (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 82). It is a compatible method, which works well within different research paradigms because of its theoretical freedom (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is not only able to describe the data set in rich detail, but also can be used to interpret different aspects of the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Instead of only focusing on the semantic content of the data, thematic analysis within the constructionist (interpretive) paradigm "starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations and ideology that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

A coding method which incorporated both inductive and deductive thematic analysis approaches were adopted. An inductive analysis approach is a data-driven approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which seeks new patterns and themes from the specific data of a qualitative study without fitting the data into predetermined analytical categories or a previous coding frame (Patton, 2001). In contrast, a deductive analysis approach examines the data for explaining or supporting existing concepts, theories or theoretical relationships (Patton, 2001).

3.5.2 Analytical framework

The analysis process was informed by a step-by-step guide of doing thematic analysis identified by Braun & Clarke (2006) in general, while a customised coding method which was based on the researcher's theoretical interests was employed. An analytical framework was developed to illustrate the analysis process (Figure 2).

The first step of the data analysis process was data familiarisation which needs the researcher to get immersed in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). More specifically, interview audio recordings have been transcribed into written form by the researcher

herself, which familiarises the researcher with the data and works as the bedrock for the rest of the analysis. In addition, each transcription of interview recordings has been gone through over and over again with going back to the original audio recordings and taking notes of the initial thoughts as necessary. Transcription was in Chinese (Mandarin) with data only transcribed when required for quotation in the thesis.
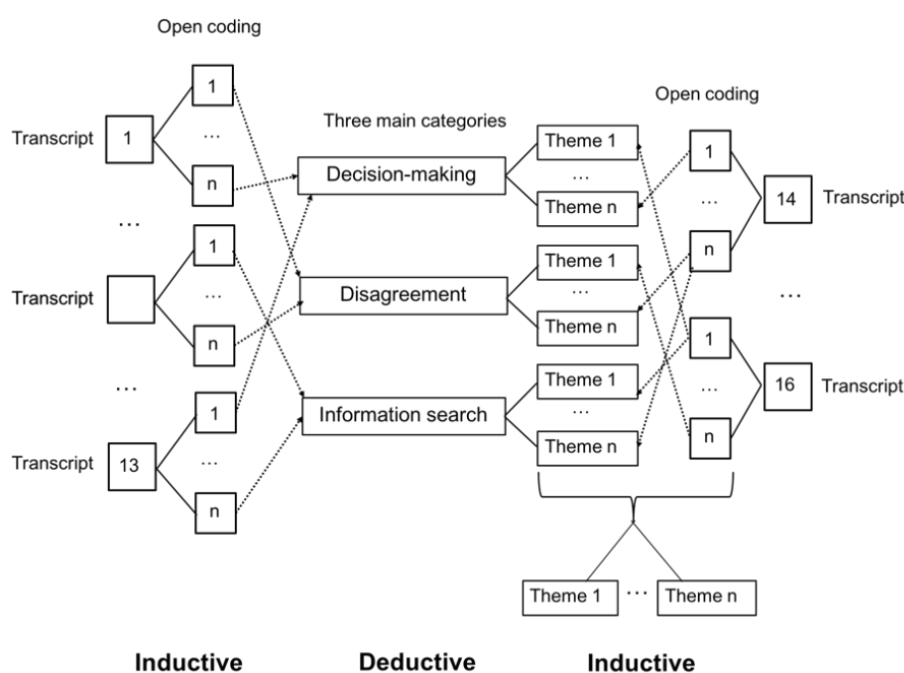
Figure 3.1 Step of data coding

The second step was generating initial codes, which is also referred to as open coding. During this preliminary coding process, words, sentences or paragraphs contained in each transcription have been described as codes (Jennings, 2010).

At the third step, three main categories have been developed based on the three research questions: decision-making, disagreement, and information search. Then, all the open coding was classified into these categories according to relevance. The fourth step was searching for themes. Codes which had been sorted into each main category were sorted again into potential themes under each category, and all the coded data was grouped together into those potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step, which is also referred to as axial coding, needs the researcher search for the connections and links between codes, themes and different levels of themes (Decrop, 2005; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Jennings, 2010).

The fifth step was reviewing themes. Braun & Clarke (2006) suggested reviewing and refining the themes at two levels. Level one encompasses reviewing coded data and

examining whether the coded data tends to correspond to a consistent theme. At level two, the researcher needs to ascertain whether each theme is valid and is able to represent the meanings concerning the whole data set. More precisely, the open coding of transcript 14 to transcript 16 was employed to assist this process. First, the researcher examined whether this open coding fitted into those previously developed themes. Second, the researcher examined whether these themes work well in relation to the data in the selected transcripts.

3.6   RESEARCH MERITS AND LIMITATIONS

3.6.1   Merits and strengths

First, this study addresses several gaps in the literature. Although attention of the travel decision-making studies has gradually shifted from the previously dominated individual choice process to a more collective perspective (families and couples), non-family groups such as group of friends as a travel decision-making unit have been neglected, as have their decision-making process and disagreement resolution strategies. Furthermore, group travel decision-making has rarely been examined in an Eastern cultural context. Although the study can only make a limited contribution to fill these research gaps, it shed some light upon non-family group travel decision-making in the Eastern context, and added some knowledge to this study area in terms of both academic and managerial aspects.

Second, as a cultural insider, the researcher shared the same cultural background, similar social identity, and language with the interviewees. For instance, as a Chinese international student studying at VUW, the researcher has a close connection to the VUW Chinese international student groups, which provides access to the field (Ganga & Scott, 2006). Moreover, sharing the same cultural background with the interviewees enables the researcher to better understand interviewees' thoughts and feelings to provide proper prompts to have good-quality conversations during the interview. Additionally, interviews have been conducted in the native language of both the researcher and the participants, which to some extent avoids interviewees' thoughts being interrupted while switching from different languages, for speaking in their native language has been perceived as an aid to thinking (Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010). What is more, as the researcher shares similar social identity with the interviewees (both are Chinese international students of similar age who are far away from their home country while studying in VUW), some possible bias which

might be caused by social distance between the researcher and the participants can be reduced or mitigated.

Third, research that has been conducted in the decision-making area mostly adopted a quantitative research method. Instead of following the traditional fashion of travel decision-making research adopting a quantitative research method, this study employed a qualitative research method guided by the interpretive research paradigm. Using semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the research topic through interaction with the participants.

3.6.2   Challenges and Limitations

There are some limitations to this study. First, due to the limited research period, a sample of VUW-based students has been reached. Although the interviewees were from 11 provinces and 1 municipality of China, they were still less representative in terms of a large group of Chinese international students. Moreover, although being guided by a rigorous research paradigm, assisted by a fundamental analysis method and advanced computer software, lack of experience of conducting qualitative research was one of the challenges of the researcher. Second, there were some limitations to the research design which collected data basically depending on the interviewees' memory. Although the insights and understanding of participants towards a certain topic could be dug out, it might cause recall bias (Song et al., 2016). Third, although following the recommendation that "stay in the original language as long and as much as possible" (Van Nes et al., 2010, p. 315) to reduce potential limitation, the final translation stage might contribute to meaning lost or conceptual equivalence.

4 CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of this study structured in three main themes: travel-related decisions, models of group decision-making, and disagreement prevention and resolution.

The first research questions, "Are Chinese International Students (CISs) travelling around New Zealand engaged in discussions regarding travel-related decisions, and which are the most discussed decisions?" are addressed in the first theme. Three models of group decision-making emerged from the interviews: leadership, division of work and shared decision-making. They are also presented under the second theme. The relevant content on information searching, linked to the third research questions, "How does information searching occur during the decision-making process and what are the most-adopted information sources?" were found to be related to the adoption of the group decision-making models. As a result, the initial third research question will not be presented as a separate section. Information searching is demonstrated, together with the corresponding group decision-making models, under the second theme.

The third theme provides the findings to address the second research question, "What disagreement resolution strategies are used to make travel-related decisions?" Since most interviewees perceived there was a lack of disagreement during the group decision-making process, the focus of the research question shifted from disagreement resolution strategies to also include disagreement prevention strategies. Five disagreement prevention strategies and one external influencing factor have been recognised, and are discussed before the disagreement resolution strategies are presented.

After the introduction, the second section presents the demographics of the respondents and briefly introduces their travel behaviours. The third section introduces the important decisions that respondents thought had to be made and the influencing factors of the most commonly discussed decisions during the group decision-making process. In the fourth section, three models of group decision-making are introduced, along with each relevant content of information

searching. The fifth section presents the disagreement prevention strategies and introduces some disagreement resolution strategies.

4.2 PROFILE OF INTERVIEWEES

The profile of interviewees comprises two parts, namely demographics (Table 4.1) and travel behaviour of interviewees (Table 4.2). Chinese pseudonyms are used. Information on interviewees, such as the specific time spent in New Zealand, and the majors they were studying are left out in order to protect the participants' identities. Both Chinese names and English names have been considered when deciding pseudonyms. It has been decided to use Chinese pseudonyms eventually in order to give the whole study, especially the finding chapter, an immersive context which English pseudonyms could take away in contrast.

Presented in Table 4.1 are sixteen interviewees who have been interviewed from eleven groups: one member from seven of the groups; two members from three of the groups; three members from one group. The gender of interviewees reached the balance of nine males and seven females. The average age was around twenty-five, ranging from the youngest at nineteen years old to the oldest at twenty-nine years old.

Travel Group	Name	Gender	Age	Have been in NZ	Study programme
Group 1	Junjie	Male	29	1-3 years	PhD
	Huilan	Female	25	1-3 years	PhD
	Sicong	Male	29	<1 year	PhD
Group 2	Chunjiao	Female	28	>3 years	PhD
	Ronghao	Male	29	>3 years	PhD
Group 3	Siyuan	Male	23	<1 year	Master
	Zhiming	Male	23	<1 year	Master
Group 4	Xuesong	Male	27	>3 years	Bachelor
	Jiamu	Male	26	>3 years	Bachelor
Group 5	Qinming	Male	23	<1 year	Master
Group 6	Wenjun	Female	19	1-3 years	Bachelor
Group 7	Qingzhao	Female	24	1-3 years	Master
Group 8	Xinyi	Female	24	<1 year	Bachelor
Group 9	Shenle	Female	23	>3 years	Bachelor
Group 10	Yueru	Female	26	1-3 years	Master
Group 11	Zhanpeng	Male	19	>3 years	Bachelor

Table 4.1 Demographics of interviewees

The study programme also reached the balance of six Bachelor students, five Master students and five PhD students. In terms of time spent in New Zealand, interviewees

have been categorised into three groups with five interviewees having spent less than one year in the country, five for more than one year but less than three years, and six for more than three years.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	Group 9	Group 10	Group 11
Auckland		✔									
Hamilton		✔									
Rotorua		✔			✔				✔		
Taupo		✔	✔	✔			✔				
Gisborne		✔									
Tongariro		✔					✔	✔			
Napier		✔									
Palmerston North		✔									
Christchurch	✔									✔	
Tekapo										✔	
Wanaka											✔
Queenstown										✔	
Dunedin						✔					

Figure 4. 1   Interviewees' destinations

Some groups travelled to more than one destination (Figure 4.1). Group 8 travelled to two neighbouring destinations, Taupo and Tongariro, while Group 10 travelled in the South Island and visited Christchurch, Tekapo and Queenstown. Group 2 organised a North Island trip and visited eight destinations: Auckland, Hamilton, Rotorua, Taupo, Tongariro, Gisborne, Napier and Palmerston North. Members of seven travel groups indicated that they travelled with their Chinese friends, while two groups were made up of members from China and New Zealand, and two were made up of members from China and other countries. The number of group members averaged four people with a minimum of two and a maximum of five members. Although the average trip was five days, most travel groups travelled for three to four days. The group who went on the North Island trip spent the longest time period travelling for two weeks. Self-driving tours and touring were the two most adopted travel styles, with only one travel group going tramping. As a result, most groups used a car, followed by taking buses, and the tramping group hitchhiked. In terms of accommodation, most chose hotels and motels, some lived in backpackers, the tramping group stayed at a camp site, and one group lived in a holiday house.

Table 4.2 demonstrates the travel behaviour of each group with destinations located in the North Island dominating. Because of geography and time limitations, Taupo was the most popular destination, followed by Rotorua and Tongariro, for the relatively short distance to drive from Wellington.

Travel group	Name	Group members	Travel companions	Destination	Trip Duration	Travel style	Transportation modes	Accommodation modes
Group 1	Junjie Huilan Sicong	5	Friends (all Chinese)	Christchurch	3 days	Self-driving tour	Flight & renting a car	Backpacker
Group 2	Chunjiao Ronghao	4	Friends (all Chinese)	North Island	2 weeks	Self-driving tour	Renting a car	Holiday house
Group 3	Siyuan Zhiming	3	Friends (all Chinese)	Taupo	4 days	Touring	Bus	Backpacker
Group 4	Xuesong Jiamu	5	Friends (all Chinese)	Taupo	5 days	Touring	Bus & taxi	Motel
Group 5	Qinming	5	Friends (all Chinese)	Rotorua	4 days	Self-driving tour	Renting a car	Backpacker
Group 6	Wenjun	2	Friends (all Chinese)	Dunedin	4 days	Touring	Flight & walking	Hotel
Group 7	Qingzhao	3	Friends (Chinese and New Zealander)	Taupo & Rotorua	4 days	Self-driving tour	Car	Motel
Group 8	Xinyi	4	Friends (Chinese and other international students)	Tongariro	3 days	Tramping	Hitchhiking	Camping site
Group 9	Shenle	4	Friends (Chinese and New Zealander)	Rotorua	4 days	Self-driving tour	Renting a car	Motel
Group 10	Yueru	3	Friends (all Chinese)	Christchurch, Tekapo & Queenstown	1 week	Touring	Bus	Backpacker
Group 11	Zhanpeng	4	Friends (Chinese and other international students)	Wanaka	3 days	Touring	Bus & bike	Hotel

Table 4. 2   Travel behaviour of interviewees

The travel behaviour of the Chinese interviewees is in accordance with the report by King and Gardiner (2015) that Chinese international student travellers take more short trips and prefer hotels and motels for accommodation. Additionally, this corresponds to the previously identified travel pattern (Ryan & Xie, 2003; Ryan & Zhang, 2007) that Chinese international students studying in New Zealand tend to travel in groups of around four members, and prefer travelling in cars.

4.3   TRAVEL-RELATED DECISIONS

When asked about travel-related decisions that had to be made for the trips (i.e. the most important travel-related decisions), most interviewees identified accommodation, followed by transportation, destination, travel activities, departure

time, food and restaurants, tourism attractions, budget and schedule.

As the study and analysis developed, it was found that tourism attraction was the most discussed travel-related decision during the group decision-making process, followed by travel activities, food and restaurants, accommodation and transportation. Some interviewees talked about the factors influencing the group decision-making regarding these aspects, which were also the main concerns when the travel groups were trying to make the decisions.

This section presents the process of group decision-making, the influencing factors, and why the group members thought these decisions were important.

4.3.1 Accommodation

The accommodation was considered the most important travel-related decision. Chunjiao, a PhD student from Group 2 who had a two-week self-driving trip around the North Island with her boyfriend and two other males. She shared her concerns about the shortage of accommodation during peak seasons.

> *… and you have to decide your accommodation, that is to say, you have to make a reservation for accommodation in advance, for some places are so popular that there is probably no room left for you if you arrive at the place and want to check-in on the same day, which is totally an unpleasant travel experience.*

Jiamu was a Master student who travelled to Taupo by bus with four others. He made a similar point to Chunjiao indicating the importance of booking accommodation in advance, especially for a relatively long trip to popular destinations.

Accommodation was found to be discussed frequently during the group decision-making process. The travel budget of each group member and the location and price of the accommodation were found to have the influence on the decision-making in the aspect of accommodation.

Huilan from Group 1 pointed out that considering each members' budget for the accommodation was important.

> *When we were trying to decide the accommodation, […] there was a boy saying "I want the cheapest." [We thought] he was concerned about saving money for some reason… […] So you have to take care of everyone who is involved in your travel group. Hum… just have a general idea about their*

financial condition.

Wenjun from Group 6, and Zhanpeng from Group 11 indicated that the price and location of the accommodation were the factors they and their friends would consider. Wenjun and Zhanpeng both indicated that their choice of accommodation was limited by their travel budget but they eventually booked a hotel. According to Chunjiao from Group 2, manifesting the local culture and features was one of the factors that influenced their selection accommodation.

4.3.2　Transportation

Transportation was an important decision the interviewees thought had to be made. Wenjun from Group 6, who was a Bachelor student from a two-member travel group which travelled to Dunedin, explained the reason why she considered the decision regarding transportation was important as this per se meant the start of a trip.

> *[...] For myself, only if I have booked the air ticket that I feel everything is ready, otherwise everything is still just a plan on a piece of paper waiting to be conducted...*

Huilan from Group 1 self-drove with her other four group members to Christchurch for a skiing trip. She pointed out that using public transport means they cannot fully take control of arranging time themselves. However, Xinyi from Group 8, who went on the only tramping group and hitchhiked to Tongariro with three group members from other countries indicated they were quite casual with the transportation mode as they had other alternatives (e.g. buses).

The transportation mode was also one of the most discussed decisions during the group decision-making process. In most cases, it seems that self-driving was regarded as a more advisable transportation mode (even by those who took buses).

Junjie from Group 1, who rented a car to travel in the South Island, pointed out the limitations caused by the low accessibility to some places when using public transport to travel. He compared the complexity of renting cars in New Zealand to that in China, and indicated that it is suitable for self-driving when travelling in New Zealand because of customised car rental procedures, complete transport indicators and signs and less traffic jams. However, Zhiming from Group 3 made the decision to not drive a car considering the safety issues when self-driving in New Zealand.

Many interviewees admitted the importance of driving a car when travelling around New Zealand. The choice of transportation influenced other travel-related decisions

such as travel destinations and accommodation, and the flexibility of a travel schedule.

4.3.3   Destination

Interviewees perceived that destination was one of the decisions that had to be made. Ronghao from Group 2, a PhD student who went on the North Island trip with Chunjiao. He pointed out the importance of deciding on the general travel destinations.

> *It must be where to go. Because... although we were good friends, everybody had to have the same "big picture" so that we can... [start planning].*

As discussed in the last section, the selection of travel destinations was influenced by the choice of transportation.

4.3.4   Travel activities

In terms of travel activities, some interviewees indicated that they had made decisions on what to do during a certain time period. Zhanpeng from Group 11, who, a Bachelor student who toured Wanaka with friends from China and other countries, pointed out that deciding travel activities was to avoid different opinions.

> *[...] For example, if we wanted to visit a lake then we had had to decide which parts of the lake we visit today and tomorrow. We should make decisions in advance, otherwise we would have different opinions and argue with each other.*

Travel activity was one of the most discussed decisions during the process of group decision-making.

The decisions relevant to travel activities were found to be made both before the trip and when the travel group arrived at the destinations. Xinyi from Group 8, who went tramping with other members from New Zealand and other countries, indicated she and her friends had met before the tramp. She indicated that they had determined which level of the tramping route they were going to take after learning about each member's tramping ability.

Sicong from Group 1 indicated that they made decisions on which skiing field to visit after they had arrived at the destination. He implied that budget and time were the

factors that influenced their selection. Sicong's group member Huilan also mentioned that the decision on which skiing fields to choose was also limited by the location of the accommodation they had booked.

4.3.5   Departure time

Qingzhao from Group 7 travelled to Taupo and Rotorua with one Chinese friend and one New Zealander friend. She considered finding a departure time which fits all members of the travel group.

> *Deciding departure time means… everyone has to… [find a time that suits everyone] My Chinese friend and I were free for we were having the school break, and we need to choose a time period when we all had free time.*

In the case of tramping at Tongariro, Xinyi from Group 8 indicated the departure time was relevant to the tramping experience.

> *[…] We had decided to set off early just in case the mountain would be packed with people if we left too late. Our concerns turned out to be true. When we looked down from the top of the mountain, wow… you were only able to see the dense crowds of people. It is very annoying if there are so many people, especially for tramping, for you have to follow the crowds instead of adjusting to the pace of your own ability.*

4.3.6   Food and restaurants

Some interviewees considered food and restaurants as important. Xuesong from Group 4, who visited Taupo in the same travel group with Jiamu, revealed their worries about food and restaurants at the destination.

> *[…] Another thing is having a look at what to eat. Because we were worried about what if we do not like the local food. In this case, generally, we would search if there were any options for fast food around. If we were not used to the local food, at least we can turn to KFC or McDonald's.*

In contrast, a few interviewees such as Sicong and Qingzhao from Group 7 seemed not to perceive food and restaurants as one of the important aims of their trips.

The decisions regarding food and restaurants were discussed during the group decision-making process. Huilan from Group 1 pointed out that when making

decisions on food and restaurants, girls' requirements and recommendations were firstly taken into consideration.

> *[…] Sometimes we would take care of girls and girls' thoughts. Everyone was like more accommodating to girls. For example, if girls wanted to eat at this place, saying that "I want to have deep-fried chicken, I don't like that ramen", we would consider [girls' requirements]. Because boys are more accommodating, they will not argue. [...] So, it was like someone gave a suggestion, if there was nobody who strongly disagreed and everyone thought it was okay, we would accept the suggestion.*

Ronghao from Group 2 reported that Chinese restaurants were their first choice, while sometimes they cooked their own food at the accommodation.

4.3.7 Tourism attractions

On decisions relating to tourism attractions, Sicong from Group 1 viewed choosing the place they were heading to depended on their travel purpose, and this was an essential decision.

> *…deciding the place we are going to is also very important. You cannot start making the plan in haste until you actually arrive at that place. Taking last time when we went to the skiing field as an example, we had had some options of those skiing fields to choose from. But as soon as we arrived at Christchurch, we learned about the actual local situation, and then made the decision right away, rather than when we were about to set off, as we had no idea where to go, which I think is blind.*

Tourism attractions were the most discussed decision during the group decision-making process.

In the case of the round the North Island trip of Group 2 which lasted for almost two weeks, Chunjiao pointed out that they had already decided the duration of stay at each destination, which she thought was a big plan, for they had eight destinations to visit. As a result, they made the decisions on tourism attractions when they arrived at each destination.

> *Yeah… it was a very big plan. That is to say, after making the big plan, […] we were not able to make those small plans in more detail, like the tourism attractions we are going to on a certain day. I felt I did not want to make more decisions as long as the big travel plan had been made, we can make other*

decisions when we arrive at the destinations.

Qinming from Group 5, which chose self-driving, indicated that when making the decisions on tourism attractions, the group members would consider its "cost efficiency". He further indicated that whether they wanted to visit other attractions on the way to the original attractions they were heading to or not was not important to them, as they had high mobility driving a car. As a consequence, Qinming indicated that the travel schedule became more flexible and customised. The factors restricting the group making the decisions on tourism attractions were related to some uncertain factors such as weather or the physical conditions of the group members.

Shenle from Group 9 made the point they benefited from the collision of different cultures as it brought them more ideas and choices.

> *[...] If culture collision happened, for example, my boyfriend had planned to go to four attractions in one day, while my friends found out that we actually can visit five places, which was also inexpensive. If I thought the schedule arrangement that other members gave was good, I would explain my boyfriend's thoughts to other group members and explain theirs to him. Then we made decisions by voting.*

4.3.8 Budget

Deciding on a travel budget was considered as a measure that had to be taken to protect the friendship between the group members. Shenle from Group 9, who travelled to Rotorua by car with her boyfriend who is a New Zealander along with two Chinese friends, emphasised the importance of deciding the travel budget.

> *We have to make the budget [clear]. We are a team, because... there is a Chinese saying "even reckoning makes long friends", I do not want to... [spoil the friendship] we travelled together because we were good friends. I do not want to see that we drift apart because we did not clear the finance problem in the last trip.*

Ronghao from Group 2 made the point that deciding the travel budget is the premise of making other travel-related decisions.

4.3.9   Travel schedule

The travel schedule is a more general decision, which is a holistic plan for the entire trip. It includes some of the decisions mentioned earlier, such as departure time, tourism attractions, travel activities, etc. Junjie from Group 1 described their travel schedule and emphasised its importance.

> *I think the travel schedule was quite important, which of course was based on the premise that you had booked airline tickets. You have to decide how to allocate time and arrange activities, which I also think was very important. More specifically, for instance, you cannot start considering where to go right after you arrive. You always need to consider [in advance], what to do first and what to do later, and to plan and arrange those activities is rational, not boring, nor exhausting, which I think is very important.* (Junjie)

4.3.10   Customised and practical decisions

Some more customised and practical decisions emerged, such as gas stations and gasoline, and luggage and equipment, which depended on the travel style and travel activities of the groups. Chunjiao from the self-driving North Island group, shared her opinion about gas stations and gasoline.

> *I think things relating to gas stations were very important, for we were driving a car ourselves. If sometimes we have to drive for a long time, we have to make sure in advance that there were gas stations during that driving period.*

Huilan from Group 1 indicated that their trip was influenced by weather and the travel activities they were going to do at the destination. She made the point that they had to have the basic cognition about the places. That is to say, they had to have the idea that what were the necessities for that trip.

Rather than focusing on the importance of one single decision, some interviewees also viewed these travel-related decisions to be interconnected to each other. Yueru from Group 10 toured Christchurch, Tekapo and Queenstown with two other Chinese group members for one week. She acknowledged the importance of deciding accommodation and transportation, which is related to the travel budget.

> *I think the key decisions were accommodation and transportation, for they take up a great part of the whole trip and they were involved in your travel plan and your budget.*

Huilan from Group 1 revealed the influence of one decision upon making other decisions. Similarly, Zhiming from Group 3, who travelled with two Chinese friends by bus, emphasised the interlocking relationship between some decisions, such as transportation, tourism attractions and accommodation, and especially the transportation mode they chose limited other decisions.

In summary, accommodation has been regarded as the decision that has to be made by most interviewees, considering that there might be a shortage during peak seasons and it is necessary preparation for a long trip. Also, completing the reservations for transportation means the real beginning of the trip to some interviewees. Using public transport brings limitations to the freedom of arranging the time and making other travel-related decisions. However, for the tramping group, the transportation mode was not a matter, for they were able to switch flexibly between the alternatives. In addition, travel destinations are the "big pictures" the travel group have to decide. Having the same destinations is the premise of the group to start planning the trip. Moreover, deciding travel activities in advance is regarded as the avoidance of different opinions and argument. Deciding the departure time means looking for the common time period that works for every group member. It has also been identified as having significant importance on the quality of the tramping experience. In terms of food and restaurants, a few travel groups would consider the fast food restaurants as opposed to the local restaurants, while some travel groups did not regard it as the main aim of the trip. Besides, tourism attractions which are determined by the travel purpose, have been considered as the decision that has to be made. As for travel budget, similar to the travel destination, it has been regarded as the premise of travelling together with other group members. Also, deciding the travel budget is necessary to protect the friendship between group members.

The travel schedule is a more holistic plan which includes travel-related decisions such as departure time, tourism attractions, travel activities, etc. A "rational, not boring", and "not exhausting" travel schedule is expected. Additionally, depending on the travel style and travel activities, some customised and practical decisions emerged, such as deciding where to stop to refuel and how to operate the self-service stations when driving themselves; and deciding how much luggage to bring when they chose to live in a tent rather than the hut at the campsite. Interviewees acknowledged that travel-related decisions are interconnected to each other.

Decisions on one aspect often influence or limit making other decisions.

In addition, tourism attractions were found to be the most discussed travel-related decision during the group decision-making process, followed by decisions on travel activities, food and restaurants, accommodation and transportation.

Some travel groups decided on which tourism attractions to visit after arriving at the destination. The "cost efficiency" was considered, as well as some uncertain factors such as the weather or the physical condition of the group members. Using a car reduced some of the restrictions. The benefit of different cultures was acknowledged as it brought more ideas and choices.

The decisions relevant to travel activities were found to be made both before the trip and when the travel group arrived at the destinations. They were influenced by the travel budget and amount of time available for the groups, and also limited by other decisions (e.g. the location of accommodation). In terms of the decisions on food and restaurants, group members' budget and thoughts were always taken into account, while girls' requirements and recommendations were taken into consideration first. Chinese restaurants were found to be the most popular choice, while sometimes interviewees cooked food for themselves at the accommodation. Furthermore, the travel budget of each group member and the location and price of the accommodation influenced the decision-making. Accommodation with typical local culture and features was more favoured by the interviewees. Additionally, the self-driving was regarded as a more advisable transportation mode by most of the interviewees. Self-driving was considered preferable to avoid the possible limitations caused by low accessibility to some places rather than using public transport. Compared with the complexity of renting cars and the road conditions in China, New Zealand was perceived as customised, and the road conditions were perceived as better with complete transport indicators and signs and less traffic jams. However, safety issues on self-driving was one of the factors that influenced interviewees to not drive a car. The selection of transportation influenced the decisions on travel destinations and accommodation. Moreover, using a car was considered as enriching the flexibility of the arrangement of the travel schedule, while taking the buses restricted the original travel schedule.

4.4 MODELS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

As mentioned earlier, three group decision-making models have been identified: leadership, division of work and shared decision-making.

When answering the question "how did the group make travel-related decisions", interviewees spoke about when and where they started planning the trip, whether there were any strategies they had used to make group decisions, and they described their or other members' roles that had been taken to make the decisions.

In most cases, instead of adopting a single model, group members tended to shift between different models depending on what travel-related decisions they were trying to make. In addition, the information search was found to be related to group decision-making models.

This section presents each group decision-making model and introduces how information searching occurred and the use of information sources under different group decision-making models. Quotes and examples from the interviews have been taken to illustrate corresponding models.

4.4.1 Leadership

Leadership refers to the role members played in the travel groups, which required members to take up the responsibility of a leader in the group, such as looking for potential group members, working out the general travel plan, and making reservations of transportation and accommodation. A leader was also recognised as a necessary role who is responsible for gathering all members together, listening to different opinions and then integrating them, and always being passion-filled towards the upcoming trip and arousing the enthusiasm of group members to move forward with the whole travel plan.

This section firstly presents the three common roles in the model of leadership. Secondly, group members' views about leadership in group decision-making will be given, and the characteristics of the leaders will be illustrated subsequently.

4.4.1.1 Three roles in the model of leadership

There are commonly three roles in the model of leadership, namely travel initiator, main plan provider, and main decision maker. The travel initiator is the person who

has the initial idea for the trip and who gets potential members together. Sicong, from Group 1 went to Christchurch with four Chinese students. He identified his friend Junjie, who had initiated the planning, as the leader of the travel group.

> *Junjie had first found the information about the special discount airline tickets and then shared with us, asking if we had any interests. We said yes and then booked the tickets, and then decided which skiing field we would go to, I feel Junjie was the leader of our group.*

The main plan provider is responsible for collecting travel information and travel tips to make the whole travel plan and arrange travel schedules. However, in most cases, the main plan provider always made the final travel decisions with others. Qinming from Group 5, a Master student who had driven to Rotorua with four Chinese friends, gave an example of how the group members had worked out the whole travel plan.

> *For example, when making the travel schedule, I made the whole travel plan and presented it to the travel group, asking their opinions about tourism attractions, modes of transportation, and time […] they might give me some suggestions after going through the whole travel plan, like "Qinming, how about going to this place?". So we could… [further revise the plan].*

The main decision maker is the person who makes the final decision when making travel-related decisions. The other members in the travel group fully trust and follow the main decision maker, and even rely on the decisions made by the main decision maker. Qingzhao from Group 7, who had travelled with her New Zealander friend, pointed out that her New Zealander friend was the main decision maker.

> *I was not the main decision maker. It was my New Zealander friend… [who made most of the decisions] … It was her who had collected all the travel information.*

Similarly, Bachelor student Shenle, who went to Rotorua with her boyfriend and two Chinese friends, revealed the role her boyfriend had played in the travel group when making travel plans.

> *… but in terms of the final decisions, because they know that my boyfriend [the main decision maker] is good at this… [making travel plans], he has stayed in New Zealand for quite a long time, so everyone was like… having a sense of dependence on him, everyone was like "I trust you …". So there would not be many different opinions.*

Although, being considered as the authority in the group, the main decision makers were not dominating. They also took the travel preference into consideration and

paid respect to their requirements, which was the starting point and principle of making a travel plan for the whole group. Qingzhao from Group 7 gave an example of how her requirements had been met by the main decision maker.

> *For example, I told her in advance that instead of having too exciting travel activities such as skydiving, I would prefer to have some soft and gentle travel activities. Then she listed many options for me to choose from. Basically, I trusted and followed what she said.*

Shenle from Group 9 had a similar experience. The local knowledge her boyfriend had and the principle of considering every members' requirements and feelings had together made him the main decision maker of the group.

> *Just as I mentioned before, the plan had been made after gathering other group members' opinions, travel preference and information. He [the main decision maker] worked out the plan and presented it to us. If somebody raised any objection [which did not frequently happen according to Shenle's quote above], we would discuss and then revise the plan, or we would follow the plan. By this way, we saved so much time.*

Instead of calling themselves the "leader", the people who were identified by other members as the leader of the travel groups tended to refer to themselves as the person who made most of the decisions, or the main plan provider, or one of the participators in the discussion of decision-making, rather than using the term leader. For instance, in the quote from Sicong above, he regarded Junjie as the leader of the travel group, as did Huilan, while Junjie considered himself more of a trip initiator.

> *Could I be a trip initiator? Because I would not like to say that I decided... I think generally I was like "how about going for a trip?".*

In contrast, both Huilan and Sicong perceived Junjie to be the leader.

> *[...] And... in terms of making the travel plan and schedule, yes, I discussed with him, but basically, I think... his general plan took priority. But based on the plan he had already worked out, we would add something or give some suggestions if the schedule is not very full.* (Huilan)

> *As for renting cars, because Junjie has rented cars a lot of times he was very familiar with it... [...] Based on the numbers of group members and the vehicle condition, he decided and rented the car on his own... [...] and in terms of booking accommodation, he asked for our opinion... [...] and it was he who literally booked the accommodation... [...] On the day we set off, Junjie picked every one of us and drove us to the airport...* (Sicong)

When it came to the question "what was your role in the process of group decision-making?", Yueru from Group 10, who had made most of the decisions in the group, also showed some evasiveness in calling herself the leader.

Yueru: *…hum… I think I was half the leader and half the assistant.*

Researcher: *Based on your description before, I feel you are more like a leader and it was you who initiated the trip as well.*

Yueru: *(Laughter)…yeah, actually I think… no matter if we travel nationally or internationally, basically, I play a role of searching information for travel activities, checking the travel route, and making the travel plan…*

In the group decision-making model of leadership, the group "leaders" were found to play the roles of mainly searching travel information. Junjie from Group 1, who was the travel initiator for his travel group, indicated that it was searching for discount tickets for tourism destinations that often enabled him to initiate the trip.

I travel a lot. I often check if there are any special discount tickets to some places. If there are, then I will tell others and ask them if they are interested in going.

Zhanpeng from Group 11 indicated that one of his friends went through all the collected information and shared these options with the other members to discuss and choose. He perceived this friend as the person who mainly collected the information, including both travel-related information and the travel preference and requirement of the group members (main decision maker).

We did not allocate the tasks precisely as to who would collect information. It was the person who was better at collecting information who offered to search related information. Other members like me just sat beside him and gave some suggestions. So most travel information was collected by my friend, including information on travel activities, accommodation, transportation and bicycle renting. Well, he had collected lots of relevant information. After other members raised up their requirements, he would screen the information which did not meet our requirements. Only the options which we all were satisfied with were left.

Qingzhao from Group 7 pointed out that her New Zealand friend searched for and made all the travel plans and schedule by herself (main decision maker).

I was not the person who mainly collected the information. It was the New Zealand friend who collected information. […] We followed all her arrangements.

In addition, other members of the travel groups were found to search and collect information by themselves when their group leaders did not make the decisions on behalf of other members. Qingming from Group 5, who was identified as the main plan provider, indicated that his group members searched for information by themselves to give further suggestions to refine the travel plan he had made.

> *Yeah, rather than only depending on me to make all the travel-related decisions and provide the travel plan for the group to vote, other group members would learn about the places we were going as well.*

4.4.1.2 *Leadership in the group decision-making process*

The importance of having a leader was acknowledged by some members of the travel groups. Sicong from Group 1 shared his view that instead of being the main decision maker, a leader in the travel group is more like a main plan provider and also the person with passion for the upcoming trip, who pushes the whole process of making a travel plan, while the final decisions will be made collectively by all the group members eventually.

> *I think at first we need someone to lead us to organise the whole thing [the travel plan], leading the whole thing to move forward. There should be somebody who provides a plan for us to discuss, and then we decide whether the plan is rational or not and whether to follow the plan or not. If it is rational and acceptable, we move to the next stage, otherwise, we further revise the plan.*

Qingzhao from Group 7 pointed out that it is necessary to have someone leading the travel group. She emphasised the importance of knowing the priorities of roles in working with other group members.

> *I think no matter what we are dealing with, be it a project or a decision, as long as there are more than three people, more than two people, we should make clear who is dominating and who is assisting… […] If we do not make this clear, it becomes a situation that someone wants this, while someone wants that, which I do not think would lead to a pleasant travel experience.*

Chunjiao from Group 2 was identified as the leader of the travel group by her friend Ronghao. In addition, according to the quotes from both Chunjiao and Junjie, who expressed their views about what travel-related decisions had to be made, it was found that they had also been aware of more general travel decisions like the travel

schedule and driving route, which were the premise of making other relatively more detailed travel-related decisions. Junjie from Group 1 perceived making group decisions in this way (having one person to decide the general travel plan) as the way to avoid the whole plan becoming a mess and at the same time being more efficient.

In terms of making plans for a driving route, which was my responsibility, if other members only care about the tourism attractions and travel activities, the result would be a complete mess. If the situation is that someone wants to go here, someone wants to go there, and meanwhile, we have to take the driving route and weather condition into consideration, it would be hard to deal with such a situation. But if it had been decided by only one person, other members would have a general idea which attractions to go to and what activities to do near the spots we would pass by, rather than proposing some attractions and activities randomly, which leads to a slow decision-making process or even an unpleasant ending. So I think it is more efficient, no matter what decisions we are trying to make.

Considering the composition of the groups in terms of nationalities, leaders existed in groups with all Chinese members and also groups with Chinese and New Zealander members. In the two cases of this study (Group 8 and Group 11), the only New Zealander member in each group had taken the role of the leader. Qingzhao was quite satisfied with the travel plans and the decisions made by her New Zealander friend as she considered it as giving members more flexible options rather than following one fixed schedule, which she considers is the Chinese style of leadership.

I think the way of communication itself is different. My New Zealander friend was like giving us two options in a certain time period, telling us what the first option was like and what the second option was like, and giving us suggestions about which to choose...

Indeed, New Zealander leaders of the travel groups turned out to be more serious about making travel-related decisions. Travel plans and travel-related decisions made by New Zealander leaders have been found to be more organised and scheduled, and followed the plan more strictly. Shenle from Group 9 shared her experience.

[...] ...We are men with plans. If we choose to travel to a certain place, we will start planning one week, or even one month before. Then we will collect a lot of information, and we will... if... in fact the actual time of travel is very short, we will arrange a full schedule in case we set off late. For example, the original plan was to set off at 4 pm, but we literally started driving at 5.20 pm, which

might lead us to miss one of the options in the schedule. But it does not matter because we still have the follow-up plans and we never need a plan B.

4.4.1.3 Characteristics of the leaders

In the two cases of those travel groups who had the New Zealander to play the role of the leader, their native advantages were identified. As Qingzhao from Group 7 indicated, knowing the native language, understanding the native culture and travel destinations are necessary elements in making travel-related decisions, and that is the reason why she was willing to follow the leader's decisions.

> *[...] Because she is local, she knows better than us international students where to go and visit, and what to experience in New Zealand from a more local perspective... [...] It was not the person who is high-ranking who was chosen to be the leader of the group. I think it should be the most suitable person to be the leader. My friend [the main decision maker] was the suitable person because she is local, and familiar with those destinations. Even for us Chinese, for example, I have never been to Xinjiang (a municipality of China) before, but there are friends from other countries who find me [to travel together to Xinjiang], and it should be me... [to be the leader]. Because I speak Chinese I know how to communicate with the local residents.*

The member who is experienced in travel was found to be more active in taking up the responsibility of the group leader, such as when Qinming made a travel plan for the group members to discuss.

> *I have rich travel experience. I have been to a lot of countries and places. So making a travel plan like that was no big deal for me.*

In the case of Group 2, the only female group member made most of the travel-related decisions, which can be interpreted as giving in to girls or to the minority's priorities, and also thinking that girls are born to be more careful and patient.

> *It was Chunjiao who had booked the accommodation. It was her who had made the travel plan ("gong lue"†) and decided on accommodation and tourism attractions, namely where to live and where to go. We (the rest of us) did not worry so much [about making the travel plan], for she was the only girl in the travel group and is [more] careful [than boys].*

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† travel tips, plans, and schedule made and shared by the previous travellers on tourism websites

Yueru from Group 10 attributed making most of her decisions to her personality.

> *I think it is about a person's character and personality. I always like to make plans in advance.*

In addition, the sense of responsibility is needed to be a good group leader, which requires the person to devote much time and vigour that other members would not want to do. Sicong from Group 1 explained why he did not take the role of leader.

> *… well, Junjie sometimes asked me to search for some information. I would but not be very careful, (laughter) because I was not willing to, I might not be that willing to spend too much time on it.*

In Wenjun's case, she indicated that she has been cultivated or has got used to taking up responsibilities, such as making travel-related decisions like accommodation and transportation as she has had practice since she was a little girl.

> *No matter who I travel with, it seems it is always me who makes those decisions [relating to accommodation and transportation]. I used to travel with my mum a lot. It may be because my mum always asked me to book everything when I was a kid. Gradually, I have a feeling that it should be me who does those things, and only when it is me do I feel relieved.*

To summarise, the trip initiator has been identified as the group leader by group members. The difference between the main plan provider and the main decision maker is that the former provides the travel plan for the whole group to discuss and make decisions collectively, while the latter makes the final decision on his or her own. Meanwhile, the main decision maker follows the principle that takes every group members' travel preference into consideration and pays respect to their requirements when making decisions. People who took up the leader's responsibilities often felt reluctant using the term "leader" to refer to themselves, while they were recognised as the leader in the travel group by other members.

A travel group needs a leader who is filled with passion and pushes the process of making the travel plan forward, although the final decisions are made by the group members collectively. Additionally, distinguishing the roles each group members play, such as who is dominating and who is assisting, leads to a pleasant travel experience. Leaders pay more attention to the more general travel decisions such as travel schedule and driving route, for that is the premise of making other travel-related decisions.

The style of leadership is different between Chinese and New Zealand leaders. The former has been considered as giving group members more flexible options, while the

latter follows one fixed schedule. The New Zealand leaders are found to be more scheduled and organised and strictly follow the plan.

Knowing the native language, understanding the native culture and travel destinations have been found to be the essential elements of being a leader. Rich travel experience is also vital. Sometimes, deciding who the leader of the group is reflects the idea of giving in to girls' or the minority's priorities, such as making the only female in the group the leader. A leader has been reported to have a sense of responsibility, which has sometimes been developed through parents' intentional nurture.

4.4.2   Division of work

The second model of group decision-making is division of work, dividing the tasks within the travel group. For example, dividing the travel plan into several sections and allocating them to each member. Thus, each member has the task to search for related information and making the plan for his or her section, or making the final decision for this section. Sometimes the potential work which might be needed during the whole trip will be allocated as well, such as physical work (e.g. carrying and moving heavy luggage) and entertainment work (e.g. playing the role of livening up the atmosphere within the group).

This section discusses how the work was divided and consideration of why groups adopted this model of decision-making. Two roles, namely plan provider and decision maker, which are similar to the main plan provider and the main decision maker within the leadership model discussed above, are presented later.

4.4.2.1   Division of work in the group decision-making process

Generally, the work was divided into aspects of transportation, accommodation, food and restaurants, travel attractions and activities, physical work, and entertainment. Chunjiao from Group 2 gave an example of how her group divided the work.

> *So, for example, I was in charge of accommodation, and the driver who was my boyfriend was in charge of the driving route. For another two friends, one friend searched for information about tourism attractions, and local features and characteristics. The other was responsible for decisions relating to food and restaurants, searching information about nearby restaurants.*

Ronghao, who was in the same group with Chunjiao, also perceived there was division of work in their group. However, the role each person played was a little bit different from his perspective.

The work has been well divided. It was mainly Chunjiao who made the travel plan ("gong lue"). Our driver was her boyfriend. I was the support crew who was responsible for food, another friend's responsibility was chatting with us [livening up the atmosphere within the group].

Similarly, Huilan from Group 1 indicated that they had divided the work, although she considered Junjie, the leader of their group as he had taken up almost 60% of the work.

For the other four members, except Junjie, someone was responsible for carrying our luggage, someone was responsible for making breakfast for us, someone was responsible for… yeah, the physical work was one aspect, because we had luggage, and there were girls who needed to be taken care of…

In addition, Chunjiao explained that they had allocated the tasks according to each member's "characteristics and personalities, and preference". She perceived each member would be willing to complete their task and also better enjoy the trip.

For me, because they [other group members] thought making decisions about the accommodation was too much trouble, I took responsibility for it, for I was the only girl in the group and was much better at comparing prices than boys [more sensitive to numbers] and looking for accommodation. For the driver, he had to make the plan for the driving route such as what places he would like to go through as to whether any place was worthy to go. We had decided the person who was in charge of these two parts first and let them pick from the rest of the decisions. For example, for Ronghao who likes local features, he was in charge of searching for information about local culture and features of the destinations. Another member, who is totally a foodie, was in charge of food and restaurants. We divided the work according to each group member's characteristics and personalities, and preference, so that everyone was happy when they were doing their work.

Sometimes, the division of work happened silently. Qingzhao from Group 7 gave an example revealing the tacit cooperation within their travel group.

[…] Everybody just knew instinctively what their duty was. For example, she [the New Zealander friend] was driving, which was a very tiring task. I have a driver's license, but I did not drive for safety concerns, as we had to go along

rugged mountain roads. She was very tired after driving and needed to take a break right away. I made her a cup of tea when she was having some rest. She is a granny. We made dinner for her when she was taking a nap, and when she got up the dinner was just ready, so that I did not think I was tired, she did not think she was tired. The other friend shared the responsibility for making dinner with me.

Most members of the travel groups who used division of work indicated that they did not have formal discussions. However, social media was frequently used by travel groups to discuss and share information and opinions.

We did not sit down or have any formal discussions. [...] There was no collective discussion. (Chunjiao)

We normally discuss in our Wechat group. Sometimes, we discussed when we are having dinner together, rather than saying that we should have a meeting to discuss our plan. (Junjie)

Ronghao from Group 2 considered the division of work was more efficient compared to having long discussions aimlessly. Also, Junjie from Group 1 also acknowledged that division of work was efficient, although not all members have been involved to the same degree.

[...] Because, by this way, everyone being responsible for making decisions for one aspect avoided the situation that we spend too much time on meaningless discussion which means we have spent much time discussing unrelated things for the trip. (Ronghao)

I think it might be like this, every one of us was mainly in charge of one aspect. In terms of decision-making for one aspect, it was not that every member was involved to the same extent, but it was efficient. (Junjie)

Chunjiao from Group 2 regarded dividing the work as a way of avoiding the decision-making becoming a mess, for each group member has their own opinions, and sometimes it was not easy to reach an agreement.

I think the way we made decisions like the division of work worked very well. Everyone had their own responsibilities. If we did not divide the work, it [the process of decision-making] may become really messy. So I think it was important to divide the work.

Ronghao, Chunjiao and Huilan indicated that having every group member get involved was necessary. Huilan explained it enabled the group members to have a

sense of participation, which helped them enjoy the trip better.

> *We have engaged in different aspects. You go travelling as a group. How is it possible that someone was not involved? If someone was not involved, he or she was not truly in this group, right?* (Ronghao)

> *[...] You cannot do everything all by yourself, you have to let everyone get involved to share some responsibilities...* (Chunjiao)

> *I think every member was well engaged, rather than having not contributed anything but just following. Only if everybody is engaged that they can better enjoy the process of the trip...* (Huilan)

4.4.2.2   Two roles in the model of division of work

Two roles in the model of division of work have been recognised, namely the decision maker and the plan provider. The difference between these two roles is the former makes the final decision for the element he or she is responsible for, while the latter only makes the plan for his or her element and provides it to the group members to discuss and make decisions collectively. These two roles are similar to the main decision maker and the main plan provider within the model of leadership, although those two make decisions or plans for the whole trip rather than just an element.

Chunjiao indicated that each member of her group was in charge of one section of the travel plan. Once the task leader made the decision, the other members all agreed.

> *Instead of discussing in detail we can do this and we cannot do that, it was like simply saying verbally that you are in charge of this part, ok, we all listen to you, and that is it.*

Sicong gave an example of the plan provider in his travel group. The person who was responsible for food and restaurants had made a list of options for other group members to discuss and choose from.

> *In terms of food and restaurants, one of our group members had searched information particularly for food and restaurants in Christchurch and had made a list with many options for us. We had a look at that list to see what the local flavour was... [...] ... then we made the final decision together.*

To summarise, the work related to the travel process can be divided into aspects of transportation, accommodation, food and restaurants, travel attractions and activities, physical work and entertainment work. Division of work also happens in

the group where a group leader has been identified. These divided tasks have been allocated according to each group members' "characteristics, personalities and preference". The division of work happens silently sometimes, which needs the tacit cooperation between the group members. Most interviewees indicated there were no formal meetings for discussion, while the use of social media had often been mentioned. Dividing the work was considered as an efficient way to make travel-related decisions and avoided the process of decision-making becoming a mess. Also, some interviewees recognised the necessity of getting everyone involved. Two roles were identified within the division of work model, namely the decision maker (the task leader who makes decisions on his/her own) and the plan provider (the person who provides a plan for the task he/she is responsible for), which are similar to the main decision maker and the main plan provider in the model of leadership.

As discussed earlier, the whole travel plan was divided into several sections, such as transportation, accommodation, food and restaurants, travel attractions and activities. In the group decision-making model of division of work, each task leader searched relevant information to help make the decisions or make the plan for the task he or she was in charge of.

Xinyi from Group 8, which consisted of two couples, indicated that when searching for information, the two couples searched for different information.

> *I searched information. They did as well. We mainly searched information on the real-time information, such as weather. They searched information on the detailed tramping route, for they had started making the travel plan some time ago. We decided to join them temporarily, so we cared more about the weather.*

4.4.3 Shared decision-making

The third group decision-making model is shared decision-making where all members of the group making travel-related decisions collectively. Three ways of sharing decision-making were identified, namely voting, discussing and random choice (e.g. rock, paper and scissors or names from a hat, etc.). As discussed earlier, group members would have a further discussion based on the travel plan provided by the main plan provider, or the plan provider would revise the plan and the group would make the final decisions collectively. These three ways of sharing decisions were combined.

Zhanpeng from Group 11 described the travel-related decision-making process for his group, indicating that he and his friends discussed travel plans face-to-face and made decisions collectively, mainly by voting.

We got together at one place, turned on all the computers, laid out all the information, and exchanged information. For example, someone found a hotel and then asked our opinions right away, and we had further discussions later and made decisions collectively. It was like a majority voting rule [if most group members agreed then pass], by which we made decisions in general.

However, Junjie from Group 1 indicated that voting was only a sort of entertainment for them to "liven up the atmosphere" in the group.

We made decisions mainly by discussing rather than voting. If we did vote, we did it for fun, which was to liven up the atmosphere.

Huilan, who was in the same travel group with Junjie, explained the reason why they did not vote.

We did not need to vote. [...] So somebody raised a suggestion, and if nobody strongly disagreed with it and most of us thought it was okay, then we would go for that option.

Some interviewees pointed out that discussion was the most used way to make shared decisions. Making decisions by discussing collectively was regarded as "a process of reaching agreement" by Qinming from Group 5. From the perspective of Wenjun from Group 6, this way of discussing was fair. She gave an example as follows.

My classmate and I made decisions [collectively]. We each had listed some places which attracted us most and we would like to visit most. When we arrived [at the destination], we went to those places one by one. [...] I think it [making decisions by discussing] worked well, and we did not have much disagreement. Making decisions by discussing is a fair method.

Some interviewees, who had made travel decisions through discussion, acknowledged the importance of having the discussion face-to-face. Zhanpeng from Group 11 compared discussing on the phone and discussing face-to-face, emphasising the advantages of face-to-face discussion.

Hum... I think making decisions in this way was humanised. Also, it is convenient for us to discuss with each other face-to-face, compared with discussing on the phone, by which we could not make it clear sometimes. When

we were discussing, we could raise the dissatisfaction of some decisions, so that we would revise the plan in order to meet and satisfy each member's requirements.

Xuesong from Group 4 pointed out that they discussed travel-related decisions during casual occasions. Discussion often happens during a meal. He also indicated that they discussed the travel plan in their social media group.

We discussed with each other. [...] It [making decisions] did not take us too long, we had talked about it once or twice in our Wechat group. Then we used one afternoon to discuss or discuss it during a meal and that is it. Instead of organising a meeting for it specially, we would say "how about we have a meal together and discuss things about travel by the way?" That is it.

Sicong from Group 1, who also used a social media group to share information and discuss the travel plan, explained the reason of discussing in a social media group.

We were all involved in the discussion. Considering not everyone was always available to be online at the same time, we had set up a Wechat group. Even if we could not be online at the same time, we will see the information in the Wechat group eventually anyway, and everyone could give their comments as well.

Additionally, some travel groups also used random choice to make travel-related decisions. Zhiming from Group 3 gave an example. He indicated that in terms of decisions which had not been decided before the trip, such as food and restaurants, the group would sometimes use a more random way like "rock, paper and scissors" to make decisions.

Sometimes when we found making decisions quite annoying, we used "rock, paper, and scissors" to make the decision. We went to the restaurant which was representative of the winner in the end. We did not know those restaurants well, but we just took a chance, and maybe we would go to a really good one.

In summary, shared decision-making refers to all the group members making decisions collectively. This model is often founded alongside the other two models presented before, where the group need further discussion to either revise or to make the final decisions collectively based on the plans provided by the main plan provider (the leadership model) or the plan provider (the division of work model). Three ways of shared decision-making have been identified: voting, discussion and random choice.

Some groups reported that they used voting to make shared decisions, while a few groups revealed another effect of voting: "livening up the atmosphere" in the group. In terms of discussion, some interviewees considered this was a fair "process of reaching the agreement". Meanwhile, they emphasised the importance of discussion face-to-face for its efficiency. Also, most interviewees indicated that discussions happened on casual occasions and the social media group was also used frequently. Additionally, random choice was used to make decisions that had not been decided before the trip, such as food and restaurants.

In the group decision-making model, information search was found to occur during the discussions after arriving at the tourism destination. Sometimes, information search was used as a strategy to address different opinions or small disagreements.

Yueru from Group 10 indicated that for the decisions on transportation and accommodation, she and her friends sat together and searched relevant information to make the decisions collectively.

> *At that time, we thought we had better down and book the tickets together, and make the travel plan and schedule such as what the arrangement would be for a certain day. Considering the arrival and departure time of the buses, we made the decision that we would stay at some place on a certain day.*

Zhiming from Group 3 indicated that although he and his group members had divided the information searching, they made the travel-related decisions collectively.

> *Before we had the discussion, we had optionally learned about some travel information. When we got together one night, each of us searched information for different sections. For example, Siyuan got that book 'Lonely Planet', so he looked up the tourism attractions we can visit and travel activities we can do in Taupo. We had another option which was going to Hamilton. So he also searched information about Hamilton. […] Another friend searched information for public transportation, including the numbers of runs of the buses. Actually, the information searching for transportation was based on the premise that we had decided the destinations. […] In the end, we integrated all the scattered information to develop the whole travel schedule.*

Xuesong from Group 4 indicated that his group made travel-related decisions after they had arrived at the destination and gathered relevant information at the local visitor information centre.

> *The first day we arrived at Taupo we went to the local i-site and got some information there.*

Wenjun from Group 6 indicated that in terms of decisions on food and restaurants, she and her friend searched for information immediately using the applications on their smart phones to assist to make the decisions.

> *In terms of decisions on food and restaurants, we made decisions instantly. After we finished visiting tourism attractions and felt hungry, we used the applications on the smart phone to look for a restaurant nearby. You can use applications like TripAdvisor, Yelp and Zomato to look for food and restaurants by going through their menu and the pictures of the food.*

Zhanpeng from Group 11 gave an example when one of his group members used an information search to persuade others to accept his suggestions.

> *We had different opinions on whether to cook food by ourselves or to eat in the restaurants. [...] He searched information and learned there were no restaurants which met our requirements, for there were many western style restaurants while we prefer eating Chinese food. Also, the western style restaurants were expensive. [...] He also looked at the map to find out if there were there any restaurants near us. We got the information from the map that there was a supermarket where we could buy food and later cook at home. It was from the information that we decided to cook food by ourselves which was more suitable for us.*

4.4.4   Adoption of the group decision-making models

Based on the description of the group decision-making process from the interviews and the identified roles given by the interviewees, Table 4.3 was developed to provide an overview of the adoption of group decision-making models. The group numbers, group members, and the primary and secondary models of group decision-making are given.

As shown in Table 4.3, travel groups tended to used multiple group decision-making models depending on what travel-related decisions they were trying to make. For example, three groups (Groups 5, 9 and 10) used the leadership model as the primary group decision-making model mostly for the overall travel plan and schedule, and then adopted the shared decision-making model. Two groups (Groups 1 and 2) used the leadership model primarily for the overall travel plan and schedule and also

Group		Primary	Secondary
Group 1	Junjie	*Leadership* for the overall travel schedule and plan, and driving route	*Division of work* for transportation, accommodation, food and restaurants and physical work
	Huilan		
	Sicong		*Shared decision-making* for accommodation, tourism attractions, food and restaurants, and travel activities
Group 2	Chunjiao	*Leadership* for the overall travel schedule and plan	*Division of work* for transportation, accommodation, food and restaurants
	Ronghao		*Shared decision-making* for tourism attractions and travel activities
Group 3	Zhiming Siyuan	*Shared decision-making*	/
Group 4	Xuesong Jiamu	*Shared decision-making*	/
Group 5	Qinming	*Leadership* for the overall travel schedule and plan	*Shared decision-making* for tourism attractions
Group 6	Wenjun	*Shared decision-making* for tourism attractions and food and restaurants	*Leadership* for transportation and accommodation
Group 7	Qingzhao	*Leadership* for the overall travel schedule and plan	*Division of work* for transportation and food and restaurants
Group 8	Xinyi	*Shared decision-making*	/
Group 9	Shenle	*Leadership* for the more general travel schedule and plan, transportation, accommodation, tourism attractions, travel activities and food and restaurants	*Shared decision-making* for tourism attractions and travel activities
Group 10	Yueru	*Leadership* for the overall travel schedule and plan	*Shared decision-making* for transportation, accommodation, tourism attractions and travel activities
Group 11	Zhanpeng	*Shared decision-making* for accommodation, food and restaurants, tourism attractions and travel activities	*Leadership* for the transportation, accommodation, food and restaurants, tourism attractions and travel activities

Table 4. 3 Adoption of the group decision-making models

further used the shared decision-making and the division of work models. One group (Group 7) used leadership as the primary group decision-making model for the overall travel plan and schedule and also used the division of work model secondarily. Two groups (Groups 6 and 11), who mainly used the shared decision-making model

for tourism attractions and food and restaurants, also used the leadership model secondarily. Only three groups (Groups 3, 4 and 8) adopted the shared decision-making as their single group decision-making model.

Overall, the shared decision-making model was the most popular model, with five groups using it as the primary model and five groups using it as the secondary model. The leadership model was the second most commonly used model, with six groups using it as the primary model and two groups using it as the secondary model. Three travel groups used the division of work model during the decision-making process.

Most travel groups who adopted shared decision-making as the primary model used only this model to make group decisions collectively. However, in the case of Groups 6 and 11, although the shared decision-making model was primarily taken, there was one member who played the role of a leader, mainly when searching for travel-related information, making reservations and leading the group decision-making process to move forward. For most travel groups who primarily used the leadership model, they tended to use either the shared decision-making model or and division of work model as the secondary group decision-making model. That is to say, in most cases where the groups used the leadership model, the decisions were made collectively by the group members rather than being made by the "leaders" of the group.

4.5 DISAGREEMENT

When asked about whether there were any disagreements during the travel-related decision-making process, most interviewees indicated that there were no big issues. The differing opinions were on decisions regarding food and restaurants, travel activities, travel destinations, transportation, tourism attractions and accommodation.

Thus, the research focus has shifted from disagreement resolution strategies to also include disagreement prevention strategies. Five disagreement prevention strategies and one external factor have been recognised, and eight disagreement resolution strategies have been identified.

4.5.1 Disagreement prevention

Some behaviour was identified as the reason why most interviewees indicated that there were no disagreements during the whole trip. This behaviour refers to the

measures or strategies the group members had taken to prevent disagreements. The five disagreement prevention strategies and one external influencing factor were: travelling with like-minded people, adequate preparation, having empathy and mutual understanding, tolerance, compensation, and an external factor (i.e. the travel environment).

This section presents the identified disagreement prevention strategies and the influencing factor by giving examples and quotations from the interviewees.

4.5.1.1 Travelling with like-minded people

When asked about how did they choose travel companions, most interviewees mentioned the word "like-minded" which means they share similar personalities, share an interest in the same tourism destinations and travel preference, have similar interests, and share an expectation for the travel experience. Indeed, travelling with like-minded friends was the very first step to prevent disagreements.

As well as the adequate preparation and work allocation before the trip, Chunjiao from Group 2 pointed out that the similarities in characteristics and personalities were also important in disagreement prevention.

> *We had decided in advance who was in charge of which section. And we all agreed with the decisions made by every task leader. We chose to travel together because we were familiar with each other, that is to say, there will not be many different opinions because at least we were like-minded.*

Shenle from Group 9 interpreted such "selection standard" as the saying "birds of a feather flock together".

> *We barely had disagreements. Because... we... it was like the saying "birds of a feather flock together". My boyfriend and I are rational, so are our friends.*

Sicong from Group 1 owed it to the same education level of the other travel group members and their easy-going characteristics:

> *Well, the trip was good in general, for there were not many disagreements during the trip. The possible reason is that we were all PhD students, even if we sometimes had our own opinions, we would be tolerant, for we are all adults who know how to deal with people and things related to disagreements. So, I think generally it was good. It has something to do with... our education background, which I think is also important. Also, we did not have a member who likes to show off or have strong opinions. It is not very proper to be too*

special in a group. Travelling itself should be a casual thing. So, choosing reliable and easy-going fellows is also important. I have travelled with Junjie and Huilan no less than four or five times so we are familiar with each other.

Similarly, Ronghao from Group 2 perceived the easy-going characteristics his travel group members have as the reason why disagreements did not happen.

Like I mentioned before, the four of us are easy-going. So, if somebody held to his or her view, the rest of us would not… [argue with the person]. We were very casual. They all listened to me in terms of the decisions on food and restaurants. They did not have any different opinions.

Xinyi from Group 8 connected the people's characteristics with the travel style they chose. She pointed that the people who would choose tramping are more open and open-hearted and able to assess the risks rationally.

I think it was also related to the travel style we had chosen, for people who can accept the travel style of tramping are more open in general. They do not worry too much, they are open-hearted and express their own ideas directly. Also, they understand the relevant risks we might have during the tramping so that they will never do things recklessly. I think if we travelled by bus, the travel companions might not be as open… So, I think it is important to choose the right person to travel with, who shares the same ideas and attitudes with you and who is casual.

Ronghao from Group 2 indicated that besides travelling with familiar and like-minded friends, travelling in a small group could be the reason why there were not many disagreements, for it was much easier for a few group members to come to an agreement.

We did not have any different opinions, let alone disagreements, all along the way. Firstly, the duration of the trip was limited. Secondly, the travel group was a small group. Thirdly, we were familiar with each other. It is better to travel with familiar friends in a small travel group with four or five people. I have a friend who travelled with a big group with seven or eight members. They ended up splitting up into a few small groups for it was hard for so many people to reach an agreement on something. Also, if you are not familiar with the people you are travelling with, it is really an awkward situation when disagreements happen. So, the fewer the travel group members, the lower the rate of divergence will be. Overall, travelling with a few familiar friends is important to me. I could choose not to travel. If I decide to travel, my group

members must be the people who are willing to step back when there are disagreements.

Similarly, Qinming from Group 5 considered it was easier for the group members to make decisions in a small group.

I think travelling in a small travel group was comfortable and it was easy, flexible and democratic to make decisions. If there are people, there will be disagreements, for people have different opinions. Only if the group members were more tolerant, open and in harmony, the disagreements could be resolved by having more discussions or voting, through which the result was more convincing.

Furthermore, Qinming explained why it was better to travel in a small group with five or six members. He emphasised the importance of the group members sharing the same expectation for the trip and transparency of the process of dealing with money issues.

It is better to travel in a group with five or six members. It is hard to travel with only one person, which could lead to more divergence, for there is not the relatively dominating person. Travelling in a three-member group is also not easy, for if there were two people both wanting to dominate, it is hard for the third person to make the choices. [...] Additionally, it is better that the members in the travel group share the same interests, such as they want to visit the same destinations or they want to experience the same activities. Another thing is the budget, which is very important to students. Decisions on how much to spend have to be made with other group members' agreement.

4.5.1.2 Adequate preparation

The preparatory work for a trip includes gathering enough relevant travel information, developing a comprehensive and reasonable travel plan and schedule, and agreeing on each travel-related decision. "Sufficient preparatory work" has been identified by Zhanpeng and Siyuan as the reasons why the trip went very well and without disagreements.

Sicong from Group 1 also admitted the importance of adequate preparation. He owed the situation where no disagreement happened to a "reasonable travel plan" made by a qualified group leader. He pointed out that he had been well informed with the relevant information, which contributed to the pleasant trip.

We had a good leader and the travel plan was reasonable. Also, we had been prepared before the trip, such as purchasing ski gloves. We had been well informed [of relevant information]. So the whole travel was... [going quite well]. Junjie had learned that we needed to get the ski gloves ourselves, which the skiing field will not provide. If we did not know that until we arrived at the skiing field, I think it would cause unpleasantness. However, we all brought the ski gloves, which I think avoided unexpected unpleasantness.

Junjie from Group 1 confirmed that before the trip started they had prepared for possible situations that they might encounter during the trip by searching for relevant information.

I think having disagreements is normal. Because not everyone has the same travel preference. Before the trip started, we had thought of problems that we might encounter. Also, we had searched information such as weather before we set off on the trip. We did not have disagreements on big issues.

Shenle from Group 9 gave an example of their well-developed and detailed travel plan, providing the group members with a wide range of options, which resulted in an enjoyable travel experience without argument.

Generally, we would make a very detailed travel plan. People normally arrange two or three travel activities or tourism attractions for one day, while we will make it eight. So my boyfriend (the driver) kept telling us what the upcoming attraction was. If most members did not want to go, then we would pass the attraction and head to the next one. Although the travel plans and schedule were made by my boyfriend, other travel group members had the right to choose. So, we did not argue with each other.

Furthermore, Shenle pointed out that besides the details of each travel-related decisions, travel budget and money issues were also part of the travel plan. She implied that timely sharing the relevant information accurately and then making the agreements on related decisions could somehow reduce the possibility of a disagreement.

Generally, I think the disagreement was most likely to happen on the decisions of accommodation. After completing the reservation, we would send all the members the pictures of the room we had booked and made the agreement on the allocation of the rooms. [...] We had made things clear to every member in advance, such as how to share the fees of car rental and gasoline. We had also confirmed the details of every decision with each member, such as whether

they wanted to book the accommodation by themselves or what their expectation of their rooms was. [...] Everyone had rationally known how much the prices will be, which avoided the dispute on the issues about money. So I think the probability of a disagreement and being irrational was reduced...

Shenle also indicated that they had even figured out the detailed preference of each group member to make sure the related decisions were made properly.

Besides the budget, we had even taken the dietary issues of each member into consideration. For example, my boyfriend and a girl in the group love seafood, while another girl and I have allergies to it. We had decided to eat in a seafood restaurant. That girl and I ordered non-seafood, while my boyfriend and the other girl ordered seafood. Also, in order to make sure that all of us can start together, we asked the restaurant to make our non-seafood order after finishing making the seafood order. Although it took longer, we can finish eating at the same time.

4.5.1.3 Empathy and mutual understanding

Empathy is referred as to thinking from others' perspectives and taking others' feelings into accounts. Empathy and mutual understanding have been identified as one of the strategies of disagreement prevention.

Huilan from Group 1 pointed out the premise of empathy is not hurting other peoples' principles.

I think everyone is an independent individual, who has their own ideas. So, I think if it was not related to the matters of principles... also, all members in our travel group were considerate and all of us would pay respect to others' feelings rather than being self-centred and ignoring other's requirements. We would consider things from others' perspectives. That is empathy.

Qingzhao from Group 7 considered empathy is not related to culture but humanity. She regards considering others' perspectives as necessary when dealing with people.

I think although we have different cultures, the only thing that never changes is humanity, no matter if you are with your Chinese friends or friends from other countries. It is empathy which requires you to consider others all the time, otherwise you are very selfish. [...] When dealing with people, no matter who the person is, every sentence you say and everything you do should be considered from others' perspectives.

Mutual understanding has been identified to prevent disagreements. Junjie from Group 1 shared his experience of being understood by his travel group members.

Taking the trip which we had in the South Island as an example, we did not go to Milford Sound, for it would take two days for a round trip and also the road condition was not very good. There was only me who was able to drive, which was a tiring thing. So, we cut this place off our travel plan. Indeed, somebody would feel that we were already in the South Island so we should go, but we needed to cut it off, which was a pity. However, nobody said "I am not happy about the decision". In most cases, everyone understood that it (with only one person driving) was a tiring thing. So, we did not have anybody who could not accept the decisions we had made or something like that. [...] Also, all the members in the travel group were able to understand others, which meant they understood that we could not be prepared for everything and the travel plans and decisions could not be perfect, for sometimes we made the decisions only because we have to.

Also, considering others' feelings and requirements worked as one of the disagreement prevention strategies. Shenle from Group 9 indicated this strategy was shown as "all the travel plans and decisions having been made according to each group members' expectations for the travel budget and their travel preferences".

Huilan from Group 1 pointed out that girls' sensitivity played an important role in giving considerations to others' feelings and requirements, for it helped to detect other members' unspoken feelings. She also indicated that empathy is often used in a different context and the use of empathy is a reflection of people's emotional intelligence.

From the perspective of being a participant of the trip, I think giving consideration to everyone's feelings was very important, for we were not travelling with only one or two people. There will be some disagreements. So, the point is how to keep the whole trip going pleasantly. I think sometimes girls' sensitivity is quite useful, for people sometimes would not voice their different opinions. So you can read their facial expressions or body language to realise what he or she was thinking about. [...] Also the "thinking from others' perspectives" I mentioned before is not only used in the context of travel. It is also important in daily life, which reflects people's emotional intelligence.

Taking other members' feelings and requirements into account was interpreted as the basic respect to others by Huilan, especially when dealing with decisions related to

money issues.

Taking the skydiving as an example, which was related to money. The skydiving was very expensive, which took a large part of our budget. There were some additional items such as whether purchasing the pictures and videos or not, which was as expensive as the skydiving itself. It was not like the money related to food and restaurants, which was not a big deal. So, we could not make the booking for all the group members without asking them. We would confirm with every member if they have decided to do the skydiving and buy the pictures and videos, then we pay for it. Like what I said before, it was taking everyone's feelings into account, which was also a kind of respect to others.

4.5.1.4   Tolerance

Tolerance was found to be used in preventing disagreements. Tolerance was represented as the behaviour of not voicing one's inside feelings and embracing uncontrollable situations.

Huilan from Group 1 gave an example of tolerance used by their driver. The driver chose to respect and tried to meet the group members' requirements, not voicing his own feelings. Even after the trip finished, Huilan was the only one who knew his thoughts.

For example, after finishing skiing, we needed to drive to the accommodation. We were only allowed to drive to a parking lot half-way up the hill and then be picked up by a bus which transported people between the parking lot and the skiing field. When we were waiting for the bus to go back to the parking lot, first we wasted some time waiting in a wrong line. Then we had to change to another line. When it was our turn the bus was already full, which meant if we took the bus we would have to stand, while if we chose to wait for the next one we would have to wait for a long time. This situation could have caused some small confliction. Because on the one hand, the driver had to drive us a long distance to the accommodation when we got to the place where we had parked the car. On the other hand, standing there waiting for the next bus was so cold. We wanted to get on the bus as soon as possible, even if we had to stand for half an hour. However, Junjie did not tell me about this until we were on the bus. This was not a disagreement, for other members did not know it at all. They were just thinking that it was very cold and we need to get to the parking

lot as soon as possible, ignoring the feelings of the driver who skied for the whole day, already tired and still had to drive a long distance.

Xuesong from Group 4 described the situation where he was not satisfied with the food they had one day. Instead of complaining, he chose not to voice his dissatisfaction directly.

We had one disharmonious situation but we did not have any argument. On the day we went shrimping, they ate shrimp. I have allergies to seafood, so I could not eat too much. I only had some bread. However, we shared that cost in the end. I feel it was very expensive, while I only said to them it was the most expensive shrimp I had ever had. Actually, it does not matter. It does not happen all the time.

When encountering uncontrollable situations, Shenle from Group 9 indicated that the group members were willing to be tolerant and understanding.

Well, sometimes the information given by the accommodation is not always 100% true, which means the actual rooms might not be corresponding to the description given to us before, especially when it is in the peak seasons. What might happen is that although the accommodation is with two bedrooms, there is no bathroom which was included in the description. But this is no big deal, which most members could understand.

In terms of some small decisions, listening to others' opinions and making a choice from these ideas was identified as one of the strategies. Siyuan from Group 3 indicated that he was "willing to let others make the decisions" when determining food and restaurants.

Actually, I was not the person who gave suggestions like where and what to eat. Generally, I would listen to their ideas. If someone wanted to cook at the accommodation and the others agreed, then I just followed the suggestion. If they said they wanted to eat outside, then eat outside. It was fine by me. The role I played was being obedient, I guess. You can say that I was willing to let others make the decisions, for I do not care too much in terms of food and restaurants.

Similarly, Huilan from Group 1 gave the reason why she did not give any suggestions.

Hum… normally I would not propose anything, for there were already many people giving their suggestions. Also, all the aspects have been generally covered. Actually, travelling is nothing but considering what to eat, what to do and where to live. We will not care too much about the tiny detailed things.

4.5.1.5 Compensation

Compensation is a means of making up for somebody's sacrifice or compromise when the group makes unwanted decisions, in case the negative feelings caused lead to a disagreement.

Qinming from Group 5 shared an example of the measures they took to prevent a disagreement that might be caused by some group members' unmet requirements.

> *For example, in terms of self-driving, if we chose to drive a car by voting, but somebody did not think it was a good idea, it may let the members who did not support the idea feel uncomfortable. So, we would take some prevention measures, such as driving slowly, making clear the driving route before we started or making decisions where we have to stop for a break. We took such measures to reduce the possible risks (and to make them feel relieved).*

4.5.1.6 External factors

Jiamu from Group 4 considered the external factors, like the travel environment, as an essential reason why he and his group members did not have disagreements. He compared the travel experience both in China and New Zealand.

> *In China, there are thousands of people who choose to travel during the "golden week" of the National Day holiday. As a result, when you are at a tourism attraction, there must be many places that you have to wait in line for a long time, which is an annoying travel experience. People becoming uneasy and irritable increase the possibility for them to have conflicts. However, such a situation rarely happens in the context of New Zealand, for there are not so many people. Additionally, the feelings of travelling in New Zealand differs from those in China. In the tourism destinations of New Zealand such as Taupo, staying at the accommodation or wondering the lakeside doing nothing will make you feel relaxed, which is the purpose of travel: escapism. This purpose is hard to reach in China which is packed with people. So, in terms of disagreements and conflicts, I think it depends on the environment. Besides the influence of people, the environment also has an impact.*

Furthermore, Xuesong, who was in the same travel group with Jiamu, owed the situation where no disagreements happened to the limited choices at destinations like Taupo which is famous for its natural scenery.

It might be because there are limited places to go in Taupo. Actually, it was hard for us to have disagreements, for there was no situation where the girls wanted to go shopping, while the boys wanted to play computer games at the accommodation. There are not so many places where we can go. Well, if it was in Auckland, it might be different.

4.5.2 Disagreement resolution strategies

Eight strategies that had been adopted by the interviewees to resolve the disagreement have been identified, namely making concessions, discussing and voting, looking for alternatives, persuasion, toleration, splitting up, accommodating and delaying.

This section focuses on presenting the identified disagreement resolution strategies. Meanwhile, the examples of disagreements on different travel-related decisions will be given to provide the contexts.

4.5.2.1 Making concessions

Making concessions has been found to be the most adopted strategy to resolve disagreements. Making concessions involves somebody offering to give up his or her own opinions and follow other's suggestions, or somebody offers to accept the options that others would not be willing to take.

Chunjiao from Group 2, who had divided the work of making decisions, indicated that the group members would still choose to follow the team leader's arrangement even though other members did not think it was an ideal option. She gave an example of making concessions when the travel group was making decisions on food and restaurants.

Well, generally, everyone agreed on most decisions that had been made. However, disagreements happened in a few cases. For example, in terms of food and restaurants, sometimes we thought the restaurants the person chose were not that good, but we did not dispute this. We expressed our views but not by arguing but just saying that "this place is not very good". We still went there anyway in the end.

Zhanpeng from Group 2, who travelled with three other male group members, gave an example of the concession made by two of his group by offering to take the option

that other members could not accept.

> *Hum… we had a problem with the hotel we booked. There were two single beds and one queen size bed in the room. Four of us who travelled together are all boys. We had to make the decision, which two would share the queen size bed, which is the thing that I and another friend didn't expect. So we had a disagreement on this, for two of us did not like sharing one bed. In the end, the other two friends decided they would share the queen size bed. [...] Actually, they did not really care about this, so they just chose to share that bed, which readily solved the problem.*

Siyuan from Group 3, who took buses to travel, indicated that his original thought was renting and driving a car, while his group members were concerned more about the safety issues. He chose to give in and make the concession.

> *At the beginning, I wanted him [Zhiming] to drive a car thinking that it would not be a big deal because it would be just one-hour driving. However, he did not think so, he thought he was not able to handle it and he decided not to rent a car. I could not force him. So our final decision was not driving the car.*

Zhiming from Group 3 indicated that making concessions had been used when making decisions on tourism destinations. He perceived that making concessions is "common and effective" in resolving disagreements and only if the disagreements on the main aspect were solved, the disagreements on the secondary aspect such as food and restaurants and travel activities will be readily resolved by mutual understanding.

> *It [disagreement] included one main aspect and one secondary aspect. In terms of the main aspect, the disagreement we had was on where to go. We tried to find a balance which was suitable for everyone. Of course, it could not 100 percent satisfy everyone, but we tried to make it 80 percent. In terms of the secondary aspect, it involved disagreements like what food for today, which was easy to solve. It was like "okay, we have this tonight, we have that for lunch tomorrow", that is it. Or somebody wanted to spend a longer time in the hot spring, while somebody who could not bear it wanted to spend less time in it, then everyone just needed to make a concession and be more considerate. I think making concessions is a common and effective way to solve the disagreement. Frankly speaking, as long as there were no disagreements on the main aspect [like tourism destinations], the disagreements on the secondary aspect do not really matter, for they can be easily solved by*

considering each other.

Similarly, Yueru from Group 10 also mentioned the use of making concessions when she and her group members were making decisions on travel destinations. She regarded the process of deciding travel destinations as the "process of making concessions". She implied that if no one was willing to make a concession, the whole travel plan would probably be cancelled.

Jiamu from Group 4 indicated that as long as the original intention of the trip was not broken, he was willing to make concessions to resolve a disagreement.

> *Personally, I am willing to make concessions as long as it does not hurt my bottom line [the purpose of travelling]. If they suggest doing a certain travel activity which I do not have too many interests in, I can also go with them and then just watch.*

Yueru further indicated she would be willing to be the one who would make concessions, for it is a rare opportunity to travel with friends.

> *In terms of the disagreement resolution strategies, of course, I would be very happy if my friend makes the concession to me. I will also be very happy if it is me who gives up a certain destination that I wanted to visit, for there are few opportunities to travel with my friends. So, just enjoy every opportunity of travelling together.*

4.5.2.2 Discussing and voting

As mentioned before, interviewees indicated the travel groups made some travel-related decisions collectively by discussing and voting and this has been found to be one of the most adopted disagreement resolution strategies. Voting is embodied in the behaviour of actual voting and uses the majority voting rule, which was based on the results of the travel groups' prior discussions.

Sicong from Group 1 indicated that he and his group members used the majority voting rule to solve the disagreements when deciding the type of accommodation.

> *One of us had raised up the suggestion of looking for relatively cheaper accommodation, which I totally supported. That is to say the number of people who prefer to live in cheaper accommodation dominated, which influenced the final decision. I do not think it was real "voting", for all of us were in the Wechat group anyway. We did not meet and it was not face-to-face. We were just saying "I prefer a cheap one", another friend said he wanted a cheap one*

as well. So it was like [what we said] guiding the opinion.

Chunjiao from Group 2, who went on the North Island trip, explained the reason why there were some small disagreements on some detailed decisions, such as tourism attractions, that had not been made before the trip.

There were definitely some small disagreements. For example, the biggest problem we had was that we had not made decisions like what we were doing on a certain day. So, there might be a few disagreements on tourism attractions, such as somebody wanted to go two places but we did not have enough time so we were only able to go to one place. So we voted in terms of deciding tourism attractions. There were only four of us, so my boyfriend, who was the driver, was not involved in the voting, only the rest of us participated in the voting for the tourism attractions [to avoid the situation where two people wanted to one place while another two wanted to go another place.]

Zhanpeng from Group 11 indicated that the disagreement was over the transportation mode. He considered the voting process as getting to know each other's thoughts.

It happened in a few cases, such as deciding which bicycle rental to choose, which was a very tiny thing. We sort of voted. There were only four of us, so "voting" for us was more like learning about everyone's thoughts and how many people supported this decision.

Qingming from Group 5 also indicated they discussed and voted to deal with disputes on tourism attractions. He perceived discussing and voting as an equal and fair way to resolve the disagreements.

The disagreements did not often happen. However, taking the Redwoods Forest Park as an example, the girls in the group wanted to go there so much, while the boys did not have as much interest. So we had the discussion. Also, the weather was not very nice that day, which meant wandering in the park in such weather would not be cost-efficient. [They spent money on the petrol and time on the road to get there. If the weather is not pleasant they would feel disappointed.] So we voted and finally decided not to go there. [...] Yeah, it was like having discussions equally, and everyone had the right to express their own opinions and the right to vote.

Jiamu from Group 3 emphasised the importance of expressing the real "opinions and feelings" to other members when the group decisions differ from yours.

I think the best way [to solve disagreements] is to express your own opinions and feelings and then we had a discussion together. After all, the purpose of

travelling is to relax rather than getting involved in trouble... So if we could not reach an agreement, eventually we would choose to make concessions.

4.5.2.3   Looking for alternatives

Looking for alternatives was used to resolve a disagreement when the decisions were not supported by some group members, or the original plan for some decisions could not be carried out because of some temporary situation.

Junjie from Group 1 described an unpredicted situation when their booked travel activity had to be cancelled because of the undesirable weather condition. He indicated that he chose to look for other alternatives but two of his group members insisted on doing the activity.

In the last trip, we had booked skydiving. However, when we arrived we were informed that we could not do it because of the bad weather, which was a pity for every one of us. [...] Actually, I was like if we could not do it then just give it up. However, there were two members who came to New Zealand from China for a holiday. They were like "we came here already, we really want to try skydiving. [...]" The booking we had was in the morning. When we were having lunch, I did some information search wondering whether there were other places where we can do the skydiving. After lunch, the rest of our activity was basically driving all the way to find a place for the skydiving. Then I got in contact with one place who told me we were able to do the skydiving in the afternoon. Actually, we had other plans for the afternoon, so the travel schedule became full because of the unexpected added activity, which made us very busy and tired at the end of the day. But we all thought it was good and well worth.

Junjie further indicated that looking for alternatives was acceptable based on the premise that the original travel schedule was not too full.

Our original plan for that day was finishing the schedule by 5 pm or 6 pm and looking for a restaurant to have dinner. However, we reached the accommodation at 9 pm because of adding the extra travel activity. We were driving in the dark, which was quite dangerous. Also, all of us were exhausted. Generally, we were very lucky. I wanted to do the skydiving. But from the angle of driving and the whole arrangement of the travel schedule, I would have just given up this activity. We finally made it because the others insisted,

and we were really lucky with the weather as well. [...] So, what we did added extra to the original travel schedule when there was some space left. [...] I probably played the role of the "bad guy" who kept saying that "we should try not to re-schedule it since we have already made other arrangements for the afternoon", for if we change one part of the schedule it would influence the whole travel plan and schedule, which was annoying...

Sicong from Group 1 gave an example of a disagreement on the accommodation. He indicated that Junjie, who was the leader of their travel group, resolved the disagreement by looking for other options.

Taking accommodation as the example, it was the first accommodation they found at that time. Junjie suggested we book a big room, so all of us could share the room, for there were three boys and two girls. However, the girls did not think this was a good idea, for they thought it was inconvenient. So we chose to live separately. What [the resolution strategy] I remember was that later Junjie found another better and cheaper option and showed us, asking our opinions.

4.5.2.4 Persuasion

Zhanpeng from Group 11 indicated that persuasion was the most used strategy to resolve disagreements which happened when making travel-related decisions. He gave an example of how one of the group members used persuasion to resolve the disagreements on food and restaurants.

We had different opinions on how to deal with the problem of food. At the beginning, we thought that we could just go to the restaurant. However, one of the friends advised us to cook food ourselves. So, we had some discussions on whether to eat in a restaurant or to cook. [...] In the end, this friend still thought cooking was more economical and there were not many restaurants suitable for us. He also searched for relevant information and it turned out that there were many western style restaurants which were beyond our budget and few Chinese restaurants. So we decided to cook our own food, for we learned there was a supermarket where we can buy food to cook. So, according to the information, we knew that cooking food ourselves was more suitable for us.

Furthermore, Zhanpeng considered persuasion as a more "customised and reasonable" way to resolve the disagreement, for his friend used sufficient and relevant information to support his argument.

> *It was reasonable. He would provide…[relevant information] He was not like making the decision all by himself, he would use all kinds of reasons and facts to try to persuade you to make you feel what he was saying is reasonable. And you would easily choose to accept it. The way he used to solve the disagreement was more customised and reasonable, not just holding his own opinions.*

However, persuasion does not always work well in resolving disagreements. Yueru from Group 10 shared the experience of a plan having been delayed, implying that sometimes persuasion leads to compromise, while sometimes it does not work well when somebody holds steadily on to his or her views.

> *The only time the plan was delayed was the time we planned to go to Kaikoura. We tried to persuade another group member not to do the whale watching by telling her that there is nothing else, just whale watching in Kaikoura, and only seafood and lobsters to eat there. We told her that the most important thing is that you have to stay one more night there [because of the bus departure] and taking buses there would use a lot of time and money. We thought she might compromise. However, she did not listen to us.*

4.5.2.5 Toleration

Toleration is referred to as paying respect to others' requirements and suggestions, and supporting others' decisions when realising they have different opinions from their own. Wenjun from Group 6 gave an example of the disagreement on food and restaurants. She indicated that she followed her friend's decision to look for the restaurant which her friend had chosen. Although they didn't manage to find the restaurant, she treated the suggestion with tolerance and patience.

> *For example, she wanted to go to a restaurant which she had seen on the website. We had been looking for a long time but we did not find it. We asked a person and he said it had closed a few years ago and that was why we could not find it. Because it was the place she wanted to go, she felt very sorry about it. Then I was like "it is okay, we can still look around to see if the restaurant is somewhere else."*

Chunjiao from Group 2 indicated that her friends showed more tolerance to her, for she was the only girl in the travel group who had made up the travel plans for the whole group. She pointed out that with tolerance, even if her friends were not satisfied with some decisions, they chose not to turn it into an argument.

I think I played the dominating role in our travel group. If there were any disagreements happening, other members treated my decisions and requirements with so much tolerance, for I was the only girl in the group. There were disagreements on whether we were going swimming or having some rest instead, and also disagreements on who will cook the food for us. [We understood that] nothing is going to be perfect… I was like "okay, then it is your turn to cook the food for us", or "let's go somewhere today". Even if other group members had different opinions they would not raise them.

4.5.2.6 Splitting up

When there have been different ideas about tourism attractions and travel activities (normally once at the destinations), sometimes the group members split into small groups to continue their own travel schedules.

Yueru from Group 10 indicated that they disagreed on travel activities. For personal reasons, she had to choose to be "free and easy" and to split up with her friends, while she also believed that two or three group members doing the travel activities together would be so much fun.

Yeah, for the last trip, we did not have so many disagreements. The only disagreement was mainly focused on the travel activities we were going to do when we were in Queenstown. I do not dare to do those extreme activities such as bungee jumping and skydiving. So my friend chose to do them by herself. In this case, I think we should be free and easy. In terms of doing some travel activities, it would not be like I gave up what I wanted to do just because she did not want to do it, but vice versa. Right? Especially as it was an uncommon opportunity to do the extreme sports. I struggled with the thought that we should not be together since we had chosen to travel together. However, personally, I could not overcome it [the fear of extreme sports]. Generally, I think it would be better if we do the travel activities together, at least two or three people, which would be more fun.

Xinyi from Group 8 went tramping with her partner and another couple. She indicated that she and her group members chose to split up when they could not reach an agreement, but it did not influence their friendship.

> *Most of our opinions were in consensus. No one was like "I am skilled, I want to reach the top of the mountain." The only divergence emerged when we were heading back going downhill. My husband and I are used to doing things at a slow pace, so we wanted to walk slowly. However, they worried that it would be very dangerous to go downhill when it was in dark, so they walked very fast. Then we had the discussion and realised that we could reach an agreement, so we chose to split up into two groups. I feel it was expressing our opinions. If we had not managed to reach the agreement, then we would split up anyway but it was not a big deal.*

4.5.2.7   Accommodating

Accomodating occurs when someone gives up their opinions because they differ from those of other group members.

Ronghao from Group 2 shared the way he dealt with disagreements in the travel group, indicating that he had to give up his ideas when he found that the other was not being convinced.

> *Sometimes, we had disagreements on some detailed decisions. For me, I would tell everyone my opinions at the first time. If somebody still stuck to his or her views, generally, I would choose to give up my suggestions, stay quiet and follow their decisions.*

Xinyi from Group 8 gave an example of the accommodating made by one of his group members when most travel group members did not support his idea.

> *When we were in the middle of tramping, one guy in our group suddenly had the idea of trying to reach the top, for the snowy mountain was so beautiful. However, my husband and I did not bring any relevant equipment, and our boots were not suitable for the depth of snow. So, we said to him that if he wanted to do it then he should go, and we can wait for him somewhere. But he did not want us to be waiting for him, so he had to give up the idea in the end.*

4.5.2.8 Delay

Instead of dealing with disagreements immediately, people use different ways to delay or postpone the decision-making process, such as keeping silent or ignoring the issue. Huilan from Group 1 described a situation where the group members had different opinions about food and restaurants when they were heading back after skiing, hungry and tired. The food and restaurants proposed by the driver were ignored by the group members, which led the decision-making to end in silence.

> *When we finished skiing, all of us were very hungry. Although we had got some energy bars from the staff at the ski field, we were still hungry and tired after skiing. When he [Junjie] was driving, he asked us what food we wanted to eat, for we would pass through some towns where there was some food. It was like everyone had a different idea, so we were not in the consensus. One of the suggestions was that when we reached the accommodation we then find a nearby restaurant because everyone was very tired at that time. However, the driver thought since everyone was hungry then just choose a restaurant on the way back. Some members were in silence and some members fell asleep. This was not a confliction because we were actually considering others: the driver thought everyone was hungry, so we needed to find a place to eat as soon as possible. While some members thought everyone was tired, so we need to reach the accommodation as soon as possible and have some rest. In the end, we drove directly to the accommodation and had the dinner in a nearby Chinese restaurant.*

Huilan implied the strategy of delay was not the proper solution for dealing with disagreements. She indicated that there should be a person who is actively involved in the group decision-making process to gather and integrate everyone's thoughts to facilitate the decision-making process.

> *In terms of the disagreement resolution strategy of delay [laughter], personally, I think I would be more active next time and try to get involved to learn more about what other members are thinking about in order to create a win-win situation. Although there will be different opinions, I will try to take every member's suggestions into consideration...*

5 CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This section reflects on the main findings of the study: the most discussed travel-related decisions, the relationships between the group decision-making models, disagreement prevention strategies, disagreement resolution strategies, and the group decision-making process.

Section 5.2 returns to the discussion of the most discussed travel-related decisions in the Findings chapter which addressed the first research questions "are Chinese International Students (CISs) travelling around New Zealand engaged in discussions regarding travel-related decisions and which are the most discussed decisions?" Then it compares the findings with those in previous research which shares a similar study context.

Section 5.3 readdresses the adoption of the group decision-making models (Table 4.3) in the Findings chapter and further reflects on the relationships between the three group decision-making models and the complexity of the group decision-making process.

Section 5.4 returns to the discussion of disagreement resolution strategies in the Findings chapter, which was a new theme that emerged during the interviews and analysis, and refers back and compares the findings with those in the previous research which shares a similar study context with the current study. Section 5.5 reflects on the discussion of disagreement resolution strategies in the Findings chapter, which addressed the second research question, "What disagreement resolution strategies are used to make travel-related decisions?" and compares the findings with those in the previous research.

Section 5.6 connects the framework of the group decision-making process of friends with the group decision-making models and discusses the group decision-making process in each group decision-making model. The third research questions, "How does information searching occur during the decision-making process and what are the most-adopted information source?" became less important in this study, and is discussed along with the frameworks where it is applicable. Section 5.7 compares the similarities and differences between these frameworks of the group decision-making

process in different group decision-making models, followed by section 5.8 giving a summary of this chapter.

5.2   THE MOST DISCUSSED TRAVEL-RELATED DECISIONS

The most discussed travel-related decisions were identified: tourism attractions, travel activities, food and restaurants, accommodation, and transportation, which addressed the first research question. From the perspective of the interviewees, the most important travel-related decisions that had to be made were also revealed: accommodation, transportation, destination, travel activities, departure time, food and restaurants, tourism attractions, travel budget, and travel schedule.

This finding is similar to some previous research. Song, Sparks and Wang (2016) conducted the research in their context of young Chinese travelling in groups of friends to nearby destinations in the Yangtze River Delta region. They identified eight issues where their interviewees frequently had different views and were more likely to disagree with others: destination selection, tourism activity, meal option, travel cost, travel timing, accommodation, transportation and safety. The findings of the current study also reveal more interactions between the group members on issues like travel activity, food and restaurants, accommodation and transportation. However, the destination selection was not found to be one of the main concerns of the travel groups, for most travel groups had been made up of members with similar or same tourism destination interests before they gathered in a group and started planning.

In the previous research it was found that the types of disagreement issues varied at different stages, such as pre-vacation and during-vacation. Song, Sparks and Wang (2016) found that at the pre-vacation stage their interviewees primarily had disagreements on destination selection, accommodation, transportation, and travel timing, while at the during-vacation stage the disagreements were primarily on meal option and safety. They found their interviewees mainly had disagreements on tourism activities and travel cost at both pre- and during-vacation stages. Corresponding to the findings in the previous research, the study confirms the stages when different travel-related decisions were made. In this study, it was found that the decisions on accommodation, transportation, destination, travel timing (departure time and travel schedule) had mainly been made before the trip; decisions on food and restaurants had mostly been made at the destinations; and the decisions on travel activities had been made both before the travel and at the destinations. Decisions on travel cost (budget) had mainly been made before the trip, and the decisions on tourism attractions had mainly been made both before the travel and at

the destinations in this study.

In terms of the safety issue, there were differences to the previous research where it caused concerns. The awareness of safety was found to be entwined in all stages of the decision-making process and was one of the important factors influencing making other travel-related decisions (e.g. the decision of whether to use self-driving, the decision of the location of the accommodation).

5.3   THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MODELS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

The decision-making involving a group of friends is complex. As discussed in the Findings chapter, shared decision-making (i.e. discussion, voting and/or making random choices [2] to assist group decision-making) was found to be the most commonly adopted group decision-making model, followed by the leadership model and the division of work model. However, there were overlaps using these three models during the group decision-making process. As a result, the first research question, "Are Chinese International Students (CISs) travelling around New Zealand engaged in discussions regarding travel-related decisions and which are the most discussed decisions?" was not able to comprehensively cover the emerging situation, since the group decision-making process not only involved discussions, but also other decision-making models such as voting or decision-making by one person without discussion.

Based on Table 4.3 which showed the adoption of group decision-making models, a framework (Figure 5.1) has been developed to illustrate the relationships between these three models of group decision-making: leadership, division of work and shared decision-making. The figure should be read from the top downwards.

During the decision-making process, the travel group members mainly used either the leadership or the shared decision-making models to make travel-related decisions in groups. Most travel groups who adopted the shared decision-making model reached the stage of final decisions by having discussions, voting and making random choices.

However, the decision-making process of the travel groups who used the leadership model varied due to the different roles the "leaders" played in the travel groups. Three roles have been recognised in the leadership model (section 4.4.1.1): travel initiator, main plan provider and main decision maker. The former two roles are with

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[2] e.g. rock, paper and scissors or names from a hat, etc.

lower dominance as these two types of "leaders" either initiated the trip and pushed the development of the group decision-making process, or developed and provided the travel plan and schedule for the group members to discuss. In both cases these leaders did not make the final decisions. In contrast, a leader who is the main decision maker had higher dominance, and made the decisions on the behalf of the group members.
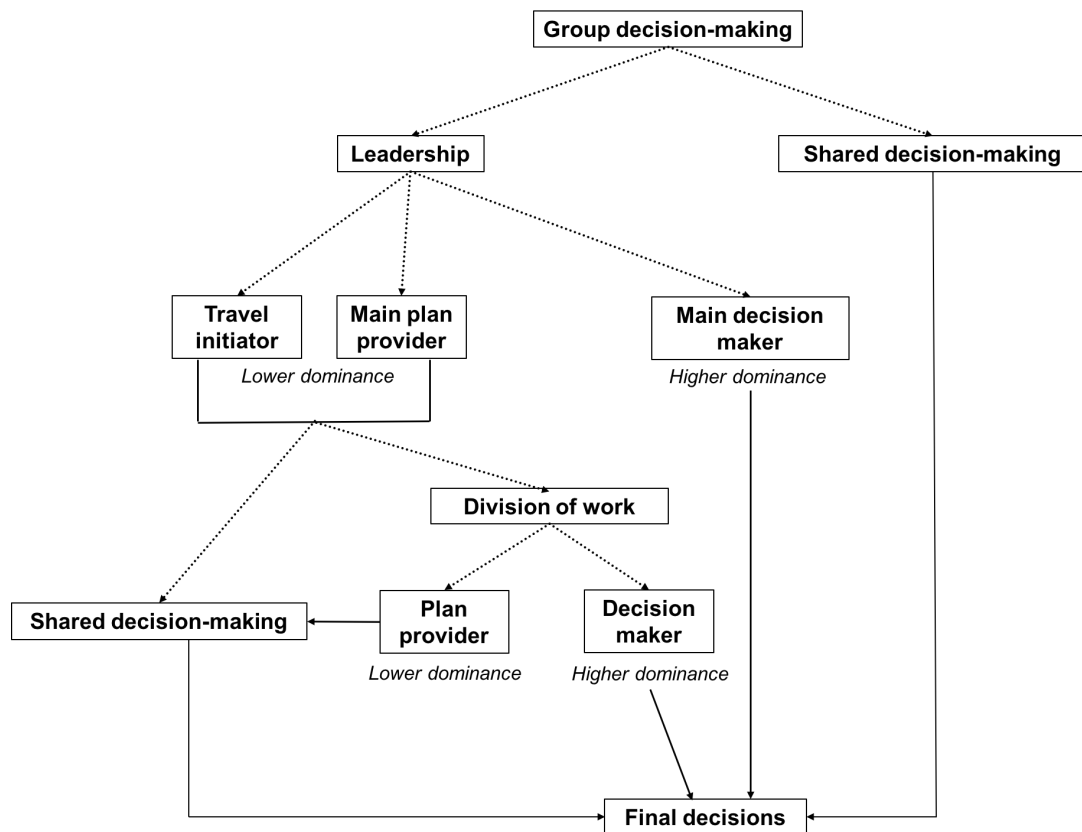

Figure 5.1 Relationship between the models of group decision-making

As a consequence, the travel groups with leaders who were less dominant tended to further use either the shared decision-making model or division of work model. The groups who then adopted the model of shared decision-making ended up making travel-related decisions collectively through either discussing, voting or making random choices. For the groups who then used the division of work model, the following process of group decision-making depended on the roles in the groups (Section 4.4.2.2): plan provider and decision maker. The work relating to the trip was divided into several sections and then they were allocated to different group members. The member who made the plan for a certain element (e.g. accommodation) and provided it to the other group members to discuss was the plan provider, while the decision maker made the decisions on the element by himself or herself. The former role, which has lower dominance, moved to the next stage: shared decision-making, in which the group members made the final decisions for this section together. The

latter role, which is more dominant, made the final decisions he or she was in charge of on behalf of other group members.

5.4   DISAGREEMENT PREVENTION STRATEGIES

The second research question initially asked, "What disagreement strategies are used to make travel-related decisions?" However, most interviewees indicated that there was a lack of disagreement during the group decision-making process. This situation is similar to the research findings of Song et al. (2016). They found that some of their interviewees perceived that there was no disagreement, or did not express their disagreement during the group decision-making process.

In this study, six disagreement prevention strategies have been recognised based on the analysis of the interviews and transcripts: travelling with like-minded people, adequate preparation, empathy and mutual understanding, tolerance, compensation and external factors. In the previous research, four reasons, namely maintaining close relationships, achieving an enjoyable travel experience, obeying the role of the leader, and obeying the male authority, have been identified to explain the phenomenon that Chinese travellers avoided disagreement (Song et al. (2016). They further interpreted the perception towards disagreement of Chinese interviewees as the profound influence of Chinese culture values: forbearance and authority.

Generally, all the disagreement prevention strategies can be explained by "maintaining close relationships" and "achieving an enjoyable travel experience". Rather than "obeying the role of the leader", the interviewees in this study were found to respect the role of the leader. "Obeying the male authority" was not reflected by the research findings. In contrast, the role of the leader was played by the only female in one group (Group 2), and the requirements and preferences of female members in the groups were firstly and carefully considered in most travel groups. The phenomenon of preventing disagreements parallels the concept "groupthink" in Decrop's (2005) research, which refers to that members change their own opinions to conform to the preferences and opinions of the group. Chinese students' high mutual-face concern (Mian zi), which identified by X. Wang and Walker's (2011), also had relation to this phenomenon as Chinese tend to regard a disharmonious group as losing mutual face.

The external influencing factor (i.e. the travel environment of New Zealand), which is an emerging reason why it was reported there was a lack of disagreement, was found to be a distinct advantage for New Zealand as the tourism destination compared with

China as the tourism destination.

5.5 DISAGREEMENT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

Although indicating there was lack of disagreement, when disagreements happened, interviewees would adopt the disagreement resolution strategies to resolve them. Eight disagreement resolution strategies were identified: making concessions, discussing and voting, looking for alternatives, persuading, tolerating, splitting up, accommodating and delaying.

In one of a few studies which investigated the relevant issues of disagreement resolution in the context of young Chinese travellers, Song et al. (2016) found their interviewees had used a range of strategies to deal with disagreements: compromising, problem-solving, delaying, forcing and accommodating. Compromising was found to be the most used disagreement resolution strategy in the context of families and couples making travel-related decisions (Bronner & de Hoog, 2008; Kozak, 2010). Making concessions, looking for alternatives to the eight disagreement resolution strategies found in this study are similar to the definition of compromising: discussing and voting are the specific forms of problem-solving defined in the findings of Song et al. (2016) . The strategies of delaying and accommodating were also found in the current study. Persuading, tolerating and splitting up are new disagreement resolution strategies that emerged in the current study.

Song et al. (2016) further identified two Chinese culture values, "reciprocity" and "conformity", to explain their interviewees' behaviour of adopting these disagreement resolution strategies. Song et al. (2016) stated that compromising, problem-solving and delaying reflected the concept of reciprocity, for using these approaches, interviewees valued their mutual dependent relationships with other group members and were seeking to reach mutual benefits. In terms of the approaches of forcing and accommodating, Song et al. (2016) indicated that they conveyed the concept of conformity, for their interviewees who used these approaches either imposed their views to others or gave up their own thoughts to facilitate the process of group decision-making.

The eight disagreement resolution strategies found in the current study fit in the two identified Chinese culture values in the previous research of Song et al., 2016. Making concessions, discussing and voting, looking for alternatives, and delaying embody the concept of reciprocity, for interviewees who adopted these strategies were trying to

meet others' requirements and expectations. Compared with the former three disagreement resolution strategies, delaying is a less proactive way to resolve the disagreement. Persuading, tolerating, and accommodating reflected the concept of conformity, for the interviewees either tried to impose their views on others or chose not to emphasise their own requirements. The strategy of persuading found in the current study is similar to the "forcing" in the previous research. However, although sharing the same starting point, persuading showed more mutual understanding and respect, and it was often assisted by adequate and convincing information. In terms of the strategy of splitting up, it partly fits in with the concept of reciprocity, for the premise of splitting up was for not harming each other's benefits and maintaining the relationships. Moreover, it was embodied in the mutual understanding and respect between the group members, and the more open mindedness and independency of the Chinese international students.

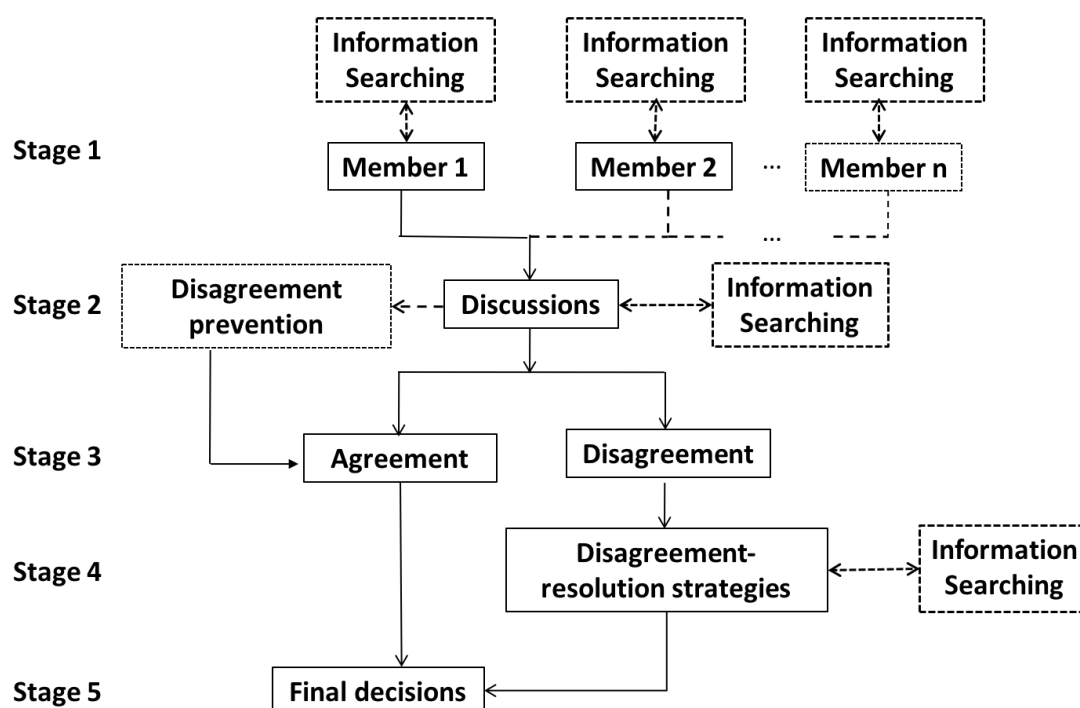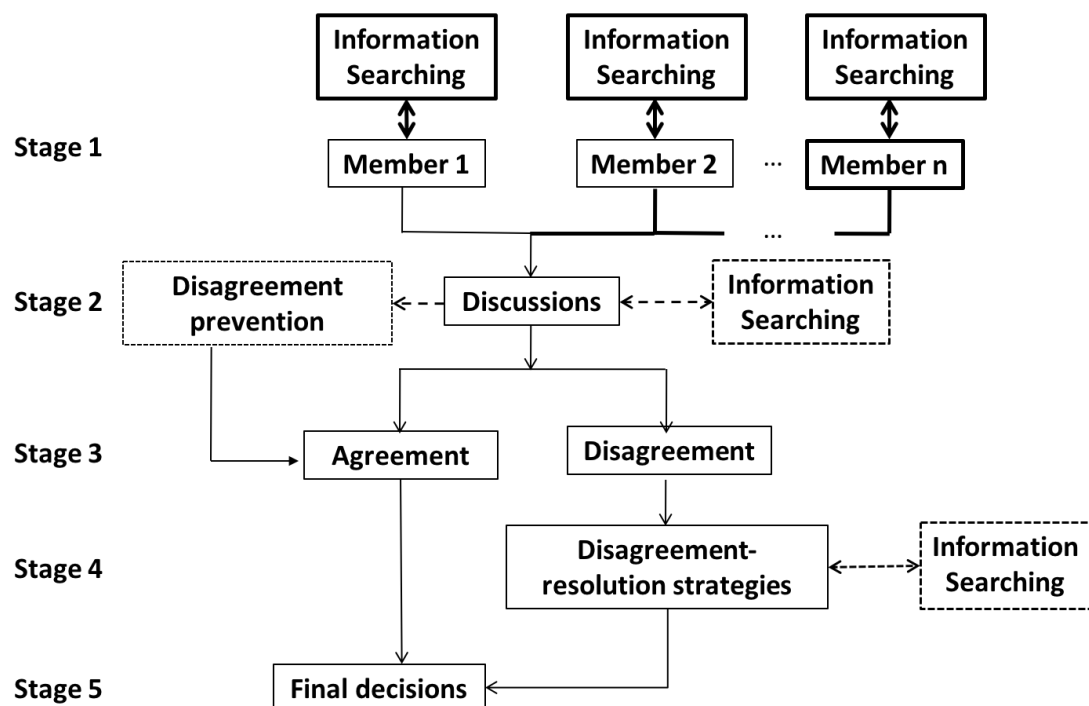## 5.6   GROUP DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Figure 5.2 Group decision-making process of friends (revised)

The previously developed conceptual framework (Figure 2.1) largely fitted the three models of group decision-making found in the study. However, disagreement prevention also emerged during the analysis. At Stage 2, the disagreement prevention strategies might be adopted during the group decision-making process to assist the group members to reach an agreement and eventually reach the Final Decisions Stage. Figure 5.2 is a revised model of group decision-making of friends. This framework is

then applied to the group decision-making process in these three models. The differences between these frameworks of these three models are highlighted in bold.

In the shared decision-making model of group decision-making (Figure 5.3), all group members were engaged in the group decision-making process where the group members made travel-related decisions collectively. Group members were involved individually in information searching to collect travel information before they had their discussions. Information searching might also happen during the discussion to assist the group to reach the agreement. Also, disagreement prevention strategies might be adopted by some members to prevent the divergence from turning into disagreements. If a disagreement happened, resolution strategies would be used to resolve the disagreement. Information searching might also be used to support the adopted disagreement resolution strategies.

Framework A

Figure 5.3 Group decision-making process of friends: Shared decision-making model

As discussed earlier, the group decision-making process varies depending on the dominance of leaders in the travel groups. Figure 5.4 consists of two parts. Framework B, which shows the group decision-making process in the leadership model, illustrates the group decision-making process with less dominant leaders; while Framework C illustrates the group decision-making process with more dominant leaders.

Generally, in the leadership model of group decision-making, the leaders of the travel groups took the main responsibility of searching for travel information. For the roles of travel initiator and the main plan provider who have lower dominance (Framework B), other group members were also involved in the information searching before the discussions within the group. This is because they needed relevant information to further revise the travel plan and schedule provided by the travel initiator or the main plan provider during the discussions. Information searching might also happen during the discussion to help the group reach the agreement. Also, the disagreement prevention strategies might be adopted by some group members to avoid differing opinions turning into Song et al. (2016) a disagreement. If a disagreement happened, the disagreement resolution strategies were used to address the disagreement with the information searching sometimes happening to support the adopted strategies. For the roles of the main decision maker who is more dominant (Framework C), the information the leader collected included taking into account the travel preference and requirements of other group members. The leader made the final decision with group members sometimes using disagreement prevention strategies to avoid any disagreement with the leader.

Figure 5.5, which shows the group decision-making process of friends in the division of work model, is made up of two parts with Framework D illustrating the process with low dominance task leaders, and Framework E illustrating the process with high dominance task leaders. In the group decision-making model of division of work (Figure 5.5), each task leader searched for information separately. For the plan providers, who were the task leaders with low dominance in the groups (Framework D), their main responsibility was searching for travel information and making the travel plan on the task they were in charge of. Based on the plan of each task provided by the plan provider, the group members either revised the plan or made the decisions collectively, which may have needed other group members to also have searched for information. Similar to Framework B, during the discussion, information searching might happen to assist the group to reach an agreement. Also, the disagreement prevention strategies might be taken to prevent the potential disagreements. If a disagreement happened, the disagreement resolution strategies would be used by the group members to resolve the disagreements, during which information searching might happen to support these strategies. For the task leaders with high dominance, like the decision maker in Framework E, they took the travel preference and requirements of other group members into consideration other than searching for travel information. The final decisions on each task were made separately by their decision makers. The disagreement prevention strategies might be adopted by group members to avoid the disagreement with the task leaders.

Framework B: Low dominance leaders   Framework C: High dominance leaders
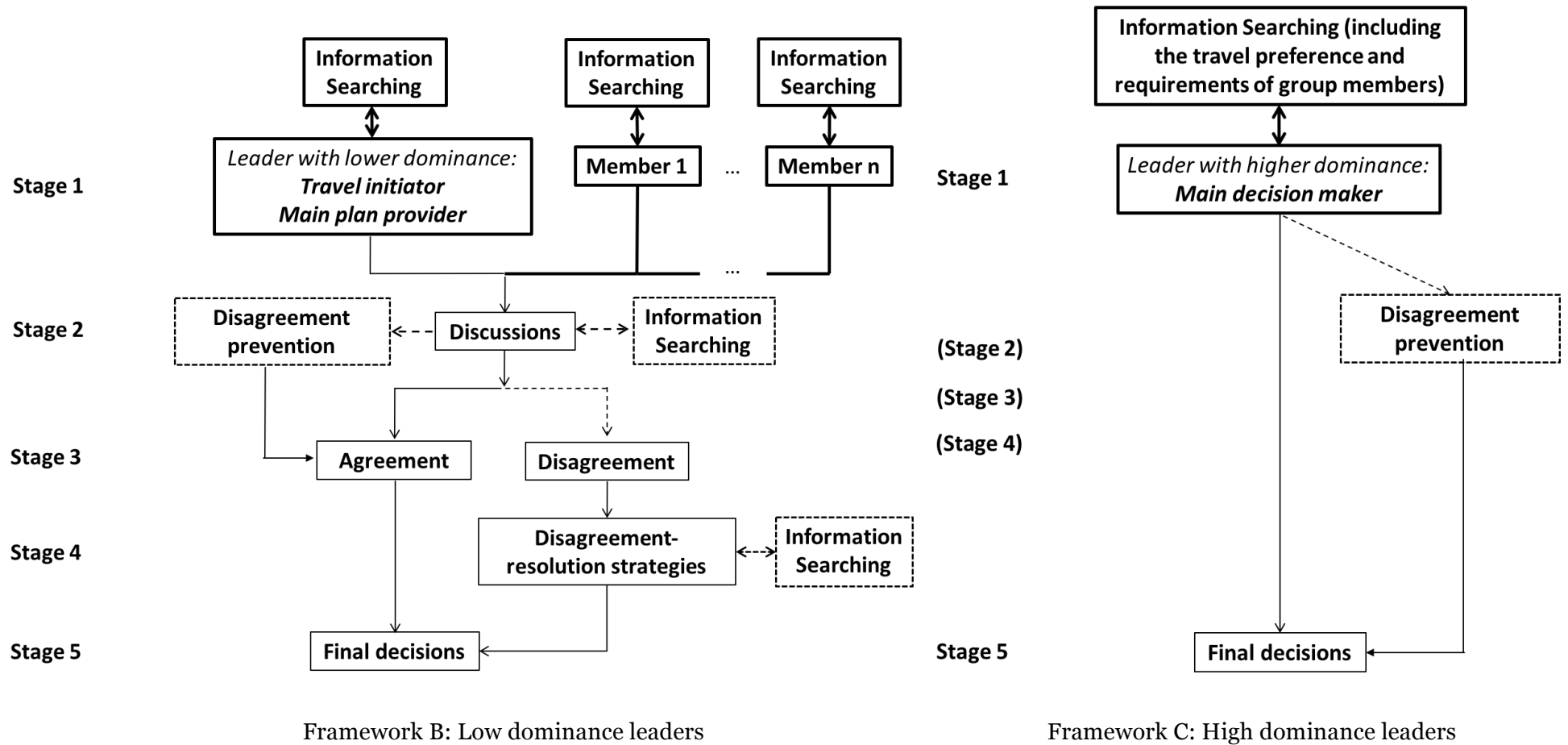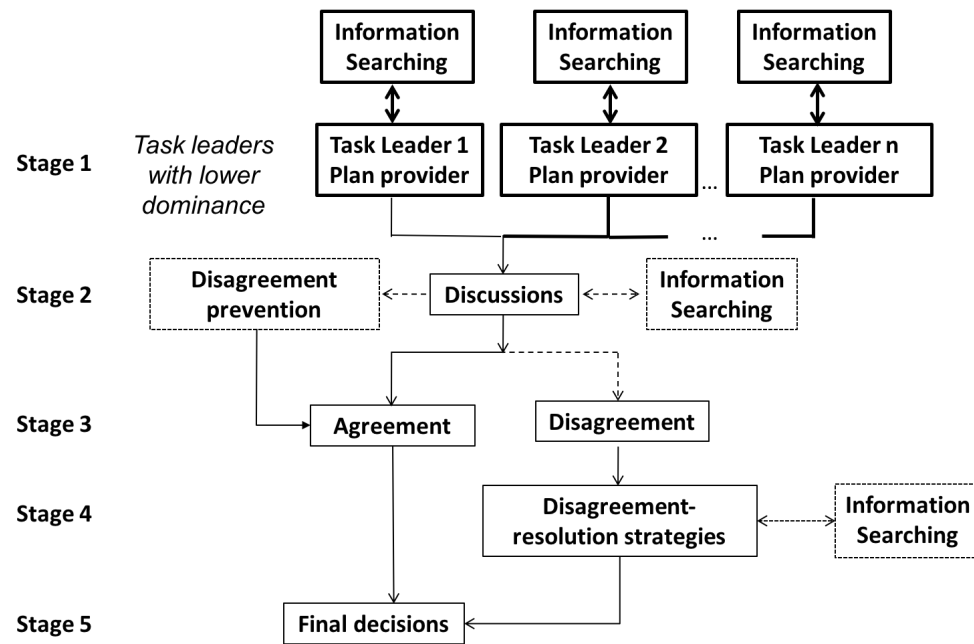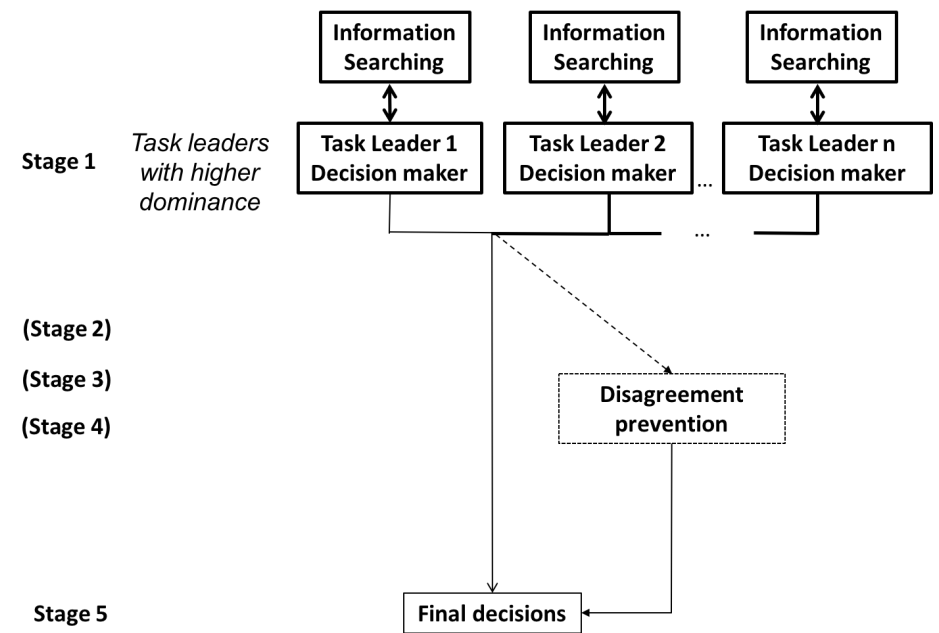
Figure 5.4 Group decision-making process of friends: Leadership model

Framework D: Low dominance leaders   Framework E: High dominance leaders

Figure 5.5 Group decision-making process of friends: Division of work model

5.7   COMPARISON OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FRAMEWORKS

In general, there are two main similarities between these five frameworks (Figures 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5). First, information searching happened at Stage 1 of each framework. Second, disagreement prevention strategies were likely to be adopted by the group members between Stages 1 and 5 in each framework to avoid different opinions turning into disagreements.

Compared with Frameworks A, B and D, Stage 2 to Stage 4 are missing in Frameworks C and E, where the group members had discussions, adopted disagreement prevention strategies and conducted information searching at Stage 2, reached the agreement or disagreement at Stage 3 and used the disagreement resolution strategies at Stage 4 in Frameworks A, B and D.

In general, the travel-related decisions in the groups of Frameworks A, B and D were made collectively by the group members, which involved more interaction (i.e. discussion, disagreement prevention and disagreement resolution) between the group members. However, in Frameworks B and C where the high dominance leader made the decisions on his or her own, only the disagreement prevention strategies were adopted by the group members to avoid the divergence turning into disagreements with the (main) decision makers in the group.

The framework of the group decision-making process of friends in the shared decision-making model (Framework A) and the frameworks of low dominance leaders in both leadership and division of work models (Frameworks B and D) share a similar structure: more than one group member was involved in information searching and group discussion. Information searching and disagreement prevention might happen during the group discussions, which then might lead to either agreement and smoothly reaching the final decisions, or disagreement. When disagreement happened, disagreement resolution strategies might be used (sometimes assisted by information searching) to help reach the final decisions. However, at Stage 1, the information searching behaviour of group members of each framework varied. Group members of Framework A were engaged in information searching at different degrees since they made the group travel-related decisions collectively. Group members of Framework B were also engaged in information searching, with the less dominant leader mainly searching for travel information and making the travel plans, and other members searching for information in order to give suggestions. In Framework D, where the groups divided the work, group members were delegated to be task leaders who primarily searched for information to

make the plan for their responsible elements.

The frameworks of the group decision-making process of friends in both leadership and division of work models with high dominance leaders (Frameworks C and E) share a similar structure: at Stage 1, only the leaders with the high dominance of the Framework C were involved in the information searching as the leaders in the leadership model made the final decisions by themselves. Besides searching for travel information, the information on travel preference and requirements of group members were also collected and taken into consideration when making the decisions by the high dominance leaders. In Framework E, where the group divided and allocated the work to each group member, these group members became the task leaders and made the decisions on the elements they were in charge of. Each of them was involved in information searching but for different areas.

5.8 CONCLUSION

To conclude, the most discussed travel-related decisions were identified and compared with the findings in the previous research. The findings of the current study revealed more interactions between the group members on issues like travel activity, food and restaurants, accommodation and transportation, while the destination selection was not found to be one of the main concerns of the travel groups. Moreover, the study confirms that the travel-related decisions were made at different stages, while decisions on travel cost were found to be made before the trip and the decisions on tourism attractions were found to be made both before the travel and at the destinations in this study. The safety issue was not the main topic of the group discussions in this study. However, it was found to be one of the important factors influencing making other travel-related decisions.

The group decision-making involving the group of friends is complex. Shared decision-making (i.e. discussion, voting and/or making random choices to assist group decision-making) was found to be the most commonly adopted group decision-making model, followed by the leadership model. Most travel groups were found to use multiple models to make group travel-related decisions.

The disagreement prevention strategies were identified and compared with those in the previous findings. Most disagreement prevention strategies in this study conform to the reasons given by the previous scholars, which were influenced by Chinese culture values. However, the reason "obeying the male authority" was not confirmed by the findings in this study as the requirements and preferences of female members in the groups were firstly and carefully considered in most travel groups. Besides, the

travel environment was found to be a distinctive factor that leads to lack of disagreement.

Disagreement resolution strategies were used by group members when disagreements happened. The disagreement resolution strategies conformed to the two identified Chinese culture values "reciprocity" and "conformity" in the previous research. Compared with "forcing", which is one of the strategies found in the previous research, the emerging "persuading" showed more mutual understanding and respect. Another emerging strategy, "splitting up", partly fits in to the concept of reciprocity, and it reflects the mutual understanding and respect between the group members, and the more open mindedness and independence of the Chinese international students.

The frameworks of the group decision-making process of friends in different group decision-making models were discussed and compared.

6 CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the group travel decision-making process of Chinese international students. A conceptual framework was developed based on the literature reviewed to guide this study. Qualitative research methods guided by the interpretive research paradigm were adopted. Sixteen semi-structured interviews were analysed using a coding method which incorporated both inductive and deductive thematic analysis approaches in order to seek new patterns and themes and later examine the data for explaining or supporting the previously found patterns and themes.

The next section revisits the relevant findings and evidence in Chapters 4 and 5 to further explain how the research questions were addressed to acknowledge the contributions of the study. The third section revisits the methodology, and provides some direction for future research based on the strengths and limitations of this study. The fourth section provides potential implications and recommendations to the New Zealand tourism industry and relevant tourism organisations in terms of understanding the group decision-making behaviour of Chinese independent travellers.

6.2 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

6.2.1 The most discussed travel-related decisions

Addressing the first research question, "Are Chinese international students travelling around New Zealand engaged in discussions regarding travel-related decisions and which are the most discussed decisions?" the most discussed travel-related decisions were identified. These were tourism attractions, travel activities, food and restaurants, accommodation, and transportation. There were fewer discussions on destination selection and safety issues compared with previous research findings. The interviewees chose to travel with companions with similar tourism destination

interests, and the concern for safety issues were entwined in all stages of the decision-making process and safety was one of the important factors influencing other travel-related decisions.

6.2.2 Further exploration of the group decision-making process

As the study and analysis developed, the group decision-making process was found not only to involve group discussions, but also other decision-making methods such as voting or decision-making by one person without discussion. Therefore, the study continued to further explore the decision-making process of the travel groups, since the first research question was not able to comprehensively cover the emerging situation.

6.2.2.1 Three models of group decision-making

Three group decision-making models were identified: leadership, division of work and shared decision-making. Section 4.4.1 employed examples and quotes from the interviews to explain the leadership model (where a member takes up the responsibility of a leader in the travel group, such as looking for potential group members, working out the general travel plan, and making reservations for transportation and accommodation). The leadership model parallels the concept "delegation" in Decrop's (2005) research, which refers to that a leader emerges to make the final decisions. Three roles of leader in the leadership model were identified: travel initiator, main plan provider, and main decision maker. In Section 5.3, the level of dominance of the roles was discussed. The travel initiator and main plan provider are the leaders with low dominance as they did not make the final decisions; the main decision maker is the leader with high dominance as he or she made the decisions on behalf of the group members.

The division of work model refers to the group members dividing the tasks within the travel group, e.g. dividing the travel plan into several sections and allocating them to each member (Section 4.4.2). Two roles in the model of division of work were identified: plan provider, and decision maker. In Section 5.3, the level of dominance of the roles was discussed. The plan provider was less dominant as he or she made the plan for the responsible element and provided it to the group members; while the decision maker was more dominant as he or she made the final decision for the responsible element.

The shared decision-making model refers to the group members making travel-related decisions collectively (Section 4.4.3). Later, three ways of shared decision-making were identified: voting, discussing and random choice (e.g. rock, paper and scissors, or names from a hat).

Each travel group's adoption of the group decision-making models was illustrated in Table 4.3. Most travel groups were found to adopt multiple models when making different group travel-related decisions. The primary and secondary group decision-making models used by each group were identified. Shared decision-making was the most popular model, followed by the leadership model and the division of work model. It was found that the travel groups who adopted the shared decision-making primarily made the group travel-related decisions collectively; and most travel groups who adopted the leadership model primarily tended to either adopt the shared decision-making model or the division of work model.

Therefore, based on Table 4.3, the relationships of cooperatively using these three models were demonstrated in a framework (Figure 5.1) and further discussed in Section 5.3, highlighting the complexity of the group decision-making involving groups of friends. During the decision-making process, most travel groups either only used shared decision-making as the single model or used leadership and shared decision-making or division of work as multiple models to make different travel-related decisions in groups (see Figure 5.1). The groups who only adopted the shared decision-making model reached the stage of final decisions by having discussions, voting and making random choices. However, the decision-making process of the travel groups who used the leadership model varied due to the dominance level of the roles "leaders" played in the group. It was found that when the group decision-making process involved the leadership model, the less dominant leaders in the group let the group members either make the decisions collectively or divided and allocated the work, while the leaders with high dominance made the decisions on the behalf of the group members.

6.2.2.2   *Disagreement resolution and prevention*

Section 4.5.2 addressed the second research question, "What disagreement resolution strategies are used to make travel-related decisions?" Eight strategies which had been adopted by the interviewees to resolve the disagreements were identified: making concessions, discussing and voting, looking for alternatives, persuasion, toleration, splitting up, accommodating and delaying. These strategies were found to be similar

to the previous studies with three new emerging strategies: persuading, tolerating and splitting up, while the previously identified strategy "forcing" was not found in this study. In the study of Song, Sparks, and Wang (2016), two Chinese culture values, "reciprocity" and "conformity", were used to explain their interviewees' behaviour of adopting these disagreement resolution strategies. Section 5.5 used these two Chinese culture values to examine the disagreement resolution strategies identified in the current study and found them to fit in these disagreement resolution strategies.

However, disagreement resolution strategies became a less important component of group decision-making as the analysis developed, for most interviewees reported there was a lack of disagreement during the group decision-making process, which confirms the findings of the study of Song et al. (2016). The group decision-making process has been further explored, and five disagreement prevention strategies and one external influencing factor have been recognised: travelling with like-minded people, adequate preparation, having empathy and mutual understanding, tolerance, compensation and the travel environment of New Zealand (see Section 4.5.1). "Obeying the male authorities", which is one of the four reasons explaining why Chinese travellers avoided disagreement identified by Song et al. (2016), was not reflected in the current research findings, for the only female in the travel group was found to play the role of the leader, and the requirements and preferences of female members in the groups were firstly and carefully considered in most travel groups.

6.2.2.3   *Group decision-making process of friends*

After identifying the three group decision-making models, the adoption of these three models and the disagreement prevention strategies, this study revisits the previously developed conceptual framework (Figure 2.1) and found it to largely fit these three group decision-making models. The adoption of disagreement prevention strategies was also found to fit the framework (see Figure 5.2). This framework is then applied to the group decision-making process in these three models.

The information searching behaviour and the adoption of disagreement resolution strategies varied due to the use of different group decision-making models and the level of dominance of the roles of the "leader" in the travel groups. It was found that the frameworks of the leadership model and the division of work model with low dominance leaders and the shared decision-making model share a similar structure. At Stage 1, all group members were involved in information searching. The low dominance leaders searched for information to make and provide the travel plan, and

the rest of the group members searched for information to further revise the plan. In the travel groups who used the shared decision-making model, the group members searched for information to make the travel plan and the travel-decisions collectively. The travel groups who used these three models made travel-related decisions jointly. Therefore, in these corresponding three frameworks, the travel groups had discussions at Stage 2, and they might use disagreement prevention strategies to avoid disagreements. If disagreements happened (Stage 3), group members would use disagreement resolution strategies to resolve them at Stage 4.

The frameworks of the leadership model and the division of work model with high dominance leaders share a similarity in structure. At Stage 1, only the leaders with high dominance were involved in information searching. The information they searched for included travel preference and requirements of group members other than travel information. The leaders with high dominance made the final decisions on behalf of the group members. Hence, there were no group discussions in the frameworks of these two models. The group members would adopt disagreement prevention strategies to avoid different opinions turning into a disagreement.

6.2.2.4   *Information searching*

Information searching was discussed along with frameworks to address the third research question, "How does information searching occur during the decision-making process and what are the most-adopted information sources?" However, this study failed to fully answer the part, "What are the most-adopted information sources?" as the information searching became less important during the data analysis.

6.3   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Historically, the data on the group decision-making studies was collected on an individual basis, which led to many aspects of the group decision-making process being neglected (Decrop, 2005). For example, when exploring the choice process on vacation needs of couples with kids, Khoo-Lattimore, Prayag, and Cheah (2015) asked the couples to nominate one group member to take part in the interviews. To understand the decision-making process of a group of friends rather than relying on one person, this study aimed to interview multiple people from the same travel group. However, this aim was not able to be fully achieved with three members from one

group, two members from three of the groups, and one member from seven of the groups having been interviewed.

In addition, as a culture insider, the researcher shares a similar social identity with the interviewees (both as a Chinese international student of similar age who is far away from their home country, and studying in VUW) which not only provided the access to the field, but also reduced some possible bias caused by social distance. Sharing the same cultural background with the interviewees enables the researcher to better understand interviewees' thoughts and feelings to provide proper prompts to have good-quality conversations during the interview. Conducting interviews in both the researcher and the interviewees' native language prevented interruptions when switching from different languages.

This study originally aimed to examine whether Chinese international students involved themselves in group discussions, whether they had disagreements, and what their information searching behaviours were when travelling around New Zealand with a group of friends. A conceptual framework was developed to guide this study (Figure 2.1). With the analysis developed, it was found that the group decision-making process not only involved group discussions, but also other decision-making methods such as voting or decision-making by one person without discussion. Hence, the study continued to explore the group decision-making process and then identified three group decision-making models, the adoption of these three models, and disagreement resolution and prevention strategies. Then the study went back to the original conceptual framework and examined whether these findings fit this framework.

For future research, four elements should be noted. First, this study was unable to fully achieve the aim of trying to interview multiple people from the same travel group, and it is therefore suggested that future researchers should endeavour to recruit more than one member from the same travel group to understand the group decision-making process from multiple dimensions. Second, interviewees in this study were physically in New Zealand. The travel behaviour and the group decision-making process of Chinese free independent travellers who start planning their outbound trips in their home country should be further studied to provide an overall understanding of Chinese independent travellers. Third, the models of group decision-making and the group decision-making process of friends needs to be further tested in other cultural backgrounds to examine whether they are formed and influenced by cultural factors. Last, since this research failed to fully study the issues

relating to information searching and information sources, it is suggested that they be studied and examined in future research.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The travel behaviour of groups of friends was found to be distinctive from those of families and couples as decision-making units (Decrop, 2005). With the growth of the global international student market and the student travel market who frequently travel with groups of friends, this decision-making unit is gradually showing increasing importance. For Chinese international students who are identified as China's first wave of independent travellers (King & Gardiner, 2015), the study on this market contributes to adding knowledge to both student travel and independent travellers.

Chinese international students from this sample mostly used the shared decision-making model during the group decision-making process. That is to say, Chinese international students tended to make the group travel-related decisions collectively. The role of the leader in the travel groups was considered necessary, while the actual influence of the leader was not dominating: leaders were more guiding rather than leading in the group; group members valued and respected the role of the leader while they were not blindly obeying the leader's decisions. In most cases, rather than being the decision maker for the whole group, the leader was perceived as a core person who initiated the trips or pushed the process of making the travel plans moving forward. Additionally, Chinese international students in this study travelled with other nationalities including local New Zealanders, and showed they were more convinced by the advantages of their New Zealand friends being the travel group leaders as long as their preference and requirements were met.

Therefore, targeting the potential leaders who play the core roles in the Chinese travel groups is necessary. In the meantime, given the collective decision-making process in the Chinese travel groups, it is suggested that the information synchronisation is important in a travel group, and requires relevant travel information to be marked and shared easily and instantly. No matter the official tourism website or online travel agent, the travel information provider could cooperate with popular Chinese social media such as Wechat (which was used quite often during the group decision-making process in this study) or Weibo (the Chinese version of Twitter) to create a platform for better sharing travel information. Also, it is suggested that they could cooperate with a Chinese local tourism website, such as

qyer.com and Lonelyplanet.com, where Chinese young independent travellers search and collect travel information from "gong lue" (travel tips, plans, and schedule made and shared by the previous travellers) to organise their own trips.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The Chinese independent traveller market has been identified as a dramatically increasing and promising market to New Zealand. As a traditional and important international student market to New Zealand, the Chinese international student market contributes to both New Zealand's education industry and tourism industry, for Chinese international students were found to undertake travel activities during their period of studying in New Zealand. As an important and increasing component of Chinese independent travellers, Chinese international students share similar travel behaviour with Chinese independent travellers. This study adds knowledge to a better understanding of international students as tourists and Chinese independent travellers. More specifically, it explored the decision-making process of Chinese international student travel groups, identified three group decision-making models, identified the disagreement prevention and resolution strategies, and shed light on the process of group decision-making of friends.

APPENDICES

APPENDICES A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

How do Chinese international students make travel-related decisions when travelling around New Zealand in groups?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A. INTRODUCTION

The researcher briefly introduces the objectives of the research and the procedure of the interview.

B. SIGN THE CONSENT FORM

Interviewees read the information sheet and sign the consent form.

C. INTERVIEW BEGINS

Section 1 Demographics and general travel information

Section 2 Information search

Section 3 Experience of group travel-related decision-making

Section 4 Disagreement

D. INTERVIEW ENDS AND THANKS

QUESTION OUTLINE

Section 1 Demographics and general travel information

    a) Tell me about yourself (age, study, hometown)

    b) Tell me about the last trip you took with friends in New Zealand (where, when, how long, with who)

Section 2 Information search

    a) What information source did you use to search for travel information for that trip?

    b) What travel-related information did you think was most important? Why?

c) How did the travel information you had gathered help you in making decisions regarding that trip? Tell me an example?

Section 3 Experience of group travel-related decision-making

a) How did you decide who to travel with?

b) What travel-related decisions did you have to make? (destination, when, travel duration, attractions, travel schedules, transportation modes, accommodation, food &restaurant)

c) How did the group make those decisions?

- Was everyone involved in decision-making to the same extent?

- What was your role?

d) How did you feel about those decisions? How did you feel about the way of those decisions were made?

Section 4 Disagreement

a) Did everyone agree on all the decisions made (even if disagreements were eventually resolved)?

Yes:

- Why did you think that you were all in agreement?

No:

- Tell me an example of a disagreement happened during the decision-making process.

- Tell be about how the disagreement was resolved.

- What roles did you and others play in resolving the disagreement?

b) Overall, how did you feel about the disagreements happened in that trip? How did you feel about the resolution of the disagreements?

End

Finally, what have you learnt from that trip which might help you in future group travel decision-making process?

APPENDICES B: INFORMATION SHEET

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI

VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

How do Chinese international students make travel-related decisions when travelling around New Zealand in groups?

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for your interest in this project. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to take part, thank you for considering my request.

Who am I?

My name is Hanru Zhu and I am an international student from Kunming, Yunnan, China. Now I am doing my Master's degree of Tourism Management at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my Master's thesis.

What is the aim of the project?

This project is to gain an understanding of group travel decision making. More specifically, the aim of the research explores how group travel-related decisions are made by Chinese international students studying in New Zealand. Also, it examines if there is any disagreement during the group travel-related decision-making process, and what disagreement resolution strategies are adopted to help reach an agreement. Additionally, the research explores the role of information search during the group travel-related decision-making process.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (reference number: 0000023217).

How can you help?

If you agree to take part in the research, I will interview you over a coffee on the campus of Victoria University Wellington. I will ask you questions about group travel decision-making in your last trip taken with friends in New Zealand. Also, we will talk about (if it is applicable)

whether you and your friends had different opinions or disagreement towards any travel-related decisions during that trip such as the selection of travel destination, transportation mode, type of accommodation, etc., and whether and how you and your friends reached agreement. The interview will take around 40 minutes. I will record the interview and write up the transcript later. You can stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. The information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you if you withdraw the research. After finishing the interview, a $25 New World food voucher will be given to you as thank for your kind participation in this research.

What will happen to the information you give?

This research is confidential. I will not name you in any reports but will use information like your gender, whether you are undergraduate or postgraduate, and possibly general details about your trip (e.g. female postgraduate, South Island road trip). As I am trying to recruit a number of people from the same travel group, so it is likely that, even without your name, your friends may be able to identify quotes I may use from your interview in the thesis.

Importantly, only my supervisor and I will read the notes or transcript of the interview. The interview transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed 3 years after the research ends.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my Master's thesis report. Your real name will not appear in my report. I may also use the results of my research for conference presentations, and an academic article.

If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

• choose not to answer any question;

• ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;

• withdraw from the study up until four weeks after your interview;

• ask any questions about the study at any time;

• read over and comment on a written summary of your interview;

• receive a copy of the research summary.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Student:

Hantu Zhn
朱菡如

University email address:

zhuhanr@myvuw.ac.nz

Supervisor:

Professor Karen A. Smith

School of Management

Phone: +64 4 463 5721

Karen.Smith@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett.

Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480.

APPENDICES C: CONSENT FORM

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI

VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

How do Chinese international students make travel-related decisions when travelling around New Zealand in groups?

CONSENT TO INTERVIEW

This consent form will be held for 1 year.

Researcher: Hanru Zhu, School of Management, Victoria University of Wellington.

•   I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.

•   I agree to take part in an audio-recorded interview.

I understand that:

•   I may withdraw from this study up to four weeks after the interview, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.

•   The information I have provided will be destroyed 3year after the research is finished.

•   Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor. I understand that the results will be used for a Master's thesis report and a summary of the results may be used in an academic article and/or presented at conferences.

•   My name will not be used in reports. However, I am aware of other interviewees from the same travel group as me may be able to identify me based on the information I have provided.

•   I would like a summary of my interview: Yes ☐   No ☐

•   I would like to receive a copy of the research summary: Yes ☐   No ☐

Signature of participant: _____

Name of participant: _____

Date: _____

Email (for provision of the summary of interview or a copy research summary):

_____

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