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The Concept of Family Across Cultures: Examining Differences Between the UK and China Through Museum Translations

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This study explores the concept of family across cultures within the context of translation studies. It focuses on how the Chinese translation of the British Museum website presents the family by using the Cultural-Conceptual translation (CCT) model and Chinese perspectives on the family. This paper finds that the English version of the British Museum website primarily promotes a nuclear family model, whereas the Chinese version emphasises a broader family structure, which highlights intergenerational bonds and a collective orientation. Comparisons with the National Museum of China reveal how family-oriented activities differ: the English website of the British Museum encourages interactive engagement among family members, while the National Museum of China focuses on educational experiences where parents are more observers than active participants. Notably, the Chinese website of the British Museum removes family activities altogether, further highlighting the educational function of museums. The study follows a top-down approach, first analysing cultural aspects before moving to translation analysis.

Introduction

Museums have played a prominent role in education and cultural tourism (Marinescu 185; Utanova 27), especially for family and tour groups. However, the ways in which museums engage audiences can vary significantly depending on cultural values and institutional priorities. This paper explores how the British Museum conceptualises and attracts family, with a particular focus on the contrast between its English and Chinese websites. It uses the Cultural-Conceptual Translation (CCT) model as the theoretical framework, which draws on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to explore how cultural dimensions, such as individualism vs collectivism, influence the representation and translation of family. In individualist societies such as the UK, the museum tends to promote itself as a destination with leisure experiences for the nuclear family. In contrast, museums designed to attract tourists from collectivist cultures, such as China, may prioritise educational value. It advertises the museum with the view that 'family' is an extended group of people.

This paper also discusses Chinese perspectives on family. This provides a cultural perspective to understand how culture influences Chinese people's understanding of family, and the socio-cultural motivations of Chinese tourists to visit museums. In addition to the theoretical basis, the CCT model introduces a methodological and analytical approach that includes examining the source text (ST), parallel text (PT), and target text (TT).

Following this model, the National Museum of China is examined as an example of parallel texts, which are "original texts of different languages, that are written by competent native speakers in the best of cases, they resemble one another in the topic they discuss and in their communicative function, i.e. they belong to the same text class, and are not translations of one another" (Floros 2). The website of the National Museum of China can be considered as the PT of the British Museum, because, according to both of their websites, they are national level museums, and both are responsible for representing and preserving historical and cultural heritage ("The British Museum"; "the National Museum of China"). In examining the English and Chinese websites of the British Museum, this paper will reveal the context of educational materials for families and other groups within the British Museum.

Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism vs. collectivism, one of the cultural dimensions of the CCT model, is particularly relevant to how tourists choose to visit places — whether as part of a group or with family. This dimension was first proposed by Hofstede as a dimension of culture and has been continuously refined and updated by Hofstede et al. and Hofstede Insights (now The Culture Factor). The website, The Culture Factor, is "a cultural analytics and strategy advisory with a global reach", which provides updated scores for different countries within this model ("Country Comparison Tool"). Table 1 shows the UK and China's scores in Hofstede's culture dimensions.

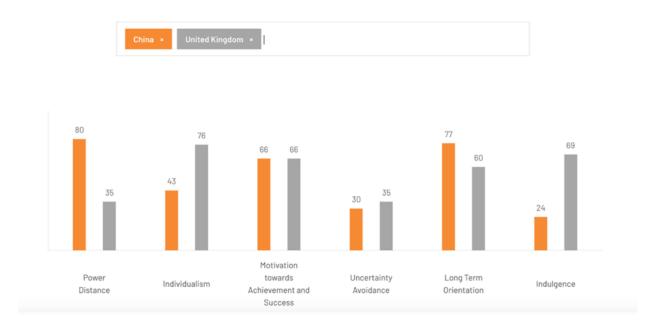


Fig. 1, The Culture Factor. "Country Comparison Tool."

The concepts of individualism and collectivism are cultural orientations that shape society and individuals, and are particularly important in comparing cultures within the UK and China as there are notable differences in the scores above. Hofstede et al. state that:

individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him- or herself and his or her immediate family only. Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lives continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (92).

In highly individualistic cultures, societies attach importance to individual freedom, autonomy and pleasure (Ahuvia 23; Natarajan 134). People are 'I' oriented. Social connections tend to be less tight-knit (Sulaiman & Wilson, *Translation and Tourism* 77). The United Kingdom, which scores 76 in individualism (Table 1), can be considered as an individualist culture. Conversely, in highly collectivistic cultures, societies attach importance to group goals, needs and cooperation. People are 'we' oriented (ibid.), valuing a sense of belonging to the group (Sorensen & Oyserman 233-236). They prefer to follow in-group norms rather than differentiate themselves to avoid a loss of dignity in front of others (Sun et al. 325-326). Compared with the UK, China scores 43 in individualism, which means that it can be considered as collectivist.

This cultural dimension has been identified by other scholars as a factor influencing tourists' preferences and behaviours. For example, Budiarta's study (19), Sakakida and other scholars' empirical study (35) have acknowledged that people from individualistic cultures favour more independent activities, while those from collectivist cultures tend to prefer group-oriented experiences. This is supported by Li et al (79-93), who discuss how collective values influence Chinese visitors to a U.S. National Park. They argue that Chinese tourists prefer collectivistic activities, such as wildlife viewing and photography in groups, rather than solitary activities (e.g. hiking alone). This preference influences their expectations for experiences in national parks, where they anticipate activities that involve social interaction and shared experiences with group members.

This dimension also influences the difference in tourists' choice of tourist activities. Tourist activities could be placed on a continuum, with passive/static activities (e.g. shopping, attending cultural and art festivals) at one end and active/dynamic activities (e.g. hunting, rafting and wilderness hiking) at the other (Pizam & Fleischer 18). Pizam and Fleischer's (ibid.) study shows that in an individualist culture, people tend to pursue individual goals and interests, which often leads to a preference for active and dynamic activities that are highenergy. On the contrary, collectivist cultures highlight group goals and social harmony over individual pursuits. In these cultures, activities are passive and static tourist activities, involving "seeing" and "observing" (Sulaiman & Wilson 132), such as visiting friends, shopping and attending cultural and arts festivals (Pizam & Fleischer 13). In the following case study, the preferences for activities in the museums of people from different cultural dimensions are discussed in detail.

Chinese Perspectives on Family

The above section talks about the contrast between individualism and collectivism, which helps illuminate differences in preferences for tourist activities. However, it is essential to recognise that in the Chinese context, 'family' ("家"; my trans.) is a more fundamental concept. The concept of 'family' in Chinese culture extends beyond the nuclear family, and encompasses a broad network of kinship relationships (Fei 63). Historically, families were often organised hierarchically, with the male figure – typically the father or eldest son –

holding significant authority (Sheng 117). These families followed Confucian doctrines with ideas around duty and hierarchy within the family (Yao 30). These traditional values continue to influence contemporary understandings of family, despite changes in family size over time (Gu and Li 45; Liang). For example, due to the impact of the one-child policy in China, a decades-old government policy that limited many families to having one child (Zhang 141), the censuses conducted in 1982, 1990, and 2000 showed that nuclear families made up nearly 70% of Chinese households, making them the dominant family structure (Xu and Xia 32). However, the understanding of family still revolves around the extended family, which includes not only parents and children, but also grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives (Hsia et al. 789). This is evident in other interpretations related to the concept of family. There is the idea of 'a member of own's family' ("自家人"; my trans.). According to "Han Dian" ("漢典", an online Chinese dictionary; pinyin), this means "somebody with whom one is on familiar terms, somebody from the same place, same house, same town etc." (my trans.). Moreover, the term 'state' ("国家"; my trans.) also embodies the idea of family. The relationship between citizens and the country is framed in familial terms, with the state considered a parental figure (Liu and Gammon 793). All of these understandings reinforce a collectivist mindset. Also, it demonstrates that families are intertwined with broader societal structures, rather than being purely focused on personal pursuits or the nuclear family.

In the context of tourism, one example of this influence is the extended family traveling together (Xiang et al. 35; Wu and Wall 274). Unlike tourists in the UK, who prefer personal experiences or small family units, Chinese tourists frequently travel in extended family groups. This is evident in Wu and Wall's study of visitors to heritage museums in a Chinese city where they noticed that a large number of the visitors were extended families, including aunts, uncles, cousins and in-laws (277).

Another key aspect of Chinese perspectives on family influencing tourists' motivation is the emphasis on education during travel. Chinese parents tend to select destinations that provide cultural or historical sites with a desire for education and learning (Lu, *Learning Outcomes* 279). This aligns with the Confucian belief in the dedication to the pursuit of learning (Sun 559). Besides, these parents prefer a traditional method of education or learning, where an organisation or authority figure conveys information, and the audience is expected to receive it without much engagement or interaction (Hooper-Greenhill 9).

Case Study: the British Museum

The English website of the British Museum is the ST, which offers digital museum resources and enables users to explore and learn about the museum's collections and exhibits. The homepage of the British Museum (https://www.britishmuseum.org) is the first page presented when entering the website. There is no language selection in the navigation menu; however, a hyperlink labelled "Chinese site 中文" at the bottom of the homepage navigates to the homepage of the Chinese version of the website (https://britishmuseum.org.cn). The British Museum aims to cater to Chinese-speaking tourists by designing a special website for them, which is not surprising as that demographic is known for their significant spending potential on travel and cultural experiences (Chen et al. 500). The Chinese website of the British Museum is taken as the TT. The PT is from the Chinese website of the National Museum of China.

The National Museum of China is introduced to provide a comparative perspective, but it is important to acknowledge the fundamentally different roles that museums play in China and the UK. These differences will impact the production of texts and, consequently, their translation. Museums inherently serve an educational function, but there are differences in how these institutions engage their audiences: museums in the UK tend to focus on "educative leisure", which is a form of leisure that includes both educational and recreational elements (Foley and McPherson, 161), whereas Chinese museums tend to emphasise passive and patriotic learning (Lu, "Roles" 45).

In the UK, constructivist learning theories, which argue that learners actively construct knowledge through experience, interaction, and reflection, have significantly shaped educational roles within UK museums (Hooper-Greenhill 9). This approach often includes hands-on activities, interactive displays, storytelling, and opportunities for discussion, which allows visitors to grasp new knowledge with their prior experiences (Adams et al. 20). In contrast, most of the museums in China are state-owned, and use a one-way transmission approach to impart knowledge (Te'Eni 251) and patriotic learning, which features the traditional Chinese values (Vickers 365).

Source Text Analysis

There are different family activities shown in the ST, and these are clearly intended to be one of the appealing factors for an audience in the UK. For example, on the homepage, under the title "Visit the Museum", there is a subsection for "Family visits". Clicking on the website link, visitors will see various activities in the British Museum designed for families.

There is no clear definition of what "family" is in the ST, but from the pictures on the site (see fig. 2), we can tell that family is presented as at least one adult and one child, which is similar to the definition of family given by the Office For National Statistics as "a married, civil partnered or cohabiting couple with or without children, or a lone parent with at least one child, who lives at the same address; children may be dependent or non-dependent" ("Family and Household Statistics Explained"). The notion of 'family' in the UK is broadly understood to be the nuclear family, which is different from that in a collective society like China, where an extended family more readily comes to mind.

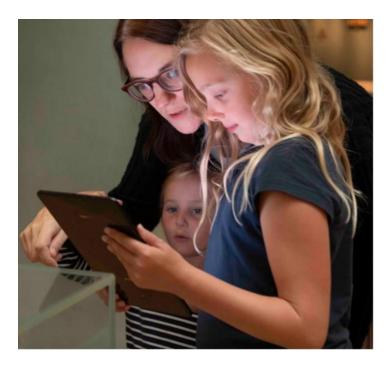


Fig. 2. The British Museum, "Welcome to the British Museum".

Figure 2 shows a woman and two children engaging with a digital tablet. It seems that the adult is a parent or guardian and that they each help each other in using the device. This

collaborative engagement can foster a sense of togetherness and reinforce family identity (Melvin et al. 9). Moreover, the close physical proximity between the adult and the children suggests emotional intimacy and parental care, which are central to nuclear family relationships (Graham et al. 222). This image points towards a family-led exploration of information in the museum, and the family is regarded as the primary unit of learning.

Moreover, the activities in the museum highlight the shared and self-guided experience among family members. Below, for example, the British Museum exhibition *Michelangelo:* the last decades, which focuses on the final 30 years of Michelangelo's life, the provides an interactive activity *Find Tom in Time* for family visitors:

Families. Find Tom in Time creative family trail. Get creative and discover what life was like in Michelangelo's Italy through our Find Tom in Time exhibition trail and art pack. This self-led trail takes you to four stops in our stunning exhibition Michelangelo: the last decades and has practical art activities for families to complete together, which complement the exhibition. (The British Museum https://www.britishmuseum.org/exhibitions/michelangelo-last-decades)

The activity is described with positive adjectives, "creative", "stunning", and "brilliantly fun", to cater to the general idea that UK families seek fun and entertainment in a visit to museums. The activity also aligns with the growing trend in museums to create more interactive and engaging experiences for visitors of all ages (Foley & McPherson, 161; Marinescu, 185). The trail not only plays an educational role in guiding visitors to learn about the famous artist, but also involves them in a "practical" experience. Moreover, the emphasis on the "self-led" feature of the activity shows that families can explore the museum at their own pace. This personal discovery aspect advertises individualistic societies, where personal freedom and self-guided experiences are highly valued (Chen et al. 194). Visitors can engage with the trail according to their interests and timetable.

Importantly, the activity is described as "for families to complete together" to encourage familial bonding through collaborative exploration. The exhibition provides an opportunity for families to construct shared moments, which centres on family-oriented programming. This is different from the museums in China, which are concerned with group-oriented experiences and will be discussed in the TT analysis.

Parallel Text Analysis

As the CCT model suggests, the analysis of PTs is a way to help frame the discussion of a target text. Texts from the National Museum of China are considered as the PT, which show a different understanding of family. The extended family is more likely to be presented in these because of the ways in which family is conceived within Chinese culture. As with the ST, the museum has activities for family members, but it seems that they lack involvement from parents. For example, on the homepage of the website, under the title "Social Education" ("社教"; my trans.), there is a subsection for "Educational Activities" ("教育活动"; my trans.) and visitors will see figure 3, showing "Parent-Child Classroom" ("亲子学堂"; my trans.). According to the program description (PT1), it aims to "take the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture and the dissemination of advanced Chinese civilisation" rather than engaging in fun with parent-child bonding. This aligns with the roles of the Chinese museum mentioned above, which includes imparting a collective sense of historical continuity (Hook et al. 821). Besides, it helps children to "form a correct outlook on history, the world and values" (PT1). This suggests the priority of education over fun in Chinese museums, which reflects a collective responsibility that positions learning as a serious, top-down authoritative leadership over children rather than being a form of entertainment (Zhang and Koshmanova 86).

PT1	Back Translation (Author's Translation)	
课程简介:	Course Description:	
	The series of parent-child courses of	
"稚趣博物馆"系列亲子课程主要面向家	"Museum of Childish Interests" is mainly for	
	families and is specially designed for children	
庭群体,专门针对 4-6 岁幼儿开设。本	aged 4-6. This course takes the inheritance	
	of traditional Chinese culture and the	
课程以传承中华传统文化、传播中华先	dissemination of advanced Chinese	
	civilisation as the starting point, bases itself	
进文明为出发点,立足 4-6 岁幼儿的认	on the cognitive level and psychological	
	characteristics of 4-6-year-old children, and	

知水平和心理特征,依托我馆"古代中国"基本陈列等国宝级资源,引入"生活教育"、"启发教育"、"实践教育"、"审美教育"等理念,让家长带着小朋友们走进博物馆,用精美的展品、精心的讲授、精巧的体验激发幼儿观众的学习兴趣,启蒙想象力和探索力,引导他们立足于今天的生活去理解中国源远流长的历史、感悟博大精深的文明,以春风化雨、润物无声的方式,帮助 4-6 岁幼儿形成正确的历史观、世界观、价值观。(The National Museum of China, https://www.chnmuseum.cn/fw/ggjy/jyhdjs/gyjt)

relies on national treasures such as the basic display of Ancient China in the museum, and introduces life education, inspirational education, practical education, aesthetic education and other concepts, allowing parents to bring young children into the museum, with exquisite exhibits, elaborate lectures and exquisite experiences, the museum stimulates the interest of young children in learning, enlightens their imagination and exploration, guides them to understand China's long history and rich civilisation on the basis of today's life, and helps young children aged 4-6 to form a correct outlook on history, the world and values in a silent way.

Additionally, the Confucian tradition of authority and structured learning (Tweed and Lehman 89) influences the design of family activities as opportunities for children to learn from authoritative sources, rather than as chances for direct parental involvement. Compared with the ST, which highlights family members getting involved in the activities together, the PT indicates that parents seem to be directed to take on a role as more of a guardian. According to the description, the activity "is mainly for families", but the role of parents in this scenario is "getting parents to take their kids to the museum", rather than actively participating in the learning process and sharing experience with their children. Instead, these activities rely on museum educators. Parents are positioned more as observers rather than being involved with the process.

The accompanying image (see fig. 3), which presents two children without an adult, visually reinforces this distinction, although it is labelled as an activity designed for parents and children. Unlike the ST, which shows parents engaging in interactive activities with their children, the absence of parents in this image suggests that learning is primarily a child-centred but institutionally or authoritatively guided process, by directors in museums in this case.



Fig. 3. "Parent-Child Classroom" from The National Museum of China website.

Target Text Analysis

The Chinese version of the British Museum's website, as the TT, selectively translates certain elements of the ST. We can tell that the translation process not only adapts the content but also presents an image that the museum foregrounds educational opportunities with less interactive activities. This image is similar to that of the PT. This may be because the

designers of the website assume that Chinese tourists are likely to accept museums highlighting educational functions rather than fun activities.

It is interesting to note that there is no family visit in the TT. The deletion of family activities in the target text is mainly because the idea of nuclear family visits is less favoured in Chinese culture, where, in line with the collective nature of the society, educational and group activities which highlight group cohesion and interdependence, would be preferred (Cai 79; Meng 340).

However, this does not imply that individualistic societies lack the concept of group visits. For example, on the homepage of the ST, the navigation bar includes a "Visit" section, which contains a submenu link for "Group Visits", providing massive information about booking, such as guidelines for group tours (e.g., *Around the world in 90 minutes, Ancient Egypt – one hour https://www.britishmuseum.org/visit/group-visits*).

This information about group visits in the ST was selectively translated into the TT with a focus on the general group visit and simplified booking guidelines. The ST addresses a broad range of group visits to the museum, including school groups and private guided tours for groups. In contrast, the 'group' in the TT is more general and more inclusive of diverse categories of visitors in groups, which is simplified with "groups of 10 or more". One possible reason is that Chinese tourists often travel outbound in groups (Ren 328), which may comprise people from the same place, such as the same household, town, or even region within China. Their collective mindset encourages them to stay with familiar companions throughout the visit, which diminishes the likelihood of choosing alternative group visit options. Even when presented with diverse options, they tend to prioritise the cohesion and familiarity of their group.

ST. (The British Museum,	TT1. (The British Museum	Back Translation (Author's
https://www.britishmuseum.o	Chinese Site,	Translation)
rg/visit/group-visits)	https://britishmuseum.org	
	.cn/visiting.html)	
We welcome groups of any	团体参观	Group Visits
size to the Museum.		● Groups of 10 or more
● If you plan to attend as a		must book at least 7 days
self-led group of 10 people		in advance and enter

or more, please book with us(Opens in new window) at least seven days in advance.

- Once you enter the Museum you're free to stay, within the stated opening hours.
- Please view the <u>Visit page</u> in advance to check if any galleries you plan to visit are closed.
- Tour groups are not permitted in Rooms 61, 62, 63 and 91a or any exhibitions.
- If you're from a UK school and are bringing primary or secondary students, take a look at the dedicated page for school groups.
- If you're a travel company booking a group visit, you may be able to offer an exclusive out-of-hours tour.
 See our <u>Travel trade tours</u> section for details.
- If anyone in your group has accessibility needs, please see our <u>Accessibility at the</u> <u>Museum</u> page.
- Please make sure you're mindful of other visitors in the Museum. Don't block exits or entrances.
- We recommend group leaders download and read the full guidelines for visiting the British Museum as a tour

- 10 人或以上的团体必须至少提前 7 天预约,并从博物馆北门 (Montague Place)进馆。未提前预约的团体可能不被允许立即进馆。立即预约团体参观 ->
- 10 人或以上团体参观 特展,须提前订票,并 可获团票优惠。
- ●票务处电话:+44(0)20 73238181,电邮地 址:博物馆提供团体英 语导览服务(收费), 须至少提前2个星期预 约。
- g

• 电邮地址:

tickets@britishmuseum.or

<u>traveltradebookings@br</u> <u>itishmuseum.org</u>。

- through the Museum's
 North Entrance
 (Montague Place). Groups
 not booked in advance
 may not be allowed
 immediate access to the
 museum. Book your group
 visit now ->
- Groups of 10 or more people visiting special exhibitions must book in advance and will receive a discounted group ticket.
- The Box Office can be contacted on +44 (0)20 7323 8181 or by email at tickets@britishmuseum.o rg.
- Guided tours in English are available for groups (charges apply) and must be booked at least two weeks in advance.
- Email: <u>traveltradebookings@briti</u> <u>shmuseum.org</u>.
- For Chinese visitor groups and enquiries in Chinese, please contact the China Business Network, which is authorised to manage this website. Email: BM@Chinabn.org

group(Opens in new window)	●中国游客团体及中文问	
	询,欢迎联系授权管理	
	此网站的中国商务集团	
	(China Business	
	Network)。电邮地	
	址: <u>BM@Chinabn.org</u>	

Besides, the TT adds information about inquiries for group tours specifically catering to Chinese-speaking visitors: "For Chinese visitor groups and enquiries in Chinese, please contact the China Business Network, which is authorised to manage this website" (TT1). This information indicates that the China Business Network collaborates with the British Museum to enhance its appeal specifically to Chinese audiences. As part of this partnership, China Business Network would recommend Chinese group tour providers (China Business Network), who target Chinese tourists to provide organised, group-based travel services. This targeted promotion boosts the visibility of the China Business Network. Also, it expands the museum's popularity and presence among Chinese tourists, because the presence of the Chinese website makes the museum more familiar and accessible to Chinese tourists. Besides, the availability of Chinese language-specific and group-based travel experiences caters to Chinese visitors, which encourages more of them to view the museum as a key destination when travelling to the UK.

Apart from the group visit experience, the TT also presents a different approach to the exhibition's theme compared to the ST. For instance, in ST1, *Find Tom in Time* is a hands-on activity designed for families. This type of interactive, self-led exploration with family members is absent from the TT. Instead, the TT offered a curator-led talk (see fig. 4), which was given by Sarah Vowles, the curator of the exhibition *Michelangelo: the last decades*, who discussed Michelangelo's late-life relationships and creative output. The event was in English with Chinese captions, hosted by Paragon Book Gallery, which is a cultural liaison, offering books and programs to facilitate intercultural understanding (Paragon Book Gallery).



Fig. 4. British Museum, https://britishmuseum.org.cn/blog/Michelangelo-the-last-decades.

The presence and design of the talk are presumably based on the assumption that it would be preferred by the Chinese audience. The curator-led talk might aim at a more mature audience, likely adults, who aim to have a deeper intellectual understanding of the exhibition. This format provides a more formal, lecture-based experience, which is more approachable for Chinese people in mainland China who may have an interest in the exhibition but are unable to travel to the UK. Moreover, the talk tends to be in a one-way, authoritative model of communication, which could cater to most of the Chinese audiences who often expect education in museum settings (Ji et al. 177).

The TT constructs a destination image of the museum that follows a traditional museological approach, which prioritises authoritative knowledge delivery over visitor participation; and provides general visiting groups designed for Chinese-speaking tourists. It nearly adopts similar display strategies to the existing exhibition practices in some Chinese museums, which use a curator-driven format that assumes a passive, receptive audience.

Conclusion

This study has examined different understandings of family and how these perspectives shape the way tourism is advertised as a family-oriented experience. Guided by the CCT model, this paper has used a top-down approach. It first analysed the Chinese perspective on family, which is deeply rooted in Confucian ideals of hierarchy and collectivism, in contrast with more individualistic conceptions in the UK. By engaging critically with Hofstede's individualism-collectivism dimension, this study highlights that the Chinese understanding of family tends to include extended family.

This study has used the websites of the British Museum as a case study to explore how these perspectives shape tourism advertising. A key finding is that the English website promotes a nuclear family model, highlighting interactive experiences designed for family members to engage together. The Chinese website removes all family-oriented activities, instead placing greater emphasis on group activities in museums. This shift suggests a different target audience who tend to choose to travel in groups. Besides, it downplays the interactive and entertainment function of museums, but highlights the educational function, which is similar to the museums in China, like the National Museum of China. While both the Chinese texts emphasise education, the Chinese museum provides educational spaces with family activities. However, unlike the English website of the British Museum, which focuses on parent-child bonding, the family activities in the National Museum of China tend to position parents as observers rather than active participants in their child's learning, which promotes a broader, collectivist understanding of family.

Overall, this study demonstrates how cultural frameworks influence translation and shows that family is actively reshaped through cross-cultural interaction.

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