



# IS EMOTIONAL CONNECTEDNESS POSSIBLE IN TOURISM? AN EXAMINATION OF RESIDENTS' EMOTIONAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS TOURISTS

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## Abstract

This study examines the influence of residents' emotions on their relationships with tourists, focusing on three core constructs: welcoming nature, emotional closeness, and sympathetic understanding. A quantitative research design was employed, drawing responses from 650 residents of the Kwahu Traditional Area. The Discrete Emotion Scales were utilised to assess various emotional states, with data collected through self-reported questionnaires and interview guides. Findings indicate a notably high level of emotional connectedness within the Emotional Solidarity Scale's three-factor structure, with welcoming nature receiving the highest endorsement, followed by emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding. Among these, residents expressed the strongest emotional bond with tourists in the dimension of welcoming nature. The study underscores residents' emotional attachment to tourists, particularly in their openness and receptiveness, which can significantly enhance efforts to attract and retain visitors. These insights offer valuable implications not only for destination management and branding strategies but also for helping tourists form realistic and informed perceptions of the destination.

**Keywords:** discrete emotions, emotional connectedness, welcoming nature, residents' behavioural intention, destination management

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is among the most important and rapidly growing economic sectors worldwide (Foo et al., 2020). According to Yoo (2020), tourism is crucial in accelerating economic growth by providing foreign currency and job opportunities, improving the balance of payments, and contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Specifically, the tourism sector accounted for 6.7% of the global GDP in 2022 and created 22 million new jobs (WTTC, 2023). Since 1982, tourism in Ghana has experienced significant growth, positioning the country as the top destination for international tourist arrivals in West Africa (World Economic Forum, 2021).

Ghana's tourism resource base is immense and diverse (Asiedu, 2010). Tourist destination plays a vital role in the promotion and development of Ghana's tourism industry (Asiedu, 2009). In the destination region, there is direct and constant

contact between the residents and tourists in the community. Studies have found that the long-term sustainability of a destination depends on how residents understand who a tourist is, the quality of interaction between residents and tourists and their active support of the industry (Butler, 1980; Doxey, 1975; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). Residents in tourist areas play a key role in shaping destinations and, in turn, meeting the demands of tourists. Hence, their emotional disposition is essential in tourism discourse as their emotional state and expression communicate a lot to tourists, which tends to influence tourists' intention to revisit. Currently, there is limited research on residents' emotional relationship with tourists (Zhang et al., 2023). Emotion is an important concept in tourism research when studying the tourism experience of destinations (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Moyle et al., 2017). Recent studies have examined emotions as mental states of readiness arising from cognitive

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appraisals of different experiences, thoughts, and events (Ali et al., 2016; Pelegrin-Borondo et al., 2017). Although there are debates over an explicit definition of emotion, most scholars agree that emotions are made up of three parts: subjective experience, expressive component, and physiological arousal (Kleinginna & Kleinginna (1981).

Emotions perform a crucial but imperceptible function in residents' and tourists' interactions. Residents' emotional attitude towards tourists affects tourists' experiences and intentions to revisit the destination areas. Monitoring the attitude changes of residents and exploring the influencing factors are necessary tasks for destination managers to ensure the success of tourism revitalisation (Yin et al., 2022). Recent studies have found that residents' emotions have a significant impact on residents' attitudes and behaviours (Ouyang et al., 2017; Zheng et al., 2019; Woosnam et al., 2012), thereby influencing destination image (Woosnam et al., 2020).

An emotional connection is a bundle of subjective feelings that come together to create a bond between two people (Woosnam, 2010). The feelings may be anger, sorrow, joy, love or any of the thousands of emotions that humans experience. Emotional connection can be perceived as a personal feeling identified with others, sensing emotional closeness with others, and having contact with others (Hammarstrom, 2005). Woosnam (2012) also proposes that individuals would forge a feeling of solidarity with one another as a result of sharing similar beliefs and behaviours, and being in the physical presence and interacting with each other. In this study, emotional connection is defined as a bond or tie between residents and tourists during their interactions or in the form of attachment.

Extant research on residents' emotional attitudes and behaviours has also revealed that socio-demographic factors have a variety of effects on residents' emotional attitudes (Hansen et al., 2005). Certain socio-demographic factors, including age, gender, and education, are associated with attitudes of residents towards tourism. Age, as a factor for predicting the perception of the impact of tourism, has received much attention. MacGehee and Andereck (2004) found that age and having lived in the community as a child were related to the perception of tourism impacts. In other words, older residents perceive more positive than negative impacts of tourism. However, studies by Kusadasi (2001) and Turkey (2007) revealed that older residents had more negative perceptions about tourists than young people. In addition to age, gender has been tested to predict residents' attitudes toward tourism. Mason and Cheyne (2000), in their study of a rural New Zealand region, found that men were more positive than women about tourism development. Females were more concerned about the negative impacts of tourism, such as increased traffic, drunk driving, noise, and crime (Mason & Cheyne, 2000); however, the residents acknowledged the economic benefits, including tourism-related jobs and business opportunities resulting from tourism.

Education is another important factor for predicting the local residents' attitudes to tourism. Andriotis and Vaughan (2003) identified the attitude of urban residents toward tourism development in Crete and concluded that the more highly educated residents had less favourable responses toward the impacts of tourism than did those who had less education.

Despite the significance of emotions in the tourism and hospitality industry, there is a paucity of research in this area (Zhang et al., 2023). The



interpersonal consequences of residents' emotions toward the support of tourism remain largely unexplored (Zheng et al., 2019). Even with the few research studies on emotional experiences, most of them were geared towards the emotional experiences of tourists before planning, during and after their trip and the role of emotions in consumer information processing and decision-making (Song & Kim, 2021; Breitsohl & Garrod, 2016; Walters & Sparks, 2012; Lee & Babin, 2008). In addition, most of the existing literature focused on the factors affecting residents' behavioural response solely on financial transactions or perceived impact (Aramberri, 2001; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Wang, 2008), neglecting the commonalities between the residents and the tourists, which could potentially contribute to residents' emotional attitude (Woosnam, 2009).

Although these studies have enhanced our understanding of how emotions are evoked and influence consumer behaviour (Colgate & Lang, 2001), not much work has been done on how residents are emotionally connected to tourists (Woosnam, 2009; Lee & Kyle, 2012). Based on the above gaps, the study responds to suggestions by Harrill and Potts (2003) and Zheng et al. (2019) that future research could explore residents' emotional sentiment towards tourists in developing countries. Again, as one of the limitations that the study of Zheng et al. (2019) addressed, future research could explore other factors, such as socio-demographic factors, that generate a more comprehensive understanding of residents' emotional responses. There is a gap in the literature that needs to be filled to facilitate a holistic understanding of the relationship between residents and tourists. Therefore, this study sought to examine residents' emotional connectedness towards tourists in the Kwahu Traditional Area (KTA) of Ghana, where

tourism is growing because of the popular Kwahu Easter Festival and Paragliding activities. The study area also receives tourists all year round (GTA, 2019), bringing with it both socio-economic benefits and certain social challenges (Adu-Ampong, 2019). This implies that though residents perceive socio-economic benefits from tourism (Gyasi, 2022), the exchange is typically unbalanced, and there is a tendency for conflict (Imbeah, 2016). Thus, the question then stands: What is the level of residents' emotional connectedness towards tourists across the three-factor structure (welcoming nature, emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding), and how do socio-demographic factors influence residents' emotional connectedness to tourists?

Thus, by knowing the level of emotional connectedness of residents towards tourists and the significant factors that influence this emotional connectedness, tourism planners can develop policies to promote residents' involvement rather than their avoidance to accommodate resident needs within the community. This will have a long-term effect on improving the tourism industry in Ghana. The next section discusses emotional solidarity theory as the theoretical framework of the study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Review

This study is grounded in emotional solidarity theory (Woosnam et al., 2009). Hammarstrom (2005) defined emotional solidarity as the affective bonds that individuals experience with one another, which is usually characterised by perceived emotional closeness, degree of contact and sympathetic understanding. Emotional solidarity has two commonly accepted conceptualisations, and in Wallace and Wolf's (2006) view, solidarity can be conceived as the feeling of identification a person has with another person that serves to strengthen



bonds between such individuals. The second conceptualisation involves such bonds being characterised by perceived emotional closeness and degree of contact between persons (Hammarstrom, 2005). Emotional connection and emotional solidarity, according to Hammarstrom (2005), are connected. Hammarstrom (2005) defined emotional connection as a person's sense of identification and emotional intimacy with others, and having contact with others. Woosnam (2011) argued that residents and visitors connect, engage in similar behaviours, and have similar values; a sense of bond emerges, building a tie between them. Hence, emotional connection is described in this study as a relationship or tie formed by residents and tourists during interactions.

To examine the relationship between residents and tourists, Woosnam and Norman (2010) formulated the Emotional Solidarity Scale (ESS) to test how residents' shared beliefs, shared behaviour, and interaction with tourists influence emotional solidarity, and residents' attitudes towards tourism and tourism development. The ESS consists of three factors with corresponding items: (1) welcoming nature (e.g., residents feel proud to have visitors to the destination, does the community benefits from having visitors, appreciate visitors for their contribution to the local economy, and treat area visitors fairly), (2) emotional closeness (e.g., residents feel close to visitors and have made friends with some of them); and (3) sympathetic understanding (e.g., residents identify with visitors, have a lot in common with them, feel affection toward them, and understand them).

The emotional solidarity theory proposes that residents' commonalities (degree of shared beliefs, shared behaviour and level of interaction) with tourists significantly predict their emotional attitude or a feeling of identification with others resulting

from a common value system (Woosnam, 2009). Shared behaviour simply means common behaviour accepted as truths among individuals (Woosnam, 2009). Participating in similar activities is another area of common ground between residents and tourists. Many authors have highlighted the shared behaviour of both parties in terms of shopping (Snepenger, Murphy, O'Connell, & Gregg, 2003), attending special events together (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000; Derrett, 2003), and multiple other activities throughout the community (Kneafsey, 2001).

Shared beliefs simply mean the common convictions or opinions accepted as truths among individuals (Woosnam, 2009). For instance, common beliefs such as appreciating cultural values, honouring common events, and accepting common facts. Residents having similar views and interests to tourists bring integration among residents and tourists. Interaction is the process of individuals sharing a physical space and communicating; this interaction may take the form of a formal or informal way (Woosnam, 2009). The interaction may be positive or negative (Woosnam 2010). Pizam et al. (2000) found that positive interactions with the tourists lead to a change from typical negative attitudes and feelings towards the tourists to more positive attitudes and feelings. This theory has received attention in the field of tourism as it offers a novel way to understand the multifaceted and dynamic relationship between individuals within a destination. Moreover, the theory is unique within the travel and tourism literature in the sense that its construct typically serves as an outcome of other measures (Woosnam, 2012). The three-component structure has been consistent across different studies involving residents (Joo et al., 2018; Aleshinloye et al., 2020; Joo et al., 2017). The rationale behind this is that the level of residents' emotional



connectedness with tourists influences their attitude and their response towards tourists and tourism development. Erul et al. (2020) found that residents' emotional solidarity with tourists contributed indirectly to behavioural intentions to support tourism.

### Empirical Review

Empirical studies have increasingly focused on residents' emotional connectedness to tourists as a lens through which resident-tourist interactions can be better understood. Emotional connectedness refers to the emotional bonds, feelings of attachment, empathy, and identification that residents may develop toward tourists (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000). Research shows that this connection influences not only residents' attitudes toward tourists but also their willingness to support tourism development (Woosnam, 2012). Woosnam et al. (2008) established that among the three factors, that is, the welcoming nature, emotional closeness, and sympathetic understanding, the welcoming nature was the strongest factor that predicted residents' emotional connection with tourists.

Although Woosnam (2012) discovered that emotional closeness with tourists does not directly predict the residents' level of support for tourism development, it strongly predicts the contributions the tourism industry provides to its community. Therefore, residents who developed and shaped emotional closeness with tourists have forged friendships with them, and are better equipped to recognise the contributions of tourism development. Such friendships are a paramount example of the social impacts reaped via tourism in a destination. Again, Woosnam and Aleshinloye (2015) found that residents are likely to perceive a sense of closeness with tourists when they have greater and more positive interactions with tourists. This is because when residents start interacting with tourists, it

would diminish the hostility and prejudices, thus elevating emotional closeness (Carmichael, 2000). tourists.

In relation to sympathetic understanding, Woosnam and Aleshinloye (2012) pointed out that sympathetic understanding towards tourists significantly predicts the residents' level of support for tourism development. If residents have higher levels of sympathetic understanding towards tourists, they would have a more positive and supportive attitude towards tourism development (Woosnam, 2012). Similarly, Woosnam (2012) established that sympathetic understanding had a strong influence on attitude in the sense that people who reside in a tourist destination area will be able to interpret and apprehend the feelings towards tourists (Draper et al., 2011). Moreover, Wang and Xu (2015) found that the residents' emotional feelings towards tourists may not be spontaneous, as this factor will strongly rely on their self-concept towards tourists' travel behaviour and attitudes. Sometimes, when there are dissimilarities in language or if there is a language barrier, it reduces emotional closeness between residents and tourists (Lee, 2014).

Sociodemographic factors, including age, gender, education, and occupation, are associated with attitudes of residents towards tourism. Empirical evidence shows that socio-demographic variables such as age, education level, employment in tourism and length of residence influence residents' emotional attitudes toward tourists (Zhang et al., 2019). For instance, Sharpley (2014) found that younger and more educated residents were more likely to express empathy and emotional openness to tourists than older, more conservative populations. Empirical evidence suggests that local residents' attitude towards tourists contributes to the attractiveness of a destination (Var, Beck, & Loftus,



1977) and affects tourists' choices (Hoffman & Low, 1981). Mathieson (2006) found that residents' attitudes and behaviour may be either positive or negative and can be active or passive. On the other hand, Armenski et al. (2011) stated that residents' attitude to tourists shortens the length of stay, lessens the amount of money spent in the community, diminishes repeat visits and creates negative word of mouth.

### Conceptual Framework

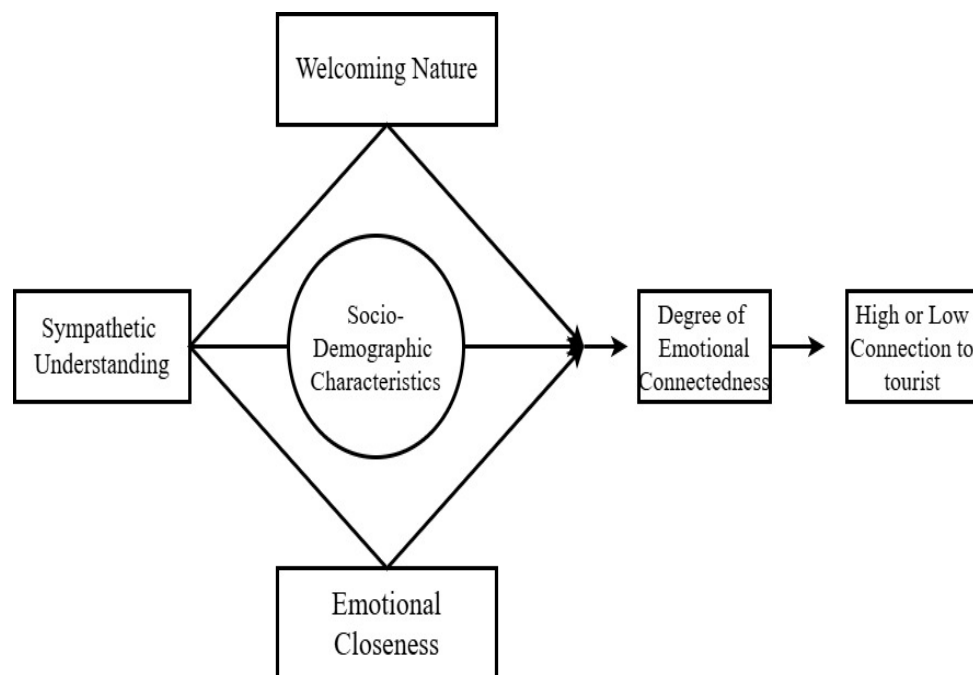
The conceptual framework guiding this research was adapted from Emotional Solidarity Theory (EST). As indicated above, the study examines residents' emotional connectedness toward tourists. Emotional Solidarity Theory was considered in this study because it examines specifically the resident-tourist relationship beyond the cost and benefits associated with Social Exchange Theory. Thus, this study overcomes the shortfall raised above by integrating SET with emotional solidarity theory to capture the affective responses. This fact has led to an alternative approach to resident attitudes in a more emotional and individual sense (Lee, 2014).

Woosnam et al. (2009), the classification of emotional solidarity is represented by a three-factor structure: welcoming nature, emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding. From this framework, the three antecedents measure inhabitants' emotional attitude based on their emotional bond with the tourists. Empirical research on residents' emotional attitudes and behaviours reveals that there is a relationship between socio-

demographic factors and residents' emotional attitudes in a variety of ways (Hansen et al., 2005). Residents' attitude toward tourism has been linked to socio-demographic parameters such as age, gender, education, and occupation (MacGehee & Andereck, 2004). Furthermore, the conceptual framework that informs this research links citizens' socio-demographic backgrounds to their emotional connectedness to tourists, as well as their emotional attitude and behaviour toward tourists and tourism in general. Residents see similarities like common behaviour and beliefs that exist between them and tourists as bases of emotional attachment. Residents are more integrated with tourists when they share common ideas such as valuing cultural values, honouring common events, accepting common facts, and sharing similar opinions and interests (Woosnam et al. 2010). One such commonality is the interaction between locals and tourists. This interaction can be formal or casual (Woosnam 2009). The contact may be favourable or bad (Woosnam et al. 2010). Positive contacts with the tourist population, according to Pizam et al. (2000), result in a shift from unfavourable views and feelings about tourists to more positive attitudes and feelings.

Emotions are accompanied by a sense of action readiness in that they prepare the body and the mind for behavioural responses aimed at dealing with the circumstances that caused the emotion (Frijda, 1986).





**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

Source: Adapted (Woosnam et al. 2010).

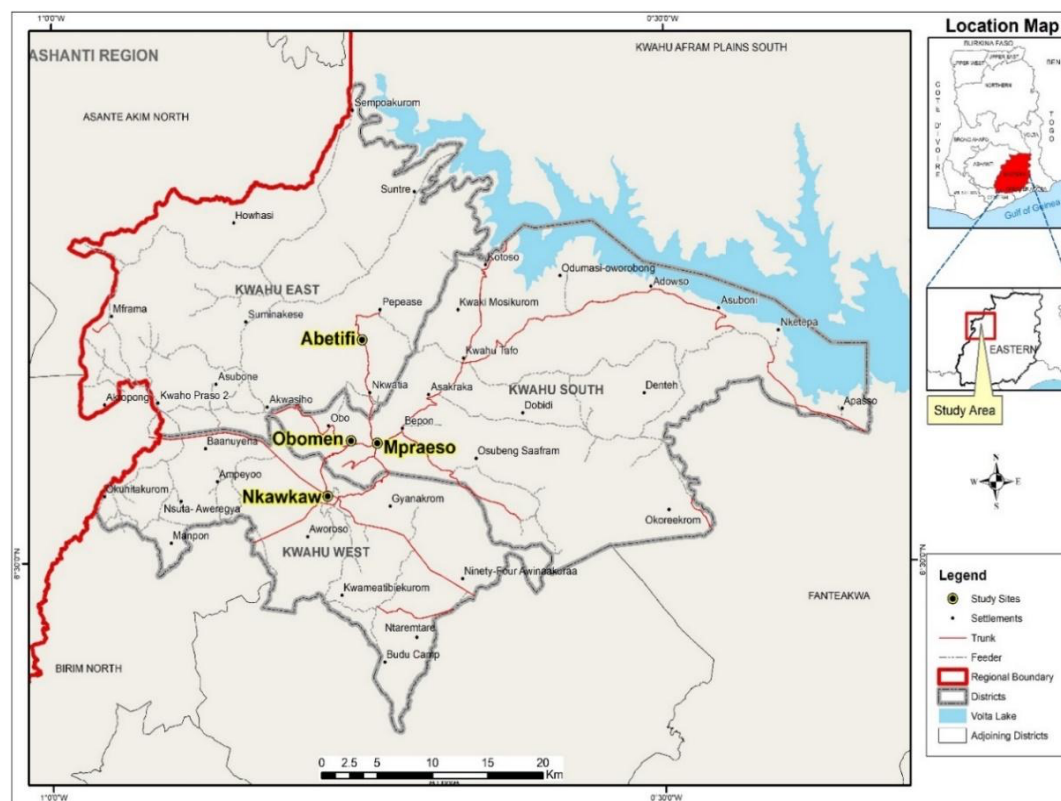
## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Study Area

The study is situated in the Kwahu Traditional Area, located in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Kwahu shares boundaries with Asante Akyem South to the north, Atiwa District to the south, and Birim North to the west. Historically, it served as a settlement for Basel Christian missionaries, who called it their "new Switzerland," owing to its rocky, green plateau and fresh, invigorating air. Geographically, the district spans three physiographic regions, including the southern Voltarian Plateau, characterised by a series of escarpments. The landscape features natural attractions such as waterfalls, ancestral caves, scenic walkways, and Neolithic rock engravings. Notably, the Odweanoma Arc Mountain (OAM) in Obomeng stands as Ghana's second-highest peak at 2,535

meters. It hosts critical infrastructure, including television, radio, and civil aviation antennae (KSDA, 2012), and serves as the launch site for the nationally recognised Kwahu Paragliding Festival, having been identified by international experts as an ideal take-off point.

For this study, three district capitals were purposively selected: Nkawkaw, Abetifi, and Mpreaso-Obomeng, representing the Kwahu West Municipal Assembly (KWMA), Kwahu East District Assembly (KEDA), and Kwahu South District Assembly (KSDA), respectively. These locations were selected not only for their administrative significance but also due to their status as major tourist destinations, supported by the availability of hospitality and recreational facilities that attract both domestic and international visitors.



**Figure 2: Study Area**

## DATA COLLECTION

This study employed a quantitative research design, facilitating the systematic observation and reporting of trends within a large population by applying rigorous statistical techniques (Amoako-Sakyi et al., 2021; Sam et al., 2023). The study targeted household heads aged 18 and above, based on the assumption that these individuals were more likely to have resided in the area for a significant period and, consequently, interacted with tourists. Their experiences made them suitable respondents capable of providing relevant insights for the study. In each selected household, any head, regardless of gender, who was both willing and available was invited to participate (Odame et al., 2024).

Using a scientific formula by Yamane (1973) (equation 1), as a sample size calculator, based on a population of 17,054, a multi-sampling technique was used to select 670 household heads from four communities that were purposively selected for the

study because these areas serve as the hub of Kwahu Easter Festival and receive a relatively high number of tourist (GTA, 2017). The study areas were divided into zones, adopting the common approach used by Kwahu West Municipal Assembly (KWMA), Kwahu East District Assembly (KEDA) and Kwahu South Municipal Assembly (KSMA). The reason behind this zoning was to bring diversity to perceptions based on their different geographical locations.

The second stage consisted of a proportional allocation of the sample size of 670 respondents among the four communities based on the compiled household lists. The first household was randomly selected using the study's probability sampling technique as part of the sampling procedure. Subsequently, every *n*th household was systematically chosen to participate in the survey. Within each selected household, any available and willing head, regardless of gender, was invited to





participate. This process continued until the target sample size was achieved.

Sample size formula  $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$  ..... equation 1

where

“N” is the sample frame

“n” is the sample size

“e” is the error margin, which in this case is 5%.

We chose a confidence level of 95% for this study.

By the formula,  $N = 17,054$  and  $\alpha = (0.05)^2$

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire consistent with the study's quantitative design. The questionnaire, originally developed in English, was administered in the local language by the researcher and three trained field assistants. It comprised two main sections: the first captured respondents' socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., sex, age, religion, occupation, and marital status), while the second assessed residents' emotional connectedness with tourists using Woosnam's (2011) Emotional Solidarity Scale (ESS). The ESS evaluates three dimensions: welcoming nature, emotional closeness, and sympathetic understanding. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement across ten items using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very Often).

### Data Analyses

The data was compiled, coded, cleaned, edited, classified and entered into a computer for analysis using Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 22.0. Largely descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, standard deviations, cross tabulations) and scores of the various scaled items were used to describe individual characteristics and outcomes of various scales. The chi-square statistic test was used. The five-point Likert scale format used to collect the data was first condensed into three categories: "agree,"

"neutral," and "disagree." As a result, "strongly agree" and "agree" became "agree," whereas "strongly disagree" and "disagree" became "disagree." The choice to conduct these recording exercises was based on the notion that such re-categorisation will make it easier to analyse the results and eliminate any data quality loss (Agyemang et al., 2023). Other graphical presentations, such as graphs, were used to depict a pictorial view of some of the responses to enable an easy understanding of the concept under study. Secondary data was collected from published and unpublished reports, online news media, articles, and other internet sources to support the study's analysis.

### Ethical Issues

This study was conducted in full adherence to ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the research process. The study was approved by the relevant Ethical Review Board to ensure that it met all ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. All participation was voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any stage without consequence.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Male and female respondents constitute 55% and 45% respectively, and this pattern conforms with the 2018 census report by Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), which revealed a higher proportion (58.0%) of male households than female households in the same communities. More than half



(52.2%) of the respondents were within the age cohort of 18 to 39, and this age cohort represents Ghana's active economic and parenting population. In terms of level of education, 71.2% of household heads had attained tertiary education and senior high-level education. This may be attributed to the fact that the survey was held in the district capitals of the Kwahu traditional area with an improved educational intervention. On the grounds of religion, marital status and residence, respondents who identified as Christians, married, and indigenes of the study area constituted 88.1%, 54.3% and 89.3% respectively. Finally, nearly half of the respondents (45.2%) have lived in the study area for at least 21 years.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Socio-Demographic Variable	N	Percent (%)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	313	55.0
Female	256	45.0
<b>Age</b>		
18-39	297	52.2
40-59	206	36.2
60+	66	11.6
<b>Education Attainment</b>		
No **formal education	32	5.6
Basic	132	23.2
Senior High School	176	30.9
Tertiary	229	40.3
<b>Religion</b>		
Christian	501	88.1
Islam	41	7.1
Traditional	25	4.4
No religion	2	0.4
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Never married	212	37.3

Socio-Demographic Variable	N	Percent (%)
Married	309	54.3
Ever married	48	8.4
<b>Household Size</b>		
1-4	358	62.9
5-9	201	35.3
10+	10	1.8
<b>Income Level</b>		
Up to GH¢ 100	37	6.5
GH¢ 101-500	198	34.8
GH¢ 501-1000	136	23.9
GH¢ 1001 -2000	128	22.5
Above GHC 2000	70	12.3
<b>Indigene Status</b>		
Indigene	508	89.3
Non-indigene	61	10.7
<b>Community</b>		
Nkawkaw	129	22.7
Mpraeso	162	28.5
Abetifi	98	17.2
Obomen	180	31.6
<b>Years living in the community</b>		
Up to 5	22	3.9
6-10	81	14.2
11-15	111	19.5
16-20	98	17.2
21+	257	45.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork

### **Residents' Emotional Connectedness with Tourists**

The result of the residents' emotional connectedness with tourists is shown in Table 2 below. This section presents statistics on inhabitants' emotional ties to tourists in the Kwahu Traditional Area. The classification of emotional connectivity is



represented by a three-factor structure: welcoming nature, emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding (Woosnam, 2009). The extent of emotional connectivity of residents to tourists was

investigated in accordance with the 10 items of Woosnam and Norman's Emotional Solidarity Scale (ESS).

**Table 2: Residents' Emotional Connectedness with Tourists**

Emotional Solidarity Item	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
Welcoming nature (Overall)	87.0	6.7	6.3	2.19	0.539
I am proud to have tourists in my community	87.4	6.0	6.7	2.22	0.566
I appreciate tourists for the contribution they make to the local economy	85.2	7.4	7.4	2.29	0.610
I feel the community benefits from having tourists.	79.1	12.7	8.3	2.31	0.632
I treat tourists fairly	78.7	12.0	9.3	1.19	0.532
Emotional closeness (Overall)	72.1	16.7	11.3	2.52	0.751
I feel close to some tourists I have met in the community	63.6	20.7	15.6	2.49	0.772
I have made friends with some tourists in my community	68.5	14.2	17.2	1.39	0.681
Sympathetic understanding (Overall)	66.8	25.5	7.7	2.67	0.824
I have a lot in common with tourists who visit my community	55.9	21.3	22.9	2.51	0.758
I feel affection toward tourists	65.4	18.5	16.2	2.51	0.727
I identify with tourists in my community	63.1	23.0	13.9	2.37	0.672
I understand tourists who visit my community	74.0	15.1	10.9	1.41	0.630
Overall emotional connectedness	78.9	14.8	6.3	1.27	0.571

(respondents' agreement to the factor is measured using a 3-point Likert scale, where 1.0 = agree, 2 = neutral 3 = disagree)

### Welcoming Nature

Welcoming nature implies the residents have personal interests in tourists and the tourism industry, which significantly predicts the residents' level of support for tourism development (Woosnam, 2012). The welcoming nature was measured with items such as residents feeling proud to have tourists from around the world visiting their communities (mean = 2.19), especially during the popular Kwahu Easter Festival (KEF). This reveals a probable high satisfaction of residents' interaction

with tourists. This result is in line with some previous studies by Maria et al. (2018) and Andereck and Nyaupane (2011), who opined that residents feel proud when tourists visit their communities. The KEF assumed an international dimension since the introduction of paragliding activity in 2005. Tourists from Western countries have made it a regular feature on the tourist calendar to visit the occasion annually. For instance, according to the Ghana Tourist Authority (2017) report, 22% of the visitor population were



Americans, 4% British, and 5% Germans. Furthermore, residents agreed that they appreciate tourists for the contribution they make to the local economy (87.4%; mean = 2.22). This is consistent with the observation by The Nielsen Company (2010), which found that residents feel proud about tourists due to the fact that the increasing number of tourists has advanced the economic development of the area.

Other welcoming nature items include the benefits residents derive from having tourists (mean = 2.31). This implies that residents derive economic benefits, such as seasonal jobs, from the tourists. Even though these jobs tend to be seasonal, it helps the residents to earn a living. Examples of such jobs include sales officers who sell and promote goods and services for companies and service providers, including telecommunications operators, drivers, tour operators, guides, and hoteliers. This finding goes deeper and suggests that the positive impact of the presence of tourists on resident-tourist interactions goes further to promote the welcoming nature to tourists, thereby enriching the existing research on resident-tourist interactions.

### Emotional Closeness

Another dimension of the emotional solidarity explored residents' emotional closeness to the tourists. Residents reported that they feel close to some tourists in the community (mean=2.49) and have made friends with some tourists in their community (mean=1.39). This implies that residents have great and positive interactions with tourists and are better equipped to recognise the contributions of tourism development to the community. The residents' level of emotional closeness depends on the level of interest tourists have in the local culture of the destination. This is in line with Wearing et al. (2010), who pointed out that emotional closeness

depends on residents' friendly nature and the tourists' contentment in getting to know the locals. Woosnam (2012) also reported how residents' emotional closeness with tourists influences their attitude and behaviour towards tourists and tourism development. This finding reflects the general assertion that Ghanaians are hospitable, friendly and entertain visitors well. The findings indicate that residents are emotionally connected to tourists (mean = 1.27)

### Sympathetic Understanding

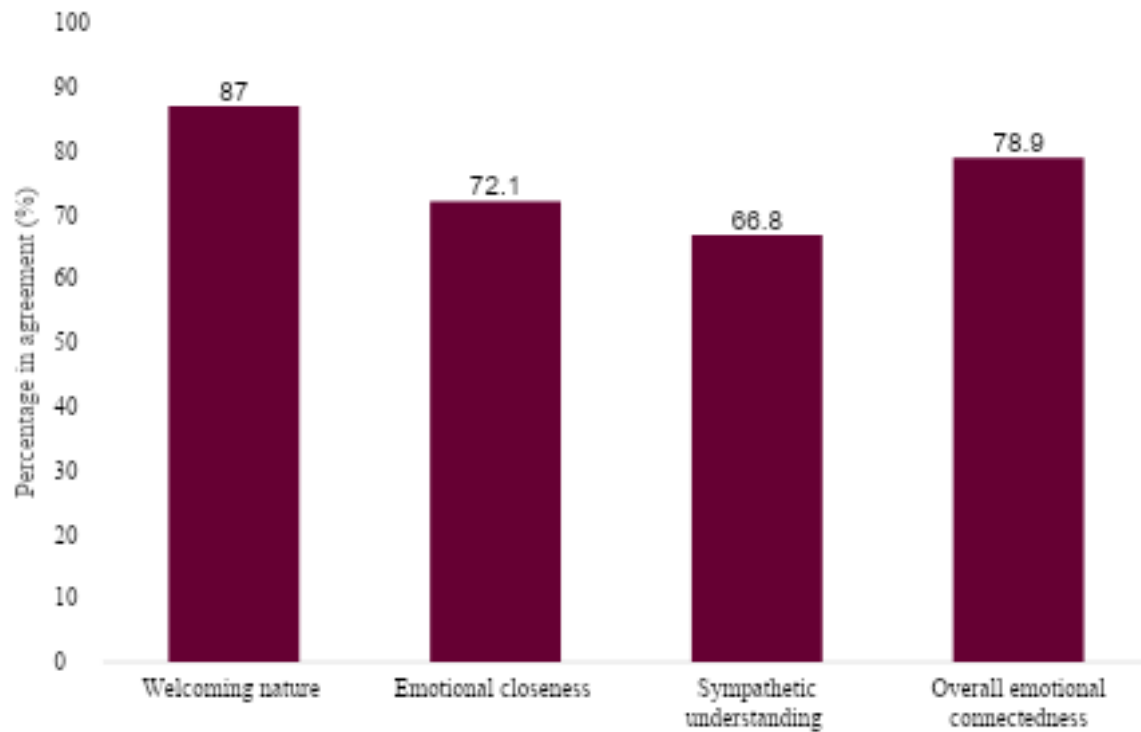
The final dimension of the emotional solidarity construct is known as sympathetic understanding. The sympathetic understanding of residents for tourists significantly predicted the residents' level of support for tourism development. Slightly above half have a lot in common with tourists who visit their community (mean=2.51). This might be because most of the tourists who visit Kwahu are domestic tourists (Ghanaian) who are likely to have commonalities like shared belief, common language and shared behaviour. This means that there is a high level of affection for tourists.

This result coincides with Woosnam and Aleshinloye (2012), who pointed out that higher levels of resident sympathetic understanding towards tourists have a more positive and supportive attitude towards tourism development. Similarly, Woosnam (2012) justified that sympathetic understanding had a strong influence on attitude in the sense that these people residing in a tourist destination area can interpret and apprehend the residents' feelings (Draper et al., 2011).

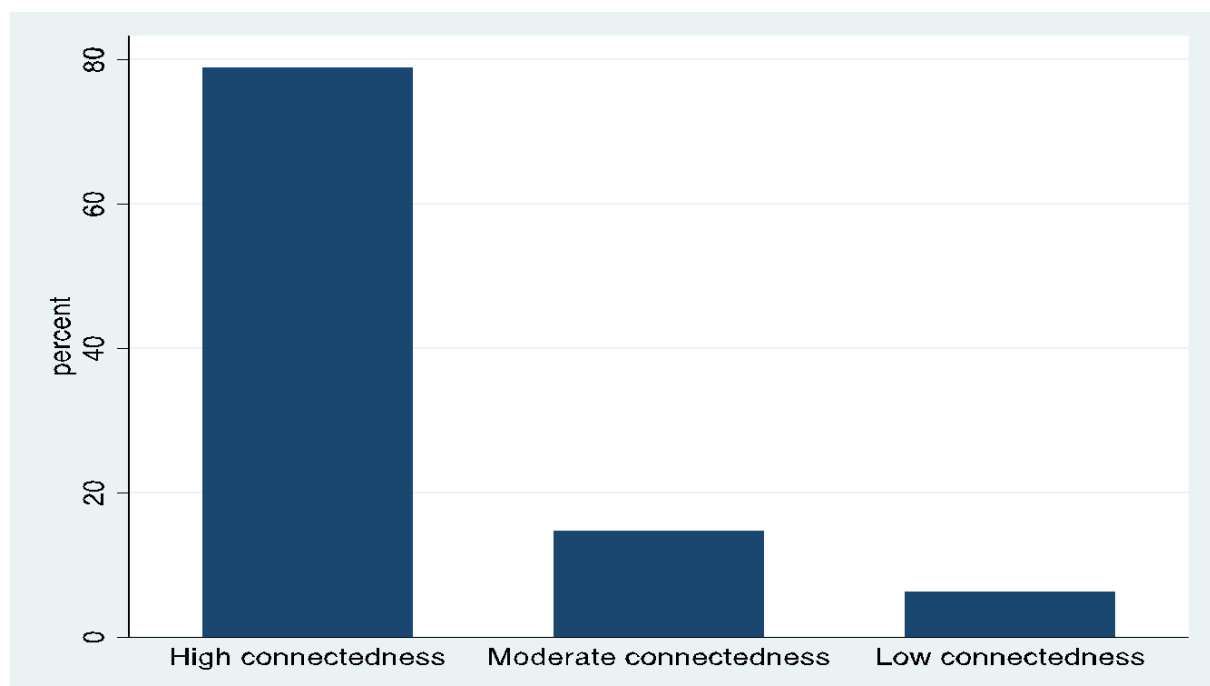
Figure 3 displays the classification of the emotional connectedness of residents across the three-factor structure of ESS: welcoming nature, emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding. Overall, the results indicate that the majority of



respondents are highly emotionally connected with tourists (mean=1.27).



**Figure 3: Distribution of Residents' Emotional Connectedness to Tourists.**



**Figure 4: Level of Residents' Emotional Connectedness with Tourists**



### **Connectedness to Tourists by the Three-factor Structure of ESS**

Across the three-factor structure of ESS, respondents revealed a comparatively higher level of connectedness in the category of welcoming nature, followed by emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding. This shows that welcoming nature appears to be an outstanding factor that influences residents' degree of connectedness with tourists, and this has been acknowledged in the literature. Woosnam and Aleshinloye (2015) confirmed that the welcoming nature of residents is one major factor that explains connectedness.

### **Overall Level of Residents' Emotional Connectedness**

Respondents were asked to indicate their overall level of emotional connectedness with tourists. Figure 3 suggests a high level of residents' emotional connectedness with tourists. Overall, the majority of respondents (78.9%) are highly emotionally connected with tourists. A few of the residents, 14.8% of residents, were slightly connected. Only a few residents, 4.3%, were not emotionally connected to the tourists, according to the data. This result suggests that residents are emotionally connected to tourists with a mean of 1.27. This reflects in the welcoming nature, emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding towards tourists; and implies that there is a high level of interactions, which include informal, occasional and unpredictable relationships as well as those that result from offering competent tourist services.

The study is consistent with Teye et al. (2002), who found that the more residents interact with tourists, the higher the emotional connection. Similarly, Hammarstrom (2005) and Woosnam et al. (2012) reported that the more residents interact with visitors, the more they identify with each other and

strengthen their bonds. Residents' high level of emotional connection might be due to sharing similar beliefs and behaviours, and a high level of interaction with the tourists. The results confirm that emotions are significant predictors of attitudinal and behavioural responses.

### **Residents' Emotional Connectedness by Socio-Demographic Characteristics**

The purpose of this section is to look at how residents' emotional attachment to visitors varies depending on their socio-demographic features.

Table 3 shows the distribution of residents' emotional connection with tourists across key socio-demographic characteristics. There was no statistically significant difference in the amount of emotional connectivity between male and female inhabitants and tourists when it came to sex distribution. This is in contrast to research by Pizam and Pokela (1985), Ritchie (1988), and Husbands (1989), all of which revealed a strong link between sex and inhabitants' feelings. Other socio-demographic factors, such as income level, indigenous status, and the respondent's community, were observed similarly.

However, there is a statistically significant relationship between age and emotional connectivity ( $P=0.000$ ) in the age distribution. Among the three age groups, those aged 18 to 39 years (young age group) demonstrated a higher level of emotional attachment with visitors (89.6%), compared to 66.5% and 69.7% for those aged 40 to 59 years and those aged 60 and above, respectively. This contradicts the findings of MacGehee and Andereck (2004), who showed a link between age and perceptions of tourists and tourism consequences. This could be because people who have lived in the neighbourhood for a longer period have a distinct perspective on tourists, which affects their emotional ties with visitors. Tourists were



benefits from them. This is in line with the prevalent belief that the tourism sector caters to young people. Furthermore, the youth are more likely than their counterparts to work in the sector or find themselves in the tourism zone. Tosun (2002) and Türker and ztürk (2013), on the other hand, discovered no significant association between age and emotional attachment to tourists and tourism development.

Socio-demographic characteristics	Emotional Connectedness					P-value
	N	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	$\chi^2$	
Sex						
Male	313	79.6	15.3	5.1	1.8	0.404
Female	256	78.1	14.1	7.8		
Total	569	78.9	14.8	6.3		
Age						
18-39	297	89.6	9.1	1.4	47.2***	0.000
40-59	206	66.5	21.4	12.1		
60+	66	69.7	19.7	10.6		
Total	569	78.9	14.8	6.3		
Education attainment						
No formal education	32	62.5	18.8	18.8	15.3**	0.018
Basic	132	75.0	17.4	7.6		
Secondary	176	84.1	10.2	5.7		
Tertiary	229	79.5	16.2	4.4		
Total	569	78.9	14.8	6.3		
Religion						
Christian	501	81.0	15.4	3.6	58.7***	0.000
Islam	41	68.3	4.9	26.8		
Traditional	25	52.0	20.0	28.0		
No religion	2	100.0	0.0	0.0		
Total	569	78.9	14.8	6.3		
Marital status						
Never married	212	88.7	9.9	1.4	25.3***	0.000
Married	309	73.8	16.5	9.7		
Ever married	48	68.8	25.0	6.3		
Total	569	78.9	14.8	6.3		
Household size						
1-4	358	83.2	14.3	2.5	24.9***	0.000
5-9	201	71.6	15.4	12.9		
10+	10	70.0	20.0	10.0		
Total	569	78.9	14.8	6.3		
Income level						

**Table 3: Continued**

Socio-demographic characteristics	Emotional Connectedness					P-value
	N	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	$\chi^2$	
Less than GHC 100	37	78.4	10.8	10.8	6.4	0.602
GHC 101-500	198	81.8	11.6	6.6		
GHC 501-1000	136	76.5	16.9	6.6		
GHC 1001 -2000	128	78.1	15.6	6.3		
Above GHC 2000	70	77.1	20.0	2.9		
Total	569	78.9	14.8	6.3		
Indigene status						
Indigene	508	78.9	14.6	6.5	0.3	0.845
Non-indigene	61	78.7	16.4	4.9		
Total	569	78.9	14.8	6.3		
Community						
<i>Nkawkaw</i>	129	76.0	14.7	9.3	5.7	0.452
<i>Mpraeso/Obomen</i>	162	80.9	13.6	5.6		
<i>Abetifi</i>	98	74.5	20.4	5.1		
<i>Obomen</i>	180	81.7	12.8	5.6		
Total	569	78.9	14.8	6.3		
Years living in the community						
5 or less	22	54.6	31.8	13.6	22.3***	0.004
6-10	81	88.9	8.6	2.5		
11-15	111	80.2	11.7	8.1		
16-20	98	69.4	24.5	6.1		
21+	257	80.9	12.8	6.2		
Total	569	78.9	14.8	6.3		

Source: Fieldwork

Note: \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* represent statistical significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% levels of significance, respectively.

The Table also reveals a statistically significant ( $p=0.018$ ) link between inhabitants' emotional closeness to visitors and their educational attainment. The respondents were separated into three groups based on their educational level (Group 1: No formal education; Group 2: secondary, and Group 3: tertiary). The findings show that, when compared to those with no formal education, respondents with formal education, particularly those with secondary school education, appeared to be more emotionally linked with tourists (84.1%). People's emotional ties to tourists vary greatly depending on their religious beliefs. Overall, all non-religious respondents (100%) have a strong emotional attachment to tourism, followed by Christians (81.0%), Muslims (68.3%), and

Traditionalists (68.3%). (52.0%). The majority of people agreed that their religious background has an impact on how they feel about tourists, for example. Christians believe that by properly greeting and entertaining visitors, you have invited an angel into your home.

This could be the explanation for their emotional attachment to tourists. Furthermore, a statistically significant relationship ( $P=0.000$ ) was observed between inhabitants' sense of connectivity and their marital status. When compared to those in a marital union (73.8%) and those who were once in a marital union (73.8%), individuals who had never married indicated a higher level of emotional closeness with tourists (88.7%). (68.8%). This could be because those who have never married have had



more time to mingle with visitors than those who are married. The level of connectivity of inhabitants and the size of the household have a statistically significant relationship ( $P=0.000$ ). The distribution of emotional connectivity by household size reveals that households with fewer members (1-4) are more emotionally connected to tourists. Finally, there is a substantial ( $P=0.004$ ) link between residents' degrees of emotional connectivity and the number of years they had lived in the research location. In general, those who have lived in the area for less than five (5) years appear to be less emotionally attached to tourists than those who have been in the area for longer periods of time. Research supports the idea that the longer a person lives in a community, the stronger their emotional commitment to it becomes, resulting in stronger feelings about issues that impact the community (McCool & Martin, 1994). This finding is in line with Sheldon and Abenaja's (2001) conclusion that the length of stay has a significant impact on inhabitants' perceptions of visitors in the host region.

## CONCLUSION

The study contributes to the literature by investigating a new perspective of offering a deeper understanding of the residents' attitude towards tourists, which has neglected the role of residents' emotions in community tourism development. Results from this study serve as a basis for more research concerning the emotional sentiment that residents feel for tourists. The results indicate that residents' attitude can supersede attitude predicated on perceived impact or financial gains from tourists, but emotional relationship can also predict residents' attitude.

In view of that, the following conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the study. First, this study concludes that there is a high level of residents' emotional connection with tourists. Across the

three-factor structure of the Emotional Solidarity Scale, respondents revealed a comparatively higher level of connectedness in the category of welcoming nature, followed by emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding. The findings show that welcoming nature is an outstanding factor influencing residents' degree of connectedness with tourists. This finding is supported by some previous studies (Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2015; Woosnam, 2012; Andereck & Nyaupane 2011 and Ko & Stewart (2002).

This study offered a new perspective on how sociodemographic factors and residents' attitudes toward tourists in a tourist destination. The findings refute the premise that residents' levels of emotional connectivity do not differ based on their socio-demographic factors. Indeed, residents' levels of emotional connectivity to tourists fluctuate greatly depending on their age, educational achievement, religion, marital status, and community of living, according to the study. However, according to the findings, there is no significant difference in emotional connectivity to tourists between males and females. This finding, therefore, represents a rich source of information for the stakeholders of the tourism industry in the Kwahu Traditional Area. The District Assemblies should intensify their collaboration with GTA and other private sector players in the industry to promote more attractive touristic activities in addition to paragliding, since the residents are emotionally connected to tourists and exhibited positive behavioural responses towards the tourism industry's support. Further research should be conducted to examine the emotional attitude of residents in the same area or different community contexts where tourism is in different developmental stages. Such research should utilise Butler's (1980) life cycle, which highlights the numerous stages a tourist destination



moves through over time. Those stages are: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, rejuvenation, and decline. The goal of this line of research would be to determine if stage influences the degree of residents' emotional connectedness with tourists for a comprehensive understanding.

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